

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF A CONSULTANT FOR THE ASSIGNMENT TO UPDATE THE JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA PRACTITIONERS CODE OF ETHICS AND ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION OF JOURNALISTS

1. Introduction

Digital technologies have been a blessing but again they have raised ethical challenges for journalists and media practitioners whether professional or citizen. Theorists have generally defined ethics in terms of a set of principles of *right*, or *moral*, conduct. In journalism and media, ethics is usually defined in terms of a set of principles and practices articulated in a code for journalists or media professionals to help them act responsibly. Common to most all codes of ethics in media are principles which aim at upholding the truth, independence of journalists (*i.e.*, avoiding conflicts of interest), accountability, minimizing harm, and preserving press freedom and rights of journalists and media practitioners.

In principle there essentially two types of ethics problems. These are *errors of commission* (ethical problems occurring by doing or committing some action) and *errors of omission* (ethical problems occurring by *not* doing something). Errors of *commission* are things journalists and media professionals or those using social media might do, but should not, such as accepting gifts from sources. Other problems of this type are actions that might present a conflict of interest and thereby compromise the integrity or independence of the journalist. For example, using anonymous sources except under the most limited circumstances; plagiarizing others; using sensationalized headlines among others. Errors of *omission* are things journalists and other media professionals should do, but fail to do. For example, journalists omitting certain information in their report because of bias.

In the context of journalism, these two types of ethical errors result in potential or actual compromise of the truth and its pursuit in a fair and responsible manner. They also diminish the quality or diversity of media content or propagate potentially harmful effects on the public and vulnerable people in our society such as children.

Journalism and Media codes of ethics have for many years served to provide guidance to traditional forms of media practice but inadequate in specific circumstances such as gender mainstreaming addressing ethical challenges associated with digital forms of media practice. These ethical gaps need to be assessed to update the Rwandan Journalists and Media Practitioners Code of Deontology that has been in force since 2014.

Similarly, The Media law in Rwanda require that every professional journalist and media practitioner should be accredited but due to the opportunities provided by the digital revolution, journalism and media practice has become more diverse than ever with a wide array of independent citizen operators engaged in the business of gathering and publishing information to the public. Against that background RMC intends to review the accreditation guidelines to streamline the profession of journalism and media by consulting stakeholders and draft guidelines for issuance of a press card to journalists and media practitioners providing for;

- ✓ Eligibility criteria;
- ✓ Requirements for the eligible applicants;
- ✓ Application forms to be used by applicants;
- ✓ Grounds for denial of a press card;
- ✓ Criteria for provisional press card to new entrants;
- ✓ Terms of use of the press card;
- ✓ Any other relevant matter to consider.

A systematic framework for understanding the gaps and actions of journalists and other media professionals as well as citizen journalists in an ethics context is what this concept seeks to address with intentions to update the current code of ethics to capture the new trends. It is in line with the above issues of concern that the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC) intends to update the journalists and media practitioners' code of ethics and accreditation guidelines for Journalists and media practitioners.

2. Objectives

The digital age has radically changed the nature of journalism process and its ethics and most theorists and debates believe that the codes of ethics that were developed in the framework of traditional media need to be updated and adapted to digital media trends. The internet has transformed the existing ethical ideals hence the need for new ethical codes integrating traditional and online journalism practices. Before the introduction of digital media, traditional media outlets such as TV, radio and newspapers were the only source of credible information and news gathering or sharing the information were carried out by the professional journalists. Today, journalists are not sole source of information for the public, citizen journalists are increasing that encourages new forms of interactive journalism. Similarly, the practice of traditional journalism, with its ethical expectations of accuracy, impartiality, gate-keeping and pre-publication verification are in conflict with speed instead of accuracy, partiality, citizen journalism and post-publication editing. The majority of ethical guidelines can be applied to online journalism but there are some gray areas which do not work with existing principles.

Therefore, the objective of RMC in undertaking this activity is to review of the current Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Rwanda with an aim of updating it to address any existing gaps, integrate new ethical concerns within the context of online journalism and gender mainstream consideration. Likewise, the activity has the objective of streamlining accreditation guidelines used by RMC in accrediting professional journalists.

3. Methodology

Given to the fact that a code is for and by journalists/media practitioners to govern and regulate their professional service to the public, RMC thinks that the following process should guide this activity:

- i. recognizing the need to draft an updated code or to revise the old one;
- ii. a consultative survey conducted to gather ideas for the updated code of ethics and accreditation guidelines;
- iii. discussions on draft versions of the code and guidelines;
- iv. presentation of the final version to a journalist²s/media practitioners;
- v. adoption by the board of commissioners of RMC;

- vi. Dissemination of the code and accreditation guidelines to the wider journalistic community and the public using various media platforms.

4. Deliverables

The following are the two main expected deliverables from the consultant:

- i. An updated journalists and media practitioners code of ethics;
- ii. A well-developed guideline for accreditation of journalists.

5. Qualifications and Experience

The individual consultant is expected to have the following minimum qualifications, experience and expertise:

- i. At least a Master's degree in Business Administration, communication, Ethics, project management or a related discipline;
- ii. A minimum of 10 years of working experience in related consultancies;
- iii. A sounding experience justified in every fields developing procedure manuals (3 certificates of good completion), development of communication strategy (3 certificates of good completion), elaboration of policies (3 certificates of good completion), development of strategic plans (3 certificates of good completion), experience with media houses (3 certificates of good completion), a strong experience in research and policy analysis (3 certificates of good completion) and other related fields.
- iv. Experience in collecting and analyzing and leading senior meetings;
- v. Proficiency in used languages in Rwanda (English, Kinyarwanda and French);
- vi. Data strategic action plans Prior knowledge and experience of at least 10 years of Research and Policy Analysis Consultancy in Rwanda;
- vii. Excellent command, written and spoken English.

6. Timing

The consultant is expected to be delivered in 40 working days after signing the contract.

7. Application

The qualified individual consultants should submit the following: letter of Expression of Interest, detailed CV and certificate of good completion. The deadline for submission of the requirements is fixed on 03/08/2021 at 5:00pm to rwandarmc@gmail.com and info@rmc.org.rw.

No hardcopies are allowed.

Kigali July 26, 2021

MUGISHA Emmanuel

Executive Secretary

