

What ATSA members have been up to

Bridge Assistive

Bridge Assistive is a not-for-profit company that aims to increase the use of high-tech assistive communication devices in developing countries. Bridge Assistive is a subsidiary of Link Assistive and officially registered as a charity organisation with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACN: 661 392 169).

Sustainable v implementation projects

Bridge Assistive aims to implement sustainable AAC projects in developing countries. They are currently working to set up projects in Ghana and Fiji. The projects will be evaluated, to improve approaches over time and add to the body of evidence.

Bridge Assistive has received full ethics approval for their first project in Ghana that is expected to start in October. The project is a collaboration between Bridge Assistive, Curtin University, and the University of Ghana and will include the training of seven Ghanaian Speech Language Therapists (SLTs). The SLTs will undergo an online AAC training course and will each receive an AAC kit, so they can build up hands-on experience with AAC devices. After completion of the online training, the SLTs will have three one-on-one mentoring sessions with Link Assistive's Speech Pathologists. The SLTs will be asked to use their AAC kits for client assessments and can apply for individual AAC device donations using the Bridge Assistive Online Application System.

A Fijian project is in the developing phase and will include collaborations with the Frank Hilton Organisation and Charles Sturt University.

Apply for AAC

In addition to the formal projects, people from developing countries can apply for donation of a (second-hand) AAC device through Bridge Assistive's online application process. Applications from all developing countries are welcome and can be submitted by speech pathologists, other health care providers, educators, and carers. The applications will be reviewed by one of Link Assistive's speech pathologists and approval will depend on: 1) meeting pre-set criteria; and 2) availability of devices and services. After approval, Bridge Assistive will prepare the device, ship it to

the applicant, and provide clinical and technical support. Bridge Assistive received the following feedback from the support team of their first young Fijian client during a follow-up clinical session:

'Having the device has made his family and teachers understand him more'

'He communicates things we would never have imagined'

'He uses so many words'

'The teachers are surprised at his academic level'

'It has helped his frustration, he can now communicate his emotions'

'It's magical'

Donate a device

Bridge Assistive is looking for more second-hand communication devices including Tobii Dynavox devices, Attainment Go Talks, Ablenet Quicktalkers, Jelly Bean switches, Big Macks or Step by Steps, switch activated toys, or Rehadapt Table and/or Floor stands. Please consider donating any unused devices as listed above that are not older than five years. Other devices may also be eligible for donation, so please contact Bridge Assistive for more information.

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