

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) FOR INSTITUTIONAL CONTRACTORS

International institutional consultancy to support scaling and institutionalizing Caring Families programme for parents of children with disabilities

Background and Context

In response to the high prevalence rates of violence against children, there has been a surge of global interest in evidence-based violence prevention and the promotion of nurturing relationships between parents/caregivers and their children. A growing body of scientific literature has shown that social-learning-theory-based parenting programmes can effectively diminish rates of violence against children and improve a range of related outcomes, such as positive parenting skills, developmentally responsive care and affection, and parental mental health.

One such programme is Parenting for Lifelong Health for Young Children (PLH for Young Children), predominantly a group-based parenting programme that aims to establish and sustain nurturing relationships between parents and caregivers and their children ages 2-9 years, and thereby prevent and reduce the risk of violence against children and maltreatment at home and in the community. Grounded in social learning theory and behavioral change techniques, it aims to strengthen parenting skills and behaviors that help parents and caregivers provide adequate support and care to their children. By building positive relations and promoting alternatives to violent discipline, the programme also contributes to the prevention and treatment of disruptive child behaviors, and the reduction of parental stress and depression. PLH for Young Children is part of a suite of open access, non-commercialized parenting programmes to prevent violence in low-resource settings, developed and rigorously tested through a collaboration between WHO, Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town in South Africa, the universities of Oxford, Bangor and Reading in the United Kingdom, and UNICEF.

Since late 2017, the Government of Montenegro (the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare) with the support of UNICEF and the EU has made considerable progress in implementing PLH for Young Children in Montenegro, under the local brand Caring Families. More than 150 facilitators, eleven supervisors and two national trainers have been trained, mostly psychologists, pedagogues, nurses, preschool teachers and social workers working at primary healthcare centres, kindergartens, NGOs and other relevant institutions. The training program has been accredited by the Institute for Social and Child Protection and the Bureau for Education. More than 2000 parents recruited across seventeen municipalities have benefitted from the programme thus far.

To ensure equitable access to support services and respond to the needs of parents of children with developmental delays and disabilities, a pilot version of the Caring Families programme was implemented in 2025. The programme was specifically adapted for parents of children aged 3–9 years with developmental delays and disabilities, particularly in the areas of speech and language development and social interaction. During the pilot, more precisely in summer 2025, a formative research study was conducted, involving both parents and facilitators, to assess the relevance, feasibility, and impact of the adapted content. Based on these findings as well as on feedback collected through the implementation of the autumn 2025 cycle, the programme was further adapted in order to enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of the programme and ensure its readiness for broader implementation and scale-up. In the process it was branded as “Together for Caring Families”.

In light of the above, technical assistance is required to support the further scale-up and institutionalization of the programmes, ensuring their long-term sustainability.

2. Purpose, Objectives & Expected Results

The purpose of this consultancy is to facilitate scaling up and sustainability of the Caring Families programme and the Together for Caring Families programme for parents of children with disabilities in Montenegro.

The objectives of the assignment are:

In relation to the Together for Caring Families programme:

- To build capacity of new facilitators of the Together for Caring Families programme including through training and supervision in order to ensure programme delivery with quality and fidelity.
- To train national supervisors of the Together for Caring Families programme, enabling professional progression and strengthening Montenegro's capacity to independently ensure high-quality programme delivery in the future.

In relation to the Caring Families programme:

- To support existing national trainers to certify an additional national trainer for the Caring Families programme in order to expand the existing pool of national trainers and strengthen Montenegro's capacity to independently scale up the programme by training new facilitators and extending implementation to additional locations. Furthermore, existing national trainers will thus be capacitated to certify additional trainers in the future.
- To, based on the national context and international experience, develop a Supervisor's Guide for for Caring Families programme that provides practical guidance to coaches, enabling them to effectively support newly trained facilitators during group coaching sessions.

In relation to both programmes:

- To provide further recommendations to UNICEF and the Government of Montenegro on the institutionalization and scale-up of the programmes, especially the Together for Caring Families programme, ensuring its long-term sustainability and strengthening Montenegro's self-sufficiency in its continued expansion.

UNICEF Country Office in Montenegro will provide translation and interpretation services. UNICEF Country Office in Montenegro and its partners will provide logistics for events. For meetings held online the agency should use their own online platform subscription.

3. Description of the Assignment

The following tasks are expected to be completed:

- To train new facilitators of the Together for Caring Families in autumn 2026 and in 2027, as well as to provide them with supervision during the autumn 2026, spring 2027 and autumn 2027 cycles, in order to ensure programme delivery with quality and fidelity. Combination of home-based and face to face.
- To train a group of national supervisors of the Together for Caring Families programme by gradually assigning them increased responsibilities under the activity outlined above, thereby strengthening their capacity to independently support and oversee programme implementation from 2028 onwards. Combination of home-based and face to face.
- To support existing national trainers to certify an additional national trainer for the Caring Families programme by reviewing training videos and certification reports by existing national trainers. Home-based.
- To, based on the national context and international experience, develop a Supervisor's Guide for the Caring Families programme that provides practical guidance to coaches. The Guide should include practical guidance on the preparation and facilitation of group coaching meetings, as well as recommendations for addressing common challenges and discussion topics that arise during Caring

Families programme implementation. Experience to date has shown that newly trained facilitators tend to encounter similar challenges when they begin delivering the programme. The inclusion of a troubleshooting section would support supervisors in providing timely, consistent and high-quality guidance, thereby promoting a more standardized approach to facilitator support across implementation sites. Home-based.

- Preparation of a brief final consultancy report (maximum 5 pages), which will include recommendations to UNICEF and the Government of Montenegro on the institutionalization and scale-up of the programmes, particularly the Together for Caring Families programme, ensuring its long-term sustainability and strengthening Montenegro's self-sufficiency in its continued expansion. Home-based.

4. Deliverables, timelines, and payment schedule

Deliverables	Tentative deadlines	Tentative payment schedule
1. Develop a Supervisor's Guide for Caring Families that provides practical guidance to coaches	By 30 November 2026	40%
2. Training new facilitators in the Together for Caring Families programme in 2026 and providing supervision, including training of new supervisors by gradually assigning them increased responsibilities	By 22 December 2026	
3. Training new facilitators in the Together for Caring Families programme in 2027 and providing supervision, including training of new supervisors by gradually assigning them increased responsibilities	By 20 December 2027	60%
4. To support existing national trainers to certify an additional national trainer for the Caring Families programme by reviewing training videos and certification reports by existing national trainers. Home-based.	By 20 December 2027	
5. Preparation of a brief final consultancy report (maximum 5 pages), which will include recommendations to UNICEF and the Government of Montenegro on the institutionalization and scale-up of the programmes, particularly Together for Caring Families, ensuring its long-term sustainability and strengthening Montenegro's self-sufficiency in its continued expansion. Home-based.	By 22 December 2027	

5. Travel

- During the application process, the Technical and Financial proposals should outline required travel (duration and number of trips).
- Travel costs will be calculated based on economy class travel, regardless of the length of travel. Costs for accommodation, meals and incidentals shall not exceed applicable daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rates, as promulgated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).
- Some meetings will be held online.
- The international team should arrange their own travel and accommodation.

6. Management and Organisation

- **Management:** The consultancy will be supervised by Early Childhood Development Officer. The Consultancy Agency should communicate with the Early Childhood Development Officer on a regular basis and share all deliverables as they become available for review and potential feedback.
- **Organization:** International Institutional Consultancy is required, meeting the criteria described below.
- **Recourse:** UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.
- **Schedule:** This assignment will commence on 1 September 2026.

7. Qualification Requirements

Contracted agency's expert(s) should be trainers of Parenting for Lifelong Health for Young Children (PLH-YC). At least one should be Master Trainer of PLH-YC. In addition, the Contracted agency's expert(s) are expected to have following qualifications to complete the task:

- Advanced university degree in clinical psychology, child psychology, early childhood development or a similar technical field;
- At least 5 years of working with children and parents of children with disabilities;
- Familiarity with the regions of Central, Eastern or South-East Europe;
- Excellent command of English (both spoken and written);
- Excellent facilitation and communication skills;
- Previous work experience with UNICEF or UN is a strong asset.

8. Application procedure

The potential contractors are expected to submit a proposal based on these Terms of Reference. The proposal should consist of:

- i. **Technical Proposal including:**
 - a) Portfolio of the organisation/institution/agency with examples of previous work on similar projects and clients in the last 5 years at least;
 - b) Title/designation of each team member including their CVs, clearly outlining how each of the team members fulfils the above requirements and role of each team member for the fulfilment of above tasks. One team member should be assigned as a team lead to facilitate communication with UNICEF;
 - c) Description of the methodology and technical approach with a tentative work plan with the number of working days and timeframe in line with the ToRs;
 - d) LRPS Form signed.
- ii. **Price Proposal (Budget) including**
 - a) Daily fee rate for each team member based on the number of working days included in the Technical Proposal.
 - b) Estimated travel costs both international and in country travel. Daily subsistence allowance (DSA) will, where applicable, be paid up to a maximum of the official UN rate. (Reimbursement of travel costs / accommodation expenses will be based on actual expenses).
 - c) Other costs if applicable.

The price, i.e. financial proposal shall indicate budget estimated in EUR.

8. Evaluation

1) Technical components (70 points)

ITEM	TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA	MAX OBTAINABLE POINTS
1	Overall Response - the understanding of the assignment by the proposer and the alignment of the proposal submitted with the ToR	
1.1	• Completeness of response	3
1.2	• Overall concord between TOR/needs and proposal	3
2	Company and Key Personnel	
2.1	• Range and depth of organizational experience with similar assignment	5
2.2	• Samples of previous work, number of customers, size of projects	4
2.3	• Key personnel: relevant experience and qualifications of the proposed team for the assignment	18
3	Company policies	
3.1.	• Company policy on Child labor, Safeguarding and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (articulate policies for the protection & safeguarding of children and prevention of PSEA)	3
3.2.	• Gender component: At least 1 female in the management structure or ownership of the company	2
3.3.	• Workplace policies on disabilities	2
4.	Proposed Methodology and Approach	
4.1	• Methodology and technical approach outline	25
4.2	• Tentative work plan	5
TOTAL TECHNICAL SCORE		70

Minimum technical score: 70% of 70 points = 49 points

2) Financial component (total of 30 points)

- Technical proposal evaluation. Proposals passing the minimum technical pass score (49 points-70% of the maximum points obtainable for technical proposal) will continue into the Financial proposal evaluation.
- Financial proposal evaluation. The lowest price proposal will be awarded the full score assigned to the commercial proposal.
- Recommendation. The recommendation for award of contract will be based on best combination of technical and financial score.

- Final award and contracts. Based on verified nominations and final scores, contract negotiations could be initiated with one or more successful Proposers.
- The UNICEF evaluation team will select the Proposal which is of high quality, clear and meets the stated requirements and offers the best combination of technical and financial score.