

Activity 0

Handout 0 - Organizing accessible and meaningful workshops for persons with disabilities **Spot the adaptations!**

Women, girls, men and boys with disabilities are at heightened risk of facing additional barriers to access to, and meaningfully engage in, learning opportunities. Training venues may not be physically accessible (e.g. with stairs at the entrance and no ramp; where toilets are not accessible for wheelchair users); information provided during the workshop may be in formats not accessible to certain groups of persons with disabilities, and trainers may not have the adequate skills to facilitate the delivery of content considering the requirements of persons with disabilities.

This tool includes tips and recommendations to organize workshops where persons with disabilities will not find additional barriers and will have an opportunity to meaningfully contribute and learn on an equal basis with other participants. It includes recommendations to follow when planning the workshop, and during its delivery..

Planning ahead of the workshop

- It is recommended to establish a basic understanding on which potential barriers persons with disabilities may encounter when **reaching, entering, circulating** and **using** the facilities and information used for the workshop, or the digital platform that will be utilized.
- This information can be used to plan for an alternative venue or digital platform and planning for adaptations or support to access the venue or platform for persons with disabilities. Sharing

information on the potential barriers with all participants will allow them to express their support requirements and be informed about potential obstacles they may face.

- Some of these measures will simply require good planning and will have no additional costs; other measures will require budget allocations, and/or being delivered by dedicated services, such as sign language interpreters. For this reason, planning well in advance is essential!
- You can use the following recommendations and questions, which can be directly asked or verified with the training venue or website manager during a short assessment ahead of the training; conducting this assessment in coordination with persons with disabilities will help to identify barriers and solutions together.
- **Reaching the workshop**
 - [Face-to-face workshops](#) Assess whether the venue where the workshop will be organized is connected to the community by any means of transportation, and whether this transportation is accessible to all persons with disabilities.
 - Is the road or transportation available to come to the workshop accessible? E.g. accessible roads/sidewalks; accessible public transport (e.g. buses).
 - Is there an alternative way of ensuring transportation if public transportation is not accessible? (e.g. hired car, accessible taxi, transportation allowance for participants (and potentially a support person)).
 - Is the training venue clearly sign posted? (e.g. the entrance has a clear sign and is easy to identify, there is enough lighting at the signpost and entry door)
 - [Digital workshops](#) Ask participants whether they have found barriers using particular call-in platforms, and their

preferences regarding which platform would be more accessible to them. Running a short test with persons with disabilities to get familiarized with the different features of the platform is always helpful. Once a platform is selected for its higher accessibility and ease of use, avoid changing it at a last minute, as this may add stress and make it more difficult for certain users.

- Design an accessible registration process: Make sure the registration website for the consultation meets web accessibility guidelines,⁸ indicate a contact in case of support during the process, and offer alternative or multiple ways to register (e.g. in addition to an online form, register by e-mail, phone, etc.).

- **Entering**

Consider the following aspects for the physical access related to the entrance, verifying each item:

- Gate is attended by staff to provide directions
- Gate is easy to open (e.g. the door is not heavy)
- Entrance to the building is free of stairs, or
- A ramp is available, safe and easy to use independently (e.g. non slippery surfaces, presence of handrails, not too steep)
- Ramp is at least 1,000 mm in width (1,800 mm is ideal)
- Entrance is well-lit and sign-posted
- Door is easy to enter (no less than 800 mm in width, without lip or stair)
- Door handles are easy to use (not round)
- Training venue is on ground floor, or elevator is available if on another floor

- Stairs are clear of material and safe to use (e.g. non-slippery surfaces, presence of handrails)
- Step edges are highlighted
- Stairs are slip resistant

- **Circulating and using facilities**

Consider the following aspects for the training venue, verifying each item:

- Temperature is adequate (not too cold, not too hot)
- Paths in the facility can accommodate different users (minimum 900 mm wide, no slippery or uneven surfaces)
- Water points are accessible for a wheelchair user
- Toilets are available in the same floor
 - Water tap handles are big and easy to open with one hand
 - Soap and hygiene supplies are easy to reach and use for a wheelchair user
 - Lights are functional
 - Wheelchair users can circulate and access all parts of the facility
 - Interior doors are wide enough for wheelchair users (minimum 800-900 mm wide) with no lips or barriers on the ground
 - At least one functional toilet cabin has sufficient space for wheelchair users to manoeuvre, and the toilet chair is mounted with hand bars

- **Using information provided during the workshop**

Assess whether learning materials used during the workshop are:

- Written in plain language, avoiding jargon and acronyms;
- Available in multiple formats: e.g. printed material, audio material, graphic information;
- Available in accessible formats: e.g. in easy-to-read formats (see example below); in accessible Word or ePUB for digital formats; in Braille for printed materials (available upon request, as access to a Braille printer will be required).

- **Adjustments for equal participation**

Ask participants with disabilities about what would support their participation. For example, some people may choose to be accompanied by a support person, some people may need a sign language interpreter. Workshop budgets should accommodate this. You can use the following process to ask and plan for adjustments:

1. The possibility of requesting these adjustments should be offered ahead of the training (e.g. at registration), and at any needed time (e.g. if a participant finds a barrier that was not previewed in advance). Consider including the following question during registration: “Would you require any accessibility adaptation or support to participate in this training? (Please specify)”.
2. Requests should be managed in an individual basis and through an interactive and transparent dialogue, where persons with disabilities requiring adjustments will have an opportunity to express their requirements.
3. Options to address requests will be then evaluated, given available resources, and considering the following components: budget provisions, time required to develop the solution, availability of service providers, and technical or

human resources required (e.g. availability of sign language interpreters, or materials printed in Braille requiring a service provider with a Braille printer).

4. A solution will be offered within given resources. This solution will be verified with the person, to find out if the proposed solution meets its purpose. In particular, the participant should be comfortable with whom is chosen to provide them assistance.
5. If a solution is found and can be provided within available resources, it should be provided.
6. If no solution is found, an alternative and/or equivalent way of participation should be proposed and verified with the person; for example, if a professional sign language interpreter is not available, using an interpreter known by the participant (e.g. a family member), or closed captioning in case of remote trainings.
7. If no solution is finally found, the person should be still given the option of participating or withdraw her interest in participating, in which case a justification should be sent to the participant; the following justifications could be used: “We regret not being able to provide this adaptation...
 - ... it is impossible to provide this adjustment because it is not available (in context)
 - ... It is impossible to provide this adjustment because it is not affordable given available financial resources dedicated to this project
 - ... It is impossible to procure this adjustment in time to meet its purpose
 - ... It is impossible to provide this adjustment as it may not be legally possible (e.g. requiring a personal assistant or

family member who has to cross a border without having adequate documentation).”

- **Preparing the audience.**

Developing briefing notes on the role of UNHCR, and organizing briefing activities ahead of the workshop to present UNHCR’s mandate and activities in context, can support the meaningful participation of both persons with disabilities and any other participants. You can develop these briefing notes or activities by including information about UNHCR’s general mandate and activities,¹ and adding local information on UNHCR’s activities relevant to the context where the training takes place.

During the workshop

- **Physical accessibility** - Ensure there is enough space in the room for participants who use wheelchairs to move around. Remove chairs from the table to provide space for participants who use wheelchairs.
- **Seating arrangements** - Ensure that sign language interpreters are seated directly opposite participants who are deaf (with no obstructions to their line of vision).
- **Safe spaces** - This is a designated room or space where an individual can go if they experience anxiety, stress or a phobic response. These spaces should be signed as “Safe space” and kept always calm and available (e.g. avoid using phones or using these spaces for meetings).

1 You can use information from the frequently asked questions at Help UNHCR website: <https://help.unhcr.org/faq/>

- **Take accessibility into account in all safety protocols.** Remember that visual alerts or the sound of the fire alarm may not be accessed by everyone if an emergency situation may happen during the training event. Ask for a dedicated briefing from the venue management on safe evacuation of the training venue, including planning for accessible emergency signs (e.g. using audio and visual signing), mapping potential barriers in the evacuation route and planning dedicated support for persons with disabilities in case this additional support is required. Ensure that this is mentioned during the workshop introduction.
- **Visual accessibility** - Describe images on the PowerPoint slides will help everyone to access content and will be very important for persons with visual impairments, in particular.

Use of language

In different contexts, different language is used to describe disability and to refer to persons with disabilities. Some words and terms may carry negative, disrespectful or discriminatory connotations and should be avoided in our communications. *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) is translated into many languages and can be a useful guide when deciding which terms to use in your context.

Translations are available at:

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=15&pid=150>

Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) can also provide guidance on the terminology preferred by persons with disabilities in a given country. In some settings, displaced populations may have established disability associations or committees to represent persons with disabilities. They are also a good resource for guidance on acceptable language. It is the role of the facilitator to do the background research and use the appropriate terminology.

Avoid...	Consider using...
<p>Emphasizing the impairment</p> <p>For example: Disabled person</p>	<p>Focus on the person first, not their disability</p> <p>For example: Person with disabilities (CRPD language)</p>
<p>Negative language about disability</p> <p>For example: “suffers” from polio “in danger of” becoming blind “confined to” a wheelchair “crippled”</p>	<p>Instead use neutral language</p> <p>For example: “has polio” “may become blind” “uses a wheelchair” “has a disability”</p>
<p>Referring to people without disabilities as “normal” or “healthy”</p>	<p>Try using “persons without disabilities”</p>