

DRAFT
Press Council of Botswana Gender Code of Ethics

1. Preamble

Members of the Press Council of Botswana recognise that gender equality is intrinsic to freedom of expression; that all women and men have the right to communicate their views, interests and needs, and that “giving voice to the voiceless” is critical to citizenship, participation, and responsive governance.

Members shall strive to ensure, through progressive targets, that women’s views and voices are equally heard and represented across all media.

Members pledge through this code to strive for gender balance and to challenge gender stereotypes in and through the media.

The Code is informed, among others, by the Constitution of the Republic of Botswana; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights; the Windhoek Declaration on Media Freedom in Africa and the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and Botswana Vision 2016.

2. Definition of terms

Discrimination means any act, omission, distinction, exclusion or any differential treatment which disadvantages or compromises any person either directly or indirectly based on sex, race, pregnancy, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, and/or marital status or other analogous ground.”¹

Gender stereotyping means media that portrays a person or persons of a certain gender in a manner that exploits, objectifies or demeans.”²

Negative gender portrayal refers to language, attitudes or representations (either explicit or implied) which tend to associate particular roles, modes of behaviour or characteristics to people on the basis of gender in a manner that restricts and entrenches the role of persons of such gender in society or sections of society.”³

Sexist language is language that unnecessarily excludes one sex or gives unequal treatment to women and men”⁴

3. Application

3.1 The Gender Code of Ethics will govern the conduct and practice of all media practitioners, media owners, publishers and media institutions that are members of the Botswana Press Council.

¹ Incorporating definitions from the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the South African Advertising Standards Authority Code of Conduct

² South African Advertising Standards Authority Code of Conduct

³ Australian Commercial Radio Codes of Practice and Guidelines and South African Advertising Standards Authority Code of Conduct

⁴ Australian Commercial Radio Codes of Practice and Guidelines

3.2 This Gender Code of Ethics amplifies the Media Code of Ethics. Therefore this Gender Code of Ethics should be read together with the Media Code of Ethics of the Press Council of Botswana.

4. Basic Principles

4.1 Media practitioners are required to seek and acquire information on gender issues. They should keep abreast of gender debates/issues.

4.2 Media coverage should be balanced, fair and inclusive of both sexes.

4.3 Members shall ensure a diverse range of female perspectives is included in all stories, including politics, economics and war.

4.4 Media headlines, news highlights, pictures, audio and graphics should guard against over simplifying and reporting gender issues out of context.

5. Equitable treatment in media coverage

5.1 Media houses must ensure a balance of women and men as sources, experts, authorities and commentators on a wide range of issues debated in the media.

5.2 Media houses should give equal prominence to achievements of both men and women.

5.3 A special effort must be made to ensure that women's contributions to the socio-political and economic development of society are captured.

5.4 Media houses must be pro-active in sourcing male voices in non-traditional areas and roles.

6. Accountability

6.1 Media practitioners should act responsibly at all times. Media houses should have policies that encourage reporting on gender issues.

6.2 Public officials, regardless of sex and social standing, should be held accountable for their actions. Gender should not be accorded undue emphasis in coverage on the abuse of power.

7. Balance, Credibility, and Impartiality

7.1 Members shall encourage robust and free debate in which women and men are given equal access to air their views.

7.2 Women are not a homogenous group. Members shall ensure that the range of stories, sources and images portray men and women in all their diversity, in a fair and equitable manner.

7.3 Media practitioners and media houses should refrain from publicly identifying themselves in any way with partisan statements or actions.

7.4 Media practitioners should refrain from associating with organisations that condone sexism and other forms of discrimination.

7.5 Media practitioners should be courageous and challenge stereotypes without fear.

8. Minimising Harm

8.1 Gender stereotyping

8.1.1 Members should use non-sexist, gender-sensitive language.

8.1.2 Media practitioners should desist from placing undue emphasis on the sex of perpetrators.

8.1.3 Media Practitioners are not permitted to report stories that advocate hatred based on gender, and which constitutes incitement to cause harm.

8.1.4 In reporting sensitive issues such as rape, special care must be taken to balance the public's right to know with compassion for those affected.

8.1.5 Sources should be treated equally and with respect, regardless of their sex and class. The rights of all should be upheld all times.

8.1.6 Members shall avoid discriminatory references to people's sex, gender, sexual orientation or preference and which denigrates.

8.2 Coverage of gender-based violence

8.2.1 Media houses and practitioners should ensure that the identity of rape victims and victims of sexual violence is not published without the consent of the victim.

8.2.2 Media houses should not publish or broadcast any material, which judged within context, sanctions, promotes or glamorises any aspect of violence against women; promotes misogyny or constitutes incitement to harm.

8.2.3 Media practitioners should desist from perpetuating the link between women in a sexual context and women as victims of violence.

8.2.4 Women should not be depicted as victims of violence unless the violence is integral to the story being told.

9. Advertising

9.1 Media houses should ensure that consistent standards are applied between advertising and editorial content.

9.2 Gender stereotyping or negative gender portrayal should not be permitted in advertising.

10. Workplace - Capacity building and promotion

10.1 Media houses should ensure they develop policies that include a review of selection, recruitment, career pathing, capacity building, fast tracking and promotion policies.

10.2 Media houses should have effective and enforceable policies on sexual harassment.

10.3 Media houses should take steps to promote family friendly work practices and a culture of mutual respect between female and male employees.

10.4 Media practitioners should be encouraged to work across a diversity of beats.

10.5 Media houses should ensure they develop policies that promote gender balance on all beats.