



Media Gender Code of Ethics



Media Council of Tanzania



PREAMBLE

The Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) recognises the importance of freedom of expression as the cornerstone of a participatory and functional democracy and that women and men in all their diversity have a right to be heard.

Members of MCT recognise that the media plays a critical role in ensuring the realisation of this right and shall put in place mechanisms to ensure that the views of women and men, regardless of their class, social standing and whether they are from urban or rural areas, have equal chances to be heard.

Members also recognise the key role of the media in changing attitudes and mindsets. They pledge through this code to strive for gender balance and to challenge gender stereotypes in and through the media.

This code is informed, among others, by the United Republic of Tanzania Constitution; Tanzania's Women and Gender Development Policy; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the Windhoek Declaration on Media Freedom in Africa; SADC Protocol on Gender Rights; and the Beijing Platform of Action.

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, 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

APPLICATION

The Gender Code of Ethics will govern the conduct and practice of all media practitioners, media owners, publishers and

¹Incorporating 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

media institutions that are members of the Media Council of Tanzania.

This Gender Code of Ethics should be read in line with the Media Council of Tanzania Professional Code of Ethics for Journalists.

ACCURACY AND FAIRNESS

Media houses shall at all times give fair and equal space to men and women in their reporting.

Broadcasters shall increase the number of programmes on gender specific topics as well as programmes that challenge gender stereotypes.

In their coverage of politics, economic issues or war, members shall ensure that women's voices and views are heard.

Media houses shall put in place training programmes to improve their media practitioners' knowledge of current and emerging gender issues and its various manifestations.

Media practitioners shall be encouraged to continuously probe and research on gender issues in order to keep themselves abreast of current debates on the subject.

BALANCE, CREDIBILITY AND IMPARTIALITY

Media houses shall take proactive steps to equally seek out the views of both women and men in their diversity regardless of their social standing.

Media practitioners shall at all times strive to be impartial and avoid publicly associating themselves with partisan statements or organisations.

Members shall increase programmes on gender specific topics and allow more women to be involved in the production of such programmes.

MCT recognises that women are not a homogeneous group. Media houses will be encouraged to give inclusive coverage of all women that goes beyond differences of class, social standing and whether they are from rural or urban areas.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Journalists shall hold all policy makers accountable for ensuring that gender equality is achieved in their areas of work in accordance with national, regional and international commitments.

MCT shall use its mandate as a self-regulatory council for media to collaborate with media training institutions to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in their curricular.

GENDER STEREOTYPING

Media houses shall desist from reporting stories that advocate hatred or incite violence based on gender which could constitute incitement to cause harm. Therefore media houses shall be required to refrain from:

Publishing the identity or details of rape or sexual violence victims that could lead to their identification;

- Promoting pornography and violence against women and children;
- Depicting women as helpless or deserving victims of violence and abuse unless the violence is integral to the story;

- Degrading or exploiting women as helpless victims of violence and abuse;
- Degrading or exploiting women and undermining their positive role and position in society;
- Reinforcing gender oppression and stereotypes;
- Publish stories that might incite violence and hatred based on gender; and, Broadcasting or publishing material that glamourises violence against women.

Media has a mandate to report on all issues as fully and as accurately as possible. However, in pursuit of this goal, media houses shall be required to balance harm and discomfort with alternatives that maximise the goal of truth telling.

Broadcasters shall not broadcast material, which judged within context, contains a scene or scenes, simulated or real of any of the following:

- A person who, or is depicted as being under the age of 18 years, participating in sexual conduct or a lewd display of nudity;
- Explicit violent sexual conduct;
- Bestiality;
- Explicit sexual conduct which degrades a person in the sense that it advocates a particular form of hatred based on gender and which constitutes incitement to cause harm.

LANGUAGE

Media houses shall prohibit the use of sexist language in their coverage.

Media practitioners shall respect the dignity of women and desist from making derogatory and discriminatory references to people on the basis of gender.

When editing and selecting facts,

headlines, news highlights, pictures, audio and graphics, media houses shall not oversimplify and report gender issues out of context.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

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

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

GENDER SENSITIVITY WITHIN WORKPLACES

Media houses are encouraged to incorporate gender balance in their recruitment and selection policies to ensure equitable representation of women in all levels of decision making.

Media houses are encouraged to ensure that their employees have access to training and mentoring programmes that are inclusive for both female and male staff with special attention to female staff.

Media houses should be encouraged to adopt policies that discourage sexual harassment.

Media houses should put in place career pathing, capacity building, fast tracking and promotion policies to ensure that both female and male employees have equal opportunities to specialize in reporting any beat in the newsroom.

Adopted by stakeholders during the 12th National Convention held on June 30, 2009 at Blue Pearl Hotel, Ubungu Plaza, Dar es Salaam.

