

*PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION POLICY*

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REPUBLIC OF KENYA

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**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION,  
COMMUNICATIONS AND  
TECHNOLOGY**

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MANAGEMENT POLICY**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

The history of Public Relations and Communication Management in Kenya is as long as the history of Kenya. Indigenous African communities were known to engage in communication activities, including having their own spokespersons.

Likewise, when Kenya became a British East Africa Protectorate in 1895, the British colonial government used PR to enhance relationships between white settlers and the local people.

The British used PR with a view to building mutual understanding between the white settlers and the local people. In a memorandum dated 1947, *Public Relations Work in the Colonies*, the Chief Secretary to the colonial government describes PR as “the art of establishing and maintaining within a community, a spirit of fellowship and co-operation based on mutual understanding and trust.”

Regarding the qualifications of the head of the PR Department, the memo stated that “He must have a sympathetic approach to the public, he must have feelings for the colonial people, and he must believe in the future of the Colony. In addition, he should be a person of some seniority, with administrative ability, with a flair for publicity, and with a sincere and sympathetic approach to his work”.

The industry progressed during this period with the first Public Relations consultancy established in East Africa in the mid 1950s, and parastatal organizations such as the East African Railways and Harbours Corporation set up PR departments and hired consultants from London, United Kingdom. The first Public Relations consultancy in the country was Dunford Hall & Partners that was established in 1955 from a partnership of Michael Dunford and Andrew Hall.

Shortly after independence in 1965, the permanent secretary/accounting officer to the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism established the department of Public Relations in the ministry.

Subsequently, the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) was established in 1971 to bring together PR practitioners in Kenya. PRSK was formed by a constitution and is a registered Society. Full membership to the society was restricted to those who had proven experience and/or approved academic qualifications including membership to any other international public relations bodies with entrance qualifications no less strict than the PRSK. The membership of PRSK had to subscribe to the society’s code of professional conduct. The application of the code had its desired effect, providing for the first time in Kenya criteria for judging the professional qualities of the PR practitioner.

In June 1975, the society organized the first All Africa Public Relations Conference to coincide with the annual general assembly of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA). This was the first time that IPRA, founded in 1955, met in Africa during which the Federation of African Public Relations Association (FAPRA) was formally established with its interim headquarters in Nairobi.

Great strides have been made by Kenya in the Public Relations and Communication Management industry culminating in Kenya hosting the prestigious Global Alliance's World Conference on Public Relations in Emerging Economies (WCPREE) in 2015 co-sponsored by the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology and the Public Relations Society of Kenya.

Today, the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) is the umbrella body for all Public Relations and Communication Management practitioners in Kenya with an overriding purpose to advance excellent performance in the practice. The Society maintains local and international affiliates, which include the Eastern Africa Public Relations Association (EAPRA), the African Public Relations Association (APRA), and is a founding member of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management.

Article 35 of the Constitution and Access to Information Act, 2016 provide for citizens to obtain information held by the State. In order to professionalize information sharing between institutions/organizations and their publics, PRSK seeks to transform into a statutory self-regulatory body for the Public Relations and Communication Management practitioners both in public and private sectors in Kenya fully backed by law.

## **2. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

The practice of Public Relations and Communication Management has advanced. Globally, practitioners and PR organisations continue to define the practice, formalise its structure and seek to regulate the industry. In the US, for instance, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is the nation's largest professional organisation serving the communications community. Public relations associations regulate the practice among public, private and not-for-profit organisations operating within national borders of several countries.

In Kenya, professional standards are vested in the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK), a body corporate established and registered under Chapter 108 of the Societies Act. However, the Society lacks the legal instrument to enable it to enforce professional ethics and standards in the practice of Public Relations and Communication Management in the country. The Society intends to transform into

an Institute of Public Relations and Communication Management (IPRCM) under an Act of Parliament as an instrument to professionalise and regulate the Public Relations and Communication Management (PRCM) practice in Kenya.

The PRCM Policy will provide the required framework for the development of a statutory self-regulatory and effective IPRCM that will be the centre of information for all matters to do with the practice.

### **3. CHALLENGES FACING PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN KENYA**

Kenya has a vibrant PRCM industry it however lacks a legal framework to regulate the manner in which professionals conduct their practice. The country lacks mechanisms to enforce the code of conduct for the PRCM practitioners as well as standards for their training. Together with the lack of a coherent understanding of the PR and communication practice, the industry has been subjected to manipulation, resulting in negative perceptions that have injured the profession. It also poses a challenge to implement article 35 of the *Constitution of Kenya 2010* and the access to information act, 2016 in a manner that embraces national values and principles of governance as provided under article 10 of the Constitution.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) is a body corporate established and registered under Chapter 108 of the Societies Act. Formulating the PRCM Act, will be informed by the following instruments:

- (a) *The Constitution of Kenya, 2010*
- (b) Access to Information Act, 2016
- (c) Public Sector Communications Policy, 2017
- (d) Kenya Information and Communications Act, 1998
- (e) Kenya National Qualifications Framework Act, 2014
- (f) Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018
- (g) Media Council Act, 2013
- (h) Copyright Act, 2001
- (i) Public Service Commission Act, 2017
- (j) Public Officer Ethics Act, 2003

- (k) Kenya Vision 2030
- (l) Mwongozo Code of Corporate Governance
- (m) Public Participation Guideline for County Governments
- (n) A Guide to the Legislative Process in Kenya (by Kenya Law Reform Commission)
- (o) PRSK Constitution, 2016
- (p) PRSK Strategic Plan; 2018–2022
- (q) Global Alliance for Public Relations instruments (such as the Global Capabilities Framework for Public Relations and Communications Management) and best practices from international and local professional associations (such as UK Chartered Institute for Public Relations, Law Society of Kenya, and the Institute for Human Resources Management).

## **5. OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES OF THE POLICY**

### **5.1 Objectives**

- (i) Develop a legislative framework for Public Relations and Communication Management practice.
- (ii) Standardise the practice of Public Relations and Communication Management in Kenya.
- (iii) Promote the PRCM practice in Kenya.

### **5.2 Strategies**

- (i) Initiate mechanisms to develop a legislative framework for PRCM practice through development of the PRCM Bill.
- (ii) Transform Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) into an Institute of Public Relations and Communication Management (IPRCM).
- (iii) Charge the Institute with operationalization of the IPRCM Bill.

## **6. REGULATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION PROFESSION**

### **6.1 Promotion of Professional Standards and Ethics**

- (i) The Institute shall establish internal accreditation systems and code of

conduct for its members.

- (ii) The Government in collaboration with the stakeholders in the industry will encourage and promote acceptable standards by providing incentives and an enabling environment for the practice.

## **6.2 Code of Conduct/Ethics for PRCM Professionals and Practitioners**

At a minimum, the code of conduct/ethics for PRCM practitioners shall include commitment to the principles and national values as is prescribed in the *Constitution of Kenya, 2010*.

## **6.3 Public Relations and Communication Management Practice in Public Institutions/Private Sector/Not-for-Profit Sector/Academia**

This policy document seeks to address the PRCM practice in the following sectors:

### **6.3.1 Public Relations and Communication Management Practice in Public Institutions**

The role of Public Relations and Communication Management in Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) entails among other functions identifying significant events which require packaging of Government information for dissemination to the public; organizing fora where Government policies, programmes and projects are propagated and promoted; advising Ministries/Departments/Agencies on matters of public communications and dissemination and management of public information; and, formulation of National Public Communications Policies and design of a Government communications infrastructure.

According to the Public Service Human Resource Manual (2016) and the Public Service Act, 2017, Ministries, Departments and Agencies are expected to maintain regular liaison through public communications units to ensure the fullest possible publicity for Government policy, programs and plans. The PSC Human Resource Manual also provides for professional public servants to strengthen their skills by subscribing to relevant professional bodies while the Public Communications Policy identifies the Public Relations Society of Kenya as the suitable body to build the professional capacities of public relations officers in Government.

### **6.3.2 Public Relations and Communication Management Practice in the Private Sector**

The private sector plays a critical role in national, social and economic development. The partnership between the public and private sector is important in creating

national cohesion, integration and prosperity. Public Relations and Communication Management practitioners in the private sector manage relationships between institutions and their stakeholders inclusive of Government in creating understanding promoting business and job creation.

Their roles of those in the private sector includes; stakeholder management, media relations, external relations, internal relations, Government relations, public policy affairs, corporate communications, campaigns, advocacy, research and information management, community relations, regulatory affairs, political advisory and parliamentary affairs. In addition, they provide counsel to management and create positive perceptions on the organization among publics.

### **6.3.3 Public Relations and Communication Management Practice in the Not-for-profit Sector**

The Not-for-profit (NFP) organisations are dedicated to furthering particular social causes or advocating for a shared point of view. In Kenya, the NFP sector is large and diverse. It covers activities and services including health, social services, education, sport and recreation, arts and culture, environment, animal welfare, human rights and religious practices. NFPs are accountable to the donors, sponsors, volunteers, program recipients, and the public community. The activities that NFPs undertake can help build the public's trust and confidence in them. The nature of their operations requires them to build and nurture relationships with their stakeholders, thus the increasing realisation of the need to engage PRCM professionals.

### **6.3.4 Public Relations and Communication Management Practice in Academia**

Institutions of higher learning are an important segment in building skills and human capital for both public and private sectors. Academic training in Public Relations and Communication Management grounds students in theory and practice in preparation to engaging in strategic Public Relations and Communication Management work in the industry. Learners are prepared to conduct research and tackle emerging issues and trends in the industry in order to effectively and innovatively manage national challenges.

## **6.4 Human Resource Development**

Human capital development feeds the national development agenda. IPRCM shall be responsible for building skills and competencies for communication professionals in both private and public sectors for effective practice and good of the country. It will offer professional training and administer examinations to assure standards and quality of service among the professionals.

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## 7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The existence of a cohesive and well-functioning institutional framework is essential for the attainment of all the objectives of this policy. The aim is to ensure that the various institutions within the PRCM sector effectively play their respective but interdependent roles to ensure an efficient and sustainable PRCM industry. The following will play important roles in the development of the Public Relations and Communication Management industry:

- (i) Government of Kenya;
- (ii) Institute of Public Relations and Communication Management (IPRCM);
- (iii) Public Relations and Communication Management Practitioners Examinations Board (PRCMPEB).

### 7.1 Role of the Government

The role of government will include, the development, implementation and coordination of this policy including the establishment of a legal framework that guarantees and allows PRCM professionals to exercise their profession freely and provision of an enabling environment for PRCM Practice and investment in the sector.

### 7.2 Role of the Institute

The PRCM Act will provide the requisite legislative framework to regulate PRCM practitioners. The Institute shall, therefore, implement provisions as provided for in the IPRCM Act which include:

- (i) To establish, regulate and promote standards of professional competence and practice amongst members and monitor and enforce compliance with, and delivery of, such standards by members;
- (ii) Promote, commission and carry out research into the subject of Public Relations and Communication Management and related disciplines, and the publication of books, periodicals, journals and articles in connection therewith;
- (iii) Promote, maintain and enhance the reputation and standing of the profession and of the Institute and represent the profession and the views of members, both nationally and internationally;
- (iv) Advise Examinations Board on matters relating to examination standards and policies;

- (v) Collaborate with the relevant training institutions for professional education and training;
- (vi) Advise and make such recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary on matters relating to Public Relations and Communication Management in all sectors of the economy and on all other matters relating to the profession, as it may deem appropriate;
- (vii) Maintain, Promote, and monitor compliance with, a regime of the Institute's continuing professional development programmes through the commissioning and provision of general and specialised post-registration and the promulgation of best professional practices;
- (viii) Promote, enhance and enforce professional and ethical guidelines, rules and standards amongst practitioners;
- (ix) Liaise, co-operate and collaborate with regional and foreign regulatory bodies in the field of public relations and communication management;
- (x) Promote and encourage entry into the Public Relations and Communication Management profession through the study of public relations and communication management and related disciplines and the provision of bursaries, scholarships, prizes and other incentives to students;
- (xi) Provide for resolution of disputes on professional issues involving members;
- (xii) Establish branches and chapters to support the mandate of the Institute;
- (xiii) Prepare the remuneration order for the Public Relations and Communication Management profession and advise the Cabinet Secretary to prescribe the same through a Gazette notice;
- (xiv) Do anything incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the preceding functions;
- (xv) The Institute shall be financed from fees and other monies in respect of licences and accreditation, donations, gifts, endowments, grants, proceeds of any investments, a training levy and levy on revenue of the PRCM Institutions;
- (xvi) Where the Institute is unable to resolve the issues presented before it and its organs through its laid down procedures, the aggrieved party shall have the right to take legal action according to the existing laws.

### **7.3 Role of Public Relations and Communication Management Practitioners Examinations Board**

The role of the Examinations Board will be:

- (i) Prepare syllabus for examinations in Public Relations and Communication Management and related disciplines;
- (ii) Make rules with respect to such examinations;
- (iii) Arrange and conduct examinations and issue certificates to candidates who have satisfied examinations requirements;
- (iv) Promote recognition of its examinations in Kenya and foreign countries;
- (v) Investigate and determine cases involving indiscipline by the students registered with the Examination Board;
- (vi) Promote and carry out research relating to its examination;
- (vii) Promote the publication of books and other materials relevant to its examination;
- (viii) Subject to any other written law, consider and approve applications for accreditation by educational institutions that seek to offer courses in public relations and communication management;
- (ix) Set standards, in consultation with the relevant training institutions, for professional education and training of public relations and communication management;
- (x) Liaise with the Ministry of Education in accreditation of institutions offering training subjects examinable by the board; and
- (xi) Do anything incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the preceding functions.

## **8. LEGAL INSTRUMENT FOR OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE POLICY**

The Public Relations and Communication Management Bill, 2019 has been developed to implement the policy objectives and strategies contained in this PRCM Policy.

## **9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISM FOR THE POLICY**

This policy shall be reviewed from time to time to incorporate emerging issues and identified needs in PRCM practice. Monitoring and evaluation shall be based on measurable, observable and verifiable indicators in line with the emerging

development within the Public Relations and Communication Management practice. The Cabinet Secretary for Information, Communications and Technology shall undertake its advisory, co-ordination and facilitation role for the successful implementation of the policy.

