

# **Code of Ethics**

**Journalists' Association of Bhutan**

## PREAMBLE

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Bhutan's Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, opinion, and expression.

To fulfill this important responsibility in a democracy, the Constitution also guarantees the press, radio and television, including other mediums of public communication, the access to information for effective dissemination. The media provide the necessary forum through which citizens can exercise this constitutional right.

Since Bhutanese journalists are at the heart of this fundamental tenet, it therefore places on them a particular responsibility, one that demands the pursuit of a standard of integrity proportionate to their purpose and obligation.

## **1. Commencement**

This document shall be known as the Code of Ethics for Journalists (hereinafter referred to as 'the code'). The provisions of the code shall be implemented with effect from October 1, 2014.

## **2. Scope of Application**

The code shall apply to all journalists; the code shall act as a mother document to guide code of ethics of all practising journalists.

## **3. Scope of Accountability**

1. A journalist shall be accountable to the citizenry bearing public interest in mind at all times.
2. A journalist shall give an aggrieved person a chance to respond to accusations or allegations.
3. A journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information that is found to be inaccurate.

## **4. Independence**

A journalist shall not be influenced, and his or her journalistic work not compromised, by the management, government, political, commercial, financial or other vested interests, and shall carry out his or her duties independently.

## **5. Accuracy**

1. A journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he or she knows the origin. A journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.
2. A journalist shall fact-check and maintain transparency in dealing with news.

## **6. Objectivity**

1. A journalist shall ensure that all reports are balanced and all parties involved are given an equitable voice.
2. A journalist shall avoid any direct or indirect conflict of interest in the discharge of his or her

professional duties.

## **7. Honesty**

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1. A journalist shall carry out his or her duties with professional integrity.
2. A journalist shall not use his or her position to solicit any benefit or advantage or accept favours from his/her sources.

## **8. Sources and Confidentiality**

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A journalist shall have the right to protect the identities of his/ her sources as well as his/ her work documents (notepads and all electronic devices related to news gathering).

## **9. Privacy**

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1. A journalist shall respect sources' privacy.
2. A journalist shall cover grief and trauma with sensitivity.
3. A journalist shall exercise professional precaution in identifying a victim of sexual offence, children in conflict with the law<sup>1</sup>, persons living with HIVAIDS, and suicide.<sup>2</sup>
4. A journalist shall avoid unnecessary reference to a person's or a group's ethnic background, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and physical and mental conditions.

## **10. Use of Image**

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Journalists shall not doctor images.

Journalists shall have the right to take photos or film in public spaces.

## **11. Plagiarism**

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A journalist shall not plagiarise.

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<sup>1</sup> NCWC's Media Guidelines for Reporting on Women and Children

<sup>2</sup> Health Ministry & JAB's Media Guidelines for the Responsible Reporting of Mental Illness & Suicide



## **12. Sensationalism**

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A journalist shall avoid sensational reporting that is not in public interest.