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MEDIA ASSOCIATION  
OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

“  
*Strengthening  
the capacity  
of the  
Media  
in  
Solomon Islands*”



# Journalist Code of Ethics



## CODE OF ETHICS FOR JOURNALISTS

*This Journalist Code of Ethics  
Binds all members of the media practicing in  
Solomon Islands*

*Is witnessed and executed this day,*

*18 September 2021*

*By*

Georgina Kekea  
President,  
Media Association of Solomon Islands, MASI

Parangiju Mountain  
Lodge Retreat  
12 September 2021



## PREAMBLE

This code is a charter that sets the benchmark for the high professional standards that all journalists in the Solomon Islands have a duty to maintain.

Newsroom Editors/Leaders/Managers ensure that their staff adhere to this Code of Ethics.

This Code of Ethics embraces and respects the traditional values of the Solomon Islands way of life and the duty of news media to hold individuals, communities and institutions (public, private and not for profit) to account, consistent with the freedoms of expression, freedoms of information and of public interest.

The code is to be honoured and interpreted to the spirit of its intent, within a free and democratic society.

This Code of Ethics shall apply to all those who regularly commission, collect, write, produce and edit content for public dissemination in the Solomon Islands. The Code relates not just to professional publishers, journalists and other media workers but also to non-professional publishers and individuals who create or aggregate news, information and commentary, as a significant element of their publishing activities. The Code applies to print publishers, radio and television broadcasters, digital content providers and advertisers.

## ETHICAL STANDARDS

### 1. ACCURACY, BALANCE AND FAIRNESS

Journalists must take all reasonable care to present information (news, current affairs and stories) honestly - striving for accuracy, fairness and balance at all times.

- 1a. If published information is inaccurate, misleading or distorted – it must be publicly corrected at the first available opportunity with due prominence.
- 1b. Editorial comment and advertisements must be clearly identified as such and kept physically separate from other content and the author clearly identified.
- 1c. In the case of ongoing issues of significant public interest, individuals or organisations shall be allowed at last one (1) working day to respond to media inquiries or allegations made by third parties.

- 1d. Any conflict of interest (or perceived conflict of interest) including personal, family or community interests must be disclosed by journalists.
- 1e. Receiving of gifts or other financial or non-financial benefits (directly or to third parties) must be discouraged.
- 1f. News and current affairs involving personal grief or shock, the reporting must be made with empathy, discretion and published with due sensitivity.

### 2. PRIVACY

- 2a. Publication of information including images on private lives or concerns of individuals without their consent is only acceptable if a legitimate public interest, then it outweighs their normal right to privacy as per laws of Solomon Islands.

“In the public interest” does not mean “of interest to the public” or in other words, “mere public curiosity”.

The overriding public interest relied upon may include the following actions from an individual or organisation:

- i. Detection or exposure to crime, corruption or mal-practice
- ii. Protection of public health and safety
- iii. Preventing the public from being misled by a public statement or action
- iv. Private Sector – protection of customers and public

### 3 INTIMIDATION AND PURSUIT

- 3a. Journalists must not seek interviews, information or pictures by intimidation, blackmail or bullying (including invading private space of individuals or organisations) by technological or photographic means.



#### 4. DISCRIMINATION

Journalists should avoid all discriminatory or derogatory references in reporting. This includes references to:

- 4a. peoples gender, race, colour, ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental capacities, illness, age unless it is strictly relevant to the topic reported.
- 4b. publish information or material in the form likely to promote, encourage or infer racial, religious and ethnic divisions, hatred or discord.

#### 5. PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS AND PARTICULARLY CHILDREN

5a. As defined in MASI's Child Protection Policy 2016, MASI considers:

- i. A child as anyone below 18, even in the event that this goes beyond laws for consent and marriage in the Solomon Islands.
- ii. Child abuse is defined as including "all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development or dignity";
- iii. 'Grooming' is defined as behaviours used to form a special or power-based relationship with children. The process is designed to build the family and child's trust and to make it easier for the person to commit abuse.

5b. To protect children, the media will undertake the following:

- i. A child under the age of 18 must not be interviewed, filmed or photographed on issues involving their own or another child's welfare unless a custodian parent, guardian or similarly responsible adult consents and is present.
- ii. Pupils must not be approached, filmed or photographed at school without the permission of the school authorities.
- iii. Journalists should have particular regard for the potentially vulnerable position of children who are victims of, or witness crime. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

- iv. Journalists must not, even if legally free to do so, identify children under 18 who are victims of or witnesses in cases involving sex offences.
- v. In incest cases: - the child must not be identified; the adult may be identified subject to: the word "incest" must not be used where a child victim might be identified and care must be taken that nothing in the report implies the relationship between the accused and the child.
- vi. Care should be taken to ensure programs or films scheduled for family audiences generally do not include languages, images or content unsuitable for children. Where this is impracticable, appropriate advance guidance must be given to allow parents to exercise appropriate control.
- vii. There should be a standard Consent Form when interviewing children under 18.

Refer to Family Protection Act.

#### 6. REPORTING ON SENSITIVE ISSUES

- 6a. When reporting sexual activity or conduct, consideration should be given to the potential dangers of publishing material that affronts or offends the public.
- 6b. When reporting on suicide, care should be taken not to glorify acts of suicide and to avoid excessive detail of the methods used:
  - Use language with due consideration for the family and friends of the deceased person.
  - Where possible, include in any editorial coverage the address of a medical or other suicide prevention service, which could offer help to other persons who might consider taking their own lives.
- 6c. When reporting on crime, journalists should not, unless it is both legally permitted, in the public interest and not cause further harm:
  - i. name, or any way identify, without consent, victims of sex crime
  - ii. identify any child under the age of 18, accused of a criminal offence
  - iii. identify without consent, relatives or friends of a person accused or convicted of a crime, unless they are materially relevant to the story
  - iv. glorify or glamorise crime, violence or anti-social behaviour

Refer to Court Reporting Guidelines.



- 6d. Journalists should at all times recognise currently accepted general standards of decency and taste, bearing in mind the context in which the situation occurs:
- Report with integrity while avoiding the use of language or images that may cause unnecessary offence or worsen sensitive situations.
  - Respect the generally accepted tradition, culture and community values of the Solomon Islands.
  - When visiting hospitals or other medical facilities, always identify yourself as a journalist and seek official permission before approaching patients.

## 7. PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES AND JOURNALISTS

### 7a. Quoting Sources

When quoting or interviewing a source on-the-record:

- Use the correct name and title of a person who provides information for a story with the expectation that the information may be published.
- When recording an interview or taking notes, inform the interviewee that you are doing so.

### 7b. Off-the-record Sources

In circumstances when a news source speaks off-the-record:

- Reach an explicit understanding that information may be used so long as the source is not identified.
- Consider the motive of the source in offering information on an anonymous/confidential basis (i.e., whether a particular self-interest lies behind the decision of the source to provide information).
- Try to verify or fact-check information provided by an anonymous source.
- Respect the confidential nature of information provided knowingly and willingly by the source.
- Take reasonable steps to protect the identity of sources, including any documents, which should be stored in a secure place.

- 7c. All journalists should take reasonable precautionary measures to protect your own safety and be mindful of the trauma you may experience. Refer to advice and resources available from the Dart Centre Asia Pacific to

assist with preparation for and the coverage of stories of a sensitive nature and in risky situations.

## 8. PLAGIARISM

- 8a. It is unacceptable for journalists to use information or material from any rival media outlet, or social media platform, without consent and full and proper attribution.

## 9. SOCIAL MEDIA

- 9a. Journalists have a moral obligation to adhere to MASI Social Media Policy, which outlines all accepted ethical practices.

Refer to MASI Social Media Policy.

## 10. PANDEMICS

- 10a. To use and publish information from official authorities.

- 10b. Refrain from causing confusion and fear.

- 10c. Ensure clarity of events for education and awareness for reader, listeners and viewers.

## 11. CRIME

- 11a. Journalists must abide by the law.

## 12. ELECTION COVERAGE

- 12a. Refer to Electoral Media Code of Conduct.

## 13. KASTOM/TRADITIONAL PRACTICE

- 13a. Journalists to be sensitive to traditional and cultural practices.



#### 14. FUNDED TRIPS AND RECEIPT OF GIFTS

- 14a. Journalists are allowed commissioned trips provided that there is disclosure of engagement.
- 14b. Journalists should declare/disclose if travelling under external fully funded trips for stories and, or events.
- 14c. When offered gifts at cultural, government or commercial events:
  - Under no circumstance shall journalists accept monetary or any other form of gift in the course of their work.
  - At all times, journalists will seek to uphold the independence of journalism, avoiding any circumstance that could be seem to be bribery.
- 14d. Journalists are required to exercise their judgment cautiously on the matter of what constitutes a “gift”. The definition of gift does not include, for example, light refreshments offered to all those attending a public event. But it does include items of particular value and anything offered specifically to journalists that may be intended to influence editorial coverage.

#### 15. CONSENT

- 15a. Journalists must ensure the interviewee, whether or not a public figure, is aware he/she is being recorded (audio, video or still images) unless that person is performing a public duty (eg. a news conference, speech, etc).