

Evaluation of UNICEF's Reasonable Accommodation Fund

UNICEF Evaluation Office

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Content

01 Introduction

02 Purpose, scope and approach

03 Findings and conclusions

04 Recommendations

05 Additional information



1. Introduction

What is reasonable accommodation?

In line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), a reasonable accommodation (RA) is the action taken by an employer for an employee or applicant with disability to remove a workplace barrier. Administered through UNICEF's Division of Human Resources, the Reasonable Accommodation Fund plays an important role in ensuring the inclusion of persons with disability within the organization.



2. Purpose, scope and approach

PURPOSE



To assess **UNICEF's Reasonable Accommodation Fund** to ensure that it meets needs and expectations while in line with relevant international and UN-specific guidelines and provide evidence-based insights and recommendations to **inform the organization's future model** for the Fund and related decision-making processes.



The assessment aims to assess conformity with relevant guidelines, internal relevance and coherence as well as identify the extent to which the current model meets the requirements for an effective and sustainable future provision of reasonable accommodation.



SCOPE

Time scope:

From its inception starting in 2011 to the end of 2022.

Geographical scope:

Use across global, regional, and country levels.

Internal scope:

Evaluation assessed how the RA Fund relates to other policies and procedures that address accessibility and accommodations.

Note:

Accommodations without a cost are not part of the Fund. However, the evaluation does consider them in terms of how relevant and complementary the RA Fund is in the context of broader HR tools and policies.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was guided by a **human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach** and by the principles of **accessibility, transparency, meaningful participation, and ownership**.

The evaluation used a **mixed-methods approach**, including **96 key informant interviews**, an **online survey of UNICEF staff** with disabilities, which received 142 responses, and a **document and literature review**. Data sources were analysed, triangulated and discussed in validation workshops.

The evaluation approach was structured around **three key perspectives**: first, examining the **Fund as a policy** crafted and provided by the organization; second, assessing the **implementation of related processes**; and third, analysing its **effectiveness in delivering results**.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Analytical perspectives	POLICY	PROCESS			OUTCOME	
Evaluation questions	<i>To what extent is the current model in line with relevant guidelines and good and proven practices?</i>	<i>How relevant is the fund within the organization and how coherent is it with other related tools and policies?</i>	<i>To what extent is the Fund's model clearly and consistently defined, organized, and communicated?</i>	<i>To what extent is the current model suitable to meet related objectives and requirements?</i>	<i>What have been the main results achieved so far?</i>	
Criteria addressed	Conformity with relevant guidelines	Benchmarking with good and proven practices	Internal relevance and coherence	Quality of operationalization	Overall readiness and suitability	Use and results achieved



3. Findings and conclusions

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



The evaluation found that the provision of reasonable accommodation is essential to enable persons with disabilities to apply for jobs and perform essential job functions.



The Fund has been effective in the provision of reasonable accommodation, contributing significantly to an equitable and enabling work environment.



The Fund complements other internal accessibility mechanisms, creating a more comprehensive approach to promoting an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities.



More needs to be done to ensure that all staff members are aware of reasonable accommodation and know how to submit and support requests.



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



While there is a well-established process to apply for reasonable accommodation, related procedures can be further clarified, and a written operations manual is needed.



While the current budget for the Fund adequately addresses present demands, concerns persist regarding its sufficiency to meet future goals.



The evaluation advocates for a holistic approach, covering both accommodations with and without costs, to be handled by an RA Office/one-stop shop.




4. Recommendations




RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1



UNICEF should **transition from an RA Fund to an RA Office**, with accountability to senior leadership and dedicated staff to manage it. The RA Office should act as a 'one-stop shop' (single point of entry for the provision of services), using a case management approach, with the authority to issue 'accommodation passports' that would facilitate and advise on RA for employees with disabilities, while ensuring that personal information is stored appropriately, and key communication is in the applicant's preferred UN language, if requested.

Recommendation 2



To **ensure that employees and applicants are aware of and can access reasonable accommodation**, UNICEF should strengthen its internal and external measures to effectively communicate the organization's commitment to provide RA and how to request it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 3



UNICEF should **strengthen organization-wide strategies, training, and communication activities** towards achieving a truly disability-inclusive and accessible workplace. This is necessary to support the provision of RA and to work towards the goals of the DIPAS, particularly the target of 7 per cent of employees being persons with disabilities by 2030.

Recommendation 4



UNICEF should continue to **approve all RA requests that meet the criteria and ensure their consistent and effective provision** across the organization in line with international best practices, while addressing existing issues in RA guidance and procedures.

Recommendation 5



To ensure quality **assurance and user satisfaction**, UNICEF's RA Fund/Office should use an appropriate set of tools and practices to monitor and evaluate the provision of RA to employees and applicants across the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 6



UNICEF should **regularly review RA expenditure and recruitment activities** (i.e., hiring persons with disabilities and any targeted recruitment) to ensure that additional funds can be quickly allocated to RA as needed to support personnel with disabilities.



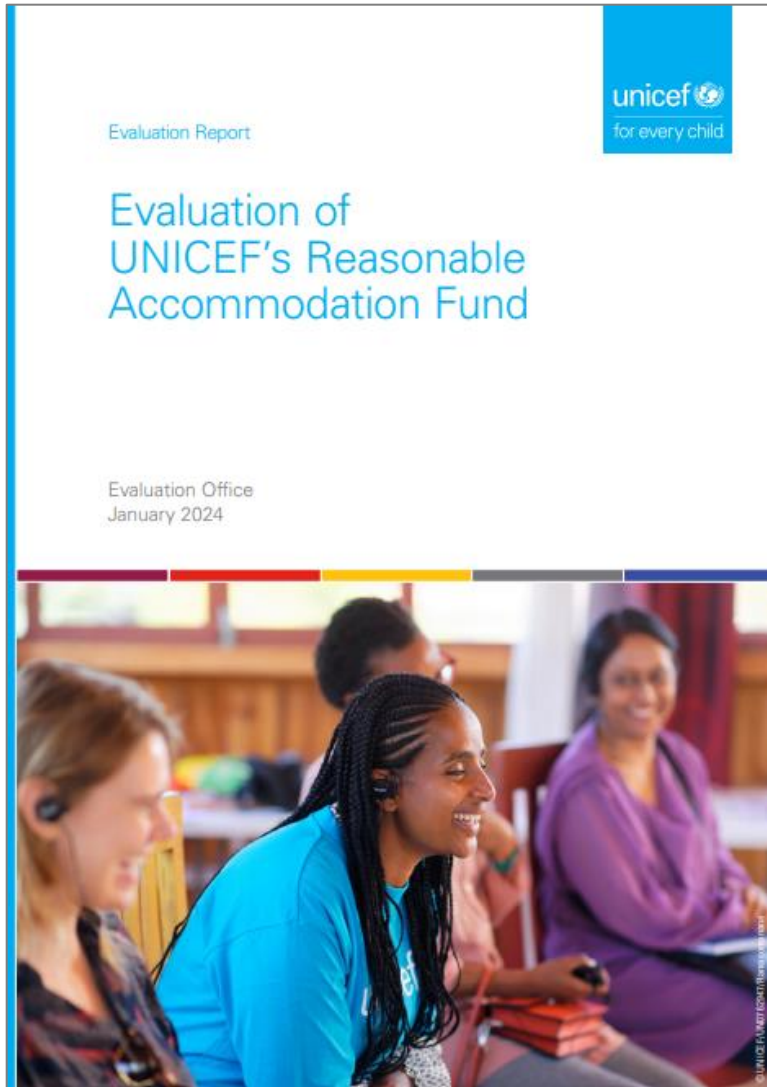
Recommendation 7

UNICEF should **review the composition of the RA Committee**, which decides on requests over US\$2,500, to ensure broad representation and appropriate expertise and avoid potential conflicts of interests if committee members are also in positions to advise personnel with disabilities, for example through Disability Connect.

Recommendation 8



UNICEF should continue to **share knowledge and experience on reasonable accommodation with other UN organizations** to promote collaboration and learning in this area and the effective inclusion and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities.



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For any questions on this evaluation, please contact evalhelp@unicef.org.