unicef | for every child

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Senior Editor Consultant

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	New York, USA (remote)
DURATION OF CONTRACT	5.5 months

Purpose of Assignment

To provide senior editorial review for the launch and first months of GPD's Staff Working Paper Series, so that papers written by UNICEF staff are rigorous, clearly argued, grounded in evidence and published on time. The Senior Editor will review at least 15 papers over the assignment.

The Senior Editor will read and assess submitted papers and give authors clear, constructive written feedback, much as a journal reviewer would, under the guidance of the series' editors' group, and will help set the editorial standards that will define the series.

Scope of Work

GPD is launching a Staff Working Paper Series: short research and analytical papers (2,000 to 5,000 words) in which UNICEF staff share research, analysis and ideas on issues affecting children, drawing on their technical expertise and on evidence. Papers are published under the authors' names after a light internal editorial review rather than formal peer review. The first five or so papers are due in December 2026; further papers follow on a rolling basis.
Most authors are technical experts rather than professional researchers or writers, and many write in a second language. Comparable series at the World Bank, the IMF and other institutions show that strong editorial review is what makes such papers read and cited. This consultancy provides that review.

Working part-time (an estimated 50 working days over the assignment), the Senior Editor will review at least 15 papers, alongside the editors' group, which decides on pitches and does the final check, and a communications consultant, who manages the series page and production. The core of the role is reading papers and giving authors substantive written feedback; it is not primarily a copy-editing role.

Key areas of work include:

Workstream 1: Editorial Standards and Launch Papers

Develop the series' editorial toolkit: paper template, house style sheet, and checklists for pitch review and the final check, covering the five publication tests and publication ethics (plagiarism, AI use, conflicts of interest and author contributions).
Output: Editorial toolkit agreed with the editors' group.

Review the five or so launch papers, give their authors written feedback, and assess revised drafts until they are ready for publication in December 2026.
Output: Review reports and publication-ready launch papers (around five).

Workstream 2: Paper Review and Author Feedback

Review pitches (up to 500 words) before they reach the editors' group and give authors brief written feedback on focus, argument and feasibility.
Output: Written feedback on pitches.

Read each submitted draft and write a review report on the strength of the argument, structure, use of quantitative and qualitative evidence, engagement with current research, and clarity; then assess revised drafts against that feedback. Provide light language editing where needed, with particular support for authors writing in a second language.
Output: A written review report for each draft and feedback on revisions, for at least 15 papers over the assignment (including the launch papers).

Workstream 3: Quality, Ethics and Pipeline

Prepare each paper for the final check: plagiarism screening, references, disclaimer and author declarations; flag any quality, evidence or safety issues to the editors' group.
Output: Completed final-check checklist for each paper.

Keep the pipeline of papers on schedule, working with the communications consultant on final PDFs, and recommend how the editorial model should evolve.
Output: Monthly pipeline tracker and a short end-of-assignment note with recommendations.

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable
Editorial toolkit and launch papers	Editorial toolkit (template, style sheet, pitch and final-check checklists, short author FAQ), and review reports for the five or so launch papers, with revised drafts assessed to publication-ready standard	18 December 2026 – 18 days
Paper review, January–March 2027	Pitch feedback, written review reports and assessment of revised drafts for at least 6 further papers, final-check preparation, and monthly pipeline tracker.	30 March 2027 – 18 days
Paper review and end-of-assignment note, April–May 2027	Written review reports and assessment of revised drafts for at least 4 further papers (bringing the total to at least 15), final-check preparation, and an end-of-assignment note (up to 3 pages) with recommendations for the series' editorial model.	30 April 2027 – 14 days

Payment Schedule:

Payment will be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

Important Notes

- Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered "staff members" under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF's policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.

- Contracts are conditional upon the selected candidate's willingness to comply with any current or future vaccination requirements that may be established by UNICEF, where applicable. Failure to comply with applicable vaccination requirements, where required and without an approved medical exemption by UNICEF, may result in the withdrawal of the consultancy offer or termination of the contract in accordance with the General Terms and Conditions of Contract.

- UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

QUALIFICATIONS / SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE/ COMPETENCIES (CORE/TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL) / LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

Minimum requirements:

- Education:
    - Advanced university degree (Master's or PhD) in social sciences, public policy, economics, public health, international development or a related field.
    - A PhD is an asset.
- Work Experience:
    - At least 10 years of experience in research and policy publishing, including an extensive record of publishing in and/or reviewing for peer-reviewed journals (for example as a regular peer reviewer, editorial board member or journal editor).
    - Experience working with first-time authors and authors writing in a second language; gives tactful, clear and timely written feedback.
- Language requirement:
    - Excellent written English required;
    - French and/or Spanish an asset.
- Skills:
    - Proven ability to assess the quality of research and policy papers and to write constructive, actionable review reports that help authors sharpen their argument, structure and use of evidence.
    - Sound understanding of quantitative and qualitative research methods and of publication ethics (e.g. COPE guidelines, plagiarism screening, disclosure of AI use).

Desirables:

- UNICEF/UN experience is an asset.
- Experience editing a working paper series, academic journal or flagship report for an international organisation, think tank or university.
- Knowledge of child-focused programmes or social policy is an asset.