The Enabling Environment in focus

This series of documents collects and distils recommendations from the Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System for specific areas regarding intersectionality: LGBTQI+, Disability, Geographic and Cultural Diversity and Health.

Many of the recommendations will overlap and be relevant for a range of areas, so these documents are for guidance rather than prescriptive of all the possible relevant recommendations. The overlapping or intersecting nature of these areas should be considered. These documents have been collated in the spirit of Intersectionality, the understanding that inequality does not occur along a single axis.

The Enabling Environment Guidelines encourage our workforce to champion workforce diversity, leverage different perspectives and build a flexible organization with family friendly policies. An intersectional approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the complexities of human identity and an understanding of the network of informal hierarchies and power dynamics that work together to create these issues.
The Enabling Environment in focus: Disabilities at work

The Enabling Environment Guidelines encourage our workforce to champion workforce diversity, leverage different perspectives and build a flexible organization with family friendly policies. An intersectional approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the complexities of human identity and an understanding of the network of informal hierarchies and power dynamics that work together to create these issues. Below are collated recommendations from the Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System with regards to Disabilities.

RECRUITMENT

- Ensure that public images on the UN website, public messaging and event promotion reflect a diverse staff composition including representation of diverse races, ethnicities, sexual and gender identities and persons with disabilities (p. 25).
- Use inclusion statements in job advertisements and in the careers section of the organization’s website. Specificity in these statements such as mention of women and persons with disabilities further strengthens messaging that the organization welcomes diversity in all its forms (p. 25).
- Application forms are recommended to be in accessible online formats, such as a Word format of the P11 form for persons with disabilities, especially those using screen readers. Further, application forms should contain only essential criteria and broad competencies, and organizations should examine ways to be more inclusive regarding required information (p. 28).
- Removing barriers, such as minimum time in post requirements, could have a particularly positive impact on the representation of marginalized groups who may have experienced additional challenges to their career advancements (p. 32).

WORK PLACE FLEXIBILITY

- FWAs can increase recruitment and retention, including among personnel with disabilities, personnel with dependents with disabilities and personnel who are unable to commute into the office (p. 64).
- As needed, provide laptops and associated equipment or install relevant software on home/private computers to be used by staff working remotely. This includes providing personnel with disabilities the necessary technology they require to telework, such as screen readers and voice recognition software (p. 69).

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

- Provide additional allowances, leave and flexibility to support staff members addressing family care issues, such as eldercare and care for family members with disabilities, including temporary disabilities (p. 12).
- Expand childcare and education grant options to better accommodate personnel with children under the age of 5 and create financial support for staff caring for an ageing relative or dependent with a disability (p. 12).
- Ensure mobility policies take a supportive and sensitive approach to staff and their families, particularly with respect to gender and disabilities (p. 12).
Consider discussing with host governments the ability of the family to stay in the previous duty station for a limited time, move to the closest HQ duty station, or a regional location with family-friendly living conditions in cases of potential moves that present safety concerns for staff’s families, or in case of a move to duty stations with no acceptable schooling and healthcare facilities, particularly those able to address the distinct medical needs of women staff and staff with disabilities (p. 107).

Staff with disabilities and staff who have dependents with disabilities face mobility challenges regarding access to health care facilities, accessible schools and accessible workplaces (p. 107).

TALENT MANAGEMENT

- Consider partnering with other UN agencies and international organizations working to develop country-level information regarding living conditions at each duty station to avoid repetitions and increase cost effectiveness. This should also include information of particular importance to personnel with disabilities (p. 47).

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

- Actively show support for and build an accessible, diverse, inclusive and safe workplace for all personnel. This may include accessible and gender-inclusive bathrooms, as well as ensuring that physical infrastructure office premises not only meet prescribed. Changes should not be made only to accommodate existing or incoming staff but doing so from the outset sends a powerful message that the organization invites and values diversity (p. 130).

- Take steps to ensure that the workplace, including work stations and meeting rooms are accessible to persons with disabilities (p. 131).

- Provide assistive technology, such as screen readers for personnel who are visually impaired, keystroke navigation and/or voice recognition software, and services such as an interpreter, closed captioning, phone with captioning and/or computer-aided transcriptions (p. 131).

Further Resources


The Enabling Environment in focus: LGBTQI+

The Enabling Environment Guidelines encourage our workforce to champion workforce diversity, leverage different perspectives and build a flexible organization with family friendly policies. An intersectional approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the complexities of human identity and an understanding of the network of informal hierarchies and power dynamics that work together to create these issues. Below are collated recommendations from the Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System with regards to LGBTQI+. The Enabling Environment Guidelines have been developed in a highly consultative and participatory process also with UN-GLOBE, the system-wide inter-agency staff group advocating for the equality and non-discrimination of LGBTQI+ staff in the UN system and its peacekeeping operations.

RECRUITMENT

- Strengthen targeted outreach by advertising diversity and inclusion. Increase sourcing efforts of underrepresented candidates through channels including social media, LinkedIn and university career websites, in particular for functions and roles where their representation is low. Utilize thematic networks for outreach of job postings to attract more diverse talent (p. 25).

TALENT MANAGEMENT

- Develop and deliver an orientation programme on a scheduled, regular basis to familiarize new employees with the organization, including expectations to uphold and promote the discrimination-free and inclusive culture of the entity and information relevant LGBTQI+ staff including information on UN-GLOBE and local laws (p. 47).
- Consider partnering with other UN agencies and international organizations working to develop country-level information regarding living conditions at each duty station to avoid repetitions and increase cost effectiveness. This should also include information of particular importance to women and LGBTQI+ personnel and personnel with disabilities (p. 47).

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

- Aim to standardize parental leave to afford all parents, gestational and non-gestational, an equal post-birth paid leave entitlement of six months (p. 11).
- Ensure mobility policies take a supportive and sensitive approach to staff and their families, particularly with respect to gender, LGBTQI+ and disabilities. Identify which family duty stations are friendly for LGBTQI+ staff and LGBTQI+ children (p. 12).

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

- Actively show support for and build an accessible, diverse, inclusive and safe workplace for all personnel (p. 13).
- Foster an environment that promotes diverse discussions in order to maximize collaboration and productivity (p. 13).
Further Resources

The Enabling Environment in focus: Geographic and Cultural Diversity

The Enabling Environment Guidelines encourage our workforce to champion workforce diversity, leverage different perspectives and build a flexible organization with family friendly policies. An intersectional approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the complexities of human identity and an understanding of the network of informal hierarchies and power dynamics that work together to create these issues. Below are collated recommendations from the Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System with regards to Geographic and Cultural Diversity.

RECRUITMENT

• Ensure that public images on the UN website, public messaging and event promotion reflect a diverse staff composition including representation of diverse races, ethnicities, sexual and gender identities, persons with disabilities, etc. (p. 25).
• Ensure only the essential qualifications for the job are mentioned in vacancy announcements and job descriptions, rather than nonessential criteria, as mentioned above and in the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity (p. 29).
• Encourage underrepresented candidates to apply. Specific reference to various dimensions of diversity, such as sex, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, and disabilities, send a stronger message than generic statements (p. 29).
• Ensure opportunities for candidates to engage with the organization are inclusive to all candidates. Track and share reporting of who receives these opportunities by various diversity demographic data. Compare this against past results to spot trends. If gaps are found, implement new outreach strategies to be more inclusive (p. 30).
• Ensure that all interview panel members receive training on unconscious bias and diversity to increase awareness, understanding of organizational priorities, such as the attainment of gender parity, and how hiring decisions will impact this progress. Make viewing the video “UNbiased:Mitigating Unconscious Bias in Recruitment” a mandatory requirement for all panelists (p. 35).
• Ensure diversity and gender balance within interview panels (p. 35).
• Out of the best-qualified candidates, choose the candidate that would bring the most diversity into the team in terms of gender, geography and background. Make sure to have the facts about the team composition to be able to do this. Teams with 70 per cent or fewer members of the same gender/nationality/ethnicity perform better than more homogenous teams when the leadership is inclusive (p. 36).
• Require the Head of Departments/Offices to acknowledge the relevant gender and geographic parity targets and how their selection decision will impact progress towards these targets before such decisions are made. Ensure real and concrete accountability measures with consequences for lack of action (p. 41).

TALENT MANAGEMENT

• Harness mentoring networks and informal support systems to foster inclusion (p. 48).
• Develop and deliver inclusive leadership programmes and trainings (p. 56).
WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

- FWAs [Flexible Work Arrangements] can support business continuity by allowing personnel to work remotely in certain situations that might otherwise preclude them from coming into work (e.g. transport strikes, extreme weather conditions, unforeseeable events). Additionally, such arrangements can ease the strain on personnel observing religious holidays, which may require fasting, and send a positive message of workplace accommodation for diverse religious practices (p. 65).

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

- Develop a proposal for implementing a standardized paid parental leave policy of six months, including cost estimates, funding proposals, risks if not executed and potential benefits to increasing retention and improving diversity (p. 84).
- Expand opportunities for recognized partner employment and facilitate mobility of dual UN career couples (p. 110).

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

- All UN personnel should be provided with a holistic harassment prevention programme, including training on issues of, but not limited to: gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, power, discrimination, conscious and unconscious bias and understanding a victim/survivor-centred approach to address sexual harassment and misconduct (p. 120).

- Include mandatory performance objectives, including annual reporting of accomplishments, in performance management reviews to monitor managers’ efforts to promote diversity and a workplace culture of respect, zero tolerance and accountability (p. 121).
- Require diversity when selecting participants for trainings, ensuring diversity across various dimensions (gender, geography, grade, etc.) whenever possible (p. 135).
- Survey design should be an inclusive process to ensure applicability in crosscultural contexts, such as incorporating minorities into the steering group and testing the survey with different profiles (age, race, culture, etc.) (p. 127).

- Encourage personnel to avail themselves of any programmes on working effectively in multicultural environments (p. 139).
- Articulate an organization-wide diversity and inclusion statement and strategy with desired outcomes, targets and benchmarks to measure progress, indicating responsibility for implementation. Be clear in messaging to avoid misconceptions. (p. 131).
Further Resources

The Enabling Environment in focus: Wellbeing at Work

The Enabling Environment Guidelines encourage our workforce to champion workforce diversity, leverage different perspectives and build a flexible organization with family friendly policies. An intersectional approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the complexities of human identity and an understanding of the network of informal hierarchies and power dynamics that work together to create these issues. Below are collated recommendations from the Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System with regards to Wellbeing at Work.

The recommendations are in line with the Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy launched by the Secretary General which aims to strengthen individual knowledge, skills and behavior with regard to:

- Taking care of others – colleagues, family and friends
- Taking care of our own mental health
- Taking care of the people who look after the health of others
- Seeking help earlier, to obtain access to a range of evidence-based psychosocial support and interventions

WORK PLACE FLEXIBILITY

- Be mindful when sending email communications after normal working hours and do not expect to receive a reply until the resumption of respondents’ core working hours unless situations require otherwise. Limit phone calls after working hours to emergency situations (p. 77).
- Schedule periodic staff meetings, if possible, at consistent and predictable times during core working hours and on working days for staff, with teleconference possibilities (p. 77).
- Explicitly allow flexibility for staff who have to connect to personnel in other time zones (e.g. ask/allow personnel to take meetings and calls from home if meetings are before or after the core working hours) (p.77).

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

- FWAs reduce unscheduled absences by providing the necessary time-off for staff to care for themselves and their families. In terms of psychological and physical well-being, reported benefits include reduced stress, a greater sense of control, a pleasant work environment and the ability to better integrate a healthy lifestyle into daily routine (p. 64).
- Effective programmes demonstrate support for employees and their health and increase employees’ workplace satisfaction and morale (p 99).
- Ensure mobility policies take a supportive and sensitive approach to staff and their families (p. 12). Staff with disabilities and staff who have dependents with disabilities face mobility challenges regarding access to health care facilities, accessible schools and accessible workplaces (p. 107).
TALENT MANAGEMENT
• Develop targeted skills-building programmes, e.g. training to address intersectionality in substantive work areas, transformative leadership for gender diversity and women’s rights, management training, strategic thinking, negotiation and public speaking skills, conflict prevention, self-confidence, stress management and tackling self-imposed barriers (p. 53).

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT
• Unresolved or chronic conflict among colleagues is counterproductive, can impede the conduct and quality of work and is associated with poor mental health. When conflict does arise, it is important for managers and personnel to recognize the problem and be aware of measures for resolution (p. 153).
• Consider the importance of allocating communal physical space(s), such as a common lounge or dining area, in order to promote the informal exchange and networking of colleagues. The lack of such a space inhibits personnel’s ability to engage across departments and levels (p. 139).
• Ensure that health insurance covers flexible options for mental health support, such as remote therapy through Skype or telephone, as this is of particular importance for staff in locations with limited options (p. 139).

Further Resources
• World Health Organization (2019) Mental health in the workplace. Available at: https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/
• Harvard Medical School (2019) Mental health problems in the workplace. Available at: https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/mental-health-problems-in-the-workplace