



Results-Based Management

at Abilis Foundation



Abilis country coordinator Beatrice Nafuna at work in Uganda. New results chain and budget under planning.

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The purpose of this guide is to explain what Results-Based Management (RBM) means in the work of Abilis Foundation and to demonstrate the processes and tools Abilis uses for applying a RBM approach in practice.

RBM is a tool for learning, making better informed decisions and becoming more effective in development cooperation work



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1

Definition of results-based management at Abilis Foundation

WHAT?

In the work of Abilis Foundation, Results-Based Management (RBM) is used as an organisational approach to manage its global programme. The aim of RBM is to achieve the results set for the programme, i.e. outputs, outcomes and impact.

WHY?

Abilis uses RBM to increase the quality and effectiveness of its development aid activities and to achieve the set results.

HOW?

In practice, RBM means that the information on results, collected through monitoring and evaluation, is used to make evidence-based decisions. The plans are then adjusted according to decisions and timely corrective measures taken to achieve the set results in the programme.

RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT PROCESS



Children in Sierra Leone. Abilis is accountable for the results it delivers and how it uses its resources – not only for its donors, but to all stakeholders including project participants at grassroots level.



STRUCTURE OF THE ABILIS GLOBAL PROGRAMME. RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT APPLIES TO ALL LEVELS AND ALL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION ACTIVITIES AT ABILIS FOUNDATION.

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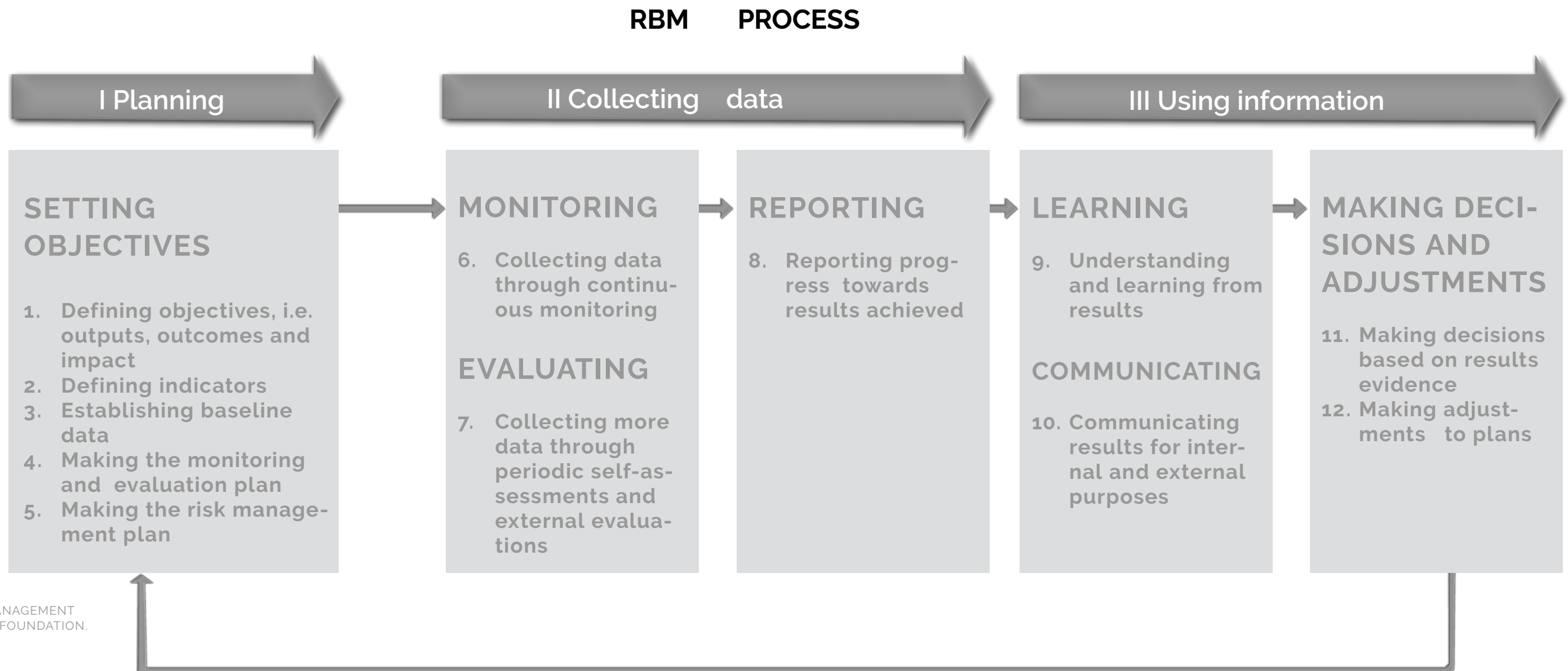
Results-based management process

RBM process at Abilis Foundation consists of three phases:

I **PLANNING** is where intended results are defined with the given funding. A vision is set for the programme in response to a problem, objectives are defined as intended results, risks analysed and resource needs determined.

II **COLLECTING DATA** is where during the programme implementation data of the progress of projects and other activities are collected and reported.

III **USING INFORMATION** is where learning and communication take place. Results are discussed, understood and disseminated, decisions to make adjustments are made.



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Guiding principles of result-based management

Abilis Foundation has five guiding principles for Results-Based Management. These principles guide all Abilis work in programme countries and in Finland.

1. Participation and ownership

Abilis global programme and the funded projects are based on national priorities, strategies and local needs. The active participation of persons with disabilities is the key principle in Abilis work. Persons with disabilities have the primary responsibility for their own development. In an Abilis funded project they plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their own projects. Abilis has deliberately selected grant-making as a main method for ensuring ownership and full participation of persons with disabilities. This is also how tangible results are achieved.

2. Transparency

Abilis enhances open communication

and sharing of information, from top down and from bottom up, among its stakeholders. All grassroots groups, Abilis representatives at country offices, staff in headquarters, donors and other partners have access to relevant information concerning the programme and the projects, i.e. programme and project documents, progress reports and budgets. The information is available on time and in an accessible language and format to all stakeholders.

3. Accountability

In addition to its function as a management tool, RBM is also considered as an accountability tool in Abilis Foundation. Abilis is accountable for the results it delivers and how it uses its resources, not only for its donors, but to all its stakeholders. By demonstrating results through regular reporting



Results-Based Management places priority on achieving results.

One of the outcomes in Abilis Foundation's global programme is socially empowered people with disabilities like Diana Patricia Botero Ortiz from Colombia.



and communications to donors, wide public and partners, Abilis gains legitimacy and credibility for its work.

4. Results management culture

Abilis supports and fosters a results management culture within the organisation by continuously developing effective leadership in the organisation, strengthening learning culture among leadership and staff, and enhancing transparency and open communications in the programme and in the projects.

5. Sustainability

Sustainability is ensured in the Abilis programme by true ownership of the projects and their results by persons with disabilities themselves. Multifaceted capacity building of project participants is an integral part of all projects. Sustainability plans are defined in the global programme and in all Abilis funded projects.

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Results-based management in practice

This chapter introduces how Abilis Foundation implements RBM in practice and the key tools Abilis uses.



1. Defining objectives, i.e. outputs, outcomes, impact

In this phase, a vision for the programme is set out. Impact, outcomes and outputs are defined as intended results, a monitoring and evaluation plan is made, and risks analyzed.

SETTING OBJECTIVES

1. Defining objectives, i.e. outputs, outcomes and impact
2. Defining indicators
3. Establishing baseline data
4. Making the monitoring and evaluation plan
5. Making the risk management plan

SETTING OBJECTIVES IN THE RBM PROCESS.



HOW?

Abilis has defined objectives (outputs, outcomes and impact) for the global programme in its results framework. At country level, Abilis representatives select objectives from the global programme for country programmes. At the project level, project participants define own project objectives in project applications. Objectives of the approved projects contribute to country programmes, and ultimately to the global programme.

Abilis uses the following tools to define the objectives in programme planning:

- Analysis of operating environments (including stakeholder analysis, gender analysis and human rights analysis), presented in Country Profile Papers
- Theory of Change
- Results Chain
- Results framework

WHAT?

Objectives, which are called results in RMB, is a positive change that is expected to see as a result of the work in the project or in the programme, e.g. change in people's skills, behavior, attitudes or practices. Objectives describe the changes the project or the programme wants to achieve.

WHY?

Objectives give a common understanding for project management of where the work is aimed. Objectives frame the work and give an overall picture of its targets at one glance. When objectives are clearly defined, it increases the chances of achieving them.

2. Defining indicators

WHAT?

Indicator is a monitoring tool that measures the progress against the set objective. Indicator identifies what to measure and what data to collect.

WHY?

Indicators provide data to show changes in the project or in the programme. Indicators tell whether the project or programme is making progress.

HOW?

Abilis has defined output, outcome and impact indicators for its global programme. Indicators consist of both quantitative and qualitative indicators. The same indicators apply to the country programmes and projects.



Objectives and indicators in the Abilis Global Programme are SMART-Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound

A project participant Frehiwiot Abebe working at her own kiosk in Ethiopia. One of the outcomes in Abilis Foundation's global programme is economically empowered people with disabilities.

OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS
Outcomes	
3. PWD are economically empowered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increased number of project participants who manage their own finances o Increased number of project participants who are self-employed or employed
Outputs	
3.1 PWD's technical skills on IGA are improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increased number and types of IGA trainings & number of participants in trainings (M/F) o Increased number of project participants received facilitation on running businesses (M/F)

EXAMPLE OF INDICATORS FOR OUTCOME 3 AND OUTPUT 3.1 IN THE ABILIS GLOBAL PROGRAMME.
IGA = INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES.

3. Establishing baseline data

WHAT?

Baseline is the initial data collected in the beginning of the project and programme, to serve as basis for comparison with the data later collected. Information is collected before any activities start, and then later again to see the difference.

WHY?

The progress of the projects and programme is measured against the baseline data. Without the baseline data, it is impossible to measure whether the wanted changes are happening.

HOW?

Baseline data against all indicators is collected in Abilis monitoring and evaluation framework in the beginning of the projects and programme from the following documents:

- Country profile papers
- Project applications
- Field assessment forms
- Country programmes and projects.

Project Application Form – Regular Grant									
2.5.	Please fill in the numbers describing your organisation/group today.								
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>No.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Number of members</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of active members</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of funding sources (donors, own funding)</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		No.	Number of members		Number of active members		Number of funding sources (donors, own funding)	
	No.								
Number of members									
Number of active members									
Number of funding sources (donors, own funding)									
Note: if you do not understand one of the items above, you can review the guidelines at the end of this form for filling the application form.									

EXAMPLE OF A QUESTION IN A PROJECT APPLICATION FORM. IDENTICAL QUESTIONS ARE FIRST ASKED IN THE PROJECT APPLICATION AND LATER IN THE FINAL REPORT. A BASELINE IS THUS ESTABLISHED BEFORE THE PROJECT STARTS. AT THE END OF THE PROJECT WHEN THE SAME QUESTIONS ARE ASKED AGAIN, THE ANSWERS CAN BE THEN COMPARED AND THE CHANGE MEASURED.

II Collecting data

In this phase, data from the field is collected, analysed and reported. Data is then ready to be used for decision-making and further actions.

MONITORING

6. Collecting data through continuous monitoring

MONITORING IN THE RBM PROCESS.

6. Collecting data through continuous monitoring

WHAT?

In monitoring, data is collected as an ongoing process during the project and programme implementation. Indicators in the results framework specify what data to collect. The primary focus in monitoring should be on outputs and outcomes, not on activities.

Monitoring is carried out as part of ongoing activities and is on the responsibility of staff implementing the programme. Monitoring establishes a track record that outcomes are happening.

WHY?

Monitoring is carried out to track progress of results and resources consumed, and establishing the basis for preparing an annual report. Monitoring is important in order to determine whether the intended results, as established in the planning phase, are on track to being achieved, and to detect and correct problems during implementation. Data is also collected for documentation and evaluation purposes.

HOW?

Monitoring data is collected systematically and consistently throughout the year. Data is collected from projects by Abilis local staff in programme countries, and Abilis country coordinators and Board members during the annual monitoring trips. In addition to data against indicators, data on successes, challenges and lessons learnt from projects is collected. In advocacy and communications activities at global level, data is collected by Abilis headquarters staff. Changes in the operating environment are also monitored and risks assessed.

Abilis uses the following methods in data collection:

- Interviews of project participants
- Questionnaires for project participants
- Focus groups of project participants
- Success stories from projects
- Field visits in projects
- Case studies from projects
- Observation during field visits
- Data collection tools in social media
- Country statistics of programme countries.

The aim of monitoring is to help us to know whether the results we want to achieve are on course to be achieved!



Abilis programme coordinator Rea Konttinen discussing about a project visit with the country office staff during an annual monitoring trip in Vietnam.

EVALUATING

7. Collecting more data through periodic self-assessments and external evaluations

EVALUATION IN THE RBM PROCESS.

REPORTING

8. Reporting progress towards results achieved

REPORTING IN THE RBM PROCESS.

7. Collecting more data through periodic self-assessments and external evaluations

WHAT?

In evaluations, more data is collected and overall performance of the project or programme is assessed. Evaluations are periodic and can be internal or external, e.g. self-assessments, internal reviews or external evaluations.

WHY?

Evaluations fill the information gaps and complement the information that is already gathered through monitoring.

Evaluations are an important tool for joint learning with partners and other stakeholders, offering a platform for dialogue, cooperation and exchange. Having the benefit for implementing partners to review together what results have actually been attained, evaluation provides a stronger basis to draw conclusions about the true picture of the aid activities and to determine what adjustments need to be made for further progress, e.g. on Abilis working practices and tools, including funding criteria.

HOW?

Abilis carries out both internal and external evaluations in its programme, and are described in the monitoring and evaluation plan. Internal evaluations are self-assessments conducted regularly in each Abilis country. They are facilitated by country coordinators and cover typically country in question or specific theme at a time. External evaluations are carried out by independent consultants. Abilis global programme is evaluated externally once during the programme phase.

8. Reporting progress towards results achieved

WHAT?

Reporting is writing about activities, outputs and outcomes in the given reporting templates, having the focus on results. The basic reporting on indicators is a simple and straightforward procedure: it is recording information after the collection of data. Assessing progress is comparing actual results observed, using collected data as evidence, to the intended results established in the planning phase.

WHY?

Reports provide a basis for joint discussion, learning and decision-making as reports gather together, provide analysis and interpretation for data. Reports also document and store the evidence, ready to be used for evaluation.

HOW?

Abilis reports its results according to its monitoring and evaluation plan. At project and country levels, reporting is mainly simply recording information in the reports. At global level the progress of the programme is assessed and the data analysed in annual reports. It is where the results are understood and interpreted; what do the results mean and why these changes have happened or have not happened in peoples' lives.

Abilis reports its results using the following monitoring and reporting templates:

- Project application
- Mid-term report
- Final report
- Field assessment form
- Annual report



DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING TEMPLATES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS IN THE ABILIS GLOBAL PROGRAMME.

III Using information

In this phase, learning and action take place. Results gained from monitoring and evaluation are reflected and understood, communicated, and necessary adjustments to plans are made.

LEARNING

9. Understanding and learning from results

LEARNING IN THE RBM PROCESS.

9. Understanding and learning from results

WHAT?

Results are used for understanding and learning of what changes have happened in peoples' lives, why these changes have happened, and how we should react to these changes.

Learning takes place during all RBM process phases from planning, collecting data and using information. Learning happens during setting the objectives, during monitoring and evaluation, when writing and reading reports, and when discussing and sharing information jointly among the staff.

WHY?

It is essential to learn what works and what does not work in the projects or in programme in order to know what changes need to be done to achieve the set results. Learning from both successes and failures is important. With balanced and right information, it is possible to make evidence-based decisions and thus right changes in the plans. Learning is important for ongoing and future work.

HOW?

Abilis seeks to be a learning organisation and supports a learning culture that bases on participatory learning and dialogue. Abilis promotes learning in its organisation in the following ways:

- Knowledge and information on projects is shared on a daily basis among project coordinators in Abilis teams (Africa, Asia and Cosmos) and in monthly office meetings with all staff
- Joint learning with programme partners takes place in regular skype meetings and during the field trips

- Learning visits are organized between local staff in programme countries annually
- All staff receive continuous thematic training
- Abilis staff reflect on and assess the programme performance and analyse results in annual staff development days
- The Abilis Board discusses proposals and make decisions jointly in bi-monthly board meetings
- Quality assurance mechanism presents funding criteria and gives definitions for quality work
- The programme is actively developed during the programme funding period through updating templates and manuals, creating new guidance and policies, all to support effective programme implementation.

In learning and decision making we can fix what is not working, and learn from what is working



Learning from successes and challenges from past year together with partners in Kyrgyzstan. Abilis supports and fosters a results management culture within the organisation by continuously strengthening learning culture among staff.

COMMUNICATING

10. Communicating results for internal and external purposes

COMMUNICATING IN THE RBM PROCESS.

HOW?

Abilis has a communications plan which is followed for reporting results. Target groups are stakeholders at the grass-roots level, partners and other stakeholders including donors and wider public. Abilis communicates its results in the following main channels:

- Website
- Social media, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
- Articles and newspapers in e.g. magazines
- Newsletter

10. Communicating results for internal and external purposes

WHAT?

Results are used for communication. Abilis communicates the results it has achieved in the programme to its stakeholders and wider public.

WHY?

Results are communicated to demonstrate achievements and effectiveness of the work, and to show how the money is used. Communication is important for enhancing transparency in Abilis Foundation. Greater transparency on how resources are used improves public understanding and trust in development cooperation in general.



Abilis promotes open communication and sharing of information among all stakeholders

Abilis communication secretary Katja Vis taking photographs from project results in Tanzania, for further use in Abilis communications.

MAKING DECISIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS

- 11. Making decisions based on results evidence
- 12. Making adjustments to plans

MAKING DECISIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS IN THE RBM PROCESS.

11. Making decisions based on evidence of results

WHAT?

Results are used for decision-making. Evidence-based decisions are made from the results, through information gained in monitoring and evaluating, i.e. from the reports but also what has been learnt from the results jointly. The status of the programme and what has been achieved is agreed on, and what adjustments to plans, if any, are needed.

HOW?

In country and global levels decisions are made according to the rules of procedure and rules of financial management of Abilis Foundation. The rules describe the procedures of decision-making and its responsibilities.

RBM enables Abilis to learn, focus on and achieve the set results



Executive directors Marjo Heinonen from Finland and Saida Inoyatova from Tajikistan making decisions on country programme.

12. Making adjustments to plans

WHAT?

Decisions are put into action. Activities are changed, added or removed and resources reallocated to correspond to lessons learnt on what works and what does not work in the programme.

HOW?

Jointly agreed adjustments are made to plans and budgets annually during country programming and documented in annual country programmes. Country programmes are activity plans guiding the implementation. In global programme, adjustments are made in country and project allocations mainly.

WHY?

Adjustments are made to correct the course of the project towards the set objectives. As said earlier, the aim in the Results-Based Management is to achieve the set objectives. It means that some changes are usually needed to projects and programme during implementation. Otherwise the objectives will not be met when the programme comes to end.



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