



**Abilis**  
FOUNDATION

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2023



## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Theme 1: Awareness, Inclusion and Active Participation .....	6
Theme 2: Income and Employment .....	7
Theme 3: Girls and Women .....	9
Theme 4: Crisis and Resilience.....	11
Country Programme summaries .....	13
Final Notes .....	20

### *Abbreviations*

DRR – Disaster risk reduction

IGA – Income generating activities

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

OPD – Organisation of persons with disabilities

SRHR – Sexual and reproductive health and rights

UNCRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

## Introduction

This annual report is an introduction to Abilis Foundation's work in 2023, which is the second year of our current four-year global programme (2022-2025). Main component of our work continues to be project funding directed to OPDs. Additionally, we raise awareness and actively share information in Finland and our programme countries. We work with local Partner Organisations (PO) and through our own Country Offices (CO) to best support OPDs, monitor their projects and to create change towards equality and the implementation of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on a local level.

Compared to our previous annual reports, this report has been stripped into a shorter and more concise format. It highlights our activities and results thematically and by programme country and it includes some key numbers and analysis of results, but does not go through all of them. It's important to note, that we have submitted a more thorough report and analysis to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – as we do every year – and that this annual report is more intended for others interested in our work and results. For further inquiry into the details of our work in 2023, you may contact us through the contacts listed on our website [abilis.fi](http://abilis.fi).

Our programme focuses on the capacity building of organisations, and on the active participation of persons with disabilities in the designated programme countries through project funding. We've found that direct and active participation and peer support are efficient means towards empowerment and equality. When combined with advocacy work, awareness raising and other actions promoting disability inclusion, equal rights of persons with disabilities and the implementation of the UNCRPD, change can be accomplished on both policy level and in practice. When given the right resources, training and opportunities, OPDs can bring about change in their societies, while also gaining the skills and capabilities to continue the work and take ownership of it even after direct support from Abilis has ended. In other words, the capacity building of organisations and participation of persons with disabilities allows them to be the change, rather than "just" the object of the change.

Openness, equality, and reliability are key values in the Abilis Foundation Strategy. Our clear processes, project visits and thorough reporting during multiple stages of projects create a stable and reliable working environment for all participants: OPDs, POs, COs and Abilis headquarters. We are continuously improving our processes to catch misuse cases and deal with them, while also making sure not to create too high barriers for grassroots OPDs to apply and get funding – and to compensate for the necessary barriers with guidance, training and support. Our local POs and COs are a key part of this effort, as they are the ones with the most direct contact with current and possible future recipients of funding. These reporting processes also allow us to glimpse into our results throughout the year, though combined with many projects lasting over the calendar year, they also make it difficult to define when results happen. That is why in this annual report the focus is on the projects finalised in 2023, the majority of which began in 2022. Some projects from 2022, as well as many from 2023 lasted until 2024 and therefore the results from those projects are not a part of this report.

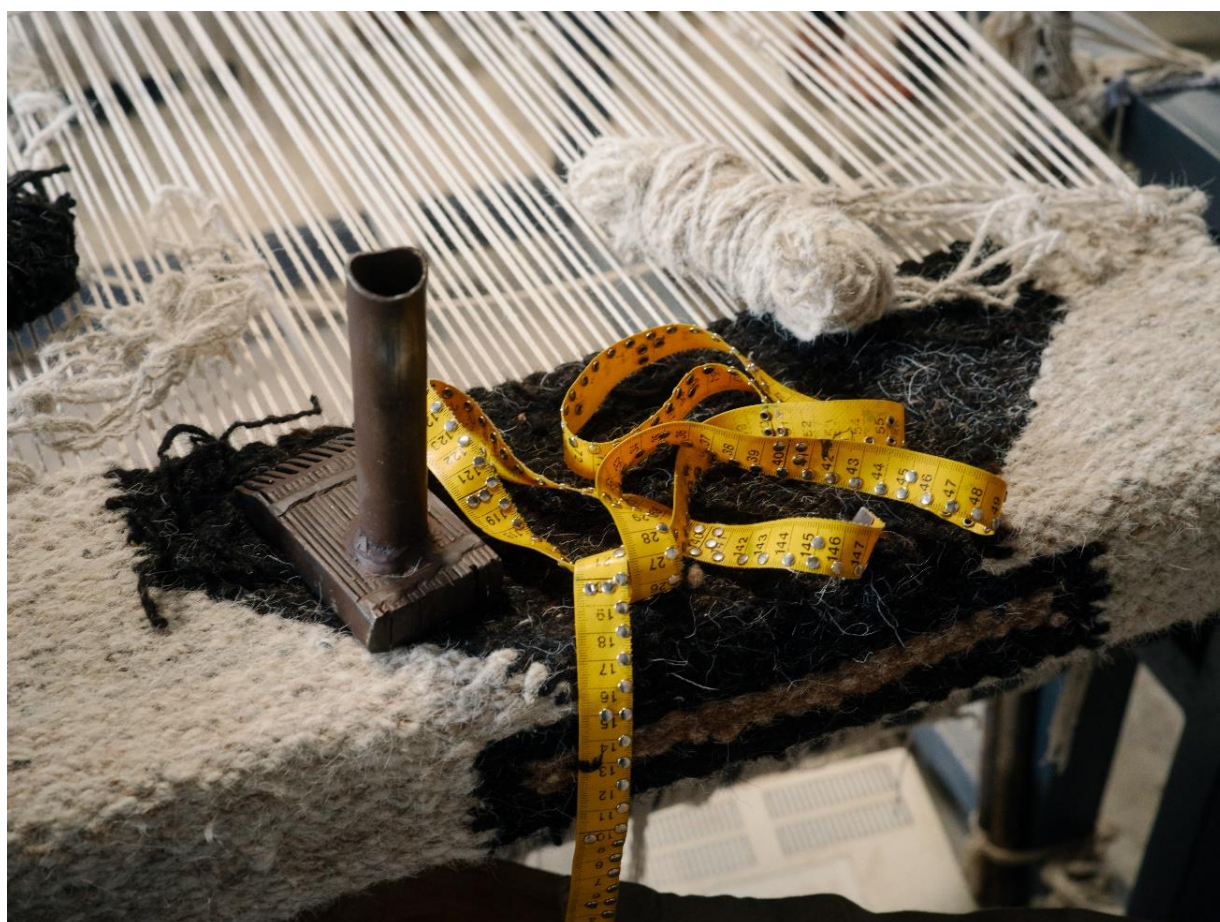
In this report, we'll go through the main objectives, activities and results thematically. Please note, that the themes are not exactly the same as our four-year-programmes' official objectives, but rather thematic areas encompassing multiple objectives of our global programme. The four themes of this annual report 2023 are 1) Awareness, Inclusion and Active participation, 2) Income and Employment, 3) Girls and Women, and 4) Crisis and Resilience. These themes have been chosen to highlight key results from multiple objectives and to paint a clear picture of our overall work.

Abilis seeks to help those most in need. Abilis is currently working in its ten official programme countries: Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Ukraine, Uganda, and Vietnam. These include some of the poorest countries in the world, as well as others with unstable or fragile contexts. Working in fragile contexts – sometimes even amidst war – can be very difficult and unpredictable, but we see this work as necessary. The main goals of Finnish Development Cooperation nor the goals of Abilis Foundation don't disappear when countries face disasters. We thoroughly prepare for these risks with country-specific risk mapping and limiting our work to countries where we have worked before.

Our work is guided by the needs expressed by persons with disabilities in the programme countries. This is in line with our mission, outlined in the Abilis Foundation Strategy (2020):

“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.”

After the four thematic areas, you’ll find summaries of the country programmes of 2023, which include the main focuses, new developments and adversities faced by the programmes, as well as some key numbers and results from 2023. At the end of this annual report, you’ll find final notes from our Executive Director Riina Paasio, with glimpses towards the future of Abilis and the final year of our four-year-programme.



## Theme 1: Awareness, Inclusion and Active Participation

One of Abilis' main goals is to support the active participation of persons with disabilities in civil society. Abilis recognises the weaker capacity of grassroots OPDs, which is linked to a lack of opportunities and poor educational background of the participants. Abilis employees train and consult the OPDs in their grant application process, which also builds the groups' capacity. Through this capacity building, Abilis can better reach the goal of active participation, as this will activate them and help improve their social standing. In recent years this support has also included translating core documents to applicants' own languages in order to make sure all participants are on the same page about what is being agreed upon. Additionally, Abilis employees offer other support and guidance for OPDs and non-registered groups wishing to form an OPD. Abilis has directly supported the establishment of 8 new organisations between 2021-2023.

Grant sizes vary usually between 3500-15000€, with long term projects

going over these averages. Out of the 207 projects which started in 2023, 142 groups had not had a prior Abilis project. Out of the OPDs with finalised projects in 2023, 23 were cross-disability OPDs, 53 were single disability OPDs, and 9 were women's organisations. Three organisations received two sets of funding in 2023. In all three cases the projects were different in their content and aim. Additionally, there were 15 projects approved for organisations which had received previous Abilis funding. The data from the new projects and the finalised projects of 2023 show that the efforts to reach groups working on grassroots level have been successful, and that Abilis was able to foster continuous co-operation with OPDs in order to further increase their capacity.

Permanent societal change is required to reach equal rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities. Out of 85 projects finalised in 2023, 51 directly related to awareness raising and advocacy. 60% of all finalised projects increased inclusion of persons with disabilities. Additionally, all Abilis

projects promote and advance the rights, active participation and equality of persons with disabilities.

An important aspect of awareness raising were trainings and campaigns on UNCRPD and its implementation. Some of the trainings were aimed at decision-makers, local authorities and communities, while others were aimed directly at persons with disabilities.

Out of the projects finalised in 2023, five have directly increased accessibility. This includes both physical accessibility, such as ramps, and the accessibility of information. Additionally, the projects that raised awareness also increased awareness on accessibility. There is still much work to be done regarding accessibility, especially in rural communities that remain highly inaccessible. Furthermore, in many countries, accessibility is still primarily defined by ramps, rather than recognising it as a complex issue that impacts various disability groups, each

needing their own specific considerations.

Laws are another aspect of permanent societal change. Adequate representation of persons with disabilities during legislative processes is crucial for the effective implementation of the UNCRPD. Employees of Abilis and its partner organisations actively participated as experts in legislative processes and committees. In 2023, we saw progress in the ratification of the UNCRPD in Tajikistan and advancements in the enforcement of the UNCRPD in Mozambique, Malawi, Nepal, Tanzania, and Vietnam. We also noted an increase in dialogue with decision-makers and local authorities. In the countries where we did not observe significant progress or advocacy-related projects, the primary reason was that employees and advocates faced unsafe conditions during times of crises and political unrest.

## Theme 2: Income and Employment

Livelihood and economic empowerment are key in reaching equality. Whereas awareness,

inclusion and rights allow persons with disabilities to be equal on a policy level, the implementation of the

UNCRPD and persons with disabilities becoming equal on all levels of society both require equal opportunities to education, employment, services, and through these, the ability to make decisions for their own life. Funding income generating activities (IGA) is one way for persons with disabilities to gain financial control and to be able to provide for their families and community. The change from someone requiring financial aid from others to a provider in turn then improves the persons with disabilities' overall status in their communities. Out of the 85 projects finalised in 2023, 12 had livelihood as their main priority. Additionally, 73 projects had livelihood as an indirect goal.

Projects related to livelihood and economic empowerment can be roughly divided into two types: providing earning opportunities and vocational training. Projects providing earning opportunities, such as funding the necessary purchases to start a farm, are means to equip a person with little to no income with a stable source of income. Education is often out of the reach of persons with disabilities due to poverty and prejudices. By funding vocational

training, Abilis offers persons with disabilities the necessary education to work.

Out of the finalised projects in 2023, there were 22 projects that included vocational training, directly created employment or supported self-employment, which reached a total of 1095 direct beneficiaries and 87 596 indirect beneficiaries. 12 projects provided earning opportunities for persons with disabilities and 10 projects provided vocational training. nine of these took place in the capital, five in a town and eight in the countryside. There was no clear correlation between location and beneficiaries reached. Some projects in the countryside reached thousands of beneficiaries, while some in the capital only reached 100-200 beneficiaries.

Abilis also supports parents of children with disabilities to gain better financial status and opportunities necessary to provide for their children. Out of the finalised projects of 2023, 14 were aimed at parents of children with disabilities.

At the end of projects, most participants reported that, in their own



view, their situation was somewhat or much better than before. No participants reported a negative effect on their situations. Still, many participants also reported very low income and a need to rely on others, with 10 participants reporting having no income at the end of a project aiming to increase their income. This data shows that Abilis was successful in empowering many persons with disabilities and provided earning opportunities and vocational training. Even though some participants

reported very low income and a need to rely on others, it is not necessarily a failure of the programme, as the overall financial position of persons with disabilities in our programme countries is very dire and while there is a positive impact being made through our projects, there is only so much a single project can do to lift people out of poverty. To achieve sufficient and permanent improvement of the overall financial position of persons with disabilities, continuous support for livelihood projects is key.

### Theme 3: Girls and Women

Abilis had both successes and challenges in empowering women in various regions. Abilis engaged women in decision-making processes and enhanced their participation in project activities.

In rural regions, where the projects generally had a smaller number of beneficiaries reached, they were significant in fostering women's participation. On average, each project directly impacted 79 women, with approximately 700 indirect beneficiaries. These figures highlight the efforts to reach vulnerable

populations in more isolated and less accessible areas. The qualitative data from the final reports indicate that women in rural areas are increasingly involved in decision-making roles within these projects. They manage resources, participate in community meetings and advocate for the rights of women with disabilities. For example, one of the projects based in a rural district reported that women were actively participating in local advocacy campaigns, raising awareness about SRHR. Another project trained women with disabilities for leadership roles, which boosted their confidence and

social standing within their communities. While the engagement levels are promising, the scale of these projects, and thereby their broader societal impact, remains limited.



In urban regions, the projects had a broader reach. On average, urban projects engaged 99 direct beneficiaries, with some projects involving over 300 women. The number of indirect beneficiaries was significantly larger, with some projects impacting as many as 36,000 individuals. Better access to infrastructure and the resources available allow projects to scale up more effectively. Reports from urban projects frequently highlighted the

increased participation of women in leadership positions. In one project, women with disabilities were trained in advocacy and leadership, which enabled them to actively participate in decision-making processes within their local organisations. Another project focused on SHRR in the capital city saw significant progress in raising awareness about women's rights, with female participants taking leading roles in organising community events and educational seminars.

Gender-focused interventions are necessary in both rural and urban settings. In urban areas there are more opportunities for women to engage on a larger scale. The smaller-scale projects in rural areas are also making meaningful strides toward empowering women, particularly in their role as decision-makers and advocates within their communities. Across the board, projects that prioritised gender equality reported higher levels of engagement and satisfaction in their final evaluations. In many cases, the women were becoming more confident in asserting their rights, particularly in matters related to SRHR.

Abilis projects aimed at empowering girls and women with disabilities, are making a tangible impact. In both rural and urban settings, women are increasingly taking on leadership roles and becoming more involved in decision-making processes. These efforts contribute to broader societal

change, fostering greater inclusion and awareness of women's rights, particularly in terms of sexual and reproductive health. Further support is needed to expand the scale of rural interventions to ensure more widespread benefits for women across different regions.

## Theme 4: Crisis and Resilience

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is one of the central themes of the 2022-2025 global programme. The amount of DRR projects varies each year, as ongoing situations change, and new crises emerge. Most Abilis projects contribute towards civilian resilience during crises through empowerment, awareness and increased inclusion and representation. DRR projects are utilised in active crisis contexts, such as during natural disasters and in conflict areas.

For example, the ongoing crisis in Myanmar has deeply impacted persons with disabilities. In areas affected by the civil conflict, such as Kayah, Chin, Northern Shan and Kachin States, homes and properties have been destroyed by soldiers, forcing many, including persons with

disabilities, into displacement camps. These camps often lack accessibility, essential services and support for specific needs. Education and employment opportunities have decreased due to widespread instability, with schools closing and companies ceasing operations. In addition, disrupted communication networks in rural areas prevent persons with disabilities from accessing critical aid and information, leaving them isolated and without resources. This combination of conflict, displacement and systemic neglect severely jeopardises their well-being and rights. In 2023 Abilis supported a food security project in the Bago region, where support was aimed at those most affected by the war, such as persons with disabilities who've had to relocate. Out of the projects

finalised in 2023, 6 had DRR as their main theme. In addition to DRR projects, Abilis has expanded to support persons with disabilities in Ukraine, with Ukraine becoming an official programme country in 2024.

Though Ukraine is not categorised as a Least Developed Country, the war has the greatest impact on the lives of those in the most fragile positions, such as persons with disabilities. The war has also brought into spotlight the inaccessibility of both physical spaces and information: bomb shelters are not accessible and persons with disabilities are often the last people notified of current events. Abilis works in Ukraine to build the capacity and resilience of persons with disabilities and their organisations. Successful projects have included psychological support, spreading awareness and trainings on their rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities to gather and socialise with peers.

Working in a war-torn country is difficult, but necessary for the well-being of persons with disabilities. The OPDs Abilis supports aren't working despite the war: they are actively

adapting to the conflict and considering rising needs.

Circumstances change every day and require them to change plans, whether it's a power outage, an air raid or having to evacuate. The community might at any moment be hit with a crisis that shifts priorities, freezes the project and forces them to focus on their communities' most basic needs. This doesn't make the work of Abilis meaningless - it makes the work that much more necessary.



## Country Programme summaries

### *Ethiopia*

In 2023, Abilis provided substantial funding to several national-level OPDs as well as small grassroots groups by approving a total of 12 applications in Ethiopia. Newly approved projects focused on advocating disability rights and UNCRPD, improving the status of women with disabilities through SRHR trainings, and empowerment through IGA. Business collaboration with Sera Helsinki continued and new projects related to the export value chain in rural areas and the capital city were started.

Capacity building activities for OPDs reached over 200 participants and included training on Abilis grant-making mechanism, climate change, sustainable livelihoods and community development. Through training, the programme continued to foster sustainable development and self-reliance among OPDs. The programme gave special focus also to SRHR and encouraged women with disabilities to take leadership roles and implement safeguarding measures in OPDs, further contributing to systemic change.

Key challenges faced in 2023 included political unrest, inflation, and low capacity within OPDs. The government's tendency to prioritise issues concerning persons with disabilities has diminished due to a lack of awareness and ongoing conflicts across the country. Despite the challenges, the programme contributed to the process of drafting the Disability Act and made significant strides in disability rights, leadership development, and grassroots empowerment.

### *Malawi*

The Malawi Country Programme started in September 2023. Being a new programme country, the programme focused on putting structures in place and recruiting a country coordinator. As the programme is implemented in partnership with Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA), both Abilis and FEDOMA staff were trained on topics related to capacity building, such as governance, leadership and transparency. Five Committee of Local Disability

Experts (COLDE) members were recruited and trained. Another focus of the programme was communication and networking with affiliated national OPDs, media, government officials and various relevant stakeholders about the programme.

The start of the programme was delayed due to legal issues, that needed to be sorted out and more time was needed to put the proper structures in place. Most applicant had very low literacy levels and problems comprehending English, which led to a need to translate application forms to local languages. Two OPDs were given funding at the end of 2023 for projects focusing on SRHR issues.

### *Mozambique*

2023 was the second year of the newly started Mozambique Country Programme, implemented in partnership with the Association of Youth with Disabilities of Mozambique. Thus, the year saw the finalisation of only a handful of projects. The programme was able to expand to district levels in Zambezia and Tete provinces and start funding in Inhambane and Maputo provinces, resulting in many new projects that continue beyond 2023. The Country team also grew with the addition of an Assistant Facilitator based in Tete province.

The majority of finalised projects improved livelihoods and living conditions of persons with disabilities and their families through IGA and advocacy for better access to employment. Women with disabilities were prioritised in these projects and women's organisations own projects raised awareness on the rights of women and girls with disabilities. Access to education was improved through monitoring and awareness raising of accessibility of schools and inclusive methods in classrooms. Ramps were installed and more children with visual impairments were able to join braille classes.

Challenges during the year included logistical issues, equipment loss, delays in fund transfers, and currency fluctuations. Despite these, the programme made progress and surpassed its original targets for number of new projects.

## *Myanmar*

Myanmar has an ongoing civil war. Despite the challenging situation, all planned activities to support disability inclusion and organisational development were successfully implemented. A total of 16 projects were approved, consisting of seven fast track grants, seven regular grants and one special grant. Seven follow up visits and seven prefunding visits were carried out. In addition to these funding initiatives, since most projects in Myanmar focus on income-generating activities, 10 leaders from 10 organisations of persons with disabilities received training in business skills.

The most significant challenge in 2023 was security due to the civil war. When visiting some regions, Country Office staff must navigate multiple security checkpoints, and in certain areas, personal mobile phones are subject to inspection. Additionally, there were instances of bomb explosions in Yangon, making it unsafe to commute to the office. Contacting some beneficiaries was challenging due to disruptions in internet and mobile connectivity.

The Myanmar Country Programme successfully adhered to its thematic priorities, focusing on the capacity building of organisations of persons with disabilities, particularly women with disabilities, income-generating activities, increasing disability awareness and building the resilience of persons with disabilities in internally displaced persons camps and conflict-affected areas. Under the leadership of the Myanmar Country Office, the Gender Equality Network provided resilience support aimed at 120 persons with disabilities in Rakhine State, one of the regions most affected by the civil war.

## *Nepal*

The Abilis Nepal Country Office achieved significant results in 2023, continuing the successful implementation of the Abilis programme. Key activities included four orientation sessions for potential grantees, two advocacy trainings for OPDs, and multiple project monitoring visits across various regions. The office supported 42 new applications, leading to the approval of 24 new projects. Additionally, Abilis

facilitated the translation of application templates into Nepali, improving accessibility for grassroots-level OPDs.

A highlight of the year was a joint training on disability inclusion, organised with the Finnish Embassy, which received strong feedback from key stakeholders and partners. This event included a networking session to connect international and Nepali civil society organisations with local OPDs. Furthermore, Abilis staff contributed to capacity building for health professionals on disability-inclusive sexual and reproductive health rights and supported OPDs in advocating for the local implementation of the UNCRPD.

### *Tajikistan*

The 2023 Tajikistan Country Programme successfully facilitated 10 new projects, focusing on key areas such as disability rights, gender issues, and capacity building of OPDs. The programme included regular field visits, organised one two-days training session on project reporting, and actively engaged in advocacy through roundtables and awareness campaigns on the UNCRPD. Collaboration with partners like the Finnish Red Cross and Tajikistan Red Crescent strengthened efforts in inclusive disaster preparedness.

A significant milestone was the development of a National Program on Accessible Environment, with OPDs actively contributing to legislative development. Despite challenges like internet connectivity and economic instability, the programme maintained regular communication and adapted to unforeseen circumstances. The visibility of Abilis work increased through proactive PR efforts and participation in key events, including the Women's Entrepreneurship Symposium. Moving forward, capacity building remains crucial, as many OPDs still struggle with fundraising, project management, and advocacy. Continuous networking and collaboration with various stakeholders are essential for the programme's sustainability and effectiveness.



## *Tanzania*

The Tanzania Country Programme focused on empowerment and education of persons with disabilities. The year saw the finalisation of seven projects, with over 2600 beneficiaries. Most of the Abilis funded projects were implemented in the countryside and small towns. Throughout the year, the country office also worked closely with stakeholders, local authorities, other international NGO's and local members of the disability umbrella organisation Shivyawata. Abilis is part of Finnish Disabilities actors in Tanzania network that consists of Finnish organisations that work in the disability sector in Tanzania.

One of the success stories was the co-operation with local NGO CCBRT (Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation Tanzania) in Moshi Kilimanjaro Area. 8 small groups of parents of children with disabilities received funding from Abilis for the IGA project. Through earning income, the parents can provide rehabilitation for their children with disabilities.

In 2023 Abilis organised a new type of training on Climate Change and disabilities for Abilis OPDs, federation of association of person with disabilities and community development officers. The effects of climate change are noticeable especially in rural Tanzania.

## *Ukraine*

In 2023, the Abilis programme in Ukraine provided 30 grants, consulted 400 public organisations, and assisted one group in registering their OPD. A total of 103 OPDs submitted applications, each receiving consultation. Partnerships were established with local authorities to support the projects. Additionally, a media campaign was launched to raise awareness about the grants. Donations included 10,000 Euros from the Norwegian Association of Blind and Partially Sighted, which supported camps for children with visual disabilities.

The programme faced several challenges, including inflation, rising transportation costs, power cuts that disrupted communication and prolonged projects, frequent air alarms, and a high volume of applications that increased the workload. Many

organisations also struggled with low project management capacity and poor internet connectivity, complicating communication. To mitigate these challenges, the programme used alternative communication methods, offered support techniques for motivation and self-care, and provided training in project and crisis management.

Despite not planning for advocacy work, the programme exceeded its goals, with Country Coordinators promoting the grants at various events and conducting disability training for Polish refugee centres. Overall, the programme successfully supported OPD capacity building, project facilitation, and technical support throughout the year.

### *Uganda*

The 2023 Uganda Country Programme successfully supported 38 OPDs, focusing on livelihood activities, capacity building, and awareness of disability rights and inclusion. The programme conducted 78 field visits, identified capacity gaps, and provided 24 training sessions in leadership, financial management, and safeguarding. Awareness campaigns promoted disability inclusion, notably with increased community and family recognition of persons with disabilities as valuable members of society. Challenges such as foreign exchange losses and over-expectations from applicants were mitigated through strategic planning and transparent communication. Partners, including the Danish Association for the Physical Disabled and Disability Rights Fund, contributed to shared resources, though DRF closed their office by the end of 2023.

Sustainability was promoted through long-term support for OPDs, encouraging them to reapply after initial projects to build on skills and reach more beneficiaries. The programme had strong results in empowering persons with disabilities and increased awareness of the UNCRPD. This further improved disability inclusion in national programmes like the Disability Special Grant and Parish Development Model. Abilis Foundation is focused on continued capacity building, documentation of best practices, and collaboration with stakeholders to ensure the long-term success of the programme.

## *Vietnam*

In 2023, the Vietnam Country Programme successfully executed all planned activities as part of its ongoing efforts to support disability inclusion and organisational development in Vietnam. In total 41 applications were facilitated, of which 24 projects were approved, consisting of 19 fast track grants, four regular grants and one special grant. In addition to these funding efforts, a strong emphasis was placed on capacity building by organising seven capacity-building trainings for OPDs and carrying out field visits and monitoring and evaluation activities for 39 OPDs.

The most significant challenge in 2023 was the delay in renewing the Abilis certificate in Vietnam. Bureaucratic processes in the country often take considerable time, which hindered the approval and implementation of several projects. The delay also impacted the planned Asia regional meeting, forcing it to be relocated to Bangkok instead of its originally planned venue in Vietnam. Furthermore, the Vietnam Country Office was unable to hire a new employee until the new certificate was received.

The Vietnam Country Programme successfully adhered to its thematic priorities; capacity building for OPDs and self-help groups, enhancing livelihoods for persons with disabilities, promoting gender equality for women and girls with disabilities and advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights. Furthermore, the Country Office translated and published the manual “Disability and Climate Change” in response to the increasing impact of climate change in Vietnam.

## Final Notes

2023 was a good year for Abilis and marked a strong second year to our four-year programme period cycle. There were some changes in the management, but our global team of talented professionals worked hard and achieved most of our objectives. This remarkable spirit of global collaboration and dedication is evident in our day-to-day operations. The activities in 2023 were guided by the objectives and results framework set for the 2022–2025 global programme. The Malawi country programme took off fully in late 2023. In Ukraine, project funding was provided as part of the global programme's thematic component, and projects in Ukraine also received flexible support.

Abilis' grants are relatively small, tailored to the needs of disability groups operating on grassroot level. The average grant amount in 2023 was 9 539 €, reflecting our policy to prioritise smaller grants for emerging disability groups and small, concrete projects. If we examine just a single project, the change might look small - like in the case of the Vietnamese Tay Ho Association of people with disabilities' livelihood project, where 10 members, who had little to no income, took part in a sewing course. Yet, these small steps are essential. Our aim to empower persons with disabilities can't be enacted on just a national level, let alone a global one, because it's the individuals we need to empower.

Looking ahead to 2025, Abilis will continue programme work in its programme countries and in the newly designated programme country, Ukraine. In addition to programme work, we will conduct advocacy at both national and international levels and will seek business partnerships. We aim to build stronger disability inclusion in development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding by offering expertise and added value to work done through other actors and funding instruments. Strengthening the rights of persons with disabilities will always be at the heart of our work, and we are committed to building on our progress to create a more inclusive world.

Riina Paasio, Executive Director, Abilis Foundation



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