

Essential Accessibility Checklist for Organizing Event

Are you planning an event and want to ensure it is accessible for all, including persons with disabilities but are unsure about the basic event accessibility guidelines? This document is for you! Since 15% of the world's population experience one or another form of disability, ensuring physical and information accessibility is a prerequisite for their effective and meaningful participation in any public event. Everyone who arrives at your event should feel welcome and be able to participate and benefit from the event equally.

The Objective of the Checklist

To provide guidance on how to ensure physical and information accessibility while organizing an event.

Audience

This checklist is prepared by UN Women Nepal Country Office. The document can be referred by other UN Agencies, government agencies, partners, and other relevant stakeholders as required.

Limitations

This checklist covers basic concepts of event accessibility. It recognizes that accessibility is a relatively new concept in Nepal and thus takes into account the current context.

Relevant for all disabilities:

- When planning an event, ask for reasonable accommodation requests in advance. A reasonable accommodation is an adjustment or modification of the environment, product, services, or programs to allow full participation of individuals with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations may or may not have cost implications. Some of the reasonable accommodation requests might include time to rest between sessions, separate rooms for taking sensory breaks, lowered desks or chairs, etc. Keep in mind that reasonable accommodation should be provided on the individual request, which differs from one individual to another. Therefore it is always recommended to ask the participants in advance for such requests rather than making assumptions.
- Provide information about the venue along with a google map in advance.
- Ensure there is signage providing directions from the gate to the main venue, and use contrasting colors and large fonts for easier visibility.
- Include information in the invite on what accessibility services are provided, e.g., 'sign language interpretation provided'.
- Provide information on disability-related etiquette to organizers, volunteers, and support staff.
- Make sure that the main sessions, icebreakers, training games, competitions, and other activities within the event are also accessible and inclusive.

- Collect feedback from event participants on whether they were able to participate fully and what improvements would be needed in future events.

Accessibility Checklist—Physical disabilities with mobility impairments (wheelchair users, crutches users, and more)

- Provide information in advance on accessible entrances.
- Provide information in advance on designated accessible parking spaces.

Walkthrough the following criteria before selecting the venue:

- The entrance gate is wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through
- The entrance gate has a ramp or no stairs
- The path from the entrance gate to the event hall is wide enough for wheelchairs to move
- The event hall doorway is wide enough for a wheelchair to pass through
- The event hall entrance has ramps or no stairs
- The event hall space is wide enough for wheelchair users to move around
- Availability of ramp to reach the podium
- The path from the hall to the toilet is wide enough for wheelchairs to move
- Accessible toilets are not too far from the event hall
- The doorway of the toilet has ramps or no stairs
- The toilet has wide enough space for wheelchairs to rotate
- Availability of commode along with grab bars in the toilet
- Lock, sink, and toiletries in lower height
- Availability of elevator if the event hall is on the upper floors
- Gradual (no steep) ramps with handrails
- Non-slippery floors.
- Sliding doors for easier mobility
- Low-level chairs, tables, and counters
- Accessible dining places

Accessibility Check List—Blind and visually impaired, print disabilities

Before the event:

- Send accessible email invitation: Provide necessary details of the event in the email body, at least the title, venue, date, and time of the event. The invitation letters prepared in image formats and image form PDFs might not be readable to most screen reader users. Therefore provide at least the basic details of the program in the email body.
 - Send all presentation documents to be used during the event, including the event schedule, at least a day before the event. This will help screen reader users and people with other print and developmental disabilities to process the information in advance.
 - Provide presentation documents in an accessible format.

Basic techniques for making presentations accessible to blind and visually impaired people:

- Do not provide the documents in image format or image form PDF. Word, PowerPoint, and Notepad are so far accessible to screen reader users. PDFs are sometimes accessible and sometimes not, depending on how it is prepared, so best to provide the documents and handouts in word plaintext format.
- Provide alternative text to images. Giving alternative text means describing through words what the picture is about.
- Documents in the Nepali language should be in Unicode font and word format. A font like Priti is not accessible.
- Use off-white backgrounds and high-contrast color combinations, and use non-decorative Sans Serif fonts such as Calibri, Arial, and Verdana.
- Provide enough line spacing in the document.
- Use 'Styles' in Word to create headings and subheadings outlining the text structure.

During the event:

- Provide a verbal orientation of the hall, washroom, and other important places at the beginning of the event. While providing orientation, do not use words such as 'here' and 'there'; instead say 'left', 'right', etc.
- Provide sufficient lighting in the hall for people with low vision.
- Check if projection screens are visible for people with low vision and assign seats according to their requirements.
- Use audio-descriptive video as far as possible. If unavailable, the instructors or any assigned volunteers should verbally describe pictures and videos used during the presentation.
- If these participants have not brought their personal assistance, assign some volunteers to support the participants in going to the toilet, lunch, etc.
- Prepare large print or braille document upon request of the participant (mostly if they don't have access to technology).

Accessibility Check List—Deaf and hard of hearing

- Hire sign language interpreters (SLI) in advance. At least two interpreters are required for a daylong event.
- The event venue should have enough lighting to enable deaf participants to communicate using sign language.
- Place sign language interpreters at the front of the venue near the stage. Ensure they have a blank background behind them.
- Need to arrange real-time captioners for some deaf participants if requested, as everyone cannot understand sign language. (Captioner listens to speech and translates it to the text displayed in a projector or app).
- Provide the program materials, including presentations and handouts, to the interpreters in advance to allow the interpreters to prepare.
- Presentation using a projector will be helpful for deaf participants rather than verbal sessions as they can refer both to sign language and written words on the slides.
- Presenters should speak slowly to allow the SLI to interpret.
- SLI must be visible with appropriate lighting.
- Seating arrangement near the presenter for lip reading if requested.

Accessibility Check List—Neuro-developmental disabilities

- Conduct a preparation session a day before the event to allow participants to comprehend the terminologies and issues to be discussed during the event.
- Prepare the documents in an easy-to-read version. This means the document is prepared using very simple and understandable language, with no jargon, using images to make the content understandable for readers with diverse learning abilities.
- Make use of pictural, videographic, and practical methods of content deliberation.

Accessibility Check List—Speech-related disabilities:

Upon the participant's consent, prior inform the instructors/moderators that a specific participant with a speech-related disability might take time to respond.

Accessibility Check List—Deafblind:

- Make prior arrangements for a tactile interpreter, audio interpreter, haptic or other forms of interpretation services upon the participant's request.
- Check if any seating arrangements, such as sitting near to instructor, might support the deafblind participants to perceive the information and manage accordingly.

Checklist for Making Online Events Accessible

- Use accessible hosting platforms. Zoom, Teams, Google Meet, etc., are so far accessible.
- Share accessible presentations in advance as described above.
- If there are any visual aids or PowerPoints, the presenter should describe what is there on the screen. If videos without audio description are played, describe the video verbally before or after the video is played.
- Make sign language interpretation available for deaf participants.
- Assign a live captioner for deaf participants if requested.
- For programs conducted in the English language, turn on automatically generated captions if live captioning is not available.
- Introduce those on the call or at least the host and co-host and their roles.
- Tell people to say their names every time they speak.
- Allow time to process information: Some people might take a longer time to type information, to mute-unmute, and to speak, so give them the opportunity to respond.
- Allow multiple modes of communication: to unmute and speak, to put their views in chat, to raise a hand, etc.

Conclusion

Disability is an evolving concept, and there are diverse needs and requirements among individuals with disabilities. However, there are no accessibility measures that are suitable for

all. Therefore, always ask about participants' accessibility preferences and reasonable accommodation requests beforehand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge, with appreciation, the World Food Programme, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, and Organizations of persons with disabilities — Independent Living Center, National Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Prayatna Nepal, National Federation of the Disabled Nepal, Autism Care Nepal Society, Nepal's Stutters' Association, Koshish Nepal, Shovalaya Inclusive Society, Deaf-blind Association Nepal, and Nepal Disabled Women Association — for reviewing and validating the checklist.