Joint Evaluation of Abilis, KIOS and Siemenpuu Foundations

Final Report

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List of Abbreviations

AcBio	Accion por la Biodiversidad, Argentine
ALRC	Asia Legal Resource Centre
CBO	Community based organisation
CEHURD	Centre for Health Human Rights and Development, Uganda
CJGEA	Centre for Justice, Governance and Independent Action, Kenya
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAN	Disability Action Network, Somaliland
Dastak	Dastak Charitable Trust, Pakistan
DPO	Disabled Peoples Organisation
ECDD	Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development
EHRD	Environmental human rights defender
EU	European Union
HRBA	Human rights based approach
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDPC	Inclusive Development Promoters and Consultants, Tanzania
IMLU	Independent Medico-Legal Unit, Kenya
INSEC	Informal Service Sector, Nepal
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
ISER	Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, Kenya
LDC	Least Developed Country
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
MDL	Mothers and daughters of Lanka, Sri Lanka
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland
MILI	Myanmar Independent Living initiative
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PWD	Person with disability
SDI	Sustainable Development Institute, Liberia
ToR	Terms of Reference
TLC	Twerwaneho Listeners Club, Uganda
TPF	Turning Point Foundation, Bangladesh
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Executive Summary

1. The Abilis, KIOS and Siemenpuu Foundations continue to make a distinctive, relevant contribution to Finland's development cooperation. Their programmes clearly align to Finland's development priorities and their support to, and advocacy on behalf of, 'hard to reach' marginalised populations to defend or claim their rights is particularly relevant to the 2030 Agenda of 'leaving no-one behind'. The concept of local ownership is key to the Foundations' approach which is reflected in their ways of working. Project achievements demonstrate the ways in which Foundation projects help to strengthen civil society but there is a need for the Foundations to better conceptualise their approach, and establish a better evidence base for these achievements. Grant management systems are generally efficient and partners highly value their relationship with the Foundations for its mutual trust and flexibility. However, many partners highlight the disadvantages of short-term granting and suggest that grant funding support should be relevant to the needs of different types of projects and partners. They would also like the Foundations to add value to their grant-making activities by, for example, facilitating peer learning. The Foundations should take advantage of the evaluation to sharpen their focus on civil society strengthening; refresh their human rights-based approach (HRBA); improve the evidence base for their achievements; raise the profile of the marginalised voices they support; and clarify and confirm with the MFA how they propose to ensure their ways of working are relevant to the needs of their partners.

RELEVANCE

Finland Development Policy
2. The missions and programmes of the three Foundations remain relevant to Finland's Development Policy, perhaps increasingly so. Their HRBA and thematic focii - disability, environment and human rights – align with the priority areas of Finland's development policy and some recently defined outcome statements for these areas. The focus countries of the Foundations are increasingly concentrated on Less Developed Countries (LDCs), though a strategic case can and should be made to work in a non-LDC country when clearly in line with their missions.

3. The Foundations play a distinctive, complimentary role in Finnish development cooperation with their human rights and demand-led approach. In particular, respondents highlighted the focus of the Foundations on vulnerable target groups such as people living with disability (PWD) in remote rural areas; marginalised populations; human rights movements and activists, and its reputation for supporting partners who are 'not the usual suspects'. The 2022-25 programme support funding window will provide an opportunity for the Foundations to further affirm this 'niche' role that differentiates them from other programme support organisations.

Programme Support modality
4. The Foundations have an ambiguous status as programme support organisations. They are almost wholly dependent on programme support and are subject to the general conditions governing the modality, with some exceptions. The ambiguity of their status has been the source of some uncertainty as to what are formal requirements of the MFA and what has become *de facto c*ustom and practice. With the exception of referral of grants over 10,000€ to the MFA for approval, the evaluation found no formal requirements under the general

conditions that would inhibit the Foundations adapting their grant funding mechanisms to ensure their continued relevance to partners.

Grant management

5. Foundation grant administration systems are generally well-managed but there is room to organise the selection and approval of partners more efficiently over the four year period of programme support. A mixed portfolio approach combining longer-term grants to partners who have demonstrated their fiduciary responsibilities and project effectiveness with shorter-term grants to emerging CSOs, along with earlier scheduling of Calls for Proposals during the programme support period, could release staff resources from grant administration to more value-adding activities.

Strengthening civil society

6. The global results frameworks of the Foundations, and most projects, are easily classifiable within some key dimensions of change linked to strengthening civil society. Some projects have a strong livelihood or service delivery focus and could be more explicitly linked to a rights-based approach, and to strengthening civil society. The human rights based approach shared by the Foundations is relevant to the challenging environment for civil society found in most of their focus countries, and the vulnerability of the marginalised populations that projects aim to support e.g. persons with disability (PWDs,), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual (LGBT) communities, human rights defenders, and forest and tribal peoples. Nonetheless, many projects support CSOs and civic groups to constructively engage with government and public bodies at different levels to ensure that existing legislative commitments are effectively implemented to the benefit of the marginalised and vulnerable. In some cases, this policy of engagement helped civil society partners surmount the resistance of local government authorities and navigate restrictive NGO legislation.

Communications in Finland

7. There are signs that the Foundations are recovering from the cuts they made to their communications activities in 2015, and reinvesting in their communications in Finland. Key respondents would like to see the Foundations develop a higher profile in Finland to communicate the rights issues associated with their work, and consolidate their reputation as experts in their fields. The Foundations communicate to different target audiences through a range of channels e.g. websites, social media, brochures, events etc. Their annual reporting on communications in Finland for the MFA is very variable and would be improved by more detailed metrics e.g. on the use of their websites and social media. The Foundations should take the opportunity of the next programme support period to reassess their communications priorities; update and sharpen their communications strategies; and develop detailed, realistic plans with key communications targets and indicators. This would help them make best use of limited resources and better monitor their 'reach' with the Finnish public.

EFFECTIVENESS

Partnership and project management

8. Partners value highly their partnership with the Foundations for its mutual trust and respect, flexibility and quality of dialogue. Abilis's country presence enables it to offer guidance and support to partners at close hand. The 'long-distance' support from KIOS and Siemenpuu is also appreciated - for example, in helping with security issues and in making contact with other agencies - although communications with KIOS were affected by staff changes during the

evaluation period. There was considerable support among partners for the Foundations to facilitate more added-value activity - in particular, more opportunities for national and international networking and knowledge-sharing.

9. All Foundations have developed guidance for partners on project cycle management but only Abilis has provided more detailed guidance on a results-based approach. Partners reported some difficulties in developing project results frameworks, and the variable quality of the frameworks and project reporting undermines the evidence base for project results. While there is *prima facie* evidence of projects strengthening civil society, project reports too often focus on the successful delivery of activities and outputs which makes it difficult to confidently demonstrate the project contribution to change at outcome level. This is due, in part, to the comparatively short-term grants awarded. There is evidence that the Foundations recognise the importance of improving their results based approach. Partners should be further supported in developing results frameworks and in results reporting, and encouraged to report at outcome level, where appropriate. Support to partners in the use of simple M&E tools to assess how projects are helping to strengthening civil society would improve the quality of project reports and the annual reporting of the Foundations to the MFA.

Strengthening civil society

10. The evaluation found examples of the Foundations contributing to strengthening civil society through their support to community mobilisation, capacity development, networking, inclusion and advocacy. Much of the work of the Foundations exemplifies the 2030 principle of inclusion i.e. 'leave no-one behind'. Abilis, for example, seeks to strengthen Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPOs) in society and support the independent living and socio-economic inclusion of PWD groups through small-scale livelihood projects in remote rural areas. In addition to improved livelihoods, there is clear evidence that the projects improve the self-esteem and social status of PWDs in their local communities, although there is potential to support the broader social and political inclusion of PWDs as rights-holders in the community. A distinctive feature of the KIOS and Siemenpuu approach is to target support to populations to defend and/or assert their rights in relation to government and the private sector.

11. Many projects include mobilising target groups or communities at an early stage of the project to increase their awareness and knowledge of their rights with regard to the law or duty bearers. Projects too frequently report on the increased awareness of target groups by reporting the community mobilisation activities rather than the knowledge or attitude change that results from these. Several projects provide a better evidence base by reporting when mobilisation activities resulted in specific, intended actions e.g. women's mobilisation on land rights resulting in more land titles being granted to them.

12. The Foundations do not normally develop the capacity of partners directly, although support to their organisational development can be included in grants. More frequently partners helped to strengthen civil society by developing the capacity of target groups - for example, to dialogue and engage with government or public bodies or in providing technical training on physical and digital security for human rights defenders. Supporting and building networks of civic activists or CSOs to assert or defend their rights e.g. to land or sustainable forestry, featured prominently in KIOS and Siemenpuu projects. Capacity building and networking play an important part in many Foundation projects but there was little documented evidence of their effectiveness. The Foundations should consider the use of, for example, organisational capacity assessment and network effectiveness tools to better monitor and report on their contribution to strengthening civil society in these areas.

13. Civil society strengthening is often combined with advocacy activities at local or national level. These are less about getting new laws adopted and more about getting an issue on the policy agenda and/or holding duty bearers to account for the implementation of policy or practice commitments. A number of Abilis projects focused on changing public attitudes to disability - for example, an Arts Festival in Myanmar to convey the creativity of PWDs. A more focused example of agenda setting was the success of the KIOS partner ALRC in drawing the attention of international community, including the International Criminal Court, to the plight of the Rohingya refugees.

14. The evaluation identified several examples of projects working with both right holders and duty bearers to ensure that existing policies or legislation respond to the needs of the poor and marginalised. This sometimes involved a collaborative approach with government e.g. a KIOS partner helping the Uganda government to monitor and implement the recommendations of a Universal Periodic Review. Alternatively, a more adversarial approach is adopted - for example, using strategic litigation to ensure that the law e.g. regarding health and social insurance is implemented fairly to the benefit of the target populations. It can take time for the impact of policy and practice change to translate into benefits for the poor and marginalised. The Foundations should consider commissioning thematic evaluations in key areas such as these to assess to what extent policy influence or successful Court rulings result in tangible changes for the target populations, as this is usually too early for final project reports to demonstrate.

SUSTAINABILITY

Lasting change
15. At a community level, the psycho-social benefits to PWDs of Abilis's grass-roots income generation projects are likely to be long-lasting but the evaluation considers that a savings and loan component to the projects would make the economic benefits more likely to be sustainable. Many of the projects reviewed were at an early stage of the project cycle – raising awareness, capacity building, network building, agenda setting etc. – and it is too early to conclude whether they are likely to contribute to lasting changes in people's lives. The evaluation considers that those projects that constructively engage with government bodies or existing legal frameworks to ensure that existing opportunities are exploited and legislative commitments are implemented are more likely to deliver lasting benefits for the poor and marginalised in the context of restricted civic space than projects with a more confrontational approach.

Organisational sustainability
16. Several partners reported that Foundation support in proposal development and report writing has helped them diversify their funding base. Some partners have also used grant funds in support of their organisational development e.g. to develop organisational strategies. A number of partners suggested that the Foundations could contribute more to their organisational sustainability. The evaluation encourages the Foundations to use an organisational capacity assessment tool with key partners to jointly identify how their organisational development needs will be assessed, supported and monitored throughout the project cycle. This need not involve the Foundations directly in the provision of the support.

Summary of Recommendations

RELEVANCE

Finland Development Policy

1. *Foundations to use the findings of the evaluation to propose to, and seek confirmation from, the MFA how they intend to ensure that their ways of working are relevant to the needs of their partners and target groups within the programme support modality.*
2. *Siemenpuu to make a strategic case to work outside LDCs or Finland priority countries, if strategic to its mission, in the next programme support application.*
3. *KIOS and Siemenpuu to retain a focus, within a mixed partner portfolio, on supporting human rights movements/actors that tend to fall outside other donors' funding priorities.*
4. *Foundations to identify in next programme proposal how they will add value to the efforts of partners and Finnish development cooperation, based on their areas of expertise.*

Grant management

5. *Foundations to plan a 'mixed portfolio' of partners for 2022-25 programme period i.e. awarding longer-term, programme grants to established CSO or DPO partners with shorter-term grants to new partners e.g. emerging human rights groups/organisations, community-based PWD groups.*
6. *Siemenpuu and KIOS to plan and coordinate Calls for Proposals at specified times earlier in the programme period to maximise efficiency and allow for longer-term granting.*
7. *Abilis to review grant limits of fast-track and regular grants, and consider a more pro-active approach to enabling groups to apply for follow-up grants when appropriate.*

Strengthening civil society

8. *Foundations to clarify e.g. through a conceptual framework, how their human rights based approach strengthens civil society, including the types or dimensions of change relevant to this.*
9. *Abilis to consider a broader interpretation of a human rights approach to its work on livelihoods to support PWDs in asserting their social and political rights within the community.*
10. *KIOS and Siemenpuu to review how service delivery elements in projects contribute to strengthening civil society dimensions of change.*
11. *Foundations to explore opportunities for mutual learning in key areas e.g. on different dimensions of change, data gathering tools relevant to civil society.*
12. *Foundations to explore the possibility of allowing the inclusion of contingency funds in project budgets.*
13. *Siemenpuu and KIOS to pursue a policy of engagement with embassies and relevant missions to highlight human rights work that may be vulnerable to oppression.*

Communications In Finland

14. *Foundations to update communications strategies to clarify realistic goals, target audiences, and key messages in order to raise the profile of their programmes, and consolidate their reputation as trusted experts in their fields.*
15. *Foundations to clarify any advocacy objectives and plans in association with their next programme support application.*

16. *Foundations to develop and share best practice in disaggregated metrics when monitoring and reporting on the popularity of their websites and social media.*

EFFECTIVENESS

Partnership/project management

17. *Foundations to consult with partners to provide guidance and support on results frameworks and reporting - to include simple tools such as use of mixed indicators, storytelling methods and use of case studies, for gathering evidence in support of changes in civil society.*
18. *Foundations to more systematically encourage and harvest learning from project reports and end of project evaluations, and to explore ways to more actively facilitate knowledge sharing among partners.*
19. *KIOS to consult with partners if they would like a template for project reporting.*
20. *Foundations to commission thematic evaluations of key aspects of their approach to strengthening civil society so that projects and programmes can benefit from lessons learned.*

Strengthening civil society

21. *Foundations to consider the use of organisational capacity assessment and network effectiveness tools as a means of jointly assessing, planning for, monitoring and reporting on the organisational development of key partners.*

SUSTAINABILITY

Lasting change

22. *Abilis to consider how to incorporate/ encourage savings and credit schemes in its livelihoods projects with grassroots communities of PWDs.*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Abilis, KIOS and Siemenpuu Foundations were established as independent foundations with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) in 1998 with the aim of channelling further support to civil society to work on disability rights, human rights and the environment in line with Finnish development policy. Since 2015/16, the MFA has supported the Foundations through its programme support modality which remains the primary source of funds for the three Foundations, accounting for 90-95% of their annual income during the current funding period 2018-21.

Although programme support organisations, the Foundations have a distinctive status within the modality and some separate conditions e.g. on self-financing and re-granting, apply to them. They are seen to make a distinctive contribution to Finland's development cooperation through their human rights based approach (HRBA) and their focus on smaller, hard-to-reach groups. While the Foundations share a common modality and origin, each differs in terms of its ways of working, thematic focus and priority countries. Abilis, in particular, differs in its way of working by making a greater number of smaller grants to grassroots disability groups in remote areas and maintaining a small number of country offices.

A key characteristic of the Foundations is their shared commitment to the principle of local ownership and to supporting projects planned and implemented by civil society actors in the global South, and to ensuring that their ways of working and processes are appropriate to the needs of those they support.

The MFA commissioned evaluations of the Foundations in 2008 and 2016 but these did not assess in detail the ways of working and operations of the Foundations. This independent evaluation was commissioned by the three Foundations and is expected to assess the working practices and achievements of the Foundations in more detail during the period 2018/2019. The objectives[1] of the evaluation are to:

- Make recommendations on the development of the Foundations' modality or ways of working;
- Make recommendations on the development of the Foundations' grant-making tools and practices, and on their communications activities; and
- Increase the understanding of the Foundations on the best ways to support the strengthening of the civil society.

The evaluation approach and methods were guided by OECD DAC evaluation criteria, in particular, relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. The evaluation will serve a dual purpose of accountability and learning, and is expected to feed into the planning of the foundations for the next programme period (2022-2025) and their own strategy processes. The evaluation has a strong utility focus and its findings and recommendations are directed principally towards the Foundations.

1.2. Evaluation methodology

The team followed three guiding principles in conducting the evaluation:

- *Consultation:* The team has tried to ensure that the Steering Group was regularly involved in and informed of the progress of the evaluation so that the final report contains 'no surprises';
- *Evidence-based*: The team has triangulated the evidence form the data gathering methods to ensure that the findings and recommendations of the evaluation are firmly based on evidence;

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[1] See Annex 7 for an edited version of the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR)

- *Utility***:** The team has tried to ensure that the evaluation findings and recommendations are practical and useful to the Foundations, and relevant to their future programme development.

The team drew upon the evaluation questions in the Terms of Reference (ToR) to develop an Evaluation Framework which further refined the questions and identified the sources and methods of data collection. Key learning and evidence from the documentary review and stakeholder interviews were documented in a format in line with the Evaluation Framework to provide a consistent overview of the documentary evidence. Data was gathered from the following sources:

- *Document review:* The team completed a documentary review of 24 projects after agreeing a sampling method with the Steering Group during the inception meetings. The aim was to review a sample of projects active during the evaluation period that represented different thematic programmes and countries.
- *Interviews:* In addition to interviews conducted during the country visits, the team held 25 individual interviews with a representative sample of stakeholders (see Annex 5) to ensure that diverse perspectives were incorporated into the evaluation findings. All interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format and recorded in a standard template in line with the Evaluation Framework.
- *Learning Workshop:* The team supplemented individual interviews with senior staff members of the Foundations with workshops in Helsinki with staff and Board members of each of the three Foundations.
- *Country* visits: The team made country visits to Uganda and Nepal in early March 2020 (one team member per country). The two countries were chosen since they offered the greatest overlap of work by the Foundations to give each evaluator a broader perspective of the work of the Foundations on the ground. In addition, Nepal is a partner or priority country for the MFA. The Director and an expert advisor of KIOS travelled to Uganda, and a programme coordinator from Siemenpuu travelled to Nepal, and were present during project visits but not during individual interviews or workshops.

A workshop planned with the Steering Group in Helsinki on the 27th March to present initial findings to the Steering Group prior to the delivery of the draft report was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, but was held via Zoom on the same date. A draft final report was delivered on 6th April 2020 and the Foundations returned individual and joint comments on the report to the evaluation team the week beginning 20th April 2020. The evaluation team prepared a written response to the joint comments from the Foundations prior to a Skype conference with the Steering Group on 29th April 2020 to discuss the draft final report. This final report was delivered to the Foundations on 6th May 2020.

2. Relevance

2.1. Finland development cooperation

This Section will review:

a) The relevance of the work of the Foundations to Finland's development cooperation;
b) The relevance of the programme support modality to the work of the Foundations; and
c) The complementary role the Foundations play in Finland's development cooperation.

a) *Finland Development Policy*

Two key documents provide the policy framework for the Foundation's 'fit' with Finland's development policy - the Finland Development Policy[2] and the Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy[3]. In the case of Abilis, MFA also has a specific policy document on the rights of persons with Disabilities[4].

Finnish development policy is committed to a human rights-based approach (HRBA) and has four priority areas. These are broadly defined as:

- The rights of women and girls;
- Reinforcing developing countries' economies to generate more jobs, livelihoods and well-being;
- Peaceful and democratic societies; and
- Food security, access to water and energy, and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The evaluation found from the document review that the work of the Foundations clearly aligns with these priority areas. A new MFA document[5], which includes impact and outcome statements and indicators for each priority area, confirms that the work of the Foundations contributes to more than one priority area and outcome statement. The following table provides one example for each Foundation.

	Priority Area	Outcome statement
Abilis	Rights of women and girls	The rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to enjoy life free of violence, stigma and discrimination are protected. (Outcome 3)
KIOS	Education and peaceful democracies	Enabling environment for and capacity of the civil society and persons in vulnerable positions to influence and participate in decision-making has improved. (Outcome 3)
Siemenpuu	Climate and natural resources	All people benefit increasingly from clean environment and healthy ecosystems, conservation, sustainable management and use of renewable natural resources, such as forests and water bodies. (Outcome 1)

It is not clear how the MFA plans to use this document and whether, for example it aims to use the aggregate indicators for its results reporting. While not suggesting that the Foundations should align their reporting to these outcome statements, it would not be difficult, for example, to include an annex in their annual reports which illustrates their contribution to specific outcomes of the priority areas.

Finnish development policy recognises the critical role that an independent, vibrant, pluralistic civil society plays in establishing the conditions for democracy and in realising human rights. The 2017 Civil Society Guidelines sets out a number of principles characteristic of Finland's support to strengthening civil society such as a human rights based approach to development, which is universally seen by respondents as distinctive of the Foundations' approach and very relevant to Finland support to strengthening civil society.

Nearly all of Finland's 14 development cooperation partner countries belong to the group of the least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa and Asia, many of whom are defined as fragile states. The 2017

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[2] Finland Development Policy, 2016
[3] Guidelines for Civil Society in Development policy, 2017
[4] Leaving No-one Behind: The Finnish Approach to Addressing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Development Cooperation Policy, undated.
[5] Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy 2020, 2020

Guidelines *encourages* programme support organisations to work in LDCs and with the poorest sections of the population. During the evaluation period, the majority of countries in which Abilis worked were LDCs and/or the focus of Finnish bilateral cooperation. A majority of KIOS country programmes were LDCs although only two out of five were priority counties for Finland's development cooperation. Two out of five of Siemenpuu focus countries were Finnish priority countries and three out of five were LDCs. Siemenpuu is taking measures to address this - for example, its Calls for Proposals in 2018/19 focused on LDCs with the exception of Indonesia; MFA funded projects in India closed in 2019; and the Foundation is reconsidering its work in Indonesia.

One MFA respondent commented that the rationale for Siemenpuu's choice of countries was not clear in the 2018-21 programme support proposal. The Siemenpuu proposal justifies its choice of focus countries in terms of its long-term experience, expertise and networking in these countries[6], and there is supplementary detail on the programme rationale in other sections. The evaluation believes a case should be able to be made for a Foundation to make a strategic choice[7] to work in a country that is not a LDC or a priority of official Finnish development cooperation if it is clearly in line with its mission. For example, there is an *a prioiri* case for Siemenpuu to continue to work in Brazil or Indonesia given their strategic importance for the environment and environmental rights.

b) *Programme support modality*

The ToR asked the evaluation to assess the relevance of the programme support modality to the work of the Foundations. The programme support modality is central to the Finnish goal of strengthening civil society and is the MFA's principal grant mechanism to support the development cooperation programmes of Finnish partnership organisations, special foundations and umbrella organisations. The three Foundations are almost exclusively reliant on MFA programme support which has constituted 90-95% of their annual income in recent years.

While current support from the MFA is administered under the general conditions[8] for programme support issued in 2017, both the Foundations and the MFA see the Foundations in a somewhat different category from other programme support organisations. For example, the history of the three Foundations as strategic initiative of MFA (albeit independently governed) sets them apart from other programme support organisations. The Foundations were established in 1998 as a "re-granting mechanism" to channel small-scale civil society funding for the cross-cutting issues of Finland's development policy. This was formalised in the Cooperation Agreement of 2005[9] which is the latest formal agreement between the MFA and the Foundations. This sets out the role of the Foundations as making use of their expertise on thematic areas to strengthen civil societies in developing countries.

The general conditions for programme support states two special conditions that apply to the Foundations that do not apply to other programme support organisations i.e.

- *Self-financing*. The minimum self-financing contribution of partners is set at 7.5% which may consist of cash, donations of goods or services, or voluntary work, as opposed to a 15% co-funding requirement for other programme support organisations.

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[6] *Development cooperation programme of the Siemenpuu Foundation 2018-21*, Dec 2018, pp 4,5

[7] One possibility is to use the Civicus Civil Society Monitor which has five scales to categorise the civil society space across the world. See https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2019

[8] General conditions for the use of discretionary government transfers and additional conditions for programme support, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OSLR_3LosZqSitL9sLTEsJR4u9jFrH4Z?zx=au0gv24t3trh

[9] Cooperation agreement between MFA and Siemenpuu Foundation, 2005 (in Finnish), https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AzAQ5rXuswdU7j5GSQ89MM5vJdxJDDca?zx=au0gv24t3trh

- *Grant approval.* Funding decisions must be sent to the MFA for information who may request changes to the decisions. This is based on the guidance of the National Audit Office of Finland that the Foundations cannot make decisions on state funds to third parties, described by one respondent as a 'Finnish peculiarity'. The current practice is that all Foundations send their funding decisions above 10,000 € to the MFA *de facto* for final approval.

The special conditions for the Foundations have not been further, formally defined by the MFA since 2017. The only written communication on the issue is correspondence between the three Foundations and the MFA unit for civil society in May 2017. The Foundations report that a number of ways of working and practices have been discussed and developed together with the MFA over the years which may represent 'custom and practice' rather than conditions. The Foundations have found the lack of further detailed, written guidance on their special conditions challenging as, for example, there is an ongoing need to discuss their special status with new staff at the MFA.

The Foundations commented to the evaluation that the programme approach of the modality is not necessarily best suited to them since, being demand-driven, they cannot predict the exact composition of their project portfolios. Respect for the principle of local ownership is at the heart of the Foundations' approach, and all three have a legacy of bottom-up development in which partners in the South take the initiative, develop and implement their own projects. However, the evaluation found that this principle does not seem to be undermined by the programme support modality. For example, the 2018 programme proposals to the MFA outlined the rationale and approach of their proposed thematic programmes without predetermining individual projects.

The evaluation has sought to understand whether the special status of the Foundations with the MFA places constraints on the size, length and nature of their grants. It is our understanding that:

- There is no guidance from MFA on size and length of grant although *de facto* it has been limited to three years. In addition, the grant period may exceed the programme support funding period (subject to a clause in the contract stating that funding is subject to the continuation of the support from MFA);
- The MFA acknowledges[10] that the programme support proposal and annual plans do not have to be presented at project level but can be presented, for example, at a programme level with a well-defined results framework.

In summary, in the absence of further clarification from the MFA on the special conditions surrounding the Foundations, the evaluation concludes that the programme support modality is sufficiently relevant to the Foundations' missions to enable them to develop and support their programmes in the ways they think are most relevant to their partners and target groups. To avoid any future ambiguity, the Foundations should meet with the MFA prior to developing their programme support proposals for 2022-25 to propose, and seek confirmation for, how they intend to use the findings of the evaluation to ensure the continuing relevance of their ways of working to partners.

c) Complementary role in and added value to Finnish development cooperation

The evaluation was asked to review the complementary role the Foundations play, and the value they add to, Finnish development cooperation. Stakeholders interviewed confirmed that they thought the Foundations occupy a distinctive niche as Finnish human rights agencies within Finland's Development policy. (Although it should be noted that, approximately every two years, through Calls for Proposals the MFA also funds international human rights organisations working on similar themes to the Foundations such as human right defenders, LGBT rights and international disabled people's

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[10] Memo from MFA to Foundations, May 2017

organisations.) Key respondents highlighted the following ways in which the Foundations play a complementary role in Finnish development cooperation:

- *Target groups:* Many respondents perceive that the Foundations target civic actors many other Northern donors do not reach – for example, grassroots groups of PWDs in poor rural communities; 'front-line' human rights defenders; forest and tribal communities etc.
- *Partner organisations.* Similarly, the Foundations are perceived to support CSO/CBO partners who are 'not-the-usual-suspects' - Abilis with grassroots PWD groups, KIOS and Siemenpuu traditionally with smaller human rights based organisations e.g. working outside the capital.
- *Politically sensitive issues.* KIOS and Siemenpuu are respected for working on politically sensitive issues such as LHBTQ and indigenous rights in the context of declining civic space.

MFA respondents identified several ways in which the Foundations add value to Finnish development cooperation. The MFA considers the Foundations as a source of information about the human rights situation in countries where Finland does not have an embassy – for example, on LGBT and indigenous peoples' rights which are priorities for Finnish human rights policy. MFA officials said that they draw upon the work of the KIOS and Abilis, in particular, for examples to use in their policy work e.g. speaking points and national contributions to international level processes. KIOS and Amnesty were the main partners of the MFA e.g. organising seminars/events together during the Finnish presidency of the European Union (EU) in 2019 when human right defenders were a Finland priority theme for Finland. KIOS' contacts with grassroots-level organisations is seen by the MFA as an important asset. Siemenpuu's approach of strengthening the role of local communities in natural resources management is also seen by the MFA as an important complementary element to Finnish development policy.

The MFA views Abilis as a strategically important partner since disability is such a strong priority issue for Finland. The MFA and Abilis have worked together in various ways at an international level – for example, co-hosting The Global Action on Disability (GLAD), the coordination body of bilateral and multilateral agencies, private sector and foundations, in Helsinki in January 2018. At a country level, MFA respondents highlight that Abilis' networks and contacts are potentially very useful since there is an increasing focus on the inclusion of PWDs in the Finnish development policy, and a related need to build capacity of country level programming. This may be an opportunity that is under exploited by KIOS and Siemenpuu in their respective areas of expertise. The fact that Finland's Embassies no longer manage cooperation funds at country level further highlights the role of the Foundations in reaching out to local civil society groups as part of Finland's development cooperation.

Abilis has sought to add value to the efforts of other programme support organisations to include PWDs in their programming, offering training and support to Finnchurchaid, Finnish Red Cross, WWF Nepal and others. KIOS and Siemenpuu were less frequently cited as adding value to the efforts of others in their fields.

Recommendations

1. *Foundations to use the findings of the evaluation to propose to, and seek confirmation from, the MFA, how they intend to ensure that their ways of working are relevant to the needs of their partners and target groups within the programme support modality..*
2. *Siemenpuu to make a strategic case to work outside LDCs or Finland priority countries, if strategic to its mission, in next the programme support application.*
3. *KIOS and Siemenpuu to retain a focus, as part of a mixed portfolio of partners, on supporting human rights movements/actors that tend to fall outside other donors' funding priorities..*
4. *Foundations to identify in next programme proposal how they will add value to the efforts of partners and Finnish development cooperation, based on their areas of expertise.*

2.2. Grant management

This Section will:

a) Review briefly the grant management systems of the Foundations;
b) Summarise partner[11] perceptions of Foundation grant management; and then
c) Review the relevance of Foundation grant funding to their projects/partners.

a) Grant management systems

All the Foundations have developed standard formats and guidelines for the grant administration process, such as criteria and checklists for grant applications and approvals. Abilis and Siemenpuu have provided written guidance on the grant application process. The Foundations have also produced a range of supplementary Guidance Notes for partners on, for example, gender, the environment, and ethical principles. Abilis is the only Foundation to share Guidance Notes on two important areas, although KIOS and Siemenpuu provide support in other ways:

- *HRBA* e.g. contrasting HRBA and a charity-based approach in working with PWDs; and
- *Results based management* e.g. on defining outcomes and outputs, choosing indicators, collecting data and results reporting.

The Foundations tend to approve comparatively short-term grants – in particular Abilis, given its primary focus on supporting grassroots groups of PWDs. Abilis is the only Foundation to provide different types of grant funding – fast track (max. 3,500 €), regular (max. 10,000 €) and special (above 10,000 €) – and sees this ability to offer different types of grant funding as a strength of its approach. For example, it may be possible for a partner organisation to 'graduate' from one grant to another[12].

Most partners interviewed, other than those interviewed in Nepal, reported that their current grant was the result of a process of bilateral discussion with a Foundation rather than a result of an open Call for Proposals. This may be due to the project sample being weighted in favour of 'older' projects since nearly all of the current partners of KIOS and Siemenpuu in Nepal are grant-funded as a result of open Calls for Proposal. In some cases, a partner had approached the Foundation; in other cases, the Foundation had taken the initiative. Partners found these bilateral negotiations satisfactory but such an open approach has advantages and disadvantages. It is likely that an open, informal approach enables partners to apply for a grant at a time that is convenient for them, and with a project/proposal that fits in with their own priorities and plans. On the other hand, it may be a contributory factor to a certain lack of focus in project portfolios, and to the preponderance of short-term grants as grants continue to be awarded throughout the programme support funding cycle.

Abilis describes itself as having a continuous, open Call for Proposals. Country offices and partners disseminate information about the Call and grant applications are encouraged and supported through bilateral discussion. This would seem, in the main, an appropriate approach since a more open,

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[11] The experience of the evaluation from interviews and workshops is that organisations grant-funded by the Foundations consider themselves to be partners rather than grantees. We will, therefore, use the term partner in this report.

[12] Abilis reports that approximately 15% of partners who have been in receipt of more than one grant started with a fast-track grant.

competitive process would not be relevant to the marginalised, community-level groups that it typically targets.

Both the KIOS and Siemenpuu issued Calls for Proposals during the evaluation period as a means of attracting new partners. KIOS launched a Call for Proposals in four countries (and for regional proposals) in February 2018. The Foundation admits it was overwhelmed by the response to the Call and unable to administer the applications efficiently, due to staff changes including at Directorial level. More than half of the 279 grant applications were not assessed subsequent to the Call; only ten grants approved (approx. 4% of applications); and grant approvals were significantly delayed.

Siemenpuu made the most extensive use of Calls for Proposals during the evaluation period, using a two stage process of shortlisting the concept notes of applicants before inviting them to submit a full proposal. During 2018/19 Siemenpuu issued nine Calls to selected countries of which one was restricted. Siemenpuu received 126 concept notes from the first seven Open Calls and invited 32 proposals of which 18 were approved. Nearly two thirds of grants approved during the evaluation period were to new partners through Open Calls. However, a high concentration of Calls focused on three countries. Five Calls were issued each to Mali, Myanmar and Nepal in a two year period - raising the issue of how best Calls might be coordinated throughout the programme support period.

The evaluation notes that the grant approval process is very extended - in the case of Abilis potentially starting with the recommendations of a country office/local advisory board through Foundation staff, Board and, finally, the MFA. In the case of Siemenpuu, the thematic working groups are also involved in the process.

b) *Partner perceptions of grant management*

The partners of all three Foundations, with only a few exceptions, found their approach to grant management relevant. There was considerable consensus in what partners valued:

- *Flexible donor:* Several KIOS and Abilis partners mentioned that they liked the fact they could approach the Foundation at any time with a proposal since it allows more time for discussion than a Call for Proposal.
- *User-friendly templates*: Most partners considered the grant application and reporting templates relatively easy to complete. Several partners reported difficulty in developing results frameworks e.g. identifying appropriate indicators, although many thought it a potentially useful discipline.
- *Good dialogue during application process*: Partners appreciated the opportunity to discuss proposals – with Helsinki or an Abilis country office – before they were approved. Foundations were described as easy to approach, quick in responding, and offering clear guidance when needed – although some gaps in communication were reported with KIOS during staff changes.
- *Due diligence*: Partners thought the assessment process fair and thorough. Partners acknowledged that this helps to develop the project in detail; ensures that it is based on genuine needs; and that all stakeholders are involved. Several KIOS partners commented on its due diligence, including very comprehensive reference checks on the applicants. Although most saw the value of this rigorous approach, some suggested that the process could be streamlined for already tested organisations.
- *Local ownership of projects:* Partners universally appreciated that the Foundations do not impose their own agendas on applicants during the application process.

The reaction of partners to the experience of Calls for Proposals was mixed. Siemenpuu partners who responded to a Call commented positively on the two-stage process. KIOS partners, in contrast, reported a lack of communication following application, and a 12-18 months delay from grant application to approval.

Some specific suggestions for reform to grant administration were mentioned by partners, including:

- *Abilis fast-track grants:* Abilis grassroots partners in Uganda and Nepal commented that the current limit of 3,500 € for a fast track grant is no longer sufficient for start-up project activities since costs have increased significantly. It was also suggested that the regular grant limit be reviewed. A further suggestion was that Abilis might provide start-up capital where required in income generation projects.
- *Grant disbursement:* Some Abilis partners commented that a delay in the disbursement of the second tranche of the grant can be very inconvenient for smaller CSOs. Abilis observes that any delay is normally due to the late submission of the progress report or delays in getting clarification to questions on the report, so it is not apparent how best this might be avoided;
- *Application templates*: Some partners made suggestions in this regard e.g. the application form should be available in local languages (not appropriate to Abilis who already does this); and baseline data should not be mandatory since it is impractical to gather for a short-term grants.

c) Relevance of grant funding

A theme that emerged from partner interviews and workshops was that the type of grant offered by the Foundations should be relevant to the needs of the project and partner. In particular, many partners reported that short-term grants were not best suited to the nature of their projects[13]. While short-term grants may be appropriate in some circumstances, longer-term grant funding is appropriate if the project aims to deliver even short to medium-term outcomes.

Some Abilis partners thought that small grants were relevant to their start up activities or to the specific initiative that they were to support. Abilis points out, for example, that the majority of community groups in receipt of a first-time grant have never previously managed a project or received external funding, and that longer-term funding would be inappropriate. Nonetheless, nearly all the PWD groups visited in Uganda, for example, were clear that the initial grant was enough to get them started but not long enough to consolidate their progress and ensure sustainability. While it is possible for Abilis partners to 'graduate' from fast track to regular grants, only a minority do so. More established CSOs that were also in receipt of short-term grants from Abilis said that longer-term support would be necessary if their project was to achieve the desired longer-term outcomes.

Many partners, of KIOS and Siemenpuu especially, valued their long-term relationships with the Foundations but this was usually characterised by having had several short-term project grants. The disadvantages of this serial, short-term grant-making were consistently documented by partners and, in some cases, compared unfavourably with INGOs with whom they have long term partnerships. These include:

- It creates uncertainty for staff; makes it difficult to retain good staff if there is no guarantee of future funding; and can incur costs and delays in recruiting and training project staff;

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[13] The October 2018 Evaluation of KIOS support to ISER in Uganda also recommended that core, multiple year funding would strengthen sustainability of the work and ensure follow up on gains realised.

- It undermines the continuity of project activities and makes it difficult for partners to plan for the future and to invest in their own growth and organisational development;
- It makes it difficult to report to outcomes within the project period;

In the case of Siemenpuu and KIOS in particular, partners reiterated that human rights work is a long struggle. *"Human rights victories do not happen overnight. They require persistence and resilience and a will not to give up"*.[14] This was confirmed when reviewing project reports which often referred to follow up activities as necessary for the successful completion of the project. Siemenpuu support to LIVANINGO in Mozambique provides a typical example. The project was awarded a one year grant to strengthen the capacity of women's organisations to promote their land rights and traditional systems of agriculture as a means of creating greater food security. The project reported initial successes in the increased food production and marketing; improved advocacy capacity and activities of the women's groups; and their beginning to participate in district consultative committees. The partner has applied for a second grant to consolidate and replicate the project benefits and would like a longer-term partnership with the Foundation, as it has with Danish, Norwegian and Swedish NGOs.

The advantages of longer-term funding, as reported by partners, are that it would enable them to:
- Better able to retain and train staff;
- Provide greater continuity to project activities such as advocacy that require more time to implement; and
- Report more realistically to outcomes rather than activities and outputs:

Longer-term grants would also be more cost-effective for Foundations to manage. Spending less time on grant management could potentially enable Foundation staff to add more value to project or programme activities e.g. by facilitating networking and knowledge sharing; improving results reporting; and communicating programme achievements and challenges.

Several partners, of KIOS and Siemenpuu in particular, but not exclusively, suggested that the Foundations offer longer term partnerships to organisations that have demonstrated their competence to implement the work successfully, demonstrate results and provide reliable financial reporting. They also indicated a preference for programme rather than project funding. This would grant fund a specific programme of work, for example, with a results framework describing outcomes and outputs rather than a set of specific calendarized activities at proposal stage.

Longer-term grants will not be appropriate for all projects or partners. The Foundations might consider more explicitly managing a 'mixed portfolio' to ensure the relevance of their grant funding to the needs of partners/projects The Foundations could identify in their MFA for programme support proposal for the MFA partners for longer-term grant funding that have an established track record of competence. Improved results frameworks and reporting would be a condition for such longer-term partnerships. This could release staff time for ongoing monitoring and support of newer partners. Longer-term partnerships could be supplemented during the programme support period by providing shorter e.g. two year, grants to unspecified projects/partners identified either through referral, bilateral discussions or Calls for Proposals.

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[14] *"From little things big things grow",* KIOS Foundation, 2018, p.4.

Recommendations

5. *Foundations to plan a 'mixed portfolio' of partners for 2022-25 programme period i.e. awarding 'longer-term, programme grants to established CSO or DPO partners with shorter-term grants to new partners e.g. emerging human rights groups/organisations, community-based PWD groups.*
6. *Siemenpuu and KIOS to plan and coordinate Calls for Proposals at specified times earlier in the programme period to maximise efficiency and allow for longer term granting.*
7. *Abilis to review grant limits of fast-track and regular grants, and consider a more pro-active approach to enabling groups to apply for follow-up grants when appropriate.*

2.3. Strengthening civil society

The evaluation was asked to review how Foundation projects help to strengthen civil society and how this could be reinforced. Section 4 will illustrate how Foundations projects are helping to strengthen different aspect of civil society. This Section will:

a) Illustrate how the work of the Foundations is relevant to the type of changes associated with strengthening civil society;
b) Review the relevance of the Foundation partners and target groups to strengthening civil society; and
c) Assess the relevance of livelihoods and service delivery projects to a HRBA to civil society strengthening.
d) Briefly review how well Foundation-supported projects have adapted to a changing operating environment for civil society.

a)   Civil society dimensions of change.

Although the Foundations have sometimes expressed reservations about the suitability of the concept of strengthening civil society to describe their work, most of the outcomes in their global results frameworks (which are the basis of their annual reporting to the MFA) are clearly compatible with the concept. The project document review also indicated that most of the work reviewed can be presented and understood within the concept of strengthening civil society (although livelihoods and service delivery projects require special attention). However, a more explicit conceptual framework might enable the Foundations and partners to formulate and report more effectively on their results in this regard. The evaluation identified a number of dimensions of change associated with strengthening civil society that encapsulate most of the work that the Foundations support[15]. These are:

- *Community mobilisation/Awareness raising:* A central feature of much of the HRBA of the Foundations is to raise the awareness of target populations of their social, economic or environmental rights vis-à-vis duty bearers. This is achieved most frequently at local level through community mobilisation activities, closely linked to the concept of empowerment, with marginalised target populations such as LGBT, PWD and other groups.
- *Capacity development:* The Foundations are directly involved in developing the capacity of partners only to a limited extent – for example, in proposal development and aspects of project cycle management. However, capacity development of target groups by partners e.g. in advocacy or through technical training, is a major element of much of the project work they support.

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[15] Section 4 will provide specific examples of how projects seek to achieve change in these dimensions.

- *Networking:* Foundation partners frequently work to develop or support networks of civil society actors - for example, by building networks with poor or marginalised communities such as tribal people, poor farmers, and human rights activists. These networks serve a variety of purposes - to enhance citizen voices in advocating for change; help to exchange information or resources among citizen groups; and to expand the reach, scale and impacts of the project.
- *Inclusion:* The concept of an inclusive society is increasingly present in development policy and dialogue, and is closely linked with the concept of "leaving no one behind" included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Much of the work of Foundation partners e.g. Abilis's work on disability, is focused on supporting the social, economic or political inclusion of marginalised populations.

These four dimensions of change in strengthening civil society are often linked in HRBA programmes to a fifth dimension of change i.e. changes in laws, policies, norms and practices, achieved through advocacy.

- *Advocacy:*   While strengthening civil society is a developmental objective in its own right, it is often linked in Foundation projects to supporting targets groups to achieve policy or practice change at district, regional or national level. There are two approaches to achieving policy or practice change. Outsider advocacy is focused mobilising rights holders to campaign and assert their rights, sometimes in confrontational manner. 'Insider advocacy' focuses on working collaboratively with duty bearers to lobby for change. Foundation projects illustrate both approaches but more frequently the latter. This will be discussed further in Section 4.5.

The evaluation found that project results frameworks, particularly those of KIOS and Siemenpuu, often included policy or practice change objectives that might be more clearly described but linking civil society engagement in advocacy to the different stages of the policy cycle as below:
- *Agenda-setting*: Strengthening civil society to raise awareness of and have priority given to an issue or problem.
- *Formulation*: Civil society developing policies or strategies to influence policy or practice.
- *Decision-making*: Duty bearers decide to adopt policies or new practices.
- *Implementation:* Policies/practices implemented e.g. by duty bearers.
- *Monitoring:* Civil society monitoring and holding duty bearers to account for the implementation of policy or practice commitments."

How strengthening civil society through these dimensions of change contributes policy and practice change in support of human rights is illustrated in the following diagram:

Diagram 1: Strengthening civil society dimensions of change
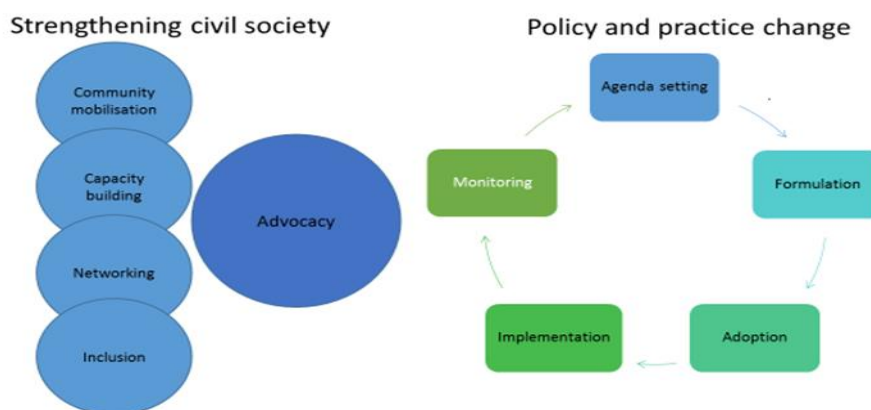
It is important to acknowledge that these conceptual distinctions are not mutually exclusive in projects. Projects can and do combine different dimensions of change e.g. they can build capacity to bring about changes in knowledge attitude and behaviour to get an issue on the policy agenda and formulate a policy change. However, using a conceptual framework like this would enable the Foundations to more consistently communicate and demonstrate how the work they support helps to strengthen civil society and contribute to development outcomes.

b)   Relevance of partners and target groups.

The three Foundations support partners at local, regional and national levels and, as we have noted earlier, often work with target groups and geographical regions that are less well supported by other donors and International non-governmental organisations (INGOs).

Abilis choice of partner and target groups is very much in line with the 'leave no-one behind ethos' of Agenda 2030. Abilis continues to work with grass-roots, marginalised community groups in hard to reach parts of the country along with supporting the disability movement more broadly in the countries where it works. In Uganda, the main focus was on support to the independent living and community inclusion of PWDs through income generating activities; in Nepal there was more emphasis on the communi ty mobilisation of PWDs to change public perceptions of disability.

Key respondents considered that the work of Siemenpuu and KIOS in targeting the rights of marginal communities is part of the same inclusive principle, and a distinctive contribution to strengthening civil society. However, there is evidence from the document review and country visits that the profile of KIOS and Siemenpuu partners is changing, and that they are tending to become more sophisticated and better funded. The document review indicated that long-standing partner organisations of KIOS and Siemenpuu have progressively consolidated their systems and diversified their funding. In several cases, the Foundations were minor funders compared to other donors. In Nepal the new organisations that both KIOS and Siemenpuu have started funding through Calls for Proposals are relatively well-established, have good implementation capacity and receive funding from several sources.

There is no doubt that the Foundations remain more committed to 'movement building' with marginalised populations than many other donors. Indeed, one respondent suggested that the Foundations should try to support community-based networks and activism more directly but this may be difficult under the constraints of programme support funding. Nonetheless, the evaluation considers that support to smaller, less well-established human rights organisations working with vulnerable, marginalized sections of the population remains a distinctive role for Siemenpuu and KIOS in strengthening civil society.

Partnerships with smaller, emergent organisations may incur a higher level of risk which may be more time consuming for the Foundations to manage.   However, a mixed portfolio approach as suggested in Section 2 would enable KIOS and Siemenpuu to manage that risk, in addition to having other advantages. A mixed portfolio would include longer-term grants for high-performing partners that need less support from the Foundations and, for example, a graduated system of short-term, incubator grants to emerging CSOs that could be offered more guidance and support.

c)   Relevance of livelihoods and service delivery to an HRBA to civil society strengthening

The evaluation identified a number of projects supported by the Foundations with strong livelihoods or service delivery elements whose relationship with a rights-based agenda merits closer examination. In the case of livelihoods, the evaluation was able to visit a number of Abilis's income generating projects

with PWDs in grassroots communities in Uganda, and a Siemenpuu food security project in Nepal that supports women's groups in dry zones to establish savings and loan schemes to grow and sell vegetables.

The evaluation observed that the primary focus of the Abilis livelihoods projects in Uganda was on the social and economic benefits to individual households. Community members visited all attested to how the projects had increased their household income which, in many cases, had brought social benefits such as affording to buy school uniforms. Abilis places specific emphasis on change at an individual level. PWDs confirmed in workshops during field visits how their more independent livelihoods had their improved their own self-esteem and status in the community. Abilis cites Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which asserts the right of PWDs to live independently and be included in the community, as the basis of its rights-based approach to income-generating or livelihoods projects. None of the groups visited seemed to be active in pursuing broader rights of the Convention[16] with decision-makers in the broader community e.g. on accessibility, inclusive education, health and political participation. There were no examples of the groups advocating for the rights of PWDs e.g. with regard to physical access or special needs support in schools, although these issues were raised in the workshops. (It is should be noted that relationships with district councils and local community development officers were positive and PWDs in Uganda are automatically entitled to a place on district councils.) Abilis, in subsequent discussions, explained that the expectations of PWDs tend to be modest and that it is best to wait and see if a group has the desire and capacity to grow into more rights-based activities. In such a case, the possibility exists for a group to graduate to another grant (although, in the case of Uganda, a policy of prioritising different regions each year would seem to make this more difficult).

The evaluation suggests that Abilis's approach to sustainable livelihoods[17] at grassroots level should incorporate a broader range of UNCPRD rights, with the expectation that the PWD groups develop their skills as rights-based advocates in their local communities. In terms of the dimensions of change introduced earlier, income generation schemes with marginalized populations such a PWDs can lead to their *economic* inclusion (or empowerment). This in turn can contribute to their social and political inclusion in democratic processes to ensure that their rights and interests are represented and respected. This was a point made to the evaluators on more than one occasion by partners – a project that offers beneficiaries an economic benefit is more likely to sustain their participation in rights-based issues than a project that does not.

A Siemenpuu project in Nepal provides an interesting example of how support to the livelihoods of a marginalised, largely illiterate population can also provide a platform for their political inclusion. The HIMAWANTI project to support women's leadership and food sovereignty in Nepal works with 14 indigenous and dalit women groups. The project aims to support the sustainable livelihoods of marginalised women and to empower them to assert their rights under the 2015 Constitution. The project has provided training and support to the groups to grow and market traditional and high value crops; to open bank accounts; and to produce detailed plans on how to manage a revolving fund which offers loans at a minimal interest. The project has also invested in the leadership development of the women's groups so as to enable them to take advantage of their rights under the Constitution to be proportionately represented in state institutions. The women's groups have lobbied local government , for example, on their land rights to ensure gender-inclusive agriculture and food sovereignty is incorporated in local development planning.

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[16] These rights are also incorporated in the relevant articles of the UNCRPD e.g. Articles 9, 24, and 29 respectively.
[17] A new Abilis Guideline on Sustainable Livelihoods makes no reference to the concept of rights or savings and credit systems (see Section 5.1).

The evaluation also found examples of service delivery elements in some projects. For example, the KIOS partner the Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU) in Kenya provides medical, psychological and legal services to detainees with the prison system. Somewhat differently, Siemenpuu - co-funded with the EKOenergy Climate Fund - supports small-scale renewable electricity projects in Nepal, Mali and Myanmar which, while delivering some benefits for rural communities, do not obviously contribute to strengthening civil society. While it can be argued that these projects are compatible with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the concept of the right of access to basic services, it is not clear how they fall in the mainstream of the Foundations' HRBA. As in the case of sustainable livelihoods, the evaluation suggests that the Foundations seek to ensure that projects with a strong service delivery element are clearly linked to a HRBA approach to strengthening civil society.

d) Adaptability to context

Partners reported in interviews and workshops that the operating environment for civil society in many countries continues to be challenging. Several national governments e.g. Uganda, Nepal, and Ethiopia, in recent years have introduced new laws governing and restricting the conditions under which civil society works. Human rights organisations tend to be particularly vulnerable in these conditions, although disability tends to be less of a politically sensitive issue. Partners reported a number of obstacles to the implementation of their projects as result of these laws. Registration under the legislation can be time consuming, costly process. In some cases, e.g. Bangladesh and Nepal partners reported that the need for government approval can delay project implementation. In Uganda, for example, the level of disclosure required under the NGO Law e.g. disclosure of staff details, contributes to staff feelings of insecurity. In general, the evaluation formed the impression that the more collaborative the relationship with government and the 'safer' the nature of the project, the easier it is to surmount these challenges. For example, the Abilis partner IDPC in Tanzania reported that working collaboratively and constructively with the government helped it come through the Government's new restrictive laws on CSOs.

Despite the challenges facing civil society, many projects enjoy a collaborative relationship with government authorities. However, several projects cited the resistance of local government authorities as an obstacle to project implementation. For example, projects supporting popular participation in environmental governance bodies frequently encountered resistance from vested interests at local level (where such bodies can be a source of patronage and/or corruption). In some cases, partners were able to engage with higher level stakeholders to overcome local enable marginalised communities to claim their rights, as illustrated below.

> **KIOS/CJGEA : Adapting to overcome government obstacles in Kenya.**
>
> *The Centre for Justice, Governance and Independent action (CJGEA) project aims to mobilise EHRDs to participate in the County Environmental Committees (CEC) established by law to manage the environment at country level. Partners initially encountered resistance from public officials to their right of information about the CEC. CJGEA has subsequently worked closely with the higher authorities the Council of Governors (COG) and Commission of Administrative Justice (CAJ) and Office of the Ombudsman which subsequently instructed local authorities to release the information*
>
> *CJGEA has also changed its registration from being a CBO to an NGO after attempts to register a Coalition of Environmental Defenders failed since the government views it as a possible threat. CJGEA can now host and help formalise the EHRD network which otherwise would have been a major difficulty.*

Partners reported the Foundations to be very flexible when unforeseen circumstances required changes to the workplan e.g. when the security situation in Baluchistan required change of location of the KIOS partner Dastak Charitable Trust project activities. Some partners commented that there was less flexibility with regard to changes to budget e.g. when currency fluctuations led to budget shortfall. In the Uganda KIOS partner workshop, partners highlighted the role that KIOS might play when a security situation threatens a project, and suggested that the Foundation develop stronger links with the Finnish embassy in Nairobi or the diplomatic missions of the European Union (EU) and Sweden in Kampala so that support from the missions might be available should it be required.

Recommendations

8. *Foundations to clarify e.g. through a conceptual framework, how their human rights based approach strengthens civil society, including the types or dimensions of change relevant to this.*
9. *Abilis to consider a broader interpretation of a human rights approach to its work on livelihoods to support PWDs in asserting their social and political rights.*
10. *KIOS and Siemenpuu to review how service delivery elements in projects contribute to strengthening civil society dimensions of change.*
11. *Foundations to explore opportunities for mutual learning in key areas e.g. on different dimensions of change, data gathering tools relevant to civil society.*
12. *Foundations to explore the possibility of allowing the inclusion of contingency funds in project budgets.*
13. *Siemenpuu and KIOS to pursue a policy of engagement with embassies and relevant missions to highlight human rights work that may be vulnerable to oppression.*

2.4. Communications in Finland

This section will briefly assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations' communications activities in Finland based on the Foundations' reports and interviews with key informants in Finland.

The Foundations admit that their investment in communications activities in Finland has declined since the budget cuts of 2015. The Foundations seek to raise awareness in Finland on the issues such as human rights in general, disability rights, human rights defenders in the South, environmental challenges in the South, global overconsumption. A variety of communications channels are used - for example, websites, social media, brochures, radio broadcasts, seminars and events – to communicate with a wide range of target audiences such as Finnish public; tax-payers; decision-makers; and school children and youth in higher education institutions. In addition, the Foundations communicate directly with decision-makers in Finland and collaborate with other CSOs on trainings, lectures and advocacy activities.

Abilis has a communications plan for the 2018-21 programme period which sets out in general terms target groups, objectives and main themes of its information and communications work. Siemenpuu does not have a current communications plan and KIOS is currently working on a new communications strategy. The Foundations also set out in general terms their communications plans in their 2018-21 programme proposals and annual plans. Abilis has some more specific indicators e.g. number of likes and shares in its social media, for its communications on the outcome on disability inclusion and mainstreaming from its global results framework, some of which it has been able to report on in its Annual Report to the MFA. While the Foundations plan their communications annually, a clearer sense of strategy with regard to the objectives and target audiences, and more detailed communications plans with key communications targets and indicators would help them make best use of limited resources and better monitor progress in their 'reach' with the Finnish public.

The Foundations reporting on their communications activities in Finland in their 2018 annual reports was varied and the evaluation found it difficult to discern trends over time. The Siemenpuu 2018 Results Report contains one paragraph on its communications work with no analysis of its communications activities. The KIOS 2018 Annual Report was more informative, reporting on key messages; use of communications channels and participation in events. It also provided some longitudinal analysis of website page views and social media followers. Abilis provided the most detailed information on its communications activities in its 2018 Annual Report including e.g. geographical distribution of Facebook likes (though not year on year) and was able to provide evidence of its 'reach' to the Finnish taxpayer. Abilis also seems to have promoted a wider range of communications activities through its use, for example, of celebrity 'Ambassadors' and 20th anniversary photo exhibition.

Key respondents in Finland had few detailed comments to make on the communications activities of the Foundations as they did not feel that they had enough knowledge. Siemenpuu was thought to have reasonably good website, well visualized with good examples and stories, and to be good at making links to Finnish realities. KIOS was recognized for its human rights educational work with teachers and schools and perceived as good at communicating on their own issues but less so in making the connections with other areas. The Abilis webpage was thought to be of a standard comparable to international organisations working in the same field. Abilis, though active on policy issues in Finland and beyond e.g. the European Disability Forum (EDF) task force on disability rights, was also seen to have considerable potential for advocacy work.

Some respondents had the impression that the Foundations' communications mainly reach "those already interested" in the issues, and expressed the view that the Foundations could be more outspoken in bringing easy-to-understand, concrete issues to the wider public – for example, the precarious situation of human rights defenders in many countries. In general, both key respondents and many partners feel that the Foundations should raise the profile of the work they support. Some specific suggestions included were to communicate its success stories based on plausible evidence and amplify genuine voices of the marginalized. This would be both in their interests and in the interests of Southern partners. This is, in part, recognised by the Foundations who have increased the resourcing of communications despite constraints on their budgets - KIOS and Abilis, for example, have recently appointed communications officers.

Recommendations

14. *Foundations to update communications strategies to clarify realistic goals, target audiences, and key messages in order to raise the profile of their programmes, and consolidate their reputation as trusted experts in their fields.*
15. *Foundations to clarify any advocacy objectives and plans in association with their next programme support application.*
16. *Foundations to develop and share best practice in disaggregated metrics when monitoring and reporting on the popularity of their websites and social media.*

3. Effectiveness: Partnership and project management

The evaluation was asked to assess how the Foundations have supported partners throughout the project cycle, and how it could further develop project management and support. This Section will review the support offered by the Foundations through its partnership model and their approach to project cycle management, with a specific emphasis on results reporting.

a) Partnership

Organisations grant-funded by the three Foundations value their partnership with the Foundations highly and identified the following characteristics in interviews and workshops:

- *Trust*: a high level of mutual trust between Foundation and partner;
- *Respect*: from the Foundation for the autonomy of the partner;
- *Understanding*: of the Foundation e.g. of local context, human rights issues, and the real needs of communities;
- *Responsiveness*: of Foundations to approaches from partners;
- *Flexibility:* of Foundations to adapt to unanticipated changes in context;
- *Dialogue*: with Foundations throughout the project cycle in which it offers guidance, encouragement and motivation;
- *Commitment*: of the Foundations to work with partners over time.

In the case of Abilis, partners reported that the creation of country offices had significantly improved the quality of support provided by the Foundation since working with PWD groups is labour-intensive. Community groups in Uganda and Nepal frequently consulted with the country office which they said was friendly, approachable and responsive to their needs. Being able to communicate in their local language with the Foundation is a major advantage for such groups.

Abilis partners in Uganda and Nepal differed slightly on how they would like the partnership to evolve. In Uganda, several project members suggested that Abilis could do more to strengthen the groups it supports. It was also suggested in some meetings that Abilis should stay longer in a region in order to provide longer follow up support to projects and develop more of a 'critical mass' of projects in the region.   Partner feedback in Nepal focused more on the need to develop a strategic approach to working with the disability movement and supporting it to engage with government at all levels, finding common ground disabilities and forming alliances with other civil society actors. In both countries, stakeholders thought that Abilis has credibility to further support its partners by publicising and expanding its work to generate more interest and support for the sector and partners.

Partners of KIOS and Siemenpuu also valued their partnership with the Foundations. In terms of non-financial support, they cited facilitating contacts with other agencies; some capacity building especially in finance; and some help with security issues e.g. through letters of support and political contacts. A number of partners from both Foundations suggested that they would like the Foundations to provide more added-value support, for example, by helping partners participate in international human rights fora; providing more technical advice; sharing good practices; and linking up partners with other organisations working on similar issues.

In summary, partners of the three Foundations value the distinctive features of their partnership but would like them to facilitate more added-value activities. In particular, they prioritise more opportunities for networking and peer learning - for example through sharing best practice in thematic areas; horizontal learning across disabilities; and exchanging innovative experiences from other countries including Europe.

b) Project cycle management

This section will address the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations' approach to project cycle management, with particular reference to results reporting since the Finland Development Policy is

committed to *"step up the measuring, reporting and evaluation of results and impacts"*[18] and this has been the subject of some dialogue between the MFA and the Foundations. The 2017 MFA evaluation also recommended that the Foundations improve their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems; develop more measurable outcomes; and demonstrate results based on evidence and case study material. There is evidence that the Foundations have made some progress in this regard. The Foundations acknowledge that reporting should improve; that improved reporting skills is also in the interests of partners; but that *"measuring long-term effectiveness in human rights projects is challenging"*[19].

- *Project monitoring*

Section 2. addressed the earlier stages of project cycle management i.e. project formulation or proposal development. Following project approval, each Foundation monitors project implementation in different ways. Abilis country offices, although lightly staffed, are in a position to provide monitoring and support to grantees/partners in-country which is supplemented by monitoring visits from Abilis HQ. Abilis is the only Foundation to have an in-country presence since working with hard-to-reach PWD sensibly requires some form of local accompaniment[20]. Abilis expects projects to be visited two or three times by the country office. Community-level partners in Uganda and Nepal described their relationship with the country office as responsive and accessible but some, nonetheless, suggested they would benefit from closer support, perhaps through local focal points in their regions.

In the absence of a country presence, KIOS and Siemenpuu provide at distance monitoring supplemented by country visits. Monitoring visits from Helsinki seem to vary between once every one or two years. Nonetheless, most partners interviewed of KIOS and Siemenpuu reported a good level of dialogue with the Foundations during the project period, linked often to the reporting cycle. Siemenpuu partners in Nepal were appreciative of the responsive communication they had with their focal points in Helsinki. Some KIOS partners in Nepal and Uganda reported difficulties in communication with the Foundation during the period of staff changes. KIOS is currently exploring the possibility of the use of a local consultant in Uganda to provide more frequent, close-to-hand support to projects.

- *Project reporting*

Since 2018 each of the Foundations have developed and shared with their partners guidance on project management and reporting, in addition other guidance notes mentioned earlier. Abilis and Siemenpuu provide templates for project progress and final reports; KIOS reports are 'free form' but must respond to a list of guiding questions. (In the Nepal workshop KIOS partners said that they would prefer a clear reporting format.) Siemenpuu and KIOS guidance on project reporting offers only limited detail on how to report to results; Abilis which has produced a separate guidance note on results reporting. Interviews with partners indicate that some found the development of project results frameworks challenging. One partner commented that she/he did not think the Foundation staff had 'internalised' a results-based approach; a number commented that not enough support was offered in this area in the application and reporting stages.

The document review confirmed that project results frameworks were of variable quality. This is important since confusion in a results framework with regard to outcomes, outputs, indicators will lead to unreliable results reporting. The project reporting guidance offered by the Foundations tends to

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[18] Finland Development Policy, 2016, p.47
[19] KIOS Foundation Annual Report 2018, p30
[20] Abilis is represented in most countries by a Country coordinator and in some by a Programme coordinator or facilitator..

focus on activities and to encourage quantitative reporting. This may reflect the preponderance of short-term grants which tend to focus on activities/outputs rather than outcomes. The result is that reports are often heavy in numbers while offering little insight into the achievements of the projects. Outputs are frequently reported as outcomes e.g. number of trainings conducted. Outcomes are too often claimed without evidence e.g. "rights improved" or "awareness increased". There is insufficient use of simple tools such as *ex post facto* surveys to provide evidence, for example, to support claims of knowledge or behaviour change. This makes it difficult for the Foundations (as it has been for the evaluation) to confidently demonstrate evidence-based results of the work it supports. There remains, therefore, considerable room for improvement in results reporting in project reports. Sensible, realistic results frameworks could help partners report more credible results[21].   In particular, the use of mixed indicators[22] would also encourage good qualitative reporting in addition to quantitative data.

Foundation guidance encourages partners to reflect on lessons learned in their projects. Both Abilis and Siemenpuu final report formats ask partners for feedback and, in different ways, encourage partners to reflect on the lessons learned from project successes and challenges. However, responses to these questions tended to be disappointing. This, in turn, limits the degree to which the Foundations can identify a 'learning agenda' and facilitate learning across their programmes. In this regard, it should be noted that lesson learning was one of the areas that the MFA highlighted for improvement in its comments on the 2018 annual reports (see below).

Investing in the quality of project reporting will require time and resources. Improved efficiencies in grant management would enable more Foundation staff time to be allocated, for example, to helping to improve results frameworks and reporting, and to demonstrate the achievements of its projects.

- *Annual Reporting to MFA*

In 2018 the MFA requested all programme support organisations to develop a theory of change and results framework as a condition of its support for the 2018-21 funding period. Each Foundation has subsequently produced an organisation-wide results framework and all reported to these in their 2018 Annual Reports to the MFA . There is considerable room for improvement in the Foundation annual reports which differed significantly in format, length and detail - ranging from 10 pages (Siemenpuu) to 55 pages (Abilis), excluding annexes. MFA feedback on the separate Foundation reports, for example, consistently emphasised the need for a clearer analysis of how civil society is strengthened; better results reporting at outcome level; and more reflection on lessons learned. The evaluation has tried to address these concerns in its recommendations.

The quality of the Foundation annual reports is, in turn, dependent on the quality of project reports. Foundations require partners to submit progress and final reports at the appropriate stage of the project cycle rather than, for example, annual reports in line with the financial year. As a result, they compile their annual reports to MFA by drawing only on the final project reports delivered during the year in question, rather than reports from the project portfolio as a whole. This should have the advantage of being able to draw upon a solid evidence base for results reporting; the disadvantage is that it offers only a partial insight into the whole project portfolio.

One factor to consider is the relationship between the global results frameworks and project reporting, and the degree to which the Foundations require project reports to align with the outcomes/indicators

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[21] The evaluation echoes the recommendation of the 2017 MFA evaluation that outcome statements should be realistic.

[22] For an analysis of indicators best suited to monitoring civil society see Annex 6 "Seeing the Wood for the Trees: Summarising Results", INTRAC, 2016.

of the global frameworks. Some of the outcome indicators of Abilis's global results framework (which are mostly quantitative) are included in the project final report templates so that information (supplemented by information from interviews) can be collated in its Annual Report to the MFA. In the case of Siemenpuu, partners are expected to report to at least one standard indicator from its global results framework in their final report. KIOS does not require projects to report to the outcomes of its global results framework (which has no outcome indicators). The use of standard indicators in project reporting makes it easier for the Foundations to summarise results but can be seen to undermine the relevance of reporting to project partners and the principle of local ownership[23].

KIOS provides written guidance on project evaluation, and the evaluation was able to review three, independent, end of project evaluations of KIOS projects[24]. These were generally positive about project outcomes and provided a useful insight into the some of the challenges faced by projects and lessons learned. It would be useful for the Foundations to consider how best they can best synthesise and share lessons learned from such evaluations. In addition, the Foundations should consider commissioning - independently or jointly - more thematic evaluations on key aspects of their programming so as to base future programming on evidence of what works and what does not work so well. Possible themes include the use of strategic litigation in achieving policy/practice change; the effectiveness of civic engagement in local environmental governance bodies; and the contribution of savings and credit schemes to sustainable livelihood projects with grassroots communities.

Recommendations

17. *Foundations to consult with partners to provide guidance and support on results frameworks and reporting - to include simple tools such as use of mixed indicators, storytelling methods and use of case studies, for gathering evidence in support of changes in civil society.*
18. *Foundations to more systematically encourage and harvest learning from project reports and end of project evaluations, and to explore ways to more actively facilitate knowledge sharing among partners.*
19. *KIOS to consult with partners if they would like a template for project reporting.*
20. *Foundations to commission thematic evaluations of key aspects of their approach to strengthening civil society so that projects and programmes can benefit from lessons learned.*

4. Effectiveness: Strengthening civil society

The 2017 Civil Society Guidelines state that programme support organisations must specify in their plans how their projects "*will promote the strengthening and sustainability of the activities of civil societies in developing countries*"[25]. There is an inference, therefore, that programme support organisations should also report on how they have achieved this. Section 2.3. described how many of the outcomes in the Foundation 2018-21 global results frameworks, to which the Foundations report annually to the MFA, are compatible with strengthening civil society.

The ToR asked the evaluation to assess how the Foundations strengthen civil society, and how this could be reinforced. This Section will draw upon the document review and country visits to review the evidence of how the Foundations contribute to an independent, vibrant civil society by providing some

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[23] See Annex 6 "*Seeing the Wood for the Trees: Summarising Results*", INTRAC, 2016.Section 3 discusses the implications of using global indicators
[24] Of ISER Oct. 2018, CEHURD Nov.2018, and TLC July 2019.
[25] Guidelines for Civil Society Policy, 2017 p.15

examples of project achievements, using the dimensions of change' introduced in Section 2.3.   The extent to which this can be done is conditioned by the constraints in the quality of evidence in project reports and documents, as outlined in Section 3.

The use of 'dimensions of change' helps to identify the kinds of outcomes that projects can realistically achieve. Short term outcomes in relation to civil society strengthening, for example, are often process-related e.g. networking, community mobilisation, but are no less valid as results. Annex 6 provides a list of support materials to help partners identify suitable indicators, and gather evidence for the different dimensions of change so that they can demonstrate how process-related outcomes contribute to broader programme goals.

4.1. Community mobilisation/awareness raising

"Changes in the awareness and skills of rights-holders to claim human rights, especially vulnerable groups and women."

KIOS Results Framework 2019-21, Short-term outcome 1.1

The mobilisation of targeted groups/ communities is a consistent feature of the earlier stages of many Foundation projects, and associated with raising their awareness of their rights. The following are three examples of Foundations partners seek to raise the awareness of their target groups:

- *Abilis*: Community mobilisation with PWDs at grassroots level is normally a start-up activity, for example, in income generation projects;
- *Siemenpuu:* Several projects reviewed involved partners mobilising communities of e.g. tribal peoples, forest dwellers, and poor women farmers to raise awareness of their rights in relation to environmental law, land titling etc.; and
- *KIOS:* Similarly, a number of projects in Uganda have focused on mobilising and raising the awareness of local communities on issues such as health, LGBT, and lands rights, often with the goal of making representation to the relevant authorities.

Projects reported the changes in targeted groups resulting from community mobilisation and awareness-raising activities in two ways. Numerous project reports claim increased awareness among the target population of a particular issue e.g. land rights. However, this is often reported by a simple claim, often expressed quantitatively e.g. x % of target community or x number of people with increased awareness. In effect, this is reporting an output i.e. that x number of people were involved in community mobilisation activities rather than the outcome of these activities i.e. increased knowledge, understanding or motivation to act on the issue. It is difficult, and often impractical, for projects to measure changes of knowledge and attitude on a mass scale as a result of awareness raising activities e.g. the impact of the Twerwaneho Listeners Club (TLC) radio programmes in Uganda on human rights. However, end of project evaluations can be used to provide evidence of the increased awareness of target of issues through focus group discussions and surveys.

A more effective way of providing evidence on the outcomes of community mobilisation is to report on the actions that the mobilisation activities were designed to inspire – for example, to measure the impact of increased awareness of land rights by number of community members who defend their land against land grabbing. This works well if the community mobilisation activities are targeted to stimulate specific courses of action. The following edited excerpt from the results framework of the KIOS partner TLC provides a good example of this in relation to the programme objective of enhancing good

governance and accountability of the private sector in the Rwenzori region in Uganda[26]. It also illustrates how projects work across different dimensions of change to achieve a project objective.

KIOS/TLC: community mobilisation outcomes and indicators.

Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Indicators
Stakeholder engagement, community outreach meetings, radio talk shows, networking, advocacy	Enhanced capacities of…. the communities to advocate and participate …..in natural resources governance and management	No. of companies compliant to sector standards e.g. conducting due diligence impact assessments No. of engagements attended by companies and government officials. Decisions made by government and companies promoting interest of communities Increased number of people access redress due to corporate abuses No. of community development agreements between communities and companies
Capacity building, litigation, legal aid, monitor, document and advocate	Strengthened capacities of communities to monitor and engage the private …on issues of compliance to sector standards and CSR	

4.2. Capacity development

> *"Changes in the management capacities of grantees…to integrate HRBA and security in operations and programmes.*
>
> KIOS Results Framework 2019-21, Short-term outcome 2.1.

Effective, accountable CSOs is one indicator of an independent, vibrant civil society. The evaluation found no examples of the Foundations directly or formally building the capacity of CSO partners, other than the support and guidance they provide on the 'compliance requirements' of proposal development and reporting. This is not to say that the Foundations do not aim to support the capacity development of partners. Both Abilis and KIOS, for example, include stronger partner capacity as outcomes in their global results frameworks.

Partners can and do use project funds to invest in their own organisational development. The Siemenpuu partner Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI) in Liberia, for example, used project funds to support its own organisational development by conducting a review of its own governance at a time when its Board was not functional.

> **Abilis/DP Hanoi: Strengthening a DPO partner**
>
> *Abilis provided a 10 month grant to the Hanoi Association of People with Disabilities (DP Hanoi) in Vietnam help them improve the advocacy, communications and presentational skills of their women leaders and those of its member organisations. The final report states that 116 women with disabilities (along with 16 men with disabilities and 32 person without disabilities) had enhanced their skills. As a result, women with disability (WWDs) are now involved in the activities of local women and connections with local Women's Unions have been made. It is also reported that more WWDs have become leaders of DPOs in the districts and participate more actively in DP Hanoi activities. It is anticipated that, with the skills and experience gained from the project, DP Hanoi, member organisations and WWD clubs will be able to raise funds to expand their activities.*

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[26] Unfortunately it was not possible to review how results to these outcomes were reported by the project.

The Ethiopia Centre for Disability and Development (ECDD) [27] and the National Association of The Disabled in Nepal used Abilis short-term grants to develop organisational strategies. This type of small grant seems to be the main way in which Abilis seeks to institutionally strengthen key DPO partners (see above).

As we have mentioned, there is evidence from country visits and interviews that many partners would like the Foundations to play a more pro-active role in helping to develop their capacity – in particular through facilitating knowledge sharing and peer learning at both national and international level, and supporting their organisational development. To help to support the organisational development of CSO/CBO partners as an element of strengthening civil society, the Foundations should consider using a specific organisational capacity assessment tool (OCAT) [28] with applicants/partners to assess their organisational or capacity needs and agree a capacity development plan for the partnership. Partners usually own this process of self-assessment themselves but an OCAT can provide a systematic framework to assess, monitor (and report on) the organisational capacities of partners.

The key focus of capacity development in Foundation projects is partners working to strengthen the capacity of their target groups. A frequent example was partners strengthening the capacity of local communities to dialogue and engage with governance bodies, usually at district or provincial level. In the case of Siemenpuu, for example:

- LIVANINGO in Mozambique reports women's organisations have strengthened capacity on advocacy. As a result, women's organisations are demanding that land titles be registered under women, and some women are participating in district consultative committees – something previously restricted to men;
- In Nepal, FECOFUN reports it has developed the capacity of indigenous, community forest groups to dialogue with local government to secure community rights over their resources and knowledge.

The evaluation found a number of examples of Abilis partners proving training to target groups in technical skills – for example, the Turning Point Foundation (TPF) in Bangladesh training DPOs to develop their own websites in order to increase their visibility and networking. Several other Abilis projects reviewed in Nepal included technical training e.g. sewing skills with deaf women, mobile device repairs etc. Abilis partners are not alone in providing technical training. For example, a major feature of several projects supported by KIOS is the training of staff and EHRDs in physical and digital security for staff and EHRDs. This is important work, but the evaluation found few references to *ex post facto* assessments of the results of trainings in this or other areas. The KIOS partner the Centre for Justice, Governance and Environmental Action (CJGEA) in Kenya was the only project report to refer to an internal evaluations of its capacity building activities, and to provide links in its reports, for example, to its training on environmental rights with EHRDs and on procedural environmental rights for EHRDs and public officials [29]. Technical training is also a component of Siemenpuu projects - for example, in agriculture and production, and the repair and care of solar energy systems.

Of course, a post-training evaluation or survey is not the only way to report on the strengthened capacity of a target group. In the case of LIVINGO above, for example, the increased advocacy activities of women farmers are an acceptable indicator of their strengthened advocacy capacity.

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[27] Although it has received grants, Abilis considers ECCD more of an 'associate' than a grantee/partner since it has outsourced some activities to it.
[28] INTRAC Praxis Paper 23 (see Annex 6) provides an analysis of the strengths nand weaknesses of various OCATs.
[29] GJGEA interim narrative report to KIOS, December 2019

4.3. Networking

Developing and supporting networks is a key element in KIOS and Siemenpuu projects in particular, often with human rights activists/defenders in marginal communities. KIOS provides numerous examples of partners building networks as an integral part of their projects. DASTAK in Pakistan reports on its efforts to build a network to support child protection and advocate for children's' rights. LOSAUK refers to supporting the beginning of a transgender (hijra) network or movement in Bangladesh. The long-standing coalition the Mothers and Daughters of Lanka (MDL) refers to building a national advocacy platform from district level to campaign for the safety and protection of high-risk, vulnerable groups such as women human rights defenders.

Siemenpuu also provides examples of network building, particularly in relation to environmental rights.

-   LIVANINGO (Mozambique) – supporting networks of women farmer organisations to promote their land rights;
-   AcBio (Latin America) : regional network to promote biodiversity through raising public awareness, building member capacity and sharing knowledge;
-   SDI (Liberia): supporting national network of Community Forest Management Boards to defend the incursions of logging industries and e.g. to document the process of third party agreements.

Seba Jagat in India below provides a typical example of environmental networking.

> **Siemenpuu: Strengthening marginalised forest community networks for environmental rights.**
>
> *The Forest Rights Act (2006) in India gives rights to communities over community forest resources. Tribal people (Adivasi) who have been working their land for hundreds of years face resistance from Forest Authorities and commercial interests in claiming and formalising these rights. The project aimed to strengthen the networks of marginalised forest community networks by training eight partners to train 110 forest communities (involving 800 community leaders) on how to formalise their rights; to develop community forest management plans and bio-protocol documents; facilitates dialogue among the forest communities; and promote a cultural advocacy campaign for community forest rights. This work also indicates how strengthening the capacity of target groups often goes hand-in hand with supporting their networks.*

Once again, the evidence base for the effectiveness of networking building in these projects is weak. As with community mobilisation the effectiveness of network building can be measured by monitoring the strength of the network and/or the success of the network in achieving the changes it has focused its efforts on. Seba Jagat, for example, reports that to date 88 of the 110 forest communities have received community forest rights and 21 have developed bio-protocol documents a result of project activities[30].

Civil society networks are not automatically representative, effective or accountable. Simple diagnostic tools, normally used collaboratively with partners, are available to monitor network effectiveness which would enable partners to report concretely on how they are strengthening networks[31]. Given the central role building networks plays in many of KIOS and Siemenpuu projects it may be helpful to refer

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[30] Seba Jagat Narrative Progress Report to Siemenpuu, December 2018
[31] See Annex 6, for example, a link to the Network Effectiveness Framework of the Commonwealth Foundation which has supported networks in different parts of the world for many years.

to the different methods that have been developed to monitor and measure the strength of a network over time.

Recommendation

21. *Foundations to consider the use of organisational capacity assessment and network effectiveness tools as a means of jointly assessing, planning for, monitoring and reporting on the organisational development of key partners.*

4.3. Inclusion

> *"Disability inclusion is improved in communities.*
>
> Abilis Results Framework 2018-21, Outcome 4.

The concept of inclusion can be applied to different aspects of the work of the Foundations, and is a particularly useful way of interpreting how Abilis's support to PWD income generation projects helps to strengthen civil society. Foundation projects can be seen as contributing to the economic, social and political inclusion of marginalised groups.

The primary stated objective of the Abilis livelihoods projects visited in Uganda is to improve the livelihoods of PWDs in remote communities i.e. to support the inclusion of groups supported in the local economy. Project reports and workshops with beneficiaries confirm that the inclusion of participant households in the local economy has delivered tangible, albeit small-scale, economic benefits for the PWDs involved which, in turn, has led to some indirect social benefits. Section 5.1. will consider whether and how such economic and social benefits can be increased and sustained over time.

The economic inclusion of PWDs also contributes to their social inclusion by changing public attitudes to disability. PWDs in the communities visited in Uganda and Nepal universally reported that their social status in the community had increased as a result of improved livelihoods or, for example in Nepal, participating in sports or recreational activities. This, in turn, provides an opportunity for the political inclusion of PWD groups, and for them to put forward disability-related rights issues with local decision-makers, as illustrated below.

> *Siemenpuu/ HIMAWANTI: Supporting the economic, social and political inclusion of marginalised women's' groups in Nepal.*
>
> *Siemenpuu partner in Nepal HIMAWANTI has helped women's groups in a poor, dry region to start up savings and loan schemes to grow vegetables both for their own consumption and to sell in the market. The project was in its early stages when the evaluation visited but there were already clear signs of improved livelihoods and environment management e.g. the use of vegetable gardens instead of destructive open grazing. The project had also helped to mobilise the community by formally registering and starting savings and loan schemes which offers the possibility of further funding from the local government and banks. The evaluation was able to observe the groups expressing their concerns to local government representatives which they said they had never done before. This is a promising example of HRBA support to women in a marginalised position can contribute to their economic, social and political inclusion.*

The concept of the political inclusion of vulnerable sections of the population is directly in line with the Finland Development Policy priority area on Education and Peaceful Democratic Societies. Outcome 4

for this priority area in the new MFA policy document[32] refers to *" the capacity of the civil society and persons in vulnerable positions to influence and participate in decision-making has improved"*, with an associated indicator *"strengthened public and political participation and decision-making power of women and those in vulnerable positions".* The Abilis global results framework outcome indicators for social and economic empowerment e.g. % of projects participants stated to participate in social events of the community, or who are employed or self-employed, provide a useful guide to the kind of project indicators relevant to the concept of inclusion.

4.4. Advocacy

In relation to the five stages of the policy cycle outlined in Section 2.3., most advocacy related activities of the projects reviewed fell into the categories of:

- Agenda-setting with duty bearers,
- Policy implementing i.e. seeking to have existing legislation properly implemented e.g. through litigation or dialogue with duty bearers; and
- Monitoring the implementation of legislation to ensure that it benefits marginalised sections of the population.

The evaluation found that Foundation projects frequently combined the types of civil society strengthening outlined in the previous sections with advocacy activities. For example, Siemenpuu partner Jikalahari in Indonesia combined technical support on the ecologically sustainable use and restoration of peat lands with strengthening the capacity of local communities to advocate for their rights with the government. Similarly, the KIOS regional partner the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) is working with a Bangladeshi NGO Odhikar to provide research and training with Rohingya refugees to support international advocacy.

The following are some examples of advocacy-related activities drawn from the document review.

Agenda setting

> *"Changes in the awareness of the international community of human rights situations in KIOS focus countries."*
>
> KIOS Results Framework 2019-21, Short-term outcome 1.4.

While projects most frequently seek to raise the awareness of and mobilise rights-holders on an issue, many projects also sought to raise the awareness of influential stakeholders on an issue so to get it on the agenda of decision-makers. Sometimes, this agenda-setting activity is to raise the profile of a specific group or issue without a specific policy objective in mind. Abilis projects, for example, frequently seek to change public attitudes towards disability in general. An example is the work of the National Association of the Disabled or Paracycling Association in Nepal in highlighting the ability of PWDs to play a full, active, creative life in the community. Another Abilis example was a short-term grant to the Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI) to organise a Arts Festival to change public attitudes to disability. The event attracted a lot of influential stakeholders such as government officials, private sector businesses, media and national celebrities, and received very positive coverage and reviews. This would have been a good opportunity to communicate some key policy messages regarding the issues/challenges that PWDs face in Myanmar. Project reports, however, do not give any detail of targeted communications or messages in relation to PWD rights although these may have been communicated implicitly or explicitly by performers.

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[32] Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy 2020-30, pp.44,45.

Both KIOS and Siemenpuu refer to the use of strategic litigation as an agenda-setting tactic i.e. as a means of raising public awareness and getting an issue into the public domain. For example, an end of project evaluation of KIOS support to a partner from 2014-18 frequently referred to the success of the project in raising public awareness of economic and social rights[33]. The question is whether this is a cost-effective approach if agenda-setting is the only desired dimension of change.

In other cases, projects seek to raise the awareness of duty bearers with clearer policy issues in mind, and to have them give priority to specific human rights issues. For example, the KIOS partner LOSAUK in Bangladesh has worked to raise awareness through the media of the rights of the transgender (hijra) community under the law e.g. to register to vote. Abilis has supported agenda-setting with a specific policy objective through the work of the Disability Action Network (DAN) in Somaliland that targeted humanitarian aid workers and local government actors through TV and radio shows to ensure PWDs are included in and benefit from humanitarian aid schemes. Another KIOS project (below) provides an example of agenda setting on an international scale to give an issue priority.

> *KIOS/ALRC: Putting the plight of Rohingya refugees on the international agenda.*
>
> *The KIOS partner the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) in Hong Kong sought to put the plight of Rohingya people on the international agenda by producing a documentary film; producing a detailed report; and liaising with UN Fact-Finding Mission to Myanmar, making submissions to UN Human Rights Council session, and making a submission also to the International Criminal Court ICC) in 2018 which received extensive publicity. In November 2019 the ICC instructed the Prosecutor to proceed with an investigation against alleged crimes against the Rohingya people in Myanmar .*

In this case, the action of the ICC to initiate an investigation into war crimes against the Rohingya people occurred after the completion of the 11 month ALRC project, although it is fair to assume that, given the prominence of its activities, the project played some part in bringing the issue to the public attention[34] and that of decision-makers.

Policy implementation

> *"Members of low-income rural communities have obtained ownership or users' rights to land…."*
>
> Siemenpuu Results Framework 2018, Short-term outcome 1.2.

The evaluation found several examples of projects working with both rights holders and duty bearers to help to ensure that existing policies or legislation work for the poor and marginalised. Some projects adopted a collaborative approach to working with government; some a more conflictual approach; and others combined both approaches.

Inclusive Development Promoters and Consultants (IDPC) in Tanzania is good example of an Abilis partner working collaboratively with government to try to ensure that a positive piece of legislation delivers tangible benefits for PWDs.

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[33] ISER end of project evaluation, Oct.2018.

[34] See, for example, the Guardian article in June 2018 which makes specific reference to the ALRC submission to the ICC. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/23/myanmar-icc-pushes-to-investigate-rohingya-atrocities-rape-fire

> ***Abilis/IDPC: Helping to implement the Disability Law in Tanzania***
>
> *IDPC has developed National Guidelines help National (Disability) Advisory Council to enforce sections of the Disability Law. For example, local councils are supposed by law to conduct an accessibility audit of public buildings and spaces but do not know how to do such an audit. The Guidelines will be the first Code of Practice of its kind in Tanzania and could transformative if used to for evidence-based advocacy to mainstream disability Law enforcers now know what to insist on and what to prohibit with regard to accessibility. Some stakeholders e.g. Universities have already used the Guidelines in their teaching modules.*

In one sense, the project can be considered a success in that it has delivered the desired *output* i.e. a jointly-owned Code of Practice regarding PWD access within the Disability Law. However, the project reports make clear that a number of follow up activities will be required if the Guidelines are to contribute to positive *outcomes* for PWDs.

A number of KIOS partners in Uganda take a more adversarial approach in trying to make legislation work for the marginalised - for example, to obtain a Court ruling in benefit of the target population on the application or implementation of a law or legal ruling. Although strategic litigation is a prevalent strategy of several KIOS partners, the evaluation found comparatively few successful examples in project reports and, more frequently, references to lengthy, unresolved judicial procedures[35]. The Uganda project example quoted under policy monitoring below is one of the few cases of a successful appeal to a higher legal authority.

Sometimes the fact of initiating legal proceedings itself can result in positive change for target groups. For example, the Centre for Health and Human Rights Development (CEHURD) in Uganda reports[36] a case of litigation against a Chinese company damaging the environment, water sources and health of local communities through stone quarrying. Community dialogues with the company were ineffectual so CEHURD filed a case against the company and local authorities. Without the case being heard in Court the company took a number of measures to lessen the impact of its quarrying on the community.

In Uganda, a litigious approach was sometimes combined with a more collaborative relationship with government in a 'carrot and stick' approach getting legislation effectively implemented. While the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) in Uganda actively litigates on government policies, it also plays a constructive role in helping government institutions implement policy commitments. For example, ISER has collaborated with several government departments, including the Office of the Prime Minister, to develop an implementation matrix to help the government monitor and implement the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) held in 2017. The partner reports that this kind of approach works effectively since the government needs the support of the NGO to implement commitments while it is aware that the NGO will pursue government through the Courts if needs be.

More broadly, there are numerous examples of Siemenpuu and KIOS supporting partners taking advantage of opportunities within existing legislative frameworks to empower marginalised people to participate, for example, in community forest councils or similar bodies to defend or claim their rights. These were highlighted in Section 3.3. Section 5.1. will consider to what extent this policy of

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[35] The CEHURD end of projects evaluation, Nov. 2018, refers to the unnecessary prolongation of cases (p.32) and gives an example of a civil case filed in 2014 which, after a lot of work, now has a hearing scheduled for April 2019. (p28)

[36] Ibid.pp20,1

constructive engagement with existing laws or legal frameworks is likely to contribute to sustainable change.

Policy monitoring

In many of the countries where the Foundations work there is a comparatively strong legislative framework in the sectors where they work e.g. disability or social protection rights in Uganda or forest community rights in India, Mozambique, Nepal and other countries. The evaluation found some project examples of civil society monitoring and holding duty bearers to account for the implementation of policies that have passed into statute or practices they have committed to.

In relation to the analysis above, a good example is provided by the KIOS partner the ISER in Uganda who monitored the implementation of a pilot scheme for a social assistance programme for the elderly and subsequently successfully appealed for a broader interpretation of the legislation to benefit those who had been excluded from the pilot.

> **KIOS/ISER: ensuring the elderly In Uganda gain access to social protection**
>
> *Older people that qualified for Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) but had not been included will now become beneficiaries in Uganda. SAGE is the only available social protection measure for older persons in Uganda. ISER complained to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) that the fact that SAGE pilot had focused on only a few districts for many years constituted discrimination, and sought for government to roll out the grants to all older persons nationally and to include gender and equity considerations when selecting beneficiaries. The EOC ruled in its favour on 14th June 2019, and the Uganda Government has announced a national roll out of the SAGE in 2020 2020 incorporating gender and equity considerations.*

In Nepal, KIOS partner the Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) illustrates a more 'hands on' approach to monitoring. It has established a local level human rights watch group consisting of voluntary representatives of community-based organisations to monitor local government service delivery in seven municipalities e.g. by making visits to schools, health posts and agricultural service centres. The group presents its findings to the Mayor who reported to the evaluation that he appreciated the information received on implementation gaps as it helps to improve local government services and, when relevant, to refer cases to higher levels of government. Interestingly, the group includes representatives also from the target groups of Abilis and Siemenpuu i.e. PWDs, community forest groups and women farmers, and provides a platform for advocating their issues at the local government level.

5. Sustainability

This Section will look at the sustainability of the work of the Foundations in two senses – whether the changes reported by project partners are likely to last over time and the degree to which the Foundations have contributed to the organisational sustainability of its project partners.

5.1. Lasting change

The previous Section has tried to illustrate how Foundation projects have contributed to strengthening key elements of civil society and to achieving policy and practice change to the benefit to poor and marginalised populations. This Section will comment on to what extent these changes are likely to be sustained over time.

Much of the work of Foundation partners is directed towards bringing about lasting changes in the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of target groups through community mobilisation, networking, capacity development and promoting their broader economic and social inclusion in the community. It is difficult to assess to what extent these changes among target groups will be long-lasting since the supporting evidence in project reports tends to be anecdotal. Where community mobilisation, for example, can be shown to contribute directly to demonstrable actions e.g. successful claims for land titles, it is reasonable to assume that these activities have helped to effect lasting change in people's attitudes. End of project evaluations are potentially another source of evidence for target populations reporting knowledge and behaviour change over time. Those evaluations reviewed by the evaluation were generally positive in this respect, although the Foundations could use evaluations perhaps more systematically to learn and document what factors contribute or undermine lasting project success. At a personal level, the evaluators had a strong impression from visiting Abilis grassroots projects that the gains in self-esteem and self-confidence of the PWDs is likely to last a lifetime.

Projects that were engaged in advocacy related activities, in addition to trying to get issues on the agenda of decision-makers, tended to focus less on getting new policies or laws on the statute and more on ensuring that existing laws with a progressive potential are implemented to the benefit of the poor and marginalised. In some cases, projects have worked collaboratively with government structures or bodies; others have used due legal process to seek redress or to ensure that legislation is properly implemented for those most in need. As previously noted, the evaluation also found a number of examples of projects seeking to take advantage of opportunities within existing legislation to try to ensure that marginalised populations can participate and benefit from exercising their rights. For example:

- *Abilis*: The work of IDPC in Tanzania is likely to contribute to systemic, sustainable change for PWDs through developing written set of disability access standards, approved and developed with the government, which gives both rightsholders and duty bearers a common set of standards to implement and monitor.
- *KIOS*: The work of CJGEA in Kenya also to facilitate the incorporation of environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs) in governance bodies at county level is likely contribute to a more effective implementation and monitoring of environmental legislation.
- *Siemenpuu:* As above, the work of SDI in Liberia and Seba Jagat in India support the popular participation in environmental governance bodies established through national legislation to enable forest communities to manage their forests sustainably and to withstand the incursions of logging companies.

The view of the evaluation is that those projects which follow a strategy of 'constructively engagement' e.g. to embed positive change within existing legislative frameworks are likely to achieve lasting, systemic change, though these changes will need to constantly monitored and defended if they are not to be rolled back.   This was confirmed in a recent end-of project evaluation of a KIOS partner, *"…it is becoming increasingly clear that non-confrontational advocacy is most likely to guarantee positive and sustainable changes…"[37]*. The examples quoted above are *likely* to contribute to lasting change since they are focused on making legislation more responsive and accountable to marginalised population, but they are still in their early stages. The document review found evidence, for example, of the increased participation of EHRDs in environmental bodies but this will have to be sustained over time in order to report tangible changes or benefits for these communities as a result of their participation.

Despite Abilis's reservations, the evaluation considers the short-term household benefits of Abilis's livelihoods projects are potentially vulnerable to 'shocks' such as drought or family crisis in the absence

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[37] TLC end of project evaluation, July 2019, p 32.

of some kind of savings and loan scheme. The view of the evaluation is that savings and loan schemes should be encouraged and supported as an integral part of Abilis's small scale livelihoods projects in order to ensure their social and economic sustainability. It is interesting to note that the women's groups involved in the food security project supported by HIMAWANTI in Nepal reported that the savings and loan scheme had made the difference in their project, while other agricultural projects they had been involved in had not led to sustainable changes.

5.2. Organisational change

We have observed that the Foundations support partner organisations in proposal development, project and financial reporting through the provision of guidelines, dialogue and advice. These skills are key to partners diversifying their funding base which many partners consider to be the most important strategy to establish their own sustainability. Several partners interviewed confirmed that they had been able to diversify their funding from other donors since their initial funding and, in most cases, the funding of new donors exceeded that of the Foundation.

Some partners have also used grant funds for activities that contribute to their organisational development. We have noted two cases in which Abilis partners have used grant funds to support their organisation's strategy development. A Siemenpuu partner also used grant funds to review its organisational governance at a time when it was in crisis. These activities contribute to the organisational sustainability of Foundation partners which, in turn, provides a better basis to diversity their funding base and secure greater financial sustainability. The evaluation has two observations with regard to how the Foundations could support the organisational partners:

- In Section 4.2. we noted that, in tune with the general philosophy of the Foundations, support to the organisational development of partners seems to be demand-led. A common practice among many NGOs is to encourage or require a successful applicant for grant funding to conduct its own organisational assessment using an established tool so that it can identify its own organisational assessment needs. The NGO and applicant then agree how the NGO can support the new partner in its organisational development over the course of their partnership. The partners progress in terms of organisational development can be measured over time using the same tool. The Foundations may not find such an approach practical but it is particularly relevant when supporting partners at an earlier stage of their organisational life cycle.
- Alternatively, KIOS and Siemenpuu may consider the example of Abilis in awarding short term grants to support partners in specific initiatives relevant to their organisational development.

Finally, the evaluation found one example of a project partner planning an initiative to contribute to its own financial sustainability, the Turning Point Foundation in Bangladesh.

> *Abilis/TPF: Planning for financial sustainability in Bangladesh.*
>
> *To register as an NGO with the government in Bangladesh – and, for example, be eligible for foreign funding - an organisation requires a website. TPF supports the web development of local CSOs which it describes as a "one-time investment with longer-term return". In the process, it has acquired web-development and software skills. It has established a start -up private enterprise, controlled by TPF, to provide training support on website development and graphic design to the new DPO websites as means of generating income for the NGO. The new company is called "Accessible and Affordable Information Technology for You" (www.aaity.com)*

Recommendations

> 22. *Abilis to consider how to incorporate/ encourage savings and credit schemes in its livelihoods projects with grassroots communities of PWDs.*

6. Conclusions

6.1. Relevance

The programmes of the Foundations remain relevant to Finland;s Development policy. In addition to their HRBA approach, the thematic focus of Foundation programmes - disability, environment and human rights – have a clear fit with the priority areas of Finland's development policy and recent outcome statements. Siemenpuu's country programmes did not always align with Finland's focus on LDCs and fragile states during the evaluation period but steps have been taken to address this, for example, in its recent Calls for Proposals. Nonetheless, a strategic case can and should be made to the MFA for a Foundation to work in a non-LDC country if it is clearly central to its mission.

The Foundations continue to have a somewhat ambiguous status as a programme support organisation. They are governed by the general conditions governing the modality, but with some exceptions. The evaluation found the modality to have no formal requirements which should significantly impede the work of the Foundations. The relevance of the modality to the work of the Foundations should be measured by the extent to which it enables them to fulfil their missions and be relevant to the needs of their Southern partners. In this respect, the Foundations should use the evidence of the evaluation to clarify and confirm with the MFA how it intends to ensure the relevance of their ways of working in the next programme support period.

Respondents confirmed that the Foundations continue to play a distinctive, complimentary role in Finnish development cooperation with their clear mandate to promote human rights in developing countries. In particular, they highlighted the focus of the Foundations on marginalised rural communities, human rights movements and activists, and its reputation for supporting partners who are 'not the usual suspects'. The evaluation recommends that the Foundations further refine and affirm this 'niche' role in its next programme application to differentiate themselves from other programme support organisations.

The Foundation grant administration systems are generally well defined but they should consider how best to manage the selection and approval of partners more efficiently over the four year period of MFA programme support. The experience of Calls for Proposals during the evaluation period was mixed. The view of the evaluation is that Siemenpuu and KIOS in particular should seek to manage a mixed portfolio of projects in the 2022-25 programme period by awarding longer-term managed grants to established partners and coordinating and issuing Calls for Proposals early in the programme period to attract new partners and respond to new needs.

The results frameworks and most projects of the Foundations are easily classifiable within some key dimensions of change associated with strengthening civil society. Projects with a strong livelihood or service delivery focus should be more explicitly linked to a rights-based approach and to strengthening civil society.

The HRBA approach shared by the Foundations is increasingly relevant to the challenges of a worsening operating context for civil society, and the increased marginalisation and vulnerability of many of the project target populations. The preparedness of many partners to constructively engage or collaborate with government or public bodies has helped them navigate restrictive NGO legislation while others

have been able, for example, to facilitate registration of themselves or other civic groups with the authorities by other means.

The communications activities of the Foundations in Finland have been one of the casualties of the funding cuts in 2015 although there are signs that they are addressing this. A number of stakeholder would like to see the Foundations developing a higher profile in Finland to better communicate the rights issues emerging from their programmes and consolidate their reputation as experts in their fields. The 2022-25 programme application provides an opportunity for the Foundations to develop new communication strategies and more detailed communication plans so that they can prioritise their communications efforts and better report on how their reach with the Finnish public.

6.2. Effectiveness

Grant funded organisations value the support offered by the Foundations for the mutual trust and respect, flexibility and quality of dialogue of the partnership. However, many partners would like the Foundations to provide more opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing – for example, by linking up to share learning and good practice with organisations working in similar areas or across disabilities.

All Foundations provide good support and guidance to partners on project cycle management for the current programme support period, although only Abilis has produced more detailed guidance on results-based management. There is considerable room for improvement in project results frameworks and in project reporting. The Foundations should support partners in the use of appropriate tools so that both they, and the projects they support, have a body of evidence in the 2022-25 programme period that demonstrates how they contribute to civil society strengthening and the fulfilment of the rights of the marginal groups, and populations they support.

There are many examples of how the Foundations contribute to strengthening civil society through their support to community mobilisation, capacity development, networking, inclusion and advocacy. Projects frequently combined different approaches but perhaps the distinctive contribution of all three Foundations is their support through local partners to help marginalised populations to defend and/or assert their rights in relation to government and the private sector While there is *prima facie* evidence of strengthening civil society, the quality of the evidence makes it difficult to confidently demonstrate how projects contribute to lasting change at outcome level. This was apparent in all the dimensions of change reviewed. The concept of inclusion i.e. 'leave no-one behind' is particularly useful in describing how Abilis income generation projects promote the inclusion of PWDs in the local economy and there is scope to plan for their broader social and political inclusion as an example of civil society strengthening.

Project advocacy activities tend to contribute to the agenda-setting, implementation and monitoring stages of the policy cycle. Many projects focused on getting a human rights issue on the public agenda e.g. Abilis's work on changing public attitudes to disability. It is easier to demonstrate the success of agenda-setting activities if the project has specific policy objectives in mind – for example, ALRC raising the profile of the plight of Rohingya refugees to get the international community to act in response to alleged war crimes.

A key part of the Foundations work is to support civil society to participate in existing legislative frameworks to ensure that policy commitments are implemented fairly and transparently and respond to the needs of the poor and marginalised. This sometimes involves a collaborative approach with government and, in other cases, the use of litigation to ensure that the law is implemented fairly. Sometimes collaboration and litigation are combined in a carrot and stick approach. However, litigation can be a lengthy process and take a long time to deliver tangible changes for the target populations. This could be the focus of future research.

6.3. Sustainability

Many Foundation projects have a positive working relationship with relevant government bodies at local, regional or national level, despite the general environment in many countries being inhospitable to civil society rights-based activism. Also project activism often tended to focus on making existing laws work for the poor and marginalised, rather than advocating for new laws, and in taking advantage of opportunities within existing legal frameworks to ensure the rights of poor and marginalised communities are represented. A policy of constructive engagement offers the opportunity to embed positive change within the laws of the country, although changes will have to be vigilantly monitored by civil society if they are to be sustained over time. In the view of the evaluation, this is more likely to deliver lasting benefits for the poor and marginalised than a more overtly confrontational approach.

At a community level, the psycho-social to PWDs of Abilis's grass-roots income generation projects are likely to be long-lasting but the economic benefits may be vulnerable to 'shocks' such as drought, theft or other unanticipated events. A savings and loan component would provide some resilience to such shocks in addition to strengthening individual and social self-confidence.

Partners report that the support the Foundations provide in proposal development and report writing has helped them to achieve funding from other sources. Several partners suggested that the Foundations could further contribute to their organisational sustainability. The use of organisational capacity assessment tools would enable Foundation partners to identify their priority organisational development needs which could be incorporated into project grants.

Annex 1: Evaluation Framework

Draft Evaluation Questions	Subsidiary questions	Data Sources	Data collection methods
Relevance			
R.1 Development cooperation. To what extent are the Foundation strategies and programmes relevant to Finland's Development Cooperation?	R.1.1 To what extent are Foundation strategies and programmes aligned to Finland's development cooperation policy?	Foundation and MFA documents; key respondents	Document review; Helsinki interviews.
	R.1.2 To what extent and how do the Foundations programmes add value to or complement other modalities of Finnish Development Cooperation?	Foundation staff; key informants; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	R.1.3. How might the Foundations' adjust their strategies/ programmes to add greater value to Finland's development cooperation?	Foundation staff; key informants; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	R.1.4. How relevant is the programme support modality of the MFA to the Foundations' work?	Foundation staff; key informants; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
R.2 Grant management. How relevant are the Foundation grant selection and management systems and processes to the needs of partners?	R.2.1. How do the Foundations identify suitable partners; invite and support grant applications; select and approve partners and projects?	Foundation documents; Foundation staff	Document review; Helsinki interviews.
	R.2.2. How relevant do partners perceive the Foundation grant selection, approval and management processes?	Country and regional partners	Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	R. 2 3. What do stakeholders suggest the Foundations do differently to improve the processes of selection and approval projects and partners for grant funding?	Foundation staff; key informants; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews

R.3 Strengthening civil society. How relevant are the Foundations' support to strengthening civil society at an organisational and systemic level?	R.3.1 How do Foundation staff and partners perceive the relevance of the Foundations' approach to strengthening civil society in their own context?	Foundation staff; Country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
R.4 Adaptability to context. How adaptable is Foundation support to civil society to changes in the operating contexts of different countries and regions?	R.4.1 What are the contextual changes that stakeholders perceive to have impacted on Foundation supported projects?	Foundation staff; key informants; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	R.4.2 What mechanisms are in place to enable adjustment of Foundation supported projects to changing context and needs?	Document review; Helsinki staff; country-based contact people	Helsinki interviews and workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	R.4.3 To what extent do partners perceive Foundation support to be flexible to changing circumstances in the country context?	Country and regional partners	Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	R.4.4 How well do Foundation reports reflect changes in external environment and their response to these?	Foundation documents	Document review
R. 5 Communications activities. How relevant are the communications activities of the Foundations in Finland?	R. 5.1How do the Foundations plan and implement their external communications and monitor changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in target groups?	Foundation documents; staff and key respondents	Document review; Helsinki interviews.
	R.5.2 How do stakeholders in Finland perceive the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations' communications activities?	Foundation staff; key respondents.	Helsinki interviews
R.6 Key lessons What are the key lessons that would help to ensure the continued relevance of the Foundations partnership approach	R.6.1 What do stakeholders suggest that the Foundations do differently to increase the relevance of their approach? What are the similarities and differences in the lessons for the Foundations? How do different types of partner organisations converge or differ in their perceptions?	Foundation staff; key informants; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews

and support to strengthening civil society?			
Impact/Effectiveness			
E.1. Strengthening civil society How effectively do Foundations' programmes strengthen civil society in the South?	E.1.1 What evidence is there that Foundation activities to strengthen civil society have been effective?	Foundation documents; staff; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; country visit interviews and workshops
	E.1.2 Have particular dimensions of civil society been more effectively strengthened than others e.g. organisational development, service delivery, networking, advocacy etc.?	Foundation documents; staff; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	E.1.3. What changes in target groups or operating environment do partners report as a result of Foundation support?	Country and regional partners	Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	E.1.4 How do Foundation staff and partners assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations' approach to strengthening civil society?	Country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
E.2 Capacity development How effectively do the Foundations develop the capacity of partner organisations and staff?	E.2.1. How do the Foundations identify and respond to the capacity development needs of partners, and monitor the effectiveness of its support?	Foundation documents; Foundation staff	Document review; Helsinki interviews
	E.2.2. How have the Foundations helped to develop the organisational or personal capacity of partners? What forms of/ approaches to capacity development would they prioritise?	Annual and project reports; Foundation staff; country and regional partners.	Document review; Helsinki workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	E. 2.3. What forms of/ approaches to capacity development do partners most value and would prioritise in the future?	Country and regional partners	Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews

	E.2.4 How do partners perceive the added value of the non-financial support provided by the Foundations?	Country and regional partners	Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
E.3. Partnership/PCM How effective are the Foundations approaches to partnership and project cycle management?	E.3.1. What systems and process do the Foundations have in place to contract with their partners and to manage projects throughout the project cycle?	Foundation documents and staff	Document review; Helsinki interviews
	E.3.2 How do partners perceive the strengths and weaknesses of Foundations support throughout the project cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting)?	Country and regional partners	Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	E.4.1 How effective are the Foundations' planning, monitoring and reporting systems in establishing an evidence base for programme/project achievements?	Foundation documents; staff; key respondents.	Document review; Helsinki interviews
E.5 Key lessons What are they key lessons that could help to increase the effectiveness of the Foundations approach to strengthening civil society?	E.5.1 What stakeholders suggest that the Foundations could do differently in order to increase the effectiveness of their approaches to strengthening civil society? What are the similarities and differences in the lessons for the Foundations? How do different types of partner organisations converge or differ in their perceptions?	Foundation staff; key informants; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
Sustainability			
S.1 Systemic change How have the results achieved by projects contributed to long-term change?	S.1.1 To what extent do partners perceive that Foundation support has contributed to their organisational development and sustainability?	Country and regional partners	Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
	S.1.2 What evidence is there that the results reported by the Foundations will contribute to long-term changes in civil society?	Annual and project reports; Foundation staff; country and regional partners.	Document review; Helsinki workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews

S.2. Organisational sustainability	S.2.1 To what extent and how do partners perceive the Foundations to the contributed to their organisational sustainability?	Country and regional partners	Country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews.
To what extent has Foundation support to partners contributed to their organisational sustainability?			
S.3 Key lessons	S.3.1 What do stakeholders suggest that the Foundations do differently in order to ensure the sustainability of the expected changes? What are the similarities and differences in the lessons for the Foundations?	Foundation staff; key informants; country and regional partners	Helsinki interviews and workshops; country visit interviews and workshops; at distance interviews
What are they key lessons that would help to ensure that the expected organisational & systemic changes of Foundation supported projects are sustainable?	How do different types of partner organisations converge or differ in their perceptions?		

Annex 2: Work plan

Activities	Dec		Jan					Feb				March					April				May		Consultancy days		
Inception	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	CC	MT	Total
Start-up consultation	X																						0.5	0.5	1
Prelim doc review		X	X	X																			2	2	4
Write/send draft IR					X																		1.5	0.5	2
Inception visit						23/4																	2	1	3
Send final IR							X																1	-	1
Data gathering																									
Doc review								X	X														3	5	6
Interviews									X	X	X												4	2	6
Staff workshops								X	X														-	3	3
Country visits												X	X	X									7	7	14
Analysis/reporting																									
Analysis															X								1	1	2
Initial findings workshop															27								1	1	
Write/send draft report																X	X						3	1	4
Easter Holidays																	H	H							
Receive comments on report																				X					
Write/send Final report																					X		2	0.5	2.5
Total days																							**29.5**	**25.5**	**55**

Annex 3: Sampling matrix for documentary review of projects

Abilis		KIOS		Siemmenpuu	
AFRICA					
Project Partner	Country	Project Partner	Country	Project Partner	Country
Inclusive Development Promoters and Cons (IDPC)	Tanzania	Centre for Justice, Governance and Environmental Action ((CJGEA)	Kenya	Sustainable Development Institute (SDI)	Liberia
Disability Action Network (DAN)	Somalia	Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU)	Kenya	Asociacao para Preservacao de Meio Ambiente (LLIVANINGO)	Mozambique
Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development (ECDD)	Ethiopia	Samburu Trust	Kenya		
United Polio Brothers and Sisters Association, UPBSA	Sierra Leone				
ASIA					
Myanmar Independent Living initiative (MILI)	Myanmar	LOSAUK	Bangladesh	Seba Jagat	India
Hanoi Association of People with Disabilities	Vietnam	Mothers and Daughters of Lanka (MDL)	Sri Lanka	Jaringan Kerja Penyelamat Hutan Riau (Jikalahari)	Indonesia
Turning Point Foundation	Bangladesh	Asia Legal Resource Centre (ALRC)	Regional	Renewable Energy Association Myanmar (REAW)	Myanmar
		Childrens' Rights	Pakistan	SADED	India
LATIN AMERICA					
				Accion para la Bioversidad (AcBiol)	Argentina

Annex 4: Documents reviewed

Document	Abilis	KIOS	Siemenpuu
Framework documents			
Strategy	X	X	X
MFA application 2018-21/Global Programme	X	X FI	X
Theory of Change/Results chain	X	X	X
Results Framework	X	X	X
Global operational/action plans (annual plans)	X		X
MFA application for additional funding 2010-11			X
Cooperation agreement with MFA			X FI
MFA funding decision (including statements from MFA departments and embassies)			X FI
Minutes of the annual negotiations with MFA			X FI
Reports			
MFA report 2018	X	X	X
Comments from MFA on the report of 2018	X FI	X FI	X FI
Response to MFA comments	X FI	X FI	X FI
Specimen project reports (2 per Foundation)	X	X	X
Annual report 2018 (publication)	X FI		
Summary memo on project results 2018 (including final summaries of 2018 completed projects)			X FI
Grant administration			
Application forms	X		X
Funding agreement			X
Guidance on proposal/concept note			X
Grants lists	X	X	X
Criteria/checklists for applications, approvals, rejection	X	X FI	X FI
Reporting forms and guidelines	X	X	X
Guidance Notes			
Project management/reporting	X	X	X
Human rights based approach	X		
Results based management	X		
Gender	X		X
Environmental sustainability, climate change	X	X	
Ethical principles, code of conduct	X	X	
Project evaluation		X	

Monitoring visits			X FI
Risk management	X FI	X FI	X FI
Internal control/compliance	X FI		
Security		X FI	
Country profile paper guidelines	X		
Manuals for partners (project planning, proposal writing, reporting, good governance)	X		
Country-specific (Nepal, Uganda)			
Country profile papers	X		
General administration			
Bylaws	X FI		X
Rules of procedure		X FI	X FI
Staff job descriptions			X FI
ToRs for thematic groups			X FI
Board charter			**X FI**
MFA documents			
Finland's Development Policy 2016			
Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy 2017			
Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy 2010			
MFA conditions for programme support			
Memo on the application of the MFA conditions to foundations (FI)			
MFA guidelines for the application of programme support 2018-2021 (FI)			
MFA guidelines for the application of additional programme support funding 2020-21 (FI)			
MFA draft guidelines for reporting of programme support 2019 (FI)			
Evaluation 2017			
Evaluation of PBS to Foundations 2017			
Evolution of PBS through Finnish CSOs, Foundations and Umbrella organisations – Synthesis Report			
evaluation of PBS through Finnish CSOs, Foundations and Umbrella organisations – Meta-Analysis			
evaluation of PBS through Finnish CSOs, Foundations and Umbrella organisations – Assessment of Results Based Management (RBM) in the Partnership Organizations (Working Paper)			
MFA's decision on the implementation of the PBS Evaluation results			
Foundations' comments on the evaluation of 2017	X (FI)	X	X

Annex 5: List of stakeholders consulted

Name	Organisation
Interviews	
Peer organisations	
Veera Pensala	Kynnys / Threshold Association
Sabina Bergholm	Finnchurchaid
Anne Tarvainen	WWW Finland
MFA	
Riina-Riikka Heikka	Director, Civil Society Unit
Krista Orama	Programme Officer, Civil Society Unit
Merja Luostarinen,	Programme Officer, Civil Society Unit
Katariina Sario	Senior advisor, development policy (vulnerable groups)
Janina Hasenson	Unit for human rights policy
Vesa Kaarakka	Senior advisor, development policy (forestry)
Partners	
Abilis	
Melaku Tekle	ECDD
Nay Lin Soe	MILI
Kaganzi Rutachwamagyo	IDPC
Jibon William Gomez	Turning Point Foundation
Siemenpuu	
Carlos Vincente	AcBio
Jonathan Yiah	SDI
Clemente Ntauazi	LIVANINGO
Satya Pattanayak	Seba Jagat
KIOS	
Phyllis Omido	CJGEA
Peter Kiama	IMLU
Brian Bichanga Osiemo	IMLU
Hina Jilani	Childrens' Rights
Nazmul Ahsan:in	LOSAUK

Uganda Country visit

Name	Organisation
Interviews	
Salima Namusobya	ISER
Gerald Kankya	TLC
Memory Bandera Rwampwanyi	DefendDefenders
Beatrice Nafuna	Abilis
Miiro Micheal	DHF
Esther Kyozira	DRF

Abilis workshop

Betty Kinene	Mpigi District Women with Disabilities Association
Daniel Walusansa	Uganda Parents of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities
Alex Byekwaso	Luweero Epilepsy Support Association
Deborah Mazzi	Kaliiti Disabled Women's Network
Oscar Walukhu W.	East Africa Center for Disability Law and Policy
Sula Musese	Jinja District Association of Persons with Disabilities Living Positively
Mawazi Mwanja	Uganda Parents of Person with Intellectual Disabilities
Abdul Ssebaggala	Makindye Association of People with Physical Disabilities
Mike Makasa	Makindye Association of People with Physical Disabilities
John James Okello	Lukomera Youth Deaf Association
Tracy Nabayaza	Lukomera Youth Deaf Association
Moses Kazimba	Lukomera Youth Deaf Association

KIOS workshop

Dr Chris Dolan	Refugee Law Project
Dismas Nkunda	Atrocities Watch
Leticia Sam Opio	QYU
Paolyel MP Onencan	BIRUDO
Gerald Kankya	TLC
Moses Mulumba	CEHURD
Angella Nabwowe	ISER
Dorothy Mukasa	Unwanted Witness
Ntenga Moses	JFCU
Yona Wanjala	DPI

Project visits
Abilis
The Uganda National Association of Cerebral Palsy
Teens and Tots Neuro Development Center
Naukozi
Kitenga
Kyenjojo District Disabled People Union
KIOS
ISER
TLC

Nepal Country visit

Interviews

Name	**Organisation**
Birendra Raj Pokhrel	Abilis Nepal
Kati Bhose	Embassy of Finland

Abilis workshop

Bidya Nand Chaudhary	Muscular Dystrophy Foundation Nepal
Pawan Ghimire	Landmines Survivors
Surendra Bajracharya	Autism Care Nepal Society
Lila Nath Pahadi	Akshar Arambha Nepal
Shristi K. C.	Blind Rocks
Diuya Shah	Blind Rocks
Krishna Maharjan	Disability Empowerment Society Nepal
Shreejan K. C.	Mothers Society of Intelletual Disabilities
Parmila Neupane	Autism Care Chitwan Society
Deepak Koirala	Nepal Table Tennis Association of the Blind
Nawina Gyawali	Independent Living Women with Disabilities Empowerment Centre

Krishna Gautam	Independent Living Center – Lalitpur
Tej Kumari Tiwari	Nepal Society of the Disabled
Rajiv Ghimre	volunteer
Manisha Poudel	volunteer

KIOS workshop

Tehal Thami	LAHURNIP
Gopal K. Siwakoti	INHURED International
Rajin Rayamajri	WHR
Jamuna Poudual	Centre for Victims of Torture Nepal
Shom Luitel	People Forum
Tasi Lama Tang	Childspace Foundation Nepal
Subhechhya Khadkha	INSEC
Renu Sijapati	FEDO

Siemenpuu workshop

Simon Poudel	SADED Nepal
Ram Sharan Shapkota	SADED Nepal
Santosh Mandal	CRT Nepal
Sarita Lama	HIMAWANTI Nepal
Manisha Chhetri	WATCH
Bharat Mani Subedi	HURENDEC
Taj Raj Shahi	HURENDEC
Dil Raj Khanal	FECOFUN
Jailab Rai	REF

Discussion with civil society (organised by SADED)

Pushpa Bhusal	MP, House of Representatives
Bhakta BK	Dalit Activist/ civil society leader
Geja Wagle	Columnist, Dailies/former press advisor to PM
Yubraj Acharya	Former journalist, now working with an INGO
Indra Adhikari	Works with a govt. think tank
Uddhab Pyakurel	SADED Nepal
Birendra Pokhrel	Abilis Nepal

Partner/project visits

Abilis
Creative Hands of Deaf Women
Para Cycling Association of Nepal
Nepal National Disabled Association

KIOS
LAHURNIP
INSEC

Siemenpuu
CRT Nepal
FECOFUN
HIMAWANTI

Annex 6: M&E of civil society strengthening: selected references

The following selected references are drawn mostly from two sources – BOND, the umbrella organisation of UK NGOs, and INTRAC, a UK research and training organisation that specialises in work with civil society. They have been selected as useful, practical resources for monitoring civil society strengthening.

The BOND impact builder is an excellent general source. It was developed collaboratively with more than 100 UK-based NGOs to identify "tried and tested" outcomes, indicators and data collection tools across a variety of sectors including empowerment, advocacy and capacity development. https://www.bond.org.uk/resources/impact-builder

INTRAC has developed a free, online resource on M&E for development practitioners - the M&E Universe – which consists of a series of short papers on different subjects related to M&E, and is an excellent introduction to the area. https://www.intrac.org/resources/me-universe/

It also developed, as part of the evaluation of Danish support to civil society, a brief introduction for Danish CSOs on how to provide an evidence base on strengthening civil society. *Seeing the Wood for the Trees: Summarising Results*, INTRAC/TANA January 2016. https://www.intrac.org/resources/seeing-wood-trees-summarising-results/

Awareness raising

The BOND paper *"Assessing effectiveness in empowerment programmes"* includes indicators and specific tools relevant to monitoring awareness raising and community mobilisation. https://portailqualite.acodev.be/fr/system/files/node/309/assessing_effectiveness_in_empowerment_programmes.pdf

Capacity development

The BOND paper *"Assessing effectiveness in building the capacity of organisations and institutions"* includes relevant indictors and tools https://ngo.acodev.be/nl/system/files/node/307/assessing_effectiveness_in_building_the_capacity_of_organisations_and_institutions.pdf

INTRAC has produced a number of papers on the M&E of capacity building, including:

"Monitoring and evaluation of capacity building: Tracking capacity change", March 2016 https://www.intrac.org/resources/monitoring-evaluation-capacity-building-tracking-capacity-change/

"Monitoring and evaluating capacity building: Is it really that difficult?" Praxis paper 23, January 2010.

https://www.intrac.org/resources/praxis-paper-23-monitoring-evaluating-capacity-building-really-difficult/

INTRAC, along with Framework, also produced a "*Cross-cutting Capacity Building Learning Review"* in March 2016 which is of particular interest to Abilis. https://www.add.org.uk/research

Framework produced for WWF UK a useful "Compendium of qualitative methods for monitoring and evaluating OD" in May 2015. http://www.framework.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Methods_Compendium_External_Document-COVERS-signed.pdf

Networking

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has produced a short paper "*Not everything that connects is a network*" that provides a detailed discussion of networks, including a broad definition and a description of their purpose and use. http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/6313.pdf

"Evaluating Coalitions and Networks: Frameworks, Needs, and Opportunities", Dec. 2017 provides an introduction to different approaches to evaluating networks and has useful bibliographic references. https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Evaluating-Coalitions-and-Networks.pdf

The Commonwealth Foundation has developed a useful Guide to its Network Effectiveness Framework for policy advocacy and engagement. http://commonwealthfoundation.com/resource/nef/

Inclusion

Advocacy

While the concept of the policy cycle is used extensively, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the best source for discussion on its use. See "*Policy engagement: How civil society can be more effective"*

https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/200.pdf

The BOND publication "*Assessing effectiveness in influencing power holders"* provides a range of advocacy indicators and tools drawn from the UK NGO sector. https://kb.acodev.be/fr/system/files/node/310/assessing_effectiveness_in_influencing_power_holders.pdf

Annex 7: Terms of Reference (edited)

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2. Rationale, purpose and objectives of the evaluation

This evaluation serves the dual purpose of accountability and learning. It should give an assessment of the results achieved so far in this programme period in strengthening the civil society and in relation to the specific objectives of each Foundation. It should assess the role that the Foundations play in the Finnish development cooperation, and the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations' modality and grant making approaches. The evaluation should also provide analyses on the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations' communications activities.   The evaluation will feed into the planning of the next programme period (2022-2025) and the strategy processes of the Foundations.

The objectives of this evaluation are:

- To give recommendations to the development of the Foundations' modality;
- To give recommendations to the development of the Foundations' tools & practices in grant making and in communications activities;
- To increase understanding on best ways to support the strengthening of the civil society.

3. Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation deals with the years 2018-2019 of the ongoing programmes 2018-2021 of the Foundations financed by the MFA, covering the active projects during this period. The evaluation should focus on the Foundations' common modality framework, however also address the Foundations separately. The evaluation should not focus on the results of individual funded projects and communications activities, but rather address the programme level.   Travel to project locations in 1-3 countries is expected.

The evaluation will be guided by the Evaluation manual by the MFA (based on OECD DAC and EU criteria) on parts relevant for CSO projects. The evaluation will utilize OECD DAC criteria, particularly relevance, impact and sustainability in the context of the Foundations' grant making mechanisms.

4. Issues to be addressed and evaluation questions

The evaluation is asked to address, but not necessarily to limit to the following evaluation questions:

1) What is the added value of the Foundations for Finland's Development Cooperation?

- Do the Foundations succeed to add value and do they have a complementary role in relation to other modalities of Finnish Development Cooperation? If yes, how?

- How does the programme support modality of the MFA fit for Foundations' work? Are there issues that are not relevant and appropriate for the Foundations?

2) How well do the funding processes support the selection and management of grants?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different funding modalities and mechanisms used by the Foundations? Are the used funding criteria relevant?

- How to strengthen the processes in choosing the right partners and projects for funding?
- How the Foundations could develop project management and support?
- How have the Foundations succeeded to support grantees throughout the project cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting)? Strengths and weaknesses?

 3) How do the Foundations' programmes strengthen the civil societies in the South?

- In which ways do projects strengthen the civil society? How could this be reinforced?

- How do the grantees assess the changes in the targeted groups and their operating environment?

- In what ways have the Foundations contributed to the capacity development of their grantees?

- What are the ways of capacity development that the grantees value the most?

4) How relevant are the communications activities (in Finland) of the Foundations?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses?

5. Methodology

The evaluation team is expected to use its professional skills and experience in defining the most relevant approach and methodology for the evaluation. Proposed methodology for the evaluation should be comprehensive to ensure a broad view of the Foundations' work. Evaluation can include field visits to maximum 3 countries. Country/countries will be chosen together with the selected evaluation team.

As basis the methodology is recommended to include:

a) Desk review and analysis of documents Key documents from each of the Foundation include (some of the documents are in Finnish or other languages than English):
- Programme document 2018-2021
- Sample of project documents (funding decisions 2018-2019 and earlier)
- Annual report 2018 and draft report 2019
- Funding criteria, project forms, management tools .
  Other key documents

- Relevant guidelines from the MFA
b) Interviews, discussions and meetings with relevant stakeholders including

Foundations' representatives

- MFA representatives

- Other funders in the sectors of the Foundations

- Grantees and beneficiaries

- Other key stakeholders

c) Field trip

6. The evaluation process and time schedule

Abilis, KIOS or Siemenpuu Foundations will select the evaluators based on their proposals of interest. These proposals, including a work plan with the suggested evaluation criteria, budget and the CVs of the evaluators should be submitted by 15.11.2019 by e-mail to marjo.heinonen@abilis.fi, with the title "Joint Foundation Evaluation". If you have any questions related to the assignment, please send it to the email above by 5.11.2019. They will be answered 8.11.2019.

Time schedule for the evaluation:

Activities	Date

Contracting of evaluators	November 2019
Kick-of meeting	December 2019
Inception report	February 2020
Inception report meeting	February 2020
Interviews and possible field visits	March 2020
Draft Report	April 2020
Presentation of the report	May 2020
Final Report	May 2020

7. Reporting

The evaluators are asked to deliver the following reports in English language.

1. Inception report: On the basis of the desk study, the evaluators shall present an inception report. The inception report consists of the initial findings of the desk study, an evaluation matrix with the focused evaluation questions, a detailed and updated work plan and elaboration of methodology

2. Draft final report for comments

3. Final report: A maximum of 30 pages long report (excluding summary of max. 3 pages long and annexes)

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10. Mandate

The evaluation team is entitled and expected to discuss matters relevant to this evaluation with pertinent persons and organizations. However, it is not authorized to make any commitments on behalf of the Abilis, KIOS or Siemenpuu Foundations.