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for Journalists

Advancing Quality Journalism Worldwide

Free & Fair

A Journalist's Guide to Improved Election Reporting in Ghana

By Alison Bethel



Movement for Democratic Change supporters
give the party's opening hand salute during an
election rally in Harare, Zimbabwe, 2005.
(Photo courtesy of George Ngwane)



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About the Author

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About the International Center for Journalists

The International Center for Journalists, a non-profit, professional organization, promotes quality journalism worldwide in the belief that independent, vigorous media are crucial in improving the human condition. Since 1984, the International Center for Journalists has worked directly with more than 50,000 journalists. Aiming to raise the standards of journalism, ICFJ offers hands-on training, workshops, seminars, fellowships and international exchanges to reporters and media managers around the globe.

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Introduction

As African voters increasingly demand free and fair elections and move toward more democratic leadership, media are challenged with providing coverage that is more balanced, more honest and more detailed than ever before. After all, it is the essence of what journalists are supposed to do.

In recent years, elections in countries across sub-Saharan Africa have been plagued by violence. In most circumstances, journalists are not equipped to deal with these volatile, confusing and often dangerous situations.

Reporters, as well as their editors and newspaper owners, must be committed to reporting on campaign issues and the impact on the society at large and resist the temptation to sensationalize the news in order to sell newspapers or attract viewers or listeners. They must be committed to accomplishing this through non-partisan reports and by giving each political party equal time to share their goals and strategies for reaching those objectives. Media do, indeed, have a certain level of social responsibility to avoid incendiary language or biased reporting that incites antagonism or conflict.

Reporters must also avoid reporting on rumors and seek out new and diverse voices for their stories whenever possible. They should also embrace the need to sometimes expurgate inaccurate or potentially inflammatory language from political statements or speeches and always be aware of the words they choose to use in stories. As we have seen recently, words can be weapons, too.

By following these basic rules and universal journalism standards, media will be less likely to incite violence during and after political campaigns.

As Canadian journalist and media consultant Ross Howard puts it, "Incompetent journalism and partisan news management can generate misinformation which inflames xenophobia, ethnic hatred, class warfare and violent conflict in almost any fragile state.

"Reliable reporting, and responsibly written editorials and opinion, do things such as establish communication among disputant parties, correct misperceptions and identify underlying interests and offer solutions," says Howard, author of [Conflict Sensitive Reporting: A Handbook](#). "The media provides an emotional outlet. It can offer solutions, and build confidence."

This manual is designed to help journalists in emerging democracies improve their coverage of presidential elections. It is also intended to help journalists navigate difficult, and often violent, situations that can sometimes follow elections in many regions of central and southern Africa.

The hope is that journalists will come away with a better understanding of:

1. The media's role in elections.
2. The need to be fair and impartial in all coverage involving political campaigns.
3. The impact reporting can, and sometimes should, have on readers, listeners and viewers.
4. How to navigate ethical dilemmas.

You will also find in these pages advice and reflections from journalists who have been in the thick of political mayhem in recent years, including radio journalist Mathews Ndanyi of Kenya and reporter/copyeditor Robert Magezi of Rwanda.

Mr. Ndanyi recalls vividly the violence that broke out during and after the 2007 elections and reflects on the mistakes the media made, including himself. Nearly six months after more than 1,000 people were killed, he is honest about what has to change in the profession so the media don't unwittingly spark protests and, in some cases, deaths.

After last year's vote and the resulting post-election violence, Ndanyi took part in three days of training for 30 Kenyan journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting. The workshop's main goal was to inform journalists of how their choice of words can incite conflict -- words like "militiamen" and "ethnic cleansing."

"We learned which words to apply when writing a story. Now I know better," Ndanyi said after the training.

In Rwanda, one particular radio station was credited with sparking bad feelings among ethnic groups with the words it chose to blast over the airwaves. What resulted was a massive genocide.

Robert Magezi recalls the events that led up to the violence of 1995. He cautions other journalists to choose the right words when writing and to constantly remember their role as reporters of the facts when covering elections.

Free & Fair: Improving Election Reporting

Seven Tips for Election Reporting

Stick to the issues. Watch out for candidates who employ clever public relations tactics that have nothing to do with real election issues. Some candidates find they can call more attention to themselves by launching a hate campaign against their opponents (personal family values is a favorite topic) rather than addressing important issues like the economy and jobs.

Beware of exaggerating controversy. Too often on a day when a story doesn't hit us in the face, some reporters and editors create and then exaggerate a potential conflict. Better to let that day pass without a 20-second sound bite or a byline.

Equal time for all. Keep a meticulous running score on space and play (front page, inside) given to each candidate. Uneven reporting is the most certain way to lose credibility and readers.

Don't forget the voter. Reporters should keep up with what the voters are thinking, not only through polls and man-in-the-street quick quotes, but by meaningful probing of how families are surviving. Remember to



cover the regions and not just key areas of the country.

Beware of “poll-itis.” Polls can be useful, but they can be overused and manipulated. A reader will be better served by more old-time regional reports with interviews and predictions from voters and field experts.

Don’t over-analyze. Much of the energy and time devoted to analyzing the candidates’ every move would be better utilized telling readers what voters think rather than what a desk-bound dreamer, with a license to sway, wishes would happen.

Beware of “creeping legitimacy.” Creeping legitimacy occurs when one news organization (usually a not-so-reliable one) publishes a story based on a rumor or one source and other media houses follow suit out of fear of missing the story. News organizations should apply the same reporting standards of their own investigative efforts (double check every fact) to any political campaign rumors and scandals. The reporter must never serve as a mere conduit for unchecked personal information on a candidate, especially from a questionable source. Stick by your own standard of fact-checking before pulling the trigger.

(From an article by Thomas Winship, founder and former chairman of the board of the International Center for Journalists in Washington, D.C., and former editor of The Boston Globe. Written for Editor & Publisher, Oct. 3, 1992)

Good Journalism’s Unconscious Role in Covering Elections and Conflict:

- **Channeling communication.** The two sides speaking to each other through the media.
- **Educating.** Exploring each side's struggle to move towards reconciliation.
- **Confidence-building.** Reducing suspicion and fear and showing that reconciliation is possible and what local efforts are being made.
- **Correcting misperceptions** of each side and encouraging them to revise their views of each other.
- **Making "them" human.** Giving each side names, faces, and voices and describing how the issues affect them.
- **Identifying underlying interests.** Asking the tough questions and getting out the real message beyond leaders' interests.
- **Emotional outlet.** Allowing both sides to speak their grievances.
- **Framing the conflict.** Describing the problem in a way that reduces tension and leads to negotiation.
- **Face-saving, consensus building.** Highlighting efforts of leaders and reaching their constituencies, including refugees and exiles, with that information.

- **Solution-building.** Publicizing steps of solution building on a daily basis.
- **Encouraging a balance of power.** Fostering negotiations and focusing on a power balance in hearing grievances and seeking solutions.

Checkpoints on Election Coverage in Conflict Sensitive Situations

- De-emphasize the "two opposing sides," reporting in favor of including voices of all who are affected.
- Avoid quoting the leaders by quoting ordinary people.
- Report on common ground more than division.
- Treat suffering of all sides.
- Avoid inflammatory language like "devastation" and emotional or imprecise words like "massacre," instead, use the more specific "deliberate killing of innocent, unarmed civilians..."
- Avoid language that takes sides like "terrorist" and substitute what people call themselves.
- Avoid making opinion into fact -- use a person's name with their opinion.
- Don't wait for leaders to suggest solutions. Explore peace, put ideas to the leaders, and report their responses.

-- from *"Conflict Sensitive Reporting: A Handbook,"* by Ross Howard



Opposition supporters brandish crude weapons during protests in Nairobi December 31, 2007. (Reuters)

"You must understand the impact reporting can... have on readers, listeners and viewers."

Lessons from Rwanda

What the Media Learned
Media can be used as a tool for national security and unity by putting peace as the first priority.

Journalists should take away lessons from a country's political, cultural and social history so they can downplay violence and other undesirable situations.

Media should be as neutral as possible to avoid pushing an already tense situation into bloodshed, like the case with Rwandan genocide.

-- Rwandan journalist Robert Magezi

The Role of the Media in Covering Polls and Conflict

The Kenyan Experience

Kenyan journalist Mathews Ndanyi, 36, reported on the country's Dec. 27, 2007, elections and the violence that followed and led to more than 1,000 deaths. Ndanyi continued to report, despite threats from voters and politicians. He shares the lessons he learned before, during and after the election.

By Mathews Ndanyi



KENYA -- The 2007 elections and the resulting violence presented critical professional challenges which most journalists in Kenya had never experienced.

Covering the elections and the conflict brought forth new experiences and lessons for journalists and at the end we, too, realized the importance of the media for any country.

I was affected when I was displaced from my home during the violence, just like more than 500,000 other

Kenyans. But the greatest lessons and challenges came in the line of my duty as a journalist.

The media was in focus, and for ordinary Kenyans it was more important to listen to radio, watch TV or buy a newspaper than buy a meal. The work of journalists was thus pivotal in the electoral process and the violence.

The role of the media was so influential. Journalists faced the challenge of remaining focused on reporting objectively without bias or favor and presenting the facts as they were to help readers, listeners or viewers make informed decisions.

During the election, during the violence that led to the death of more than 1,200 people, and then through the healing process led by former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan of Ghana, the media was in the thick of things.

As the country reviews what happened, it has clearly emerged that many institutions, including the media, had failed in their roles and in one way or another they did contribute to the Kenyan crisis.

To date, the government and media stakeholders are still embroiled in a debate over the role of the media in the Kenyan crisis. Key commissions formed to probe the chaos have critically analyzed the positive and negative contributions of the media to the crisis.

The failures and positive contributions by the Kenyan media during the elections serve as lessons or guides on how to handle elections and

conflicts for journalists in Kenya and other African countries, like Ghana, if faced with a similar situation.

Partisan Coverage

Even in the most complex circumstances, journalists need to remain independently focused, fair, impartial, factual and objective.

In Kenya, sections of the print and electronic media largely disregarded professional ethics and codes of conduct, instead choosing to be trumpets of individual, tribal or political party interests, which helped to polarize society.

Many of us took sides openly in the way we covered the polls. From our stories, Kenyans could easily tell our bias, including which side a media house or a journalist supported.

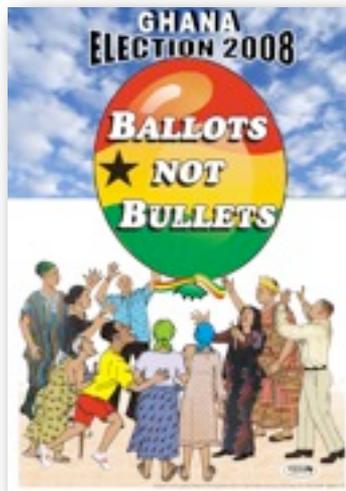
Kenya has five daily newspapers, four national TV stations, about 10 national radio stations and more than 80 other FM radio stations that broadcast mainly in vernacular languages to over 40 ethnic groups.

Many vernacular FM stations have wide listenership and openly propagated interests of tribes, parties and politicians, thus stirring up anger and violence.

What we have learned is that the media can instead help to harness the cultural, social and political diversities of a country for national good and that elections provide an opportunity for journalists to objectively focus on critical issues rather than dangerous trivialities.

Government and Political Interference in Media

A free and independent press helps to nurture democracy, human rights and the rule of law. When governments and power barons seek to muzzle the freedom of the press, then democracy and good governance are threatened. In Kenya, the government and politicians extensively interfered with the independence of the media, exerting pressure on journalists to demand favorable coverage during the polls.



A Ghanaian election poster promoting a peaceful election

Many journalists succumbed to external influence and, therefore, could not work independently. Threats to journalists, including myself, were massive. One of the Kiss FM editors had to escape from the country because of political intimidation. Meanwhile, many other journalists went underground for fear of their lives.

The state deployed agents to track journalists and tap their phones in moves that were intimidating. Such retrogressive acts undermine the development of strong, transparent and democratic institutions and it's important for government and politicians to always allow freedom of expression and the existence of a free media as a pillar of civilization.

Conflict- Sensitive Reporting

Elections can turn into violent conflicts as was the case in Kenya. The media can either help to aggravate the situation or restore order, depending on how journalists cover the situation.

The elections and the ensuing violence made it difficult for many of us to cope with the situation personally while professionally carrying out our duties.

Journalists had to exercise a high level of sensitivity for our own friends, families and colleagues and still understand the fact that our role had a direct impact on events.

Even the choice of words to use in a story was important because the public was sensitive to the way we reported events.

While covering events, I would use words in my stories without knowing or weighing their implication. I realized that in a conflict situation it's important for journalists to understand the interests of each group, or individuals, and try as much as possible to remain factual and neutral while avoiding words or styles of reporting capable of heating up the conflict.

I faced threats and attacks from mobs that disliked my style of reporting or the words I had used in stories during the poll violence. One time I referred to some youth as “militiamen” and the following day they stopped me at a road barricade demanding that I explain why I referred to them as militiamen and not what they thought they were -- “protestors.”



A man injured in election violence in Zimbabwe

During election campaigning, some terms used by politicians were picked up by the media and provoked angry reactions and even violence from opponents. Our use of terminologies like worriers, ethnic cleansing, massacres, gangs, or other tribal terminologies, during the violence also provoked anger from politicians and communities depending on who a writer was referring to.

Later, I acknowledged the fact that some of the words I used in my stories may have helped to incite anger or harden feelings, thus aggravating the conflict.

However, journalists should also be careful that self censorship does not undermine their work. At the height of the conflict in Kenya, editors agreed to give a blanket blackout on certain types of information in a bid to calm

down passions or encourage reconciliation. This can easily deny the public important information.

All in all, journalists must be acquainted with techniques of conflict-sensitive reporting so that during elections or conflicts they can continue to operate freely.

Live Coverage and Scenes of Violence

Live coverage of events both on radio and television is an effective way to communicate information as it is happening. During the polls and the conflict in Kenya, live coverage of events sparked debates. Many political parties used live coverage of rallies as one way to reach out to larger audiences.

Politicians were hosted on TV and radio for live shows or debates which captivated the country and impacted on political events.

However, politicians and their supporters should not be allowed to take advantage of wide publicity to propagate sectarian interests or utter words that amount to incitement of one group against the other, as was the case in Kenya. The government banned live coverage fearing that politicians were using media to incite the public.

Some of the scenes of violence aired on TV caused instant reaction across the country and sparked counter killings. However, this was not reason enough for the government to impose the ban on live coverage because the state had its own failures in dealing with the chaos. The live coverage of events by local and international media helped to attract quick

international intervention, which saved Kenya.



It's therefore important for the media in Ghana to carefully handle coverage of elections in a manner that will not undermine peace but also ensure that the public is adequately informed.

Media and Election Monitoring

The media, through monitoring and coverage of election events, can help to ensure free and fair polls in any country. Journalists help to educate the public on the need to vote, expose irregularities, including rigging, and give the public authentic facts and figures.

In Kenya, reporters were all over the country in an effort to monitor and independently report events during the elections. Journalists were quick in giving out information or the results as the votes were counted and the same was broadcast nationally way ahead of the official announcements by the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK).

Despite exposing wide-spread irregularities, journalists in Kenya abandoned the job halfway through

and never came up with final tallies to indicate who won the presidential election. Many Kenyans still demand to know the truth, but this is a story our media is yet to do.

As Ghana goes to the polls, it will be important for journalists to closely monitor and report on the polling process independently so that at the end of the day the Ghanaian media will have played its role to avoid the pitfalls we faced in Kenya.

Training and Equipping Journalists

It's important for media employers to ensure that their journalists are well trained and equipped so that they have the capacity to handle important events like elections.

Training and provision of the necessary tools to journalists helps in strengthening professionalism, ethics and independence of media workers. This is more important during polls to avoid situations where politicians use weaknesses in the media to influence its work. This is one of the main problems the media in Kenya are currently grappling with because many of us were ill-equipped to deal with the situation.

Other Media Channels

Other communication tools, including the Internet and mobile phones, also proved to be crucial during the polls in Kenya. All forms of campaign messages, including hate texts, were extensively passed around through the Internet and mobile phones.

These channels of communication proved to be even more dangerous because it was difficult for even the

government to monitor, edit or regulate information before it was circulated

Conclusion

Despite all the shortcomings by media in Kenya during the polls, it remained clear that no society can do without the work of journalists. What is required is to have a strong, vibrant, independent, professional media that will stand the test of time.

The media is a powerful tool that I believe can fight for free and fair polls and journalists can use the power of the pen to chart the way forward for a nation or help to destroy it.

Elections are a critical moment for any country and this is the time when journalists are called upon to do their best in helping to nurture democracy, which is currently at stake on the African continent considering events in Kenya and now Zimbabwe.

My hope is that journalists in Ghana will stand up to the task having learned from our experience.

Mathews Ndanyi has been in journalism for 15 years having trained at the Media Institute and at the United States International University (USIU). He currently is a correspondent for The Associated Press and works as a reporter in western Kenya for the Radio Africa Group, which runs Kenya's four leading English FM stations and the country's third largest daily newspaper, The Nairobi Star, for which Ndanyi also writes.

Recommendations for African Countries in Post-Election Crisis

- Government authorities should drop their fear about a repeat of what happened in Rwanda with the Radiotelevision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) radio that encouraged the 1994 genocide there and take a less hostile and more trusting attitude toward the media.
- Government should help the media to strengthen its self regulation machinery and its capacity for working together and providing training, so it can more effectively cope with extreme crisis situations.
- Political parties should stop using community radio stations to rally and organise their supporters and confront the questions and criticism of the media honestly.
- Media should review its successes and failures in a post-election crisis in a spirit of cooperation.
- Media across the continent should set up a fund to help train journalists in investigative reporting and self protection in places where there is violence and fighting.
- The media should strengthen its system of self-regulation and consulting together.

-- *Courtesy of Reporters Without Borders, International Media Support and Article 19*

An Insight Into Media-Related Violence

Rwandan journalist Robert H. Magezi reported on the massive genocide that occurred in that country as well as the presidential elections that followed. Here, he analyses the role played by the media in the 1994 genocide and the current role in the two elections the country has held since then.

By Robert H. Magezi

Kigali, RWANDA -- Thomas Carlyce, a Scottish writer in the first half of the 19th Century, termed media as the "Fourth Estate," adding it to the three official French 'estates' at the time due to the subtle significance media can have in society.

The phrase "media can make or break" implies that media can be successfully used to bring sanity to the society and at the same time to perpetuate turmoil and chaos in the society.

Media, being a double-edged word, can have an unlimited impact on society, depending on who is using it and how beneficial it will be to the user in terms of achieving his or her ambitions.

Media often are used strategically by systems, societies, personalities, institutions and governments to maintain a certain status-quo to which they attach a subtle value or expect a benefit, depending on their political, social or economic calculations.

The impact media can have on the society, largely depends on which camp they are serving. If they are serving a "wrong camp," that is to say a despotic government or a cynical regime with intentions built on cultivating hatred and division among the people, media might work towards achieving those sinister ambitions.

A vivid instance in which media contributed to bloodshed is when the Rwandan government-controlled radio station Libre Des Mille Collines and a local newspaper, *Kangura*, incited ethnic hatred among the populace that sparked off the mother of all genocides in human history. One million lives were lost in a period of three months.

Recently, media in Kenya were accused of inciting masses into post-election violence, which left thousands of people killed. The reports say Kenya media exaggerated and prematurely reported on the results in local languages, which threw people into a killing frenzy.

Media-induced violence thrives on the deep-held trust and compliance the public normally attaches to the media. It so happens that the public in most cases gets tempted to take media as trusted friends and redeemers it runs to, just like the proverbial knight, who against all odds fights for his village.

It is this inclination that "wrong camps" can take advantage of if they have an upper hand in the media houses. It is not because media have been highly trusted or dependable every time the common man has needed them; the conformity is developed because of the positional advantage media have over other institutions in regards to public expectations.

It is against that positional advantage of expecting media to fight for the people that the wrong camps leap to indoctrinate cynical propaganda. This eventually influences people into having sinister mindsets, which has on many occasions turned them into both victims and instruments of violence and related consequences.

In certain cases, media have incited violence unintentionally -- in the line of duty, for instance, or during election-related reporting and when reporters are interested in controversial story angles. After all, that's what makes news.

Media normally face a sharp conflicting loyalty between preventing a security threat and reporting the truth, which by principle is what they are supposed to do.

That is why media at times are compromised, due to increasing pressure from governments, institutions and other authorities to drop certain news coverage due to perceived security risks they anticipate such reports will incite.

In many cases, media houses have stuck to their professional ethics of impartiality and reporting the truth, hence ignoring the "risks" and reporting on those issues. In this case,

media can't be pinned for doing what they are supposed to do.

My recommendation to all the media institutions is to be as neutral as possible and strive to increase independence every passing day. This will work to strengthen their professional ethics and help reporters flourish in their work, as well as lessening the threat of being used by the wrong camps to promote their interests.



State-owned or state-affiliated media institutions, with their life blood connected to the ruling regime, should be investigated by an independent body to determine if they are following laws governing media.

Journalists themselves should put their professional ethics and truth above emotions, bias, divisionism and the drive to belong.

Media can downplay or avoid violence before, during and after the election process in the following ways:

1. By practicing objective reporting instead of subjective reporting in disseminating information on elections; that is, avoiding reporting that is based on internal or external influences.

2. Exercising the highest level of neutrality. Media should not side with a particular party, personality or opinion camp. For example, during the recently completed parliamentary elections in Rwanda, an unprecedented level of peace was realized, due in part to the high level of impartiality the media exhibited.

3. Putting peace and national stability at the forefront of media election coverage (before, during and after), regardless of looming internal and external pressures.

Ever since the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) captured power in Rwanda, the face of the media, in regards to downplaying violence, has greatly improved. This can be witnessed in the general peacefulness that has prevailed during the three elections conducted since RPF gained power.

The secret behind this has been national solidarity and a drive to reconstruct the economic, social and political spheres of the country, to which the media has been proactive, as opposed to dwelling on the negative reporting that has been predominant in Rwanda and elsewhere.

4. Avoiding exaggerations. Media should refrain from exaggerating or catalyzing negative election developments that come up in the most tense, fragile election situations that can spark violence, as in the case of Kenya's recent pre- and post-election violence.

5. Acknowledging the paradigm change. In other words, practicing

"peace" journalism (like advocacy journalism), where the media becomes an arbitrator in tense situations. It refocuses media onto reporting positive developments of the election process.

6. Being in direct touch with what is happening on the ground instead of reporting rumors.

7. Ignoring international media reports because they are normally so much inclined and interested in reporting negatives in Africa, more so during tense situations like elections and conflicts.

8. Carrying out a contextual analysis of the country in terms of security sensitivity before reporting. Countries have different political, cultural and social contexts, which should determine the journalist's approach when reporting.

Robert Magezi is a Rwandan journalist based in Kigali. With more than seven years experience in Rwanda, he is a member of journalists associations in the country and the region. He currently is a correspondent for a German news wire service and is a proofreader for New Times newspaper.

Covering Budgets

Money fuels the system and the relationship between money and the workings of the government can be seen in the budget process.

(Reprinted from "Handbook for Rwandan Broadcast Journalists," by

Michelle Betz, Knight International Journalism Fellow, 2003.)

The budget is a forecast or estimate of expenditures that a government will make during the year. Revenues are needed to meet those expenses and the budget is the final resolution of the conflicting claims of individuals and groups to public moves.

All sorts of pressures come to bear on the budget makers. Good reporters check to see if politicians seek to reward constituencies and fulfill campaign promises.

Here is a checklist of budget stories: Amount to be spent on new or increased taxes, higher license and permit fees and other income that will be necessary to meet expenditures cuts, if any, to be made in such taxes, fees or fines. (Comparison with preceding years. Justification for increases sought, cuts made.

Rate of current spending, under or over budget of previous year

- Patterns behind submission and subsequent adjustments, such as political motives, pressure groups, history.
- Consequences of budget for agencies, departments, businesses, public.
- Per-person comparison of costs for specific services with other areas or schools.
- Check of one or more departments to see how funds are used, whether all funds were necessary.

There are five major interest groups that seek to influence budget making and constitute a reporter's sources:

1. Government - executives who submit the budgets, officials and party leaders outside government are often helpful.
2. Money-providing constituencies - local real estate associations, property owners, associations, chambers of commerce, taxpayer organizations, merchants, business groups and banks.



An enthusiastic party supporter in Ghana



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Additional Resources

Ghana Journalists Association Code of Ethics

The GJA Code of Ethics was adopted by the National Council of the Ghana Journalists Association at Sunyani, capital of the Brong Ahafo region, on 27 July 1994.

Preamble

1. The GJA Code of Ethics has been drawn up as a ready guide and is applicable to members of the association in the state-owned media, private media and local freelance journalists.
2. The code provides a frame of reference to the National Executive and the Disciplinary Committee and members of the association when it becomes necessary to initiate disciplinary action against any member who flouts any Article of the Code.
3. The code is meant to ensure that members adhere to the highest ethical standards, professional competence and good behavior in carrying out their duties.
4. As the fourth estate of the realm, the public expect the media to play their watchdog role. They should do this with a high sense of responsibility without infringing on the rights of individuals and the society in general.

Article 1: People's right to true information

1. The duty of every journalist is to write and report the truth, bearing in mind his/her duty to serve the public.
2. The public have the right to unbiased, accurate, balanced and comprehensive information as well as express themselves freely through the media.
3. A journalist should make adequate enquiries and cross-check his/her facts.

Article 2: Social responsibility

1. In collecting and disseminating information, the journalist should bear in mind his/her responsibility to the public at large and the various interests in society.

Article 3: Professional integrity

1. Journalists should not accept bribe or any form of inducement to influence the performance of his/her professional duties

Article 4: Plagiarism

1. A journalist should not plagiarize because it is unethical and illegal.
2. Where there is the need to use another's material, it is proper to credit the source.

Article 5: Respect for privacy and human dignity

1. Journalists should respect the right of the individual, the privacy and human dignity.
2. Enquiries and intrusions into a person's private life can only be justified when done in public interest.
3. A journalist should guard against defamation, libel, slander and obscenity.

Article 6: Respect for national and ethnic values

1. A journalist should not originate material, which encourages discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, color, creed, gender or sexual orientation.

Article 7: Confidential sources

1. Journalists are bound to protect confidential sources of information.

Article 8: Suppression of news

1. Under no circumstances should news or a publication be

suppressed unless it borders on national security or is in public interest to do so.

Article 9: Corrections

1. Whenever there is an inaccurate or a misleading report, it should be corrected promptly and given due prominence. An apology should be published whenever appropriate.

Article 10: Rejoinders

1. A fair opportunity should be given to individuals and organizations.
2. Any report or a write-up affecting the reputation of an individual or an organization without a chance to reply is unfair and must be avoided by journalists.

Article 11: Separating comments from facts

1. While free to take positions on any subject, journalists should draw a clear line between comment, conjecture and fact.

Article 12: Information and pictures

1. A journalist shall obtain information, photographs and illustration only by straightforward means.
2. The use of other means can be justified only by overriding considerations of the public interest.
3. The journalist is entitled to exercise a personal conscientious objection to the use of such means.

Article 13: Respecting embargoes

1. Journalists should respect embargoes on stories.

Article 14: Victims of sexual assault

1. Journalists should avoid identifying victims of sexual assault.

Article 15: Dealing with the under-aged

1. Journalists should protect the rights of minors and in criminal and other cases secure the consent of parents or guardians before interviewing or photographing them.

Article 16: Personal gifts or distress

1. In case of personal grief or distress, journalists should exercise tact and diplomacy in seeking information and publishing.

Article 17: Headlines and sensationalism

1. Newspaper headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles they accompany.
2. Photographs and telecasts should give an accurate picture of an event and not highlight an incident out of context.

Glossary

Absentee voting/ballot: a ballot marked and mailed in advance by a voter away from the place where he or she is registered

Accessibility: the extent to which access is available to all citizens

Analysis vs. Opinion: analysis involves observing carefully or

critically and objectively, or the process of examining and questioning formally, as to elicit facts or information; opinion is based on a personal belief that is not founded on proof or certainty

Ballot: sheet of paper or card used to cast or register a vote, especially in secret; a list of candidates running for office on a ticket

Campaign: a race between candidates for elective office; the campaign of a candidate to be elected

Campaign Contributions: money, goods or services provided to a sponsor of election advertising, in relation to that sponsorship, whether given before or after the individual or organization acts as a sponsor

Campaign Finance Reform: rejecting contributions from private sources and accepting spending limits with the option of receiving “clean money” – public funds for their election campaigns

Campaign Period: the period between when an election is called and the close of general voting day

Candidate: a politician running for office, or someone who is considered for some position

Certifying Election Results: the formal process of verifying the validity and accuracy of the election

Citizen-based Coverage: reporting with a focus on citizens and their role in the community, providing citizens with an active voice in the reporting process

Civic Journalism: journalism with the emphasis of informing and empowering citizens or communities

Coalition Government: an alliance, especially a temporary one, of people, factions and/or political parties in running the government

Conservative: favoring traditional views, tending to oppose change; moderate

Constituency: the body of voters represented by an elected official or the district so represented

Democracy: a government in which the supreme power is retained and directly exercised by the people; a government by popular representation in which supreme power is retained by the people but indirectly exercised through a system of representation

Election Advertising: advertising during a campaign period to promote or oppose, directly or indirectly, the election of a candidate or a registered political party. This includes all forms of advertising, such as leaflets, lawn signs, billboards, brochures, newspapers, radio, television, newsletters, T-shirts, hats, buttons, public address systems, and the Internet.

Election Commission: a body, such as the Federal Election Commission, acting as an independent regulatory agency, designed to disclose campaign finance information, enforce the provisions of the law such as the limits and prohibitions on contributions, and oversee the public funding of presidential elections

Electioneering: persuasion of voters in a political campaign; to work actively for a candidate or political party

Election Monitors: a task normally expected of parties, but sometimes undertaken by impartial outside observers, to ensure that there was no fraud involved in the election process; involves monitoring the correctness of the procedures used during registration, polling, and the count

Election Opinion Survey: a public opinion poll or an opinion survey respecting an election or a matter of public discussion in relation to the election, including an opinion survey respecting an issue discussed publicly in the election

Electoral: a person who is eligible to vote

Focus Group: a small group selected from a wider population and sampled, as by open discussion, for its members' opinions about or emotional response to a particular subject or area, used especially in market research or political analysis

Free and Fair Election: an election respecting civil liberties, such as the freedoms of speech, association and assembly, and one which allows for the participation of the entire electorate with no interference

General Election: an election involving all or most constituencies of a state or nation in the choice of candidates; a national or state election; candidates are chosen in all constituencies

Horse Race: the political race among candidates

Instant Runoff Voting: allows voters to rank candidates as their first choice, second choice, third and so on; if a candidate does not receive a clear majority at first count, a series of run-off votes are counted

Interest Group: a group of persons working on behalf of or strongly supporting a particular cause, such as an item of legislation, an industry, or a special segment of society

Legislature: an officially elected or otherwise selected body of people vested with the responsibility and power to make laws for a political unit, such as a state or nation

Liberal: favoring proposals for reform, open to new ideas of progress; not limited by traditional, orthodox or established views

List of electors: a list of names and addresses of all eligible electors that is used at a polling station on voting day; also known as the voter list

Majority: the greater number or part; a number more than half of the total; the amount by which the greater number of votes cast, as in an election, exceeds the total number of remaining votes

NGO: non-governmental organization

Opinion Polls: a survey of the public or of a sample of public opinion to acquire information

Party: an organization to gain political power; a number of persons united in opinion or action

Plebiscite: direct vote in which the entire electorate is invited to accept or refuse a proposal

Plurality: in a contest of two choices, the candidate with the highest number of votes – even if less than 51 percent – wins

Polling Station: a place where voters go to cast their votes in an election

Polls: the location for casting and registering votes in an election
Primary: a preliminary election in which voters nominate party candidates for office

Proportional Representation: representation of all parties in a legislature in proportion to their popular vote

Qualifications: (1) a quality, an ability, or an accomplishment that makes a person suitable for a particular position or task; (2) a condition or circumstance that must be met or complied with, e.g., fulfilled the qualifications for registering to vote in the presidential election

Recount: an additional (usually a second) count; especially of the votes in a close election

Redistribution: the periodic adjustment of electoral district boundaries after a census to reflect population changes. Independent electoral boundaries commissions hold hearings and redraw the map

Referendum: the submission of a proposed public measure or actual statute to a direct popular vote; a referendum is used by governments to consult the people on a specific issue

Registration: the act of signing up to vote; voter registration; the act of registering; registry; enrollment

Ruling Party: the political party in power or majority in the government

Seat Allocation: the number of government/parliamentary seats meant to represent the populace

Sponsor: a sponsor is an individual or organization, other than the candidate, registered political party or registered constituency association, who pays for election advertising or a public opinion survey

Term Limits: a set limit to the number of terms a candidate can serve

Third Party Advertising: when organizations or individuals, other than candidates, registered political parties and registered constituency associations sponsor election advertising

Universal suffrage: the extension of the right to vote to all adult citizens, including the removal of restrictions against women and property-ownership requirements

Vote Counting/Verification: the act of ensuring that the published number of votes is equal to the actual votes collected

Vote-buying: the process of buying gifts for, or giving money to, potential voters in order to ensure their vote

Voter: one who votes; one who has a legal right to vote or give his suffrage; an elector; a suffragist; an independent voter

Voter Fraud: involves such acts as voter coercion, the completion of false registration cards, signing false names on petitions in order to influence the election

Voter List: a list of names and addresses of all eligible electors that is used at a polling station on voting day; also known as a list of electors

Voter's Guide: a directory of national, state, district, county and local officials prepared to promote political awareness among citizens

Voting Book: a book maintained at each voting station containing information and signatures of those voters who have voted

Writ of Election: the document signed by the Chief Electoral Officer that instructs the returning officer in an electoral district to conduct an election (or referendum) on a specific date

Write-in Ballot: the process whereby voters can choose to vote for a representative not listed on the ballot if the party and primary processes did not produce candidates for whom they wished to vote



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