

Guidance Note on Reasonable Accommodation

1. What is reasonable accommodation?

In line with the [United Nations Disability Strategy \(UNDIS\)](#), UNDP is strongly committed to creating an inclusive workplace for all and, as such, stands ready to take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to access employment opportunities and enjoy rewarding and diverse careers in the organisation through the provision of reasonable accommodation.

As per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), *“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”*

The CRPD, further, defines reasonable accommodation as ***“necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”***¹. The objective of reasonable accommodation in the workplace is to facilitate the full and effective discharge of official functions, as well as enjoy a non-discriminatory and inclusive working environment on an equal basis with others.

While reasonable accommodation primarily addresses the needs of individuals with disabilities, ensuring their full participation and equal opportunities in the workplace, it also applies to personnel with specific temporary or permanent conditions or circumstances that may also require accommodation of their needs. In this case, reasonable accommodation provisions under

¹ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Article 2

this guidance note and funding can be approved for the duration of the temporary impairment/short-term condition.

In addition, it is important not to mistake ‘reasonable accommodation’ for, or limit it to, ‘accessibility.’ Accessibility entails the “*identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to facilitating access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities*”². It is designed to benefit groups, involves progressive implementation, and focuses on removing barriers broadly rather than being constrained by individual proportionality tests.

Instead, reasonable accommodation from any personnel (i.e. staff, consultants, interns, etc.) with disabilities from the recruitment stage throughout their entire employment cycle, taking into consideration all the circumstances of individual cases while ensuring that work continues to be delivered efficiently. The accommodation measures should always be designed, and the accommodation process should be undertaken in close consultation with the person with disabilities. Confidentiality throughout the process is key in order to avoid stigma and stereotyping that often hamper inclusion, in accordance with the [UNDP Data Protection and Privacy Policy](#)³.

Reasonable accommodation aims to remove or sufficiently mitigate the potential barriers encountered by personnel with disabilities, thereby enabling them to join and stay in the organisation. Providing for accessibility and *universal design*⁴ of all structures and practices at the workplace can reduce reasonable accommodation needs and increase the independence of

² UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Article 9

³ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. General comment No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination (UN CRPD/C/GC/6)

⁴ [UN CRPD Article 2](#) - “Universal design” means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

personnel in all work-related activities. It is the responsibility of the organisation to progressively move towards full accessibility with provisions for reasonable accommodation throughout.

2. When is an accommodation reasonable?

While the organisation strongly commits to exploring options for reasonable accommodation, the organisation reserves the right to decline to offer the requested accommodation when it considers that it may impose disproportionate difficulties or an 'undue burden' for the organisation, or its functioning. For example:

- Modifications to premises will normally be restricted to the organisation's premises. It might not be feasible to implement them, for example in leased buildings, or government buildings. Also, where modifications are feasible, the organization may not have the ability to immediately put them in place in response to an individual request.
- Reasonable accommodation requests may have cost implications. However, requests must be cost effective to be considered reasonable.

Some of the factors that are commonly taken into account in determining whether a requested accommodation would pose a disproportionate burden on the organisation include:

- cost of the accommodation in combination with one or both of the following factors:
 - the availability of funding, which could cover the partial or total cost of this type of accommodation for any personnel;
 - anticipated duration of the employment relationship. If the employee has been hired on a short-term basis, then the Organisation may not be able to invest in major changes unless these would be of wider benefit to personnel;
- whether the accommodation cannot be implemented within a reasonable timeframe;
- whether the accommodation is required to enable an employee to perform their duties in the organisation, rather than support their general ability to live and function with a disability outside of the organisation;
- whether the accommodation is likely to benefit more people than the individual making a request; and

- the impact of the accommodation on the operation of the office, including occupational safety and health requirements of the organisation (i.e., a person with disabilities that may need a personal support when travelling on mission may not get clearance to travel to a high security risk area).

3. Types of reasonable accommodation

As forms of reasonable accommodation can strongly vary, the following list of potential types of reasonable accommodation is not exhaustive but exemplarily highlights most typical requests. Other reasonable accommodation requests, which are not mentioned in this guidance note, may also be considered and are contingent on their respective justifications.

a. Job design, recruitment/selection and on-boarding

For UNDP as an inclusive employer, it is important to ensure that candidates with disabilities are able to access vacancy announcements and can participate in all stages of the recruitment cycle, including the selection and hiring processes.

As a reminder, in line with UNDP's commitment to diversity in hiring, hiring units should consider ways in which they can increase the applications received by people with disabilities through dedicated outreach and sourcing strategies. In particular, Country Offices should consider leveraging their partnerships with networks and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and conduct dedicated outreach to promote all vacancies among this talent group.

During the selection process, certain accommodations may be requested. For example, in the case of persons with hearing disabilities, sign language interpretation will be needed for interviews. To enable persons in wheelchairs to participate, interviews will have to be held in an accessible premise. It is key to confirm any reasonable accommodation needs with short-listed candidates unless they have already communicated these in the application.

Once a person with disabilities is recruited, they must be effectively on-boarded, with the on-boarding period potentially requiring extra time and support. For example, a person with a visual

impairment may require support to complete mandatory on-line courses that are not yet fully accessible.

Please refer to the [Strategies for a Disability-Inclusive and Accessible Recruitment Process](#) and [Strategies for an Inclusive and Accessible Onboarding Process](#) for further information.

b. Flexible working arrangements

Personnel with disabilities working for UNDP may require adjusted working hours, or the opportunity for a full remote working arrangement (telecommuting) when their work duties allow it and/or when offices and work premises are not accessible. Such arrangements are often explored as part of reasonable accommodation and should follow the [UNDP Policy on Flexible Working Arrangements](#).

c. Specific office equipment and assistive technology

Some persons with disabilities may require assistive technology, such as Braille note takers, Braille input and output devices for standard computers, screen reading software, special screens or magnification software, sound amplifiers, text-to-speech software (TTS), captioning services, frequency modulation technology, adapted keyboards, touch screens or joysticks, and supportive office chairs, among many others. UNDP offices should first inquire if such equipment can be purchased at the duty station along with installation and maintenance support. Alternatively, corporate long-term agreements (LTAs) can be leveraged to purchase such equipment. Costs will depend on the type of equipment and technology required. In deciding on what to purchase, it is advisable to consult with the personnel with disabilities themselves and local organisations working with persons with disabilities.

d. Documents in an accessible format

Personnel with disabilities, especially those who are blind, have low vision, or are neurodivergent (e. g. dyslexia, autism, etc.) may require documents to be available in an accessible format (e.g., large font, readable by a screen reader, etc.). For guidance on how to create documents that are accessible, please refer to [UNDP Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines](#), [Reference Guide: Creating Accessible Electronic Materials and Websites](#), and [Tips for Creating Accessible](#)

[Word Documents](#) so that the office can adjust their templates, and personnel can be sensitized and trained in how to do it.

e. Sign language interpretation

Personnel who are deaf, hard of hearing, or with other auditory and communication needs may require interpretation services on a daily or occasional basis, as well as outside of office hours at the beginning of the assignment while settling in or while on official mission. During the recruitment process, it is important to understand the type of sign language used by the candidate. It is also important to explore, in case of sign language interpretation, if this service is locally available in the appropriate language.

f. Personal assistant

Personnel with disabilities may require personal assistance on a daily or occasional basis in the office, during travel as well as outside of office hours at the beginning of the assignment while settling in or while on official mission. In-office support by an assistant is customary and should be accommodated if it enables equal participation levels with other personnel. As such, the personal assistant's qualifications may vary depending on the type of disability, level of autonomy, requirements of the job, accessibility of the office, etc.

UNDP will provide a lump sum to cover the costs of the personal assistant, who should have a contract directly with the personnel (not with UNDP). The use of this lump sum needs to be validated through the submission of the F10 form and supporting documents, such as the contract between personnel and the service provider, a monthly invoice, and proof of payment⁵. Individual Consultant (IC) contracts for personal assistants may only be issued on exceptional cases.

For duty travel with a personal assistant, possible reasonable accommodation costs associated with the personal assistant may include transportation (e.g., flight), Daily Subsidy Allowance (DSA), terminal expenses, as well as daily rates or fees if this was not included in an ongoing

⁵ UNDP Operations can confirm and offer further guidance on the reimbursement process.

contract. Considerations will be given to requests for 24-hour personal assistance service to cover beyond official working hours during missions. In the case that the personal assistant is a family member, or 24-hour assistance is requested, the DSA will be reduced to 50%.

As a reference, the costs of services may be calculated based on the lowest entry level of General Service in force on 1 January of the year concerned for the duty station. However, the G6 nurse scale could be applied should the support needed require medical skills and qualifications (i.e., respiratory care, medication administration, etc). The Head of the Office will determine whether the wage is reasonable based on local cost of living. If circumstances, require a higher lump sum, market research will be requested and signed by the Head of the Office or delegated authority. Local Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) should be consulted to ensure a fair wage for the services.

g. Accessible premises

With regards to the accessibility of premises and facilities, UNDP operates under the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) [Performance-Based Guidelines for the Design and Construction of UNDG Common Premises Office Buildings](#). As such, Country Offices are guided to meet the requirement for all new premises to be constructed based on these Guidelines and the universal design principles.

In addition, UNDP encourages its offices to advance the *minimum levels of functional accessibility*, including ensuring access to the building itself, as well as to at least one accessible office, one accessible restroom, and one accessible meeting room.

To be able to accommodate the needs of personnel as well as partners and stakeholders with certain disabilities, further improvements may be required to office premises, such as ramps, wider doors, bathroom upgrades, flashing doorbells, modified emergency alarms, push buttons to open doors, and the like. These are likely to have cost implications.

In many cases, however, meeting the premises and facilities accessibility needs does not require a significant investment. For instance, when organising meetings, one can choose to avoid a

meeting location with stairs, narrow passages, or heavy doors, which often represent barriers for persons using mobility devices (e.g., wheelchairs). Similarly, simple measures such as keeping the office well-organised and free from clutter, will allow both persons using mobility devices and persons with visual impairments to navigate the space without facing physical obstacles.

Large-scale modifications to the office premises would be limited as these are accessibility measures. Before confirming an assignment that requires accessibility of premises, UNDP offices should evaluate the feasibility and reasonableness of the modifications to be made. The latter would normally require inputs from the requestor, accommodation experts and/or local organisations of persons with disabilities. In cases where accessibility is a major barrier that can only be addressed in the mid-long term, Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA), such as remote and home-based assignments, should be explored.

In addition, there may be instances where accommodations may not be possible, such as in high security risk duty stations, where the [Minimum Operating Security Standards \(MOSS\)](#) requirements for premises may be particularly strict.

h. Accessible transportation

International travel to a duty station and mission travel. It may be possible that personnel are not able to travel on an airplane due to physical or psychological reasons. Alternative modes of transportation (e.g., train or car) may need to be considered, as appropriate, as a reasonable accommodation measure. Another possible reasonable accommodation could include allowing the person with a disability to travel with an assistant (see section above), or a specific airline or flight (not all planes have accessible restrooms). Due to accessibility constraints, lodging for persons with disabilities may be more costly than the average estimate. Hence, the actual cost of the accommodation will be paid, and the remainder of the DSA provided to the personnel. Related costs should be estimated and budgeted before the assignment (in the case of new personnel), or mission travel is confirmed.

Local transportation. If an employee requires help with transportation to and from the office, UNDP offices should consider and confirm if the office can provide it or if it can contract such

service from a service provider. While personnel are encouraged to be present in the office, alternative working arrangements, like telecommuting, could also be considered to limit the need to travel when possible.

Other reasonable accommodation measures could include covering additional customs fees that may apply if a person needs to travel with special equipment of significant value. Also, an arriving person with a disability may need to be met at the point of entry by a UN personnel, UN car, or a contractor engaged for this purpose. Related costs should be estimated and budgeted for before the assignment (in the case of new personnel) or a mission travel is confirmed.

i. Accessible housing

Requests for a lump sum will only be considered in specific cases in which the requestor may have reduced mobility (e.g. wheelchair users, persons using crutches and persons with visual impairment), which often require accessible housing and/or housing that is not too distant from the work premises. All personnel are eligible to submit a request.

For personnel with disabilities holding a staff position, in which the duty station differs from their permanent address, the regular rental subsidy framework will be applicable with an additional dependent added to the household scheme. Staff members with disabilities that qualify for this entitlement will not be subject to time-bound eligibility. The rental subsidy will not be phased out over time, regardless of the number of years in the same duty station, if their housing needs are ongoing and unlikely to change. This provision also applies to staff members with dependents with disabilities.

Before a decision is made as to whether an assignment will be remote or on-site, it may be useful for an office to review the availability of accessible housing in the duty station and provide support, as possible, in searching for the lodging. This decision needs to account for the needs and preferences of the personnel, as well as the FWA policy and procedures.

j. Medical needs

Personnel, including those with disabilities, may have specific medical needs, including medication. In case of international personnel, before accepting the assignment, personnel should be encouraged to find out if they can obtain sufficient medication at a duty station in

advance. While individuals are responsible for making their own arrangements to obtain medication, the office can support them by providing the contacts for them to confirm with the appropriate authorities if the required medication is available locally, particularly with the UN physician, when available, to consult on general medical requirements. The office can also provide support regarding the availability of medical facilities/services (e.g., therapy) in the duty station. If not, it is important to confirm if specific equipment and medical services outside of the duty station or virtually could be covered by the medical insurance plan.

4. Reasonable Accommodation Process

a. General Principles

- The Organisation is required to consider all requests for reasonable accommodation from any personnel (i.e., staff, consultants, interns, UN volunteers etc.) from the application stage through to recruitment, hiring and over the duration of their employment with UNDP taking into consideration all the circumstances of individual cases.
- Accommodation measures where feasible should be designed in consultation with the requestor. There is no need for the organisation to be informed of the underlying diagnosis causing the disability.
- Information on the request should be limited to the manager, HR focal point or HR Business Partner, and Head of the Office. Confidentiality throughout the process is key to avoid stigma and stereotyping that often hamper inclusion.
- It is important to ensure that after implementing the accommodation measures, the person is enabled to deliver on their work efficiently, as this is the overall purpose of approving reasonable accommodation.

b. Managing reasonable accommodation requests

The expectation is that a person with a disability should let the organisation know, as early as possible, that they need an adjustment pertaining to any aspect of the job, or any other support. The organisation should also encourage candidates or personnel with disabilities to communicate such needs to their HR focal point or directly to the hiring manager.

While requests for reasonable accommodation may initially be informal, it is important to keep a written record of any agreed steps, especially if extra funding is involved.

Where UNDP personnel with disabilities have previously received, or been denied, an accommodation, this should not prevent them from making another request at a later time if their circumstances change and they believe that a reasonable accommodation is needed. An appeal can be filed for the particular request in written form directly to the Director of OHR within 6 weeks after it was denied.

The reasonable accommodation process includes the following steps:

1. A reasonable accommodation process starts when a candidate for a UNDP vacancy, regardless of the contractual modality (i.e., internship, consultancy, etc.), or current personnel, submits a request for such accommodation in writing. Personnel can submit their requests using the template available on the [Reasonable Accommodation SharePoint page](#).

Once a request for reasonable accommodation is received by a supervisor or an HR focal point, it should be individually assessed and submitted to the head of the office for review and approval. While the direct supervisor will be instrumental in overseeing the process, the HR focal point will facilitate the necessary approvals and coordinate the implementation of measures with key stakeholders, such as procurement, etc.

2. Every request should be evaluated with the requestor to ensure that the person can fully perform the functions of the post, same as any personnel with no disability. In doing so, the following six key questions should be considered:
 - What limitations/barriers is the person experiencing to fully perform at work?
 - How do these limitations/barriers affect the person and their job performance
 - What specific job-related tasks cannot be fully fulfilled as a result of these limitations/barriers?
 - What accommodations are already available to mitigate or eliminate these barriers?

- Has the person received advice on utilizing the existing and other possible alternative accommodations (for example, outsourcing Braille printing instead of buying a Braille embosser)?
- Does the supervisor and/or other personnel need training for the person with the disability to be able to properly use the provided accommodation?

It is important to remember that the only information that the organisation should require is the functional limitation(s) experienced by the employee, and steps that could be taken to remove or mitigate any barriers connected to such limitation(s). There is no need for the organisation to be informed of the underlying diagnosis causing the disability.

3. Once accommodations are in place, the HR focal point managing this process is required to follow up with the employee receiving accommodations in several intervals, after 3 months and after 6 months, to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodation and to determine whether additional or different accommodations are needed. Accommodations may need be removed when no longer needed and when they do not benefit any of the employees, with or without a disability. This is particularly relevant in cases of temporary impairment/short-term disability.

5. Funding for reasonable accommodation

As a general practice, offices are encouraged to reflect provisions for reasonable accommodation in both their institutional and programme/project budgets. In addition, there are two centrally managed mechanisms that could be used to cover the costs of necessary reasonable accommodation measures, as well as to enhance the overall accessibility of UNDP premises and offices. These include:

- A **Reasonable Accommodation Funding Facility**, which aims to cover the cost of appropriate measures to enable personnel with disabilities to fully and effectively participate in the organisation's work. These accommodations aim to remove or mitigate any immediate barriers that may limit a person's ability to deliver at their full potential and discharge their official functions. These may include, for example, the purchase of

Braille printers or notetakers, adjustable desks, screen reader licenses, communications interpretation⁶, personal aides, etc.

Requests for funding from this facility should be sent to reasonable.accommodation@undp.org, including a brief justification with a description of needs⁷ (no medical certificates and diagnoses required) and a detailed description of the reasonable accommodation measure to be implemented, a cost estimate, as well as the approval of the head of the office.

- The **Capital Facility Fund**, which aims to cover significant costs and capital expenditures, including permanent structural changes, that will enhance the accessibility of UNDP offices and facilities, as well as their sustainability (e.g., the installation of an elevator or adapting a bathroom to be accessible).

Requests for funding from this facility are to be submitted as part of the annual institutional budget submission and allocation process. Once approved, funds will be advanced to offices and will be expected to be recovered in subsequent budget periods.

⁶ Communications interpretation includes but is not restricted to sign language, tactile sign language, Easy Read, closed captioning, speech to text, communication chart and interpretation of the communication chart, relay etc.

⁷ Based on the above six questions

6. Resources

UNDP resources

- Guidance Note on disability-inclusive HR practices: [recruitment](#) and [onboarding](#)
- [UNDP Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines](#)
- Template for the registration process and offer to reasonable accommodation for events.
- Checklist for accessibility requirements during events.
- Post-conference and post-meeting satisfaction surveys (regarding the accessibility of facilities and services).
- Template form/sentence to reach out to candidates during recruitment phases and identify their need for the assessment phase (e.g., during an interview)⁸

Further resources

- Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments: a practical guide, ILO, 2016⁹
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹⁰
- United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)¹¹
- Employment and accessibility for staff members with disabilities in the United Nations Secretariat. Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2014/3¹²)¹³
- UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2018): General Comment No. 7 (on Reasonable Accommodation)¹⁴

⁸ "Please let us know should you require reasonable accommodation during the assessment phase."

⁹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_536630.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

¹¹ <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>

¹² <https://www.undocs.org/ST/SGB/2014/3>

¹³ [https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/1/documents_sources-english/08_secretary-general's_bulletins/2014/sgb_-_2014_-_3__\[employment_and_accessibility_for_staff_members_with_disabilities_in_the_un_secretariat\].doc](https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/1/documents_sources-english/08_secretary-general's_bulletins/2014/sgb_-_2014_-_3__[employment_and_accessibility_for_staff_members_with_disabilities_in_the_un_secretariat].doc)

¹⁴ <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsnbHatvuFkZ%2Bt93Y3D%2Baa2pjFYzWLBu0vA%2BBr7QovZhbuyqzjDN0plweYI46WXrJJ6aB3Mx4y%2FspT%2BQrY5K2mKse5zjo%2BfvBDVu%2B42R9iK1p>

Annex: Sample scenarios of reasonable accommodation

Speech Impairment – On Mission

Faith is a project manager with a speech impairment preparing to travel for a mission in a different town. While she already has text-to-speech software installed on her laptop, she requests a reliable speech-generating device that she had previously been familiar with. She also asks for support to assist her in conveying speech during meetings and presentations and for the necessary mission materials to be provided in advance for her to prepare responses. The manager finds that all the requests that Faith has asked for are reasonable and coordinates with procurement to provide the requested assistive technologies and coordinates with the host office to identify a focal point to assign support.

Deaf Person – Onboarding

Marcus has just been employed as a Talent Development & Inclusion Associate at UNDP. During the onboarding process, Marcus requests to have a professional Kenyan Sign Language interpreter to accompany him for meetings and training sessions for an English-language conference. He also requests to receive all meeting agendas and important information in written form before and after the sessions. Marcus proposes to hire an interpreter whose daily rate is significantly above the average market rate. Marcus' request is deemed reasonable. However, procurement advises him to find other interpreters within the market rate before accepting.

Person who is blind – On Mission

Stephanie is offered an international mission to represent the organization in a large conference. She requests the support of a personal assistant to assist during the mission and requests the specific support of a family member. This would include flight tickets, visa fees, and DSA costs. Stephanie's request is considered reasonable and approved prior to her trip. Stephanie also contacted the conference organizers and asked them to share the presentations and other materials in accessible formats, prior to the sessions.

Wheelchair User – Commute

Lynn is a new consultant whose lodging is 45 minutes from the office. Since the public transportation is not accessible, she must drive to and from work. She requests personal

assistance to support her with transfers in and out of her car and a parking space close to the office entrance to minimize travel distance. Her manager finds her requests reasonable.