

ATF AWARDS REPORT 2021



AssisTech Foundation (ATF)

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ASSISTECH FOUNDATION AWARDS (ATF AWARDS)

Introduction

AssisTech Foundation (ATF) Awards is a platform that recognizes our unsung heroes who aim to make a change in the lives of people with disabilities across the globe. Through India's first assistive technology awards, ATF hopes to shine focus on how technology innovation can enable people with disabilities to become independent and empower them to live with dignity (ATF awards [2-mins video](#)).

In the first edition 2021, we introduced **10 awards in 3 categories** to recognize not just the start-ups, but the ecosystem enablers like corporates, NGOs, governments, educational institutions and investors that have leveraged the power of technology to drive change. Through the ATF Awards, we hope to bring their stories to center stage and inspire more people to step forward and share our vision of making a disabled friendly world.

Why ATF Awards

Indian start-ups are growing 8-10% y-o-y despite Covid-19. However, Assistive Technology startups are struggling. The issues are base level as there is very little or no support from the Government, difficulties in raising funds, scarcity of impact investors, prevalence of working in silos amongst stakeholders and operational challenges as well. With all this, motivation and resilience are prone to go haywire. To recognise startups in their journey and provide reassurance for their work, many startup awards are there. However, there is no particular award for assistive technology startups. Therefore, to recognise the work of startups from the AT sector, a sector specific award is the need of the hour.

With the aforementioned reflection, ATF awards serve a purpose of identifying new startups, increasing awareness about Assistive Technology and its use case in disability, abolishing the silos ideology between stakeholders and initiating partnerships & deals. Additionally, it

will also open doors for establishment of brands and future opportunities of growth for the startups following the event.

The Good News & the Not-so-good News!



INDIAN START-UPS ARE GROWING 8-10% Y-O-Y DESPITE COVID-19

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY STARTUPS ARE STRUGGLING

INDIAN START-UP ECOSYSTEM

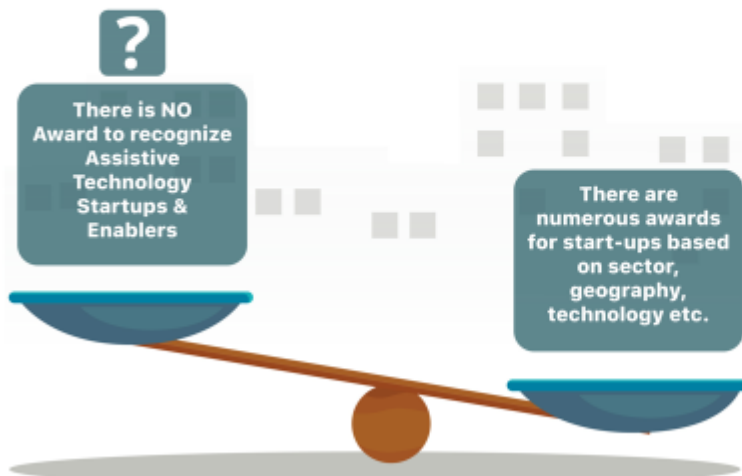
- 1600+ Start-ups added in 2020; steady and sustained growth in new start-ups
- 12 Unicorns added in 2020; total 38 unicorns are active in India
- \$3.5 Bn Total funding received by Start-ups in 2020 (Jan-Dec)
- 520+ Active Incubators and Accelerators across 100+ cities

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT) ECOSYSTEM

- No Government Policy & Support for AT Sector
- Difficult to Raise Funds
- Not many Impact Investors are interested in AT Start-ups
- Stakeholders working in silos
- Distribution Challenges

Reference: Indian Tech Start-up Ecosystem Report (NAASSCOM – ZINNOV, 2020)

There are numerous awards recognizing the work of start-ups. However...



Why Assistive Technology Awards?

A white icon of a person holding a rocket, symbolizing innovation and new startups.

Identify new AT startups

A white icon of a person with radiating dots, symbolizing awareness and community.

Awareness about Disability and AT

A white icon of three circular arrows forming a loop, symbolizing deal flow and cohorts.

Deal Flow for ATF Cohorts

A white icon of two hands shaking, symbolizing partnerships.

Partnerships

A white icon of three stacked cubes, symbolizing brand building and structure.

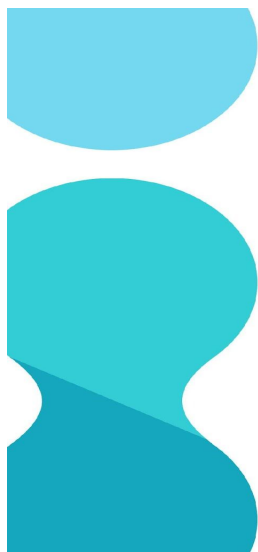
Brand Building

A white icon of a central point with radiating arrows, symbolizing opportunity beyond the event.

Opportunity beyond the event

ATF Awards Logo

The ATF Awards logo is an abstract 'I'. The logo signifies the independence that a person with disability can achieve when technology, passion, and society come together.



INDIA'S FIRST ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARDS

Award Categories

For its first edition, we introduced **10 awards in 3 categories** to recognize not just the start-ups, but the ecosystem enablers like corporates, NGOs, governments, educational institutions and investors that have leveraged the power of technology to drive change.

3 Award Categories:

- 1. Emerging Startups** - Creativity and innovation are absolutely necessary for long-lasting social change and ATF looks to foster an environment that promotes just that. Emerging startups category aims to reward the ingenuity and passion that are the backbone of our collective mission to empower persons of disability, thereby acting as a source of inspiration and motivation to think differently and look for opportunities where others may see a roadblock. It recognises young start-ups that are showing immense skill and innovation in creating assistive technology with the potential for large scale impact. The Emerging start-up category included **Best AT startup for innovation (Product/Technology) Award**.
- 2. Established Startups** - Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. It is truly magical that we are in an age where many paths that are closed due to disability can be opened with innovative technology. Through this category, ATF Awards celebrates these magicians who have worked tirelessly to create impactful innovations and the meaningful change they have brought about will create ripples of hope and empowerment in the community. Established Start-Ups category rewards assistive technology start-ups that have significantly impacted the lives of persons with disabilities. The category included **Jury's Choice for Best AT Start-up Award, Most Impactful AT Startup Award, Women Ahead: Best Woman-led AT start-up Award** and **Best Assistive Technology(AT) Start-up: People's Choice Award**.
- 3. Enablers** - At a micro level, assistive technology improves an individual's employment opportunities, acceptance into educational institutes, emotional status and social life.

But even if we look at it from a broader perspective, mobilizing a community of people with disabilities and giving them tools to learn and earn, can only aid in the development and growth of nations. In fact, the United Nations suggests that leaving people with disabilities out of the economy may result in as much as 7% loss of GDP in India. Hence, the work of entities within the assistive technology universe impacts not only the individuals of the community but the nation as a whole. While many assistive technology start-ups have phenomenal potential to create an impact, they lack funding, mentorship and access to communities of persons with disabilities. Hence, we found that the assistive technology ecosystem is incomplete without enablers who can promote and support the development of innovations. With the help of NGOs, educational institutes, government bodies, investors and corporate organizations, the impact of assistive technology products is amplified.

They provide domain expertise and assist in creating a supportive playground for pilots to test new products. Educational institutes are at the forefront of research and innovation and lend valuable support to start-ups, while creating strategies for increased awareness. Government bodies create policies and programs which are instrumental in building sustained positive impact. Last but not least, many organizations and individuals provide funding to create change. For persons of disability, this leads to an increased access to assistive technology at a reduced cost. Needless to say, without the constant support of these organizations, the impact of innovations would be significantly lower. Hence, the final category for the award, Enabler Awards which recognises the organizations and individuals who have helped promote the use and development of assistive technology across India and the globe. This category included **Best Government Assistive Technology(AT) Initiative Award, Assistive Technology (AT) CSR initiative of the year Award, Best Assistive Technology(AT) Initiative among Educational Institutes Award and Best Assistive Technology(AT) initiative among NGOs Award.**

3 Categories 10 Awards



EMERGING START-UP	ESTABLISHED START-UP	ENABLERS
1. Best AT Start-up for Innovation (Product/Technology)	2. Jury's Choice for Best AT Start-up	6. AT CSR Initiative of the Year
	3. Best AT Start-up: People's Choice	7. Best AT Initiative among NGOs
	4. Most Impactful AT Start-up	8. Best AT Investor of the Year
	5. Women Ahead: Best Women-led AT Start-up	9. Best Government AT Initiative
		10. Best AT Initiative among Education Institutes

Trophy (Designed in partnership with Titan)

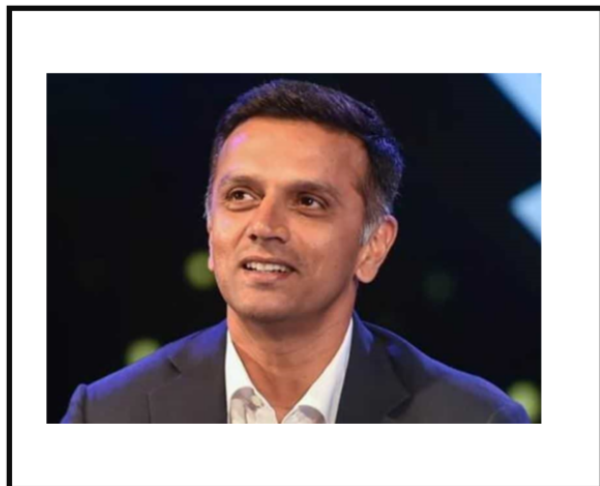
To honor the impact made by startups and enablers, ATF (in partnership with Titan) designed the trophy that's inspired by implementations of concepts of Japanese and Buddhist philosophy along with the theme of minimalism. A Japanese philosophy called "Wabi-Sabi" was the elementary theme, which means finding beauty in the imperfections. Wabi-sabi is the view or thought of finding beauty in every aspect of imperfection in nature. It is about the aesthetic of things in existence that are "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete". Moreover, another concept that was used in structuring the trophy was the basic principles of Buddhism that is embracing impermanence, suffering and absence of self. The design was minimalist with a major element of "Kintsugi", through the cracks that are seen as assets rather than flaws.



Award's Brand Ambassador – Rahul Dravid

The brand ambassador of ATF Awards was Mr. Rahul Dravid. He is a former Indian cricketer and captain of the Indian national team, currently serving as its head coach. It's hard to plot Rahul Dravid on the graph of cricketing greats. There has rarely been a historic Indian win without a vital contribution from 'The Wall'. He introduced ATF Awards and unveiled the trophy as well. Mr. Dravid has been associated with ATF since the beginning and relates with the vision of empowering lives of people with disabilities.

Brand Ambassador to Launch ATF Awards Trophy



Rahul Dravid

Cricketing Legend



ASSISTECH
FOUNDATION
AWARDS

Award's Jury

ATF Awards Jury was formed to solicit nominations for the awards. The objectives behind establishing a jury was to make an informed decision wisely, without any individual bias and in the fairest manner possible. There were two separate Jury for Startup Awards and Enablers Award. The Startup awards Jury consisted of **Prof. Rishiksha T Krishnan** (Director, IIM Bangalore), **Mr. Ravi Narayan** (CEO T-Hub, Chief Innovation Office, State of Telangana), **Mr. UB Pravin Rao** (COO, member of board, Infosys & Chairman, NASSCOM), **Mr. Ferose VR** (Senior Vice President and Head Of SAP Academy for engineering) and **Ms. Hema Ravishankar** (Strategic HR Advisor, Ex Senior Vice President and Global Head of Human Resources, Infosys).

Furthermore, the enabler awards jury was formed with **Mr. Jawahar Bekay** (Executive Chairman TAO Automation Co.), **Ms. Pankajam Sridevi** (Managing Director, Commonwealth Bank), **Mr. VS Basavaraju** (Former State Commissioner, Rights of Person with Disability Act, GoK) and **Mr. Arman Ali** (Executive Director, National Center for Provision of Employment for Disabled People),.

Startup Awards Jury

Emerging and Established Startup Awards



Prof Rishikesh T Krishnan
Director, IIM Bangalore



Ravi Narayan
CEO, T-Hub
Chief Innovation Office (CIO), State of Telangana



U. B. Pravin Rao
COO and Member of Board at Infosys
Chairman, NASSCOM



Ferose V R
Senior Vice President and Head of SAP Academy for Engineering



Hema Ravichandar
Strategic HR Advisor, Ex- Senior Vice-President and Global Head of Human Resources, Infosys

Enablers Awards Jury

Awards for Best Assistive Technology Initiative by NGO, CSR, Government, Educational Institution and Best Investor



Jawahar Bekay
Executive Chairman, TAG Automation
Co-Founder, Microland & Planetasia



Pankajam Sridevi
Managing Director (India) at Commonwealth Bank of Australia



V. S. Basavaraju
Former State Commissioner Rights of Persons with Disability Act, GoK
Chair-Sub-Committee-Health and Rehabilitation Health Vision Karnataka



Arman Ali
Executive Director National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP)



Picture: ATF Awards – Startup Jury - Final Presentation session by Startups

ATF Award Champion - Padma Shri Awardee, Mr Shekar Naik

The ATF Awards also had a segment of fireside chat with Mr. Shekar Naik & Mr. Prateek Madhav. Mr. Shekar Naik is an Indian blind cricketer and a former captain of the India national blind cricket team. He captained India to victories at the T20 Blind Cricket World Cup in 2012 and Blind Cricket World Cup in 2014. In 2017, the Government of India awarded Naik with Padma Shri, the country's fourth highest civilian honor. He is a Right-handed batsman and also a wicket-keeper. Mr. Naik has been actively associated with various initiatives of ATF and has provided instrumental support since the beginning.

ATF Awards Champion



Shekar Naik

Padma Shri Awardee (2017)

Former Captain of Indian Blind Cricket Team

National Awardee - Best Sports Person with Disabilities



Partners

Spreading awareness at a larger scale, invites stakeholders to take notice of this fragmented landscape and influence them to take necessary actions that impact the disability sector for the better. Not only that, it also serves as a platform for more Assistive Technology based start-ups and enablers to be a part of this change. This vision however will not be possible without the trailblazers who joined hands with ATF to establish a strong foothold for recognizing the new age thinkers who have developed the necessary technology that

enables and empowers persons of disabilities and give them a fair chance at life that's free from any discrimination and limitations. ATF has partnered with some of the leading organizations for enabling ATF Awards. The partners were:

The Office Of Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA) to Govt. Of India. The PSA's office aims to provide pragmatic and objective advice to the Prime Minister and cabinet on matters related to science, technology and innovation with a focus on application of science and technology in critical infrastructure, economic and social sectors in partnership with Government departments, institutions and industry. They provided instrumental support in outreach and promotions of ATF Awards.

JP Morgan, a global leader in financial services offering solutions to the world's most important corporations, governments and institutions also provided resources for ATF Awards. Moreover, ThoughtWorks, a leading global technology consultancy that integrates strategy, design and software engineering to enable enterprises and technology disruptors across the globe to thrive as modern digital businesses and Swasthi Foundation, a non-profit child sponsorship organization, fights poverty and helps children in their needs through our programs were also an elementary partners for ATF Awards.

Nonetheless, Prof. Rishiksha T Krishnan (Director, IIM Bangalore) also partnered with ATF for conceptualizing ATF Awards and provided funding and additional resources for the same.



ATF AWARD – PROCESS AND SUMMARY OF APPLICATIONS

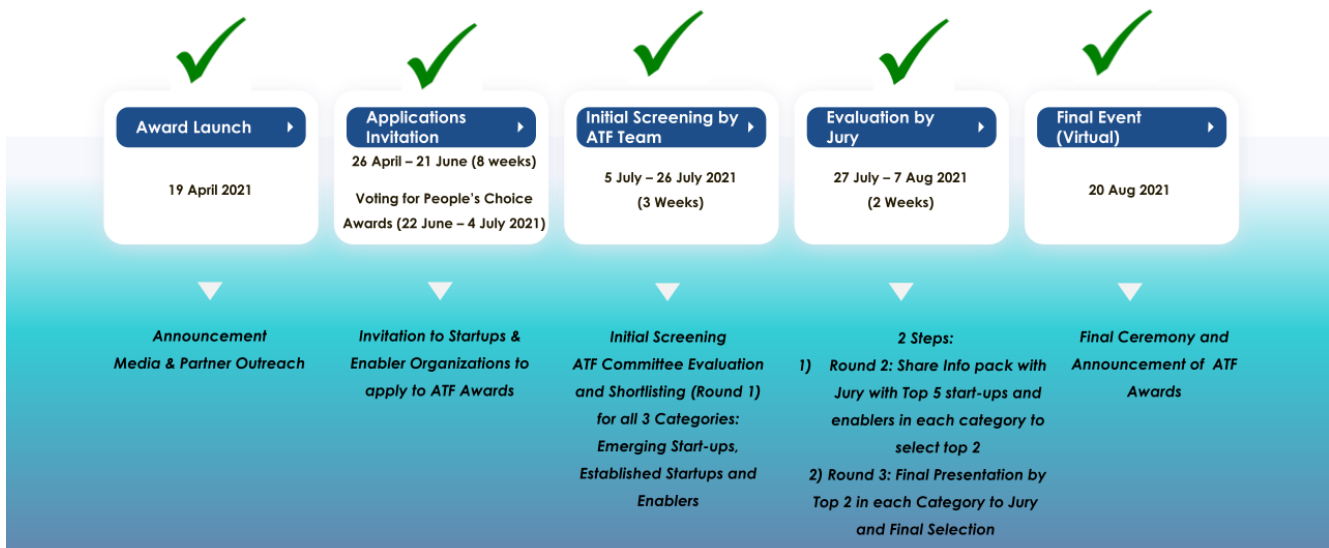
Process & Timeline

ATF Awards was launched on April 19, 2021 which was followed by rigorous outreach for promotions and partnerships. The applications were opened from April 26 till June 21, 2021 for a span of 08 weeks. During that time, we invited many startups and enabler organizations to apply for ATF Awards. The voting for People’s Choice Awards was held between June 22, 2021 and July 04, 2021. After receiving the applications, the screening process began from July 06, 2021 to July 26, 2021 for a duration of 03 weeks wherein the first round of evaluation and screening was done by ATF Committee. Thereafter, further rounds took place between July 27, 2021 and August 07, 2021 wherein the second round consisted of sharing an info pack with the jury, top 5 startups and enablers in each category to select top 2s. Furthermore, in the third round, final presentations were given by the top 02 prospective recipients in each category to the Jury who evaluated and led towards the final selection. Finally, the award ceremony and announcements of winners were announced virtually on August 20, 2021.



ATF Awards – Process and Timeline

Final Announcement and Celebration (Virtually) on 20 Aug'2021

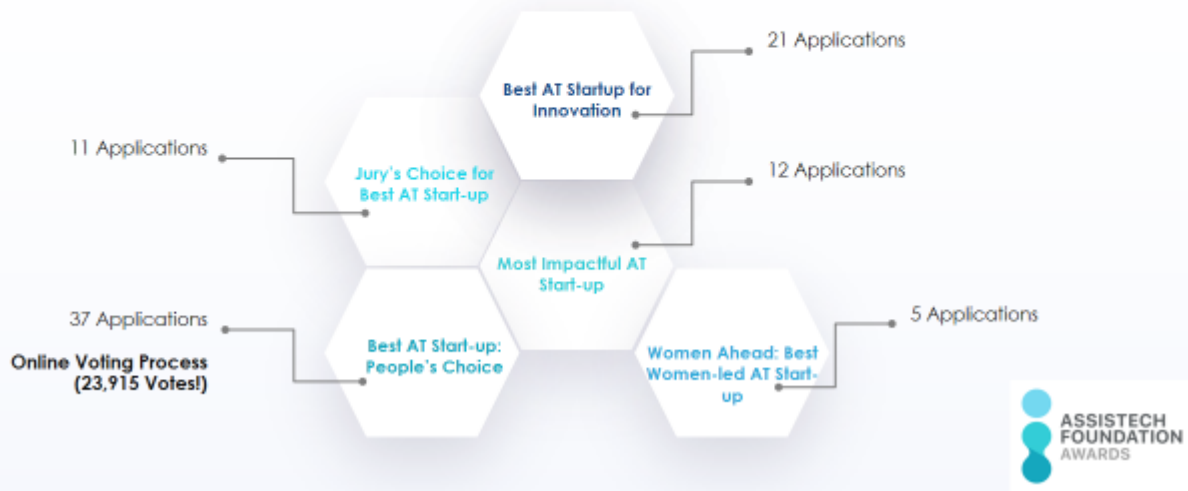


ATF Awards- Startup Applications Summary

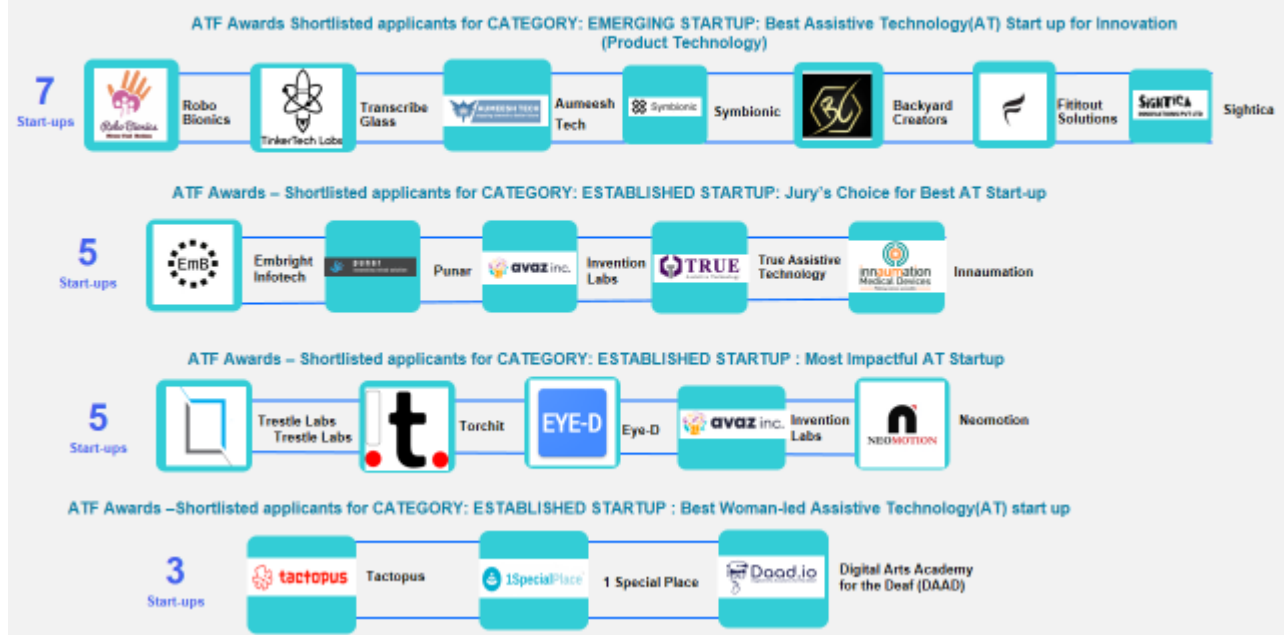
- Total 100+ startups applied across 25+ cities
- 49 applications qualified for the 1st round (ATF team screening)
- These 49 applications cover all the major disabilities including cognitive, speech and hearing, visual, locomotor and multiple disabilities
- 37 startups applied for the People's Choice award for which 23,915 people voted in an online voting process!

ATF Awards- Startup Applications Summary

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ATF Start-up Awards: Shortlisted Applicants after Round 1 (Screening by ATF Awards committee)



ATF Awards- Enabler Summary of Applications received

- Assistive Technology Enablers: NGOs, Government Departments, Educational Institutions and Investors
- 23 Applications across categories
- Applications from premier institutes like IIT Delhi, IIT Madras, Manipal etc.

ATF Awards- **Enabler** Summary of Applications received

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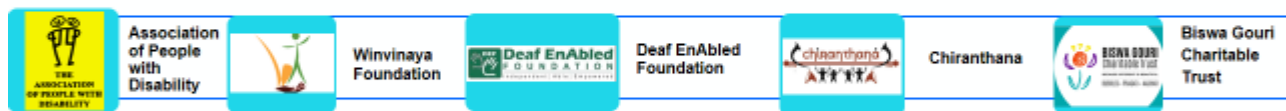


ATF Enablers Awards: Shortlisted Applicants after Round 1 (Screening by ATF Awards committee)

ATF Awards – Shortlisted applicants for Best AT Initiative among Education Institutes



ATF Awards – Shortlisted applicants for Best AT Initiative among NGOs



ATF Awards – Shortlisted applicants for AT CSR Initiative of the Year



ATF Awards – Shortlisted applicant for Best AT Investor of the Year



ATF Awards – Shortlisted applicant for Best Government AT Initiative



ATF AWARDS FINAL CEREMONY

Final Event

The final event was held on August 20, 2021 virtually for a duration of 60-minutes. The event was attended by 450+ industry leaders and other people within and across the sector of assistive technology and empowerment of people with disabilities. The ceremony was commemorated by 20+ speakers and awardees that included eminent personalities like Prof. Raghavan (PSA, Gol), Rahul David, Kris Gopalakrishnan, Prof. Rishi T Krishnan and ATF Board Members. It was held completely digital with 100% accessibility through an interpreter for inclusivity across disabilities.

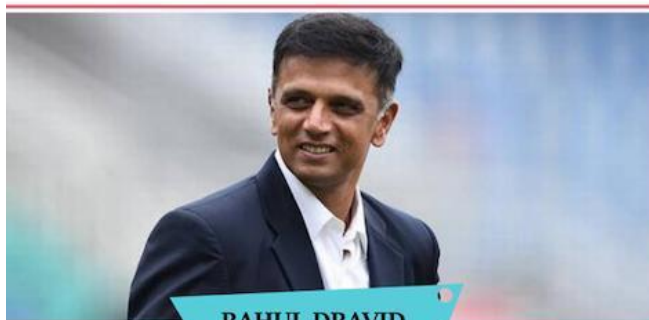
"Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them." – Steve Jobs

Introducing



A premiere event which recognizes the startups and ecosystem enablers that have leveraged technology to empower persons with disability.

Don't miss ATF Ambassador and legendary cricketer



RAHUL DRAVID

Keynote Speaker

- Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA) to Government of India - Prof. K. Vijay Raghavan

Keynote Speaker



Prof. K. Vijay Raghavan

India's Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)
to the
Government of India

Award Winners

Amongst all the wonderful applicants, the following organizations won in respective categories. Under the emerging startups, Best AT Startup for innovation was won by **ThinkerTech Labs (Transcribe Glass)**. Further ahead, in the established startups category, the Jury's choice for best AT startups was won by **Invention Labs (Avaz App)**, Most Impactful AT Startup was won by **Trestle Labs**, Women Ahead : Best Women Lead AT Startup was won by **1Special Place** and best AT Startup People's Choice was won by **Maker's Hive**. Lastly, under enablers, Best Govt AT Initiative was won by **National Institute of Speech and Hearing**, AT CSR Initiative of the year was won by **Prosus**, Best AT among educational institutes was won by **IIT Madras** and best AT initiative among NGOs was won by **The Association of People with Disability (APD)**.

WINNERS OF ATF AWARDS 2021

EMERGING START-UPS

BEST AT START-UP FOR INNOVATION

TINKERTECH LABS
(TRANSCRIBE GLASS)



ESTABLISHED START-UPS

JURY'S CHOICE FOR BEST AT START-UP

INVENTION LABS (AVAZ APP)



MOST IMPACTFUL AT START-UP

TRESTLE LABS



WOMEN AHEAD: BEST WOMAN-LED AT START-UP

1 SPECIAL PLACE



BEST AT START-UP: PEOPLE'S CHOICE

MAKERS HIVE



ENABLERS

BEST GOVERNMENT AT INITIATIVE

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
SPEECH & HEARING (NISH)**



AT CSR INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR

PROSUS



BEST AT INITIATIVE AMONG
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

IIT MADRAS



BEST AT INITIATIVE AMONG NGOS

**THE ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITY (APD)**



AT - ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Testimonials

After the commencement of the programme, we asked the stakeholders to share their feedback and experiences with ATF Awards which is depicted in the picture.

Thank you Prateek for a wonderful session today. I learnt a lot from all the participants and the jury. Congratulations to you and your entire team.

My regards to the Jury members.

Ferose VR
Senior Vice President and Head of
SAP Academy for Engineering

Prateek, I completely agree with Ferose (and Hema's comments on the call!). Well-organised process and jury session, and a good learning experience.

Prof Rishikesh T Krishnan
Director, IIM Bangalore

Thanks, the awards event was very nicely done, congratulations!

Look forward to working with ATF on future initiatives to further innovations in the AT space.

Prof Sujatha Srinivasan
IIT Madras,
TTK Center for Rehabilitation Research
and Device Development (R2D2)

What people said about ATF Awards!

Thank you for organizing such an amazing event. I am sure it's just the beginning of a big collective movement around accessibility and inclusion to support persons with disability.

Akshita Sachdeva
Co-founder, Trestle Labs



ATF Awards – Startup Jury - Final Presentation session by Startups

The virtual awards ceremony was very pleasant and enjoyable.

We look forward to collaborating more with ATF in the future.

Akila Surendran, PhD
National Institute of Speech & Hearing
(NISH), Kerala

Testimonial from Narayanan Ramakrishnan, CEO Invention Labs/ Avaz Inc

Dear Prateek,

I am sharing my thoughts with respect to the ATF Award.

As soon as the ATF Awards voting started, I realized that it was a great idea to increase awareness about disabilities and assistive technologies. Many people who knew nothing about Avaz, got curious, understood the product and the use case now. And probably will remember us when they come across a person with a disability. It went viral on social networks and the culmination of it was my wife receiving the same message back on a WhatsApp group.

Thanks to the award, I have been able to make some useful connections on LinkedIn and it has made its way into my pitch decks.

Personally, my parents have been the happiest folks in the world after we won the award. They were on YouTube following the entire session and could not stop sharing it with their friends and family after that. They have been very supportive of my career choices, and I felt that I had done them proud. This award is also an appreciation of the efforts of all the Avaz team members - for the alumni, a vindication of the vision that they believed in and for the current - a springboard to strive for greater heights and to make every voice heard.

Thank you Team ATF.

ATF Awards – PR/ Media Coverage

- 20+ coverage for the ATF awards, including publications like Deccan Herald, AdGully, Education Times and YourStory to name a few:
- YourStory:
<https://yourstory.com/socialstory/2021/08/independence-day-india-disability-gdp-expert/amp>
- Deccan Herald:
<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/low-cost-made-in-india-speaking-valve-gives-voice-to-voiceless-1010258.html>
- Media Brief :
<https://mediabrief.com/assistentech-foundation-launches-assistentech-foundation-awards/>
- CXO Outlook :
<https://www.cxooutlook.com/rahul-dravid-takes-up-the-cause-for-the-betterment-of-the-disabled-population-inaugurates-the-first-edition-of-the-assistentech-foundation-award-trophy/>