**8 June 2021**

**Replies by the Government of Finland to the questionnaire by the**

**Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities**

The Government of Finland thanks the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities for his work in relation to these rights and presents the following replies to the questionnaire sent by the Special Rapporteur on 12 May 2021 for the preparation of a thematic report to the General Assembly at its 76th session concerning the protection of the persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict.

The replies to the questionnaire were received from the Ministry of Defence, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, Finnish Rec Cross and Abilis Foundation.

**1. Ministry of Defence of Finland**

**A. Questionnaire for States**

***4. Please identify any domestic laws or statutes that seek to punish criminal acts that specifically target persons with disabilities.***

***4a. Do the laws or statutes apply to acts of violence against or abuse of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict, conflict prevention, humanitarian action, and/ or peacebuilding operations?***

The provision of the Finnish Criminal Code apply to all acts performed against groups of potential victims. The situations of special vulnerability of victims (e.g. disability) are taken as an aggravating factor at the courts when those acts are prosecuted. This apply to all criminal acts.

***4b. Do the laws or statutes apply solely to government actors, individual actors, or both?***

According the Finnish Criminal Code, the criminal act is a criminal act despite whomever performs it. The potential official position is a fact, which may be as an aggravating factor in the crime performed, or it may also form an additional criminal act to be prosecuted jointly with the actual criminal act.

***4c. Does the criminal code provide for the prosecution of crimes against humanity and if so, could disability-related crimes be prosecuted under such provision(s)?***

The Chapter 11 on War crimes and crimes against humanity (212/2008) of the Finnish Criminal Code includes Section 3 on Crime against humanity and Section 4 – Aggravated crime against humanity, which may be applied to those situations. If the acts are such that could be prosecuted under the similar provisions of the International Criminal Court, or ad hoc -international criminal tribunals, they could be prosecuted also on the basis of the Finnish Criminal Code, as these provisions were drafted taking into consideration of the potential crimes which could be prosecuted in the ICC.

***6. Please identify and describe any efforts undertaken to build capacity across stakeholders—including military and civilian, peacekeeping personnel, and other field workers—who intervene in emergency situations, including armed conflict, regarding the rights of persons with disabilities.***

The WPS perspective, based on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, also includes taking into account the security and situation of other vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, in crisis management. These issues are trained for soldiers involved in crisis management missions.

***7. Please provide information on relevant legislation and policies related to:***

***7a. Whether persons with disabilities are excluded from serving in the armed forces on the basis of their disability.***

The Finnish Armed Forces is structured as a conscript army and accordingly the officers, staff and conscript have to belong to the s.c. healt class A or B, which practically excludes persons with disabilities from the military service.

***7c. What supports are available to assist persons experiencing psycho-social trauma as a consequence of armed conflict (civilian, current military, or former military).***

There are specific programs available for those who have served at the peacekeeping/international military crisis management -operations, whether they have been voluntary conscripts or members of the Armed Forces.

***7d. The existence of differential obligations or services granted to veterans with disabilities on the one hand and civilians with disabilities on the other.***

Crisis management veterans are legally entitled to health care services. Injured veterans receive health care and rehabilitation services as part of this treatment.

**B. Questionnaire for military authorities**

***1. How have ‘protection’ issues, as they relate to civilians with disabilities, been reflected in military doctrine, operational planning, and/or military training?***

These issues belong to the issues of general protection of civilians under the law of armed conflict. In military crisis operations to which Finland is participating, they come through general operational orders drafted on the basis of the mandate at the Headquarters of the Head of the operation.

The WPS perspective, based on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, also includes taking into account the security and situation of other vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, in crisis management. These issues are trained for soldiers involved in crisis management missions.

Protection of Civilians and the International Humanitarian Law are also part of the general military training provided to all soldiers. The Finnish Defence Forces give training on international humanitarian law including the Convention to conscripts, reservists and its personnel through lessons and exercises on every level of military education and training. Training implemented for officers is given mostly by military legal advisors and other legal and military specialists with academic degree.

***2. Please identify measures taken to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the framework for ‘protecting civilians’ from violence and abuse in the context of armed conflict.***

***2a. Do military manual(s) or policies refer to, or recognize, State obligations to ensure specific protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict?***

The WPS perspective guidelines, manuals and policies address the protection of all vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities.

1. ***2b. Do rules of engagement (ROEs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for military and security forces consider persons with disabilities*?**

As stated above these issues belong to the considered issues of general protection of civilians (including all vulnerable groups) under the law of armed conflict.

***2c. Do trainings on international humanitarian law (IHL) for military and security forces include a module on disability or otherwise address the protection of civilians with disabilities in the context of armed conflict?***

The protection of vulnerable groups, including of civilians with disabilities is part of the training on IHL.

***3. Does the military engage with civil society organizations representing persons with disabilities (including organizations of veterans with disabilities), for example in discussions regarding the ‘protection’ of persons with disabilities during or after armed conflict?***

Any discussions or other forms of engagement described in the question are not recognised.

**2. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland**

**A. Questionnaire for States**

***1. Please describe what obligations Article 11 of the CRPD establishes on a State in relation to the ‘protection’ of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict, conflict prevention, humanitarian action, and peacebuilding operations.***

Finland’s National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020–2023) includes obligations on the implementation of CRPD Article 11, including in contexts of armed conflict and emergencies. The National Action Plan states that all necessary measures must be taken to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk. General principles in laws regulating border security, police and rescue services are applied, such as the principle of proportionality. Measures must be defensible in relation to the importance of the task, the danger and urgency, the objective pursued, the behaviour, age, health and the like of the person concerned (affected by the measure) and other factors affecting the overall assessment of the situation. This requires the awareness of the authorities on the needs of different groups in the population. Non-discrimination and equal treatment are part of the ethical code used by the police and border control authorities.

The National Action Plan also outlines the implementation of CRPD Article 32 and includes an objective on mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises in all humanitarian funding provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In addition, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland released new guidelines on humanitarian assistance in 2019. These guidelines emphasise the participation of persons with disabilities in all phases of humanitarian action.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland Development Policy 2020 priority area outcome on “More peaceful, stable and just societies with strengthened political and judicial institutions and inclusive state-building processes” includes a results output on “Increased participation and leadership of women, youth and persons with disabilities in all questions of peace and security”. The indicator for monitoring this output is the “Number of national action plans in support of the implementation of 1325, 2250 and 2475 Security Council Resolutions developed”.

***1a. Have the above obligations been officially recognized? If so, please provide examples such as legislation, press releases, policy statements, official remarks, etc.***

For further information, the National Action Plan can be downloaded at (only the description sheet is available in English): <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162687/STM_2021_2_J.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Press release on the launch of the National Action Plan: <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1271139/second-national-action-plan-on-the-un-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-now-published-rights-of-people-with-disabilities-must-be-taken-into-account-in-all-activities>

For further information, the English version of the guidelines on humanitarian assistance can be downloaded at (only the description sheet is available in English): <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/new-guidelines-on-humanitarian-assistance-to-strengthen-finland-s-support-to-crisis-areas>

Press release on the launch of the guidelines on humanitarian assistance:

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/new-guidelines-on-humanitarian-assistance-to-strengthen-finland-s-support-to-crisis-areas>

Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland’s Development Policy 2020: <https://um.fi/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/suomen-kehityspolitiikan-tuloskartat-ja-indikaattorit-2020>

***1b. How broadly is ‘protection’ interpreted in regard to civilians with disabilities in the context of armed conflicts?***

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland applies the CRPD general principles (Article 3) in interpreting ‘protection’ of civilians with disabilities in its funding for humanitarian action. In other words, humanitarian action that includes protection of civilians must respect the inherent dignity and independence of persons with disabilities; must not discriminate against persons with disabilities; must include participation of persons with disabilities or their representative organisations; must view disability as part of diversity and not as an inherent vulnerability; must promote equal access to humanitarian services; must include accessibility measures; and must ensure intersectionality including in gender equality and child protection.

**3. Ministry for Social Affairs and Health of Finland**

**A. Questionnaire for States**

***3. Please identify and provide information on the institution/government entity(s) tasked with overseeing the implementation of obligations under the CRPD (Article 33 framework).***

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are the national focal points for implementing the CRPD. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has established a national coordination mechanism, the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE). The role of the Advisory Board is to facilitate the national implementation of the Convention within the government.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Human Rights Centre and its Human Rights Delegation, which form the National Human Rights Institution, carry out the duties of the autonomous and independent mechanism referred to in the CRPD. The role of this mechanism is to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention.

***3a. Does that institution/government entity advise or interact with the military and security forces on how to implement Article 11 of the CRPD in their operations?***

Protection of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict has not been on the agenda of the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ensuring safety of persons with disabilities and preventing emergency situations generally have been on the agenda and the topic with objectives and actions is included in the National Action Plan on the UNCRPD for the years 2020-2023.

**The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health would also like to point out that the questionnaire sent by the OHCHR was not accessible for the persons with disabilities**.

**4. Finnish Red Cross (FRC)**

**C. Questionnaire for Civil Society**

***1. Please provide information on how civil society, specifically OPDs, are involved in the process to identify and address discrimination and marginalization of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict, conflict prevention, humanitarian action, and peacebuilding operations.***

The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), incl. the Finnish Red Cross (FRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (RC/RC) Movement. They form a worldwide humanitarian movement whose mission is “to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being, in particular in times of armed conflict and other emergencies, to work for the prevention of disease and for the promotion of health and social welfare, to encourage voluntary service and constant readiness to give help by the members of the Movement, and a universal sense of solidarity towards all those in need of its protection and assistance. *The Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance* govern National Societies and the IFRC in international humanitarian assistance (excluding armed conflict, internal strife and their direct results that is the mandate of the ICRC).

The FRC’s work in humanitarian action includes 1) multilateral support to IFRC or ICRC operations – in which either National RC/RC Society /IFRC or ICRC are responsible for the process to identify and address discrimination and marginalization of persons with disabilities; 2) direct bilateral assistance to National RC/RC Society and 3) support to the National RC/RC Society under the coordination of the IFRC. In these cases (2 and 3), the FRC is involved in promotion of disability inclusion in the response but not directly engaging with local government (as it is the mandate of the National Society as an auxiliary to its respective government).

The commitments of the Movement to address discrimination and marginalization of persons with disabilities are described on the Resolution “*Promoting Disability Inclusion in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*” (adopted by the Council of Delegates in 2013). Article 11 of the UN CRPD is of particular interest to the Movement as it refers to situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and recognizes obligations under IHL and international human rights law. National RC/RC Societies in 192 countries have an auxiliary role to public authorities and experience and expertise in service delivery to the most vulnerable including support to the respective governments in the State-party implementation of the UNCRPD, particularly with respect to the above-mentioned Article. The Council of Delegates (related to the Resolution on disability inclusion), for example, calls on the Movement’s components to take all necessary measures to seek to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities, particularly in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters. Under international humanitarian law, persons with disabilities may fall within the category of the wounded and sick or civilians enjoying special respect and protection. Moreover, it urges all of the Movement’s components to work with governments, including through appropriate humanitarian diplomacy, to help address the needs of persons with disabilities, and to help implement relevant instruments of international law to support the rights of persons with disabilities and to address discrimination, change perceptions and combat stereotypes and prejudice.

Followed by the RC/RC’s *Strategic Framework on Disability Inclusion* (2015-2019), the Movement continues to ensure that 1) all components of the Movement adopt a disability inclusive approach 2) persons with disabilities have equal access to the services and programs the Movement provides, thereby enabling their inclusion and full participation; and 3) all components of the RC/RC Movement endeavour to change mind-sets and behaviour in order to promote respect for diversity, including disability inclusion. Thus, the RC/RC Movement is committed to the reduction of discrimination and lack of respect for diversity. Non-discrimination and diversity is promoted both internally, within National Societies and the Movement, as well as externally, among relevant stakeholders and in communities at large. This includes promotion of inclusion and diversity in opportunities, representation and decision making.

Based on IFRC *Gender and Diversity policy* (2019), National Societies, including the FRC, and the IFRC commit to guard against discrimination in actions, and to promote the value of a diverse society with gender equality. In projects and operations, this will be facilitated through the implementation of the IFRC’s existing “*Minimum Standards for Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) in Emergencies*”. A PGI assessment and analysis is incorporated in all humanitarian action, to ensure dignity, access, participation and safety for persons of all backgrounds and identities. This includes identifying persons with disabilities, their needs and accessibility to services and information. This analysis will cover the full management cycle, from assessment to planning, monitoring and data collection, evaluation and reporting. Persons with disabilities (and organisations of people with disabilities (OPS) when applicable) are consulted and engaged throughout the process. In its bilateral projects and programmes, FRC operationalizes the Movement commitments and guidance as well as other global standards and tools (e.g. the IASC *Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*) by applying them in the humanitarian action.

Similarly, the ICRC humanitarian action is planned to consider and address the different needs and risks persons with all identities and abilities face in armed and conflict situations. The ICRC’s work ([*Vision 2030 on Disability*](https://shop.icrc.org/download/ebook?sku=4494/002-ebook)) is guided by the humanitarian values as enshrined in the Movement’s Fundamental Principles, the general principles of the CRPD, as set out in Article 3, the guiding principles of the 2019 [*Accountability to Affected People (AAP) Institutional Framework*](https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/accountability-affected-people-institutional-framework) and the people-centred approach at the core of the [*ICRC Strategy 2019–2022*](https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4354-icrc-strategy-2019-2022)*.*

The ICRC has articulated its 4 objectives concerning persons with disabilities in its Vision 2030 on Disability as follows:

1) To design and deliver inclusive people-centric programmes and services that are accessible to people with physical, psychosocial, intellectual and sensory disabilities, and promote their protection and safety, as well as respect for their dignity;

2) To deliver and develop targeted physical rehabilitation services;

3) To build an enabling work environment for people with disabilities;

4) To contribute to a legal and policy environment that promotes, in armed conflict and other situations of violence, the inclusion of people with disabilities in humanitarian activities and promotes their protection and safety.

The organizational strategy prioritizes a people-centric approach, positioning affected people as experts of their situation, as first responders and as agents of change. To be people-centric, it is imperative to recognize diversity within communities. Girls, boys, women and men with disabilities, as well as older women and men, their families and support networks form a significant part of the community. They are entitled to have their perspective of their needs, priorities, concerns and capacities heard, and to take part fully in humanitarian programming.

Despite nearly a decade of addressing disability issues in armed conflict and other situations of violence, the ICRC recognizes that there is still to do in implementing disability-inclusive programming and activities in its humanitarian action. Based on the progress reports, ICRC has advanced by increasing our visibility and participation in external international forums on disability. It has also made progress e.g. in expanding coverage of the Physical Rehabilitation Programme (PRP), redesigning the branding and communication of the ICRC’s MoveAbilityFoundation, and promoting more widely the legal obligations related to the CRPD and IHL. To contribute to a legal and policy environment that promotes, in armed conflict and other situations of violence, the inclusion of people with disabilities in humanitarian activities and promotes their protection and safety, the ICRC provides leadership and demonstrates how the international legal frameworks that apply to people with disabilities – in particular, IHL and the CRPD. These include for example assisting authorities and weapon bearers in meeting their legal obligations under IHL and the CRPD, contributions to mainstreaming the inclusion of people with disabilities in international forums, and advocacy for other humanitarian organizations to do so, by leveraging our operational experience and diplomatic expertise.

**5. Abilis Foundation**

**Questionnaire for Civil Society**

***1. Please provide information on whether and how your organization engages on the protection of persons with disabilities under international humanitarian law.***

Abilis Foundation is primarily a development aid agency. This means that the role of the Abilis Foundation in humanitarian context is providing project grants and expertise to global and Finnish humanitarian actors. This is conducted by providing key expertise on disability inclusion through direct consultancy, staff trainings and evaluations. Abilis Foundation is also a part of international expert groups revolving on the topic through working groups such as Reference Group on Humanitarian Inclusion. Abilis does participate in the CRPD monitoring work through several networks. The implementation of Article 11. is important for Abilis and its target groups: persons with disabilities in the Global South. In Finland, Abilis Foundation collaborates with humanitarian aid organisations towards implementing a coherent Finnish approach through IASC guidelines.

Additionally, Abilis Foundation is a part off the new Technical Support Working Group which was established in 2020 to develop a proposal for an effective model of providing technical support to humanitarian actors through e.g. establishing a pool of experts or a help desk. This proposal is one of the deliverables in the Reference Group Work Plan, contributing to operationalizing the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. Based on this approach, Abilis also works domestically with Finnish actors to create mechanism to execute other relevant guidelines and frameworks for disability inclusive humanitarian action through technical support for implementation.

***2. Please provide information on the engagement of your organization with the government and/or military authorities relating to the protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict*.**

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland is the main donor of Abilis Foundation, since 1998. Abilis has been one of the funding instruments of the Finnish development aid to channelling support to disability rights projects and human rights of persons with disabilities. During recent years, more emphasis has been put to security and humanitarian measures, including fragile states and contexts that are often in a high risk of armed conflicts or other crisis. Abilis has supported organisations of persons with disabilities in several fragile contexts, including refugee camps and circumstances where IDPs live in temporary settings. Somalia and Somaliland, Northern Thailand and Uganda are examples of countries where support have been implemented. Couple of concrete expeditions implemented, were focusing on South Sudanese refugees in Uganda and IDPs in Ukraine. In Ukraine, collaboration occurred with the OSCE mission on the status of disabled IDP's due to Crimean conflict.

Abilis Foundation has a written Memorandum of Understanding with Finnish actors working in the sector and think-tanks on wider security measures. Abilis has an interest to actively combine the own fragile context work with these like-minded actors to support coherent Finnish policy. Abilis commends Finnish government for its commitment to security and fragile context work in general.

***2a. Who initiated the engagement?***

The given example, a refugee-centred engagement and evaluation visit to Uganda in 2017 was initiated by Finn Church Aid and World Vision. Representatives of Abilis Foundation were invited as disability and accessibility experts. Collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has led to the stage where disability is a cross-cutting issue in the humanitarian work, which constitutes both natural and man-made emergencies (armed conflicts and their aftermath).

Later during 2015 – 2016, with OSCE, Abilis was engaged with the Finnish Mission that was focusing on IDP’s in Europe. Additionally, Abilis participated in World Humanitarian Summit 2016 in Istanbul and the preparatory work on the Humanitarian Charter.

***2b. What was the motivation, purpose, and outcome of these engagements?***

Since 2013, Abilis Foundation has received support for its advocacy work from Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This generous support has allowed us to expanded activities from development towards foreign policy issues such as crisis management and humanitarian aid. We started structural work with our government in the aftermath of Syrian crisis and its consequences. This work has led to constructive collaboration with the MFA. The founder of Abilis Foundation, Mr Kalle Konkkola, was included in the Finnish delegation at the World Humanitarian Summit where Finland endorsed the charter on disability in humanitarian settings.

From this fruitful collaboration, the MFA has made disability inclusion a key thematic priority in its advocacy and funding. Yet, Abilis continues still working actively on creating the best possible methods for multi-dimensional collaboration. As humanitarian funding is administratively separate from development cooperation funding, there is a need to find a new approach. Maybe triple nexus for development, humanitarian and peace work could provide some missing elements for the improvements.

Abilis has strongly advocated for disability inclusion in humanitarian action in Finland and working together with the MFA Finland. There are some positive outcomes: Finland has been instrumental in creation of resolution 2475, the financing of IASC Guideline work and in 2021 the first disability markers in the humanitarian aid procedures. Delegation from Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Abilis worked jointly to promote this approach in the GLAD General Assembly in Washington 2020.

***2c. Was Article 11 of the CRPD and/or UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) discussed in these engagements?***

Yes. Article 11 was used by Abilis as a part of ongoing advocacy effort towards making people with disabilities and their status in the aftermath of armed conflicts. The Finnish Humanitarian Policy by designated unit of MFA has taken strides, based on a pre-mentioned article and a resolution to highlight disability in its policy. However, the ongoing efforts since the Istanbul Humanitarian Summit 2016, were actually part of the process that led to resolution 2475. Also, the Moscow Declaration is something Abilis worked hard to highlight, as it provides OSCE mandate to act on disability rights.

***3. Please provide information on whether your organization engages with the government on laws or statutes that punish criminal acts that specifically target persons with disabilities.***

No, not directly. This is a domestic matter and Abilis operates mainly in the Global South and in Finland only as a global advocate.

***4. Please provide information on relevant legislation and policies related to the following.***

Not applicable.

***4a. Are persons with disabilities excluded from serving in the armed forces on the basis of their disability? Do you engage with the government on this issue*?**

Not applicable. Abilis is focusing on global advocacy and project funding in the Global South.

***4b. Do policies or programs exist that allow persons serving in the armed forces to continue serving in cases where they acquire a disability? Do you engage with the government on this issue?***

Not applicable. Abilis is focusing on global advocacy and project funding in the Global South.

***4c. What supports are available to assist persons experiencing psychosocial trauma as a consequence of armed conflict (civilian, current military, or former military)? Do you engage with the government on this issue*?**

Abilis is focusing on global advocacy and not directly on domestic matters. However, Abilis collaborates with Hilma – The Support Centre for Immigrant Persons with Disabilities and long-term Illnesses, that deals with disabled immigrants and asylum seekers in Finland.

***4d. Are there differential services granted to veterans with disabilities on the one hand and civilians with disabilities on the other? Do you engage with the government on this issue?***

Not applicable. Abilis is focusing on global advocacy and project funding in the Global South.

***4e. Are there veterans groups with disabilities and do they interact with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) on protection or general disability rights issues?***

Not applicable. Abilis is focusing on global advocacy and project funding in the Global South.

***5. Please provide information on how civil society, specifically OPDs, are involved in the process to identify and address discrimination and marginalization of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict, conflict prevention, humanitarian action, and peacebuilding operations.***

Abilis Foundation has worked on the global disability front since 1998. Abilis has a wide experience on civil society and OPDs in the Global South, mainly focusing on the LDCs and fragile, vulnerable situations. The core activity has been the project funding with technical support to OPDs in the focus countries. Some supported OPDs have worked in refugee camps, in the middle of armed conflict or humanitarian actions. Abilis have several experiences how OPDs can operate for meaningful living and earning income. Projects have targeted at awareness raising on disability inclusion and collaboration with stakeholders.

Abilis Foundation has provided disability expertise in the areas of development and humanitarian aid to mainstream actors in order to make Finnish work more inclusive. Abilis Foundation utilizes both its expertise in Finland as well as local disability experts in more than 50 countries in the Global South.

Due to military conflict, the situation in developing countries is extremely challenging and requires human resources to work immediately on the spot. Abilis representatives are mostly experts with disabilities. Engagement of Abilis representatives bring genuine disability expertise. Abilis is committed to work for disability inclusive humanitarian response. People with disabilities are always among the most vulnerable in crisis, as their ability to move, earn income and access information, is severely affected by their disability. In terms of armed conflict, the key concern is a lack of preparedness and adequate communication (information dissemination).

In order to take OPD’s as equal partners, humanitarian organisations should make reasonable accommodations in relation to transportation, interpretation, assistance and other issues affecting operations. Questions that identify key areas of concern towards inclusion of people with disabilities should be included routinely in applications for calls. Later this should apply to all data collection and preparedness activities.

Abilis emphasizes that people with disabilities and their organizations should be meaningfully participating in all responses with regard to development and humanitarian aid. This should take place through North-South collaboration and local expertise.