A Model Conflict Sensitive Editorial Policy (CSEP) to be promoted for the use of media outlets

Submitted to:Ethiopia Media Council (EMC)

Prepared by: Wondwosson Nigussie Belete

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1. Introduction

This model Conflict-Sensitive Editorial Policy (CSEP) provides a formal set of guidelines to help Ethiopian media outlets, editors, and journalists integrate conflict sensitivity into their reporting. It is designed to establish an additional layer of editorial rigor, particularly when covering latent, emerging, or active violent conflicts. Prepared by EMC, this model is not an exhaustive or mandatory set of rules, but a recommended framework to enhance the media's sensitivity to both conflict dynamics and human rights.

Conflict sensitivity, in its media setting, can be understood as the ability to understand the context, including all socioeconomic and political tensions, root causes, cultural and historical backgrounds, and structural factors in which the media operates. This is important to understand the nexus between media intervention and context, and to act on this understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive ones.

The media is expected to be conflict-sensitive by analyzing the positive and negative impacts of media interventions, both on conflict and peace dynamics, within the contexts in which they are implemented, as well as the implications of these contexts for the design and execution of the interventions.

Not only in times of violent conflict but also at all times where there is potential for violence, all media reports must take into account the context of incidents, reflect the overall situation, identify factors contributing to incidents, and aim to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts. Ultimately, conflict sensitivity is a continuous exercise that must be nurtured within the newsroom culture. It is upheld by providing accurate, fair, and responsible content in all reporting. This involves a conscious effort in language use, story framing, and editorial decision-making. By doing so, the media can play a vital role in de-escalating tensions: presenting verified facts, correcting misperceptions, and highlighting realities that conflicting parties may ignore. Such reporting helps to avoid harmful stereotypes and narrow perspectives, fostering a more informed and peaceful public discourse

The media can also maintain conflict sensitivity by providing accurate, fair, and harmless content in all of its reporting. Conflict sensitivity is not a one-time activity but a continuous exercise that requires the ongoing nurturing of newsroom culture to be versed in the appropriate use of language, story framing, and editorial intervention. By doing so, the media can help reduce tensions by presenting facts, correcting misperceptions, and highlighting realities that would otherwise be ignored by conflicting parties.

Conflict-sensitive reports also help avoid stereotypes and narrow perspectives on the causes, progress, and impact of conflict.

2. Principles and Values

The newsroom is guided by the following principles and values at all times reporters are developing news and editors are reviewing it.

2.1. Accuracy

2.1.1. The fundamental objective of **[media_name]** as a media house is to report accurately and without bias on matters of public interest by cross-checking of facts and information available.

2.1.2. Reports by **[media_name]** must conform to reality, be put in context, and never be misleading or false.

2.1.3. Accuracy also encompasses drawing on authentic pictures, audio, and videos, as well as using exact quotes and/or accurate paraphrasing.

2.2. Fairness

2.2.1. Reports by **[media_name]** must always maintain fairnessby avoiding favouritism of one viewpoint over another in all processes of news making including the collection of information, framing of angles, and release of the reports.

2.2.2. Reports of **[media_name]** should adhere to the maximum possible representation of voices of vulnerable, marginalized, and minority groups such as women, persons with disabilities, children, and survivors of natural or human-made made disasters.

2.2.3. The report contents by **[media_name]** should provide a range of views on significant issues over time, ensuring diversifying sources and perspectives and be always cautious about overusing or repeatedly using particular specialists or analysts.

2.2.4. **[Media_name]** shall ensure employing appropriate means to obtain material and inform the news sources how **[media_name]** will be using the information it gathered from them.

2.3. Cause No Harm

2.3.1. **[Media_name]** always has to commit to ensuring that its reports cause no harm to the sources of its reports, to its target audiences, or to the wider public.

2.3.2. **[Media_name]** always has to avoid framing reports that might potentially exacerbate conflicts and shape them in a way of promotes understanding among conflicting parties.

2.3.3. Cause no harm for **[media_name]** does not mean avoiding the accountability of news subjects for what they do or say but avoidance of harm to innocents or, as it may, causing mob violence against any subject.

2.4. Respectfulness

2.4.1. **[Media_name]** must always address the subjects of its reports with dignity and respect.

2.4.2. **[Media_name]** must always respect the rights and dignity of all people referenced in its reports regardless of their age, color, gender, race, ethnicity or national origin, economic class, type of work, disability, or faith.

2.4.3. **[Media_name]** must always respect the privacy of its news subjects as well as sources of reports.

2.4.4. **[Media_name]** must maintain respect for the traditional values of all groups of people, and critics of rituals must refrain from implying prejudices against the people who practice the rituals but the practice.

2.5. Consciousness

2.5.1. The reports of **[Media_name]** shall always be cautious in their portrayal of sensitive or contentious issues that might offend certain groups or communities.

2.5.2. The reports of **[Media_name]** shall always avoid the use of adjectives or qualifiers such as ethnicity, race, disability, gender, or the age of our report subjects unless it is relevant to the story reported.

2.5.3. The reports of **[Media_name]** shall always put sensitive incidents into the proper context and incorporate relevant information from the relevant subject authorities to mitigate potential reactions from our audiences.

2.5.4. The reports of **[Media_name]** must always use preferred names or identifications of sections of society at all times.

3. Sensitivity Guide

3.1. Age Sensitivity

3.1.1. Reports of **[media_name]** do not mention age unless it is relevant to the report.

3.1.2. The use of a person's age should be precise rather than the use of disapproving terms that may be misinterpreted or might inflict offense due to bias attached to them.

3.1.3. Photographs or interviews of minors (under the age of 18) should only be used with parental or guardian consent.

3.1.4. **[Media_name]** must exercise special care while producing content targeted at minors. Such content targeted at minors should not propagate hatred and should refrain from showing graphic content or expressions.

3.2. Disabilities Sensitivity

3.2.1. The reports of **[media_name]** must not use types of disabilities as adjectives before the name of news subjects. Mention a disability only if it is pertinent.

3.2.2. **[Media_name]**'s reports must always adhere to the use of the correct terms and phrases to describe different natures of disabilities according to the common reference chosen by persons with disabilities.

3.2.3. Reports of **[media_name]** never use terms or phrases that disempower, undermine capacities, belittle humanity, or reflect prejudices toward persons with disabilities.

3.2.4. **[Media_name]** should strive to consider different mechanisms of disseminating content to persons with disabilities to ensure equitable access to information, especially in times of violent conflict.

3.2.5. Reports of **[media_name]** should be cognizant of the fact that conflicts disproportionally affect persons with disabilities and also that they cause disabilities. Therefore, the reports should emphasize the necessity for special protection and access to humanitarian aid for persons with disabilities.

3.3. Ethnic Sensitivity

3.3.1. **[Media_name]** reports should reflect the ethnic diversity of the country in a natural way, free of explicit or oblique bias. The reporting should give a full and fair view of people and cultures in Ethiopia, in particular, and beyond, reflecting and drawing on this diversity to reflect life as it is.

3.3.2. **[Media_name]** always capitalizes on the proper names of ethnic groups, nationalities, peoples, races, and tribes. **[Media_name]'s** reports call people the way the people call themselves.

3.3.3. **[Media_name]** shall always actively avoid stereotypes or prejudices against social groups. Issues of ethnic groups and culture must be handled with care, without negative or positive portrayal of members of ethnic, cultural, or social groups as one and identical in behavior.

3.3.4. **[Media_name]** reports when prejudice, disadvantage, or tension exists or is perceived as existing, but with maximum caution not to misrepresent them or take positions. The report needs to address legitimate concerns and competing ideas in the claims regarding the particular case in point.

3.3.5. The reports of **[media_name]** identify a person by ethnicity, race, color, and place of origin only when it is truly pertinent. Additionally, **[Media_name]** shall never associate a person with an ethnic identity without their consent.

3.3.6. A full description, including but not limited to the color of the skin is an acceptable expression according to the context and may be used if a person is wanted by police or the situation necessitates it. This shall be applicable also when an inclusive introduction is necessary for reports targeting visually impaired communities. A full description, including skin color, may be used when required for a legitimate public interest purpose, such as a specific police request or to ensure accessibility for visually impaired audiences.

3.3.7. Ethnicity may be pertinent when it motivates an incident or helps explain the emotions of those in confrontation. References to ethnic backgrounds could be relevant in reports of ethnic controversy, language discussions, and so on.

3.3.8. While reporting ethnically motivated attacks or violence, **[media_name]** shall make a maximum effort to verify the motivation and report it carefully. However, referring to the victims or survivors of ethnically motivated violence in association with their ethnic or social group may be acceptable according to the context may allow, incriminating an entire group or portraying the perpetrator's ethnic background, as representative of the incident shall always be prohibited.

3.3.9. Under no circumstances will [media_name]'s editorial content justify an ethnic slur by claiming it was intended as humor.

3.4. Religious Sensibility

3.4.1. **[Media_name]** reports about religion shall not hold to or promote any particular belief system or form of religious expression. The reports shall always be sensitive to the protocols applicable to places of special sensitivity or importance toa specific group.

3.4.2. Media outlets must never define the people of a territory by religion unless it is strictly relevant to the story, and shall identify religious groups as specific institutions or factions rather than as representatives of a faith as a whole, even if they claim to do so.

3.4.3. Reports of **[media_name]** shall not assume and portray the participation of public figures in public affairs emanating from the faith they follow or from their belonging to a faith community.

3.4.4. Reports of **[media_name]** dealing with religious themes should be aware of what may cause offence among religious followers or others. Profane allusions or disdain directed towards deities, scriptures, holidays and rituals at the heart of various religions might cause deep offence. Criticism of dogmas of faiths shall be done with extreme caution to prevent inflicting harm on anyone.

3.4.5. Religious beliefs and practices should be described sensitively, accurately, and consistently. But avoiding offence should not be confused with compromising or altering other key values such as impartiality, accuracy, and respect for the truth; it only necessitates the report shall separate faith institutions and rituals from the persons practicing them.

3.5. Gender Sensitivity

3.5.1. **[Media_name]** reports deal with the sexes equally and without stereotyping. A woman's marital or family status, whether she is single, married, divorced, widowed, mother, sister, or a wife, is pertinent only to explain a personal reference or to round out a profile; her marital or family status shall never be used unless it is essential to the subject matter in the report.

3.5.2. The reports of **[media_name]** shall also not discuss a woman's news subject gratuitously as attractive or sexy, or a man's news subject as handsome or well-muscled. The description of someone's appearance in the news subject must only be done if it is necessary for the context of the news or in a quotation whose reference is necessary.

3.5.3. **[**Media_name] shall consistently use gender-neutral terminology (e.g., chairperson, camera operator) and shall never presume an individual's gender based on their profession.

3.5.4. [Media_name] shall make a deliberate effort to ensure fair and balanced representation of women and men as news subjects and sources, both in quantity and in the diversity of topics they represent, avoiding the stereotyping of women in 'soft' or 'pity'-based stories.

3.6. Precautions

3.6.1. [Media_name] must avoid the use of gratuitously shocking content and shall provide a clear prior warning before broadcasting any graphic or disturbing material that may upset audiences.

3.6.2. The reports of **[media_name]** shall ensure that those precautionary warnings give audiences enough information to decide whether they wish to continue with the content or if it is suitable for their children to hear. Warnings about viewer discretion should be clear and factual, neither urging nor daring viewers to stay.

3.6.3. The editorial of **[media_name]** shall make reasonable decisions about what kinds of content need precautionary warnings and/or blurring of images, covering part of it, or changing (with notification) offensive, vulgar, or profane words and phrases.

3.7. General Conflict Sensitivity

3.7.1. News, views, or comments by **[media_name]** relating to disputes/clashes/interor intra-state conflicts should only be disseminated after proper verification of the facts. They should be presented with due caution, balance, and restraint in a manner that is conducive to the creation of an atmosphere congenial to national harmony, reconciliation, amity, and peace.

3.7.2. Sensational, provocative, and alarming headlines or leads are to be avoided. News reports or commentaries should not be written or broadcast in a manner likely to inflame the passions, aggravate the tension, or accentuate the strained relations between the parties concerned. Equally, content with the potential to exacerbate communal animosity or national conflict should be avoided.

3.7.3. Headlines and News leads shall not be sensationally provocative and must justify the matter detailed in the news content. Headings containing allegations made in statements should either identify the body or the source,placing it within the same headline or at least enclosing it in quotation marks.

3.8. Language Sensitivity

3.8.1. The reports of **[media_name]** shall always carefully choose their languages, pictures, and sounds. The choice of language shall be carefully made to shape the understanding of audiences of the news matter to the perception of the **[media_name]** by the audience.

3.8.2. **[Media_name]** shall prioritize the use of direct quotes instead of rephrased narration of news subjects. Interpretation of messages from different languages or analysis of message content shall be done with maximum caution so as not to convey a message the news subject did not mean to pass.

3.8.3. The reports of **[media_name]** shall use simple words and expressions that can be easily understood by all people and avoid the repetitive use of technical jargon.

3.8.4. The reports of [media_name] shall use terms that describe groups and people faithfully and objectively, ensuring they neither demonize nor glorify their subjects.

3.8.5. To respect the agency and dignity of those affected by violence, [media_name] shall intentionally use the term "survivor" instead of "victim" unless the specific context explicitly demands otherwise.

3.8.6. The framing of violence reports should not be disproportionately focused on the victims, but on the perpetrators or aggressors; in particular, with gender-based violence, the aggressor's actions should be at the forefront of the news rather than the survivors being victimized.

3.9. Mass Incidents Reporting

3.9.1. **[Media_name]** shall always strive to accurately report mass demonstrations or civil disorder in news events without any manipulation of the overall behavior of the demonstration or the number of people taking part.

3.9.2. The reports of **[media_name]** shall carefully include major voices in the mass demonstration and confirm the lead-up to it from organizers' and participants.

3.9.3. Media_name]'s reports shall meticulously verify and report on the security context of public demonstrations, establish whether a demonstration is peaceable, and discern the factual causes of any disruption

3.10. Violence Reporting

3.10.1. The reports of violence by **[media_name]** shall make careful consideration of framing; they shall never encourage or justify aggressive behaviour, indifference, or insensitivity to violence victims.

3.10.2. Reports of violence must be presented factually with caution before display. Reports must always respect innocence before a judicial authority announces guilt in cases of violence involving judicial intervention.

3.10.3. The reports of **[media_name]** shall take particular care to prevent the probable harm it might cause to the news subjects or audiences when the reported violence involves domestic or sexual violence, extreme or sustained violence, any apparent encouragement or approval of violence, suicide, or attempted suicide.

3.10.4. The reports of gender-based or sexual violence shall not imply approval or acceptability of sexual exploitation or degradation. Extra caution should be taken to avoid any perception of endorsement of sexual violence as an erotic experience.

3.10.5. The reports of **[media_name]** shall not identify the survivor of any violence, but particularly gender-based violence, with any details, unless they have chosen to go public with their identity (secure a recorded or written consent).

3.10.6. Journalists or camerapersons of **[media_name]** shall not insist on taking records or photos of injuries or scars, or on describing them, unless the survivor allows it; they shall not include images or illustrations that depict scenes of violence without precautions; additionally, they shall choose neutral pictures when the target audience shall be protected.

3.10.7. **[Media_name]** reports shall not insist on excessive descriptions, details, or circumstances of the violence from the survivors. If a survivor shares more details, reporters should always consider the risks of perpetuating stereotypes in their reporting.

3.10.8. The reports of **[media_reports]** shall be cautious of the risks the piece might potentially bring to those involved in the story, to the relatives of the news subject, or to the social group they belong to. The journalists reporting on the violence shall also ensure their safety when covering it.

3.11. Election Reporting

3.11.1. The reports of [media_reports] shall be committed to contributing to free and fair electionsthrough reporting, backgrounding and analysing the issues so that a well-informed electorate can make reasoned choices.

3.11.2. The reports of [media_reports] shall consider the respective legal provisions relating to the media coverage of the pre-election, actual election (casting votes and voting process), and post-election processes (vote counting, announcement of results, and official declaration of the election's final result and other issues), and should be duly adhered to.

3.11.3. The reports of [media_reports] shall comply with the code of conduct, implementation guidelines, and directives issued by the National Election Board; in dealing with the mass media, journalists' coverage of elections shall be adhered to.

3.12. Terrorism Reporting

3.12.1. The reports of **[media_name]** shall address terrorism reports with maximum caution, as they contain life-and-death situations. No news story of **[meida_name]** shall cause further damage to the crisis.

3.12.2. While [media_name] has a duty to report on terrorism, its paramount responsibility is to ensure that its news-gathering and reporting do not endanger human lives

3.12.3. The reports of **[media_name]** on terrorist acts shall not facilitate an open publicity line for lawbreakers or give unwitting support or platform to destructive or violent causes, as terrorists often engage in acts of terrorism for information warfare. As contentious as its definitions remain, terrorism can be seen as the deliberate use of violence or the threat of violence to generate terror; intended to coerce or intimidate governments or civilian societies in the pursuit of primarily political, religious, or ideological purposes.

3.12.4. In the context of armed clashes involving multiple actors, [media_name] 's reports should cautiously address the situation and the armed actors in an editorially sound manner that avoids the villain-hero and/or good-evil dichotomy. The legal status of actors, such as "terrorist groups," should be carefully contextualized to clearly depict the conflict situation and the cause of the violent clash.

3.12.5. The reports of **[media_name]** can also use alternative terms for incidents that may require relative neutrality. These words may include bombers, assailants, gunmen, and armed groups.

3.13. Disasters, Accidents, or Pandemics Reports

3.13.1. The reports of **[media_name]** shall give proportional coverage to natural disasters or accidents according to their effects.

3.13.2. Where appropriate, and with the approval of the respective persons in charge (such as the Chief Executive and Editor-in-Chief), normal programming may be suspended and replaced by special news programming or rolling news coverage in response to disasters.

3.13.3. Reporting accidents in **[media_name]** shall seek to balance full, accurate reporting against the obligation to avoid causing unnecessary distress or anxiety.

3.13.4. In reporting accidents, [media_name] must prioritize the swift and accurate communication of essential factual details, treat initial casualty figures with caution, and issue prompt, prominent corrections for any mistakes.

3.13.5. Reports of accidents by **[media_name]** shall be sensitive and objective but not inappropriately sentimental.

3.13.6. Reports of pandemics shall fully specify and acknowledge the real threats and consequences of the pandemic, based on available information from the public or healthcare authorities.

3.13.7. Pandemic reports of **[media_name]** shall not provoke public panic or unwarranted optimism, but rather serve as a warning about the outbreak and its prevention and/or termination.

3.13.8. The reporting of deaths in [media_name] must be handled with sensitivity and a rigorous adherence to the facts, while maintaining respect for the deceased and affected communities

3.13.9. The right of the dead to privacy must be honored, as well as the right of relatives and friends to be protected from learning of the death through public reports.

3.13.10. In covering funerals, tragic incidents, and their anniversaries, [media_name] must exercise extreme sensitivity, respect the privacy of the bereaved, and be prepared to adjust editorial scheduling to prevent causing widespread offence.

3.13.11. Reports of **[media_name]** shall not include children who have recently been victims of, or eyewitnesses to, a tragedy or traumatic experience unless they contain exceptional circumstances and prior consent is received from a parent or guardian.

3.14. Reporting of legal matters (crime issues)

3.14.1. While reporting on issues about crime and criminals, the reports of [media_name] shall be careful not to report in a way that causes excessive threat or unwarranted terror.

3.14.2. The reports of [media_name] shall take all relevant care and precaution, not to inflict additional social and psychological harmon victims of crimes (individuals or sections of society).

3.15. Corrections, correctives and clarifications

3.15.1. The reports of [media_name] shall make reasonable efforts to correct mistakes and misinformation when they occur. When it happens, the priority should always be to fix it. That is to correct significant errors promptly and appropriately. A correction may also include an apology to the specific people affected by the mistakes.

3.15.2. [media_name] shall implement corrective actions that address the root cause of any editorial nonconformance to prevent its recurrence, rather than merely rectifying the immediate symptom.

3.15.3. [media_name] shall carry clarifications: when a story or news is not essentially wrong but is incomplete or may have left room for a possible misunderstanding.

3.15.4. A Clarification from [media_name] shall make clear that the original story or news left out important information or could be misinterpreted. Such clarifications should then provide a fuller version or straighten out the possible misunderstanding.