



ACTIVITY REPORT 2017

Abilis Foundation, registered in 1998, is a Finnish foundation established to promote in different ways the activity, human rights, equal opportunities and independent living of persons with disabilities in developing countries and in Eastern Europe. To achieve its purpose, the Foundation grants financial support and conducts awareness raising, training and counselling programmes. The activities include global disability diplomacy on human rights, focusing on helping, directly or indirectly, persons with disabilities in developing countries. Abilis Consulting, a company established and owned by Abilis Foundation, offers expert services tailored to the needs of various operators, complementing the Foundation's work for improving disability inclusion.

The core activity of Abilis Foundation is to fund minor, reliable and high-quality projects designed and implemented by organizations of persons with disabilities in developing countries. The provided funding helps improve the involvement, performance and position of persons with disabilities in developing societies. Funding is only granted to states officially classified as developing countries. Individual grants are small, between 1,000 and 20,000 euros. The focus is on grassroots level organizations of persons with disabilities in the least developed countries of the world.

Most of the funding comes from the Official Development Assistance administered by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. 2017 was the second year of a two-year funding period (2016-2017). Government support received for 2017 was 1,750,000 euros, considerably less than in the previous years. This was a result of the Government's austerity measures, which resulted in significant cuts in development aid appropriations from 2016. Having been preparing for public sector cuts, Abilis Foundation was able to carry over 698,966 euros of government support from 2016. This helped manage the financial situation and ensured continued project funding despite tight budgets. The Foundation itself raised 39,924 euros, most of this in donations. The highest single donation was a legacy of 27,566 euros.

In 2017 Abilis Foundation was compelled to restrict the number and handling of incoming applications and approved no new applications at all later in the year. This helped cover ongoing and new projects failing a decision about government funding for future years. In spite of the closure, the Foundation dealt with over 300 applications in 2017. 184 applications were approved for funding and 110 were rejected. The rest will be handled in the new calendar year. The Foundation granted almost a million euros (998,559) for new projects. In the uncertain funding situation, the number of small grants (max. 2,500 euros) was higher than in previous years, a total of 104 small grants were made.

Most of the applications came from Asia (46 %) and Africa (46 %), where the Foundation's focus countries are. Individual applications arrived and funding was granted to Latin America (5 %) and Eastern Europe (3 %). In Asia, most grants were made to Nepal (19 grants, 113,303 euros). Kyrgyzstan (17 grants, 82,968 euros) and Tajikistan (16 grants, 80,216 euros) continued as countries of active funding. Many years of work in the Mekong area produced a higher amount of funding. Ten new projects started in Myanmar (40,899 euros) and eight in Vietnam (33,400 euros). In Africa, Tanzania was the biggest grantee (20 new projects, 135,389 euros), followed by Ethiopia (12 grants, 52,402 euros), Uganda (10 grants, 39,211 euros) and Mozambique (9 grants, 55,321 euros). Somalia was the biggest target outside the focus countries with 13 new grants (63,775 euros). In Latin America, Bolivia received six grants (36,852 euros) and in Eastern Europe the Ukraine was the beneficiary of four new project grants (46,933 euros). Of all the support, 69 % (127 project grants) went to least developed countries, and 73 % of the funding was channelled to the appointed focus countries (134 new grants, 719,552 euros).

The grants were small, appropriate to the needs of groups of persons with disabilities in poor rural environments. Project implementation, management and reporting were in line with the



capacities of the rural groups. The average grant size was 5,427 euros. This corresponds to the decision of the Foundation Board to focus on max. 2,500-euro grants. The preference was to distribute the diminished government allocation between as many organizations as possible, ensuring that the Foundation's finances and the expected future government support suffice to cover the ongoing project payments in 2018.

The contents of the projects varied a lot. In euros, most financial support (36 %, 359,774 euros) was channelled to projects improving employment opportunities and livelihood. Training projects (18 %, 175,372 euros) contributed to the professional development and employment opportunities of persons with disabilities. The organizational activities and social engagement of persons with disabilities were supported in over a fifth of the grants (22 %, 218,386 euros). Projects promoting the human rights of persons with disabilities were funded with 94,130 euros (9 %). The focus of the work – girls and women with disabilities – was further emphasized in the projects; some 92 % of them had gender equality either as the main or a partial objective. Only eight of these projects were carried out by organizations of women with disabilities, the rest were implemented by general disabled people's organizations, which reveals an extending commitment to promote the position of women with disabilities.

Organizations consisting of persons with various disabilities were the largest beneficiary group (31 %). The intensive work of recent years to reach out to organizations of parents of children with disabilities as well as groups of visually impaired, deaf and persons with psychosocial disabilities produced good results in 2017. The share of groups for blind and visually impaired rose from 10 to 17 %, and the share of organizations for deaf and hearing impaired from well under 10 to 15 %. A tenth (10 %) of project grants went to organizations of parents of children with disabilities, also up from previous years. Organizations for persons with psychosocial disabilities accounted for 4 % of beneficiaries in 2017, having been around 1 % in recent years.

Most of the recipient organizations (73 %) operated in rural areas or towns, where community support and services are limited and other donors are more or less non-existent. As provided in the Foundation's strategy, support was directed to genuinely grassroots level groups or organizations, some of which were yet to be registered and did so with Abilis' assistance. Almost half of the organizations (48 %) had their accounts locally audited, which shows that the Foundation's guidance in good governance has been successful.

Abilis Foundation approved 203 final reports in 2017. Again, the number of audited and approved final reports was remarkably high; the monitoring and completion of ongoing projects were priorities in expectation of a decision about new government support. Most of the completed projects (83 %) lasted less than two years. Prolonged projects, with durations over three years, accounted for 5 % (11 projects). Seven projects had to be terminated, most of them owing to the organization's insufficient capacity. No financial mismanagement was discovered and no money had to be recovered.

The Foundation's finances were carefully monitored to see that the grants were channelled to the strategic focus areas. The Foundation's principles and strategic guidelines were observed excellently in 2017.

Abilis Foundation's active and high-quality work is based on a partnership programme established in 2002 and the backing of an extensive global network. These were used to check the backgrounds of applicants, to facilitate projects and to monitor project implementation as part of the Foundation's risk management programme. Partnership programmes operated in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Nepal in Asia and in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda in Africa. Work in the Mekong area continued, with Myanmar, Vietnam and Northern Thailand as target countries. Partnership programmes were run either through an appointed partner organization or a country office founded by



Abilis Foundation. Country offices operated in Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda; the registration process of the latter was officially completed in 2017.

Assessment and evaluation continued according to plan. As recommended by an evaluation completed in 2016, the Foundation's performance management was improved including metrics that help measure and report the results and impacts of individual projects according to the established principles. New application and reporting forms with more focused indicator questions will be taken into use in early 2018. Research and development, as referred to in the Foundation Act, were not done.

Abilis Foundation participated in the third phase (CSO3) of an evaluation of civil society organizations commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The recommendations of the evaluation, such as further development of programme approach, focused channelling of support and systematic measuring and reporting of results were considerations of Abilis Foundation's funding proposal for 2018–2021, submitted to the Ministry in June 2017. The proposal consisted of country programmes with background research, subprogrammes for disability diplomacy and communication, complete with project management and administration budgets. The four-year funding period will be based on the Ministry's updated programme support instrument, developed with the assistance of special foundations. In December 2017, civil society organizations received preliminary information of government funding for future years. An official decision was only received in February 2018. The total government support will be 7,800,000 euros (1,950,000 euros a year).

The initiative Global Disability Diplomacy on Human Rights was actively pursued under the leadership of Kalle Könkkölä. The key goal of the initiative was to affect all foreign policy so as to improve the position and engagement of persons with disabilities. The practical work included meetings, training sessions, awareness raising and information programmes. A group of experts with disabilities met three times and "the Elders", a supporting group consisting of experienced specialists, met twice. Services to drive the initiative were bought from Threshold Association, led by Kalle Könkkölä, at standard cost.

Abilis Foundation kept an active lookout for new sponsors and increased cooperation with similar actors in Finland and worldwide. Letters of intent were prepared for cooperation with domestic organizations including the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Helsinki Deaconess Institute Foundation and Fida International. With the Finnish Red Cross and Finn Church Aid, Abilis Foundation looked for possibilities to advance disability inclusion within humanitarian aid. The cooperation further intensified in autumn 2017 when Abilis, together with the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and International Disability Alliance (IDA) organized the global meeting of the GLAD network to be held in Helsinki. Preparations for the event, that took place in the House of Estates from January 31 to February 2, 2018, started in August-September 2017.

Abilis Consulting, founded in autumn 2016, carried out three assignments, of which two were still in progress in the beginning of 2018. A survey of training needs for Kyrgyz social workers to improve disability inclusion, conducted in early 2017, led to new cooperation with the National Institute for Health and Welfare. A further special assignment started in fall 2017 focusing on the training of university lecturers, the provision of teaching material and the preparation of maternity packages for mothers with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities. This involves the E.U. funded Social Protection System (SPS) and cooperation with the E.U. Technical Assistance programme and the work is due to completion in spring 2018. In November 2017 Abilis Consulting began the assessment of Fida International's East African programme. The assessment report was submitted at the end of January 2018. Abilis Consulting produced a profit of 2,372 euros for the period.

The Foundation's Board convened six times during the year. In addition to financial decisions and general administration, the Board upgraded the Foundation's rules and financial regulations and established environmental policy guidelines for the activities. The



Board actively monitored the implementation of the CSO3 evaluation and later in the year produced a response to the conclusions and recommendations received. The Board also outlined measures to help the Foundation improve its contribution and to seek funding outside Finland.

Owing to the nature of the Foundation, no support or financial benefits are granted to related parties; the funding is targeted to disabled people's organizations in developing countries. This is clearly stated in the Foundation's related party policy. No financial agreements have been made with related parties. In addition to meeting fees (1,170 euros), the Foundation's founder/Chairman was paid a remuneration of 3,780 euros for his disabled diplomacy work and 2,814 euros for travel expenses including per diem allowance. Travel expenses were paid according to the Foundation's travel compensation rules and actual expenses. The Members of the Board were paid regular meeting fees, 7,525 euros in total (including the fee paid to the Chairman). Salaries and remunerations paid to the Foundation's management (Board and Executive Director) totalled 68,376 euros. Auditor fees amounted to 9,052 euros.

Abilis Foundation had 11 regular employees in 2017. Four of them worked part-time throughout the year and three for a part of the year. The personnel were paid remunerations in the form of salary, benefits in kind and per diem allowances in compliance with the regulations applicable in Finland and in compliance with the Foundation's approved payroll system and personnel policy rules. The financial statements were audited by Registered Accountants Kristian Seemer and Anssi Pietiläinen. Deputy Auditors were Kari Mikkola (Registered Accountant) and Tero Paukku (Authorized Public Accountant). The financial statements were prepared by Administer Oy and the electronic financial management system employed was eFina. The tool for project management was the Arkisto database (Salesforce).

Abilis Foundation continued to adjust its activities to correspond to the funding granted for 2017 (1,750,000 euros). The austerity measures launched in autumn 2015 have been successful (support carried over 698,966 euros) and the amount at the Foundation's disposal was 2,448,966 euros. Expenses for regular activities amounted to 2,155,997 euros. The support paid to organizations of persons with disabilities in developing countries was 1,357,358 euros. Information expenses were 65,307 euros, project management expenses 466,679 euros and administrative expenses 174,292 euros. The amount used for the initiative Disability Diplomacy on Human Rights was 92,359 euros. The remaining government support to be carried over was 292,970 euros. This will secure the Foundation's activities in early 2018 in anticipation of a decision about new government funding. The Foundation's surplus for the year was 38,062 euros and Group surplus was 40,434 euros.

2018 is an important year for the Foundation. The 20th Anniversary will start a new four-year funding period. In 2018, the results and impacts of 20 years of work will be celebrated, programme approach will be further developed, visibility will be improved and intensive cooperation with other actors will continue. New funding channels would be an important addition to the Foundation's opportunities to support disabled people's organizations in developing countries at the volume of earlier years. This is what Abilis Foundation is working for using all the elements and tools of expertise developed over the past years.