COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF TRANS NZOIA

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

POLICY

FOREWORD

Public Communication is indispensable in the conduct of government affairs globally. In Trans Nzoia County, therefore, the Department responsible for matters of Public Communication recognizes the importance of promoting, projecting and protecting its interests in this sphere.

The overall objective of this policy is to provide a framework on the management the sector within the county, and also guide related interactions in and beyond the county. It sets out strategies for ensuring that the residents of the county and interested investors communicate in a structured way.

This policy proposes a broad range of measures and actions responding to key issues and challenges in Public Communication. It seeks to provide a road-map for an integrated approach to planning and sustainable management of Public Communication now, and for years to come.

The successful implementation of the objectives herein will firmly set the county on the path towards effective communication for the holistic development of its people.

I wish to thank all the participants in the development of this policy.

County Executive Committee Member- Public service Management (PSM)

PREFACE

This Public Communications policy and strategy manual seeks to enhance the national, regional and international image of the County. This is a result of learning from research already advanced by the County Government, and work done by the National Government, following comprehensive participatory processes in which several stakeholder meetings were held in various fora across the country.

The 2010 Constitution necessitated the creation of a dynamic policy in tandem with the overall National and County Governments' Public Communications needs in a rapidly changing socio-economic and political environment. This policy is anchored on key constitutional provisions and the global informational and communication revolution. It aims at giving broad and clear guidelines to the county government and public institutions as they execute their mandates and attendant functions of public communications in the new constitutional dispensation.

This policy is expected to instill public confidence and trust, help in the day to day running of the two sectors and thus build and promote a positive image of the County Government. The policy will assist in the standardization of government public communications structures, processes and procedures. It will also define strategies for crisis, emergency and risk management communication as well as social media integration.

The policy lays focus on Kenya Vision 2030 and is expected to improve communication in and by government through rigorous implementation. It will be applicable to all County Government officers in the interpretation and implementation of the county's public communications, formulation of our specific institutional public communications strategies and/or making or implementing public sector communications policy decisions.

The successful implementation of the policy shall be a collective responsibility of all County government institutions coordinated by the Department responsible for matters of Public Communication, which will provide leadership and use existing or new administrative arrangements to ensure the function is discharged in all county departments, agencies and organs

Chief Officer – Governance

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Many other people have contributed directly or indirectly to the entire process and while we might not be able to acknowledge each individually, we would like all of them to know that we appreciate their efforts in this exercise.

Director – Communications

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACERP	- Annual CER Communications plan
CCERCT	- County Crisis Emergency and Risk Communications Team
CCPJ	- Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism
CER	- Crisis, Emergency and Risk
EPA	- Emergency Preparedness Act
FOI	- Freedom of the Media
FOM	- Freedom of Information
GAP	- Government Advertising Policy
GSP	- Government Security Policy
IED	- Information Electronic Display
KBC	- Kenya Broadcasting Company
KNA	- Kenya News Agency
MA	- Media Act 2007
MOICT	- Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology
CCERCMT	- County Crisis, Emergency Risk Communications Management Team
CCMC	- County Communications and Media Centre
NDRU	- National Disaster Response Unit
NSIS	- National Security and Intelligence Service
NSC	- National Security Council
OSA	- Official Secrets Act
PCP	- Public Communications Policy
PPSA	- Preservation of Public Sector Communications Unit
PSCP	- Public Sector Communications Policy
SNCER	- Strategic National CER Communications
TSA	- Treason and Sedition Act

INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

Public communications is a key function of the County Government. With ever so enlightened citizens and growth in media platforms, there is need to improve how the County Government communicates with its people and the international community as well. This public sector communications policy is geared at not only enhancing the County Government's image but also ensuring that the residents of the county get the right information and at the right time.

To manage Public Communications, the County Government established the office of the Director of Communication and Public Relations through an organogram ratified by the County Assembly.

The Directorate of Communication and Public Relations was assigned the mandate of formulating, interpreting and implementing county public communications policies, programmes and stages. The development of a Public Communications policy and strategy manual will manage the national, regional and international image of the county government of Trans Nzoia.

1.2 *Principles of communication*

The policy upholds the key principles of communication, namely: integrity, mutuality, clarity and consistency. Communication shall be timely, complete and entail feedback. To be a well-informed and knowledge-based society in which good Communication and Public Relations, respect of the rule of law, protection of individual rights, freedoms, equality transparency, and accountability are guaranteed.

Policy Vision

2.1 *Policy Vision*

To speak with One Voice to ensure well-coordinated, managed and responsive public sector communications

2.2 *Policy Mission*

To streamline public communication through a multi-faceted strategic approach to promote public access to information for socio-economic and political transformation

2.3 *Broad Objective of the policy*

The broad objective of the policy is to ensure the County Government's visibility, accessibility and accountability, thus promoting public trust and confidence in its integrity, reliability and impartibility in the public service.

2.4 *Specific Objectives of the policy*

a) To put in place an appropriate strategic mechanism for an operational, institutional and regulatory framework to enhance the administration of public communications.

b) To Promote the participation of the County Government's and the public in democracy, Communication and Public Relations and accountability To ensure integration, co-ordination and standardization of public communications under a devolved system of government

c) To Promote and sustain the county Brand nationally, regionally and internationally by providing positive information about the county

d) To Competitively position the county and its leading exports nationally, regionally and internationally.

e) To improve the image of the county, nationally, regionally and internationally.

f) To co-ordinate the function of public communications within the county and nationally.

g) To outline the role of the County Government in the realization of freedom and access to information, good Communication and Public Relations and national development.

3.0 Policy Implementation Strategies

The following strategies will be adopted to ensure that this Public Communications policy is an enabler in achieving the above objectives in sustainable development.

a) Integrating and mainstreaming an effective public communications strategy across all County Government levels through *inter alia* adoption of the policy by departments and the integration of their communication planning and evaluation as an integral part of policy formulation, annual work plans and business operations.

b) The County Government will put effective measures in place to facilitate access to public information in accordance with Article 35 of the constitution to ensure the promotion of democracy and improved public service delivery in all the five sub-counties.

c) The County Government will facilitate collaboration and information sharing between its institutions at the sub-county levels on education, health, gender, environment, agriculture, commerce, democracy, Communication and Public Relations, children, older and aging persons, community development, industrial peace, international labor conventions, occupational safety and national social protection among others as critical in county, national, regional and global development.

d) The County Government will target as many Kenyans as possible through community and vernacular radio, television, print, social media and mobile telephony as the population grows.

e) The County Government will unveil a very clear protocol for sharing information with the media by *inter alia* institutionalizing regular mandatory media briefings

through a state of the art County Communications and Media Centre accessible to media practitioners on Specific County or policy issues in the social, economic and political pillars stipulated in Vision 2030.

f) The County Government will undertake media monitoring initiatives to gauge its effectiveness in projecting public sector communications with the objective of achieving Kenya Vision 2030 socio-economic development goals. To this end, the County Government will :

- Regularly stimulate public communications by providing appropriate and extensive communication mechanisms for dialogue, cohesion, security, sports and culture, health care, youth empowerment, protection and trade, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and handling emergency/crisis/risks.
- Accurately profile and segment the various audiences, users and stakeholders of various policy products and services to ascertain the knowledge gaps that exist among the youth, gender and the vulnerable in the society.
- Standardize, provide security (validate) and regularly exploit and update various communication tools, documents products and services.

4.0 Implementation of the County Public Sector Communications Policy

4.1 *Introduction*

Communications is a shared responsibility that requires total institutional support, co-operation and interaction. The County Government will call upon top County Government officials to represent institutions before County Assembly committees and boards of inquiry and will ensure effective communication that respects official protocol.

4.2.1 *County Messaging*

The policy upholds the principle that the County Government shall "speak with one voice" to ensure coherency. An all-inclusive and comprehensive County messaging strategy targeting all stake holders including the Executive and the County Assembly will be rolled out to guide the communications function. The County Government will undertake stakeholder engagement to create public awareness.

4.2.2 *County Corporate Brand*

The directorate of Communications and Public Relations will encourage and promote the County Government of Trans Nzoia corporate brand – *The Country's Bread Basket* , endorse brands and the image of county departments and ensure monitoring and feedback on a county-wide scale.

4.2.3   National cohesion integration

The policy propagates for the implementation of communication strategies that uphold and foster national cohesion and integration.

4.2.4   The County Government Portal

The County Government of Trans Nzoia Portal shall integrate the Kenya Open Data and be accessible to the public, state agencies, central and County Governments, and private sector and Non-Government organizations. The government portal shall be the repository of institutional data-bases and shall freely avail single, flexible and user-friendly online services that facilitate access to information held by the government to enhance citizen participation. The county website www.Transnzoia.go.ke, will remain the central county government website.

4.2.5   County Government and Media Relations

The policy supports the County Government's prerogative to cultivate proactive relations with media to promote awareness, understanding of its institutional policies, programs, projects, services and initiatives to the residents of the county.

4.2.6 Internal Communications

Internal communications shall be an integral part of the County Government's corporate communications plan and shall be addressed when planning, managing or reviewing policies, programs, services or initiatives. The directorate of Public Communications and Public Relations will develop standards and guidelines on county internal communications.

4.2.7 Languages of Communication

English and Kiswahili will be used as the official languages in County government communication.

4.2.8   Implementation of Civic Education

The policy holds that public communications is critical in the implementation of civic education; the County Government through the directorate of Public Communications and Public Relations will provide sustained publicity, sensitization and provision of information to the public on key constitutional clauses via appropriate platforms.

4.2.9 Advertising

The directorate of communication and public relations will provide guidelines regarding all County Government-originated advertisement. County Government institutions shall use alternative and cost effective advertisements. County government departments and agencies that undertake specialized or obligatory advertising shall be exempted.

4. 2.10 Social Media

The county Government will use social media and bulk SMS as a *bona fide* platform of engagement with the public. Communications officers shall be especially trained and designated to handle engagement with social media.

4.2.11 Revamp Information Resource Centers

The county government will revamp existing and establish its digitized information resource centers at county and sub-county and ward levels.

4.2.12 Enhancement of Rural Press

The county government will enhance Rural Press as critical communication and information networks at the county level.

4. 2.13 Revitalization of Mobile Cinema

The county government shall fully support and utilize the mobile cinema to inform the public on its policies, projects and programs, using modern technology platforms.

4.2.14 Communications and Media Research

The county government shall place emphasis on research in communication and media, which shall also be undertaken in partnership with the private sector to identify audience needs and trends.

4.2.15 Production of IEC Materials

The county government shall use IEC materials in digitized and traditional media formats to interpret the county vision for socio-economic development.

4.2.16 Audio Visual Productions

The directorate of public communications and public relations will ensure that all films, video, audio- visual and multi-media productions commissioned by county government institutions comply with the requirements of the national film policy.

4.2.17 Copyright and IP intellectual property

County government institutions shall respect privacy rights and copyright ownership in all online publishing and communication. All county communication shall bear the CGN copyright symbol and acknowledge any collaborating partners of the publication through their logos displayed on the appropriate title page. County government officials and their agents shall ensure effective communication that respects official protocol. Other implementers are cabinet committees, county assembly, relevant county departments, top county officials, the national government, county governments, media, civil society, citizens and all inter-government agencies.

5.0 Key Implementers of Policy

5.1 Chief Officers

A chief officer who is in charge of administration of a department is the accounting and authorized officer responsible for providing strategic policy direction for improved service delivery, developing and implementing effective performance systems, developing and implementing strategic plans and providing leadership in mainstreaming information, communication and technology in the operations of departments.
Chief Officers shall therefore:
- Ensure policy application and implementation by public communications units in respective departments and sub-counties.

- Supervise the corporate communication plans of the institutions they head and define the responsibilities of departmental staff with respect to communications;

- The Chief Officer Communication and Public Relations shall play a key role in communicating County Government issues as directed by the Executive.

5.2 Designated County Government Spokespersons

Designated Government Spokespersons shall speak on an institution's behalf and shall include technical or subject-matter experts, as per specific sectorial guidelines issued by the department of Communication and Public Relation, particularly in Media Relations. All designated Government spokespersons shall *inter alia* therefore; complement this policy by speaking as "one Government, one voice," and shall be responsible for communicating the county government's political priorities to the media and setting the

news agenda for all county departments and rally the public behind the county government's agenda.

5.3 The Department for Communication

It shall advise and support the cabinet and all county government institutions on public communications planning and management, issues, themes and strategies for policies, programs, services and initiatives. It shall support and monitor the implementation of cabinet decisions across the county government with respect to public communications and be answerable to the executive and the legislature. County government departments and county public communications offices shall regularly discuss and align with the Communications guidelines, policies and strategies to ensure their institution's communication objectives are met. The department of Communication and Public Relations shall be the administrator of the scheme of service for public communications officers and shall fine-tune the scope of their responsibilities and duties.
The department of Communication and Public Relations shall therefore:
   a) Co-ordinate and manage the county government's Public communications and shall require all public communications audit and evaluation reports to be submitted at the end of each financial year.
   b) Track the performance of county government public communications officers and products and measure results achieved against objectives set in the county government's institutional business plans;
   c) Evaluate the effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness of county government public communication programs and campaigns developed in support of policy or program initiatives, and make improvements or adjustments where necessary to ensure the efficacy of plans, strategies and activities.
   d) Issue specific guidelines, policies and strategies on different aspects of communications generally as required from time to time including modifying and varying or replacing such guidelines, policies and strategies.
   e) Hold public consultations on any proposed policies as required.

5.4 The Directorate of Communication and Public Relations

The directorate of communication and public relations (DCPR) shall be the department of Communication and Public Relations' communications co-ordination unit. The DCPR shall, on behalf of the department, play the lead role in steering county government public communications and in the implementation of this policy and shall commit to active participation and implementation of this policy new approaches to communication practice in the county government.

It shall, on behalf of the department, be responsible for providing strategic advice and support on communication issues to the county government, managing day-to-day media relations, including media inquiries and releases and co-ordinating and overseeing the effective communication of county government policies, programs and services.

The directorate shall undertake the role of research, drafting and editing and be the depository of county emblems and shall manage their use and distribution.

The policy applies generally to operations of all DCPR communications to units in departments and sub-counties in the area of information and communication. It outlines comprehensive research-based communication plans on all communication priorities in line with the people's interests and political priorities, better preparation of key messages and efficient and consistent delivery. In some cases, these roles shall be undertaken by officials responsible for relations with the media and for information.

5.5 Departmental and sub-county Public Communication officers

Each county government department shall have a fully-fledged and funded public communications unit under a public communications officer who will manage the function of public communications in the respective department and shall liaise with the Directorate of Communication and Public Relations.

All departments and public communications officers shall therefore:

- Manage and co-ordinate all county government communications in their jurisdictions:
- Manage and co-ordinate all departmental and county public communications events.

5.6 Public Communications Attaches

To improve Trans Nzoia's publicity, visibility and image abroad, the County Government shall deploy the Director for Communication and Public Relations to busy bi-lateral and multi-lateral engagements locally, nationally and internationally alongside related delegations.

5.7 The Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK)

The PRSK shall be the professional body for all county government public communications practitioners and shall accredit all county government public relations and communications officers of diverse competencies. The PRSK shall provide a mark of quality, training on best-practices for the continuous development and professional training for public communications practitioners. The PRSK shall give guidelines and approve PR training curriculum guidelines. The PRSK shall give approval to enable the recognition of Public Communications/PR as a profession. All county government institutions shall establish effective and efficient public relations and customer care units to re-align service delivery to be more customer-oriented.

5.8 Information Unit

The Information Unit, under the DCPR, shall be a chief county government data repository of photographs and copy. It shall collate and interpret county government information policies, strategies and programs at county and sub-county levels. The Kenya

News Agency (KNA) shall continue playing its role as a competitive national and global news organization. All county government institutions shall involve KNA in coverage of their events for purposes of dissemination and documentation.

The Information Unit shall:

- Maintain such repositories as it considers expedient for archival or other purposes.
- Publish such information as would supplement other efforts for sustainable development.
- Publish and distribute the cabinet chart (*Baraza la Mawaziri)* and official copies of the Governor's portrait.
- Establish, maintain and provide such information dissemination services on county government programs and projects especially in information and communications underserved areas.

5.9 *Trans Nzoia Today*

NT as the designated county newspaper will competitively gather, process and disseminate information about county government policies, projects and programs in a way that effectively links the county government with the populace to stir national development. NT shall play a leading role in promoting county pride and as a tool for positioning the county development agenda. The directorate of public communication and public relations will provide editorial leadership.

6.0 Resource Allocation and Mobilization

6.1 *Allocation of Resources and Opportunities*

County government will allocate adequate budgetary and technical allocations to ensure effective implementation of Public communications so as to optimize outputs.

All county government institutions shall therefore:

- Allocate adequate funding to the public communications function for each institutional policy, programs and project initiative.
- Seek joint ventures with the private sector as further channels for soliciting for funds and resources for the function of public communications.
- Collaborate in corporate social responsibility programs with the private sector at national, regional and international levels.

7.0 *Mapping, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting*

Monitoring and evaluation of communication initiatives shall be an integral part of the public sector's performance management system and shall be linked to staff appraisals.

County government institutions shall routinely monitor and evaluate the outputs and impacts of the policy on public programs, services and initiatives. Assessment tools shall include environmental, feedback, and inquiry analysis, media monitoring and opinion research which shall identify and track emerging media trends on public issues.

8.0 *Review of Policy*

A formal review of the policy shall take place within two years of its effective date. Evaluations of communications management by institutions will also inform the policy review and provide input to the development of best practices in this area.

Monitoring and evaluation shall be based on measurable, observable and verifiable indicators as set out in each department's work/action plan and implementation matrix and implementation reports should be submitted on quarterly and annual basis.

In conclusion, the department of Communication and Public Relations shall undertake its advisory, co-ordination and facilitation role for the successful implementation of the policy.

ANNEX 1: CRISIS, EMERGENCY AND RISK COMMUNICATION
Part One

1.0.0 *Introduction*

A county government of Trans Nzoia strategy on Crisis, Emergency and Risk Communication (CER) is critical in creating mutual understanding, informed dialogue and thus enhancing state-public communications. CERs often involve situations of a national magnitude and may include disasters emanating from ethnic or political conflicts, election violence, terrorism, fires, accidents and loss of lives. CER situations can also be manifest in escalating crime, commodity shortage, inflation, famine, and mass unemployment.

The goal of any county government in CER situations is to ensure national security, cohesion and order. The objective of this CER communications manual therefore is to give policy and strategy direction in County Government of Trans Nzoia communications during Crises, Emergencies and Risks.

The Crisis, Emergency and Risk Communications strategy is drawn from the provisions of the Public Sector Communications Policy (2014), which provides for the integration and mainstreaming of CER communications plans and strategies in public sector operations. Existent legal documents that also guide and provide for the management of national CER situations are the Government Security policy and the Emergency Preparedness Act. This strategy provides guidelines for the implementation of standards and procedures for CER communications.

CERs are often extreme situations that challenge a county's preparedness, security and integrity. The terms are not synonyms in meaning but each embodies possible danger, hazard or threat. Such events necessitate prompt procedural actions to ensure the maintenance of public order, recovery of life and property, limit to panic and of persons.

Effectively managed CER communications helps to reduce harm and sustains public confidence. A CER communications Communication and Public Relations and compliance

framework that provides for appropriate standards, procedures, protocols and guidelines will therefore ensure that the public sector institutions prioritize and integrate CER communications as a key strategy into their operations. The strategy outlines the effective and efficient management crisis, emergency and risk communications in such events by highlighting CER priorities, especially with regard to logistical planning, access to information, good partnership and resource mobilization.

Public sector institutions must strive to communicate effectively to help reinforce public confidence in CER situations. There are however, clear limitations to the release of information by public sector institutions in CERs. Article 35 of the constitution restricts the release of information by public sector institutions in CER situations if it is classified, invades privacy or jeopardizes National Security. Other relevant legal provisions are the Defamation Act, Preservation of Public Security Act, Official Secrets Act and the Treason and Sedition Act.

1.1.0 *Strategic National CER Communications*

Public sector CER communications require strategic planning, management and co-ordination. The strategy adopts a business process model that espouses simplicity, precision, sensitivity and empathy in the coverage and handling of a CER communications plan in Corporate Communications Strategies.

A strategic CER communications plan promotes good management and collective institutional responsibility. It addresses immediate, medium and long-term CER priorities and measures, enhances the level of preparedness in a clear hierarchical structure and thus provides for accessible, credible and trustworthy state-public communications.

Other components of the strategy are the use of appropriate communications and media and the strengthening of key partnerships .Media is the main bridge between the county and the public and the lead agent in the transmission of CER information and news and a stimulant to interactive public participation. The implementation of the strategy will ensure well co-ordinated and effective public sector CER communications in the wake of potential risks to public health, environmental and asset safety.

1.1.1 *Principles of CER communications*

CERs are inherently uncertain circumstances that may provoke tension between conflicting values. CER communications are founded on nationalism and patriotism and therefore hinge on the principles of equivocality, openness, honesty, immediacy and empathy. It requires efficient control, timeliness, courteousness, fairness, agility, predictability, consistency, forthrightness and flexibility within the confines of the provisions for national security, privacy and safety.

CER communications shall be carefully planned, continuous and inclusive of State-public engagement that project coherence, mutuality, integrity, reliability and impartiality. Victims and families shall be given priority and treated with respect and fairness. CER communications shall exhibit honesty, alertness, friendship, calm, control, and focus. It

shall reflect county government policy, and respect the provisions for national security, county confidence and responsibility, judiciary and privacy rights. CER communications shall be formal and factual, and shall be subject to rigorous verification. It shall avoid confrontation, contradictions, speculation, falsification, slanting, or colouring of information.

1.1.2 *National Security*

National security is the responsibility of the State. It entails protective measures against internal or external aggression. It is the pursuit of defence and social order in a combined projection of State, military, political, economic, environmental and diplomatic power. It is governed by the principles of civilian control, respect for democracy, human rights, and diversity, apolitical and equitable community representation. Threats to national security may emerge from natural disasters, violations of national sovereignty, individual human and civil rights, freedoms, democracy, and Communication and Public Relations and may be manifest in CER situations such as terrorism, ethnic, religious or communal conflicts; cross-border crimes, small arms and weapons proliferation, cyber-crime, illicit drug trafficking, among others. CER communications thus integrate the provisions for national security with regard to specified limitations in CER coverage, disclosure of information, censorship, secrecy and surveillance in the domestic, military and foreign interests of the nation. It therefore anticipates the use of State power for the timely identification and solutions for CER situations.

1.1.3 *Security of information*

The County Government of Trans Nzoia and relevant State institutions shall ensure limitation of CER data collection efforts, treatment and attribution. Only authorized information shall be distributed as per the county CER clearance protocol. CER information must be planned and tested before any engagement with media. All County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall ensure adequate security of their web presence and appropriate data storage strategies.

1.1.4 *Disclosure of Information*

The County Government of Trans Nzoia pledges for freedom of information but curbs disclosure of information in CER communications that can jeopardize security operations, endanger lives and gives advantage to the adversary. Leakers of classified county information and secrets are prosecutable. Public sector employees are therefore expected to prevent unauthorized leaks. The County Government of Trans Nzoia portal offers data on national security, health, education, census, land tenure, demographics, etc. Media can balance between the demands for national security and real-time reporting.

1.2.0 *Terrorism*

Terrorism is a strategically tactical operation meant to inflict damage for political, ideological or religious legitimacy. Proper management of communications in acts of terror entails limitations to disclosure of State and county counter-terrorism plans, State and county secrets release of unauthorized information (pictorial or text) and disinformation to terrorist allies. Media focus should be on the diffusion of tension and criminalization of the group.

1.2.1 *Media*

Media seeks to "protect societies' right to know" and to be "first with the story." Conventional and social media now have unprecedented power for story sourcing, and must conform to the standards of professionalism in the coverage of CER situations.

1.3.0 Definitions

1.3.1 *Crises*

Crises are often unexpected and harmful events that trigger fear or uncertainty. They disrupt and challenge entire systems. They often lead to organizational malfunction and public disturbances, and may pose a challenge to institutional preparedness, security and integrity. Crises can be caused by natural disasters, criminal or terrorist attacks, public investigations, media inquiries, etc.

1.3.2 *Emergencies*

These are often serious, dangerous and unexpected occurrences that require immediate action. They may require urgent delivery of humanitarian assistance at a crucial turning point.

1.3.3 *Risks*

A risk involves taking action with possibly undesirable results. It may entail a security or health threat to public safety. It requires effective management to prevent or reduce the threat. Risk communication is the exchange of information among interested parties about magnitude, significance or the nature, magnitude, significance or control of risks. It communicates a message, confirms facts, dispels rumors and clarifies details about unresolved issues.

1.3.4 *Crisis, Emergency and Risk communications*

CER communications should take place during the initial stages of the event. It anticipates the release of information against potential risks to public safety, health and the environment. It involves effective engagement with the public by giving information and reassurance to reduce tension. It demonstrates interest, concern and respect for public opinion in national adversity and helps to promote a positive organizational image.

1.3.5 *Stages of CER communications*

CERs are complex situations that may develop unexpectedly. They mainly take for stages.

Pre-CER stage: At this stage, the general public and special populations are informed about preparations to help alleviate CER.

Initial CER stage: This signals the need for immediate, intense and timely communication, mostly through the media.

Maintenance stage: This marks the subsiding of the CER and allows for public updates and the correction of rumors or misunderstanding.

Resolution stage: Earlier CER communications activities, decisions and performance may be reviewed at this stage.

1.3.6 *Language policy*

County institutions shall comply with the requirements of the Kenyan Language Act in CER communications.

1.3.7 *County Government of Trans Nzoia Common Look and Feel Standards*

County institutions shall comply with the requirements of the County Government corporate identity standards.

2.1.0 Strategy Implementation

The strategy applies a business process model that fully integrates CER communications into county operations. It fosters proactive engagement with stakeholders and promotes modern institutional information management and sharing. The co-ordination, management and implementation of CER communications thus fall into the following thematic areas:

- Coordination and administration of CER communications.
- Messaging in CER communications.
- Engagement with media and other stakeholders.
- Online CER communications.
- Non-Media communications strategies.

2.1.1 *Strategy One*

2.1.2 *Co-ordination and administration of CER Communication*

The county government shall co-ordinate and manage County Crisis, Emergency and Risk situations .The county Crisis, Emergency and Risk Communications Management Team (CCERCMT) will meet immediately after a CER alert and then brief the County Executive Committee member concerned, who shall then brief the Governor. A cabinet meeting shall then be held, after which, the CEC in charge of Communication shall oversee the CER communications. CER events at the sub-county will be carried out in liaison with the CCERCMT.

2.1.3 *National and County Emergency Alerts systems*

GOK institutions shall establish national and county emergency alerts systems.

2.1.4 *Annual CER Corporate communications plans*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Prioritize and integrate CER communications into their annual communications plans.
- Collaborate with the CEC in charge of Communication to prepare, submit and review CER communications plans.
- Implement CER plans at county and sub-county levels.
- Prepare and regularly update a comprehensive media and CCERCT contact list.
- Periodically evaluate, test, review, and update CER communications plans.
- Initiate and submit quarterly and annual CER communications plans and reports.

2.1.5 *Funding*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall ensure sufficient resources are allocated to CER communications activities and adjust CER communications priorities and resource allocation, accordingly.

2.1.6 *The County Crisis, Emergency and Risk communications Teams*

The CCERCT shall consist of individuals with specialized training and skills in CER. It shall:

- Be the oversight body that co-ordinates and approves all CER communications.
- Comprise the Chief of Staff, County Attorney, the Governor's Press Service, Directorate of Communication and Public Relations, local affiliate of the Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ), the County Commissioner and county security heads, the Kenya Red Cross and county civil society representatives.
- Be headed by the CEC in charge of the environment and natural resources. The Chief Officer in this department shall be the secretary.
- Meet immediately a CER alert is made. The concerned CEC and Chief of Staff shall then liaise with the Governor, who may, in turn, link up with the national government.

Have a secretariat that consists of CER/security policy advisers, ICT, communications, legal and intergovernmental relations specialists, analysts and researchers.

2.1.7 *The Department of Communications, ICT, Legal and Intergovernmental Relations*

It shall:

- Manage the County Communications and Media center, which shall be the center of CER.
- Maintain a comprehensive list of designated CER spokespersons and run a 24-hours call and resource center.

2.1.8 *The Directorate of Communication and Public Relations*

DCPR shall:

- Co-ordinate, interpret and approve CER communications and media strategies.
- Issue guidelines for the development of CER communications content.
- Develop county CER communications capacity and infrastructure.

2.1.9 Cabinet Crisis, Emergency and Risk Communications Team

It shall:
- Consist of senior county officials. The CEC in charge of Communications shall be the secretary.
- Manage Ministerial CER communications.

2.1.10 County crisis, Emergency and Risk Communications Team
CCERCT shall:

- Consist of the governor, MCAs, County commissioner, of County police, NIS and the county Director of Communication and Public Relations.
- Co-ordinate all county CER communications and media engagements.
- Maintain a comprehensive list of designated county CER spokespersons.

2.1.11 Departmental Public Communications Officers

DPCOs shall:
- Collaborate with the Director for Communication and Public Relation to ensure institutional CER communications needs are met.
- Co-ordinate, prepare and manage institutional CER communications/media activities.
- Plan, develop and implement annual CER communication strategies.
- Compile media and other stakeholder CER contact lists.

2.1.11 County CER spokespersons
CER spokespersons shall be senior media-trained personnel who possess excellent skills in public speaking, public relations, media engagement and subject matter knowledge.
- The Governor shall be the primary county government spokesperson. He / she shall delegate to the Deputy Governor as appropriate.
- The CEC, CILIR shall be the secondary designated CER spokesperson.
- CECs shall be the tertiary spokespersons of their respective departments in CER situations. They shall, where necessary, be deputized by their chief officers.
- Only the primary and secondary spokespersons and the subject matter specialists shall address county CER situations.
- Subject-matter specialists shall ensure accurate identification, attribution and factualness.

2.2.1 *Messaging in CER communications*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Ensure CER messages are well-researched, consistent, simple, persistent, creative, and brief and focused and resonate with the official communication themes and priorities.
- Give priority to sensitivity, sympathy, concern support and reassurance to victims and affected publics and stakeholders.
- Specify measures, related activities, directives, suggestions and recommendations to contain CER situations.
- Ensure message consistency, sound editorial policies and adherence to immediate releases or embargoes.
- Encourage vertical and horizontal action-oriented messages to establish a common public understanding.
- Shall simplify CER technical terms and concepts.

2.2.2 *Media Statements*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall issue simple, factual and empathetic oral and written media statements during CER briefings.

2.2.3 *Speeches*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Issue short, simple, concise and interactive CER speeches.
- Ensure careful preview and rehearsal of CER speeches before delivery.

2.2.4 *Advertising*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall comply with the county's Advertising Policy in CER situations.

2.2.5 *Release of news and Information*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Obtain clearance from CCERCT to release any CER related communications to media.
- If the situations warrant, decline to respond and withhold information with the potential to cause panic, confusion, concern, agitation or fear.
- Prepare, assemble and distribute media kits, facts sheets, Q&A, news releases and risk communications statements at media conferences.
- Where necessary, establish joint information centers and formulate agreements and procedures to ensure CER message consistency.
- Ensure confirmed and releasable information does not violate the Privacy Act.

2.3.1 *Engagement with media*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Proactively engage with media and cultivate long term formal and informal relationships.
- Collaborate with media to promote public sector CER communication strategies.
- Put in place communication process and procedures to facilitate response to media in a 24-hour environment.
- Promptly respond to enquiries on CER issues, processes and the decisions by phone, email, letter or person to accommodate publication deadlines.
- Develop alliances with first responder groups, agencies and public through CER exercises, drills, media breakfasts, luncheons and dinners.
- Ensure engagements with media in CER situations comply with National Security regulations.
- Give media sufficient lead time to organize themselves in CER situations and shall not induce them with financial or material favors.

2.3.2 *Media Accreditation in CER*

Only accredited local and international media correspondents shall cover CER situations. Special attention shall be given to local coverage.

2.3.3 *Early Media Response in CER*

Initial responses to CER should be instantaneous and acknowledge the obvious. County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Ensure designated top county officials visit the site as investigations are carried out.
- Respond to media in early CER stages through immediate and frequent dissemination of authorized releases.
- Establish 24-hour CER communications response centers with hotlines and other appropriate resources.
- Ensure immediate CER responses to media: the initial CER communication shall be at least two hours into the early CER stages and every three hours thereafter.
- Schedule regular conferences, interviews, briefings, updates and Q&A sessions at agreed deadlines.
- Re-engage with media as necessary to clarify or offer new or emerging authorized CER information.
- Avoid premature, inaccurate statements that attribute blame, responsibility or wrong compensation promises.

2.3.4 *State Media*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:

- Give priority to county and State media in the coverage of national CER situations with preference to the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and The Trans Nzoia Bulletin.
- Release authorized CER information to State media, official non-State websites and the county government portal.
- Collaborate with the Kenya News Agency to ensure consistent information flow to commercial, local and international news subscribers in the coverage of CER situations.
- Collaborate in information exchange with sub-county information Resource Centers in CER situations and ensure proper storage of CER communications data.

2.3.5 *Media Coverage in CER Operations*

- Coverage by the media in county CER situations shall not interfere with National Security operations and shall be restricted as deemed necessary.
- There shall be no wall-to-wall coverage by media in mid-to-high-magnitude county CER situations.
- There shall be no Public Sector engagement with on-site, hotels or private institutions or with victims or any other persons at CER sites.

2.3.6 *Communications and Media Tools*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:

- Use a diversity of conventional and new communications and media tools in CER situations.
- Give priority to community, FM Radio and television but shall also use multiple formats in mainstream and alternative media in CER situations.
- Use short text messages, talk shows, films, documentaries, workshops, seminars, vernacular radio, FM radio, print media, sign language and braille, billboards, advertisements, fliers, poster, opinion leaders, drama and online web pages in CER situations.
- Provide authorized CER audio visual and pictorial material to media and diverse publics.
- Use media-rich channels and inter-linked communications systems, video, teleconferencing, multi-media, promotional productions, films, photographs, web blogs, IEDs, IEC materials, brochures, printed materials, visuals and graphics in CER.
- Widely use print media in CER communications for public education, sensitization and mobilization.

- Issues special CER feature stories, opinion articles, supplements, documentaries, commercials, and interactive sessions to media as necessary.

2.3.7 *Press/News Conferences*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Use authorized CER press releases, media advisories and handouts.
- Be guided by media deadlines especially with regard to the preparation of media releases.
- Issue periodic press releases to make important CER national announcements to clarify CER misconceptions and counter adverse publicity.

2.3.8 *Media Interviews*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Co-ordinate and facilitate CER media interviews.
- Avoid responses to hypothetical questions and post-media interviews.

2.4.0 Strategy 4

2.4.1 *Online CER Communications*

All County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Be connected to the county government portal and ensure that posted CER communications is accurate, regularly updated and congruent with county web standards.
- Ensure media briefings are transmitted via the county government portal.
- Post authorized digitized CER communications on official websites and blogs.
- Use multi-formatted internet-published information on CER communications and ensure printed CER material is published information on CER communications and ensure printed CER material is published concurrently on the internet.
- Incorporate on-line services to receive and acknowledge CER public feedback.
- Respect CER online communications privacy rights and copyright ownership.
- Archive CER web content prior to posting any changes for long-term retention.

2.4.2 *Social Media*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall use official county Twitter and Facebook accounts to issue CER updates, subject to content approval by CCERCT.

2.4.3 *CER communications Data Base*

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Create, record and archive a CER communications database.
- Prepare a periodic CER communications database.
- Regularly post, update and publish any changes in CER communications on soft copy on PDF as downloadable information.

2.5.0 Strategy 5

2.5.1 Non-Media CER communications Strategies

2.5.2 *Public Relations and Protocol in CER*

County Government institutions shall:
- Adhere to the county Public Relations and protocol guidelines in CER situations.

- Establish efficient CER Customer Care Desks with effective feedback mechanisms.

2.5.3 Internal CER Communications

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Ensure an open CER Communications environment to foster internal trust and team spirit.
- Establish formal CER communication structures managed by a special team to address and acquaint staff on core CER messages.
- Regularly conduct CER communications surveys for internal and external publics.
- Regularly review and evaluate internal CER communication activities and processes.

2.5.4 Public Private Partnerships

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall ensure strong stakeholder partnerships with the private sector, civil society and public in CER communications initiatives.

2.5.5 Training/Sensitization

All County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Undertake joint mandatory staff training and exercises in CER communications.
- Regularly sensitize staff on media operations during CER situations.
- Train and sensitize staff to enhance their capacity in CER communications.

2.5.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

County Government of Trans Nzoia institutions shall:
- Routinely monitor, analyze and review CER communications plans.
- Anticipate CER communications issues and formulate adequate responses.
- Identify and track current and emerging CER communications issues, trends and impacts.
- Manage CER communications research, assess performance and evaluate results.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANUAL

The crisis communications manual has been developed under the direction of the county government communications team. It is intended to support the efforts of the county government to communicate positively, effectively and consistently with the news media and their publics including through social media.

About this manual

This manual outlines policies and procedures designated to help the County Government of Trans Nzoia to coordinate its response to the news media and the public in times of crisis, particularly where more than one member of the public is involved.

Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to help:-
- Co-ordinate the release of information about crisis to the news media and via the internet in a timely and consistent manner.
- Ensure that any member of the public involved in a crisis receives any assistance which may be needed.
- Mobilize combined resources to assist the individuals involved.

Requirements

The policies and procedures described in this manual are based on the parties to this agreement being able to meet and properly discharge the following requirements:
1. That each department has its own crisis communication procedures.
2. That each department has a communications officer or retained communications consultancy, with sufficient staff and resources to organize the timely release of information to the news media at its head office and at or near the scene of an accident.
3. That each department has a dark site or a similar crisis response which can be activated at a short notice to appear on its website and any social media pages.

Distribution of the Manual

The communications team of each department will be responsible for ensuring that all relevant staff members and public relations agencies within their own department have copies of this manual.

Roles of the County Government Communications Directorate

In the event of a crisis, the role of the respective communication officers is two, firstly, to deal with the demands of the news media for information regarding the county government if any; secondly to offer any support which may be requested by their counterparts at the directorate which is directly involved.

Role of the department's Communications Unit

The department is responsible for the release of the latest information pertaining to the incident.

Action sequence

- Release the first confirmation of the incident or crisis - not more than one hour after receiving notification.
- In cases where media/social media coverage of an incident is irrefutable and widespread, where possible, acknowledgement should be within 30 minutes. Contact the county government communications team to request for assistance if required.
- Conduct a media briefing by a senior county government official not more than three hours after the notification.
- Establish a schedule for regular press briefings, if possible near the site of the incident.
- Activate the crisis dark site and any social media pages and post any new information which may be released via any other channels.

Use of websites

Given the importance of the internet as a communications tool, it is essential that all departments are prepared in advance to make effective use of the county websites in the event of a crisis.

The county government should evaluate the need to prepare a dark site, special crisis pages which can be activated immediately and replace or overlay the standard promotional pages which normally appear on the county websites. The material on the dark site should appear in English. The following guidelines represents best practice for developing and using a crisis dark site for the county government:

- Banner: Information about the county government institution.
- Statement acknowledging reports of an incident or crisis involving the county government.
- Statement confirming the crisis involving a particular department.
- Statement confirming the crisis involves the government. The statement should offer an expression of sympathy and details of support being offered, for example dispatching care teams.
- Details of a number where visitors can submit a request for information about a person they think may have been in the incident.
- All press releases relating to the incident.
- All recent releases issued by the Government.

Use of websites

If any government institution suffers a crisis, it is likely that news reporters and other interested parties will visit the county website, looking for further information. A statement should be published on the concerned website no later than three hours after the incident, which acknowledges the incident and expresses the sympathy, and asking for support. The statement will also advise those seeking further information about the incident to contact a certain place.

The rapid and recent growth of social media and advances in technology has given the public power to become journalists, reporting things as they happen. Social media postings take the form of text, photos or live video footage and can spread widely and quickly. The very nature of the immediacy of social media means that information will be presented much faster than the involved can confirm or deny it. There is a very real risk of misinformation being posted and disseminated worldwide via social media channels.

Social Media Crisis Communication

Purpose and scope

This guide is designed to help county government departments and agencies when responding to social media crises. The aim is to provide guidance when social media "goes horribly wrong" –such as when a message is wrong, conflicting with another Government Department or Agency, misinterpreted, insensitive or when there is backlash from the online community. Such mishaps can damage the county government's reputation. Due to the speed of social media space as compared to traditional media, the government needs new approaches, judgments and responses to work through such issues.

This document starts with the activities the government should undertake to provide a certain amount of prevention, as well as an early warning system, of an impending issue. It then details guidelines for dealing with an event before moving into post-event analysis, which is the county government's opportunity to review and amend processes and procedures as necessary.

Common online Mishaps

There is a range of potential social media challenges that the government agencies may face.

- **Offline crisis** - Crisis where a lot of the conversations are happening on social media.

- **Directed abuse** - Abuse directed at an agency or individual at the agency.

- **Leak/Early Release** - The release of information prior to its official release.

- **Unwanted Intrusion** - When the participation of an agency in a social media conversation is unwanted by the audience.

- **Heated Topic** - Discussion of a topic which gains strong viewpoints from opposing sides.

- **Misinterpreted message** - A message intended one way, but interpreted differently, often in a negative way.

- **Misaligned expectations** - The expectation of the audience is different to the expectation of the agency.

- **Hack or wrong account posting** - An account's security is compromised and inappropriate messages are posted or a user accidentally posts on the agency account rather than their own.

- **Questionable humor** – Humor that may not be received as funny to the entire audience.

- **Insensitive statement/opinion** - A statement or opinion which may be received as insensitive or offensive.

- **Conflicting information** – Misspelling of names of important people, places or wrong information posted.

- **Lack of content** - A myriad of government accounts posting and reposting the same thing, lack of involvement notwithstanding.

- **Dead accounts** - Accounts that have been created but are inactive; they neither inform nor engage.

Before the event

Beware of what people are saying and spend time monitoring and listening. A constant monitoring program across as many media platforms as possible is the best early warning system.

Be ready for a mishap

- Identify key people to be notified in the event of an issue. This list should be reviewed and kept current in line with other communications escalation procedures.

- Identify and approve social media managers to respond in the event of a social media mishap. Note that a mishap may occur outside business hours so there should be approved managers from operational areas that cover these hours if possible.

- Develop several first response templates for each social media platform. These will assist the managers in responding to a social media mishap quickly and should go through a formal communications sign-off.

- Establish a formal process for releasing the first response to a social media mishap especially identifying the lead person, department or agency.

Minimizing the chance of a mishap

- Identify key influencers within social media base and continuously engage them based on their key interests as relates to the department.

- Keep content creative and engaging and provide value to the audience. The more captured the audience is, the more likely they will resolve potential issues.

- Have goals and objectives in place to measure social media presence. In-house monitoring may or may not be combined with current media monitoring activity.

During the event

The first response strategy needs to be thought out in advance of a mishap occurring. Each Department and Agency will need to consider its own appropriate level of response. At a minimum, they should:

- Notify the key people throughout the agency immediately and keep them up to date.

- Nominate social media 'managers' to monitor and respond during the event. Depending on the severity of the event they may need to respond outside bases, business hours and, in extreme cases, around the clock.

- Prepare the first response using the approved template response for the appropriate platform i.e. Twitter – release a tweet, always try to respond on the platform where the mishap occurred.

- Cover awareness of the issue, commit to look into it and let people know more once more information is available. Thank everyone for their patience and understanding.

- Publish the initial response as soon as possible by following the documented, pre-approved process in place, including escalations following the first response. If a social media mishap happens without an established process in place, ensure the manager is advised immediately.

General guidelines

The civil service code of conducts sets expectations of public servants that extends to their behavior online. For specific rules or remedies for most social media mishaps, general guidance is needed for staff. As each social media platform and audience is unique, it takes time to develop the knowledge of how to work through a situation.

Consider the organization's reputation and that of the government during crisis communication or in responding to social media mishaps. Consistent management and engagement will ensure the best understanding of how a specific community may react under given circumstances. Here are general guidelines for online behavior.

Do

- Ensure necessary senior management are advised in accordance with the ministry's department's or agency's communication policy.
- Be honest (within legal guidelines) and genuinely apologize for mistakes.
- Act fast, even if to say the matter is being investigated.
- If there isn't immediate response, listen and be attentive to positive and negative comments.
- Show that real people in the organization are trying to fix the problem.
- Stay in touch and update people individually or in general where there are many similar queries to respond to.
- Establish a hash tag for a large incident so people can follow it, or use one that is in common circulation.
- If a primary authoritative source issues information, attribute it to them clearly.
- Keep it simple; get to the heart of the issue.
- Recognize and thank members of the community who were supportive.
- While humor can assist a situation, it may not be appropriate coming from Government agencies where an authoritative response is expected.
- Encourage people to send feedback and respond promptly to that feedback.
- If they have a complaint, ask them to contact the organization directly.
- Correct faulty information tactfully in a calm and congenial manner.
- Keep the messaging simple.
- Be specific and relay what went wrong and the remedial steps you are taking.
- Keep your community up to date on progress.
- If threat of litigation prevents the organization from admitting a mistake or issuing an apology, reassures audiences steps are being taken to ensure what transpired never happens again.

Don't

- Don't ignore complaints
- Don't prioritize speed over accuracy of information
- Don't spread information without verifying the source.
- Don't spread hate against persons or a community.
- Don't spread information that could be used negatively.
- Don't say something or try to be funny for the sake of it. Every statement should have a purpose in a mishap.
- Don't respond to, or delete abuse or trolling. Stay calm and ask them to contact the organization directly.
- Don't engage in lengthy dialogue, social media is not the right forum and allows for too much interpretation.
- Don't use technical jargon.
- Don't quote rules or regulations unless you are correcting facts.
- Don't drip-feed solutions or information; don't prolong if it's not necessary.
- Don't say "no comment". If there is no information to hand, be honest and explain.

Offline crises or conflicting information

In the case of an offline crisis that is attracting a lot of online conversation, take note that:

- Not all county government accounts need to respond to an issue that is the responsibility of one department or agency.
- Ensure that county government is co-ordinated in cases where it touches on multiple departments and agencies.
- There must always be one department or agency responsible for communicating with the public in cases where a mishap touches on multiple departments and agencies.
- Don't prioritize speed over accuracy of information.
- Don't spread information without verifying the source.
- Always ensure that the county government speaks in one voice across the board.

Hack or wrong Account Posting

If the account is hacked, contact the social networking platform owner as quickly as possible if you are locked out of the account. Use other forms of communication to explain the situation.

Act quickly and show the remedy to the situation. In the case of hacking, ensure that processes for login and authentication are reviewed and amended after the event.

You should never mix personal and corporate social media accounts on one system such as tweet deck. While convenient for social media responders, it can result in easy mistakes.

Directed abuse

Directed abuse can put considerable strain on the people monitoring and engaging with target audiences through social media. The attacks can be malicious and sometimes quite personal.

Do not always take abuse or harassment. Often it will breach the terms of service for the platform and the service provider can investigate it.

Often the online community will recognize the difference between a complaint and abuse and will assist in dealing with it. They will usually support and understand that the organization is working through the issue.

Important considerations for resolving abuse are:

- **Tone** - What tone has the person used? Does it appear the discussion could be rational or are they negative and aggressive?

- **Frequency** - Is this abuse part of a larger trend or is it a one-off incident.

- **Influence** - All complaints should be acknowledged. However, note must be taken of how many followers, friends or subscribers a person has in order to consider an appropriate response

- **Viral behavior** - As with frequency and influence, is this a one-off incident or is this person gathering a following? Look at number of retweets, comments, etc.

- Make use of social media monitoring, even know the organization is on twitter or its respective heads are reading their blog. When they do, write to them and ask if you can help.

- Many people are just really happy to hear from someone. Find out the root of the problem and if it can't be fixed right away, tell them it is being handled. Keep in constant communication until it's been resolved. Stay positive and respectful.

Leak or early Release

Data leakage introduces a serious risk for agencies. When employees post on their social networking sites about projects they are working on or policies their agencies are developing, they don't necessarily realize they are posting county government confidential information.

If the information is perceived to be leaked, it will spread quickly and will usually result in a flood of activity and questions directed to the agency. Any staff answering social media must update both traditional and new media at the same time unless it is a conscious decision to release via social media first.

This spike in activity may require additional staff to help answer queries. It may also require strong links throughout the agency to people who can give authoritative or technical answers.

Don't disseminate any information that would violate Kenyan law or would be contradictory to the county government's code of conduct.

Other types of information may also require legal or public relations counsel before publishing, for example:

- Information that invades the right to privacy (personnel records, records, medical files or information provided to the agency in confidence).
- Identities of injured or dead people until the next of kin have been notified.
- Medical conditions of injured parties; queries should be referred to hospital authorities.
- Statements attributing blame or speculation about the cause of the mishap, unless based on findings of official investigative agencies.
- Information about estimates or financial ramifications until appropriate agency officials have conducted an appraisal.

Insensitive opinion or statement

This issue often happens after being engaged on social media for a period of time, an employee feel comfortable interacting with the community. Unfortunately, this relaxation can cause a 'slip of the tongue' or a flippant remark in jest.

Due to the speed of the internet, this issue can become a much bigger challenge to manage if not dealt with quickly. Be aware that the issue may persist since it can be easily shared and quoted on the internet for a long of time.

Act quickly.
- Apologize genuinely
- Show the steps you will take to ensure it will not happen again.
- Make the resolution public.
- See it from the users' point of view.
- Do not retaliate to abuse or trolling.
- It is a judgment to delete a post. However, never delete comments just because they are negative.
- Delete comments only if the language is offensive or abusive. State that such form of discussion is against moderation policy.

After the event

Once a mishap is under control, it is an opportune time for the organization to assess the situation, the response and the outcome. This information should be used to document the lessons learned.

You may need to change processes, roles and responsibilities going forward and these outcomes should be updated once the department or agency has completed the audit.

After a social media mishap, re-engage with the community and rebuild the organization's presence and persona. This should be done genuinely by listening and engaging slowly. Demonstrate responsibility, reform and then reaffirm, and prove your intents or aspirations.

Sample incident information form

- Use this form to record the basic details of an incident. Where information is not available, write N/A.

- When new information becomes available, update the form and note the time and date. Discard previous versions of the form.

- This factual information should be used when preparing news releases or answering questions from the media.

NAME OF THE MINISTRY	
TIME AND LOCATION OF THE INCIDENT	
CONFIRMED FATALITIES	
SURVIVORS	

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION	

Form compiled by:
Information provided by:

Scenarios

In this section, we have detailed out a number of potential scenarios along with respective holding statements, key messages and Q&As. It is important to note that it is unlikely that a crisis will play out exactly as is detailed in the scenario and the holding statements, Q&As and key messages, have to be adjusted appropriately. As such and in a break with the previous crisis communication manual, we have grouped similar scenarios together to minimize the number of repeated Q&As and to make it easier to put together suitable response documents.

There are a number of figures that we have highlighted above that need to be confirmed, prior to release of the response.

Sample Messages, Press Release/Holding statement

"Key messages" are the main points that all readers/listeners should know about the County Government of Trans Nzoia's response to the incident, and its ability to resume normal operations. These are employed in crises and disasters. Typically, three to four key messages will be developed for each major area of the crisis or disaster response. A key message is the core content for all the county's public information tools. A key message is not a factor statistic, but rather a statement that succinctly communicates what the public needs to know about the county's perspective on the incident.

Message development questions

- What are the facts? What happened?
- Who is the audience? Who has been affected by this event?
- Who is upset or concerned? Who needs to be alerted to this situation?
- What are the audience's perceptions and information needs?
- What do media want to know?
- How should be empathy be shown?
- What is the policy on this issue?
- What can be done to prevent this from happening?
- What other agencies or third parties are involved?
- What are they saying?

- What should the public be doing?
- When will more information be available?

Preparing an initial "holding statement"

The public information staff assigned materials should prepare an initial holding statement at the onset of the incident.

Reporters will likely call before all the facts have been gathered. In such an instance, a simple statement acknowledging the situation shall be prepared. The short statement avoids "no comment" and acknowledges that the government recognizes the need to cooperate with the media and inform the public. This document will be the foundation for all future written communications.

By following a few basic principles when writing the holding statement or news releases, the government will better meet the news media's needs.

1. Tell the most important information in the lead paragraph.

2. Answer four of the five 'WS'- who, what, where, and when. Explain WHAT the incident is. Identify WHO is involved in the incident as well as the resources and equipment involved. Tell WHERE and WHEN the incident occurred. Explain WHAT action the government is taking to mitigate or respond to the incident.

Do not explain why the event occurred unless complete information is available and has been approved. Attempting to explain the WHY without complete information is merely irresponsible speculation and can seriously undermine communication efforts.

3. Write remaining information in descending order of importance. If the media cuts off the bottom of the statement, the most important to the public is left intact.

4. Explain technical points in simple language. A direct quote can add the human element to otherwise technical information and help explain a situation or event in layman's terms. Tell the real story. Avoid using language that is overly bureaucratic.

5. Be concise. A good news release is judged by the quality of information it communicates, not by its length.

Sample holding statement

Workplace violence in a public facility.

Messages

- o The violent act that occurred at the County Headquarters in Kitale has activated a comprehensive emergency response.
- o County officials have diligently prepared for many types of incidents, including ones like this.
- o The incident was contained within one facility, and although investigations and related follow-up activities will continue for several days or weeks, all other facilities are in full operation.
- o The county's top priority is the safety and security of our citizens, businesses, visitors, and employees.

Sample copy for "Holding "Press Releases

The violent act that occurred at ……………….. in Kitale has activated a comprehensive emergency response. County officials have diligently prepared for incidents of this nature.

The incident was contained within one facility, and although investigations and related follow-up activities will continue for several days or weeks, all other city facilities are in full operation. The county's top priority is the safety and security of our citizens, businesses, visitors, and employees.

The emergency personnel and agencies responded to this incident.

We know of the following fatalities/injuries. State privacy laws limit our ability to provide any additional information:

The following facilities were affected:

_____

Other Information:

Terror Attack _____

KITALE - THE county government of Trans Nzoia wishes to confirm that there has been an en explosion at...........in ....sub-county at 000 hrs. The cause of the explosion, and the extent of damage, is yet to be ascertained.

We wish to appeal for calm as investigations into the incident continue. Relevant county and national government authorities have taken charge of the situation to evacuate the area.

We will provide further updates in due course as they become available.

Executive Office of the Governor
County Government of Trans Nzoia

Flood
KITALE - - THE county government of Trans Nzoia wishes to confirm that floods have been reported at .... in .... sub-county. The extent of loss as a result of the floods is yet to be ascertained.

Police and medical personnel are on the ground .Search, rescue and evacuation operations have been launched. We will continue to provide additional information in due course as it becomes available.

Executive Office of the Governor
County Government of Trans Nzoia

Collapsed Building
KITALE - The county government of Trans Nzoia wishes to confirm the collapsed of a two-storey building at .... in .... sub-county. Search, rescue and evaluation teams are on the ground.

We will continue to provide additional information in due course as it becomes available.

ANNEX 2: EDITORIAL POLICY FOR Trans Nzoia Today

Introduction

This editorial policy has been drafted with the thought in mind that *Trans Nzoia Today* would be a practical tool for mobilizing and sustaining support for County Government of Trans Nzoia's vision and mission. The editorial staff would be assessed in accordance with their performance based on the following criteria:

- *Trans Nzoia Today* would be issued once every two months (except in the event of major incidents necessitating a special edition) and would meet the publication deadline of being distributed by 4:00 pm on Fridays. Day, size and frequency of publication may be negotiated with the department's Chief Officer, but the magazine will generally not be published more often than already stated.
- *Trans Nzoia Today* will be as accurate and error free as is possible under the production constraints and deadlines with which the editorial staff deal with. Factual errors and improper writing style would be considered more seriously than typographical errors, but all will be considered more in assessing the value of each edition.
- *Trans Nzoia Today* editorial staff must follow the Editorial Policy set forth in this document. Failure to do so will not only result in impounding of a pre-press edition of the publication, but may also be cause for dismissal of editorial staff. Dismissal of an editorial staff member will result in assignment to other chores in *Trans Nzoia Today* or expulsion as per the terms and conditions of his / her contract with the County Government of Trans Nzoia.

The publication will be published officially by the County Government of Trans Nzoia. Actual production of the magazine will be done by editorial staff with oversight and / or advice from the Chief Officer, in his / her absence, the Communication & PR director's (hereafter referred to as 'the editor'). As it will be the Chief Officer's role to oversee the publication, as long as the editorial staff does not follow the editorial policy set forth below, he / she MAY censor or serve as an editor for any of the contents of *Trans Nzoia Today.* Still, the content will be the responsibility of the editorial staff. The Chief Officer will review the publication before it is sent for printing / posted online. But such review will not include any editing unless there have been violations of the editorial policy. After the issue has been published and distributed, the Chief Officer will read through, edit and comment upon each issue (a "post-mortem") and will then assess the value of the edition. The Chief Officer will meet / communicate with the editorial staff at least once each week to discuss each edition and to address problems (administrative, ethical and journalistic).

EDITORIAL POLICY

- The name of the publication shall be *Trans Nzoia Today* and it shall be issued on hard copy AND online after every two months on Fridays no later than 4.00 pm. Six scheduled issues will be published each Financial Year.
- *Trans Nzoia Today* will be a publication under the oversight of the Chief Officer. It will be compiled, edited and laid out (graphically) by editorial staff to serve all the internal and external publics of the County of Trans Nzoia: 1) The Trans Nzoia County management and senior staff; 2) supporting staff; 3) partners. News and feature balance should be achieved to address each of these publics. However, the largest public (the public) would more than likely be the major focus of the publication. *Trans Nzoia Today* shall be primarily a features and opinion publication reporting and commenting on or analyzing issues and events in and around the county. Feature content will balance the opinion but should not exceed 50% of the content of each edition.
- The editorial staff of *Trans Nzoia Today* shall be assembled according to the following criteria: 1) interest in the position; 2) demonstrated leadership and commitment; 3) demonstrated ability in journalism and management. The editorial team may recruit staff members who will include volunteers / short-termers who wish to serve with them. The editorial team's size, however, will be limited to 10 (on the higher side) per edition. Some of the staff may not receive beats (work) because of the limited nature of their assignments. Staff assignments will be determined and chosen through consultation between the Chief Officer and the editorial staff with consideration given to the volunteers' / short-termers' interests, abilities, and experience. Assignments may be rotated to give the staff a breadth of experience. Editorial staff may come from ANY academic background.
- Intellectual, professional and ethical honesty, wisdom and maturity shall govern the selection of materials for the publication so that:

a). *Trans Nzoia Today* staff will not engage in personal criticism of individuals into public ridicule, defamation of character or disrepute.

b). *Trans Nzoia Today* staff will not report on hearsay or rumor, but will check and double-check on all facts and sources and present a balanced view of sides of the issue being covered. "One source" stories regarding controversial issues will be unacceptable as are stories where the major players concerned are unavailable for comment. The main concern here is the "balance" even if the "other side" is distasteful to the writer involved. Objectivity and truthfulness will be the two major criteria on which the professionalism of the publication and the editorial staff will be judged.

c). *Trans Nzoia Today* staff will refrain from the coverage of incidents or matters that, although newsworthy and of relevance to the county, would jeopardize the relationship between the public and *Trans Nzoia Today*'s management, supporting staff and the Kenyan government.

- *Trans Nzoia Today* staff shall in each issue provide a forum for feedback from the public and the paper's partners and will treat complaints and criticisms fairly along with the compliments.
- The Chief Officer will see *Trans Nzoia Today* prior to its final printing / online posting but will make no changes unless the content does not conform to the guidelines set forth in this document, but he / she is empowered to make changes. The Chief Officer will do a post-mortem evaluation of the publication. Editorial staff may, however, seek advice of the Chief Officer on any content prior to publication. It is entirely up to the Chief Officer regarding how much advice he / she wishes to give.
- *Trans Nzoia Today* staff must meet / communicate with the Chief Officer at least once a week as part of consultations on the edition under preparation / review.
- Both the Chief Officer and / or *Trans Nzoia Today* editor shall watch for any material (advance of publication) which would endanger or damage the paper if published, with the final responsibility for the function resting on the Chief Officer and expressed through either himself or the editor.

- Structurally, the publication is a function of the Chief Officer's office with editorial guidance and logistical support from either himself / herself or the editor's office.

  Drafted by:

  Directorate – Communications & Public Relations

  Secretariat -Kenya Devolution support Programme (KDSP) & Civic education and Public Participation unit

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  KITALE, Kenya