

An illustration of two hands holding a scroll. The hand on the left is purple and holds the scroll from the bottom. The hand on the right is orange and holds the scroll from the top. The scroll is white with a black circular mark. The background is light pink with red abstract lines.

THINK ACCESSIBILITY

UNFPA COMMUNICATION AND
ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES ON
ACCESSIBILITY

WHY DO WE NEED GUIDELINES ON ACCESSIBILITY?

In the world we live in today, accessible and inclusive information should not be something people have to search for. It should be the STANDARD - simply because accessible information benefits everyone, both persons with disabilities and the general public.

Embodying diversity and inclusion requires systematic practice of disability-

inclusive communications that helps achieve the promise of “leaving no one behind”, a key component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Accessible and Inclusive communications provides persons with disabilities the opportunity to own, interact and participate fully and equally in all spheres of society. This is especially true for issues around which they are often overlooked, such as bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights for youth and women and girls.

HOW DOES THIS TOOLKIT ADVANCE THE WORK OF UNFPA?


Disability inclusion means making the work of UNFPA stronger by ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all. Focusing on the rights of persons with disabilities supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the principle of “leaving no one behind” (LNOB) and “reaching the furthest behind” (RFB), this strategy aligns with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) as well as the UNFPA

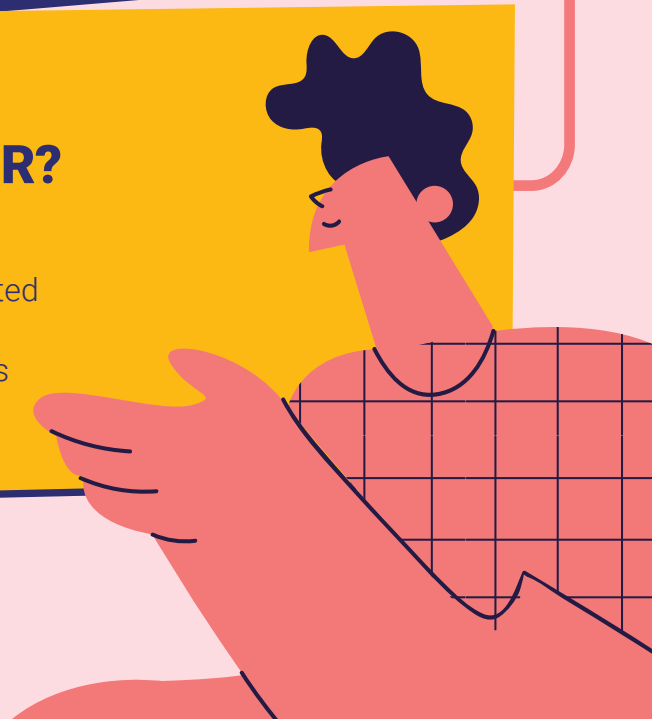
Strategic Plan, 2022-2025. It supports the implementation of the UNFPA LNOB Operational Plan.

This toolkit advances the UNFPA Disability Inclusion Strategy: We Matter. We Belong. We Decide. UNFPA works to ensure persons with disabilities are leading efforts to make the world more inclusive and are championing equal rights and a life free from violence. Disability inclusion matters because it contributes to all UNFPA transformative results. The UNFPA Disability Inclusion Strategy puts persons with disabilities at the very centre of everything UNFPA does.

WHO IS THE “THINK ACCESSIBILITY” TOOLKIT FOR?

This toolkit is for everyone who works at and with UNFPA. It is for staff and partners who are committed to disability inclusion and intend to incorporate accessibility into the design and planning processes of their communication and engagement activities.

 This document has a lot of webreferences. Click links like [this](#) to see them.



USE THESE GUIDELINES AS A STARTING POINT FOR...



- ★ Understanding what is accessibility and why it is needed
- ★ Engaging with persons with disabilities to learn about accessibility measures and how to implement them
- ★ Taking basic cost-efficient measures towards accessibility
- ★ Creating, consuming and sharing accessible content
- ★ Ensuring your events and meetings are accessible and inclusive
- ★ Thinking about accessibility in your own work
- ★ Finding out more about accessibility

WHAT DOES ACCESSIBILITY MEAN TO UNFPA

We are making great progress on disability inclusion but still have a long way to go to deliver a more **accessible environment for all**.

Accessibility is not just for persons with disabilities but makes participation and communication more **effective for everyone**.

We want to become the most inclusive and accessible United Nations entity. This means that regardless of whether you have a permanent, temporary or situational disability, you can easily engage with us and your talents, skills and potential will be enabled.

Our work must be in compliance with the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD). This requires the development and implementation of a **consistent and systematic approach to accessibility**.

UNFPA strategies towards accessibility are drawn from sound evidence and comprehensive approaches anchored in the [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) (UNDIS). Through the UNDIS, UNFPA has committed to **accelerating** the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The UNDIS lays out the foundation for system-wide sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion. The strategy's Entity Accountability Framework directs its implementation. UNFPA performance on accessibility – which is one of the key accountability areas of the UNDIS – is **measured and reported annually**.

In December 2021, UNFPA published its own organizational strategy, titled "[We Matter. We Belong. We Decide. UNFPA Disability Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025](#)". Disability inclusion contributes to all UNFPA transformative results.

UNFPA runs numerous events and meetings on disability inclusion. More and more persons with disabilities attend or follow them online via webcasts, websites and online documentation. The way in which UNFPA as an organization manages accessibility of engagement and communication establishes a highly visible standard of disability inclusion.

We envision a future of **accessibility by default**. This is why we strive to incorporate accessibility into the design and planning processes rather than having it as an afterthought. This also requires **budgeting for accessibility**.

UNFPA aspires to **lead by example on disability inclusion** and therefore seeks to meet and exceed the requirements of the UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework on accessibility.

Globally, UNFPA, with the support of Spain, implements the **We Decide** programme. This programme promotes the human rights and social inclusion of women and young persons with disabilities. Its focus is on access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education for persons with disabilities, including to prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence.

ACCESSIBILITY IS

...protected in **Article 9** of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

...a precondition for **inclusion and participation** in all areas of public life. Accessibility enhances participation by removing barriers that may be digital, linguistic, infrastructural, physical, social and economic.

...making information, meetings and materials **available to all** – including persons with various types of disabilities: intellectual, sensory, psychosocial as well as physical.

...about providing captions and audio descriptions; ensuring that interpretation into Sign Language is available; and developing materials in **alternative formats** such as Easy Read and Braille.

To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities 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 and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.



HOW TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN DIFFERENT AREAS



COMMIT TO ACCESSIBILITY

Committing to accessibility means being welcoming towards people's diversity. Being welcoming includes respectful and diverse representation throughout the organization portrayed in spoken and signed language, visual materials, announcements and social media. This is also a commitment to planning and budgeting. Accessibility can sometimes add costs to activities; however, this is part of operationalizing the "leave no one behind" principle and the human rights-based approach.



COLLABORATE WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZATIONS TOWARDS BETTER ACCESSIBILITY

"Nothing about us without us" means that in order to break down accessibility barriers it is important to work with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. When in doubt, ask the person with the disability. For instance, the best way to make an Easy Read document is to collaborate with persons with intellectual disabilities. More about consultation with persons with disabilities can be found in the [UNDIS Guidelines on Consulting Persons with Disabilities](#) and the UNFPA resource [Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights-Based and Gender-Responsive Services to Address Gender-Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for Women and Young Persons with Disabilities](#).



PLAN FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable accommodation is vital for accessibility. It means providing the necessary individual support or adjustment which would allow a person with a disability to play an active role. For a virtual event, for example, this would include providing a personal assistant, sign language interpreter or accessibility computer hardware or software to allow a person with a disability to engage or communicate on an equal basis with others.



DESIGN FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Whether designing digital services, a website or infographics for persons with disabilities, consider best practices for making information and services accessible. The [Designing for Accessibility Guide](#) provides simple Do's and Don'ts for designing digital services for persons with disabilities in different areas.



GET THE LANGUAGE RIGHT

Some norms associated with disability can make social spaces inaccessible. Using outdated disability terminology can be disempowering and offensive. It is important to think about how persons with disabilities are portrayed in communication.¹ Whether communicating about or with persons with disabilities use rights-based language² that is respectful of persons with disabilities, reflects the diverse population of persons with disabilities and considers intersectionality.³

- ✦ Emphasize the need for accessibility not the disability
- ✦ Emphasize access not limitations
- ✦ Do not use language that suggests a lack of something
- ✦ Avoid language that implies negative stereotypes
- ✦ Do not portray persons with disabilities as inspirational because of their disability



MAKE CONTENT ACCESSIBLE

Creating accessible content is vital for disability inclusion. This would mean preparing transcripts for videos or alt-text for images, for example. Several resources provide useful guidance on accessible content for [social media](#), [presentations](#) and [websites](#).



ENHANCE MOBILE ACCESS

Ensuring that engagement and communication can be supported by mobile devices is a step up in accessibility. Also, using the mobile devices' accessibility features can help with routine tasks from communication to language skills. Participating in virtual meetings and events through mobile devices should be encouraged, to allow more engagement by persons with disabilities, particularly in the Global South where the use of mobile devices is becoming more and more common.



APPLY UNIVERSAL DESIGN

When products, environments, programmes and services incorporate universal design they can be used – to the greatest extent possible – by all people without adaptation or reconfiguration. Accessibility is the practical implementation of such a design perspective.

1 See the [Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines](#) (UNDIS Secretariat, 2021).

2 See rights-based terminology, p.17, in the [IASC Guidelines: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#) (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2019).

3 See the [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy Entity Technical Notes](#) on Indicator 15.

CHECKLIST FOR ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

CREATE ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

- ✓ Prepare transcripts for videos
- ✓ Add Alt text to images
- ✓ Make sure the colors you use pass contrast checks
- ✓ Use simple and plain language
- ✓ Adjust delivery speed to enhance everyone's participation
- ✓ Use URL shorteners that take a long link and turn it into a shorter one

PRESENT ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

- ✓ Always recap each point
- ✓ Adjust your speaking speed, and ask for extra time rather than speeding
- ✓ Ensure your visuals are inclusive and representative (all audiences should feel represented, based on theme/topic presented)
- ✓ Do not assume but invite audiences to engage, especially persons with disabilities, who may often feel overlooked
- ✓ Offer a summary of your presentation, transcript of the recording and the audio and/or visual recording itself

CONSUME ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

- ✓ Provide interpretation, including sign language interpretation
- ✓ Enable closed captions in videos
- ✓ Share content with the audience prior to the event

SHARE ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

- ✓ Create an audio version of the content
- ✓ Create a video version of the content
- ✓ Create a visual description or visual narration of the content



CHECKLIST FOR MAKING VIRTUAL EVENTS AND MEETINGS ACCESSIBLE

✓ BEFORE

Start planning early to best understand your audience and implement appropriate accommodations.

Familiarize yourself with accessibility features on the software platforms commonly used for video conferencing and online meetings.

Ask attendees in advance what type of accommodations they need.

Confirm to the participants that the requests have been received and accommodations are organized.

Send any supporting documents or resources in advance to allow attendees, interpreters and captioners adequate time to prepare.

Provide materials in an accessible file format. Accessible formats include videos with captioning and sign language interpretation, audio, large print, Easy Read, plain language, Braille and digital screen reader compatible formats. If possible, make materials available in screen reader-accessible Word versions.

✓ IN THE BEGINNING

Allow participants to join the meeting prior to the start to allow time for accessible set-up.

Assign a point of contact during the meeting to assist with tech and accessibility issues.

Do an **access check** at the start of the event or meeting:

- Make sure everyone is aware of the available accommodations and let them know how to access the features, including main [keyboard shortcuts](#).
- Set guidelines for participation, such as using the raise hand or chat features.
- Ask attendees to announce themselves by name and organization/entity each time they speak.
- Ensure presenters are easy to see and hear with good sound and lighting on them.
- Record the meeting so attendees can reflect back on the information presented.

✔ DURING

Use plain language and keep sentences short.

Avoid unnecessary acronyms and abbreviations.

Ensure sufficient time to react and to respond.

Do not rely solely on images to tell a story. If you do use images, make sure you provide image descriptions.

Do not use color as the only method to highlight information.

If there are scheduled breaks, make sure they last at least 20 minutes.

Consider URL shorteners for sharing links in the virtual platform chats to concisely convey information to people using screen readers.

✔ AFTER

Ask participants if the accessibility measures provided met their needs.

Transcribe and provide captioning for recordings in different languages and share them with participants.

Include descriptions of key visual elements to provide context for persons with visual disabilities.

Make sure follow-up documents are accessible so everyone can read and work with the files.



DID YOU KNOW?

CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE ON ACCESSIBILITY AND DISABILITY:

- ★ Many people find Easy Read documents useful, especially when they are busy and need to understand information quickly.
- ★ Many blind and partially-sighted persons use computer keyboard shortcuts instead of the mouse, which makes keyboard accessibility critical.
- ★ Persons with disabilities are the largest minority group globally.
- ★ Long sentences and documents may be a barrier for someone with a learning disability. Sentences in an Easy Read document should not exceed 14 words and materials should be no more than 20 pages.
- ★ Hashtags can be made more accessible by capitalizing the first letter of each word. Example: #DigitalAccessibility.
- ★ 85 per cent of Facebook videos are watched without sound.



Most resources have hyperlinks. Click links like [this](#) to see them.

RESOURCES: LEARN MORE

ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY



[We Matter. We Belong. We Decide. UNFPA Disability Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025](#)

Disability inclusion means making the work of UNFPA stronger by ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all. Disability inclusion contributes to all UNFPA transformative results.

[The We Decide Global Programme](#)

The goal of the We Decide programme is to build a model of intervention based on human rights, in line with the standards and guidelines agreed at the international level.

[Young Persons with Disabilities: Global Study on Ending Gender-based Violence and Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights](#)

This study by UNFPA provides an assessment of legal, policy and programming developments and specific good practices in service delivery as well as best-standard prevention and protection measures including accessibility.

[Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights-Based and Gender-Responsive Services to Address Gender-Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for Women and Young Persons with Disabilities](#)

Practical guidance on the engagement of women and young persons with disabilities is provided in this UNFPA resource, as well as the provision of accessible services related to gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

[UN Disability Inclusion Strategy](#)

The strategy enables the United Nations system to support implementation of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) and other international human rights instruments. The entity accountability framework covers 15 operational areas for disability inclusion through performance indicators.

[UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework Technical Note](#)

The technical notes provide guidance on the 15 performance indicators of the entity accountability framework and informs implementation and reporting.

[UN Disability-Inclusive Communication Guidelines](#)

This document contains recommendations that can be used in oral and written communications on disability or other subjects, including speeches and presentations, press releases, social media posts, internal communications and other formal and informal documents.

[How to make your presentations accessible to all](#)

This World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) resource will help you make presentations, talks, meetings and training accessible to everyone in your potential audience, including people with disabilities and others.

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)

A wide range of recommendations to make Web content more accessible to a wider range of persons with disabilities are presented in this W3C resource. The guidelines address accessibility of web content on desktops, laptops, tablets and mobile devices.

[Accessibility Online Participation Checklist](#)

The European Disability Forum has created a checklist to help event organizers make online meetings more accessible and inclusive.

[How to Deliver an Accessible and Inclusive Presentation](#)

This resource from the A11Y Project provides guidelines for speakers and presenters when creating presentations for a meetup event. It includes guidance on how to deliver an accessible and inclusive presentation, how to prepare the content and how to present it.

[Captioning your videos for social media](#)

Clipomatic is a smart video editor that turns all you say into live captions instantly. This tool is useful for videos made for social media use.

[Fonts, language, structure and colors: Guidance for creating accessible content](#)

This toolkit by CBM is a guide and practical resource to help you produce accessible digital content and communications, and place accessibility at the centre of your processes.

Accessibility on [Google Meet](#), [Microsoft Teams](#) and [Zoom](#)

Popular online conferencing platforms offer accessibility guidelines and specific features for virtual meetings and webinars, e.g. live captions, keyboard shortcuts, captioning and screen reader content.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brief was developed under the overall leadership of the UNFPA Technical Division led by Julitta Onabanjo and by the Gender and Human Rights Branch headed by Nafissatou J. Diop, with the technical guidance of Leyla Sharafi. This document was conceptualized and produced by Virpi Mesiäislehto and Nathaly Guzmán Figueroa, with contributions from Ramz Shalbak, who also led the design concept and direction. The document has benefited from inputs from Women Enabled International, The Global Network of Young Persons with Disabilities and the International Disability and Development Consortium.