



# **UNV CONNECT BUDDY PROGRAMME HANDBOOK**

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## INTRODUCTION

UNV Connect – Buddy Programme is more than a traditional buddy system - it's a global, peer-driven network created for UN Volunteers, by UN Volunteers. It connects currently serving volunteers with newcomers to share knowledge, guidance, local insights and network throughout the assignment. The goal is to ensure that every volunteer feels supported, engaged, and confident from day one.

## WHY JOIN?

### **New Volunteers, gain a trusted buddy who can:**

- Help navigate the local culture and workplace
- Support your onboarding and settling in
- Facilitate networking and knowledge-sharing for your new assignment

### **Buddies (Serving UN Volunteers) develop new skills by:**

- Sharing your experience and gain new perspectives
- Practicing leadership and mentoring
- Receiving recognition through certificates and badges

## ELIGIBILITY

*The UNV Connect – Buddy Programme runs on UNV's eCampus, a secure and central hub for all buddy activities. It's where you can connect, communicate, and access resources to support your buddy experience. Here's how it works and how to get started:*

### **Buddy Portal**

*UN Volunteers who have served for a minimum of six months may sign-up to be a buddy. New UN Volunteers are invited to access UNV Connect – Buddy Programme upon acceptance of their assignment on the Unified Volunteering Platform (UVP).*

### **Matching Process**

*As a new UN Volunteer, you are expected to use the searchable buddy directory to find a fellow UN Volunteer based on criteria like country of assignment, gender, languages, or Host Entity. You may connect with more than one buddy for a wider peer network.*

### **Communication Tools**

*Use our secure messaging feature on eCampus to connect with your buddy. If you choose to communicate via external apps (e.g. WhatsApp or Telegram), note that UNV is not responsible for any issues that may arise.*

### **Learning Resources**

*Access orientation materials like this handbook, how-to guides, and tip-sheets to support your journey*

### **Security and Privacy**

*UNV eCampus ensures data security and confidentiality in line with UN protocols. Your personal info stays protected, and discussions are only visible to verified UN Volunteers. If you need help, you can contact the UNV Learning Helpdesk via eCampus.*

### **Continuous Access**

*You will have access to UNV Connect throughout your assignment, not just during the first 90 days. Use it anytime to join communities, connect with peers, and exchange useful resources, building a strong and supportive volunteer network across the United Nations.*

## TERMS OF USE AND RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

*To ensure a positive experience, all participants must follow the UNV Connect - Buddy Programme's Terms of Use and Code of Conduct.*

### ☐ ☒ ☐ **Confidentiality**

*Respect your buddy's privacy. Anything shared between you should stay confidential, unless there's a serious issue (like a safety or safeguarding concern) that must be reported to UNV. Trust is key to open, honest communication.*

### ☐ ☒ ☐ **Professional Conduct**

*Treat your buddy with respect, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity. Avoid harassment, discrimination, or inappropriate language. Be mindful of differences and open to learning. Misconduct won't be tolerated and may be reported. By joining, you agree to follow the UNV Code of Conduct and eCampus Terms of Use.*

### ☐ ☒ ☐ **Communication Protocols**

*Connect at least once a week during the first month, then agree on a schedule that suits you both. eCampus is the recommended platform as it's secure and supported by UNV. If you choose to communicate via external apps (e.g. WhatsApp or Telegram), note that UNV is not responsible for any issues that may arise.*

### ☐ ☒ ☐ **Cultural Sensitivity**

*Your buddy may be from a different background - national or international. Respect differences in culture, language, and identity. Use inclusive language, avoid UN jargon, and be open to learning. Avoid assumptions - ask politely if unsure. Share your own background and explain local norms gently.*

### ☐ ☒ ☐ **Appropriate Boundaries**

*Keep the buddy relationship friendly and professional. Don't ask for favors, offer work advantages, or handle issues beyond your role. Refer serious concerns to UNV support. It's fine to chat about life to build rapport, but respect comfort levels and never share confidential UN information. Focus on support, onboarding, and learning.*

### ☐ ☒ ☐ **Use of eCampus**

*It is a secure, UN-managed platform protected by UN data privacy standards. Do not spam or post off-topic issues as these won't be addressed, and your access may be terminated. Treat the online space as you would a professional workplace - it reflects your personal brand.*

### ☐ ☒ ☐ **Safety in Meetings**

*Prioritize safety. Meeting in person is optional and based on mutual comfort. If you do meet, choose public or official spaces, follow UNDSS safety guidelines, and maintain professional conduct. Keep it low-cost or free - each person covers their own expenses.*



## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As **new UN Volunteers**, take an active role in your onboarding. Here's what you should do:

- **Opt-in:** Upon accepting your assignment offer on UVP, respond to the invitation to join UNV Connect – this will allow you to actively search for a buddy via eCampus.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Be clear about what support you are looking for - cultural tips, workplace insights, or simply a friendly check-in. Share your questions openly so your buddy can support you effectively. Remember, you lead the conversation and drive your onboarding experience.
- **Engage Regularly:** Check in regularly, especially during the first weeks. Respond promptly, show up for meetings, and communicate if you need to reschedule. Treat your buddy time as a professional commitment; it shows respect and helps you get the most from the programme.
- **Be Open to Learning:** Your buddy may be from a different background - national or international. Use this opportunity to ask about local customs, language, and workplace norms. Stay curious, open-minded, and respectful. This is a two-way learning journey that builds cultural awareness for both of you.
- **Respect Boundaries and Confidentiality:** Keep the relationship professional. Agree on when and how to stay in touch. Don't share personal information without permission. If something feels off, let your buddy know or contact UNV for support. Trust is built through mutual respect.

As **Buddies (Serving UN Volunteers)**, you are a peer and colleague, not a formal supervisor. By signing up as a buddy, you agree to be accessible to the new volunteer, especially during their first two months. Here's what is expected of you:

- **Be Available:** Respond promptly to any buddy request. If co-located, meet in person; if remote, set up a call and agree on a check-in rhythm – some meet weekly during the first month. Your goal is to be a steady point of support as they settle in.
- **Provide Local Insight:** Guide the volunteer navigate work and daily life. Share tips on local customs, workplace norms, and practical info like housing or where to get a SIM card. If you don't know an answer, guide them to the right contact information. Your support helps them settle in with confidence.
- **Listen First & Support:** Be more than an info source; listen with empathy. New volunteers may feel uncertain or overwhelmed, so offer supportive, judgement-free guidance, and celebrate their successes. Keep conversations private unless safety is a concern.
- **Encourage Networking:** Connect your buddy with volunteer groups, events, or networks. Introduce them to others and share useful work and local resources like learning or support services. Whether in person or online, it helps expand their connections and support their integration.
- **Maintain Professionalism:** You are a peer, not a supervisor or counselor. Share advice, not directives, and let your buddy make their own choices. Stay neutral, avoid personal opinions, and refer serious issues to the right support channels. Clear boundaries help keep the support safe and effective.
- **Be Reliable:** Follow through on your commitments and stay engaged. If you can't continue or something isn't working, let UNV know early. Report any serious concerns immediately - your role is to support and flag issues, not solve everything alone.

## BEST PRACTICES

**Ensure Clear Communication:** Set a regular check-in schedule and be responsive. Listen actively, use clear and friendly language, and adapt if there's a language barrier. Encourage questions, stay honest, and celebrate small wins to build trust and connection.

**Set Goals & Expectations:** Discuss what you each hope to gain whether it's settling in, learning a skill, or building confidence. Agree on goals, feedback style, and any boundaries. Clear expectations help avoid misunderstandings and keep your partnership focused and supportive.

**Encourage Mutual Learning:** The buddy programme is a two-way exchange. Buddies share experience but can also learn from the new volunteer's fresh ideas and skills. Talk about each other's strengths and explore how you can support each other. This makes the partnership rewarding for both of you.

**Promote Informal Bonding:** Get to know your buddy beyond work; friendly rapport builds trust. Try a virtual coffee chat or start meetings with a fun question. Small, informal moments help reduce isolation and make the experience more personal and enjoyable - just keep it mutually comfortable and inclusive.

**Manage Challenges Constructively:** Misunderstandings can happen - missed check-ins, unclear advice, or cultural missteps. Address such issues early with empathy and openness. Talk it through, reset expectations if needed, and be willing to adjust. Assume good intent and remember, both of you are learning and volunteering your time.

**Seek Support to Resolve Conflicts:** If things aren't working, contact UNV for help or a re-match. There is no judgment in speaking up. Let us know if you can't continue or have any concerns. For serious issues, report immediately. Your wellbeing comes first.

**Give and Receive Feedback:** Share constructive, specific feedback to help each other grow - what's working and what could improve. Positive feedback builds motivation, and honest input strengthens the programme. UNV may ask for feedback at the end—please respond. Got an idea for improvement or a great buddy story? Contact us via eCampus!

**Sustaining Connections:** After the two-month onboarding buddy period ends, you are welcome to stay in touch informally. The relationship may evolve into a more equal peer exchange with less frequent check-ins. You can also hold a short closing chat to reflect, thank each other, and continue as buddies for other newcomers - give back to the cycle of support!

## CONTACT

**Reach out to UNV via the eCampus Helpdesk  
or write directly to [support@unv.org](mailto:support@unv.org)**