

MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

FOR ELECTION REPORTING 2010

TANZANIA MAINLAND

Preamble

We, practitioners and other stakeholders in the media industry:

Recognizing the significance of the forthcoming General Election;

Guided by the desire to ensure the success of this democratic process; and

Determined to ensure that voters make an informed choice;

HEREBY agree on and adopt a Code of Conduct for covering the Elections as follows:

1. Objectivity

- (i) Journalists should provide fair, balanced and impartial reporting by giving equitable space and airtime to all sides of an issue and to give an aggrieved party and the complainant the right to reply.
- (ii) Notwithstanding the foregoing, all journalists who are contesting political positions should stop or resign from practising journalism until the nomination or election process is completed
- (iii) Journalists should refrain from giving special favour to their colleagues who are contesting in the election.

2. Truth

- (i) Journalists covering elections must seek the truth and report it precisely and soberly.
- (ii) Media houses should do the utmost to correct promptly any published or aired information that is found to be inaccurate.

3. Response to the needs of voters

Journalists must provide the electorate with information and civic education in a form easily understood, to enable them to make informed choices.

4. Encouraging Free Speech

The media should encourage the public to express their opinion and views and should give them opportunities to do so.

5. Confidence Sources

Journalists should observe professional ethics regarding the sources of information obtained in confidence, but they should not use such information as an excuse to propagate their personal opinion.

6. Hate Speech and Incitement

When reporting the opinions of those who do advocate discrimination or violence on any grounds, including race, gender, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins, journalists should do the utmost to put such views in a clear context and to report the opinions of those against whom such sentiments are directed.

7. Promote Democratic Values

The media should promote democratic values such as the rule of law, accountability, good governance and political tolerance.

8. Media House Obligation

Media Houses and owners have an obligation to:

- (i) Ensure impartial, fair and balanced coverage of elections and give equitable access to all candidates and political parties because it is in the national and people's interest to do so;
- (ii) Promote unity, peace, and stability.
- (iii) Commit themselves to contribute towards the achievement of free and fair elections by developing the capacity of their respective media institutions and refraining from interfering in editorial independence.

9. Investigate issues

Journalists should have the responsibility to investigate and expose issues and practices pertaining to elections in order to facilitate fair play and level the socio-political playing ground.

10. Advertorials

Media houses should identify and charge equal rates to advertorials from all political parties but desist from publishing or airing advertorials, commentaries and columns that seek to create hatred and endanger national peace and security.

11. Media and the Election Acts

Media, like all other stakeholders in the election process, must strictly adhere to the Election Act and understand clearly the Elections Expenses Act and regulations, and expose practices that violate it.

12. Media and Civil Society

The media should work in partnership with civil society in providing civic and voter education, training as well as monitoring and evaluating the entire electoral process.

13. Professional offences

Journalists shall regard the following as professional offences:

- Plagiarism
- Malicious misrepresentation
- Slander, libel or unfounded accusations
- Acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.

14. Opinion Polls

Media Houses should take care in reporting the findings of opinion polls. Any report should include the following information:

- a. who commissioned and carried out the poll and when
- b. how many people were interviewed
- c. where and how they were interviewed
- d. the margin of error

15. Media and Maginalized Groups

- i. Journalists should promote the participation of the marginalized, including women, the disabled and the youth to take part in political leadership, they should also refrain from coverage that is biased, reinforcing existing prejudices against such groups.
 - ii. Media should encourage the above group to contest, irrespective of their political affiliation, by raising public awareness of their importance in public life, and by rebuking all moves aimed at suppressing them. Journalists should also show the public the great leadership potential that lies in the marginalized groups.
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MEDIA APPEAL TO POLITICAL PARTIES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS FOR THE 2010 GENERAL ELECTION

For the media to be able to play their role effectively in ensuring free and fair election, political parties and other institutions should undertake to respect the rights of journalists to report the elections and also ensure their physical safety by:

- i. Refraining from harassing journalists verbally and/or physically, or inciting crowds, groups or individuals to do so;
- ii. Allowing journalists to operate freely in any part of the country without fear of intimidation, except for restricted areas;
- iii. Not manipulating journalists covering elections by offering gifts, favours or special treatment;
- iv. Using existing mechanisms such as the Media Council of Tanzania, Press Clubs, the National Electoral Commission and the Coordinating Unit of the Information Department to channel complaints about items broadcast or published;
- v. Facilitating media's coverage of party conferences and campaign events by informing them sufficiently in advance of dates, times and venues;
- vi. The electoral authorities providing the media with complete, accurate and timely information about the election process.
- vii. The National Election Commission (NEC) should set aside a budget for journalists covering the elections to facilitate election coverage. The government should enable financially all media houses to provide civic and voter education.
- viii. The Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) to take the oversight role of disseminating the Code and monitoring its violations.
- ix. The government should not discriminate media in allocating advertisements and advertorials on the election.

ADOPTED BY THE EDITORS FORUM WORKSHOP HELD AT MT. ULUGURU HOTEL, MOROGORO, ON AUGUST 13TH, 2010 AND ENDORSED BY THE STAKEHOLDERS MEETING HELD AT PEARL BLUE HOTEL, DAR ES SALAAM, ON THE 18TH.