



Vibhu Sharma, UN Volunteer Associate Policy Officer in the Human Resources Policy Section, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, UN Secretariat.

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## How volunteering boosts the participation of persons with disabilities

Meet Vibhu Sharma, a UN Volunteer Associate Policy Officer in the Human Resources Policy Section, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, of the United Nations Secretariat. Vibhu serves through the UNDP/UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities. She shares how her UN Volunteer assignment has been an entry point for her to serve the global organization that serves the world.

What motivated me to serve as a UN Volunteer was my desire to learn and to contribute to the important work of the United Nations. It is inspiring that the programme provides such opportunities to young and emerging professionals like me.

“ Serving as a UN Volunteer offers candidates with

“ disabilities the opportunity to acquire practical work experience and exposure to the UN system. While this is valuable for career learning and development, it also opens up pathways to the individual that may previously have been inaccessible. Volunteering boosts the participation of persons with disabilities in political, economic, social and cultural life. --Vibhu Sharma, UN Volunteer Associate Policy Officer

In the two years that I have been a UN Volunteer, I have had an opportunity to work on many initiatives.

I am part of the Office of Human Resources at the UN Secretariat Headquarters in New York and divide my time between the two teams – the Human Resources Policy Section and the Staffing and Diversity team.

With the Human Resources Policy Section, I have worked on the UN Staff Regulations and Rules applicable to UN staff members, and interpreted and drafted policies related to Leave, Attendance and Flexible Working Arrangements. I also contributed to the organization's response to COVID-19, through the development of Human Resources Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions.

With the Staffing and Diversity team, I contributed to developing guidance for hiring managers on reasonable accommodations for personnel with disabilities and helped report on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS). I also aided the establishment of a mechanism for disclosure and self-identification of persons with disabilities, so that relevant data can be disaggregated to meet the UNDIS indicators.

Moreover, I helped to develop the content and provided advice on accessibility for the first-ever online learning course on disability inclusion, a joint effort of the UN Secretariat and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

“ Like any young professional who takes a first step in the world of work, I did have some challenges that

“ were exacerbated due to my disability. This include inaccessible content and issues with orientation and mobility. I felt restricted in moving from one place to another, which has been aggravated during the pandemic. However, my team was always there to assist in whatever way they could and we could always find a solution.

"I value every day of my assignment and I believe that I have grown each day at work with the support of my first reporting Officer, Ms Celine Ancelet," Vibhu shares.

#### **Advice for UN Volunteer candidates**

For future volunteers, I want to highlight that the United Nations Volunteers programme has a rigorous and competitive selection process.

So, first and foremost, if you are serious about taking up the role of a UN Volunteer, be well prepared to face the assessment.

Secondly, there will be highs and lows in your assignment, like any other job; it might not be a piece of cake. Be resilient.

Thirdly, although we are 'volunteers', we receive an allowance and entitlements, including reasonable accommodation for disabilities, so you are equally responsible – you must take your role seriously and deliver to the best of your abilities.

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