Job Description Type: Specific Job Description

Category:IP (International Professionals)

Reason for Classification: Revised responsibilities

Level:P-4

Title: Health Specialist

Title Information in Parenthesis:

Health Emergency Preparedness and Response

Region: ESAR

Country: Kenya

Duty Station: Nairobi

Office: Global Programme Division

Section: Health

Unit: HEPR

Organizational Context:

The Global Programme Division (GPD) plays a central role in driving programme excellence across UNICEF. It provides global strategic leadership and policy direction, develops and monitors frameworks and standards, and ensures coherence and alignment across sectors, regions and partners. GPD generates high-impact, evidence-based solutions and serves as a hub of specialized expertise, offering technical guidance on policy reform and scalable programming. GPD leads UNICEF's policies, standards and negotiations for programme, ensuring the organization's assets and priorities are aligned with and contribute to child development goals.

In addition, GPD strengthens country-level implementation through integrated technical support, linking global policy with on-the-ground action to deliver results for children at scale.

As part of this structure, UNICEF has established Centres of Excellence (CoEs) to provide high-quality, demand-driven technical assistance to Country and Regional Offices, and their governments and partners. Located strategically in Nairobi, Panama, Amman and Bangkok, the CoEs bring together cross-cutting expertise across time zones. Global Programme Practices in CoEs function as a single point of entry for support, delivering tailored assistance in priority areas such as policy reform in matters that advance the wellbeing of children, at-scale programme design, public finance, workforce development and institutional strengthening, and timely humanitarian response while promoting resilient development. In so doing, the CoEs also contribute to global policy standards ensuring that UNICEF's support is grounded in practical knowledge.

Strategic Context:

The frequency, scale, and complexity of humanitarian crises and public health emergencies (PHEs) have increased sharply in recent years. Globally, more than one in six children are affected by escalating conflicts, maternal mortality rates are three times higher in humanitarian settings, and half of all under-five deaths occur in these contexts. UNICEF now responds to approximately 100 PHEs and disease outbreaks annually. Addressing these challenges, while upholding UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) and strengthening global health security (GHS), requires specialized technical expertise in health emergency preparedness and response (HEPR) and will be deployable on short notice as part of emergency response mechanisms.

UNICEF's HEPR programme works to strengthen global, regional, national, and community systems to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from crises, while ensuring the continuity of essential health services. Humanitarian action is a cornerstone of UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2026–2029, Impact Result 6: Every child lives in a safe and sustainable environment and ensures the rights and best interests of children remain central in emergencies.

Anchored within the Programme Offer for Technical Assistance, the HEPR programme provides tailored, demand-driven expertise to reinforce preparedness, coordination, surge response, and system recovery. It is led and coordinated globally by the Associate Director, HEPR, working with regional and country teams and in close collaboration with governments, UN partners, and other stakeholders.

The Health Specialist (HEPR) will provide technical expertise to governments, UNICEF Country Offices, and partners to ensure the effective delivery of life-saving health services for children and families during all-hazard health emergencies, while advocating for equity and resilience in humanitarian settings. This includes short notice surge deployment to

Country Offices as part of emergency response mechanisms, as required. The HEPR Specialist may be embedded in the PHE unit, the Health Emergencies in Humanitarian Settings unit, or serve in a dual capacity, supporting multi-sectoral coordination, technical guidance, and systems strengthening across contexts.

Purpose of the Job:

The Health Specialist – HEPR position ensures that partners are prepared to prevent, coordinate, respond to, and recover from health emergencies in alignment with the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs), humanitarian-peace-development nexus approaches, and preparedness procedures.

This role emphasizes technical and strategic partnerships with governments, global regional bodies, and academic institutions to accelerate child mortality reduction efforts, notably innovations at national and subnational levels that ensure that intervention coverage is scaled-up for all children, before, during, and after crises. This directly supports the UNICEF Health Strategic Plan and progress toward SDG 2030 targets, by strengthening policy, financing, institutional capacity, the health workforce, digital governance, and community engagement.

The incumbent cultivates partnerships for planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of innovative actions to protect and expand performance of health services for child mortality reduction in times of crises. Under the supervision of the Unit Chief, and in close collaboration with health colleagues and cross-sectoral partners—including Nutrition, WASH, Social and Behaviour Change (SBC), Child Protection, Education, Social Policy/Cash Transfer, the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), Supply Division, and other relevant sections—the Health Specialist – HEPR will deliver coordinated and effective technical assistance to support child survival and resilience in emergencies.

Key functions, accountabilities and related duties/tasks:

The Health Specialist – Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HEPR) advances partnerships for high-quality, demand-driven technical assistance to governments, UNICEF Country Offices, and regional and global partners. The role ensures countries are better informed and equipped to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from all-hazard health emergencies. The Specialist also guides global-facing partners, strategies, multi-sectoral coordination, and inter-agency collaboration.

1. Technical Advisory on Health Emergency Preparedness and Response

- Provide expert guidance and technical leadership to governments on the design of National Action Plans for Health Security (NAPHS) and preparedness and response (PPR) components of National Health and Maternal/Child Survival Strategies.
- Conduct national and subnational analyses of public health intervention performance, identify critical bottlenecks while identifying opportunities / innovations to improve performance.
- Provide technical assistance and oversight for country-level analysis and the design of Emergency Preparedness Plans (EPP), including risk profiling of priority health hazards and preparedness actions.
- Conduct national and regional risk analyses to prioritize preparedness actions in vulnerable and high-risk settings.
- Support the development, implementation, and periodic updating of HEPR plans and vulnerability assessments.
- Translate surveillance and risk data into operational recommendations and strategies for mobilizing resources.
- Deliver surge technical and emergency coordination support to global, regional, and country-level preparedness and emergency operations through short notice deployments as part of emergency response mechanisms, field missions, or remote support as needed, including for PHEs.
- Review and advise on Country Office HEPR proposals and plans, ensuring alignment with global standards, UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2026–2029, and the Programme Offer for Technical Assistance.
- Lead multisectoral coordination at country level to strengthen HEPR, ensuring continuity of essential health, education, nutrition, and social services for children and families.
- Promote integration of resilience-building and preparedness approaches within national and regional HEPR programmes.

2. Capacity Development

- Provide technical leadership for strengthening regional and country-level capacity in HEPR and risk reduction. Bring technical expertise on context and need collaboration with other divisions and partners.

- Monitor country office HEPR programmes, identifying gaps and capacity support opportunities.
- Design and deliver capacity-building packages, including training curricula, operational tools, and guidance, to enhance preparedness for all-hazard emergencies.
- Build systems-level capacity by promoting preparedness and resilience as integral components of HEPR programmes.

3. Strategic Planning and Coordination

- Contribute to the development and implementation of UNICEF's global strategies, policies, and operational guidance on HEPR, with particular focus on fragile and high-risk contexts.
- Monitor and disseminate updates on World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations alerts and risk assessments to inform UNICEF leadership and programme teams.
- Engage with technical counterparts in regional entities on strategies and guidance that affect children in health emergencies.
- Provide technical input on cross-cutting themes (e.g., child health, nutrition, education, WASH, protection) with implications for emergency preparedness and response.
- Actively lead and contribute to internal multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms (task forces, working groups) to strengthen preparedness and response efforts.
- Document and share outcomes of HEPR discussions to inform institutional planning, cross-sectoral learning, and decision-making.

4. Networking, Inter-Agency Collaboration, and Programming Partnerships

- Lead partner coordination mechanisms to identify and resolve gaps in health systems and public health interventions in fragile and humanitarian settings.
- Strengthen institutional situational awareness by maintaining communication with external experts and partners, in collaboration with EMOPS, to monitor emerging crises.
- Develop, maintain, and strengthen partnerships with WHO, OCHA, IASC, governments, NGOs, academic institutions and other key partners to align strategies and approaches for HEPR.

- Represent UNICEF in inter-agency technical discussions, global fora, and high-level meetings on health emergencies.
- Facilitate inter-agency collaboration and cross-sectoral partnerships to improve preparedness and response capacity across humanitarian and development settings.

5. Strategic Communications, Information, and Knowledge Management

- Develop situation reports, technical briefs, and communication products for internal and external stakeholders.
- Prepare technical summaries and analyses to inform emergency planning, advocacy, and decision-making.
- Identify and propose solutions to close knowledge gaps, from formative research to implementation research and broader surveys/studies.
- Develop and disseminate technical standards, protocols, guidance notes, and training materials on HEPR.
- Lead operational research to identify and document lessons learned, innovations, and best practices in HEPR.
- Contribute to UNICEF-wide HEPR fundraising initiatives by preparing donor proposals, reports, and presentations.

Impact of Results:

UNICEF's Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HEPR) programme contributes to global health security by implementing proactive and responsive measures that reduce the risk and mitigate the impact of events threatening children's health across regions and borders.

The work of the Health Specialist – HEPR will enable the Centres of Excellence (CoEs) to deliver effective technical, policy, and systems-strengthening support to UNICEF Country Offices, Ministries of Health, and regional and global partners in managing health emergencies, scaling up services, and building resilient and innovative approaches for health systems. By shaping policies and strategies, accelerating practical solutions, and supporting scalable, high-impact programming across health and related social sectors, the Specialist will help ensure that the rights, survival, and well-being of children are protected before, during, and after emergencies.

Competencies and level of proficiency required:

Core Values:

Care

Respect

Integrity

Trust

Accountability

Sustainability

Core Competencies:

Demonstrates self-awareness and ethical awareness (1)

Works collaboratively with others (1)

Builds and maintains partnerships (1)

Innovates and embraces change (1)

Thinks and acts strategically (1)

Drive to achieve impactful results (1)

Manages ambiguity and complexity (1)

Recruitment Qualifications:

Education requirement:

An Advanced university degree (Master's Degree or higher) in the area of Public health, medicine, global or international health, health research, health policy and/or management, biostatistics, epidemiology, or any other related area is required.

Experience required:

A minimum of 8 years of experience of progressively responsible professional experience in developing countries in coordinating health emergency preparedness and response, public health emergencies, or humanitarian health programming, including work in fragile, conflict-affected, or high-risk settings is required. Significant role in applied research on related public health topics.

Areas of work:

Health emergency preparedness and response, both for public health emergencies and for health emergencies in humanitarian settings programming.

Additional relevant areas include community protection, primary health care systems strengthening, and monitoring, evaluation, research, data analysis, knowledge management, health partnerships, and public health policy.

Desirable:

1. Experience in health emergency preparedness and response in humanitarian, fragile or conflict-affected settings.
2. Experience in emergency deployment or field-based technical support during public health emergencies.
3. Experience in applied/operational research or analysis of epidemiological, surveillance or programme data.
4. Experience coordinating with governments, United Nations entities, humanitarian partners, civil society or other public health stakeholders.

Skills required for the job:

1. Knowledge of healthcare and public health systems, including in fragile settings.
2. Strong analytical and problem-solving skills, with the ability to manage competing priorities across a varied and dynamic portfolio.
3. Results-driven, with demonstrated ability to translate strategy into action within complex operational environments.

Language requirements:

Fluency in English is required. Working knowledge of French or Arabic is considered an asset. Knowledge of another official UN language (Chinese, Russian or Spanish) is an asset.