Annual Report 2025

Abilis FOUNDATION



Photo: Jussi Hellsten

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Photo: Jussi Hellsten



Riina Paasio

Executive Director of Abilis Foundation

“Of all our strong results, one stands out in particular: in 84% of our new projects, advancing the rights and status of women and girls was identified as a primary or secondary objective. This is an achievement we can be proud of, just as we can be proud of Abilis’s global team, whose commitment and hard work have made these results possible.”

About the Abilis Foundation

The Abilis Foundation is a Finnish foundation established in 1998 that supports the human rights, equality and independent living of persons with disabilities in developing countries. It works by providing funding for organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD), mainstreaming disability inclusion and policy dialogue.

The Foundation's core activity is funding small, high-quality projects designed and implemented by OPDs currently in ten programme countries. These grants, typically €5,000–15,000, support the self-advocacy, participation and capacity strengthening of these organisations, with a focus on grassroots organisations.

The Foundation is mainly funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and donations. Abilis Consulting, operating under the Abilis Foundation, also contributes to financing the activities by providing consultancy services related to disability inclusion, development and human rights issues.



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2025 at a Glance

Programme Overview

In 2025, the fourth year of the 2022–2025 programme period, Abilis operated in ten programme countries: Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Ukraine, Uganda and Vietnam. The programme supported organisations of persons with disabilities to advance inclusion, participation and human rights through locally led initiatives. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) continued to guide programme implementation across all countries.

Nothing About Us Without Us

The principle of ownership by persons with disabilities remained central throughout the programme. Abilis continued to strengthen local leadership and support grassroots organisations of persons with disabilities in advocating for their rights and leading change in their communities

132
New Projects Approved

18,485
Direct Project Participants

84%
Projects Advancing the Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities

174
Projects Completed

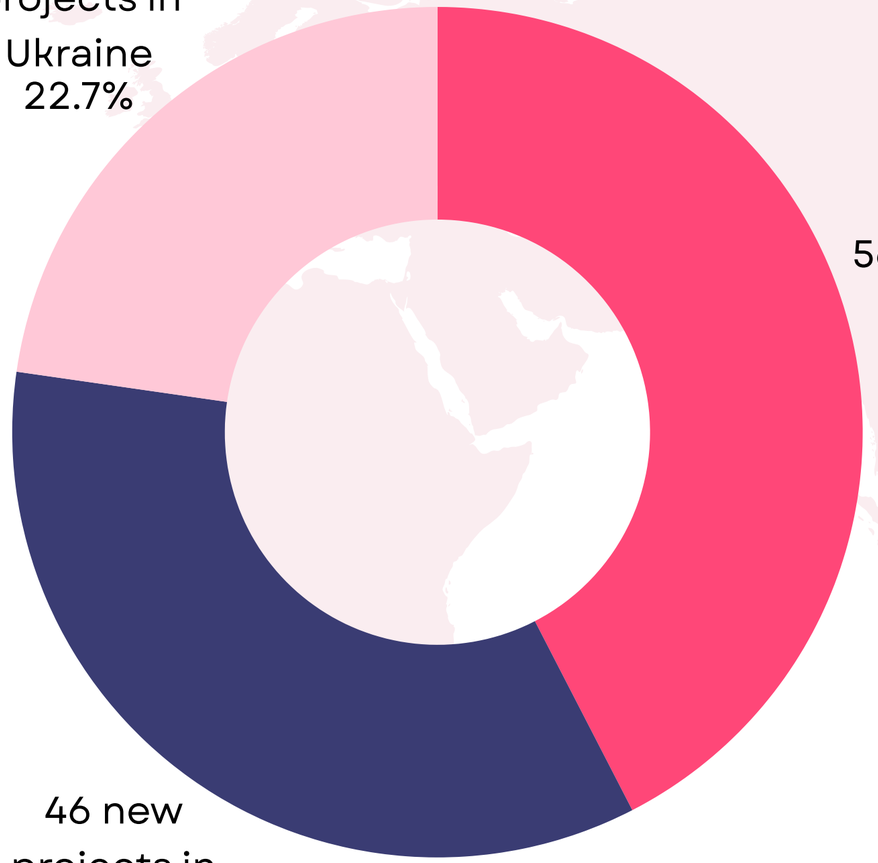
€1,445,704
Total Grant Funding

€9,281
Average Grant Amount

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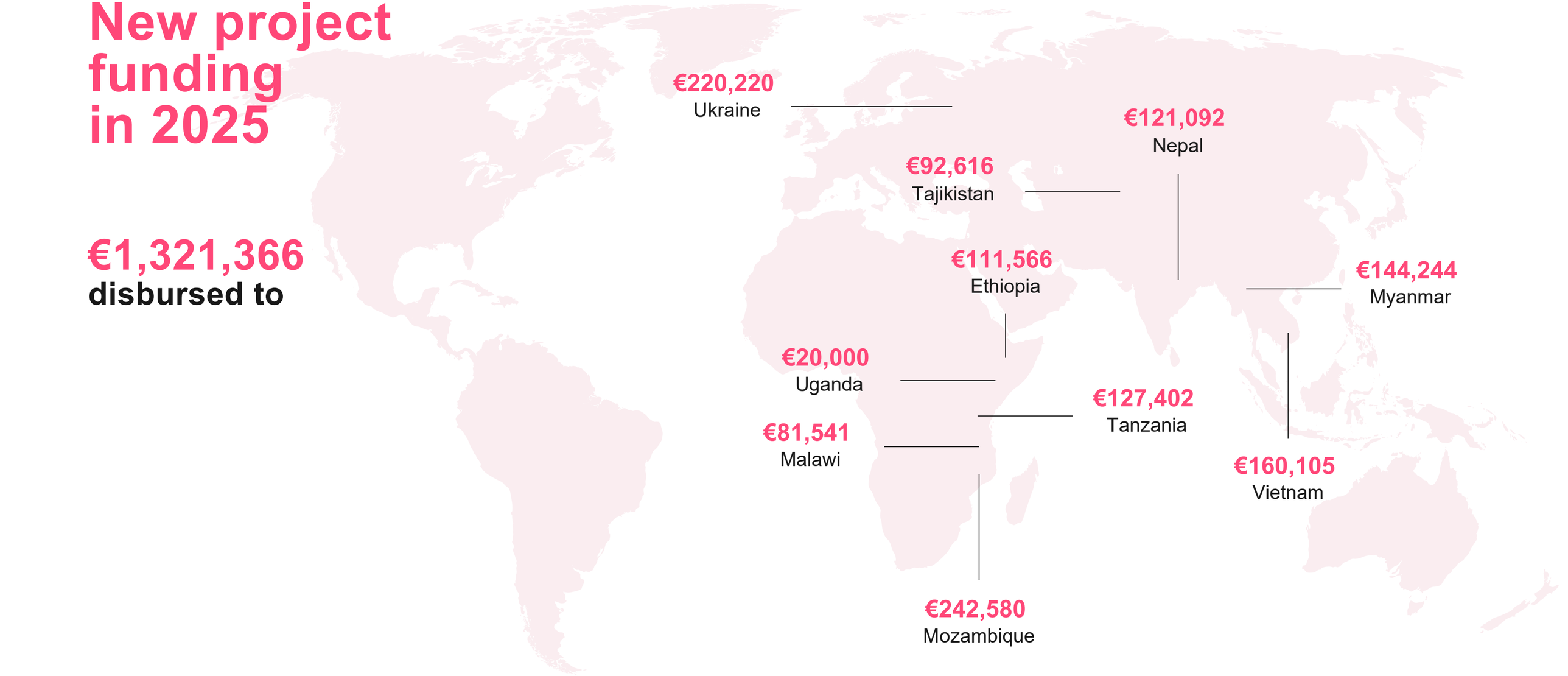
Projects in 2025

132
new projects



New project funding in 2025

€1,321,366
disbursed to



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Results Across Focus Areas

In its work, Abilis Foundation specifically focuses on:

Stronger organisations of persons with disabilities

Stronger disability inclusion

Rights of women and girls with disabilities

Persons with disabilities' right to decent work and livelihoods

Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management



Photo: Jussi Hellsten

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Stronger organisations of persons with disabilities

- 100% of completed projects strengthened the capacity and expertise of organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).
- OPDs increased their ability to advocate for disability rights, engage with duty-bearers, and participate in democratic processes.
- OPDs contributed to monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), including through shadow reporting processes.
- In several countries, Abilis country staff supported or led CRPD shadow reporting and strengthened collaboration between OPDs and key stakeholders.



Photo: Jussi Hellsten

Stronger disability inclusion

- 100% of completed projects promoted disability inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities.
- Advocacy, communications, and project activities increased awareness of disability rights and reduced stigma and discrimination.
- Country coordinators actively engaged in policy dialogue, legislative processes, and stakeholder networks to advance disability inclusion.
- An evaluation completed in 2025 confirmed that the programme successfully reached a diverse range of organisations of persons with disabilities.
- Progress was made in implementing the CRPD, and dialogue between OPDs and national-level duty-bearers increased in several programme countries.



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Rights of women and girls with disabilities

- Improving the status of women and girls with disabilities was a primary or secondary objective in 84% of completed projects.
- Promoting gender equality was a primary or secondary objective in 86% of completed projects.
- 38% of completed projects specifically focused on advancing the rights and status of women and girls with disabilities.
- At least 50% of project participants were women or girls, ensuring equal opportunities for participation.
- Projects supported peer groups, self-help groups, local associations, and organisations of women with disabilities.
- Special attention was given to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), safeguarding, and addressing discriminatory attitudes.



Photo: Jussi Hellsten

Persons with disabilities' right to decent work and livelihoods

- Approximately 45% of completed projects contributed to improving livelihoods and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Livelihood initiatives increased employment opportunities and economic independence for persons with disabilities.
- Supported activities helped persons with disabilities strengthen their position within their families and communities.
- Women and girls with disabilities were supported to improve their livelihoods, living conditions, and resilience.



Photo: Jussi Hellsten

Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management

- 9 disability-inclusive DRR projects were launched in Myanmar (6) and Nepal (3).
- 14 OPDs were trained on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness.
- At least 323 persons with disabilities participated in DRR training activities.
- 80% of completed DRR projects (32 of 40) involved collaboration between OPDs and disaster management stakeholders.
- Collaboration strengthened disability inclusion in local preparedness and emergency planning.
- 53% of collaborating projects were implemented by cross-disability OPDs, 41% by disability-specific OPDs and 6% by women-focused OPDs.



Photo: Jussi Hellsten

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Country-Level Results

Ethiopia

The Ethiopia Country Programme continued to strengthen grassroots organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), with a particular focus on organisations led by women with disabilities. In cooperation with EWDNA (Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association), the programme supported **63** OPDs through project preparation, implementation support and capacity-building activities. During the year, **46** applications were received and **10** projects approved in different sizes. Nine projects were successfully completed.

Capacity-building efforts focused on organisational governance, leadership, gender equality, collaboration, sales and marketing. Through **52** monitoring and support visits across Addis Ababa, Amhara and Oromia, the programme provided technical guidance on project management, budgeting and reporting, strengthening the operational capacity and sustainability of OPDs.

The programme also promoted cooperation between OPDs, public authorities and other stakeholders through advocacy events, stakeholder meetings and awareness-raising activities. These efforts strengthened the role of OPDs in local development processes and decision-making. Funded projects combined livelihood support, disability rights advocacy and accessibility initiatives, while increasing the participation of women with disabilities in community leadership and decision-making.



Photo: Otso Z. Laxenius

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Mozambique

The Mozambique Country Programme continued to promote disability inclusion, strengthen organisations of persons with disabilities and support the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities across Maputo, Zambézia, Inhambane and Tete provinces.

Nineteen new projects were launched with a total allocation of €242,580, while **20** projects were completed, reaching **1,085** direct project participants, more than half of whom were women and girls. Capacity-building activities included financial management training and workshops addressing climate change and community resilience.

The programme increased the visibility and recognition of persons with disabilities and their organisations among communities and duty-bearers. Women with disabilities designed and implemented initiatives promoting their rights and economic empowerment, while OPDs strengthened their role in local advocacy and community development.



Photo: Jussi Hellsten

Myanmar

The Myanmar Country Programme strengthened organisations of persons with disabilities, promoted disability awareness and women's participation, supported livelihoods and responded to the growing humanitarian needs caused by armed conflict and natural disasters.

During the year, **14** new projects were launched with a total allocation of €149,571, benefiting an estimated **1,409** direct project participants and **3,851** indirect project participants. Women and girls represented approximately 60% of all direct project participants. Five projects were completed, reaching **631** direct project participants and **1,893** indirect project participants.

Capacity building remained a key priority. **Thirteen** training sessions strengthened the leadership and management skills of **43** OPD leaders, including **31** women leaders. In response to ongoing emergencies, **six** resilience projects were launched, and additional funding was mobilised following the March 2025 earthquake. Together with Fida, the programme also provided support to persons with disabilities affected by conflict and flooding in Bago Region.



Nepal

The Nepal Country Programme continued to strengthen organisations of persons with disabilities, promote the participation of women with disabilities and support the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. Particular attention was given to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), while programme implementation continued despite delays caused by political transition and social unrest.

During the year, **12** new projects were launched with a total allocation of €97,424, reaching an estimated **2,493** direct project participants and **10,381** indirect project participants. Women and girls accounted for 51% of direct project participants. In addition, **17** projects were completed, benefiting 3,791 direct participants and an estimated 116,603 indirect project participants.

Capacity-building activities strengthened the skills of OPDs in project management, advocacy, disaster risk reduction, financial management and disability rights. The programme also supported disability-inclusive SRHR training for health professionals. Advocacy efforts contributed to increased engagement between OPDs and public authorities. Notably, the Government of Gandaki Province committed to adopting a provincial disability policy following dialogue facilitated by Abilis Nepal and OPD representatives.



Photo: Abilis

Tajikistan

The Tajikistan Country Programme focused on strengthening district-level organisations of persons with disabilities, supporting livelihoods and economic empowerment, and promoting the participation of women with disabilities.

During the year, **15** project proposals were assessed and **eight** grants approved with a total allocation of €87,616. **Two** projects were completed, reaching **60** direct project participants and 246 indirect project participants. The funded projects focused on strengthening OPD capacity, promoting economic empowerment and addressing gender-related disability issues.

Capacity-building and implementation support remained central to the programme. A total of **25** monitoring and follow-up visits were conducted to **17** OPDs, providing practical guidance and strengthening project implementation and organisational management.

The programme also promoted dialogue on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) through regional advocacy efforts and continued cooperation with local authorities, decision-makers and civil society actors.



Photo: Abilis

Tanzania

The Tanzania Country Programme continued to advance disability inclusion and economic empowerment in Arusha, Kilimanjaro and Dodoma, with a particular focus on women with disabilities and leadership development in rural areas.

The programme launched 11 new projects with a total allocation of €108,629, expected to reach **300** direct project participants and **11,440** indirect project participants. **Sixteen** projects were completed during the year, benefiting **1,344** direct project participants and **2,900** indirect project participants.

The programme strengthened the capacity of OPDs, expanded livelihood opportunities and promoted human rights, democratic participation and inclusion at community level. Particular attention was given to strengthening the leadership, participation and economic independence of women with disabilities. As a result, many women reported increased income, greater recognition within their communities and improved opportunities to support their families. Several women with disabilities also secured employment within government structures.

While national elections created some implementation challenges, they also opened new opportunities for political participation by persons with disabilities.



Photo: Abilis

Uganda

The Uganda Country Programme focused on strengthening grassroots organisations of persons with disabilities through grants, monitoring, capacity building and advocacy support.

The programme processed **30** grant applications and approved **two** new regular grants. During the year, **10** progress reports and **21** final reports were reviewed, while five monitoring and assessment missions covered **51** projects and organisations of persons with disabilities. Monitoring visits provided practical support on project implementation, safeguarding, organisational development and financial management.

The programme promoted awareness of disability rights and Abilis funding opportunities while maintaining active cooperation with government institutions, disability funders and development partners. Through funded livelihood and capacity-building initiatives, persons with disabilities increased their participation in community life and strengthened opportunities for income generation and self-reliance.



Photo: Abilis

Ukraine

The Ukraine Country Programme focused on promoting the social inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities and their families, including internally displaced persons and war veterans. The programme supported grassroots organisations providing services, psychosocial support and opportunities for participation during the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Three regional application rounds were organised during the year, resulting in **115** applications received and **37** approved projects with a total allocation of €288,422. Programme support reached **2,813** direct project participants and **57,388** indirect project participants. In addition, advisory support was provided to **406** organisations and **65** monitoring and pre-appraisal visits were conducted.

Capacity-building activities strengthened the skills of organisations in fundraising, project management, partnership development and teamwork. Cooperation with local authorities, humanitarian actors and civil society organisations continued to expand through stakeholder meetings, webinars and networking events. The programme also increased accessibility by providing sign language interpretation in trainings and webinars, ensuring broader participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations.



Photo: Abilis

Vietnam

The Vietnam Country Programme continued to strengthen organisations of persons with disabilities, support livelihood opportunities and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Hanoi, Hai Duong, Ha Giang, Nam Dinh and Da Nang.

During the year, **13** new projects were launched with a total allocation of €106,823, while **35** projects were successfully completed. Capacity-building support included training on organisational development, financial management and coaching for OPDs within the programme areas.

The programme worked closely with local stakeholders to promote disability inclusion and strengthen support for OPDs at community level. Significant government administrative reforms affected the operating environment, as several target provinces were merged and some district-level OPDs were restructured or dissolved. In response, the programme adapted its approaches and intensified advocacy efforts to ensure continued recognition, participation and support for organisations of persons with disabilities throughout the transition process.



Together towards
a more inclusive future.

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