

Approved by the Board  
April 2020

***RESULT  
REPORT  
2019***

***ABILIS GLOBAL  
PROGRAMME***

Abilis Foundation

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| BoLSA  | Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs                                   |
| CO     | Country Office (of Abilis Foundation)                                |
| CRPD   | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities                |
| DPO    | Organization of persons with disabilities                            |
| EDF    | European Disability Forum  |
| FCA    | Finn Church Aid  |
| FDP    | Finnish Disability partnership                                       |
| FEE    | Finnish Environment Education Association                            |
| FRC    | Finnish Red Cross  |
| FTF    | Fair Trade Finland   |
| HQ     | Headquarters (of Abilis Foundation)                                  |
| HRBA   | Human Rights-based Approach  |
| IASC   | Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action)       |
| INEE   | Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies                    |
| MEP    | Member of European Parliament  |
| MFA    | Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland                              |
| MSF    | Doctors Without Borders  |
| NGO    | Non-governmental Organization  |
| NLCF   | The National Lottery Community Fund                                  |
| PO     | Partner Organization (of Abilis Foundation)                          |
| RBM    | Result-based management  |
| SCF    | Save the Children Finland  |
| SDGs   | Sustainable Development Goals  |
| SHG    | Self-Help group  |
| ToC    | Theory of Change   |
| UNCRPD | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |

## Yhteenveto suomeksi

Abilis-säätiö toteutti vuonna 2019 globaalia ohjelmaa käynnissä olevan nelivuotisen rahoituskauden ja vuosisuunnitelman mukaisesti. Globaali ohjelma koostuu alaohjelmista, joista keskeiset ovat maaohjelmat ja hauraiden maiden alaohjelma. Projektirahoitukset kanavoitiin maaohjelmien alla. Lisäksi tiedotus- ja kehitysviestintä sekä vaikuttamistyö ja vammaisdiplomatia muodostivat omat alaohjelmansa.

Säätiön maaohjelmia toteutettiin seuraavissa maissa Aasiassa: Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam ja Tadžikistan sekä Afrikassa: Etiopia, Tansania ja Uganda. Maaohjelmien alasarjoja jatkui Kirgisiassa ja Mosambikissa. Maaohjelmien ja avustustoiminnan toteutuksessa keskeisinä toimijoina olivat joko nimetyt kumppanijärjestöt tai säätiön perustama maatoimisto.

Vuoden aikana säätiön tukea sai yli 300 vammaisjärjestöjen projektia. Säätiö käsitteli vuoden aikana noin 350 hakemusta. Saapuneista hakemuksista 165 hyväksyttiin rahoitettavaksi ja 116 hakemusta hylättiin. Säätiön projektirahoituksesta hyötyi aktiivisesti vuonna 2019 yhteensä 28 065 vammaista henkilöä. Heistä yli puolet (noin 54 %) oli vammaisia tyttöjä ja naisia. Tiedotuskampanjoiden ja tapahtumien kautta yli kolme miljoonaa ihmistä hyötyi säätiön avustustoiminnasta.

Avustustoiminnassa ja projektien sisällöissä näkyi selkeästi teemat, jotka oli valittu maaohjelmien keskiöön. Maittain tarkasteltuna kaikki uudet projektit linkittyivät maaohjelmiin ja pidemmän aikavälin tavoitteisiin, joita säätiön avustustoiminnan kautta halutaan saavuttaa. Päälinjat olivat samat myös päättyneiden projektien osalta, vaikka ne olivat käynnistyneet ennen nykyistä rahoituskautta (vuosina 2014-2017). Säätiön kanavoimasta tuesta yli puolet (53 %) kohdistui vammaisten ihmisten työllistymistä ja toimeentulon hankintaa edistäneisiin projekteihin. Merkittävä tuki (16 %) kanavoitiin perustaitojen ja -opetuksen edistämiseen ja ammatillisen koulutuksen tarjoamiseen. Reilu viidennes (22 %) säätiön tukemista projekteista kohdentui vammaisten henkilöiden ja erityisesti vammaisten naisten ihmisoikeuksien ja yhteiskunnallisen osallistumisen ja järjestötoiminnan edistämiseen. Säätiön strateginen painopiste, vammaisten tyttöjen ja naisten aseman ja oikeuksien edistäminen, näkyi projekteissa selkeästi. Projekteista 95 % painotti sukupuolten välistä tasa-arvoa joko pää- tai osatavoitteenaan.

Säätiö hyväksyi vuonna 2019 yhteensä 114 loppuraporttia. Päättyneiden projektien tulokset olivat linjassa säätiön strategisten painopisteiden ja maaohjelmien tavoitteiden kanssa. Säätiön tulosmatriisiin ja indikaattoreiden mukaisesti esitettynä keskeiset tulokset olivat:

### **Tulos 1: Yhteiskunnallisesti vahvistuneet vammaisjärjestöt**

Säätiön projektirahoitusta annettiin vain vammaisten omille ryhmille ja yhdistyksille, jotka vastaavat projektin suunnittelusta, toteutuksesta ja raportoinnista. Koko projektisykli eri tehtävineen ja yhteistyö projektin toteuttamiseksi vahvisti vammaisjärjestöjä.

- Yhteisön jäsenten tietoisuus vammaisuudesta vahvistui ja vammaisten ihmisten kokema syrjintä laski merkittävästi. Vammaisjärjestöistä 92 % raportoi tämän myönteisen muutoksen, joka tukee vammaisten ihmisten osallisuutta projektin jälkeen.
- Noin 80 % vammaisjärjestöistä raportoi, että yhteistyö viranomaisten kanssa lisääntyi. Vastaavasti noin 68 % raportoi vahvistuneista yhteistyömuodoista muiden järjestöjen ja toimijoiden kanssa. Projektien kautta hankitut johtajuus-, hallinto- ja muut taidot vahvistivat vammaisjärjestöjen toimintavalmiuksia siinä määrin, että yhteistyö muiden kanssa on jatkossa helpompaa. Myös muiden toimijoiden luottamus vammaisjärjestöihin kasvoi.
- Järjestöjen jäsenmäärä kasvoi noin joka toisen projektin aikana (56 %). Aktiiviset jäsenet ovat merkittävässä roolissa, kun edistetään vammaisinklusiota ja vammaisten ihmisten ihmisoikeuksien toteutumista.
- Reilu neljännes (28%) raportoi löytäneensä projektin kautta uusia varainhankintakeinoja ja lisänneen tuloja. Järjestöistä 12 % oli löytänyt uuden ulkopuolisen rahoittajan. Näissä tapauksissa Abilis-säätiön tuki oli merkityksellinen. Uusi rahoittaja luotti vammaisjärjestöön,

koska Abilis oli jo tukenut sitä. Vahvistuneet toimintavalmiudet tukivat näissäkin tilanteissa järjestöjen rahoittajayhteistyötä.

## **Tulos 2. Sosiaalisesti voimaantuneet vammaiset ihmiset**

Säätiön pienimuotoinen projektirahoitus sai aikaan yksilötasolla myönteisiä muutoksia, jotka voivat puolestaan edistää vammaisten ihmisten yhteiskunnallista osallistumista.

- Projektin jälkeen 93 % osallistuneista henkilöistä pääsi osallistumaan yhteisön tapahtumiin, koska heillä oli aiempaa enemmän yhteyksiä muiden yhteisön jäsenten kanssa ja tietoa osallistumismahdollisuuksista. Lisäksi kohentunut itsetunto ja perheen tuki edesauttoivat yhteiskunnallista osallistumista.
- Sosiaalista voimaantumista raportoi yli puolet (55 %) osallistuneista, koska heillä oli projektin myötä enemmän ystäviä.
- Vammaisista henkilöistä 67 % tunsivat projektin tuloksena omat oikeutensa ja YK:n vammais-sopimuksen, mikä jatkossa edesauttaa omien oikeuksien puolustamisessa ja edistämässä.

## **Tulos 3.: Taloudellisesti voimaantuneet vammaiset ihmiset**

Työllistymistä ja toimeentulon hankintaa edistävien projektien avulla vahvistettiin osallistujien itsenäistä elämää sekä taloudellista voimaantumista. Yksilötasolta alkava muutos näkyi seuraavasti:

- Projektien kautta työllistyi 914 vammaista henkilöä. Heistä 60 % oli vammaisia naisia ja 40% vammaisia miehiä.
- Noin 68 % (612) osallistuneista raportoi pystyvänsä käsittelemään ansaitsemaansa rahaa ja hankkimaan tarvittavia peruselintarvikkeita.

## **Tulos 4.: Vahvistunut vammaisinklusiio yhteisöissä**

Projektien perustoimintojen sekä tiedotus- ja vaikuttamistyön tulokset näkyivät selkeästi siinä, miten yhteisön jäsenten ja toimijoiden ja viranomaisten asennoituminen ja käyttäytyminen olivat muuttuneet. Kansallisella ja kansainvälisellä tasolla saavutetut muutokset vahvistivat poliittisia ja lainsäädännöllisiä toimia, joita tapahtui muun muassa Tansaniassa, Ugandassa, Nepalissa. Tajikistanissa YK:n vammais-sopimuksen ratifiointiprosessi meni eteenpäin vammaisjärjestöjen yhteistyön tiivistyttyä. Konkreettisia esimerkkejä projektitasolla olivat muun muassa:

- Joidenkin projektien myötä paikalliset viranomaiset kutsuivat vammaisjärjestöjen edustajat mukaan työryhmiin ja keskustelemaan vammaisia koskevista aiheista.
- Useissa ohjelmamaissa paikalliset viranomaiset tarjosivat vammaisjärjestöille toimitiloja, liiketaloudellista koulutusta, eläintenhoitoa tai muuta tukea projektin toteutukseen ja raportointiin.

## **Tulos 5.: Päätäjien ja viranomaisten lisääntynyt vammaisinklusiivinen työ**

Abilis-säätiön oman vaikuttamistyön keskeisinä tuloksina voidaan nimetä seuraavat tulokset:

- Dialogi Suomen ulkoministeriön, EU:n, suomalaisten ja kansainvälisten järjestöjen kanssa.
- Hallitusohjelmakirjaus haavoittuvien ryhmien oman asiantuntijuuden, ml. vammaisten asiantuntijoiden käyttäminen, yhteiskunnallisten asioiden valmistelussa ja toteutuksessa.
- Humanitaarisen avun kirjaukset haavoittuvien ryhmien oman asiantuntijuuden hyödyntämisestä sekä Suomen että suomalaisten toimijoiden työssä.
- Pyydetty asiantuntijapuheenvuoro Suomen EU-puheenjohtajuuskauden aikana järjestetyssä tilaisuudessa ulkoministereille Helsingissä sekä suurlähettiläiden järjestämässä vammaisoikeuksia käsittelevissä tilaisuuksissa Espanjassa, Armeniassa, Georgiassa ja Azerbaidzhanissa.
- Yhteistyö Tukholman vesiviikolla, inklusiivisen WASH-teeman alla.
- Yhteistyössä järjestetty sivutapahtuma YK:n vammais-sopimuksen ratifioineiden maiden sopijapuolikokouksessa New Yorkissa kesäkuussa.

Vuosi 2019 oli tuloksellinen ja toiminnot toteutuivat suunnitellusti. Tulokset kontribuoivat suoraan 4-vuotisen ohjelmakauden tulostavoitteisiin ja useisiin kestävä kehityksen (SDGs) tavoitteisiin ja alatavoitteisiin (tavoitteet 1-5, 8, 10, 11, 16-17). Säätiön työn tulokset tuovat lisäarvoa Suomen kehitysavulle sekä kanavoidun tuen että vaikuttamistyön osalta (KEPO aggregaatti-indikaattorit).

## Summary

The year 2019 followed the 4-year plan of the programme funding period. The Abilis Global Programme consists of sub-programmes, namely country programmes, advocacy programme with the global disability diplomacy initiative and communications. Project funding, as a core of Abilis work, was carried out through the country programmes.

The country programmes were in the following countries in Asia: Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam and Tajikistan, and in Africa: Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda. The country programmes in Kyrgyzstan and Mozambique were phasing out. The country programmes were carried out by the named Partner organizations or Abilis country offices.

Over 300 projects by DPOs benefitted from the Abilis support. In total, about 350 new applications were processed, out of which 165 were approved and 116 rejected. Altogether, **28 065** persons with disabilities were involved in the projects. More than half of them (54 %) were women and girls with disabilities. Through awareness raising campaigns and events more than 3 million people benefitted from the Abilis support to disability inclusion in the Global South.

The contents of projects followed the strategic focuses and expected outcomes of the country programmes. This applies particularly well to newly started projects. The finalised projects were started in 2014–2017, during which old forms and focuses existed. However, the results of the finalised projects are in-line with the present expected outcomes. More than half of the grants (53%) focused on income generation and employment possibilities of persons with disabilities. About 22 % of the projects focused on organizational development, human rights and participation in community. Life skills trainings, basic education and vocational training were themes for 16 % of the projects. About 20 % of projects were focusing on gender equality by supporting groups and organizations of women with disabilities and 75 % had gender equality as one of the project aspects.

Abilis Foundation approved 114 final reports. The main results are introduced below based on the Abilis ToC and indicators at the outcome level:

### Result 1: Stronger DPOs in society

Abilis grants were approved only for projects of genuine groups and associations of persons with disabilities. They were responsible for planning, implementing and reporting of projects. Through these tasks and cooperation with Abilis and other stakeholders, ***the capacity of involved DPOs was built***. As a result, the following can be summarized:

- Organisations were recognised in communities and invited to civil society forums. In total 92 % of the DPOs reported to be better perceived by community after the project. There was less discrimination in families.
- About 80 % of the DPOs reported to have improved collaboration and increased contact with local authorities and political decision makers as main stakeholders.
- About 68 % of the DPOs reported to have more contacts and cooperation with other NGOs due to project activities and outcomes of them.
- About 56 % of the DPOs reported to have more members and more active members after the project when comparing the situation before the project.
- About 28 % of the grantee DPOs who had included income generation or fund-raising activities in the project, reported to have increased income. Out of them 12 % had found another funding source outside of the own organisation. In all of these cases, Abilis was the first external supporter and because of Abilis, the DPO was able to get another donor. Strengthened capacity and improved management skills supported the new phase of the DPOs. This applies also to local governments that started to fund some DPOs after a successful project by Abilis.

### Results 2. Socially empowered persons with disabilities

There were positive changes at individual level, supporting persons with disabilities to become active in social life:

- About 93 % of the participants reported to be able to participate in social events of their community. The main reasons for the changes were linked with more contacts with other community members and more information about possibilities to participate. Additionally, improved self-esteem and better support from family encouraged persons with disabilities to join social events.
- About 67 % reported to know their rights, including the human right to participate and be socially involved.
- More than half (55 %) of the project participants reported to have more friends after the projects. Number of friends is one of the indicators used in social involvement. It is a clear indication of change when the starting situation is isolation and a life without social contacts outside of one's own family. A project may be the first time to meet peers and to get friends.

### **Result 3.: Economically empowered persons with disabilities**

Livelihoods projects supported independent life and economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. **Individual level outcomes** can be summarized as follows:

- In total, 914 persons with disabilities got employed in 2019. Out of them, 548 were women with disabilities (60 %) and 366 males (40 %). Majority of them (68%) were self-employed. Some individuals found a job in the private labour market. A very common way of job creation was a group workshop or a cooperative through which participants were able to work and generate income.
- About 68 % of the employed participants reported that after the project they had their own money and were able to make decisions on how to use it.

### **Result 4.: Improved disability inclusion in communities**

One part of the results of the Abilis-funded projects aims at changing attitudes and perception of people in communities as well as accessibility of surroundings. Positive changes achieved at national and international levels supported political and juridical processes on disability. For instance, some legislative revisions were made in Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda. The ratification process in Tajikistan was supported by several Abilis-funded projects and collaboration between DPOs. Some **concrete actions** as **outcomes** started to occur:

- Due to some projects, local authorities invited DPO representatives to join task groups and meetings to discuss disability issues.
- In many programme countries, local authorities provided groups with premises and workshops, veterinary services, business trainings and materials, as well support for project implementation and reporting.

### **Result 5.: Increased disability inclusion in the work of stakeholders and authorities**

The main results of the advocacy work of Abilis Foundation are the following:

- Dialogues with the Finnish Government, EU (MEPs) and EDF, Finnish and International NGOs and other agencies.
- Finnish government manifesto statement includes the clear indication to use disability expertise (experts of vulnerable population).
- Humanitarian guidelines of Finland includes disability better than ever before.
- Abilis was invited to send a representative of disability rights to the special lunch event for Foreign Ministers, held during Finland's EU Presidency in autumn 2019.
- Abilis was invited to be one of the keynote speakers at Finnish Embassy events in three Caucasus countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) in Oct 2019 and in Spain in Nov 2019.
- An Abilis representative was invited to facilitate the WASH conference in Stockholm, followed by the co-hosted release event of the WASH IASC Guidelines.
- The co-hosted side-event during the UN COSP meeting in New York in June 2019.

The year 2019 was successful and effective. The outcomes of the Abilis global programme contribute to the impact of the 4-year plan and to the SGDs (targets 1-5, 8, 10, 11, 16-17). The outcomes provide some added value to the Finnish development aid through aggregated indicators.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The annual report of Abilis 2019 focuses on the outcomes of the Global Programme. The new reporting instructions of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) are followed as much as possible. A separate results matrix with baseline and targeted results (2021) supports this narrative report.

Due to the fact that majority of the finalised projects have started before the funding period (2018 – 2021) and the present reporting requirements, the report discusses and analyses results relevant to projects. The application and reporting forms and templates used in 2014-2017, during the period when most of the finalised projects started, were different to those used in 2019. This is also reasonable because the Results Framework (RF) and the Theory of Change (ToC) of Abilis Foundation have been modified during 2018-2019. Luckily, the original RF and ToC were prepared in a participatory way, recognising the reality of living conditions of persons with disabilities in the Abilis programme countries, and thus they included many of the indicators and expected outcomes that exist in the revised versions. This means that Abilis has succeeded to find operational indicators from the beginning. One of the main reasons for this is that the indicators were selected based on the actual results of projects and pretested in several projects and countries before official use.

This report shows clearly the success of small grants relevant for grassroots level groups, even at district and national level when projects are concrete and results tangible. It is expected that the overall results of the 4-year period are even better. In the coming years, more projects from the years 2018–2019 will end. Revised forms and indicators are in use when collecting data and outcomes.

## 2. THE ABILIS GLOBAL PROGRAMME 2019 IN SHORT

### 2.1. General information about the implementation

The Abilis Global Programme consists of different elements and levels shown in Figure 1.

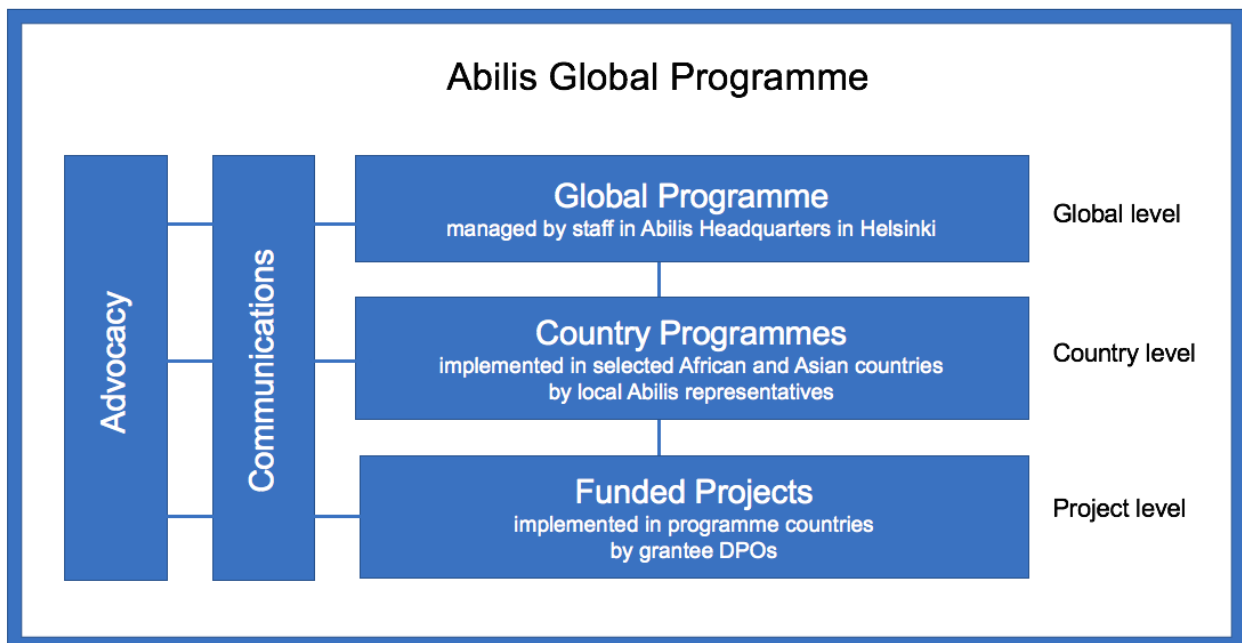


Figure 1. The overall chart of the Abilis Global Programme and its elements at different level.

The core of Abilis work is at project level, focusing on project grants. All projects are owned, initiated, implemented and reported by groups and organizations of people with disabilities (DPOs). The country programme activities support projects, starting from facilitation to monitoring and training. The main aim is to build capacity of groups throughout a project and to ensure that planning, implementation and reporting of a project is possible even without earlier experience. Empowerment occurs during projects. Local expertise and peer support are essential components of the Abilis Country programmes as representatives of the country programmes are persons with disabilities. The country programmes contribute to the disability movement of the country through networks and close contacts with other DPOs.

The Abilis Headquarters (HQ) manages the global level with essential contribution of the country programmes and funded projects. The global level activities are supported by wide partnerships with Finnish, Nordic and International development aid agencies and organizations. Main activities target at disability inclusion and mainstreaming at national and global levels.

Abilis follows the triple-track approach: 1) When persons with disabilities are empowered with specific projects, 2) when disability is mainstreamed, and 3) when political dialogue maintains disability high on the agenda, they all contribute to the overall objective of realizing global disability rights (Impact). In other words, a combination of various approaches including bottom-up, peer-support, top-down, and South-South cooperation, is relevant when promoting disability rights and inclusion. As discrimination practices are historically deeply rooted at different levels, various approaches targeting different levels with the central focus on empowerment of persons with disabilities at the grassroots level, with suitable level of responsibility and funding, is a well-grounded strategy for Abilis Foundation.

The triple-track approach is also visible in the Abilis ToC. It describes processes during which individuals and organisations can gain skills and empowerment, facilities, and opportunities to be engaged with families, communities and wider societies. Attitudes and behaviour of family members, neighbours and stakeholders become more inclusive. Similarly, increased number of political initiatives on disability and improved accessibility strengthen commitment of societies. Still, the main element of the Abilis approach is the active involvement of persons with disabilities that must increase at all levels. Only at that stage, the UNCRPD and disability rights can be said to be followed.

## 2.2. Disability-specific capacity building through grant-making

In 2019, Abilis Foundation processed more than 350 applications. Out of them, 165 applications were approved, 116 rejected. The rest will be processed in 2020. In total, 114 projects came to the end with the final reports approved. The number of direct beneficiaries was 28 065 persons with disabilities. More than three million people benefitted from the projects indirectly. Out of the active participants of the finalised projects, more than half (54 %) were women and girls with disabilities.

The capacities of DPOs were built in different ways. The most common activity was related to livelihoods; Groups aimed at income generation and poverty reduction. Often informal vocational training (short courses) and business skills, procurements and distribution of materials were parts of projects. Leadership and financial management trainings were the most common activities in organizational projects. Media campaigns, round table meetings, human rights trainings and workshops were organised to promote disability rights and raise awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

## 2.3. Country programmes with specific targets

**The country programmes** were implemented according to their plans in the following countries:

- In Asia: Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam and Tajikistan.
- In Africa: Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda.

Thematically the country programmes focused mainly on income generation and capacity building of persons with disabilities and their organizations. Awareness raising and advocacy work on the UNCRPD were included in some country programmes. Special focus was on women and girls with disabilities. The phasing out period of programmes was implemented in Mozambique and Kyrgyzstan. The following countries were included in the **sub-programme for fragile states and circumstances**: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone, and Somalia (including Somaliland).

## 2.4. Disability mainstreaming activities and advocacy work

The Abilis advocacy work continued the initiative called “Global Disability Diplomacy on Human Rights”, started by Dr. Kalle Könkkölä, the founder of Abilis Foundation. The main work aimed at improved awareness of disability inclusion among strategic stakeholders both in Finland and abroad. The initiative contributed to standard making of disability inclusion at the national and global level. It offered special expertise of professionals with disabilities to donors, mainstream organisations (NGOs), and UN actors. The special emphasis was on genuine mainstreaming of disability rights to the Finnish foreign policy, covering development and humanitarian aid as well as work of Embassies. Advocacy efforts included meetings, trainings, joint events, and consultancy tasks.

## 2.5. Communications and awareness raising

Abilis Foundation shared information regarding its activities and results of the funded projects as well as living conditions of persons with disabilities in the Global South. The information and communication activities aimed at raising awareness of the general public, decision makers and relevant stakeholders in Finland and beyond on global disability rights. Information sharing activities were carried out through the official Abilis website, social media, articles in newspapers and magazines, newsletters and outdoor advertisement. Some global education activities such as visits to schools and institutions supported the information sharing of the Foundation.

# 3. RESULTS OF THE ABILIS GLOBAL PROGRAMME

This chapter describes the results of the Abilis global programme in 2019. Results are introduced through indicator-based outputs and outcomes (Annex 1. Abilis Results Matrix). Individual and organisational indicators have been used in funded projects. Only finalised projects and ones that were relevant for the reporting, have been included. Analysis follows each indicator category at different levels.

Country programme reports (Annexes 2. – 9.) discuss the country specific results and changes in society. Relevant results of the country programmes have been included when gathering data for disability inclusion and mainstreaming. All main activities of Abilis Foundation in 2019 contributed to the overall objective, the impact of the programme.

## 3.1. Result 1: Stronger DPOs in society

Abilis recognizes the importance of supporting DPOs and local groups (Self-Help groups, SHGs) to participate in community and to contribute to development. Too often DPOs and SHGs are not included among civil society actors, or there is no DPO at all in the community to represent the voice of persons with disabilities. Outcome level indicator 1. addresses this matter (Annex 1.).

To become a stronger actor in a community requires capacity on leadership and management, cooperation with authorities and other NGOs and DPOs, active members, as well as acceptance by the surrounding community. Stronger DPOs can raise awareness of community members and

become visible. They can actively demand for disability rights. Stronger DPOs may participate in decision making and contribute to improvements needed in the community. These elements are components of the Abilis ToC that describes the process of changes that are needed before persons with disabilities can have equal rights and opportunities with others, and can enjoy dignified and productive lives (RF, Impact). Outcomes of the projects in 2019 indicate this clearly (Figure 1.).

*“After attending training, persons with disabilities feel empowered. Knowledge, skills and peer support lead to stronger conscious of being able and being a human with capacity. Many trained persons start assessing neighborhoods and other persons with disabilities to discuss with. After disability rights awareness raising workshops, some participants come together and organize themselves for a DPO. Trainings and empowerment are necessary elements for becoming activists. Empowered members are the key to DPOs. They were not visible, but hidden and silent. Now they stand strong for their rights collectively.”*

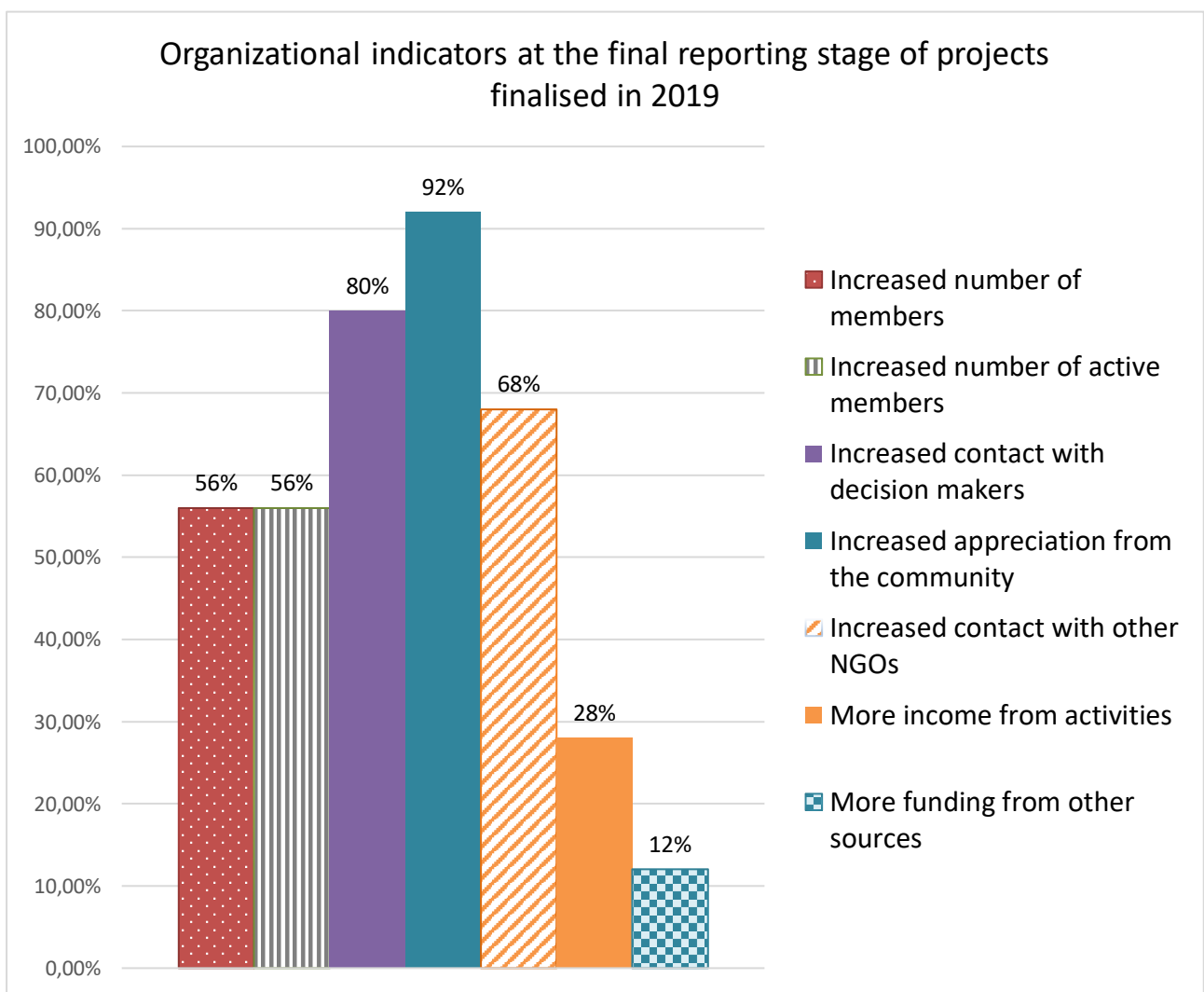


Figure 2. Results of finalised projects in 2019 based on the Abilis organizational indicators.

### 3.1.1. More active members in supported DPOs

**56 % OF THE DPOS REPORTED TO HAVE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF ACTIVE MEMBERS**

About 56 % (64) of the DPOs reported to have more members and more active members after the project when comparing to the situation before the project. Some of the projects targeted at membership activities, but the majority did not. In most cases, project planning and implementation activated organisations. At the same time, other community members with disabilities got interested in joining the DPO after following the activities. Empowered group members were the best role models and advocates to bring new members to a DPO.

The number of active members correlates with advocacy activities. A bigger number of active members means a wider network of information sharing. Disability awareness can be raised through individuals as advocates and agents of change. The following example describes this change:

*“Most of the persons with disabilities, who participated in projects, know their rights and actively participate in decision-making. They actively participate, influence and advocate in the government for the respect and implementation of disability policies and plans.”*

In the Abilis funded projects, many grantee groups are small in size. This applies especially to grassroots groups in remote areas and newly-established groups. Some grantee groups do not actively invite more members due to the nature of their association, or if they are a cooperative created for a special purpose. Abilis encourages persons with disabilities to join peers and to set up organizations. A joint voice can be heard better than one individual voice.

The aim is to reach the level of 80 % of increased numbers of active members. However, annual variation exists and Abilis has limited possibilities to influence whether grantee DPOs aim at increasing their number of active members or not. The most important point is that persons with disabilities must become more aware of their human rights and possibilities to proclaim them (as rights-holders, HRBA<sup>1</sup>). Empowered and active members form DPOs that can promote disability inclusion wider in society. At the same time, active members can be more visible in their communities and contribute towards enabling environment and disability inclusion. Moreover, this may lead to better possibilities to participate and find employment – to become a productive member of a community.

### 3.1.2. Increased contacts and cooperation with stakeholders

**80 % OF THE DPOS REPORTED TO HAVE INCREASED CONTACTS AND COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

About 80 % (91) of the DPOs reported to have improved collaboration and increased contact with local authorities and political decision makers as main stakeholders. The result is exactly in accordance with the target of the Abilis RF. The result has also improved when comparing to some statistics from earlier years. For instance, in 2018, the figure was 60 %. This difference can be explained by the nature of the Abilis work: Types and contents of finalised projects differ annually. In 2019, more projects finalised in countries and societies where local authorities provided DPOs

<sup>1</sup> HRBA= Human Rights-based Approach

with i.e. office or workshop premises and facilities, small accessibility constructions, trainings, supervision or other relevant services. This occurred particularly in Ethiopia where local government with the Bureau of Labor (BoLSA) and Social Affairs followed closely the operations of DPOs. In general, DPOs appreciated these efforts and built some trust to collaborate with stakeholders. Some DPOs, i.e. in Tajikistan, Nepal and Vietnam, received invitations to join task groups and round table meetings organized by authorities. This refers to mainstreaming and improved understanding on disability inclusion.

Capacity building of DPOs was the key for improved collaboration with stakeholders. Finalised projects contained activities through which DPOs gained new skills and competency to discuss with other agencies. Common activities included leadership and management trainings, advocacy and awareness raising work. Joint efforts of DPOs led also good results as indicated in one case:

*“There is a greater union of persons with disabilities to discuss their shared problems and challenges. We can put pressure on local government to implement the Disability Act and the UNCRPD.”*

In many programme countries, the authorities require regular reporting by NGOs. Particularly grassroots level groups had difficulties in following requirements due to poor skills and weak capacity. The Abilis-granted projects strengthened reporting and management skills of DPOs that assist them to fulfill these requirements also in the future. This can be called institutional sustainability which is important to Abilis. The supported DPOs should be able to continue their work after Abilis support has ended, and not be dependent on Abilis and external funding.

Improved administrative skills can also change the negative attitudes of authorities and bring new possibilities for future cooperation. This includes invitations and special assignments by authorities to DPOs to discuss disability issues in different forums, as indicated above and in reference to actions that started in some projects. The results support Outcome 5 well and are contributing to the impact of the programme.

**68 % OF THE DPOS REPORTED TO HAVE MORE CONTACT  
WITH OTHER NGOS**

It is positive that 68 % (78) of the DPOs reported to have more contacts and cooperation with other national and local NGOs, due to project activities and outcomes. Awareness raising campaigns, public events and celebrations of International Disability Days<sup>2</sup> and forums for NGOs have made it possible for DPOs to be visible and find a way to be part of civil society. These results contribute to disability mainstreaming and inclusion among NGO stakeholders.

In some cases, Abilis-funded projects created interest among other NGOs. Women with disabilities found the Women’s movement in Tajikistan and Vietnam. Some organizations of disability rights joined wider networks of human rights promoters and defenders in Uganda and Nepal.

Collaboration with other DPOs increased as well. In districts and local communities, different disability groups formed forums for discussions, and organized joint activities for better visibility. Even though there is plenty more to do, clear steps have been taken towards inclusive societies and improved involvement of DPOs.

*“In 2019, we strengthened our contacts with National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) in the Southern region and established a new contact in the Northern Province. These contacts will assist us to form a stronger movement for disability rights.”*

<sup>2</sup> International Disability Days consists of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, The White Cane Day, The International Day of Braille, The International Week of the Deaf and the International Day of Autism.

### 3.1.3. Increased funding of DPOs

**28 % OF THE DPOS REPORTED TO HAVE MORE INCOME FROM ACTIVITIES AND 12 % FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES**

About 28 % of the grantee DPOs who had included income generation or fund-raising activities in their project, reported to have increased income. Out of them 12 % had found another funding source outside of the own organisation. In all of these cases, Abilis was the first external supporter and because of Abilis, the DPO was able to get another donor. Strengthened capacity and improved management skills supported the new phase of the DPOs. This applies also to local governments that started to fund some DPOs after a successful project by Abilis. This occurred particularly in Nepal where similar outcomes have been observed during the last couple of years.

Majority of the income of DPOs came from activities and members of the organization. A typical project gave vocational training and start up kits to named members who paid a provision to the DPOs after starting their own business. Even though the income level of DPOs was not very high, small fund-raising had been started. In some cases, the group started to produce products to local market (i.e. clothes, milk products, wood and metal work) and services such as bakery, Internet café and WASH<sup>3</sup>, to community members. The market is growing and the future looks bright.

The financial sustainability of DPOs remains a challenge. Abilis aims at a higher level of DPO funding. The aim is that minimum 50 % of DPOs should find other means of funding after the project grant. The expected level cannot be higher because many grassroots groups operate in poor rural villages where extra funding is not available, nor is it the aim of the group members. Thus, a realistic level of income and poverty reduction should be the aim. The local context and ownership of the projects must be always taken into consideration.

The internal assessment of Abilis in 2019 on income generation activities (IGA) in Sierra Leone and Nepal<sup>4</sup> brought up some key elements in terms of what to focus on when facilitating IGA-projects. The guideline, prepared after the study, describes how to strengthen sustainability and profitability of livelihood activities. The emphasised efforts of the Abilis country programmes may lead to improved funding situations of DPOs in coming years.

### 3.1.4. Increased appreciation in community

**92 % OF THE DPOS REPORTED TO HAVE INCREASED APPRECIATION FROM THE COMMUNITY**

In 2019, the mentality of civil society towards persons with disabilities continued to change for the positive, even if the perceived changes did not cover all the grantee DPOs. In total 92 % of the DPOs reported to be better perceived by community after the project. Organisations were recognised in communities and invited to civil society forums. There was less discrimination in families.

The changes were reported to be based on awareness raising activities, meetings and round table discussions. Public events and media ensured information sharing and better understanding on disability among community members. Empowered and active individuals and groups had a great influence in their own families and neighbourhoods. Community members observed skills and capacities of persons with disabilities instead of limits and inabilities.

<sup>3</sup> WASH = Water, sanitation and hygiene

<sup>4</sup> Internal assessment of Abilis on IGA projects in Sierra Leone and Nepal. More details in chapter 4..

The trend has remained high over the last years (between 72 – 78 %) and shows the importance of awareness raising on disability as well as active participation and visibility of persons with disabilities in society. This outcome is important to DPOs. It leads to better possibilities to have a dialogue with other community members and actors, as well as to contribute to development of the community. Hopefully, it may lead to active involvement and participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. This is in-line with the UNCRPD and many national disability acts.

*“I was invited to be one of the key-note speakers at the civil society forum. I was able to share the views of persons with disabilities. This was the first time ever that a person with a disability got this type of an invitation. I am grateful and proud of what we have achieved.”*

### 3.1.5. Conclusions of results on strengthening DPOs

These above described results indicate the importance of capacity building of DPOs to be a part of society. Without relevant capacity and without operational DPOs, disability issues and people with disabilities are too easily left behind due to a severely disabling environment. Abilis is satisfied when noticing improvements in operational work of DPOs. Additionally, the disability inclusion with improved perception on disability are extremely important in promoting disability rights and implementation of the UNCRPD. It is also very important that associations of persons with disabilities were able to get an official registration. The Disability Movement needs actors that are recognised by the officials in their respected countries.

The indicators created by Abilis work relatively well and aggregated data can be analysed annually. This is mainly due to the preparation process of the indicators. The participatory approach and careful analysis of earlier funded projects, and their main results, made it possible to identify the type of changes that often happen in Abilis-funded projects. Relatively good results are partly due to technical support<sup>5</sup> that is organised through the country programmes in the programme countries and provided by the HQs staff in the case of fragile states. In addition to that, awareness raising and advocacy work support the work of DPOs, as well as recognition of their important role in communities.

There are still gaps and challenges in the operations of DPOs. Particularly in countries like Somalia, the charity approach is strong and DPOs are affected by the clan system. Similarly, in Mozambique, accountability remains an area to be focused in future. Generally speaking, good governance and the necessary capacity to lead and manage an organization are required when making plans for ensuring stronger DPOs in the named programme countries of Abilis.

## 3.2. Result 2: Socially empowered persons with a disability

As discussed earlier, active and empowered persons with disabilities are essential for operational DPOs. Even at individual level, changes occur when persons with disabilities are equipped with necessary knowledge and skills during project activities. Social skills and life skills are learnt both through named activities and along project implementation. Human rights and professional skills need to be taught in an accessible and concrete way. Social contacts, participation and peer support are the type of elements that are required when aiming at stronger involvement of persons with disabilities in social events (Outcomes 2., Annex 1.). This is due to improved self-esteem and life skills, increased awareness on disability and shared knowledge on participation. Changes started at the individual level may lead to stronger DPOs and better inclusion.

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<sup>5</sup> Technical support may consist of advice and mentoring, on-the-job training and trainings on i.e. organizational work, leadership, project and financial management.



### 3.2.1. Participation in social events of community

93 % OF THE PROJECT PARTICIPANTS REPORTED TO HAVE AN IMPROVED ACCESS TO SOCIAL EVENTS

In 2019, in the finalised projects, about 93 % of the participants reported to be able to participate in social events of community. The main reasons for the changes were linked with more contacts with other community members and more information about possibilities to participate. Additionally, improved self-esteem and better support from family encouraged persons with disabilities to join social events. Some individuals reported to have more money for transportation and facilities to participate. At the same time, those who could not participate social events, reported not to have enough information, financial resources and family support. Accessibility and communication also remained a challenge and limited participation.

About 67 % of participants reported to know their rights, including the human right to participate and be socially involved. Out of them, 79 % were aware of the UNCRPD, and 55 % knew the national disability legislation. Improved knowledge on human rights supported participants to look for possibilities to contribute to community and become active citizens.

These results indicate the importance of project activities. Discrimination and segregation of people with disabilities are a reality in their lives. Through projects they can leave their homes, get familiar with other people and gain opportunities to learn new skills. A hidden, but talented person, can start socializing and enjoying their life equally to other citizens.

### 3.2.2. Increased number of friends

55 % OF PARTICIPANTS OF PROJECTS REPORTED TO HAVE MORE FRIENDS

More than half (55 %) of the project participants reported to have more friends after the projects. This result continues with the trend that has been visible during the last years in the work of Abilis work; In 2018, the figure was 42 %.

Number of friends is one of the indicators used for measuring social involvement. It is a clear indication of change when the starting situation is isolation and a life without social contacts outside of one's own family. A project may be the first time to meet peers and to get friends. This is often reported to Abilis. Friends may mean peers with whom experiences and wishes can be shared in a confidential and unique way. Encouraging support from a friend can lead to greater actions and improved self-confidence, as occurred in some cases:

*"I was very alone. I stayed at home. I had no friends, no future. One day I heard about a group getting together nearby. My mother accompanied me to the gathering first. Soon I became a group member. Now I have many friends and we are implementing a project through which we can earn money and advocate."*

In the work of Abilis, the role of local representatives, namely country coordinators and assistant country coordinators or facilitators and assistant facilitators, is essential. They are persons with personal experience on disability. They can share experiences and support processes that take place among group members. They can also be role models and examples of how to succeed even with a disability.

### 3.2.3. Conclusions of results on social empowerment

Empowerment and participation are closely linked to each other. In addition to the increased number of participations, empowerment of persons with disabilities has been registered as a result of many Abilis-funded projects. Peer support was mentioned as one of the main reasons for empowerment. Individual stories in the final reports described the importance of participation to strengthen self-esteem, understanding on opportunities in life and own talents as elements of self-confidence and empowerment. Through Abilis-funded projects, many participants have received the first possibility in their lives to experience friendship, learning, and realisation of their own wishes and needs on an equal basis with peers without a disability.

Social empowerment was observed through different activities such as peer group discussions, vocational trainings and self-employment and other income generating activities. Empowered persons with a disability were better accepted by their families, but also more active as rights-holders in their community. The set indicators work well in terms of measuring changes at individual level. Through participation and empowerment persons with disabilities involved in projects, more than half of them women and girls with disabilities, can work for equal rights and opportunities with others and enjoy dignified and productive lives (Impact of the programme).

### 3.3. Results 3: Economically empowered persons with disabilities

The economic status of human beings' affects many sectors of human lives. This is particularly the case when talking about persons with disabilities in the least developing countries (LDC) and fragile states. People with disabilities lack education, vocational training, basic life skills and have very seldom necessary assistive devices, health and social services. Without financial resources, the entire family can experience difficulties to meet basic needs. Disability can be a burden for the family and to those family members who earn money for living. Once a family member with a disability starts generating income and contributes to the household's economy, life can change drastically. A person with a disability can be productive. At the same time, the change in one's own life and in family life can lead to improved status of a person with a disability.

In 2019, similar to many previous years, more than half of the Abilis-funded projects focused on income generation and livelihoods (53 %). This is in-line with global level studies pointing out the serious fact that there is a strong linkage of cause and effect between disability and poverty, and disability and inequalities. That is, persons with disabilities tend to become poor and excluded, while poor and marginalised people tend to become disabled. Focused actions are needed to reduce poverty among people with disabilities, but also to support reduction of inequality. Similarly, there is a strong linkage between disability and low education levels. Children and youth with disabilities lack access to basic education as well as access to vocational training and higher education. Especially girls and women with disabilities have limited possibilities to study, gain professional skills and find a job. Poor education background leads to unemployment and difficulties in generating income. It is much more difficult to a person with a disability to find a job than to a non-disabled peer. Social empowerment supports, however, economic empowerment and vice versa.

*“This is the very first time I am getting income. I didn't get the chance to attend school. But the group leaders gave me the chance to participate in the executive committee of the group. I got experience in communication with other people. I feel confident by myself. Now I have the job and I am generating daily income. I can support other group members and children with disabilities to get education. I feel that I am a valuable person now. I can work for persons with disabilities, not only for myself.”*

### 3.3.1. Management of own finances

68 % OF PARTICIPANTS OF PROJECTS REPORTED TO HAVE STARTED TO MANAGE THEIR OWN FINANCES

Management of own finances is one of the newest indicators in use that Abilis started using systematically in 2019 (in projects started in 2019). The indicator is used by asking about the management of own finances before and after the project. Thus, the baseline data was missing for many projects that were already on-going when the year started. However, some relevant data was able to be collected from the finalised projects. In total, 68 % of the participants (619) of the employed participants reported after the project to have their own money and that they were able to make decisions on how to use it. Some of them had opened their own bank account, and many contributed to food and other basic daily supplies of their families. This result is extremely good when considering the starting point which was that the majority of the interviewed participants did not have regular income at all. Further results will be reported in 2020-2021.

### 3.3.2. Employed and self-employed persons with disabilities

75 % OF PARTICIPANTS OF PROJECTS REPORTED TO BE SELF-EMPLOYED OR EMPLOYED

In total, 914 persons with disabilities got employed in 2019 through Abilis-funded projects. Out of them, 60 % were women with disabilities and 40 % men. Majority of them (68%) were self-employed. Some individuals found a job in the private labour market. A very common way of job creation was a group workshop, or a cooperative through which participants were able to work and generate income. The most common sectors were handicrafts and tailoring, metal and wood work, small grocery shops and beauty salons. Agriculture also provided self-employment to some hundreds of participants.

A typical project contained a short training course followed by start-up kits, or procurements, and the opening of a shop/workshop, or another type of setting, for the implementation of the income generation activity. During projects, technical skills on IGA were strengthened through entrepreneurship or business trainings. New skills for earning money to contribute to family living was one of the most powerful tools in the process of empowerment and acceptance by families. Many participants highlighted the meaningful life that followed from the IGA projects. One example describes this as a poem:

*“Life is beautiful as a dream.  
No more despair, no more isolation daily.  
Making fish net is a job that I love.”*

*“To overcome poverty,  
having a stable job.  
Sing up, everyone!”*

*“We are disabled, but capable.”*

### 3.3.3. Conclusions of results on economic empowerment

Even though a limited number of participants were analyzed in this set of outcomes, the results indicate that the indicators work and collect relevant information. More finalised projects with individual measurements will provide more reliable data in the coming years.

The newly drafted Abilis guideline for livelihoods will assist groups in the future to plan more profitable and sustainable IGA projects and to identify challenges important already at the planning stage. Improved technical skills on IGA should be visible in outcomes in 2020–2021.

## 3.4. Result 4: Improved disability inclusion in communities

One part of the results of Abilis-funded projects aims at changing attitudes and perceptions surrounding people with disabilities in communities as well as the accessibility of surroundings. The positive results at individual and organisational levels (described in earlier chapters) cannot fully happen unless changes occur in the environment around people with disabilities. Changes must happen in knowledge and attitude, but also in behaviour.

### 3.4.1. Increased family support to children with disabilities to participate

MORE DETAILED RESULTS COMING IN 2020-2021

One part of the disability inclusion is the support that family members give to persons with disabilities. In 2019, only very few finalised projects used the specific indicator targeting at this outcome. This occurred because the indicator development took place in 2018–2019. More relevant projects and results can be introduced in coming years. However, several reports discussed the changes within families. In practice, family members increasingly respected people with disabilities; parents took their children with disabilities to school and referred them to health and rehabilitation services. Some parents supported their children and youth with disabilities to become active and more independent. This is in-line with Outcome 2: social empowerment. Parents or care-givers' support remains essential for persons with disabilities to establish social contacts outside their home.

### 3.4.2. Increased support from duty-bearers

MORE DETAILED RESULTS COMING IN 2020-2021

In 2019, local authorities and officials, as duty-bearers<sup>6</sup>, showed positive changes towards DPOs and individuals. One of the key steps was effective communication between DPOs and local authorities that convinced them to bear duties and follow the UNCRPD principles. Improved understanding on disability and awareness on disability rights led to concrete actions.

Disability inclusion was operationalised in the majority of Abilis programme countries to some extent. Local authorities invited DPO representatives to join task groups and provided groups with veterinary services, business trainings and materials. In some cases, the government stakeholders provided groups with standard workshops with necessary facilities including enough electricity and working space. Examples set by DPOs convinced local authorities to support other groups as well. Wider development in the capacities of DPOs strengthened support from duty-bearers.

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<sup>6</sup> Rights-holders and duty bearers are the key responsible actors in the HRBA.

More precise data and results will be reported in coming years. Statistics will be gathered for these indicators, under Outcome 4. Particularly outputs on improved accessibility will be added to the results reports in the future.

### 3.4.3. More enabling environment experienced by project participants

MORE DETAILED RESULTS COMING IN 2020-2021

Through Abilis grants and the active work and involvement of DPOs, some changes were reported to have taken place in society with regard to enabling and disability inclusive environments. Individuals pointed out that they have experienced less discrimination and exclusion as well as better access to public places. In Ethiopia, for example, the Road Transport Authority (RTA) provided free tickets to DPO members. This concrete measure made it possible to some DPO members, project participants, to use public transportation. Collaboration with stakeholders was also reported to have changed towards partnership, which led (or will lead in future) to more enabling and accessible solutions in infrastructure and building construction. The Deaf community in Tanzania enjoys a more enabling environment based on a successful project to get Sign Language interpretation on TV, as the below summary describes:

*Tanzanian Association for the Deaf (CHAVITA) implemented a successful project on promotion of deaf issues through social media. After the project, the Minister of Education announced that Tanzania will adopt Tanzanian Sign Language as the national language of education for the Deaf. In addition, the Prime Minister's Office influenced the Tanzanian Broadcasting Corporation, the Parliament, and privately-owned television stations to guarantee the rights to information by deaf persons. As a result, sign language interpreters are now employed by television and broadcasting firms to cater deaf and hearing-impaired viewers.*

This great achievement was linked to improved understanding on deafness, Sign Language and disability rights, both by the Deaf and stakeholders. Similarly, other awareness raising events organised and materials published and distributed (Output 4.1.), were named as the key reasons for improved knowledge which is necessary for future steps towards a more accessible environment. The following example describes the particular and important phase of accessibility development in Tanzania:

*Inclusive Development Promoters and Consultants (IDPC) created a Disability Mainstreaming Handbook providing standards and guidelines in a Code of Practice for mainstreaming accessibility requirements regarding persons with disabilities. As a result, Tanzania now has a handbook which can be used by government, local authorities, the private sector, experts and all those who may have an involvement in creating accessible environments for persons with disabilities in Tanzania. The book will lead to improvements in buildings and spaces in a long run.*

These examples show that Abilis projects, even though small in size and short in duration, succeed to produce highly important tools and facilities for disability inclusion. Together with improved knowledge on disability and possibilities to follow the content of UNCRPD, duty-bearers start acting for improvements. Accessibility, accessible communication means and inclusive education being the most commonly addressed. However, there are many areas and many countries where the implementation of the UNCRPD is very limited or does not take place and there are huge needs for further actions by DPOs.

Due to improved understanding of stakeholders such as authorities and companies on disability, more interest was shown towards the employment and income generation opportunities of persons with disabilities. More data will be needed to report more precise outcomes.

It is important to compare this indicator and these results with Outcome 1. because some results can be strongly linked with the strengthened capacity and advocacy work of DPOs, not just individuals.

#### 3.4.4. Conclusions of results on disability inclusion in communities

In the final reports, as well as in the annual reports of some country programmes, it was pointed out that there was an attitudinal change in the community as a whole. When DPOs are visible, even unintended changes happen in the surroundings. At community level, Abilis supported projects have improved local authorities' and other stakeholders' awareness on disability rights, enhancing the opportunities of persons with disabilities to access public services such as education and healthcare (compare also with Outcome 5.). It is tangible that through the disability grants, Abilis has shown to the local authorities that grassroots DPOs are capable of implementing projects successfully with the right environment and support. Hence, some of the previous Abilis supported projects have been earmarked for government funding (compare with Outcome 1 and 5).

Based on these outcomes and reported feedback, the set indicators seem to measure concrete actions and real disability inclusion that happen in communities. Positive changes in attitudes and perception may lead to disability friendly policies and wider collaboration between different actors and DPOs. As much as national level interventions are needed to ensure disability inclusion in a country, activities are needed at grassroots level, including district and provincial level communities.

### 3.5. Result 5: Global disability inclusion and mainstreaming improved

The main aim of the Abilis advocacy work, has been capacity building of political decision makers, authorities and stakeholders, in Finland and globally, to work for disability inclusion and mainstreaming. The main global disability advocacy work is the duty of the Abilis HQ. In addition, the country offices and partner organizations do carry out tasks that contribute to global disability rights development, even though their main focus is on the country level. Among these tasks, Abilis HQ supports the actors of the country programmes to be involved when revising national disability legislations and planning the ratification/implementation of the UNCRPD. The Abilis advocacy work aims to support Abilis partners in the Global South to fully engage people with disabilities in the processes that concern people with disabilities. The structure of Abilis with the vast network of DPOs and disability experts, makes it possible to combine advocacy efforts with country-level experts and the HQ.

The Disability Diplomacy on Human Rights initiative contributed to the long-term impact of Abilis tremendously in 2019. Based on active and committed work since 2013, outcomes are visible more than in earlier years. Some country programmes and the dedicated representatives also carried out tasks and assignments relevant at the global level and in wider disability inclusion and movement.

#### 3.5.1. Collaboration with political decision makers and other stakeholders

At the HQ, a great number of meetings, round table discussions and trainings took place with Ministers and their cabinets, Members of European Parliament (MEP), civil servants, university researches and representatives of civil society actors. Some dialogues with outcomes can be reported as follows:

##### 1. Dialogues with the Finnish government

- Finnish government manifesto statement includes the clear indication to use disability expertise (experts of vulnerable population)
- Humanitarian guidelines of Finland includes disability better than ever before.
- Abilis was the co-host of the Finnish side event on the UN Conference of the State Parties in New York, which received high visibility in UN circles

## **2. Dialogues with the European Disability Forum (EDF) and EU (MEPs)**

- Abilis is now a member of the EDF task force on disability rights (12 organization cooperation for EU level inclusion advocacy).

## **3. Dialogues with Finnish NGOs**

- Abilis provided training to Fair Trade Finland (FTF), Finn Church Aid (FCA) and Fingo on disability inclusion.
- The joint programme proposals towards 2020 – 2021 were created with Save the Children Finland (SCF), FCA and Finnish Red Cross (FDC) in October 2019 to ensure disability inclusion in their operations and disability expertise that Abilis and its southern partners can provide.

## **4. Dialogues with international NGOs and agencies**

- Cooperation with Chistopher Blinden Mission (CBM) to ensure disability inclusion in humanitarian operations in different locations.
- Contribution to IASC work (Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action) and the publication of the guideline in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

### **3.5.2. Expertise assignments by persons with disabilities**

During the year 2019, Abilis HQ received some assignments from the stakeholders mentioned earlier. The main assignments are listed here:

#### **1. Finnish government (and Embassies)**

- Abilis was invited to send a representative of disability rights to the special lunch event for Foreign Ministers, held during Finland's EU Presidency in autumn 2019.
- Abilis was invited to be one of the key note speakers at Finnish Embassy events in three Caucasus countries (Armenia/Yerevan, Azerbaijan/Baku, Georgia/Tbilisi) in October 2019.
- An Abilis representative was invited to facilitate the WASH conference in Stockholm, followed by the co-hosted release event of the WASH IASC Guidelines. The seminar was hosted by UNICEF and the Finnish MFA.
- Abilis representatives participated in the special breakfast event at the Embassy of Finland in Madrid/Spain to discuss disability inclusion in foreign affairs.

#### **2. Other stakeholders**

- An Abilis representative was a keynote guest speaker at the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Conference (INEE) in Helsinki in May, and has been invited to join INEE as a full participant

### **3.5.3. Conclusions of results of disability diplomacy and advocacy work**

Abilis has created a wide network with actors working on disability over the years. Today, close collaboration is easier than some years ago. The disability expertise of Abilis representatives and partners is recognised. Disability inclusion is now on the agenda in development and humanitarian aid. Advocacy work has succeeded and many agencies have been conducting activities to mainstream disability. The unique role of Abilis is the provision of genuine grassroots level DPO participation from the programme countries for larger actors and UN/EU level. There is added value that Abilis offers. Openness for new contacts and networks may also bring more assignments that are likely to increase in the coming years.

These set indicators will measure the development that takes place in disability inclusion. More country specific outcomes will be reported also in coming years. Some concrete outcomes are also in the separate Results Matrix and in the Annexes 2.–9.

### 3.6. Raised awareness on disability in Finland

Abilis shared information regarding its activities and results of its funded projects as well as living conditions of persons with disabilities in the Global South actively throughout the year 2019. With the information and communication activities, including interactive measures, Abilis aimed to raise awareness of the general public, decision makers and relevant stakeholders in Finland and beyond on global disability rights. The overall objective was to increase visibility and recognition of human rights of persons with disabilities through Abilis activities.

Social media was the most important communication tool. Abilis kept all social media channels active, participated in social debates in Twitter, and shared the results of its work – positive changes in lives of persons with disabilities in developing countries. Through an active role in social media, Abilis reached many new groups, like young adults in business and cultural sectors.

The coverage of Abilis social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) grew significantly during the year 2019. Facebook was the most popular tool to share information. Facebook got 363 site likes more in 2019, comparing to the previous year. There was 9,3% growth from 3889 to 4252. This was in part due to paid advertisements used occasionally. Abilis started to use the new social media tool, LinkedIn, in April 2019. Abilis had 41 followers by the end of the year. Figure 4. shows the numbers of likes and shares in FB, Twitter and Instagram in 2018 and 2019.

Abilis newsletters, articles and paid advertisements in newspapers, magazines and journals, were also important tools in awareness raising work in 2019. They reached Finnish people who are not active in social media. Abilis participated in the Word Village festival in May 2019 and Disability Day Art and Action (Dida) in December 2019. They strengthened visibility and gave an opportunity to discuss with active and interested people visiting the Abilis stand. Global education activities such as school and organization visits reached mainly children and young people. Cooperation with the Abilis ambassadors (Rosa Meriläinen and Silva Belghiti) and their active role in Finnish social media, raised awareness on disability and development as well.

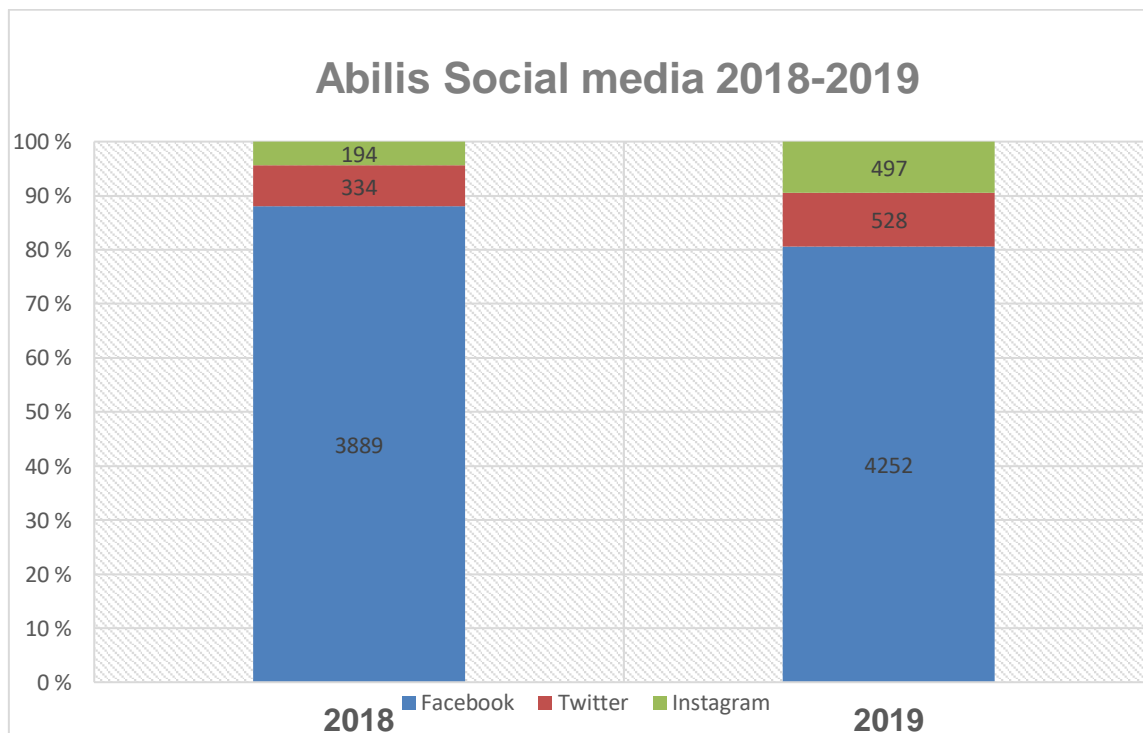


Figure 4. The numbers of likes and shares in FB, Twitter and Instagram in 2018 and 2019.



As a result, the visibility of Abilis has increased through various actions, in Finland and beyond. In 2019, Abilis received a growing number of inquiries regarding possible donations, internships, business cooperation and consultancy in Finland (targeted outcomes). Many local disability groups in developing countries participated in the interactive discussions. They made new contacts and were able to tell about their own experience on strengthening their organizations in mainstreaming and advocacy work. They also got new ideas on how to implement successful projects with Abilis funding. People with disabilities had access to information and got peer support through the use of social media.

With all the aforementioned activities and outputs, disability awareness was increased in Finnish society and among Finnish taxpayers. The Abilis efforts in Finland contributed to the disability inclusion in the Global South. One of the tangible outcomes refer to better understanding on how persons with disabilities can be active members in their society and organizations. Information passes more quickly than ever through social media.

According to some feedback, Abilis was seen as a social influencer at many levels and sectors, not only in development cooperation. The need for disability expertise does exist, and the tools in use provide relevant facilities to continue the work. The existing indicators work relatively well and the outputs and outcomes contribute to the overall impact of Abilis Foundation.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, AND DEVELOPMENT WORK

Abilis conducted an internal assessment on income generating (IGA) projects in Sierra Leone<sup>7</sup> and Nepal in 2019. The main purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of the IGA projects in order to develop the facilitation process for better outcomes. It was also important to identify the factors influencing the livelihoods of persons with disabilities to be able to provide more appropriate support for the local DPOs implementing IGA and livelihood projects. The findings and recommendations of the studies were in line with the earlier Abilis internal review<sup>8</sup> in 2018 and the evaluation carried out by Fiant Consulting Ltd. in 2016<sup>9</sup>. The main findings include the following, and more details are included in the summary (Annex 11.):

- A successful IGA project should support livelihood diversification so that people can have a wide range of products to sell or engage in more than one income generating activity. More diverse livelihood strategies enable people to respond appropriately to seasonal changes, adverse shocks and changes in customer demand.
- Improved access to assets support people to have more flexible livelihood opportunities.
- Limited financial assets and strong competition restrain persons with disabilities from expanding their businesses. It is important to increase business competitiveness.
- Possible means for persons with disabilities to gain new ideas for their livelihood opportunities include supporting training exposure and creating more opportunities for DPOs and their members to engage in learning and information sharing among their peers.
- Planning and implementing relevant and feasible projects require better understanding of the actual needs of the project participants, their other commitments and priorities.
- For project beneficiaries to attend the project activities, it is important to consider what time of day, week or season the activities are implemented, possible gender roles and responsibilities, and how these affect the beneficiaries' ability and motivation to participate.
- To influence societal factors, more awareness raising, advocacy and lobbying on disability rights and disability inclusion is needed.

<sup>7</sup> Kallio Suvi. (2019). Improving the livelihoods of persons with disabilities through income generating activities. Towards more effective and sustainable development projects in Sierra Leone. Master's Thesis. University of Helsinki.

<sup>8</sup> Katsui, Hisayo. (2018). An Impact Assessment Study of Abilis Work in Kyrgyzstan between 2002 and 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Fiant Consulting Ltd. Tran-Nguyen, Elina & Vormisto, Jaana. (2016). Evaluation of Abilis Foundation between 2012–2015 with the Case Studies on Cambodia, Vietnam and Ethiopia regarding Income Generating Projects and Projects of Empowering Women with Disabilities.

Based on the findings, Abilis developed a guideline to support planning and facilitation of IGA and livelihood projects<sup>10</sup>. It includes the main points that should be taken carefully into consideration and provides some practical tools such as examples of IGA projects and business ideas, assets and resources needed to run a business, how to make a simple market survey and a business plan. Further training will follow in 2020.

During the year 2019, Abilis revised several documents and manuals in order to better implement the programme approach and the indicators developed for the Abilis work. The following documents were revised and updated:

- Abilis application and reporting forms, Field assessment form
- Abilis Manuals 1–3, namely Project Planning Manual, Proposal Writing Manual and Reporting Manual.

Additionally, Abilis created a manual on Results-based management (RBM) to guide programme work with the results orientation. The RBM approach was discussed in internal trainings at the HQ and together with the country office staff during the Partnership seminar in October 2019.

Another essential theme of the development work was focusing on gender equality and safeguarding. The Abilis Gender & Disability manual was published during the first part of the year and the Safeguarding Policy work started during the second half. Both documents have been prepared through participatory approach, utilising the expertise of the Abilis country representatives.

Towards the end of the year, Abilis, KIOS and Siemenpuu Foundations started a joint evaluation on the foundations approach. The main aim of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the foundations' support to grantees/partners in their respective fields, and how these might be improved. The evaluation will have a strong utility focus and its findings and recommendations will be directed towards the Foundations' staff and partners and the MFA. The kick-off meeting occurred in December 2019, but the actual implementation started in 2020. Further details will be shared after the final evaluation report in May 2020.

## 5. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

### 5.1. Board of Abilis Foundation in 2019

The Board met six times during the year and followed the annual clock prepared for the core activities of the Foundation. In December, the Board selected a new Board for the coming 2-year period (2020–2021). The Board discussed several matters and approved revised Abilis guidelines for good governance and quality assurance.

### 5.2. Staff of Abilis Foundation in 2019

Committed and qualified staff members were the key for the successful work of Abilis. In 2019, various measures took place to support their professional growth and well-being. This included regular office meetings, teamwork and continuous support from the superior. Abilis offered in-house trainings and courses outside the HQ, teamwork practices and peer support particularly for discussing the programme approach, gender and disability, and RBM. External expertise was used in the preparation process of the RBM manual to deepen discussions and to get a wider perspective through different examples and experiences. Experience exchange was also linked with country programmes and projects. The special partner seminar in October in Helsinki offered the best forum for discussions about revised practices and guidelines.

In 2019 Abilis had nine permanent and four temporary contracted staff members at the HQs. One temporary contract of a programme coordinator was changed to the permanent from September 2019 onwards. Two part-time contracts were valid only part of the year. The contracts can be listed as the following:

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<sup>10</sup> Abilis Guideline for Sustainable Livelihoods. (2020).

- Executive Director
- Financial secretary
- Seven Programme coordinators (two part-time, 80 %)
- Project coordinator with divided tasks with Project researcher
- Communication secretary (part-time, 80%)
- Advocacy officer (part-time, 40 % March 2019 onwards)

Addition to the HQ staff, Abilis had locally recruited staff members in the country offices in Myanmar, Nepal, Tanzania, Vietnam and Uganda. Regular Skype meetings between programme coordinators and country office staff and active WhatsApp –groups with regular communication were carried out. These practices ensured better communication and teamwork between all parties (the HQ and POs/COs and South-South) and intensified the collaboration necessary for the programme approach.

### 5.3. Finance of Abilis Foundation in 2019

The annual MFA support was 1 950 000 €. Addition to that, Abilis had transferred money from the year 2018, 306 623 €, because of the delayed start of the new programme period after the funding decision by the MFA in 2018. Out of the available funding, 2 256 623 €, Abilis used 2 190 126 €. Majority of the funds (66 %) were used for projects, remaining parts to project management (554 480 €, 25 %) and to administration (187 805 €, 9 %). The money paid to the DPOs in the Global South was 1 339 059 €. The remaining money, 66 497 €, will be transferred to the year 2020.

Addition to the MFA programme funding, Abilis had funding from the Finnpartnership and the British donor, The National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF). The Finnpartnership programme, focusing on woollen design carpet production and employment of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia started in 2018 and money available in 2019 was in total 51 343 €. Out of this amount, 35 785 € was used. The NLCF funding was to be granted to livelihood projects in Tanzanian and Uganda and started with the pilot year (2018–2019). Total amount of funding available, transferred from 2018, was 92 739 €. All money was used by August 2019. The second phase of the NLCF funding, with the grant of 215 519 € (183 620 £), was approved in June 2019 and the official start was in late November 2019. The actual implementation will be in 2020–2021.

### 5.4. Other administrative issues

The HQ office of Abilis in Helsinki, Sörnäinen, shared the office premise with the sister organizations KIOS and Siemenpuu Foundations, Finnish Environment Education Association (FEE), Democratic Rights Association, Demla; Doctors Without Borders (MSF), and the Finnish Disability Partnership (FDP) that was the main tenant of the premise. Rent, cleaning, printing and IT solutions were shared, which led to cost-effective administration. Synergies were observed also in the substance: country specific and thematic discussions between programme coordinators of different organizations, project visits and trainings. Most collaboration occurred between the sister Foundations and some member organizations of the FDP.

Abilis Consulting Ltd, the company own by the Foundation, carried out three consultancy tasks and some trainings on disability inclusion. More efforts were put to strengthen collaboration with Finnish and International NGOs. The aim of these discussions was to plan joint interventions for coming years. Abilis Consulting will provide disability expertise to NGO interventions.

## 6. ASSESSMENT OF THE YEAR 2019

### 6.1. General assessment with a focus on the impact

The year 2019 was an active year with a great number of new projects under the well implemented country programmes, with growing number of advocacy meetings and cooperation discussions with

stakeholders. The planned activities were well implemented, leading to good level of results that contribute to the impact.

The discussed outcomes (in previous chapters) indicate the success of the Abilis work at different levels. The Results Framework with indicators, targets and assumptions was revised, and not all finalised projects followed the present framework. This remains a challenge also in the future because of the Abilis grant making mechanism. In practice, projects from earlier years which started before the use of new indicators and targets, are coming to the end. These projects cannot be expected to follow new guidelines. However, all Abilis indicators, both output and outcome level indicators, are based on years of experience and observations as well as a participatory working method with programme countries and their experts. This ensures that more or less all projects contribute to existing set of indicators, or at least to a part of them. The overall objective, the impact, of the Abilis work is based on the main purpose of Abilis. All annual activities contribute to it. It seems to be that the triple-track approach of Abilis is relevant and the achieved outcomes demonstrate that the development is going towards realisation of disability rights. This necessary improvement will make it possible that persons with disabilities can live dignified and productive lives.

In 2019, disability inclusion and mainstreaming made good progress, both in Finland and globally. Over the last 3–4 years, more and more forums and actors have shown growing interest towards disability inclusion. This applies to donors, institutions and organizations. Donor forums have shared good practices to require better involvement of DPOs in operations. Disability markers, guidelines, checklists and other concrete tools have been developed to ensure disability inclusion.

Abilis has utilised this momentum and strengthened collaboration with Finnish and International agencies and participation in different networks. Abilis has offered expertise based on wide and own experience on disability. Experts with disabilities come from Finland but often also from the named partner countries and organisations. Their contribution provides contextual understanding that is highly important for the development work. Additionally, the cooperation can contribute to the other actions taken place in the named countries and societies. Close collaboration with local DPOs ensure joint actions supporting overall objectives.

#### 6.1.1. Contribution to civil society development

Organizations, self-help groups and local associations of persons with disabilities are in the focus of Abilis. By supporting projects of these actors, Abilis strengthens one part of civil society in the programme countries. The Abilis tasks outsourced to the country offices and partner organisations build their capacities and support local cooperation between DPOs and stakeholders. This work is highly important because very often DPOs are not considered as part of civil society. Through projects DPOs build their capacity and visibility. Project participants play an active role both in implementation of project activities but also in advocating. Projects may bring closer communication and co-work among group members, but also with other organizations. Often projects with a foreign donor require an official permission from the local government. Regular reporting and other means of cooperation may also be requested. As a result, a relatively small Abilis-funded project may lead to essential contacts and skills that a DPO would also need in the future. To become a real actor among other NGOs and a promoter of disability rights, a DPO needs active members, enough skills and contacts.

The Abilis organizational indicators have been developed to measure these named elements that are also essential in future operations of DPOs. Similarly, Abilis has paid attention to the important role of group members who need to be able to participate and become empowered, before they can proclaim their rights and be active citizens. The set indicators lead to observe reasonable changes during a project.

Abilis recognises the ***shrinking space of civil society***, the general trend in the world today. It has been especially worrying because many persons with disabilities are vulnerable to the changes due to lack of alternative choices and flexible resources that stem from deeply rooted severe discrimination against them. During 2019, establishment of a new DPO was difficult in Vietnam and

the reporting requirement by the government increased in Tajikistan. Many DPOs were in difficulties due to weak capacity to fulfil the requirements. In Uganda, the official validation process of all NGOs led to unclear and worrisome atmosphere. The country office found out details and advice from the officials and made it available for DPOs. Further support and capacity building as well as close follow-up will continue in 2020, in all programme countries.

### 6.1.2. Ownership, accountability and transparency

In the Abilis grant-making work, projects are initiated and managed by grantee organizations. Abilis offers financial and technical support, but the ownership is of the grantees. The grantee groups are responsible to implement and report the planned activities and the use of money. All responsibilities are stated in the agreement between Abilis and the grantee organization. Abilis provides reporting forms and guidelines for financial management. It also supports grantees to follow the local legislation, conduct an audit (when applicable), and to fulfil all obligations officials name. This may include i.e. reporting, taxes, and registration formats. Grantees are requested to follow good governance, accountability and transparency in all of their work. Democratic decision making and the participatory approach are included in good governance. Through trainings and advice, Abilis ensures necessary skills to grantees.

Abilis has zero tolerance for corruption and sexual harassment. Early measures are taken if any signs or requests come up. Regular communication with grantee groups is one of the key tools to monitor the implementation of accountability and transparency.

Through ownership, persons with disabilities are provided with an opportunity to build their capacity to become equal members of their society. Good governance tools support capacity of grantees. These principles were carefully followed in 2019.

### 6.1.3. Risks and challenges, lessons learnt

The Abilis risk management covers potential risks at different levels, starting from project level to country level, up to the global and HQ levels. In order to manage the existing risks related to projects and country programmes, Abilis improves the grant-making and programme management procedures and mitigation measures. More compact revision of the Abilis risk management will be conducted in 2020. The Abilis HQ collects risks from country programmes through its annual reporting format. Projects are carefully monitored to recognise risks at early stage.

During the year 2019, **major challenges** remain similar to earlier years and occurred **at project level**, influencing the facilitation work of the Abilis facilitators and country coordinators. Many SHs and DPOs at grassroots level lacked management and budgeting skills. Project plans were not realistic and required modifications. Capacity of these groups was also often weak to understand the need for changes and clarifications. This occurred particularly in the situations where an Abilis grant was the very first external funding and the planned project the very first project that the grantee group carried out. Delays in planning and implementing projects and some terminations annually are logical consequences of the limited capacity of grantees. These occurred also in 2019.

The capacity of Abilis country offices is a key factor in the success of projects. Applicants and grantee organisations need external support and mentoring. Main responses to challenges at project level included face-to-face discussions and on-the-job trainings. The country office staff put lots of time and human resources to support applicants and grantee groups. However, active commitment of DPOs and their members remain necessary for successful projects and are named assumptions in the Abilis RF. Despite challenges in project implementation, Abilis did not find any financial mismanagement or misuse of money in 2019.

Additionally, some **practical and technical issues** created challenges also in 2019. Among them, weather conditions, problems with internet connection and difficulties in communication with groups

(no mobile phones/not reachable/local tribal languages) were the most common ones. In some occasions, internal conflicts among group members or the collaboration with local officials created challenges. In most cases, the problems were solved in due time without much delay. The country representatives used negotiation and advocacy skills to overcome challenges with local authorities.

**The programme approach** with indicator development and form revisions created extra work for the Abilis HQ. As anticipated, the RF needed modifications and the implementation of the RBM required time and resources. It was not easy to train the HQ and country office staff to understand the RBM and to gather data and report results at the outcome level. The former model of focusing on activities and outputs, as well as the Abilis role as a grant-maker that does not interfere too much in project and country programme work, limited the development during the reporting year. Further training and team discussions must continue to strengthen the RBM and programme approach work. This will support the development to measure wider changes and impacts that projects and country programmes achieve. It was notable that many staff members found the annual plan of actions of the country programmes supporting the grant-making work. It made the planning, reporting and assessing results easier, comparing to the earlier working modality of Abilis. Due to extra efforts, the programme development work has created positive measures. More practice in 2020–2021 could lead to better structured annual reporting and combining of data and indicators.

The **country level work with communications and advocacy activities** continued with minor challenges. Abilis representatives played an active role in different forums and networks. Cooperation with many Finnish and international stakeholders and local authorities deepened. Participation required time and resources, discussions and meetings, as well as patience. Collaboration with big organisations progressed only gradually. Abilis could have proceeded much quicker. This reflects the unique nature of Abilis – being flexible and open for different collaborations. It was recognised that local authorities, decision makers and other stakeholders, e.g. mainstream CSOs, media and academia are willing to cooperate with DPOs, which is also the assumption of Abilis. Still, there is room for improvements on how to collaborate and to ensure better understanding on disability inclusion and involvement of DPOs in society and in interventions.

One of the biggest lessons learnt in 2019, was **South-South cooperation** and importance of experience sharing with peers and colleagues. This was shared in October, when the Abilis representatives from the programme countries gathered in Helsinki. Lively and spontaneous discussions took place during the week, addition to those sessions and meetings that were in the official programme. Discussions included various topics on project facilitation and monitoring tasks, programme approach with RBM, cooperation with stakeholders and Abilis visibility in the named programme countries. Good practices and project examples were shared. Solutions to overcome difficult situations were also covered. This kind of working method strengthened team spirit and motivation, in addition to professional growth. It also taught cultural differences and the richness that the team has. Wider understanding of the Abilis approach and work support successful implementation of the global programme. More similar seminars and forums should be arranged in the future.

## 6.2. Effectiveness of the Abilis Global Programme

Abilis maximizes financial support to projects in the Global South. This is due to the fact that the grant-making work through the country programmes remained as the core of the programme. The triple-track approach widened the effectiveness by offering mainstreaming and advocacy forums to increase disability inclusion in Finland and globally. Open dialogue with different stakeholders, joint actions and network cooperation strengthened the development towards equal rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities. The existing financial resources were used effectively and committed staff members worked hard and in a competent way. The active Board of Abilis supported and contributed to the annual operation in a remarkable way. Based on this summary, Abilis Foundation was able to produce a desired result in 2019.

### 6.3. Linkage with the Finnish Development Policy Results

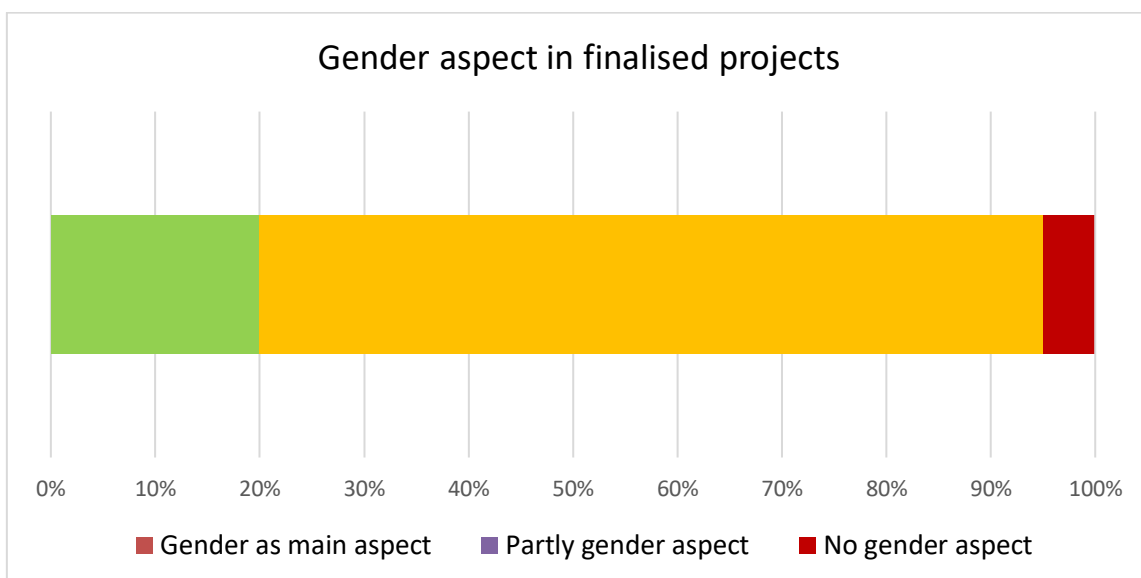
The grant-making and disability inclusive activities of Abilis contributed in many ways towards the realization of the Finnish Development Policy based on a human rights-based approach and followed through on the aggregated indicators based on the SDGs. The Abilis expertise on disability rights and development was used by the government at the policy level in supporting the operationalization of disability inclusion in foreign policies and funding instruments. Among such activities, Abilis was actively participating in dialogue with different MFA units and Embassies for making country programmes disability inclusive, when preparing the guideline on disability inclusion for humanitarian interventions, and in disability coordination group meetings. Abilis was entrusted to be part of the official delegation of Finland, in June 2019, in the UN Conference of the State Parties (COSP) in New York. Regular visits to the Embassies in the Abilis programme countries strengthened trust and collaboration. The Finnish Embassies have been kept up to date with on-going projects in their respective countries. These form an important part of Finnish Development Policy as Finland continues to be the one of the biggest and most active donors in the disability sector. This cooperation between Abilis and MFA supports the implementation of the UNCRPD, particularly regarding Article 32 on international cooperation.

#### 6.3.1. Gender equality with focus on girls and women with a disability

Gender equality and specifically the living conditions, human rights and status of women and girls with disabilities has been one of the strategic focuses of Abilis for the last ten years. As it is also the focus of the Finnish Development Policy, and one of the SDGs (#5), Abilis wants to introduce the thematic result as follows:

When looking at the division of female and male participants in the finalised projects, the portion of female participants was bigger than males: 54 % of the participants were female. This result indicates that Abilis has succeeded to follow gender equality in its projects well. This is supported by the fact that the trend has remained at around the same level during the last years.

For considering the wider gender aspect of projects, more results can be shared: There was only 5 % of the finalised projects where gender was not considered. About 20 % of projects were focusing on gender equality by supporting groups and organizations of women with disabilities and 75 % had gender equality as one of the project elements. Figure 3. demonstrates the gender aspect of the finalised projects in 2019.



*Figure 3. Gender aspect in the finalised projects in 2019.*

As a result, many more girls and women with disabilities have been deliberately empowered through Abilis-funded projects. This means that Abilis has addressed the matter of inequality and supported girls and women to fight against multiple discrimination that they experience in families and communities due to their gender, disability, and poverty level. Among project results, women with disabilities have improved knowledge and access to sexual and reproductive health services i.e. in Nepal and Kyrgyzstan. Empowered women and girls with disabilities and their own organizations are equipped with improved skills and knowledge to contribute to family life and community in Uganda and Tanzania. Better income level makes it possible to send children to school and meet basic needs of their families i.e. in Ethiopia and Vietnam.

#### 6.4. Contribution to SDGs

Abilis contributes to many SDGs and targets, even with limited contribution. In practice, many projects focus on poverty reduction (Goal 1) and increase food security for persons with disabilities and their families (Goal 2). Annually some projects address health services, recently focusing on sexual and reproductive health of women and girls with disabilities (Goal 3). Education and accessible schools (Goal 4.) are at the target of projects emphasizing living conditions of children and youth with disabilities. Gender equality (Goal 5) is the strategic priority of Abilis, targeting at improved possibilities to women with disabilities to participate. WASH related projects were also supported in 2019, mainly as income generation for persons with disabilities but covering access to clean water and accessible sanitation facilities as well (Goal 6). Employment and job opportunities (Goal 8.) remain the main content of projects year after year. Reducing inequalities includes inclusion and empowerment (Goal 10.) that are core elements in the Abilis work. Supporting accessibility in society (Goal 11., 16.) becomes reality in some projects addressing infrastructure, legislation and national norms in the programme countries. The Abilis guideline for environmental sustainability addresses the SDGs related to responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) and climate action (Goal 13). Special attention was and will put on peace, justice and strong institutions, as part of global justice, according to the UNCRPD. Abilis contributes to Goal 17 by sharing information on the situation of persons with disabilities in the Global South. Partnering with the disability and human rights sector and development and humanitarian aid actors brings added value to the Abilis work, in addition to contributing to SDGs.

Meaningful participation and empowerment of persons with disabilities at all different levels, including grassroots level, remained the focus of Abilis in 2019. It needs to become a norm in the process towards achieving the SDGs. Inequality reduction is relevant both locally and globally for persons with disabilities, particularly for those in the Global South.

#### 6.5. Climate change adaptation and the environmental element

There is a growing trend in the Abilis country programmes and in projects to take climate change and adaptation into consideration. Previously, Abilis has created guidelines for animal husbandry and chicken farming, after consulting environment experts, to develop an acceptable way of supporting grantees with their initiatives. An additional guideline was also drafted for office work, meetings and travelling measures.

In 2020, Abilis will prepare a comprehensive guideline how to operate in the case of climate change and disability. The fact is that persons with disabilities are in the most vulnerable situation in human catastrophes due to climate change and pollution. At the same time, there are many experts in the Abilis network, who can contribute to the guideline due to earlier experiences on the issue. Abilis will report on the development of the manual and its implementation.



## ANNEXES

## Annex 1. Abilis Results Framework 2019

| IMPACT   | INDICATORS   |
|--|--|
| PWD have equal rights and opportunities with others, and are enjoying dignified and productive lives | Progress with CRPD and its implementation (programme country is taking steps to ratify CRPD, CRPD is ratified and action plan is made, report on CRPD and shadow report (if available) show progress on implementation and of realization of rights) |
|  | Increased number of national policies, guidelines and programs are disability inclusive  |
|  | Number of direct and indirect right-holders who participate the programme  |
|  | Number of DPOs and groups of PWD who participate the programme   |

| OUTCOMES   | INDICATORS  |
|--|---|
| 1. DPOs are strong actors in their societies   | % of DPOs who have increased their number of active members   |
|  | % of DPOs who have increased the contacts and cooperation with stakeholders, are assigned or get invitations from local authorities or other stakeholders types of contacts |
|  | % of DPOs who have increased their funding, types of finding  |
|  | % of DPOs who feel increased appreciation from the side of community, types of appreciation   |
| 2. PWD are socially empowered  | % of project participants who have started to participate more in social events of community, reasons for participation   |
|  | % of project participants who have made new friends   |
| 3. PWD are economically empowered  | % of project participants who have started to manage their own finances   |
|  | % of project participants who are self-employed or employed   |
| 4. Disability inclusion is improved in communities   | % of families who have increased their support to CWD to participate in everyday life, types of support   |
|  | % of DPOs whose support from duty-bearers has increased, types of support   |
|  | % of project participants who experience more enabling environment, kinds of enabling environment   |
| 5. Political decision makers', authorities' and other stakeholders' capacity to work for disability inclusion and mainstreaming is increased | Number and types of established dialogues and collaboration with political decision makers, authorities and other stakeholders  |
|  | Number and types of expertise assignments for PWD or DPOs requested by authorities  |

| OUTPUTS  | INDICATORS   |
|--|--|
| 1.1 DPOs' capacity is strengthened on management and organizational skills, human rights and advocacy  | Number of project applications, DPOs or groups received funding and final reports, decreased number of interruptions   |
|  | Number of grantee DPOs trained on organizational, project and financial management, leadership, advocacy, awareness raising, human rights and thematic areas & number of participants in trainings (M/F) |
|  | Number of Abilis representatives trained on programme and project management, various thematic areas & number of participants in trainings (M/F)   |
| 2.1 PWDs' awareness on disability is increased and life skills strengthened  | Number of field visits where peer support, knowledge on human rights, disability and life skills are shared with project participants  |
|  | Number of project participants who know CRPD (M/F)   |
| 3.1 PWDs' technical skills on IGA are improved   | Number and types of IGA trainings & number of participants in trainings (M/F)  |
|  | Number of project participants received facilitation on running businesses (M/F)   |
| 4.1 Awareness is raised on disability and global development   | Number and types of awareness raising events organized or participated   |
|  | Number and types of brochures and other materials published and translated   |
|  | Number of articles published and written by Abilis representatives   |
| 4.2 Improved accessibility   | Number and types of necessary assistive devices provided to PWD (M/F)  |
|  | Number and types of accessibility adjustments/renovations to houses and/or project sites and offices   |
| 5.1 New contacts and dialogue between decision makers, authorities and other stakeholders are created and supported, and information is shared on disability | Number of meetings participated or organized with decision makers, authorities and other stakeholders  |
|  | Number of interventions made at strategic events   |
|  | Number of written concept notes and papers written to decision makers, authorities and other stakeholders  |
|  | Number of new contacts created and networks participated   |

## Annex 2. A short summary of the Myanmar country programme

Thematically the Myanmar country programme focused on income generating and livelihood activities as well as capacity building of disability organisations and persons with disabilities. The geographical focus was on 7 areas: Kachin State, Kayin State, Bago Region, Shan State, Kayah State, Chin State and Yangon Region. Some of these regions were taken into the programme as there are other Finnish NGOs working in those areas, namely Finn Church Aid in Kayin and Finnish Refugee Council in Kayah, so that Abilis and the other Finnish actors can complement each other's work. Abilis has a country office with 2 staff members, a country coordinator and a programme and finance officer. Abilis has been trying to get the country office registered since its inception in 2014, but the process is still on-going.

The biggest disability organisation in Myanmar, Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI), supports the Abilis country office with work space, office utilities and necessary relationships with local government. Abilis has a partnership agreement with MILI and pays for the services provided. All money transfers to the groups go through the Abilis country office account due to auditing procedures.

### **Increased capacity and economic empowerment**

In 2019, the country office facilitated 13 new projects. Through finalised projects Abilis supported 50 persons with a disability. The capacity and income of grassroots level disability groups increased, thus increasing the sustainability of these organisations. In addition, individual persons with disabilities have become employed and have received more income. Attitudes of communities have become more positive in relation to disability. In addition, the participation of persons with disabilities has increased: For example, already 10 sub-committees were set up under the government organised National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Communication with the government is better, although the processes are very slow e.g. registration. Close cooperation with other Finnish NGOs in Myanmar has given both Abilis and its cooperation partners a chance to learn from each other. Abilis has also contributed into the UNCRPD processes in Myanmar.

### **Challenges**

Abilis is trying to build the capacity of the disability movement in Myanmar by supporting disability groups in different, sometimes very remote areas, of the country. Travelling to these areas is challenging and takes time, and communicating with groups is slow due to poor communication possibilities. In addition, the capacity of rural grassroots level groups is very poor and they need a lot of support from the Abilis country office staff. There are so many ethnic groups in Myanmar that it is impossible for the country staff to master all necessary languages. Thus, communication with the groups is challenging. However, Abilis' unique way of providing funding as well as support at the same time does strengthen the disability movement in different areas and finally on the national level. Abilis' unique approach of being able to apply for funds and report in the local language enables the capacity building of groups that would otherwise be left outside all funding opportunities.

## Annex 3. A short summary of the Nepal country programme

### Description of the Nepal Country Programme 2019

The country programme's themes were IGA, capacity building and empowerment of women with disabilities. The country office built awareness about the Abilis grant-making mechanism and achievement through social media and distribution of brochures. The news of Abilis project outcomes have been produced in local media (Nepali Language) and in the form of a news bulletin through an online platform. The country office coordinated with the grantee organisations to establish effective communication with local authorities (elected bodies) for the allocation of the local grant for the vocational skill of persons with disabilities as follow-up activities under the Abilis grant. This strategy has improved the scale of allocation of local budget for the self-help groups of persons with disabilities.

The country office processed 2 fast track grant (FT) applications and 22 regular grant applications in 2019. The office processed 15 mid-term reports and 14 final reports. During 2019 the Abilis country office was very active on the national level, making an impact on national level disability politics:

- The Abilis country coordinator organised 7 meetings and 7 policy dialogues with the Ministry of Education (about inclusive education policy), Ministry of Federal Affairs (local development for the allocation of local government budget for persons with disabilities), and the Ministry of Home Affairs for disability inclusive disaster risk reduction plan within the DRR strategy in July.
- The Abilis country office organised policy dialogues with the National Planning Commission in November 2019 for the inclusion of DPOs in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) for covering disability inclusive targets in the review of the state report of SDGs to be submitted to the UN and to be reviewed at the UN General Assembly in September, 2020.
- The Abilis country office was invited by the Ministry of Women, Children and Elder Citizens to finalise the regulation of the "Act on the rights of persons with disabilities" (ARPD). The enactment of the act was a landmark achievement to ensure disability rights shifting from welfare to the rights based approach following CRPD principles. Though the regulation has been put forward by the Ministry of Women, Children and Elder Citizens, a line ministry of disability concerns, it is yet to be passed by the Cabinet Ministry.

The country office cooperated actively with other Finnish CSOs/NGOs working in Nepal:

- Established a working relationship with other Finnish NGOs for mainstreaming disability into development cooperation. Such as the joint workshop with WWF and FRC through WWF Nepal and Nepal Red Cross in October 2019, in Dhulikhel. Similarly, the Abilis country coordinator actively participated in the strategy planning seminar of Nepal Red Cross for the execution of the four years project under Finnish Red Cross in Salyan and Rolpa districts.
- Abilis Country Office coordinated with Finn Church Aid (FCA) to develop disability inclusive strategy and build capacity of FCA staff for disability inclusive principles. The partnership will be developed in 2020 in close coordination with Abilis HQ.

### Challenges

The terrain of Nepal is very challenging for everyone. Remote villages in the mountains and in Terai, where Abilis grants are most needed, are very hard to reach because the road network is very poor or non-existent. For this reason, most of the projects have been implemented in the Kathmandu Valley. Other challenges include the old caste system, and the low capacity of DPOs caused by lack of education. Traditionally men have been the dominant gender in Nepal, resulting in discrimination of all women, including women with disabilities, who are generally not allowed to become board members of DPOs. A great challenge faced by the country office was the fact that assistant country coordinator Ms. Tilottama Gyawali left the job in February 2019 to do an internship as an auditor. This led to a lack of resources and slowed down the activities of the country office.

### The way forward

Abilis will make an effort to reach DPOs and particularly women with disabilities in remote areas, and to continue awareness raising and advocacy work on the national and international level.

## Annex 4. A short summary of the Vietnam country programme

Thematically the Vietnam country programme focused on vocational training and income generating, as well as supporting girls and women with disabilities. Within these thematic areas, the programme combined capacity building of DPOs/self-help groups and participants as well as disability related awareness raising. Geographically, Abilis work concentrated on Hanoi and Da Nang, where Abilis is registered. Abilis has had a country office in Vietnam since 2014 and the present registration of the office is in force 5.6.2017–5.6.2020. The Abilis Vietnam country office has 2 staff members: a country coordinator and a financial assistant who are both women with disabilities. In addition, the Vietnam country office took on some responsibilities in supporting the Myanmar country office. The biggest disability organisation in Vietnam, DP Hanoi, supports the Abilis country office with work space, office utilities and necessary relationships with local government.

In 2019, the country office focused on the three main themes and worked to mainstream gender issues into all Abilis work. For different types of funded projects, women and girls with disabilities have been paid attention to, especially by building their capacity and promoting their economic empowerment. Women with disabilities have been trained, gained jobs, and have increased their income.

Most funded projects in 2019 were livelihood projects. Abilis supported 417 persons with disabilities through its finalised projects in 2019. Persons with disabilities can participate in society due to training received and assistive devices provided. They are economically empowered due to new employment opportunities after vocational training and new life skills acquired e.g. IT skills. Awareness about disability and the ability of persons with disabilities has increased. Disability organisations are more sustainable and have better capacity due to Abilis funding. Women with disabilities have better knowledge on gender equality and domestic violence prevention. They have acquired tailoring skills and become empowered. Participation of women with disabilities has increased.

In 2019, the country office has piloted the use of the ABCD method (Assets Based Community Development) while facilitating the applications, especially the applications focusing on income generating and livelihoods. This new approach together with a participatory approach has brought good results for some funded projects. The Abilis country coordinator has been part of the UNCRPD processes e.g. drafting the alternative report. The country coordinator is also supporting the newly founded network of women with disabilities.

### Challenges

Due to government regulations, DPOs face many challenges in the establishment phase. There are no new DPOs throughout Vietnam as most of the self-help groups and clubs are still operating without registration. Thus, these groups face many difficulties to access overseas funds. However, the Vietnamese Party issued a new regulation named CT39 to strengthen the leadership of the Party to do the disability work. This brings good signals to the disability movement. The Abilis country office has advocated strongly to the Hanoi and Da Nang Department of Foreign Affairs for them to ease the approval processes for disability groups and their projects. Abilis works closely with the Finnish Embassy in Hanoi.

## Annex 5. A short summary of the Tajikistan country programme

In 2019 the country programme in Tajikistan concentrated on two major themes 1) Capacity building of DPO's and persons with disabilities in project management, organizational; 2) Awareness raising on disability and human rights including UNCRPD. The chosen thematic priorities were relevant in helping persons with disabilities of Tajikistan to become self-confident and empowered as well as raising awareness on disability and the UNCRPD among local authorities.

The implementation plan was to facilitate 12 applications within in the geographical area of Dushanbe, Sogd and Khatlon regions. The planned 12 projects would reach 1000 PWDs as direct beneficiaries, out of them 50% women with disabilities. Indirectly, the planned projects should have reached 1350 individuals with disabilities.

### **Towards ratification of UNCRPD and inclusive society**

The major theme of the Abilis Country Programme in Tajikistan was awareness raising on disability and human rights including the UNCRPD among persons with disabilities and society in general. 12 projects were implemented under this theme in 2019. This activity was related to the fact that on March 22, 2018 the president of Tajikistan signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The disability community in Tajikistan had been fighting for this for a long time. With Abilis grants, the Tajiks DPOs have published and distributed materials related to the UNCRPD in Tadjik, Uzbek, and Russian languages as well as published the UNCRPD material in braille (for the blind) and in sign-language (for the deaf). The DPOs have trained persons with disabilities in Tajikistan to recognize and acknowledge their own rights, as well as local authorities to be aware of the UNCRPD, and lobbying the ratification of the UN Convention among local authorities and internationally. These trainings and round table discussions have not only been happening in Dushanbe, but other regions as well.

After the signing of the UNCRPD, there was a need for an additional awareness raising campaign to keep the process in progress. Therefore, during the past two years, DPOs implemented an awareness raising campaign in Dushanbe, Sogd and Khatlon regions to inform persons with disabilities, local authorities, and society about the signed convention in order to promote its further ratification. The campaign was also directed towards changing the perspective of society on persons with disabilities as well as strengthening and creating the relationship between the DPOs and local authorities and other stakeholders. Over 1749 persons with disabilities persons (out of which about 926 were women with disabilities) participated in the campaign and information reached about 80 000 persons. During the campaign, new leaders were found among persons with disabilities, many of them women with disabilities, which is a sign of **PWDs and women with disabilities being socially empowered**.

The implemented projects have also contributed to the way society thinks about persons with disabilities and to the creation of equal opportunities, which signifies **improved disability inclusion in the society**. This change has been documented in many personal interviews made during project implementation. It can also be noted that the negative attitude of local authorities towards persons with disabilities was no longer listed as a major challenge for organizing these advocacy events as was the case in the previous years.

Most of the implemented projects were implemented jointly with several DPOs. The DPOs have joined their forces nationally as well as locally for this important cause. Some of the DPOs work with other international NGOs, such as UN Agencies and OSCE. The UNCRPD campaign has created and strengthened interaction between DPOs and government representatives in various fields (health, education, employment etc.). DPOs have received invitations to government meetings and committees related to disability issues and the government is asking their opinion more often. The outcome of this campaign is that **DPOs have become stronger actors in society** than before and that the **capacity of political decision makers and other stakeholders to work for disability inclusion has risen. Capacity building of DPOs**

The second major theme of the Abilis country programme in 2019 was capacity building of DPOs and persons with disabilities, especially empowerment of women with disabilities. Sixteen DPOs implemented projects under this theme during 2019. The 16 funded DPOs (with 858 individual persons with disabilities as direct beneficiaries and 3500 indirect beneficiaries) were informed on modern understanding of disability issues, trained to have better capacity in office and project management and supported to have necessary office equipment and have better possibilities for further activities in promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in Tajikistan. These changes have made **DPOs stronger actors in their societies**. The implemented projects contributed to increased self-esteem of persons with disabilities which resulted to them **being socially and** to some extent **economically empowered**. Especially, young women with disabilities from rural areas were empowered. One new DPO of women with disabilities was found in Khatlon region, which is one of the more remote areas of Tajikistan.

### **Finalised projects focused on Human Rights and promotion of the UNCRPD**

There were 5 finalised projects during the year 2019. Three of them are classified under the theme of awareness raising on disability and promoting human rights, including the UNCRPD. One is under the theme of capacity building of DPOs and persons with disabilities in project management. One finalised project was started before the country programme, and is not classified under these major themes, although it contains elements of both major themes. The 5 finalised projects engaged more direct and indirect beneficiaries than originally planned (planned 505/ actual 628 direct beneficiaries).

When looking at the awareness raising projects, over 500 persons with disabilities have become aware about their rights and participated to the UNCRPD promoting activities and become right holders, Over 45000 persons though out the country, not only in the main cities but also in the rural areas, have found out about the UNCRPD and human rights of persons with disabilities, which has improved disability inclusion in the society. Many persons with disabilities reported in the individual interviews that society is now accepting them more and more.

The large number of direct participants also indicates that the DPOs have increased their members, especially active members. DPOs are becoming stronger actors in society and their interaction with other NGOs as well as local authorities have increased. In addition, one new DPO was established which is an example of persons with disabilities becoming socially empowered and that the DPO movement in Tajikistan is becoming stronger thanks to Abilis funding activities.

### **Shrinking space of civil society and low capacity of DPOs – the main challenges**

The main challenges that were faced were the poor internet connection, staff changes in the country office, low capacity of DPOs, and increasing restriction and control from authorities towards civil society.

One big challenge is that there are nowadays many unreliable companies offering their services on the internet: Sometimes it is difficult to know, whether the company is reliable even though you check it carefully. In Tajikistan, one DPO is facing difficulties because of ordering equipment and services from an unreliable company.

There are also many new requirements for DPOs in the NGO law of Tajikistan. The organizations who receive foreign funding have to report it to the Ministry of Justice following a certain procedure. For DPOs who do not have sufficient capacity the requirements are very demanding. However, this challenge has been answered by providing extra-training to DPOs on financial management.

The staff changes delayed the handling of applications and final reports. As a result of this, most of the final reports of the projects implemented last year could not meet the deadline of the annual financial report of 2019.

## Annex 6. A short summary of the Ethiopian country programme

### **Employment and economic empowerment in the focus of Country Programme in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is one of the focus countries of Abilis. Abilis has worked in Ethiopia since year 2007 with its partner organization Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD) that was established in year 2005. ECDD has been facilitating Abilis grant-making activities in the country, focusing primarily on income generating activities of groups/cooperatives of persons with different kind of disabilities and building the capacities of local organisations of people with disabilities.

### **Results of the Country Programme**

The Country Programme of Ethiopia 2018–2021 aims at improving employment and economic empowerment of people with disabilities. Following the 4-year program, the thematic areas in year 2019 were economic empowerment and capacity building of persons with disabilities and their organizations. Majority of the projects were small and medium-sized income generating projects (IGAs) focusing on the export carpet business and other types of businesses such as sanitation services and furniture making. Few projects contributed also to civil society and human rights by training new tactile sign-language interpreters and supporting persons with disabilities to participate in the 7<sup>th</sup> African Forum on Visual Impairment held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A cross-cutting theme in all projects was women with disabilities and increasing their participation at different levels of society. Geographical focus was in the regions of Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), and in the cities of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. Total amount of 111 062 € was granted to new projects. Finalised projects benefited approximately 175 persons with disabilities, and majority of them (61 %) were women with disabilities. Total number of indirect beneficiaries of finalised projects was 5366 (one project having 5000 indirect beneficiaries as customers).

Finalised IGA projects have made persons with disabilities more economically empowered, since their vocational skills and business skills have been strengthened through various trainings and their income level has increased. As a result, project participants started to afford their basic needs, send their children to schools, and cover their family's medical expenses. Although the number of project participants has not increased during the projects, many groups report about their plans to expand their activities and recruit more persons with disabilities. IGA projects have also contributed to the outcome of social empowerment of persons with disabilities when project participants were trained on disability issues and the UNCRPD under the Abilis Finnpartnership Programme. As a result, persons with disabilities' awareness on disability was increased and their life skills strengthened.

Abilis Country Programme is supported by Finnpartnership Programme that focuses on Sera Helsinki's export carpet business. The ultimate goal of the 2-year program is to support Ethiopian persons with disabilities to gain economic empowerment and independence through income generation activities focused on the carpet-making business. It is estimated that well over 200 persons of disabilities have benefited from the export carpet business in the year 2019.

Abilis HQ terminated 10 extremely delayed projects in year 2019 that were started during the time period of 2015–2017. The most typical reason behind the delay in almost all projects was internal conflict among the group members that led to disintegration of the group. The groups faced also challenges related to lack of suitable work premise and electricity power from the government's side. In addition, the groups faced the lack of market transactions which is a common challenge in majority of the IGA projects in Ethiopia. Based on the background checks of ECDD, there was no money misuse or other financially unclear issues observed. Thus, Abilis will not ask money back from the groups.

### **Changes at country level**



A new proclamation on Civil Societies Organizations (CSOs) was prepared and got approval from the House of Peoples' representatives in year 2018, and came to force in the year 2019. As a result, there are no funding restrictions for CSOs to promote human rights, good governance, and related themes such as anti-corruption and conflict resolution anymore. In addition, CSOs are nowadays allowed to engage in any legal forms of income generating activities (IGAs). In year 2019, Ethiopia also continued the process to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty focusing on persons with visual impairments' access to open jobs, and monitored the implementation of the UNCRPD that was ratified already in the year 2010.

Measures to include persons with disabilities in different development areas are gradually taking place in Ethiopia. For example, many new buildings are more accessible than previous ones and the problem of transportation is being gradually solved. In year 2019, free tickets were provided for 500 persons with cross disabilities living with extreme poverty to use city public buses freely for a year. On top of this, the government has allowed persons with disabilities to import duty free cars for their use, and many of them are using cars to move from place to place independently and becoming owners of vehicles.

All the aforementioned changes taking place in Ethiopia support Abilis' Theory of Change although the Ethiopia country programme has not had direct effect on the changes happening at the higher levels of society. As there has been restrictions for foreign donors to work on human rights, Abilis has mainly focused on supporting employment and economic empowerment of persons with disabilities in the grassroots level. Thus, results are seen mainly at the individual and organizational level, rather than in the political and societal level although the number of contacts, cooperation, and invitations from local authorities and other stakeholders are increased and more meetings with those actors are being participated and organized more than before. Disability awareness and inclusion of the community has also started to improve as persons with disabilities have increased their self-esteem and self-confidence, made new friends and started to participate in social events more than before. As a result of increased awareness, persons with disabilities have started to claim their rights in the different tiers of government structures and their appreciation within the community has started to increase. Thus, it can be said that the Abilis country programme has strengthened the disability movement in Ethiopia.

### **The way forward**

The year 2019 was very challenging and many difficult decisions were made during the year. Majority of the challenges were related to the delayed projects and the Finnpartnership Programme which was not implemented according to the plan. As the problems could not be solved and ECDD felt that activities related to business are far from its mission and values, the collaboration between Abilis and ECDD under Finnpartnership Programme ended in autumn 2019.

During the year 2019, Abilis learned that projects related to the Finnpartnership Programme should be kept separate from other IGA projects. As projects related to various activities of the export carpet business need continuous technical support, monitoring, training, problem solving, creating contacts to government offices and various stakeholders, and linking projects together, they should be coordinated and managed as a whole, not as an individual project. Thus, preparations for establishing a new DPO, who could coordinate and facilitate the whole carpet production chain and projects related to it, has been started in year 2019 by providing a grant for the establishment work.

In the year 2020, Abilis will change its partner organization from ECDD to EWDNA (Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association), since one of Abilis' strategic focuses are women with disabilities and their organizations. EWDNA has also shown good motivation and commitment throughout the year implementing a project that contributes to the Finnpartnership Programme.

## Annex 7. A short summary of the Tanzanian country programme

During 2019, the Abilis Tanzania Country Programme continued to build on achievements of previous years in meeting our programme objectives, which are:

- Persons with disabilities have improved income levels and have been economically empowered
- Disabled Peoples Organisations and persons with disabilities have improved capacities for individual, organisational, project, and financial management.

Through the Tanzania country programme, seven projects with MFA support were finalised in 2019, comprised of Fast Track Grant (5), Regular Grants (1) and a Special Grant (1).

In line with the country strategy, a small number of projects have focused towards achieving the outcome of persons with disabilities becoming economically empowered. Abilis has developed expertise in working with groups of persons with disabilities to establish suitable income generating activities with support for training and business development. Additional focus has been on vocational training – to build the skills of persons with disabilities and enable them to have greater opportunity to be economically active. In 2019, 85 persons with disabilities participated in projects to become economically empowered. The multiplying effect of building economic capacity of persons with disabilities extends to their families, for 85 active participants who benefit from the projects there are 643 indirect beneficiaries.

During 2019, great progress was made in strengthening policy and national level expertise to create a strong foundation for improving the capacities of disabled people's organizations. In cooperation with Inclusive Development Promoters & Consultants (IDPC), Abilis supported the creation of a Disability Mainstreaming Handbook providing standards and guidelines in a Code of Practice on accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities. Projects such as this have an impact that is only realized in the future, when new planning and adaptations to current infrastructure enable persons with disabilities to have equal access to spaces and buildings without barriers, which in turn unleashes the economic potential of persons with disabilities in Tanzania who were previously impeded in the labor market. Projects such as this also strengthen the capacity of the DPO, in this instance IDCP, to build their own expertise in mainstreaming disability inclusion in Tanzania.

Closer cooperation with local government at the town and district level has been initiated in 2019 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Mkinga District Council. This has led to the establishment of eight income generating activity projects with the local government and the Community Development Officer providing expert advice, regular support and monitoring of the groups. Abilis will look to strengthen and formalize cooperation with other local and regional governments in areas where we work, such as Lushoto and Arusha.

Raising awareness of disability themes is an important part of improving the attitudes of the wider community to persons with disabilities and increasing understanding on disabilities. In 2019, Abilis supported, CHAVITA the Tanzanian Association of the Deaf to organise a large project to raise awareness of deaf issues and promote Tanzania Sign Language, celebrate international Week of the Deaf and train young people in the effective use of social media to promote deaf rights and issues. The project involved targeted training Tanzanian politicians and media personalities in the use of Tanzanian Sign Language. Through this project, CHAVITA improved its organizational capacity to undertake larger projects and the members involved have improved their individual capacities achieving the outcome of *Disabled Peoples Organisations and Persons with disabilities have improved capacities for individual, organizational, project, and financial management.*

Through the finalised MFA-funded Tanzania country programme in 2019, seven projects were funded with 46 842 € in total. The number of active project participants who benefited directly from the projects were 2 205, and 500 643 people indirectly benefited from the projects.

## Annex 8. A short summary of the Ugandan country programme

The activities during the year 2019 were carried out by the Abilis Uganda country office based in Kampala. The Abilis office is sharing office premises with Nordic donors and other organisations working in the disability sector in Uganda. These are Disabled People's Organisation Denmark (DPOD), Disability Rights Fund (DRF), Danish Association of the Physically Disabled (DHF), East African Centre for Disability Policy Law and Policy (EA-CDPL) and Motivate Africa Initiative (MAI).

Uganda is a focus country because it is a Least Developed Country (LDC) with many poor and marginalized persons with disabilities and DPOs that nevertheless have great potential to learn and grow. The country has supporting policy structures in place. Uganda has also been a long-time partner of Abilis since 2002 with a good record of successful implementation of projects.

During 2019, the country programme focused on two main thematic areas; Income generation activities (IGA) and capacity building of PWDs and DPOs. The geographical working areas were eastern and northern regions of Uganda.

The overall objectives of the 2019 programme were to provide equal opportunities, capacity building, empowerment and independent living of persons with disabilities in Uganda. The specific objectives were;

- Support developmental projects to assist Persons with Disabilities at all levels.
- To build capacity of Persons with Disabilities to formulate and articulate their individual, group, or communal visions for better living, through implementation of income generating, vocational skills, tool kits and human rights awareness projects
- To strengthen self-reliance of Persons with Disabilities through provision of funds for income generation leading to independent living and economic empowerment.

During the 2019 programme, Abilis had activities at grassroots, district and national levels. Though the main focus for Abilis is to fund grassroots based DPOs, consideration was taken to include the district and national level DPOs, as well as addressing the main disability issues at the all the mentioned levels.

Projects, which were started in 2019, reflect on the main aim of the 4-year country programme as well as the 2019 programme plan for Uganda, which is to improve livelihoods of PWDs and build their capacities. The activities also address the issues, highlighted in the country profile paper, which had input to the 4-year country plan.

20 projects were finalised during 2019. Nine (9) of the finalised projects were under the National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF) UK programme. Three (3) started in 2017 and seventeen (17) in 2018. Though the 2017 finalised projects started before the programme approach, they still fell within the thematic areas of IGA and capacity building.

The results of these finalised projects are a reflection of what was expected; improved standard of living, self-reliance, improved self-esteem ability to afford basic day to day needs and having a dignified life; economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. This could be seen through the number of project participants who have improved their incomes, employed/self-employed and/or having small business enterprises. These activities were achieved through the facilitation and support of the Abilis country office during the application and implementation stages. Due to good implementation and involvement of local authorities at the grassroots level, some Abilis-supported DPOs have been earmarked to benefit from the government's disability grant.

Challenges experienced in projects were:

- Many potential DPOs, but with low capacities in implementing projects. This has however been addressed through organising training to equip the groups with skills and knowledge on project and financial management. Groups are also encouraged to include capacity building aspects within the project activities.

- Fluctuating currency rate. This has mostly led to groups having to re-adjust their budgets to accommodate losses due to these fluctuations. In other cases, it has been positive in that groups have had a bit more money to spend on activities.

One project completed in 2018, concerning awareness and lobbying on the mental health bill, has had some of its results become visible in 2019; The mental health bill is now gazetted, though DPOs are continuing with challenging some of the contentious issues contained in it.

### **Abilis country office**

The Abilis country office is now well established. After the official registration, it now has its own bank account and auditors have been engaged. One member of staff has been recruited as an assistant country coordinator in charge of finance.

A number of other activities have been done by the Abilis country office apart from the core programme activities. These have led to better visibility of Abilis Foundation in Uganda, strengthening of the disability sector, comprehensive support for DPOs, pushing for more friendly disability policies and increased networking. Some activities, which led to the achievement of these outcomes, were:

- Collaboration with local authorities and the government line ministry to ensure sustainable collaboration and support.
- Follow up on the High-level national dialogue activities of 2018. DPOs and stakeholders have lobbied the government on the disability act and having sign-language interpreters on selected programmes on TV. The disability law has now been passed, and there are sign-language interpreters on TV.
- Participation in the disability donors' round table meetings for information sharing and strengthening of the disability sector.
- Dialogue with the Office of the Prime Minister to seek ways on how Abilis can reach out to refugees with disabilities
- Discussions with Finnish partners such as Finnish Church Aid (FCA), Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) and Finnish International Development Agency (FIDA) on how to network and strengthen collaboration.

### **Challenges at the country office level included;**

- Termination of the shared office agreement with the main tenant, MAI. Abilis has now taken over as the main tenant because MAI will no longer be a shared partner from 2020.
- Bureaucracy in opening the necessary accounts for the office
- Currency fluctuations
- New demands and validation process for all NGOs in Uganda: Abilis started the process of validation in December 2019. This is continuing in 2020.

## Annex 9. A short summary of the fragile states sub-programme

This annex contains short summaries of the following countries: **Kyrgyzstan and Mozambique**, under the phasing out period, **Sierra Leone and Somalia/Somaliland** as main fragile states:

In 2019, Abilis support in **Kyrgyzstan** was concentrated on social and economic empowerment of women with disabilities and promoting the human rights of women with disabilities and their inclusion in society. This priority has been chosen because it is one of the main priorities of the Abilis global programme. It is also related to the fact that in Kyrgyzstan, as in all Central Asian male dominated cultures, women with disabilities are especially vulnerable and face more discrimination than other groups of the society.

During the year 2019, Abilis supported a shelter of women with disabilities in Bishkek which provides psychological and legal support as well as small scale training on vocational skills for women with disabilities exposed to violence. Also, Abilis supported two projects that involve psychological and material support for women with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities who have given birth recently. In addition, Abilis supported promotion of wheelchair dancing in Kyrgyzstan as well as the promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities and change in attitudes towards women with disabilities. These implemented projects have helped directly over 400 women with disabilities. The visibility of women with disabilities in society has increased and the attitudes of society towards women with disabilities have changed. They have promoted disability inclusion especially regarding to women and children with disabilities.

The government has ratified the Convention of Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2019. That was the result of many years of active work and pressure from DPOs. Some positive changes can be noticed in the situation of persons with disabilities: The government has established a working group to draft a plan for the implementation of the UNCRPD. The communication between DPOs and local authorities has increased. The government has established a coordination committee for disability affairs under the Prime Minister, where people with disabilities are also involved. However, the government is still quite reluctant to create conditions for equal participation of persons with disabilities and creating services that are needed by persons with disabilities (psychological support and personal assistance) to live independently. Situation of some groups of persons with disabilities, especially the deaf, remain very poor. The working group on the UNCRPD does not always take into account the opinions of DPOs. The DPOs in Kyrgyzstan lack the knowhow on how to be involved in the next steps of the UNCRPD process, how to monitor the implemented activities related to UNCRPD, etc.

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Abilis continued the phasing out period in ***Mozambique*** with special arrangements. The former PO of Abilis, Ajodemo Maputo, was able to monitor and support other projects through a project grant. The project funding allowed the continuation of the core activities of Ajodemo: disability rights awareness raising (human rights), capacity building of DPOs by providing support to other actors of the disability movement, and advocacy work among others. The capacity building work was highly important due to weak capacity of DPOs in general.

During 2019, seven other projects were approved. Following the trend of the previous year, four of them focused on IGAs, with three of the projects located in the south of the country, while a fourth project being in a smaller urban location in the central area of the country. One of the four projects also included a focus on capacity building, as an important share of the budget of the project was intended at completing the official registration of the association.

Additionally, a project focused on education and awareness rising (sexual education) aiming at increasing the education rate of youngsters with disability was approved in the central area of the

country, while another project focused on rising awareness on the rights of people with disabilities through theatrical performances was started in the capital of the country aiming at reaching hundreds of non-disabled citizens and many people with disabilities among them.

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Lack of public services, economic decline and poverty, and demographic pressures are major factors contributing to state fragility in **Sierra Leone**. Despite the progress on disability-related legislation, the implementation of existing laws and regulations is weak and uneven in different parts of the country. The government of Sierra Leone has limited capacity to provide public services, education and employment opportunities to the citizens. Poverty and unemployment levels remain high, especially among the youth, women and vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities.

In 2019, eleven (11) new projects were started in Sierra Leone, with the total allocated funding of 70 182 €. Eight (8) projects were finalised, including one fast track project started and finalised in 2019. In total 192 persons with disabilities directly benefitted from these projects. Majority of the projects focused on – or include a major component of – economic empowerment and income generating activities. These projects have improved the livelihood opportunities of persons with disabilities in both urban and rural settings, allowing persons with disabilities to rely less on begging or harmful activities and enabling them to better support themselves and their families. Lack of adequate infrastructure, unfavorable market situation, and recurrent floods and mudslides keep creating challenges for the sustainable livelihoods of persons with disabilities.

Advocacy and awareness raising projects have promoted the human rights of persons with disabilities, disability inclusion, and persons with disabilities' access to services in urban and rural communities as well as institutions. All projects promote gender equality by targeting at least 50 % female participation, and about one third of the projects have a specific focus on women with disabilities.

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Abilis has been funding projects of DPOs in **Somalia / Somaliland** since 2000. Connections have been mostly developed with help of the Somali diaspora. In Somalia, all cooperation across clans is still difficult: DPOs have their own networks and umbrella organizations which are covertly based on the clan system. Especially cooperation between Somaliland DPOs and Mogadishu area DPOs tends to run into troubles. The underdeveloped social sector and charity-based approach are common. Charity money may help people with disabilities every now and then, but it does not support development of good governance in DPOs, or independent living of members.

During 2019, there were altogether 25 projects funded by Abilis in Somalia. Out of these, 12 got finalised and 13 started. These included 3 FT projects which started and ended during 2019. Among the finalised 12 projects

- 1) Economic empowerment and IGA was the most popular topic (7 projects). Two of the projects were run by DPOs of women with disabilities. Altogether 217 persons with disabilities participated in trainings and benefitted from the program.
- 2) Organizational Capacity to Promote Disability Mainstreaming in Social, Economic and Political Development of Somaliland got finalised. Somaliland National Disability Forum, umbrella of 32 DPOs, updated its administrative documents, arranged strategic planning sessions for a 5-year strategic plan and organized a tour of disability mainstreaming advocacy to 6 districts with new decision makers. The project had 600 participants.
- 3) Human rights of persons with disabilities and disability inclusion – 4 projects: One project advocated accessibility demands and a tools-manual to develop accessible constructed environments. Workshops were held in six (6) biggest cities in Somaliland. One project was by a women with disabilities DPO to encourage their members in political participation in

elections of Somaliland. Two of the projects were Food Aid and Advocacy for rights of persons with disabilities in crisis situations. Participants in workshops and trainings were 1226 people with disabilities (and some were representatives of local authorities).

Altogether, Abilis grants reached 2043 participants, about half of them women, money used for these 12 projects was in total 97 332 €.

During 2019, Abilis received 30 project applications from Somalia: 23 from Somaliland and 7 from other parts of Somalia. 11 projects were approved (6 Somaliland and 5 Somalia), and additionally 2 project applications from 2018 (both from Somalia) as well. 8 applications got rejected and 11 were left waiting for 2020 decisions.

During the last part of the year 2019, two themes among DPOs rose up and needed urgent reaction: Drought and floods crisis in the north and the continuous need for advocacy work for human rights and equality of people with disabilities in the south. Altogether, in 2019 Abilis allocated project grants that reached 5124 participants and the general public via media, around half of direct beneficiaries were planned to be women with disabilities. Money allocated for these 13 projects was 105 897 €.

The UNCRPD had been ratified by Somalia Federal Government in 2018 and work for rights of persons with disabilities has begun. This development was quite lightly adapted. Bad steps backwards were taken in August when the Mayor of Mogadishu got killed in a blast which was found to be implemented by a blind female officer as a suicidal bomber. The situation of people with disabilities in general got worse as they as a group became suspended in general and were put under harder control at check points on roads and entering buildings.

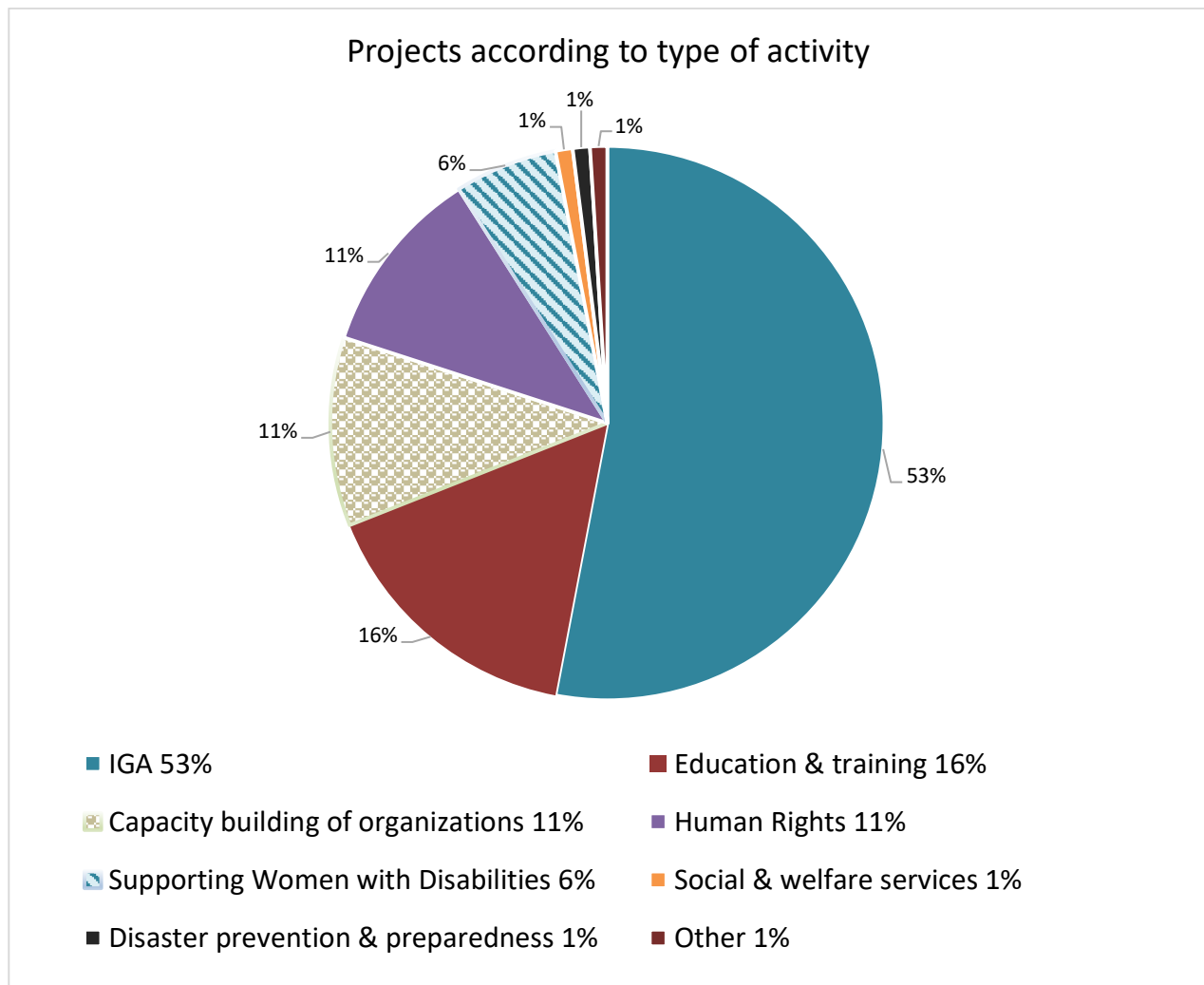
There was a new Electoral Law under discussion in the Federal Parliament of Somalia during autumn 2019. By the end of December, DPOs found out that the Parliament had completely omitted a specific section 23 of law which was meant to spell out obligations of national parties regarding people with disability and their right to political participation.

The need for uninterrupted advocacy work for rooting the UNCRPD at the practical and attitudinal level in the minds of authorities and the general public in Somalia was noticed by DPO networks and also at Abilis HQ. One multi-level advocacy project by the Somali Disability Empowerment Network, SODEN was already implemented. SODEN was a close contact, sharing a lot of experience-based information concerning difficulties and bad attitudes met by people with disabilities from the part of government and even local authorities. Relevant materials included People with Disability Livelihood Assessment Survey report in Somalia 2019 and the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability in Somali language.

The work is supported by a deeper cooperation with Finnish NGOs concerning inclusion of people with disabilities in Somalia, including Finn Church Aid, Save the Children, and the Finnish Foundation for Media and Development, VIKES.

## Annex 10. Statistics on finalised projects in 2019

The figure illustrates the division of finalised projects in 2019 with regard to the thematic focus and content of projects. The biggest category was income generation and livelihood (53 %) followed by the education and training type of projects (15 %). Purely human rights projects were 11 % of all finalised projects and 6 % of projects focused on building capacity of women with disabilities and their organisations.





## Annex 11. Summary of the internal study on IGA projects

### 2019 Abilis studies on income generation projects in Sierra Leone and Nepal

#### BACKGROUND

Income generation and poverty reduction projects are one of Abilis' key thematic areas. In 2019, Abilis conducted internal assessments to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of the funded income generation projects in Sierra Leone and Nepal. To develop and implement better targeted poverty reduction initiatives, the studies also aimed to identify the factors influencing the livelihoods of persons with disabilities. The studies aimed to complement previous reviews and evaluations of Abilis income generation projects in Vietnam, Cambodia and Ethiopia (Fiant Consulting Ltd., 2016) and in Kyrgyzstan (Katsui, 2018).

The primary data from Sierra Leone consisted of nine semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion with adult persons with disabilities who had participated in five Abilis-funded income generation projects between 2015–2018. Discussions with other relevant informants and data from the project documents were included in the analysis to strengthen the validity of the results. In Nepal, similar questions were asked from 16 persons with disabilities who had participated in 12 Abilis-funded income generation projects between 2007–2017. The findings were consistent with each other and with the previous findings.

#### MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is essential to consider local characteristics, target beneficiaries, and market dynamics when planning and implementing income generation and livelihood projects.

At the time of the study, majority of the interviewees were still engaged in the Abilis-supported income generating activities. Only a few had changed their job (mainly due to marketing difficulties and limited profit), but they were also currently employed or self-employed. In both countries, most businesses continued to be very small-scale, and people had not been able to expand their businesses. Yet, compared to the pre-project situation, almost every interviewee reported increased levels of income and various other positive changes such as increased ability to cover the basic needs, increased independence and self-esteem, and better treatment by community members.

##### 1) Livelihood diversification

Both in Sierra Leone and in Nepal, most interviewees had very limited range of activities in which they engaged to make a living. This increases their vulnerability and hinders their ability to maintain an adequate income throughout the year. Instead, persons with more successful income generating activities had a variety of products or services on offer, and they were able to focus on certain products/services according to the seasonal demand, for example. In order to respond appropriately to the seasonal changes, adverse shocks, and changes in customer demand, livelihood diversification provides a much-needed assurance for poor persons with disabilities. Improving access to a variety of assets allows persons with disabilities to adopt more diverse livelihood strategies, and to change flexibly from one income generating activity to another. Thus, supporting livelihood diversification enhances the resilience of persons with disabilities in the global South.

##### 2) Improving access to assets

Limited livelihood strategies and limited assets makes it a challenge to align production with market needs. Main factors restraining persons with disabilities from expanding their businesses include limited financial assets and strong competition, which reduces their ability make an adequate profit. Lack of financial assets is also directly affecting various other factors, including access to other assets. Especially lack of appropriate equipment, tools and materials restricts productivity and the livelihoods of persons with disabilities. In addition, social networks and education support the livelihood opportunities of persons with disabilities, but they are only useful when other factors enable people to draw on their social and human assets as well.

### **3) Improving competitiveness**

To respond to the challenges of strong competition it is important to increase business competitiveness. Lack of new ideas is hindering the competitiveness and sustainability of income generation projects. More original project ideas that take notice of the contextual factors (such as demand/supply balance and seasonal variations) would support business competitiveness and sustainability. Creative business ideas based on the local demand require developing business thinking and entrepreneurial skills that could support persons with disabilities to locate potential market niches. Possible means for persons with disabilities to gain new ideas for their livelihood opportunities include supporting training exposure and creating more opportunities for DPOs and their members to engage in mutual learning and information sharing among the peers.

### **4) Considering personal needs, commitments and priorities**

Planning and implementing relevant and feasible projects require better understanding of the actual needs of the project participants, as well as their other commitments and priorities. The project participants prioritise the activities in which to engage based on the available assets as well as their personal goals and perceived or expected livelihood outcomes. When a person has other commitments that coincide with the project activities, they must decide which one to engage in. To support the project participants' commitment to project activities, it should be considered whether they can provide for themselves (and their families) during the project period, and if project activities requiring full-time or part-time participation would be more appropriate and more compatible with the participants' other commitments and priorities. For example, it is important to consider what time of day, week or season the activities are implemented, possible gender roles and responsibilities, and how these affect the beneficiaries' ability and motivation to participate. In addition, including reasonable accommodation (e.g. assistance for physical tasks, guidance, or sign language interpreter) supports equal participation of persons with disabilities, and also serves as an example of adequate service provision for persons with disabilities. More attention should be paid to the quality of training, including its content, duration as well as the trainers' skills and ability to address the diversity of needs of persons with disabilities.

### **5) Strengthening disability rights and disability inclusion**

Persons with disabilities are often socially marginalised and face widespread discrimination that restricts their access to assets and participation in economic activities, decision-making, and social life in general. To fight discrimination and exclusion, and to deliver equal access to opportunities for persons with disabilities, more awareness raising, advocacy and lobbying on disability rights and disability inclusion is needed. Strengthening the disability movement through empowerment and capacity building of persons with disabilities and their organisations plays a key role in this regard. Increasing disability mainstreaming (i.e. integrating and considering the needs of persons with disabilities in all policies and in all stages of development programmes) across stakeholders is necessary to ensure equitable opportunities for persons with disabilities and to prevent widening inequity gaps between persons with disabilities and general population.

## **ABILIS GUIDELINE FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**

The study findings contribute to the establishment of good practice and serve Abilis to provide appropriate support for the local DPOs implementing income generation and livelihood projects. As a result, Abilis developed an Abilis guideline for sustainable livelihoods, published in April 2020. The guideline covers the main issues that should be considered when planning and implementing an income generation or a livelihood project, practical tips for the facilitation process, and examples to assist with business planning.