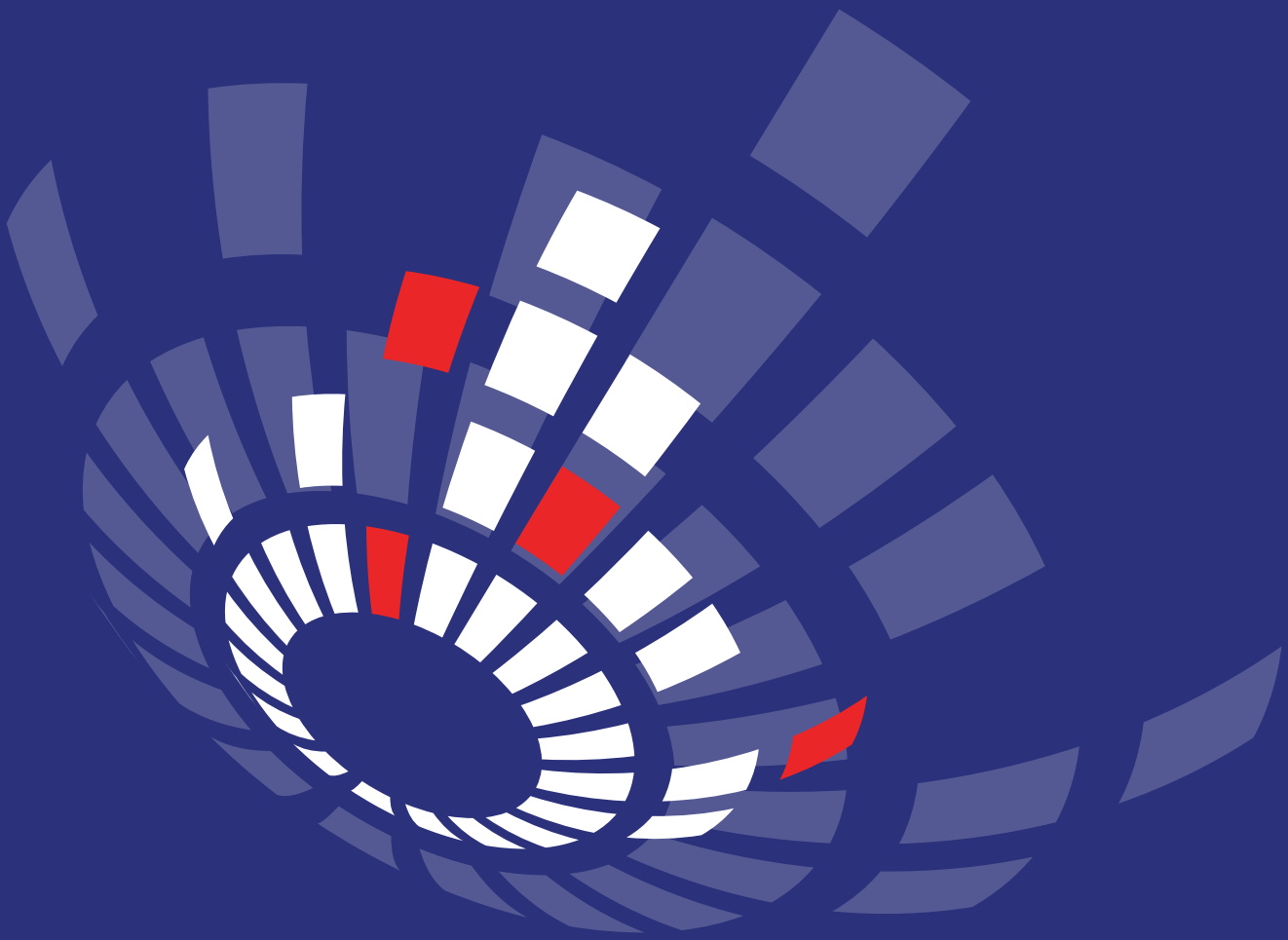
MEDIA
COUNCIL OF KENYA
Promoting Press Freedom and Responsible Journalism

THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEDIA PRACTICE, 2025



Part I—PRELIMINARY

1. Citation

This Code may be cited as the Code of Conduct for Media Practice, 2025.

2. Interpretation

In this Code, unless the context otherwise requires—

"claim" means any statement, assertion, or representation of fact, opinion, or belief presented as true in a publication, whether in written, oral, or digital form, that is subject to verification unless derived from a privileged or legally protected document where verification is impracticable;

"graphics" means any visual representation, image, illustration, diagram, chart, symbol, or design, whether static or animated, created or displayed in a digital, printed, or physical medium;

"person subject to the Act" means a journalist, media practitioner or media enterprise;

"Phone-in commentary" means a form of live broadcast in which members of the public call in by telephone to express opinions, ask questions, or provide feedback on a topic being discussed on a radio or television programme;

"watershed period" means the period between 5:00 am to 10:00 pm during which content broadcast or disseminated should be suitable for family viewing or listening.

3. Objects of the Code

The object of this Code is to—

(a) promote ethical journalism by ensuring accuracy, fairness and objectivity;

(b) safeguard public interest by balancing press freedom with responsibility;

(c) prevent media malpractice, including misinformation, disinformation, bias, and sensationalism;

(d) promote national values and principles of good governance;

(e) ensure accountability and professional discipline among media practitioners;

(f) protect individuals' rights, dignity, and privacy from unwarranted media intrusion;

(g) promote diversity, inclusion, and fair representation in media coverage;

(h) align media practices with national laws and international standards;

(i) foster public trust in the media through responsible and credible reporting;

(j) provide a framework for addressing ethical breaches and professional misconduct; and

(k) support a free and responsible press as a pillar of democracy.

Part II — ACCURACY, BALANCE AND FAIRNESS

4. Duty to ensure accuracy

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) make all attempts to verify facts for accuracy and authenticity before publication or broadcast;

(b) ensure that opinions, commentaries, and editorials are based on verifiable facts;

(c) label photographs, videos, and voice recordings with the date, location, and context of capture;

(d) ensure that images are not manipulated in a manner that distorts reality or misleads the audience;

(e) label all graphics as such;

(f) ensure documents and other sources used to generate content are authentic, credible and where applicable, from authoritative sources;

(g) verify the accuracy of statements and allegations made in public spaces before publication; and

(h) ensure all claims are verified before publication, except where such claims are drawn from privileged or otherwise legally protected documents and their verification is impracticable.

5. Balance and fairness in reporting

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) make reasonable efforts to seek comments from any person mentioned adversely in editorial content, unless such mention occurs in an opinion or commentary where the underlying facts are already publicly established;

(b) present all material sides of an issue being published in a fair and impartial manner;

(c) preserve evidence of unsuccessful attempts to contact persons adversely mentioned in a publication;

(d) clearly distinguish between comment, conjecture, and fact in all reporting;

(e) ensure that headlines accurately reflect the content and context of the subject matter;

(f) where headlines contain allegations, attribute the source or enclose the allegation in quotation marks;

(g) treat all subjects of news coverage with respect and dignity;

(h) exercise special sensitivity when reporting on victims of crime or tragedy;

(i) inform the public without bias or stereotype and promote a diversity of expressions, opinions, and ideas;

(j) avoid prejudicial or derogatory references to a person's race, ethnicity, clan, religion, political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, or physical or mental disability, unless such reference is demonstrably relevant to the story;

(k) accord equitable treatment to all persons as news subjects or sources, and shall not deliberately exclude any group from news coverage; and

(i) take into account cultural and contextual differences in the representation and treatment of persons in media content.

6. Corrections and right to reply

A person subject to the Act shall—

(a) issue a correction promptly upon discovery or notification of an inaccuracy;

(b) provide a fair opportunity for individuals or organisations to respond to inaccuracies when reasonably called for, ensuring that such responses retain their essence while allowing for necessary edits;

(c) ensure that any corrections state the accurate information without repeating the original error, except where such repetition is necessary for clarity;

(d) publish an apology where directed by the Media Council or the Complaints Commission, in the manner specified; and

(e) amend or remove the inaccurate content from digital platforms with an accompanying explanatory note for the audience.

Part III—INDEPENDENCE, INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

7. Independence and ethical conduct

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) identify themselves when gathering news;

(b) not obtain or seek information, recordings or images through misrepresentation or subterfuge, except where public interest justifies such means and no alternative exists; and

(c) obtain documents, recordings or photographs only with the express consent of the owner or subject, unless overriding public interest demands otherwise.

8. Editorial integrity and avoidance of undue influence

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) maintain editorial independence in all production and publication of editorial content;

(b) ensure that editorial content remains free from undue influence by advertisers, media owners, sources, subjects, powerful individuals, government, or special interest groups;

(c) present editorial content with integrity and common decency, and avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest;

(d) declare and manage all conflicts of interest, including those arising from gifts, funding, advertising, discounts, or sponsored travel or services;

(e) refrain from political or other external activities that may compromise journalistic integrity or public confidence in impartiality of reporting; and

(f) clearly disclose where editorial content that is sponsored, including the identity of the sponsor, and distinguish such material from independent journalism.

9. Prohibition on improper conduct

A person subject to this Act shall not—

(a) solicit or accept payments, gifts, favors, or compensation from those seeking to influence coverage;

(b) engage in activities that may compromise their professional integrity;

(c) exploit information, images, or documents obtained through media enterprises in the course of work for personal gain;

(d) use journalistic information collected in the course of their work for purposes other than informing the public;

(e) intimidate, harass or manipulate sources of

10. Accountability to the public and the profession

(1) A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) make inquiries and report with sensitivity and discretion in matters involving grief, shock or personal tragedy;
(b) refrain from breaking news of death to the immediate family members where reasonably possible;
(c) respond to public concerns, investigate complaints, and correct errors promptly;
(d) respect copyright and authorship rights by appropriately attributing all borrowed material to original source;
(e) clearly distinguish editorial content from marketing, advertisements, political materials, or sponsored content;
(f) refrain from photographing or recording individuals in private settings without their knowledge unless justified by the public interest; and
(g) before recording or broadcasting a conversation, inform any party to the call of the intent to do so, unless public interest justifies otherwise.

11. Mandatory delay for live broadcasts

A media enterprise shall incorporate a minimum seven seconds delay in live broadcasts to prevent the unintended publication of material that violates this

12. Responsibility of an editor

The editor or other person in charge of content shall assume responsibility for all published, broadcast or disseminated material, including advertisement content.

13. Author's byline

Editorial content shall bear the name or pseudonym of its author unless anonymity is required for the safety or protection of the journalist.

14. Sponsored content and advertising ethics

(1) A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) ensure that sponsored content adheres to the standards of accuracy, fairness, and objectivity to editorial content;establish systems for disclosure and

(b) labelling to enable the public to easily identify sponsored material;

(c) refrain from carrying advertisements that reinforce negative stereotypes;

(d) not display or publish advertisements that exploit vulnerable groups, including children and persons with disability;

(e) clearly distinguish between editorial content and advertising, public relations, or corporate communications; and

(f) disclose material conditions, such as financial compensation or free products, that influence or affect endorsements.

15. Obscenity, taste and tone

(1) A person subject to this Act shall not publish—

(a) content that is obscene, vulgar, or offensive unless it has overriding news value and the public interest justifies its publication; and

(b) images of mutilated bodies, violence, or abhorrent scenes unless anonymized and clearly serving a public interest purpose.

(2) A verbal and visual warning shall precede the transmission of potentially distressing content in news, factual programming or current affairs broadcasts.

16. Confidentiality, privacy, and protection of sources

(1) A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) respect individuals' reasonable expectation of privacy unless such privacy is outweighed by the legitimate public interest;

(b) ensure data collected is accurate, securely stored, and only used for legitimate journalistic purposes;

(c) balance media freedom with individuals' right to privacy unless outweighed by compelling public interest;

(d) bear the burden of proof in establishing that consent was obtained for use of personal data, unless the data is manifestly public or otherwise exempt by law;

(e) refrain from processing sensitive personal data unless consent is obtained, the data is manifestly public, or there is a substantial public interest in its use; and

(f) not publish phone-in commentaries or personal contact details without consent, unless justified by public interest and in compliance with applicable law.

(2) A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) identify sources for editorial content;

(b) use anonymous or confidential sources only when the public interest justifies it or when disclosure could cause harm to the source; and

(c) take reasonable steps to protect the identity of confidential sources, including anonymisation or pseudonymisation where necessary.

17. Prohibition on payment for information

A person subject to this Act shall not pay sources for information, unless the public interest overwhelmingly requires such payment, and it is declared, justified, and approved by the editor.

Part IV—PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND VULNERABLE PERSONS

18. General principles

(1) Exceptional care shall be exercised when reporting on children to ensure their best interests, protection, and overall welfare.

(2) A child, or their parent or legal guardian, shall not be compensated for information concerning the child's welfare, unless it is demonstrably in the child's best interest.

19. Standards for children's programming

A program intended for children shall—

(a) convey the underlying message appropriate for children;

(b) feature content that promotes emotional, moral, spiritual, mental, or physical development;

(c) be consistent with the best interests of the child;

(d) avoid language or gestures that encourage disrespectful behaviour among children;

(e) exclude vulgar, profane, offensive, sexually suggestive, derogatory, or demeaning language;

(f) avoid content that promotes unhealthy eating habits;

(g) not depict sexual acts, sexual organs, or sexually suggestive content is prohibited;

(h) not glorify violence, or portray force as an acceptable means of resolving conflicts;

(i) not promote or depict the consumption of tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, inhalants, depressants,

(j) hallucinogens, or other prohibited substances;
not promote gambling or portray it as a desirable or aspirational activity; or

(k) not feature advertisements for products inappropriate or potentially harmful to children.

20. Obligations relating to children

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) not report on children in matters involving their personal welfare without the consent of a parent or legal guardian, except where overriding public interest justifies such reporting;

(b) minimize depictions of violence and strong language in children's content, ensuring contextual suitability for the target age group;

(c) avoid publication of sexual content during the watershed period;

(d) ensure that any necessary content is appropriately classified for the intended audience;

(e) where possible, ensure digital platforms used for distributing children's content incorporate parental controls and age-based content filtering mechanisms;

(f) portray children in a dignified manner that upholds their rights and avoids objectification;

(g) not publish a child's full names, images, or other identifying details unless absolutely necessary and consented to by a parent or guardian;

(h) exercise heightened sensitivity when reporting on children, victims of crime, or individuals rendered vulnerable by trauma, injury, illness, or other factors;

(i) not sensationalise children's experiences or exploit distressing situations for dramatic or commercial effect; and

(j) provide appropriate context when reporting on children's issues to ensure accuracy and avoid misrepresentation or stigma.

21. Restrictions on photography and coverage

(1) Photographs and names of missing children may be published only with the approval of the relevant authorities or a responsible adult.

(2) Children shall not be interviewed or photographed in educational or formal institutions without the consent of a parent, guardian, or relevant authority.

(3) Special attention shall be paid to children who are victims, witnesses, or otherwise involved in criminal matters to safeguard their identity and wellbeing.

22. (1). Obligations concerning digital and online platforms and reporting on sexual violence

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) ensure that the online forum targeting children or young adults does not disseminate harmful, malicious, or exploitative content, including content that amounts to cyberbullying;

(b) not publish explicit content, language, or suggestive themes that promote inappropriate behaviour in children during the watershed period;

(c) not publish advertisements unsuitable for children immediately preceding, during, or immediately after a child-friendly program;

(d) ensure a safe and controlled environment for children involved in content creation;

(e) ensure that financial, commercial or marketing interests do not override or compromise a child's well-being or rights.

22. (2). Reporting on Sexual Violence

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) report on sexual violence cases with sensitivity and avoid sensationalism;

(b) not spread misinformation about the causes, frequency or effects of sexual violence;

(c) avoid reinforcing social norms that promote gender discrimination, inequality, or sexual violence; and

(d) not identify, directly or indirectly, victims of sexual assault without their informed and voluntary consent.

23. Obligations of media enterprises

(1) Media enterprises shall ensure that news, current affairs, emergency announcements, and programming of national interest are accessible through closed captioning, subtitling, or sign language

(2) inserts.

Media enterprises shall develop and implement internal child protection policies and designate a child protection focal person responsible for ensuring compliance with this Part of the Code.

Part V — PROTECTION AGAINST HATE SPEECH RELIGIOUS INCITEMENT, AND ETHNIC CONFLICT

24. Obligations of media practitioners and platforms

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) be responsible for hate speech published or disseminated on their platform;

(b) refrain from quoting persons making derogatory remarks based on ethnicity, race, creed, colour, or sex or other protected characteristics, except where the public interest requires and the context is properly framed;

(c) avoid the use of racist, ethnically offensive, or derogatory terms in any media content;

(d) redact offensive words when reporting hate speech for public interest purposes;

(e) not use religious content to maliciously attack, insult, harass, or ridicule other faiths, sects, or denominations or their adherents;

(f) avoid glamorizing occultism, witchcraft, exorcism, paranormal activities or pseudo-scientific practices; and

(g) ensure religious content featuring superstitious or pseudo-scientific beliefs and practices, is presented responsibly in a manner that does not mislead the public or contravene this Code.

25. Obligations on reporting ethnic, religious, or sectarian conflicts

(1) Content related to ethnic, religious, or sectarian disputes shall be published only—

(a) after proper verification of facts; and

(b) with caution and restraint, with the aim of fostering national harmony and peace.

(2) Editorial content, reports, or commentaries shall not be published in a manner likely to inflame passions, aggravate tensions or exacerbate strained relations between communities.

26. Standards of reporting on court matters

(1) When reporting on court proceedings, crime, offences, crisis situations, or violence, a person subject to this Act shall—

(a) report accurately and without sensationalism;

(b) respect the presumption of innocence until proven guilty;

(c) avoid prejudicing ongoing investigations or court proceedings;

(d) avoid glorifying crime or presenting criminals in a positive or romanticised light; and

(e) exercise sensitivity when reporting on victims of crime or violence, in respect to vulnerable persons including children or survivors of sexual violence.

Part VI—USER-GENERATED CONTENT, USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES

27. Obligations regarding the use of artificial intelligence and other technologies

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) ensure that the use of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies in content creation —

(i) is fair and unbiased;

(ii) does not perpetuate harmful stereotypes;

(iii) does not compromise accuracy; or

(iv) respects intellectual property rights;

(b) disclose to the audience whenever artificial intelligence has been used in the creation, modification, or editing of images, videos, or other editorial material;

(c) ensure that artificial intelligence and other technologies used in content creation do not generate or disseminate misinformation or disinformation;

(d) ensure that artificial intelligence-generated or technology-assisted content is reviewed by human editors and approved before publication; and

(e) refrain artificial intelligence from cloning the likeness, voice, or persona of real individuals without their informed consent, unless justified in the public interest and in compliance with the applicable law.

28. Liability for user-generated content

(1) A media enterprise shall be liable for third-party user-generated content published on its website or platforms.

(2) A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) clearly distinguish between editorial content and user-generated content;

(b) monitor their platforms and take appropriate measures to prevent or remove content that—

(i) is unlawful;

(ii) violates human dignity or privacy;

(iii) or constitutes hate speech.

(c) conduct prior review of user-generated content where possible to prevent violations.

29. Content moderation and compliance measures

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) adopt and prominently publish third-party content management policies, including—

(i) the rules governing user-generated content;

(ii) policies on anonymous comments; and

(iii) procedures for reporting and addressing policy violations.

(b) provide a simple mechanism for users to report unlawful or policy-violating third-party content;

(c) implement mechanisms to identify and disable content that—

(i) constitutes hate speech;

(ii) endangers the safety or physical integrity of individuals; or

(iii) Results in serious violations of human rights.

(d) take immediate action to investigate and remove unlawful or inappropriate content upon becoming aware of its existence;

(e) establish specific procedures for the swift identification and takedown of content that violates this Code or any applicable law; and

(f) inform the public that user-generated content is posted directly by users and does not necessarily reflect the views of the media enterprise.

Part VII — GAMING, BETTING AND LOTTERY

30. Obligations of persons subject to this Act

(1) A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) uphold the principles of fairness, accuracy, and avoidance of bias when advertising or promoting gaming, betting, and lottery activities on media platforms;

(b) clearly segregate gaming, betting, and lottery content from general consumption content;

(c) ensure that gaming, betting, and lottery content does not—

(i) portray, condone, or encourage socially irresponsible behaviour;

(ii) present gambling as a solution to financial problems; or

(iii) link gambling to sexual success, enhanced attractiveness, or personal achievement;

(d) prominently display or quote the Betting Control and Licensing Board license number on all advertisements and promotional material related to gaming, betting, and lottery activities;

(e) implement measures to limit exposure of gaming and betting content to children and other vulnerable persons; and

(f) include a disclaimer in all gaming, betting, or lottery content, warning audiences of the risks of addiction and financial loss associated with gambling.

(2) A person subject to this Act shall not—

(a) advertise or promote any gaming, betting, or lottery activity that is not duly authorized by the Betting Control and Licensing Board or any other relevant regulatory authority; and

(b) conduct or broadcast gaming or lottery activities on their platform without prior approval from the Betting Control and Licensing Board or relevant authority.

Part VIII — GENERAL

31. Obligations for classification of non-editorial content

A person subject to this Act shall—

(a) ensure that all non-editorial content broadcast, streamed, or published on their platform is classified according to age-appropriate categories;

(b) apply content classification guidelines issued by the Kenya Film Classification Board, or any other relevant authority;

(c) clearly display classification ratings before the start of any non-editorial content, including but not limited to—

(i) films, television programs, and digital content;

(ii) advertisements and commercial content;

(iii) gaming, betting, and lottery-related material; and

(iv) music videos, animations, and interactive content;

(d) include visual or audio classification indicators at the start of and during the broadcast of non-editorial content, with appropriate warnings for content that may contain—

(i) violence, strong language, or distressing scenes;

(ii) sexual content or nudity;

(iii) drug use, substance abuse, or self-harm themes; or

(iv) any other potentially harmful material;

(e) ensure that non-editorial content broadcast during the watershed period complies with child protection standards specified under this Code and all applicable laws; and

(f) establish mechanisms to advise users of available content controls or age restriction tools where applicable, recognising that full control over access lies with platform providers or users themselves.

32. Dispute resolution

(1) Media enterprises shall maintain in-house procedures to resolve complaints swiftly and, where required to do so, co-operate with the Media Council of Kenya.

(2) Any dispute arising under this Code shall be addressed in accordance with the procedures and mechanisms set out in the Act.

(3) Where a breach of this Code is established, the applicable penalties and sanctions shall be imposed as provided under the Act, including those relating to reprimand, suspension, deregistration, fines or any other lawful remedy.

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