

**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, CULTURE, ARTS AND SPORTS**

**JOURNALIST ACCREDITATION BOARD**

**CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCTS FOR TANZANIAN JOURNALISTS**

**VERSION I**

**FEBRUARY 2025**

**Chief Executive Officer  
Journalists Accreditation Board  
P.o Box 5455  
Dar es Salaam**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2016, the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) passed the Media Services Act of 2016 (MSA of 2026), which aims to professionalise journalism. Sections 11 and 24 of the Act establish the Journalists Accreditation Board and the Independent Media Council. Section 26 calls for the Board, in consultation with the Independent Media Council, to set up a code of ethics for journalists' professionals. This Code<sup>1</sup>, therefore, is a response to the MSA of 2016. Journalists must maintain the highest professional and ethical standards. This Code sets the benchmark for these standards. It protects the individual's rights and upholds the public's right to know. It establishes standards for professional behaviour among journalists, ensuring accountability, integrity, and respect for those we serve.

## **PREAMBLE**

We, the journalists in Tanzania;  
Conscious of the role of press freedom in Tanzania;  
Aware that an independent and honourable profession is indispensable to the maintenance of press freedom;  
Recognise our role in the preservation of democracy in Tanzania;  
Aware of our professional responsibilities requiring us to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct;  
Resolve to have this Code of Ethics to govern the conduct and practice of all journalists as a basis for adjudication of disputes between the press, the public and the government in Tanzania by the Independent Media Council of Tanzania.

## **Interpretation**

In this Code, a 'journalist' is a person accredited under the Media Services Act of 2016 who gathers, collects, edits, prepares, or presents news, stories, materials, and information for a mass media service, whether as an employee of a media house or as a freelancer<sup>2</sup>.

## **Application of this Code**

This Code applies to the following content published by journalists<sup>3</sup> through the following media:

- Print media
- Radio station
- Television
- Online media
- News agency
- Website and social media account owned by print media, radio station, and television station, and
- Any platform that is available digitally.

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<sup>1</sup>This Code provides general guidelines for journalists' conducts. Code of ethics for specialised areas of reporting will be developed to provide guidance on those areas.

<sup>2</sup>This interpretation is drawn from MSA of 2016

## **1.0 Independence**

Journalists shall defend the independence of media from those seeking to control or influence news content contrary to the public interest. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 1.1 Guard vigorously the free press's essential stewardship role in Tanzanian society.
- 1.2 Seek out and disseminate competing perspectives without being unduly influenced by those who would use their power or position counter to the public interest.
- 1.3 Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- 1.4 Determine news content solely through editorial judgement and not the result of outside influence.
- 1.5 Resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might undermine journalistic duty and service to the public.
- 1.6 Recognise that sponsorship and advertisements shall not be used in any way to determine, restrict or manipulate content.
- 1.7 Resist to allow the interests of ownership or management to influence news' judgment and content inappropriately.

## **2.0 Accuracy and Fairness**

Accuracy and fairness are essential for the credibility of news media. Journalists are responsible for reporting truthfully, achieved through careful fact-checking and source verification. This ensures the public receives reliable information that aids decision-making. Fairness also requires representing diverse voices, especially from marginalised communities. By presenting balanced perspectives, journalists help create an informed citizenry and build trust with the public. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 2.1 Write a fair, accurate and unbiased story on matters of public interest.
- 2.2 Ensure all sides of the story are reported wherever possible.
- 2.3 Seek from anyone mentioned in an unfavourable context, and evidence of such attempts to seek the comments shall be kept.
- 2.4 Promptly correct an inaccurate, misleading or distorted story. The corrections shall present the correct information and not restate the error except when clarity is demanded.
- 2.5 Ensure an apology that results from the Council's arbitration shall be published or broadcast whenever appropriate in such manner as the Council may specify.
- 2.6 Distinguish between comment, conjecture and fact in reportage.
- 2.7 Ensure headlines reflect and justify the matter printed or broadcast under them.
- 2.8 Present news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance.
- 2.9 Treat all subjects of news coverage with respect and dignity, showing particular compassion to victims of crime or tragedy.
- 2.10 Seek to understand the diversity of their community and inform the public without bias or stereotype and present a diversity of expressions, opinions, and ideas in context.
- 2.11 Present analytical reporting based on a professional perspective, not a personal bias.

### **3.0 Integrity**

Integrity is a cornerstone of journalism, embodying honesty, transparency, and accountability. It ensures that journalists report truthfully, avoiding bias and misrepresentation, which is increasingly vital in an era of widespread misinformation. Journalists build public trust and contribute to an informed society by providing accurate information and context. Upholding integrity also involves promptly correcting errors, which reinforces credibility and ethical standards. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 3.1 Present news with integrity and common decency, avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience and the news subjects.
- 3.2 Identify sources whenever possible. Confidential sources shall be used only when it is clearly in the public interest to gather or convey important information or when a person providing information might be harmed.
- 3.3 Label opinion and commentary.
- 3.4 Use technological tools with skill and thoughtfulness, avoiding techniques that skew facts, distort reality, or sensationalise events.
- 3.5 Employ covert news-gathering methods, such as hidden cameras or microphones, only when there is no alternative for obtaining stories of significant public importance, and ensure that the method is communicated to the audience.
- 3.6 Not pay news sources who have a vested interest in a story.
- 3.7 Not solicit or accept gifts, favours or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.
- 3.8 Not engage in activities that may compromise their integrity or independence.

### **4.0 Accountability**

Accountability is a key principle in journalism ethics, forming the foundation of public trust. Journalists serve as custodians of truth, responsible for delivering accurate and fair reports. They must correct errors promptly, accept criticism, and maintain transparency in sourcing and methodology. By adhering to these principles, journalists enhance their credibility and contribute to a reliable media landscape. In a time when misinformation can spread quickly, accountability is more crucial than ever for preserving the press as a trusted pillar of democracy. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 4.1 Promptly respond to public concerns, investigate complaints and correct errors.
- 4.2 Recognise that they are duty-bound to conduct themselves ethically.
- 4.3 Recognise that they are accountable to the public.

### **5.0 Minimize Harm**

Minimising harm is the key tenet of journalism ethics. Journalists must report truthfully while aware of their work's potential consequences on individuals and communities. This principle encourages them to handle sensitive topics carefully, considering the impact on those involved. Minimising harm builds audience trust and reinforces journalism's essential role in serving the public. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 5.1 Be compassionate for those affected by their actions.

- 5.2 Treat sources, subjects, and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect, not merely as means to journalistic ends.
- 5.3 Understand that gathering and reporting information can cause harm or discomfort, but balance these negatives by selecting alternatives that enhance the goal of truth-telling.

## **6.0 Confidentiality**

Source confidentiality is vital in journalism ethics, balancing the public's right to know with the need to protect those who provide essential information. Journalists often depend on anonymous sources to expose corruption and address significant issues. Maintaining confidentiality protects these sources and encourages sharing critical information that might otherwise be withheld due to fear of retribution. This practice reinforces core journalism values: integrity, transparency, and accountability, as it informs the public while respecting the rights and safety of contributors to the truth. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 6.1 Have a professional obligation to protect confidential sources of information. Sources who provide information may do so with the understanding that their identity will remain confidential.
- 6.2 Have a responsibility to verify the information provided through multiple channels and corroborate facts to ensure accuracy.
- 6.3 Be transparent about their processes and the challenges they face in protecting sources while also being accountable in their reporting.
- 6.4 Need to weigh the public interest against the obligation to protect a source. In cases where details are crucial for public safety or the threat of harm, releasing a source's identity may be considered.
- 6.5 Not use unnamed sources unless the pursuit of the truth will best be served by not disclosing the source, who the editor and reporter shall know.

## **7.0 Covering Tribal and Religious Conflict**

- 7.1 News, views or comments on tribal and religious disputes shall be published or broadcast after proper verification of facts and presented with due caution and restraint in a manner conducive to creating an atmosphere congenial to national harmony, peace and unity.
- 7.2 News reports, programmes or commentaries shall not be written or broadcast in a manner likely to inflame the passions, aggravate the tension or accentuate the strained relations between tribes, religions, or religious denominations.
- 7.3 Any publications or broadcasts that could potentially worsen communal tensions should be avoided.

## **8.0 Telephone Conversations and Recording Interviews**

- 8.1 Before recording a telephone conversation for broadcast or broadcasting a telephone conversation live, a station shall inform any party to the call of its intention to broadcast the conversation.
- 8.2 Journalists should not tape or record anyone without their knowledge except in justifiable cases, such as when recording is necessary to protect the journalists in legal

action or for other compelling reasons. This does not apply to programmes that customarily broadcast calls.

## **9.0 Privacy, Grief and Shock**

Privacy is fundamental to ethical journalism, guiding reporters' engagement with individuals and communities. Journalists must respect privacy while balancing the public's right to know with an individual's right to confidentiality. Upholding privacy standards enhances media credibility and fosters public trust, allowing journalists to honour individuals' dignity and rights while fulfilling their responsibilities.

- 9.1 The public's right to know is weighed against people's privacy rights in the news.
- 9.2 Intrusions and inquiries into an individual's private life without consent are generally deemed unacceptable unless a legitimate public interest is justified.
- 9.3 Issues related to an individual's home, family, religion, tribe, health, sexuality, personal life, and private matters should be protected by privacy unless they impinge upon the public.
- 9.4 In cases involving personal grief, bereavement or shock, inquiries shall be made with sensitivity and discretion.
- 9.5 In hospitals, journalists shall identify themselves and obtain permission from a responsible executive before entering non-public areas of hospitals or similar institutions to pursue enquiries.

## **10.0 Obscenity, Taste and Tone in Reporting**

- 10.1 A journalist shall not publish obscene or vulgar material unless such material contains news.
- 10.2 Publication of photographs showing mutilated bodies, bloody incidents and abhorrent scenes shall be avoided unless such publications serve the public interest. In such cases, viewer and reader discretion shall be provided.

## **11.0 Financial Journalism**

Financial journalism influences public understanding and trust in economic matters, affecting personal and institutional decisions. As the finance-media intersection evolves, the role of financial journalists becomes increasingly crucial. They report facts and simplify complex financial concepts for a diverse audience. Adhering to financial journalism ethical principles is essential for maintaining the integrity of financial information and promoting informed decision-making in society. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 11.1 Avoid ramping, a process of buying shares, boosting them with media coverage, and selling the inflated shares at a profit.
- 11.2 Refrain from using financial information they receive in advance for their benefit and shall not pass the information to others.
- 11.3 Refrain from writing or reporting on stocks, securities, and other market instruments if they are aware that they or their close family members have a substantial financial interest in them unless they disclose this interest to the editor.
- 11.4 Not buy or sell, directly or through nominees or agents, shares or securities and other market instruments about which they intend to write in the near future.

## **12.0 Use of Pictures, Graphics and Names**

- 12.1 Journalists shall exercise caution when using pictures and names and shall avoid publication when there is a possibility of harming the persons concerned.
- 12.2 Manipulation of pictures to distort the reality and accuracy of news shall be avoided.
- 12.3 Pictures of grief, disaster, and those promoting sexism shall be discouraged.
- 12.4 Avoid pictures which depict violent crime or other violence or explicit sex unless the public interest dictates otherwise.
- 12.5 Journalists shall not sanction, promote or glamorise violence or unlawful conduct through pictures and graphics.
- 12.6 Captions shall be accurately and fairly written. It shall convey the substance of the picture. The language used in captions shall not discriminate, derogate or depict persons by race, creed, gender, or ethnicity.

## **13.0 Protection of Children**

- 13.1 Children shall not be identified in cases concerning sexual offences, whether as victims, witnesses or defendants.
- 13.2 Except in matters of public interest, for example, cases of child abuse or abandonment, journalists shall not normally interview or photograph children on subjects involving their personal welfare in the absence, or without the consent, of a parent or other adult who is responsible for the children.
- 13.3 Children shall not be approached or photographed while at school and other formal institutions without the permission of relevant authorities.
- 13.4 A journalist shall not publish or broadcast the names of any underage offenders (below 18 years) either arrested by Police or tried in the criminal courts. Where such identification must be made, the media shall explain the overriding reasons that led to such an editorial decision.

## **14.0 Misrepresentation**

Journalists shall identify themselves and must not obtain or seek information or pictures through misrepresentation or deception unless the materials cannot be obtained by other means or are for the public interest.

## **15.0 Gender Sensitive Reporting**

Gender-sensitive reporting is a vital aspect of modern journalism ethics, emphasising inclusivity. As awareness of gender identity and expression grows, journalists play a crucial role in shaping narratives. This reporting approach goes beyond simply representing diverse voices; it challenges stereotypes and ensures equitable coverage for all genders. Integrating gender sensitivity into reporting enriches content and cements inclusivity. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 15.1 Ensure women and men are treated equally as news subjects and news sources.

15.2 Find and use diverse sources and stories to help shape gender narratives. This includes capturing voices from marginalised communities—such as women, individuals, and various cultural backgrounds—to provide a more balanced view of gender issues.

15.3 Highlight positive contributions of marginalised groups rather than solely focusing on victimisation or conflict.

15.4 Address biases that dictate traditional roles, such as portraying women as caregivers and men as dominant. By showcasing individuals in non-traditional roles, the media can help shift perceptions and promote diverse narratives.

15.5 Use gender-sensitive language, including opting for gender-neutral terms and avoiding assumptions based on names or roles. Inclusive language fosters respect and equality, ensuring everyone feels valued.

15.6 Address the challenges faced by women and marginalised and showcase progress.

## **16.0 Letters to the Editor**

For a journalist who writes a controversial subject that attracts several responses, a respective editor can select and publish some rejoinders, ensuring a fair balance of perspectives. The editor also has the discretion to decide at what point the discussions have to end.

## **17.0 Acts of Violence and Victims of Sexual Offences**

17.1 The media shall avoid presenting acts of violence, armed robberies, banditry and terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies such anti-social conduct.

17.2 Newspapers shall not allow their columns to be used for writings which tend to encourage or glorify social evils, warlike activities, ethnic, racial or religious hostilities.

17.3 The media shall not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification.

## **18.0 Editor's Responsibilities**

18.1 Editors shall assume the responsibility for all content, including advertisements, published and broadcast in a news media. If the responsibility is disclaimed, it shall be explicitly stated beforehand.

## **19.0 Advertisements**

19.1 Editors shall not authorise the publication or broadcast of any advertisement which is contrary to any aspect of this Code of Conduct.

19.2 A journalist shall always be seen to remain independent and shall not wear corporate-branded clothing when presenting programs.

## **20.0 Hate Speech**

Hate speech presents a major challenge in journalism, as journalists must balance freedom of expression with potential harm. Ethical reporting focuses on contextualising hate speech's impact while amplifying marginalised voices. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 20.1 Avoid quoting sources who make derogatory remarks based on tribalism, race, religion, colour, and sex shall not be allowed.
- 20.2 Avoid using questionable terms that may lead to hate speech.
- 20.3 Consider changes in public attitudes as to what is and what is not acceptable as far as the use of such terms.

## **21.0 Innocent Relatives and Friends**

The media must not identify the relatives or friends of individuals convicted or accused of a crime unless their mention is essential for comprehensive, fair, and accurate coverage of the crime or legal proceedings.

## **22.0 Opportunity to Reply**

The right to reply is a fundamental principle in journalism that promotes fairness, accountability, and transparency. It allows individuals or entities criticised in media to respond, enriching the dialogue and enhancing reporting credibility. This practice acknowledges the media's impact on reputations and emphasises balanced perspectives. In a time of rapid misinformation, the right to reply fosters trust between media and the public, contributing to a more informed society and a healthier media landscape. Specifically, the media and journalists shall:

- 22.1 Ensure that people accused in the story are accorded a right to reply before the publication or broadcast of the story.
- 22.2 Provide, without delay, a fair opportunity to reply to published or broadcast inaccuracies when reasonably called for.
- 22.3 Publish either a full or abridged version of a request to correct inaccuracies submitted in the form of a letter. The abridged version shall not lose the main content.

## **23.0 Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious violation in journalism that undermines ethical reporting. Journalists are responsible for providing original content to maintain trust with their audience and uphold the credibility of their news organisation. Rejecting plagiarism protects the rights of original creators and fosters transparency and accountability, ensuring journalism remains a reliable cornerstone of democracy. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 23.1 Refrain from plagiarism—the use of another person's material or ideas without proper acknowledgement and attribution.
- 23.2 Editors shall ensure that published/broadcast contents are free from plagiarism and that any borrowed materials are properly attributed to the rightful author.

## **24.0 Data protection**

Protecting personal data is crucial to ethical journalism in today's digital age. As journalists strive to inform the public, they must also navigate the complex landscape of privacy, confidentiality, and data security. This responsibility extends beyond merely safeguarding sensitive information; it encompasses a commitment to respect individuals' privacy, ensure the accuracy of information collected, and remain transparent about how data is used. By prioritising data protection, journalists can foster trust with their audiences, maintain the integrity of their reporting, and fulfil their role as stewards of public interest in an era where information is both a powerful tool and a potential vulnerability. Specifically, journalists shall:

- 24.1 Use and disclose data for journalistic purposes only.
- 24.2 Take reasonable steps to ensure that data containing personal information under their control is protected from misuse, loss, and unauthorised access.
- 24.3 Amend inaccuracies in published personal information where a person requests a correction.
- 24.4 Notify the affected individuals and take reasonable actions to reduce any harmful effects if it is reasonably suspected that an unauthorised person may have accessed sources' personal information held by the media.

## **25.0 Public Interest**

Public interest is fundamental to journalism, highlighting the importance of prioritising the community's needs and welfare. It involves maintaining transparency, accuracy, and fairness while considering the effects of coverage on different audiences. Upholding public interest ensures that journalism effectively promotes positive change and social justice. The term "public interest" encompasses, but is not limited to, the following:

- 25.1 Detecting or exposing crime or serious misdemeanours.
- 25.2 Protecting public health, safety, and the environment.
- 25.3 Preventing the public from being misled by statements or actions of individuals or organisations.
- 25.4 Exposing the misuse of public funds or other forms of corruption by public bodies.
- 25.5 Revealing potential conflicts of interest involving those in positions of power and influence.

25.2 When the public interest is invoked, the Independent Media Council will require a full explanation from the Editor, detailing how the public interest has been served.

## **26.0 Use of Artificial Intelligence**

- 26.1 *Truthfulness and Accuracy*: A journalist must ensure that the information generated, reported, or disseminated through AI tools is accurate and verifiable. They should strive for transparency about the sources and processes of AI-driven content generation.
- 26.2 *Accountability*: A journalist is responsible for the content produced by AI systems. They must review and understand AI-generated information and be accountable for errors or misleading content.
- 26.3 *Transparency*: Journalism that utilises AI should disclose when content is produced or significantly altered by AI technologies. This helps maintain the audience's trust and clarifies the role of technology in the information-gathering process.
- 26.4 *Fairness and impartiality*: Journalists must guard against biases inherent in AI algorithms. They should ensure that AI tools promote a balanced representation of diverse viewpoints and do not amplify harmful stereotypes or misinformation.
- 26.5 *Respect for privacy*: A journalist should respect individuals' privacy rights and ensure that AI tools do not infringe upon these rights when collecting, generating, or analysing data.
- 26.6 *Protection of sources*: AI should not compromise confidentiality or the protection of sources. Journalists must ensure that AI practices do not inadvertently expose sensitive information.
- 26.7 *Avoiding harm*: A journalist must consider the potential harm AI-generated information might cause, particularly in sensitive reporting areas. They should balance the pursuit of stories with a commitment to minimise damage to individuals and communities.
- 26.8 *Accuracy in representation*: When using AI-generated imagery or information, a journalist should ensure that representations are not misleading and are contextually accurate.
- 26.9 *Continuous learning and adaptation*: A journalist should engage with the evolving landscape of AI technologies, staying informed about advancements, ethical implications, and best practices to ensure responsible use in journalism.

## **27.0 Victims of sex crimes**

- 27.1 A journalist shall not identify victims of sexual assaults, publish or broadcast material likely to contribute to such identification unless the victims have given informed consent to such publications.
- 27.2 A journalist shall endeavour to explain the implications of such disclosure to the concerned person. In cases where consent is given subject to certain conditions, the conditions shall be respected.
- 27.3 Children shall particularly not be identified as victims, however remotely,

## 28.0 Election reporting

- 28.1 *Independence*: Journalists should remain independent from political parties, candidates, and interests. They must disclose any potential conflicts of interest and avoid endorsements or political affiliations that could compromise their objectivity.
- 28.2 *Respect for privacy*: While public figures have a reduced expectation of privacy, journalists should be sensitive in their efforts to report on private individuals and families, especially in the context of elections.
- 28.3 *Impartiality in campaign coverage*: Journalists should maintain impartiality, providing equitable opportunity for all political parties and candidates to share their views and respond to opponents' claims. Special care should be taken to maintain balance in coverage.
- 28.4 *Diligence in reporting misinformation*: In an age where misinformation can sway elections, journalists must fact-check claims, particularly those made during campaigns. Misinformation should be corrected swiftly and comprehensively.
- 28.5 *Engagement with the community*: Journalists should engage with the communities they cover to better understand their needs and perspectives rather than relying on politicians' points of view. This involves reporting on issues that matter to the electorate and highlighting underrepresented voices.
- 28.6 *Promotion of democratic values*: Journalists should promote the principles of democracy through their work, ensuring that the electorate is well-informed about their choices and the electoral process.
- 28.7 *Vying for political seats*: Although journalists are allowed to run for political positions, those participating in the party nomination process must refrain from journalistic activities. Any journalist nominated to run for a political seat must suspend their journalism practice until the election results are decided.