

Center for International Rehabilitation

Foreword

"The system of mass production...presupposes that you are already rich, for a great deal of capital investment is needed to establish one single workplace. The system of **production by the masses** mobilizes the priceless resources which are possessed by all human beings, their clever brains and skillful hands, and **supports them with first class tools**", and the training/instruction to fully utilize these resources.

E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful*, 1973

"Technologies that are small, simple and capital saving are more appropriate to the needs and resources of poor countries than are the large-scale labor saving technologies developed in the West during their heyday of cheap energy... The only sane alternative lies in the direction of technologies that are relatively small, simple, capital saving and non-violent, and economics as if people mattered."

George McRobie, *Small Is Possible*, 1981

These two quotations from the founders of the appropriate technology field reflect both ATI's philosophy and the *raison d'être* behind this production manual. People do matter to ATI and to Ralf Hotchkiss. We share the belief that utilization of appropriate technology (technology adapted to the local resource endowment) can increase income and improve the quality of the lives of the users of these technologies and consequently awaken these people to their own potential for further development.

We have made this production manual available so that small entrepreneurs and shops run by and for the disabled can construct the ATI-Hotchkiss Wheelchair with a minimal capital investment. This wheelchair, designed under an ATI grant and subsequently field-tested throughout Latin America, is lightweight, durable, extremely well-balanced; it can be fit to the individual, and can be manufactured locally at one third the price of many imported chairs.

This production manual should play an important role in increasing the availability and thus lowering the price of high quality wheelchairs in the Third World. People seeking to buy wheelchairs in many small countries have found themselves to be captives of a single importer. As Adam Smith put it in *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, "monopolists, by keeping the market constantly under-stocked, by never fully supplying the effectual demand, sell their commodities much above the natural price." The resulting price "is the highest which can be squeezed out of the buyer." By increasing competition in the wheelchair market, we hope to urge the prices of quality wheelchairs down toward their natural level.

As the prices drop, more and more disabled people will be able to obtain state-of-the-art wheelchairs. This could be the first step in permitting them to exercise their options and to begin working toward the fulfillment of their dreams.

Ton de Wilde, Executive Director

[Table of Contents](#)