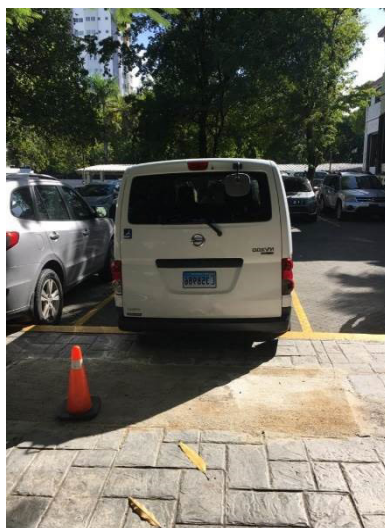


Reasonable Accommodation

To ensure that all persons enjoy equal access and equality in all terms and conditions of their employment, “reasonable accommodation” may be necessary. This flyer gives an overview of what reasonable accommodation means with regards to employment of staff members and volunteers with disabilities.

What are reasonable accommodation needs?

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and the ILO guidelines on “Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments” define 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.” These needs can occur during the selection and recruitment process, during on-boarding and throughout the whole employment of the staff member/ volunteer.



Physical adjustment: arrangements to improve accessibility of the workplace of Olga Altmann, volunteer in a wheelchair with UNDP Dominican Republic.



**UN
VOLUNTEERS**

Typical kinds of reasonable accommodation

Typical reasonable accommodation needs may include adjustments of work equipment, modification of job content or adaptation of working arrangements and environments. Awareness of and attitudes towards needs are other important elements of reasonable accommodation.

UNV has collected experiences with a wide range of potential reasonable accommodation needs of staff members/ volunteers with disabilities. The following reasonable accommodation provisions have been made so far:

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Special office equipment	Lamp at desk, big computer screen, screen-reader/ voice to text software etc.
Flexible working arrangements	More/ longer breaks, telecommuting etc.
Documents in certain format	Information in electrical version and in Braille etc.
Assistance persons	Assistance/ buddies for commute to/within office or at conferences etc.
Communication support	Sign language interpreter, close captioning etc.
Accessible office, transport and housing	Ramp at/flat entrance, driver to office etc.
Further	Re-arrangement of office equipment and desk, mobility or orientation training;

Training on potential needs of staff members/ volunteers with disabilities and sensitization for these needs should be an integral part of reasonable accommodation provision and be given to all staff members/ volunteers. It is also a crucial element of reasonable accommodation that the office is ready and committed to support the staff member/ volunteer with needs. Positive attitudes will result in appropriate wording that reflects a positive view of reasonable accommodation needs.

Finally, reasonable accommodation does not stop at the office door, but also includes the commute to/ from the office, conferences or mission travel.



Areas of reasonable accommodation needs

It is advisable to look at different areas of needs, instead of talking of disabilities, because of the following reasons:

- Needs of persons with disabilities can vary from one another, regardless if they have the same or a different kind of disability.
- One disability can lead to needs in different areas and forms, which makes looking at the needs (instead of the diagnosis/ disability) most relevant.
- The term disability carries a negative connotation and is categorizing persons in a way that is not helpful when assessing reasonable accommodation needs.

Talking of needs and different functionalities, hence, can help to avoid wrong conclusions from one person with disabilities to another and shows respect and a positive attitude towards persons with different abilities and needs.

Considering respectful wording also has positive consequences on identities and perceptions of all involved staff members/ volunteers.

Needs can arise e.g. in the following areas: Hearing, visual, physical, mental, medical etc. The photos of this flyer show examples of reasonable accommodation adjustments that might be needed for certain areas of needs.



Hearing adjustment: Chubili Moses (deaf), with sign language interpreter and two other volunteers during an interactive group discussion at workshop in Kenya.



Visual adjustment: Blind volunteer Huang with her walking stick, supported by a professional assistance person in UNDP Vietnam.



**UN
VOLUNTEERS**

Assessment of reasonable accommodation needs

When assessing and providing reasonable accommodation, the following things are to be considered:

- Needs should be assessed as early as possible in the hiring process (e.g. directly after selection of a candidate), to ensure that the office can be well prepared. A needs assessment form with specific questions for each kind of need can help to assess and understand the needs of persons with disabilities.
- It should be ensured that the perspective of the person with a disability is the leading source of information and that they are the ones who provide the information on reasonable accommodation, as experts of their own needs.
- Past experiences with reasonable accommodation at previous work places can help to come up with the most relevant needs. Additional experts (e.g. occupational therapists) can support the office and volunteer in this assessment process. It should be ensured that as many of the reasonable accommodation provisions as possible are in place before the staff member/ volunteer with a disability arrives. This avoids unnecessary stress during the on-boarding process and ensures that the staff member/ volunteer can start working productively from day one. As not all needs can be foreseen, the office should always be responsive to additional needs once the person has arrived.

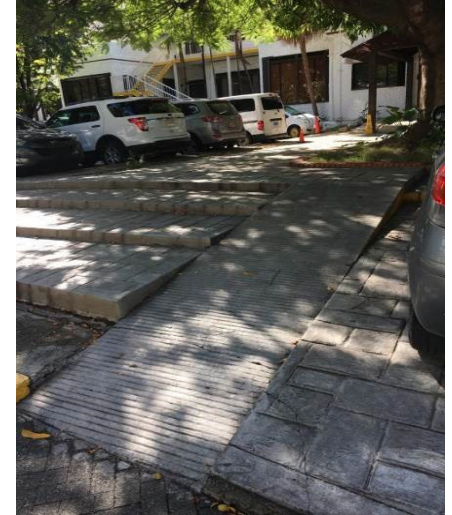
Accessibility

It is not possible to speak about reasonable accommodation without mentioning accessibility.

According to UNCRPD accessibility and inaccessibility can occur in different areas, and comprise information, communication, social attitudes, physical aspects as well as legal, economical and further structures in place.

The more accessible a workplace is designed right from the beginning, the less reasonable accommodation adjustments will be needed. Therefore, providing for accessibility and a Universal Design of all structures and practices at the workplace, can reduce reasonable accommodation needs and increase independence of the staff member/ volunteer in all work-related activities.

Accessibility checklists can help to assess the extent to which the office and all its structures and practices are designed in an accessible manner. This information helps to identify reasonable accommodation needs for specific staff members/ volunteers. If possible, the volunteer (e.g. if national) with a disability can help to assess accessibility of the office before arrival.



Examples for physical and informational accessibility of an office for both volunteers with physical and visual needs: A unisex toilet and an elevator with Braille signs at UNDP Vietnam, a ramp in front of the office of UNDP Dominican Republic.

Costs for reasonable accommodation

Costs for reasonable accommodation needs may vary immensely as the above list of potential needs shows. While average costs for reasonable accommodation of UN Volunteers with disabilities, were around 3.500 USD/volunteer, the range of costs varied between 20 USD to 15.000 USD. A fully accessible office and inclusive work culture is more likely to reduce costs necessary for adjustments to individual staff members/ volunteers.

Further information

UNV: www.unv.org

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

UNDIS: https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wpcontent/uploads/sites/15/2019/03/UNDIS_20-March-2019_for-HLCM.P.pdf

LO guidelines: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_536630.pdf

Accessibility checklist (for offices) and assessment forms (for staff members/ volunteers) available on request.