



ACTIVITY REPORT 2015

Abilis Foundation, established in 1998, aims at promoting in different ways the activities, human rights, equal opportunities and independent living of persons with disabilities in developing countries and East Europe. The Foundation realizes its purpose by granting financial support and engaging in informative, educational and advisory activities. An integral part of the Foundation's mandate is the promotion on an international level of the human rights of persons with disabilities, the focus of which is on helping, directly or indirectly, those in developing countries.

The Foundation's main activity is funding small trustworthy, high-quality projects planned and implemented by the disabled persons themselves through their organizations. The Foundation's financial support promotes the empowerment and social integration of persons with disabilities. Funding can only be granted to developing countries officially defined as such. The subventions are small, from 500 € to 30 000 €. It is the Foundation's goal to direct the aid especially to grassroots organizations.

The Foundation receives the bulk of its financing from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs Development Cooperation Fund. According to the current three-year financing decision (2013-2015), the State funding for the year 2015 totalled 2 900 000 €. The Foundation had a remainder of 118 393 € carried over from the 2014 State grant. The Foundation's own fundraising work brought in 4 925 €. The year 2015 being the final year of the current financial period, the Foundation prepared, in the spring 2015, a new funding application for 2016-2018 and submitted it to the Finnish Foreign Ministry. The new financing decision, totalling 4 500 000 €, is dated December 18th, 2015 and covers the period 2016-2017.

In the course of 2015, the Foundation processed approx. 450 applications, out of which 212 were approved for funding and 214 were rejected while the remainder will be handled in the following year. The majority of applications came from Africa (48 %) and Asia (42 %). The most grants were accorded to Tanzania (16, 135 663 € in total), Ethiopia (15, 79 483 € in total), Kyrgyzstan (14, 117 216 € in total) and to Nepal (43 051 € in total). Moreover, funds were granted to a few Disabled People's Organizations in Middle-East, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Circa 65 % of the Foundation's financial support was allocated to the world's poorest countries and 62 % to the Foundation's specific focus countries. New grants totalled in average 6 475 €.

Most of the grants approved this year, 98 in all, were small ones (budget 2 500 € or less, 2 158 € in average), a number proportionate to that of previous years. Since small grants are well suited to the needs and capacity of groups of persons with disabilities operating in poor rural conditions, their use has increased in the past few years. The average size of larger grants (budget in excess of 2 501 €) was 10 186 €, in line with the Foundation's funding principles and corresponding to that of previous years. In 2015, 222 final reports and 249 midterm reports were approved by the Foundation. These numbers are considerably larger than in the past, because of the Foundation's decision to prioritize the follow-up of ongoing projects. This temporary measure was due to a decision by the Finnish government to cut the Development Aid already in the beginning of 2016. Upon reception of this information, the Foundation immediately took measures to secure the continuation of its activities and the payment of funds according to the approved funding decisions. A moratorium on new applications was declared for the period September to December 2015, and as a result of the Foundation's austerity measures, the number of new applications processed was slightly lower than previously.

About half (47 %) of Abilis-funded projects aimed at poverty reduction of persons with disabilities. This was realized mainly through vocational training preparing persons with disabilities for micro-entrepreneurship and improving their chances of employment on the labour market. The Foundation also supported the empowerment, participation and education of persons with disabilities as well as the capacity building of DPOs (28 %). About 13 % of the projects were solely aimed at the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities while a few of them focused, among other things, on promoting the participation of children with disabilities and helping their families, on the manufacture and distribution of assistive devices and on improving the access of persons with disabilities to health services. Roughly 67 % of the beneficiary organizations were operating in rural areas where community support and services are very limited. The bulk of the financial support (49 %) was granted to DPOs which represented people with different kinds of disabilities. The Foundation monitors closely its funding activities and the channelling of funds to strategic focus areas. In 2015, the activity was very well in line with the Foundation's financing principles and strategies.

The Partnership Programme and a wide, international network are the cornerstones of the Foundation's funding activities. It is through these the Foundation conducts background-checks of applicants and monitors the implementation of projects. Apart from being an asset in Risk Management, this also strengthens local ownership as well as the capacity of partner organizations. There were altogether 12 focus countries (in Africa: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Somaliland, Uganda and Zambia; in Asia: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India (part of the year), Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Tadjikistan). In spite of its systematic approach, the Foundation had to terminate 14 projects which couldn't be carried out. Mostly this was due to the deficient capacity of the implementing organization or to inadequate reporting. No reimbursement demands were made since there was no indication of misuse of funds.

The Foundation pursued its programme of evaluation and development by means of which, a systematic mechanism for measuring the results and impact of projects as well as their sustainability will be created. The indicators thus produced were applied to small scale projects. The work in order to further develop the partnership cooperation was carried on throughout the year, with the focus on finding an even more effective way of offering support to local organizations. No research or development work as defined in the Foundations Act was conducted. Cooperation between funders was consolidated and preliminary plans were devised to cement different funding instruments into complementing one another. The future cuts of Development Aid prompted the Foundation to look for other funders and to launch a more effective fundraising programme. Disability Diplomacy on Human Rights (DD) work was continued actively under Kalle Könkkölä's leadership. The DD initiative brought together representatives of different organizations from Finland and abroad to discuss mainly the inclusion of disability issues in all Development Cooperation work as well as in all humanitarian interventions. In the course of 2015, a new project management software was developed and adopted after the process started in 2014 to buy one from Innofactor Oyj had had to be interrupted. It was the second place in the competitive tender, Roger Studio Oy (formerly Steeri OY), who, together with representatives of the Foundation, built a new, cloud-based software, ARKISTO, introduced in October 2015, while the fine-tuning went on for some time afterwards.

The Board assembled six times in the course of the year. The Foundation's annual meeting was held in May 2015. In addition to handling funding decisions and general administrative measures, the Board also updated the Foundation's bylaws to correspond to the new Foundations Act. In December 2015, the renewed bylaws were submitted to the Finnish Patent and Registration Office for approval, to be expected in early 2016.

In connection with the renewal of the bylaws the Board prepared a Related Party Rule for the Foundation and committed to follow it. Due to the nature of Abilis Foundation's activities,

no related party will be granted subventions nor any kind of financial perk; all the funding activity will be directed toward supporting DPO's in the Global South. No financial commitment was made with any related party. In addition to attendance fees (1 140 €), the founding member received in total 3 600 € in remuneration for his Disability Diplomacy work and travel and subsistence allowance altogether 13 216 €.

Travel allowances were paid on the basis of actual expenses. The usual attendance fees, totalling 5 265 €, were paid to the Board members. Salaries and fees paid to the Management of the Foundation (Board and Executive Director) totalled 62 008 €.

In 2015, Abilis Foundation employed 13 permanent and 1 temporary members of staff. The employment of two staff members was terminated at the end of the year. The staff received remuneration in the form of salary, benefits in kind and subsistence allowances in accordance with Finnish legislation, the Foundation's established payroll system and the provisions of personnel policy. The Foundation's auditors were Raimo Hakola (CA) and Kristian Seemer (CA). Anssi Pietiläinen (CA) and Kari Mikkola (CA) acted as deputy auditors. Administer Ltd. was in charge of book-keeping, while eFina financial management software was used in financial administration and the tool for project administration was Prospekti until September 30th 2015 and from thereon, ARKISTO (Salesforce).

The total costs of the Foundation's activities amounted to 2 916 847 €. The Foundation's balance sheet showed a surplus of 13 820 €. The total amount granted by the Foundation to DPOs in developing countries was 1 853 610 €. The costs of information activities were 47 335 €, those of Project Management 649 802 € while administrative costs totalled 265 785 €. The remaining 104 249 € of the state grant were carried over to next year.

In the course of autumn 2015, the Foundation readjusted its activities in a manner required by the state financing decision for the years 2016-2017. These measures apply as well to the Foundation's aid activities, their volume and allocation, and its domestic operations. In view of the significant cut in state funding starting from the beginning of 2017, the Foundation started an active search for new funders, taking advantage of the wide network built up in previous years and consisting of governmental funders of the disability sector as well as of international foundations and organizations. At the end of 2015, Abilis Foundation prepared two applications for the European Union and started to work on a third one. It also launched an evaluation of its funding activities and the effectiveness and impact thereof in order to be able, on the basis of an outside assessment, to further develop its activities and ensure they meet the needs of the DPOs in the Global South. An external assessment could also be an asset when searching for new funders. The Foundation also participates in the extensive evaluation process commissioned by the Foreign Ministry, launched in autumn 2015. Its third phase, to begin in autumn 2016, will focus on special foundations. In 2016, Abilis Foundation will start to draft a new four-year grant application (2018-2021) to be submitted to the Foreign Ministry in summer 2017.