

FROM HUMAN TO HUMAN – ABILIS FOUNDATION STRATEGY

Updated strategy endorsed by the Board of Abilis Foundation on 28 October 2020

1. Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

Abilis Foundation pursues a world where persons with disabilities are aware of their human rights and work together to promote those rights, and where societies and decision makers see persons with disabilities as equal citizens and take responsibility for the enforcement of their human rights.

Mission

The mission of Abilis Foundation is to encourage, by a range of means, the activities of persons with disabilities, to support the work of their organisations, and to make use of their first-hand expertise for the promotion of human rights, equal opportunities and independent living for persons with disabilities in the Global South.

Values

Abilis Foundation is guided by the following values, which are the framework for the Foundation's own activities and which the Foundation helps promote in the global society:

Participation and mutual solidarity of persons with disabilities

The Foundation supports the participation of persons with disabilities in a way that helps strengthen solidarity between groups of persons with different disabilities. Responsible actions by the persons themselves is always a basic assumption.

Openness

The Foundation works in an open and transparent manner. Focusing on interaction and open communication, the Foundations helps create a constructive atmosphere to boost mutual confidence.

Equality

All applicants and partners are treated equally. The Foundation's work is guided by the principles of fairness and equality.

Reliability

The Foundation values integrity and supports reliable organisations that practice good governance. Abilis Foundation is an expert organisation, whose staff and Board members have first-hand experience of disability and expertise in development aid.

2. Cornerstone and key themes

The protection and promotion of rights for persons with disabilities are at the core of Abilis Foundation's work. A human rights-based approach is the basis of activities. Always focused on persons with disabilities, the Foundation works to promote their active participation and empowerment in the Global South, in Finland and at the wider international level. Empowered persons with disabilities and their groups and organisations form a stronger disability rights movement that carries more weight in the effort to improve the lives of persons with disabilities on a global scale.

Abilis Foundation is a part of a global disability rights movement. Widely networked, the Foundation is engaged in global collaboration with other actors in the field. Peer support and experience sharing are the most genuine forms of partnership.

Key themes of the Foundation's activities include:

- Empowerment of girls and women with disabilities and improvement of their living conditions;

- Increasing access to means of support for persons with disabilities, with focus on securing sustainable livelihoods and the required training;
- Empowering persons with disabilities and enhancing the capacity and resilience of organisations of people with disabilities (DPOs) overall;
- Promoting the advocacy work performed by persons with disabilities and their organisations and reinforcing cooperation with political decision makers.

3. Implementing the strategy

3.1. Supporting the projects of groups and organisations of persons with disabilities in the Global South

The main purpose of Abilis Foundation is to fund projects designed and implemented by persons with disabilities in developing countries. The Foundation grants funding to organisations or groups of persons with disabilities in the Global South for projects based on their own ideas and needs. Most of the support goes to organisations in the least developed countries, notably in programme countries in Africa and Asia.

Eligible for support are all DPOs regardless of the type of disability group they represent. Most favoured are projects driven by groups where persons with different disabilities are working together. The idea is to find **grassroot level actors** without access to outside support but with the potential to deliver. The Foundation recognizes the weak capacity of grassroot DPOs, which very much can be attributed to poor educational background and lack of opportunities to participate. Financial support will be granted to projects where planning, implementation and reporting are done by persons with disabilities; this will activate them and help improve their social standing. If needed, the Foundation provides training and help in filing applications and in project implementation. The Foundation's local employees in the programme countries verify the reliability and high-quality implementation of the projects.

In the next few years, the Foundation will develop into testing the viability of funding longer-term projects alongside the current small and short-term initiatives. The Foundation will continue the development of results-based administration to ensure successful and high-quality work. Systematic monitoring of the results, impact and sustainability of the programme and the funded projects is a key consideration.

3.2 Advocacy and information

Advocacy at the domestic and international level is a major segment of Abilis Foundation's activities. The objective is to extensively promote the human rights of persons with disabilities as stated in the UN Convention. The primary advocacy channel is Global Disability Diplomacy on Human Rights. This is used to fortify cooperation between national authorities, NGOs and DPOs for the promotion of human rights for persons with disabilities. The long-term goal is to attain true inclusion with disability issues in the mainstream of all areas of Finnish foreign policy, especially in development assistance, humanitarian aid and peacekeeping operations. In practice this means engaging persons with disabilities as experts from planning through to implementation, monitoring and reporting. The target of the next few years is to increase the share of development and humanitarian aid given to persons with disabilities and to extend the role of persons with disabilities in peacekeeping work.

The Foundation's information and communication is designed to share awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities living in the Global South and to spread knowledge of the Foundation's work and achievements. The Foundation's goal-oriented and interactive information and communication processes are directed at domestic as well as worldwide audiences. In Finland, information focuses on sharing facts about disability and the Foundation's work; in international communication, the Foundation's operating model and funding options are highlighted.

4. Requirements for successful strategy execution

The following are key requirements for successful strategy execution:

Staff

Adequate personnel resources are part of the Foundation's growth and expert status. The Foundation invests in personnel wellbeing and competence development.

Financial stability

A stable financial situation has enabled the Foundation to concentrate on continued high-quality development funding and enhanced expertise in disability issues. To maintain financial stability and to grow, the Foundation keeps looking for new ethically sustainable funding sources. As a measure towards a more diversified financial base the Foundation favours enhancing the productivity of Abilis Consulting Ltd.'s activities.

Adaptability

The Foundation invests in improved readiness to observe changes of its operational environment and in greater agility to adapt to new challenges. While developments such as digital step change in the programme countries, climate change and various pandemics mean transformation and new challenges in the Foundation's global working environments, they also mean new opportunities to make a contribution.