



ACTIVITY REPORT 2016

Abilis Foundation, established in 1998, aims at promoting in different ways the activities, human rights, equal opportunities and independent living of persons with disabilities in developing countries and Eastern Europe. The Foundation realizes its purpose by granting financial support and by conducting informative, educational and advisory activities. Moreover, high on its agenda is the international promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, focusing on aiding, directly or indirectly, people with disabilities in the Global South.

The Foundation's main activity is to fund small trustworthy, high-quality projects planned and implemented by Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs) in developing countries. Thus, the Foundation's method of funding projects promotes the participation, empowerment and social integration of persons with disabilities. Funding is granted exclusively to countries officially classified as developing countries. The grants are small, ranging from 1 000 to 20 000 €. The Foundation's goal is to channel help particularly to grassroots organizations in the poorest countries in the world.

The Foundation receives the bulk of its financing from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs Development Cooperation Fund. Due to a reform of the ministry's financing policy, the Foundation has exceptionally a two-year financing decision (2016-2017). The state grant for 2016 totalled 2 750 000 €. The Foundation had a surplus of 104 249 € of state funding for 2015 to be carried over to 2016. The Foundation's own fundraising work brought in 28 112 €, most of which, 24 970 €, were the proceeds of a specific expertise commission. This was an evaluation and design assignment for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) regarding a project funded by the Finnish Foreign Ministry, the goal of which was to promote the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities in the activities of the African Union.

In 2016, the Foundation processed close to 400 applications, which is slightly less than previous years. A decrease in the total number of applications was due to the moratorium on applications from September 2015 to March 2016. Of the applications received, 156 were approved for funding, 171 were rejected and the remaining ones were to be processed the following year.

The majority of applications (55%) came from Asia, while 42% emanated from African countries. Increasing the part of Asian countries has been a long-term goal of the Foundation, which was now attained for the first time. In addition to goal-oriented activities, another, underlying factor contributing to the proportionately more sizable decrease of the African countries' part, was the Foundation's downsizing and austerity policy. Some n grants were given to the Middle East, Eastern Europe and to Latin America. Of the Asian countries, most grants, 20 in all, totalling 108 161 €, went to Nepal and to Kyrgyzstan, 17 grants totalling 106 221€. In Africa, most of the grants went to Tanzania (13 new project grants totalling 86 631 €. Of the funds granted by the Foundation, 71 % were allocated to the poorest countries in the world and circa 80 % were channelled to the Foundation's own focus countries (118 new grants, totalling 805 894€).

The sums granted by the Foundation are relatively small, corresponding to the needs and capacity of groups of persons with disabilities operating in poor, rural conditions. In 2016, the amounts varied between 1 018 and 22 891 € while the average grant size was 6 368 €, in keeping with that of the previous years. In accordance with the policy line of autumn 2015,

new grants were predominantly small Fast Track (FT) ones (max. budget 2 500 €). The dwindling state grant was to be distributed to as many DPOs as possible.

In 2016, the Foundation approved altogether 234 final and 92 midterm reports. The considerably higher number of revised and approved final reports than previously is due to the Foundation's prioritizing ongoing projects in order to bring them to completion in the course of 2016. Through this measure, the Foundation was getting prepared for the diminishing state support.

Of all the completed, Abilis-funded projects almost half (46%) aimed at poverty reduction of and income generation for persons with disabilities. This was realized mainly through vocational training preparing persons with disabilities for micro-entrepreneurship and improving their chances of employment on the labour market. The Foundation also supported the empowerment, participation and education of persons with disabilities as well as the capacity building of DPOs (29 %). About 9 % of the projects were solely aimed at the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. According to its strategy, the Foundation focused on channelling the support into improving the position of women and girls with disabilities: of the completed projects, 15 % were aimed at this very goal. Majority of the beneficiary organizations (76 %) were operating in rural areas or small towns where community support and services are very limited. The bulk of the financial support (48 %) was granted to DPOs which represented people with different kinds of disabilities. The Foundation monitored closely its financing activities and saw to it that the funds were duly channelled to its strategic focus areas, thus in accordance, throughout 2016, with its own financing policies.

The Partnership Programme and a wide, international network are the cornerstones of the Foundation's funding activities. It is through these the Foundation conducts background-checks of applicants and monitors the implementation of projects. Apart from being an asset in Risk Management, this also strengthens local ownership as well as the capacity of partner organizations. In 2016, there were altogether nine focus countries [Africa: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda; Asia: Bangladesh (part of the year), Cambodia (part of the year), Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Tadjhikistan]. Moreover, help was channelled to Myanmar, Vietnam and North Thailand, all in the Mekong area, as a measure to boost regional activity. In spite of a systematic project management, the Foundation had to terminate 11 projects that couldn't be completed. Mostly, the terminations were due to a deficient capacity of the implementing organization. No reimbursement demands were made since there was no indication of misuse of funds.

Abilis Foundation pursued the programme of evaluation and development by means of which, a systematic mechanism for measuring the results and impact of projects as well as their sustainability will be created. The indicators thus produced were applied to small FT projects. The realization of income-generating projects and of those aiming at empowering women with disabilities in Ethiopia, Cambodia and Vietnam was studied through an external evaluation (Fiant Consulting Ltd.). In compliance with the recommendations thus obtained, the Foundation set about to strengthen its results-based management and created a matrix supported by a logical framework of reference to reinforce program planning and follow-up of results. Likewise, a theory of change mapping out the Foundation's activities was devised. Also in 2016, as part of the development plan, an analysis of small FT projects was conducted and application and report forms were updated.

Development of Partnership work was pursued throughout the year with the emphasis on finding an even more effective way of offering support to local DPOs. In Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda, Country Offices were established to replace the old system and registration of the Foundation's local activities as part of the country's official civil society was started. No research or development work as defined by the Foundations Act took place.

Cooperation between funders intensified especially in Uganda and Tanzania where the Foundation moved into facilities shared by some other actors in the same field. While providing the opportunity for tighter collaboration, this also completes funding activities conducted through different financial instruments. The Foundation pursued its active search for new funders and started to boost its fundraising together with Rubic HR Finland Ltd. In autumn 2016, the Foundation established Abilis Consulting Limited proposing professional services for Finnish as well as foreign actors. The enterprise had no business activity in 2016 and its first financial year will end December 31st, 2017.

Work on Disability Diplomacy on Human Rights (DD) was pursued actively under Kalle Könkkölä's leadership. The DD initiative brought together representatives from different countries and organizations to discuss mainly the inclusion of disability in all development cooperation work as well as all humanitarian interventions. The group of disability experts assembled three times in the course of the year. The Foundation purchased services for the realization of DD from Threshold Association, whose Executive Director Kalle Könkkölä is, at the usual cost.

The Board assembled six times in the course of the year, the annual meeting was held in May 2016. In addition to handling funding decisions and general administrative measures, the Board also updated the Risk Management Mechanism, followed actively the development of the Foundation's fundraising and search for new funders as well as the Foreign Ministry's instrumental reforms regarding special foundations. Moreover, it established measures through which the Foundation will be able to develop its results-based management and financing activities. The Patent and Registration Office confirmed on March 1st, 2016, the renewed by-laws submitted towards the end of 2015.

Due to the nature of Abilis Foundation's activities, no related party will be granted subventions nor any kind of financial perk; all the funding activity will be directed toward supporting DPO's in the Global South, a fact clearly stated in the Foundation's Related Party Rule. No financial commitment was made with any related party. In addition to attendance fees (1 170 €), the founding member received in total 3 780 € in remuneration for his Disability Diplomacy work and travel and subsistence allowance altogether 5 047 €. Travel allowances were paid on the basis of actual expenses. The usual attendance fees, totalling 5 175 €, were paid to the Board members. Salaries and fees paid to the Management of the Foundation (Board and Executive Director) totalled 58 265 €.

In 2016, Abilis Foundation employed 12 permanent members of staff, four of whom were working part-time. The employment of one of the latter ended at the end of the year. The staff received remuneration in the form of salary, benefits in kind and subsistence allowances in accordance with Finnish legislation, the Foundation's established payroll system and the provisions of personnel policy. The Foundation's auditors were Raimo Hakola (CA) and Kristian Seemer (CA). Anssi Pietiläinen (CA) and Kari Mikkola (CA) acted as deputy auditors. Administer Ltd. was in charge of bookkeeping, while eFina financial management software was used in financial administration and the tool for project administration was ARKISTO (Salesforce).

In accordance with the policy adopted in autumn 2015, the Foundation readjusted its activities in a manner corresponding to the state financing decision for the years 2016-2017. These measures apply as well to the Foundation's funding activities, their volume and allocation, and its domestic operations, staff and administration.

The total costs of the Foundation's activities amounted to 2 155 285 €. The Foundation's balance sheet showed a surplus of 8 607 €. The total amount granted by the Foundation to DPOs in developing countries was 1 252 900 €. The costs of information activities were 53

377 €, those of Project Management 527 629 € while administrative costs totalled 216 775 €. The exceptionally large remainder of the state grant to be carried over to next year, 698 966 €, will help to cushion the fall after the 1M€ drop in the state funding for 2017. It also secures the Foundation's activity until February-March 2018, when the financing decision for 2018-2021 has been reached and the first tranche of the state grant has been received. Towards the end of 2016, the Foundation couldn't pay the second and third instalments for ongoing projects, altogether 200 000€, to be paid in 2017, which explains the considerable size of the remainder.

The year 2017 is an important year for the Foundation, beginning with the external evaluation commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation will affect the activities and funding for the years to come. In the spring 2017, together with representatives of its Partner Organizations and Country Offices, the Foundation will prepare the programme proposal for the next four-year period, 2018-2021. The foreign Ministry's new funding conditions, program based approach in organizational work and the imperative results-based management are a set of requirements not exactly suited to the nature the Foundation's activities. Therefore, developmental work and a creative touch will be indispensable to meet the new challenges. The funding application will be submitted to the Foreign Ministry by the end of June 2017. The Foundation will pursue the search for new funding sources and take any measures necessary to secure the continuation of its work. Active cooperation with Finnish and international actors will go on, thus strengthening the capacity of DPOs in the Global South.