

MEDIA COUNCIL OF TANZANIA

**CODE OF ETHICS
FOR
MEDIA PROFESSIONALS**

CONTENTS

Page

1. Rationale for Code of Ethics
2. Media Owners/Publishers
3. Media Managers and Editors
4. Broadcasters
5. Media Photography and Video Producers
6. News Agency Journalists
7. Public Information and Media Advertisers

RATIONALE FOR MEDIA CODES OF ETHICS PRACTICE

1.0 Media practice is a profession with various trades that use skills, knowledge and orientation to serve society as expected, and hence the need for ethical practice. Ethics is based on the assumption that our society has morals. Morality is behavior and actions that are guided by generally accepted human values and responsibilities. Media content is determined by individuals, but guided by their perception of what is right or wrong given the circumstances. Social, political and economic forces that are operating at that material time heavily influence their decisions. The value and decisions of media workers are based on life experiences, education and interactions with others in various social groups. These factors generate the guidelines we call codes of ethics. These codes do set the minimum standards that are acceptable in society in performing a certain task. It is against these standards that conduct can be measured and evaluated.

2.0 Standards are set internally. In a democracy and self-managing social sector, standards are not described by courts, executive decrees or the legislature (laws/acts). That is why in most countries there are bodies formed by the industry and

independent of government that set-up the codes and administer them. In non-democratic states governments set up these bodies. In Tanzania, the media refused to have a body imposed on them and instead the industry established the Media Council of Tanzania in 1995 and mandated it to enforce the code(s) of ethics, with the following aims:

- a) To protect the public which consumes the services and products of the media from any irresponsible, anti social or propaganda use of the media;
- b) To enable the public enjoy their basic rights especially that of information;
- c) To protect media practitioners from being forced to act in ways that are irresponsible, humiliating or in any manner contrary to the dictates of their consciences;
- d) To keep open all channels of communication inside the industry and within the public sphere;
- e) To ensure that the public gets information needed in self-governing society; and to ensure that ordinary people can always register their opinion through the media;
- f) To help practitioners understand principles and values that give the profession credibility;

CODE OF ETHICAL PRACTICE FOR MEDIA OWNERS/ PUBLISHERS

1.0 *Introduction*

The Media are social institutions in the information communication sector. They are there, to get society fully informed, educated and entertained.

These are established according to the guidelines outlined in the respective law(s). In Tanzania there is the Newspapers Act (1976), and the Broadcasting Services Act (1993). Furthermore, other laws, especially the telecommunications and the company acts, have a bearing on the establishment of media.

These professionals have functions in fulfilling the media role. The functions include, amongst others: binding society together, giving leadership to the public; linking leaders and the public; satisfying all needs of information for the various public; offering means of expression for various groups, providing a mirror of society, acting as an instrument of change and being the conscience of society.

In Addition, they are watchdogs of the environment, transmit cultural heritage, provide intrinsic entertainment and mobilize people. They are also expected to advance national interests,

and to promote key values and behavior patterns, especially so in times of war and other crises.

The license to operate is a contract between the owner/publisher and the public to fulfill the above roles and functions. The owner/publisher therefore has two basic responsibilities: to ensure the media role is fulfilled to society's expectations; and to provide and direct the resources needed in performing the service functions. These resources are materials, finance and manpower.

Society expects media services of a definite standard and quantity. Society also expects a particular kind of relationship between it and the media organ. The media must show that they are socially responsible.

2.0 ***Definitions and Status***

Media owners and publishers are individuals, groups or institutions with capital to establish a media organ. They may not be of the media professional themselves. The law requires that professionals should do executive management and operations. However it is the responsibility of the owner/publisher to declare in public the purpose for which the organ was established. This is referred to as editorial policy. The owner/publisher employs professionals who realize the policy objectives.

3.0 ***Ethical Practice***

Media Owners/Publishers should:

- 3.1 Employ managers on professional merit only.
- 3.2 State the purpose for which the organ was established.
- 3.3 As a rule, not interfere with the decisions of the managers in recruitment, management and disciplinary matters.
- 3.4 Spell out clearly professional and non-professional interests and ambitions in relation to the investment and the media organ.
- 3.5 Allow for the establishment of mechanisms that monitor and respond to public opinion and concern as regards the media output and service.
- 3.6 Avoid sell-out attitudes like summoning the manager before a disgruntled party for redress.
- 3.7 Consider with care gifts and offers that may compromise the policy, objectives and integrity of the enterprise.
- 3.8 Suggest without coercion or intimidation any feelings regarding certain issues to the manager.

CODE OF ETHICAL PRACTICE FOR MEDIA MANAGERS/EDITORS

1.0 *Introduction*

Media managers/editors are persons who realize the corporate purposes as defined by owners/publishers. By the nature of their placement within the organizational hierarchy managers/editors are synonymous with ownership and bear wholly the publishing responsibility. Managers/ editors are first and foremost-accomplished professionals. Both the owner/publisher and the registering/licensing authority must be satisfied with the credentials of the manger/editor during and after establishment, be it in print or broadcast media.

2.0 *Ethical Practice*

The manager/editor shall ensure that:

- 2.1 All workers know clearly the organization's objectives and how best to achieve them.
- 2.2 Motivate personnel and work out incentives for job satisfaction.
- 2.3 Remunerate fairly all work done by employees.
- 2.4 Ensure that all employees are given an opportunity to enhance their professional competence through further training.

- 2.5 Ensure that media output is distinguishable between factual and commentary; that only proven and accurate stories are published and that rumors are discouraged.
- 2.6 Ensure that information published does not incite discrimination, sexism, racism or violence.
- 2.7 Ensure that libel is avoided, and that the honor of a person is respected.
- 2.8 Ensure that all points of view are exposed by seeking out the main parties in a story. When a party refuses to cooperate, the organ should say so.
- 2.9 Inform all editorial staff of important decisions that may influence the life of the enterprise.
- 2.10 Ensure that the organ reports fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party.
- 2.11 Ensure that in times of grief or shock inquiries are made with sympathy; and editing is carried out with discretion so that the concerned are not made to relive their agony.
- 2.12 Ensure that children and minors are not identified in sexual or any other criminal offence.
- 2.13 Ensure that material that would identify victims of sexual assault is not published.
- 2.14 Ensure that derogative reference to a person's creed or racial origin is not made.

- 2.15 Ensure that neither him nor her, nor any of the employees take gifts or bribes in cash or kind in the course of duty or off-duty.
- 2.16 Examine offers, sponsorships and attractive contracts and agreements to ensure they have no attachments that would compromise the performance of the organization.
- 2.17 Not for any reason other than public interest, suppress useful information.
- 2.18 Not entertain favoritism and greed.
- 2.19 Ensure that the public is provided with un-biased, accurate balanced and comprehensive information/news.
- 2.20 Not as a rule, disclose sources of information given in confidence.
- 2.21 Avoid violation of individual privacy and human dignity, unless necessitated by public interest.
- 2.22 Not to use plagiarized material without giving due credit to the source.
- 2.23 Not open to ridicule any underprivileged persons or communities.
- 2.24 Guard against highlighting incidents out of context, either in headlines or reportage/narration.
- 2.25 Correct promptly with equal prominence and give right of reply whenever a wrong story has been discovered.
- 2.26 Ensure that information is not gathered clandestinely or by intercepting personal communication channels.

- 2.27 Ensure that material likely to cause public disorder is avoided.
- 2.28 Ensure that care has been taken when reporting matters likely to affect national security.
- 2.29 Ensure that whenever possible, photographs of the dead are published with the consent of the relatives of the deceased.

CODE OF ETHICAL PRACTICE FOR BROADCASTERS

1.0 Broadcasting embraces the trades of presenters, camera crews, script writers, sound recorders, programme producers, editors and communicators working in radio, television and independent information video production.

The relevant law has spelled out medium obligations and owners should oblige. The Broadcasting Services Act No. 6 of 1993 part IV – 13 (3) requires every person holding a broadcasting license;

- a) To present all news in a factually accurate impartial and non-partisan manner;
- b) To present current affairs in a balanced, clear, factual, accurate and impartial manner;
- c) To encourage the development of Tanzanian and African expression by providing a wide range of programming that reflects Tanzanian and African attitudes, opinion, ideas,

values and artistic creativity by displaying Tanzanian and African cultures and entertainment programmes;

- d) To serve the needs and interests and reflects the circumstances and aspirations of Tanzanian men, women and children in democratic Tanzania and Africa;
- e) To provide programming that caters for culture, arts, sports and education pertaining to Tanzania and Africa;
- f) To disclose the name of the producer of every programme at the end of the transmission of a programme;
- g) To limit advertisements to a maximum of 30 percent of the total daily broadcasting time;
- h) To respect copyright and neighboring rights obligations in respect of any broadcast material.

2.0 To be able to fulfill the above obligations ethically, broadcasters do the following:

2.1 Managers/Editors Code of Ethical Practice

Abide by all provisions in the Managers/Editors Code of Ethical Practice.

2.2 Programmed Making

- a) Make clear the nature and aim of the programme to all parties involved: the producer, outside contributors and the audience;
- b) Never deceive, mislead or misrepresent outside contributors during or after making the programme. They should be told

what the programme is all about, its duration, whether live or recorded the nature and scope of questions the interviewer/moderator, whether there is a fee, and how their expenses are to be met.

2.3 Balance

- a) Explain to the audience why a particular contribution is missing, especially if the other side has refused to take part or give information. Say it in such a way that is fair to the absentee;
- b) Give an opportunity to respond to those alleged with incompetence or inefficiencies that are damaging to the individual or an organization;
- c) Confront potential interviewees without notice (door stepping) only if the interviewee has failed or is known to have a character of refusing to respond to repeated requests on unreasonable grounds and the issue is of high public interest;
- d) Reply to complaints by listeners/viewers, preferably on the air too, by instituting a programme for that purpose or within the formats complained about. Handle all complaints in a serious manner.

2.4 Increasing Accuracy

- a) Never rely on one source when dealing with secondary sources. Check and check again;

- b) Always admit mistakes and correct it promptly and clearly;
- c) The language must be fair and accurate, avoiding exaggerated expressions. The language must be value free and objective;
- d) In reporting statistics, care should be taken to put the into the valid context, and must all the time be attributed;
- e) Accidents, disasters and other disturbances call for balance, accuracy and sensitivity in order to avoid causing unnecessary anxiety and distress. Emphasis should be on factual information concerning names, time, place, route or any known identification to narrow the area and people to be concerned;
- f) Live coverage of these events calls for care to avoid alarm. Horror should not be exploited. Camera work should be thoughtful, avoiding unnecessary close – ups of repellent scenes. Loss of life reports on accidents must be checked and attributed.
- g) Archive and library material used to illustrate a current event must be clearly identified to avoid misleading the audience about what they are hearing and seeing. Never use material of one event to illustrate another event. If there is need, then avoid shots that have identifiable persons, because they may have died since the picture was taken;
- h) Observe embargoes imposed by organizations;

- i) Recorded programs or repeats must be re-checked to make sure the information is up-to-date. If not, edit out or a prior announcement is necessary.
- j) Anonymity should not be given to people who are avoided justice. Where it is necessary to shield the then let it be effective-both picture and sound.

2.5 Impartiality

- a) National and Regional services must cater for people of all ages, beliefs, color, race, ability sexuality and gender. Programme must ensure that all significant activities and trends are featured reported, portrayed and represented and that all views are accorded due weight;
- b) Reporters may express professional judgment but not personal opinion. Such judgments are best offered by authoritative and experienced correspondents or commentators, backed by presented evidence;
- c) In dealing with the powerful, the relationship should always be professional and never adversarial and hostile. Cross examination should be firm and courteous, with a uniformity of tone in the questioning throughout;
- d) During emergencies or war observance should be given to questions of national security. Matters involving risk and loss of life need sensitivity to national mood and feeling;

- e) Personal view programmes must be accurate and fair. Opposing view points must be presented. Audiences should be made to know that they are listening/viewing a particular viewpoint;
- f) It is not appropriate for regular broadcast personalities in news and public policy related programmes to present personal view programmes on controversial matters;
- g) Living people or controversial situations portrayed realistically through drama must be accurate to do justice to the facts;

2.6 Interviews:

- a) Whether used as a news sound bite or asking questions to get opinion or telling a story, the interviews must have a clear and specific journalistic purpose achievable within the given time;
- b) When a testing interview becomes emotionally charged, the emotion should come from the interviewee, not the interviewer;
- c) Interviewers should appear tough-minded, sharp, skeptical and informed but not partial, committed or emotionally attached to one side of an argument;
- d) Interviewees should know why they are being interviewed, the subjects they are going to be asked about, the context of the programme and the part they will play. It is not proper to submit actual questions in

advance. In case an interviewee insists to have the questions, then mention must be made of this fact for the audience to know;

- e) Interviews are searching and to the point. Have to be well mannered, not aggressive, or rude, whatever the provocation. Questions that disorientate the interviewee are not allowed. The tone and approach to ordinary people, has to be appropriate;
- f) Interruption in an interview has to come naturally, after the point has been made, otherwise an interruption in the middle of a word or sentence may distract and seem discourteous;
- g) Evasion by powerful people should be exposed by politely and coolly repeating the question.

2.7 Privacy

- a) Respect the privacy of individuals and recognize that intrusions have to be justified by serving a higher public good;
- b) The public has right to have facts that bear upon the ability or the suitability of public figures to perform their duties;
- c) The use of concealed recording equipment, long-range listening devices and telephoto lenses to produce material for broadcasting is not permitted;

- d) In public places, recordings can be made, but must be open and seen. Only where there is a safety problem can one hide the instruments for recording;
- e) Never plant a recording device on private property without permission of the owner, unless for the purpose of gaining evidence of serious crime, or antisocial behavior;
- f) Some "public places" like railway stations, shops, public transport, and others have owners. Permission from the owners, managers or their agents must be necessary before filming or recording;
- g) Never record a telephone conversation without permission of one of the parties;
- h) Where we record surreptitiously for the purpose of exposing antisocial behavior or criminal activity, we must take care to protect the reputation of innocent people who may be caught in the recording. Must obscure their identify or make their innocence clear;
- i) In depicting disasters and tragic events there is need to emphasize the importance of compassion. Coverage should not add to the distress of the people who already know their loss;
- j) People in a state of distress must not be put under any pressure to provide interviews against their wishes;

- k) Filming or recording of people who are extremely distressed must not be carried out in such a way as to increase their suffering. Thoughtless questions cause distress and do damage;
- l) Use of library material depicting suffering, pain, violence or grief becomes less defensible as the original event passes into history. Avoid needless or repeated use of traumatic library material especially if it features identifiable people;
- m) As far as reasonably possible, next-of-kin should not learn of the death of a relative from a programme. Leaving out mention of names, unless we are satisfied that next-of-kin have been told;
- n) Funerals are covered only with the permission of the family. Where covered, then it is with sensitivity, and should avoid intrusive conduct, such as close camera shots of people who are grieving;
- o) In interviewing children, parental or school authority and guidance should be sought.

2.8 Crime

- a) Police appeals for information on crime are broadcast free of charge;
- b) When criminals are interviewed, they should not be allowed to glamorize their wrongdoing nor give details of

crimes that could be copied. Neither should they be remunerated for the interview;

- c) All illegal activities, as a rule, should not be covered, unless it is for high public interest;
- d) Families of criminals should not be implicated in wrongdoing or guilty because of association;
- e) Presence of cameras in front of demonstrators influences their behavior. Where it is seen to inflame their behavior, crews should withdraw at once;
- f) Coverage of demonstrations should offer a comprehensive and impartial view;
- g) Reports of proceedings in youth courts should leave out the names and addresses of young people below the age defined for children;
- h) Any promise of confidentiality given to sources must be honored;
- i) If asked to reveal the identity of a source, it may be possible to get the source's agreement. Courts do not recognize the sanctity of journalistic sources, and failure to disclose information to a court can result in punishment;
- j) Untransmitted material should not be shown to anyone not concerned;
- k) Usually requests of transmitted material are granted, provided a charge is made to cover costs;

- l) If a station receives a telephone warning from people claiming to have planted bombs, it must report the matter immediately to the police; and ask advice whether to make it public or not.

2.9 *Violence:*

- a) Screen violence, does upset some people, and that I excess, it can be accused of desensitizing viewers;
- b) Issue warnings to viewers when factual scenes or drama are to include violent scenes;
- c) The dead should be treated with respect, and not shown unless there are compelling reasons for doing so. Close-ups should be avoided and if justified, then they must not be lingered over. Nor should there be undue concentration on the bloody consequences of an accident or terrorist attack;
- d) As much as possible still pictures should be shown to convey the horrific reality of a situation. Natural sounds can be disturbing as pictures, and should be treated with care;
- e) Particular care must be taken in dealing with scenes in which humans appear to inflict violence on animals;
- f) Acquired programmes need to be double checked in detail prior to transmission to identify any need to edit to place the programme at an appropriate hour or to issue a

warning. All objectionable moments from an acquired programme must be removed by editing;

- g) Violence against women and children can only be shown as victims of violence, and a social vice but not otherwise;

2.10 Anti-Social Behavior

- a) Some viewers and listeners might be susceptible to copying behavior portrayed in programmes;
- b) In programmes made for children avoid showing actions or techniques, which could lead to dangerous imitation;
- c) Smoking and alcohol drinking in children's programmes should be avoided;
- d) In reporting suicides, graphical depiction of methods used should be avoided;
- e) Demonstration of illegal drug use, which could be imitated, should be avoided.

2.11 Taste and Decency

- a) Matters of bad taste and indecency are avoided, unless broadcast by design;
- b) Context is very important to consider. Scenes might be justified late at night. Sensitivities of children differ from those of adults;
- c) Always broadcast a warning if a programme has material that might be offensive to some people;
- d) Very bad language must not be used in children's programs;

- e) Bad language is offensive to audiences. Love words should be used with caution;
- f) Offence is often caused by the casual use of names considered holy by believers;
- g) Depiction of sex should not be linked solely or inevitably to the physical attractiveness of the characters involved. Nudity and explicit sex are considered immoral;
- h) Explicit sexual conduct between adults and children should not be depicted;
- i) When sexual subjects feature in news, documentaries and discussion programmes, they must be carefully scheduled and labeled;
- j) Comedy must be well judged, not excessive, not gratuitous, and overly cruel or designed to harm a person or group. We must avoid jokes about physical or mental disability and real life tragedy, which might be extremely painful;
- k) There is need for extra sensitivity when jokes are based upon race, religion, sex and age.

2.12 Portrayal

- a) All groups in our society must be portrayed adequately in broadcast programme, in terms of broadcasters, sources, participation and targeting;
- b) Gender sensitive language should be used as a rule;

- c) People should not be identified by ethnic origin or color;
- d) Always be sensitive to the rights and dignities of disabled people. Only describe a person in terms of his/her disability if it is relevant;
- e) It is not the business of broadcasters to bring into the open someone's sexuality.

2.13 Politics

- a) Any material recorded in parliament should not be used in light entertainment, or fictional or drama programmes, political satire or party political broadcasts. Must always be kept separate from musical, fictional or humorous items;
- b) Opinion polls indicate or suggest what people are saying at the time the fieldwork was done, and never right to say that opinion poll proves or shows;
- c) During the declared campaign period, no candidate should be allowed to take part in programmes to speak about constituency or area matters;
- d) Nothing that might inadvertently help a candidate should be seen or heard in broadcasts, unless the candidates are treated equally;
- e) All political parties taking part in an election have to be given equal time and opportunity to publicize their manifestoes.

2.14 Phone-ins

- a) The national broadcaster has an obligation to reflect the worship, thought and action of the principal religious traditions of the nation, which are mainly Moslem and Christian;
- b) Contributors/preachers in religious programmes should not promote their point of view by playing upon people's fears and anxieties, or by improper exploitation of the susceptibilities of the audience. They should never attack other denominations and faiths;
- c) Claims by preachers of powers to heal, including the performance of exorcism, or trying to promote an interest in the occult should not be allowed for broadcast.

2.15 Sports

Pictures and sound reports can be lifted from other broadcasters and used as a news item, provided the primary commentary is removed and replaced by narration and credit is given to the original recorder.

CODE OF ETHICAL PRACTICE FRO MEDIA PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEO PRODUCERS

1.0 Introduction

The photographer is first and foremost a journalist. He/she must know the basics of what makes news. Through training acquires skills for taking/shooting pictures and processing/editing on sight and in studios. Through formal education and advanced studies, he/she acquires the knowledge to determine the role and use of right pictures to communicate, in line with the objectives set by the publisher.

Through media education the photographer understands the laws that govern the profession.

The media photographer is like any other citizen doing a civic job. There are privileges extended to picture taking, like sitting inside the fenced area of sports fields or in front rows of VIP occasions. Sometimes the media photographer comes very close to the most powerful persons on earth who most people would never dream of being with. Media photographs are of public figures, public events and places or anything else of public interest.

2.0 Ethical Practice

The photo/video journalists should not:

- 2.1 Fake reality. The use of any devices like lenses, filters, polarizers and tricks like angling, superimposition, editing, touch-up , computer (electronic) and mechanical effects, do alter the reality of an image.
- 2.2 Use press-cards to access restricted places, like parties, dances, meetings and private functions. Likewise should not use the same to get favours of any kind.
- 2.3 Conceal identity as a representative of the press before obtaining permission to take pictures for publication.
- 2.4 Do anything while taking pictures, that will cause pain, or humiliation to innocent, bereaved or otherwise distressed person. Likewise disrupt an event or obstruct vision of spectators.
- 2.5 Highlight a minor incident out of context instead of giving an accurate and representative picture of the event.
- 2.6 Contravene laws or lawful orders prohibiting the taking for pictures in the precincts of courts. The law prohibits the taking of pictures of any person (Judges, jurors and witnesses) involved in a proceeding before the court, whether civil or criminal; or to publish any photograph taken in contravention of the order. It could be in the courtroom, in the precincts of the building in which the court is held, or the persons leaving or entering the

precincts. Likewise evidence introduced to the magistrate or jury must not be revealed beforehand. Permission to take such pictures must be sought from relevant authorities.

- 2.7 Take pictures of any other place prohibited by law.
- 2.8 Publish photographs provided by the police of unwanted persons without clearly captioning them that they are wanted by the police for questioning in connection with crime.
- 2.9 Take picture that will reveal the identity of the complainant in any sexual assault.
- 2.10 Take pictures of defendants who are under age in juvenile courts.
- 2.11 Damage property by walking on it in order to get a better view of a scene. It is polite to ask first for permission before trespassing; but leave promptly when required to do so.
- 2.12 Take pictures of nudity. In the event this cannot be avoided, then care must be taken not to focus on sexual organs, or features that dehumanized a person.
- 2.13 Marvel at human suffering. Pictures of such scenes must be taken with human feelings.
- 2.14 Take pictures of dead people without permission from relatives. Always take into consideration the culture,

myths, beliefs and rituals of the people involved. If permission is not granted, pack up and go.

2.15 Take pictures, and leave victims suffering without rendering them help in the best way possible.

CODE OF ETHICAL PRACTICE FOR NEWS AGENCY JOURNALISTS

1.0 *Introduction*

By definition, a News Agency is an organization, which collects and distributes news and information material to be used by the media. Traditional models of news agency formats are those of an organization that is national in scope, character and orientation. These would perform the following:

- a) Collect and distribute news material from all over the country;
- b) Present a package version of all events for consumption by subscribers;
- c) Report on daily events, be they negative or positive;
- d) Project an accurate image by reporting on the positive and negative developments including crises;
- e) Report from the national angle on events on the international scene that are of special interest to the country;

- f) Serve as an instrument of national unity.
- g) Sent to interested parties news that will give a correct picture of major events, the problems, hopes, aspirations, plans and achievements of a country.

The news agency would operate through a network of zonal, regional or district correspondents who report on what is happening in their locations. They sent their stories by telephone, fax, e-mail or any other quick means to the headquarters for compilation and distribution to clients.

News Agency subscribers, apart from the media, could be organizations, embassies and individuals.

Two aspects are of utmost importance to news agency work. One is speed, and the other is the use of language. The fact that news agencies have to file their stories to the media, calls for further speedy and accurate processing of information.

This is because the media do work under deadlines. For a news agency reporter, every minute is a deadline for a client somewhere and deadlines can not be expanded.

Language poses a significant problem to news agency reporters, most of who are forced to write in the second or their language. In most cases, they could conduct interviews in their vernacular, then translate the stories into a national, international or even foreign language. This calls for the highest degree, not only of speed, but also of accuracy. It would be advantageous for a news agency journalist to be proficient in more than one international

language, to ensure accuracy, and saves time in writing and filling the news.

2.0 Ethical Practice

The News Agency journalist shall:

- a) Report the truth;
- b) Give all the necessary and correct facts that make a news story complete;
- c) Abide by the codes of ethical practices in the trades of photojournalism. Managers/editors and broadcasters;
- d) Act responsibly with speed in gathering, processing and filling the news.

CODE OF ETHICAL PRACTICE FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MEDIA ADVERTISERS

1.0 *Introduction*

Public information officers and advertisers are people who use the media to let their goods ideas and services known, accepted and used. The purposes however differ. They could be social, economic or political reasons for indulging in public information or advertising.

2.0 Public information/Public Relations

Credibility is the major spirit that gives life to public information. If public information is not believed, then the practice becomes a failure. It differs from propaganda because it advocates truth. The trust of the public can only be maintained, if they believe in the sanctity and truth of the information received.

The information practitioner therefore is more responsible to produce factual information; accurately and without comment. It is upon the receiver to decide what to do with the kind of information provided.

3.0 The Public Information and Public Relations Practitioner shall:

- a) Maintain personal integrity by upholding moral standards and sound reputation;
- b) Not disseminate false or misleading information;
- c) Conduct all activities with regard to the public interest;
- d) Give a balanced and faithful representation of the organization served;
- e) Not engage in any practice that will compromise the integrity of clients;
- f) Not corrupt the media;
- g) Not have interest of any kind in two or more competing organizations;

- h) Respect the codes of conduct of clients;
- i) Honour confidences received and give in the course of duty.

4.0 *Media Advertising*

Advertising is the act of making known, ideas services and goods so that they are accepted, acquired and used. This involves advertisers, message designers, producers, channel and the clients or the targeted people.

Advertisers cannot send out their advertisement message without using media, and advertising agencies; and the media cannot survive without adverts. In this way, the three depend on each other for survival.

Advertising is the most public of all activities. It is heard and seen; and the more the people see it, the more successful it becomes. It is therefore more prone to public scrutiny. The methods, approaches and content have to be of a standard society approves. That is why a professional code of practice is necessary to help media advertisers and the public to live in harmony.

The following code of conduct is applicable to media advertising only:

5.0 Media Advertising shall:

- a) *Truth:*
Reveal and state the truth, and any significant facts about the products and services advertised.
- b) *Clarity:*
Use language, symbols and formats that are easily understood by the target group.
- c) *Substantiation:*
Provide evidence to substantiate claims if required by regulatory authorities.
- d) *Taste and Decency:*
Avoid statements and symbols that are offensive to any socially recognized group in society.
- e) *Price Claims:*
Avoid price claims that are misleading, or saving claims that are false.
- f) *National values:*
Avoid adverts that undermine the national value of freedom, peace, unity and security.
- g) *Discrimination:*
Avoid any advert that promotes or suggests sexism, racism, ethnicism or color.
- h) *Children:*

Not use children exploitatively in advertisements that concern adults, and should not be exposed to products that are harmful.

i) Controversy:

Handle cautiously controversial issues like political propaganda and religious sect faith, to ensure the advertisement does not infringe upon the rights of others.

j) Sponsorship:

Accept sponsorship from socially acceptable practices and organizations.

k) Public Interest:

Avoid advertisements that undermine the health and well-being of the people.

l) Code of Ethics:

Respect and promote adherence to the codes of ethical practice observed by the media.