



CODE OF ETHICS  
FOR MEDIA



## FOREWORD



**A**s part of our commitment to contribute to the transformation of public perceptions and the elimination of biases and stereotypes about women and men in our society, we, in the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), are proud to have been part in the formulation of this important set of documents - “Towards a GenderFair Media,” - that seeks to change the patriarchal practices in Philippine media, contribute to the production of more gender sensitive media content, and promote empowerment and equality in media organizations. The document contains three key documents, namely: Gender Equality Guide, Code of Ethics for Media, and Guide to Protect Women Against Discrimination in Media and Film. It was formulated to support the implementation of Republic Act 9710, otherwise known as the Magna Carta of Women.

“Towards a Gender Fair Media” outlines the pivotal role of media as an educator and shaper of public opinion and highlights the importance of upholding standards and ethics. This milestone document is a collaborative effort of the PCW, the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), and other member agencies of the Gender Equality Committee for Media.

PCW invites government and private media practitioners, journalism and communication students, and other interested parties to use “Towards a Gender Fair Media” as a guide in promoting a better and fairer perspective of women in media in support of the goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Filipino people deserve to get quality and fair news reporting, radio and TV programming, print ad and film content, among others. Let us all do our share in making the country’s media landscape gender fair.

*Remedios A. Rikken*  
**Remedios Ignacio-Rikken**  
Chairperson, PCW



# BACKGROUND for the CODE OF ETHICS FOR MEDIA

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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Just as the 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, it also recognizes the role of women in nation - building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men.<sup>1</sup>

Section 4 Article III Constitution, provides that, “No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances.”

Freedom of Expression is not absolute and the right can be subject to some regulations of the State in order that it may not be injurious to the equal right of others.<sup>2</sup>

For the media to uphold women’s rights, Republic Act 9710 An Act

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1 Sec.14 Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution  
2 Philippine Constitutional Law, Principles and Cases Vol.1 by H.De Leon, 1999 Edition

providing for the Magna Carta of Women urges, “Self-regulatory bodies, groups, and associations for media, television, cable, film, and advertising shall also ensure compliance with the Act and these Rules and Regulations.”<sup>3</sup>

Policies, programming, media production and codes of ethics should be reviewed along these provisions.

Freedom of the press carries a big responsibility to keep the public informed with accurate, objective and fair reporting. However, images of women in the media are far from being accurate and fair.

It has been said that the Philippine press is one of the freest in the world... so free that the images of women are fair game in the vast media industry – from glossy magazines for men, to sleazy tabloids bordering on pornography and masquerading as art, while the unbridled electronic media traffic unsuspecting women and children to pornographic sites and possibly into the arms of pedophiles.

The core of ethics is – to do no harm. We need to ask ourselves -- Do we do women harm in the language we use and the images we show?

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3 Republic Act No. 9710 Magna Carta of Women

## The Image of Women in Media

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) initiated by the World Association of Christian Communicators is an overview of the representation and portrayal of women and men in world news. It is based on reliable national snapshots of 'who makes the news' in print and broadcast news media taken on a single day.

The global findings<sup>4</sup> in this preliminary report are based on an analysis of 6,902 news items containing 14,044 news subjects including people interviewed in the news in 42 out of 130 participating countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America the Caribbean region, Pacific Islands and Europe.

- Only 16% of all stories focus specifically on women.
- 24% of the people interviewed, heard, seen or read about, in mainstream broadcast and print news are female.
- Almost one half (48%) of all news stories reinforce gender stereotypes, while 8% of news stories challenge gender stereotypes.

The news presents a world in which men outnumber women in almost all

professions – for instance, health (62% are men), legal (83%), science (80%) and government (83%). But in reality, women's share in all professions is much higher. The news presents a skewed picture of a world in which women are almost absent in positions of authority or responsibility outside the home.

The latest analyzed Philippine Media Monitoring was in 2005, conducted by the Communication Arts Department of Miriam College and the Communications Foundation for Asia. A total of 76 countries participated in the GMMP 2005. The Philippines finding and results are cited below, taken from:

- 7 newspapers (75 items)
- 15 TV newscasts (205 TV news)
- 13 radio newscasts (120 items)
- 1.072 people in the news

## NEWS SUBJECTS:

	%Women	% Men
All Media	23	77
• TV	25	75
• Radio	23	77
• Newspapers	20	80

## MAIN STORY TOPICS

	% Women	% Men
Celebrity, Arts & Sports	67	53
Science & Health	41	59
Social & Legal	33	67
Crime & Violence	20	80
Economy	18	82
Politics & Government	19	81

## FUNCTION IN STORY:

	% Women	% Men
Eye Witness	30	70
Subject	28	72
Personal Experience	27	73
Spokesperson	18	82
Expert	16	84
Popular Opinion	8	82

Under the Magna Carta of Women, Section 16 calls for Non-discriminatory and Non-derogatory Portrayal of Women in Media and Film. The State shall formulate policies and programs for the advancement of women in collaboration with government and non-government media-related organizations. It shall likewise endeavor to raise the consciousness of the general public in recognizing the dignity of women and the role and contribution of women in the family, community, and society through the strategic use of mass media.

For this purpose, the State shall ensure allocation of space, airtime and resources, strengthen programming, production, and image-making that appropriately present women’s needs, issues, and concerns in all forms of media, communication, information dissemination, and advertising.

The protection of the girl–children against all forms of discrimination in education, nutrition and skills development shall be pursued by the state.<sup>5</sup>

Under its Implementing Rules and Regulations, Section 19 (A) states that, “The dignity of women and their roles and contributions in all spheres of private and public life shall be promoted. The portrayal of women in a discriminatory, demeaning and/or derogatory manner in advertisements,

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Sec. 32(a) RA9710.

shows and programs is not allowed. It shall not induce, encourage and/or condone violence against women in any form and/or the violation of their human rights.”

We realize change in culture and attitudes cannot be legislated. It takes time to open and change mindsets that have been molded by and entrenched in a patriarchal society.

While respecting the self-regulation of the media, this Code of Ethics seeks to enhance existing codes to adhere to the Magna Carta of Women. Every media enterprise – publication, broadcast, new media and advertising agency – is mandated by law to review and revise their codes to include the provisions of the Magna Carta of Women.

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## **II. LAWS REGULATING MEDIA**

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### **A. Broadcast**

Under Section 11 of Article XII of the 1987 Constitution, “No franchise, certificate, or any other form of authorization for the operation of a public utility shall be granted, except to citizens of the Philippines or to

corporations or associations organized under the laws of the Philippines.”

Radio companies must file their applications to the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) as well as an application for a legislative franchise, following administrative procedures specified by both houses of the legislature.

The powers of the NTC are limited to the allocation of frequencies to television and radio stations, and do not extend to supervision over content. The NTC, whose members are appointed by the President, have the power to administer and enforce all laws, rules, and regulations in the field of communications.<sup>6</sup>

## **B. Film, Television, and Video**

The regulation of film, television programs and videos are implemented through Presidential Decree No. 1986<sup>7</sup> which created the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) which was placed under the Office of the President of the Philippines, and the Optical

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6 Philippine Press Freedom Primer, CMFR, 2007.

7 PD No. 1986 Creating the Movie and Television Review And Classification Board

Media Act of 2003<sup>8</sup> which introduced for the first time the idea of regulating the production of all optical discs, regardless of their content.

The MTRCB is ostensibly a classificatory body. The board is empowered to approve or disapprove, delete portions from or prohibit the importation, export, production, copying, distribution, sale, lease, exhibition, and/or television broadcast of motion pictures, television programs and publicity materials which in the opinion of the Board are objectionable for being immoral, indecent, contrary to law and/or good customs, injurious to the prestige of the Philippines or its own people, or with a dangerous tendency to encourage the commission of violence or of a wrong or crime.<sup>9</sup>

Decisions of the Board classifying a film or television program as “X” or not for public exhibition is appealable to the Office of the President.

In Soriano vs. Laguardia,<sup>10</sup> the Supreme Court held that the power of review and prior approval of MTRCB extends to all television programs and is valid despite the freedom of speech guaranteed by the Constitution.

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8 RA 9239 An Act Regulating Optical Media, Reorganizing for this purpose the Videogram Regulatory Board, Providing Penalties Therefor, And for Other Purposes, February 10, 2004.

9 Section 3(C) PD 1986.

10 Soriano vs. Laguardia, G.R. No. 164785, April 29,2009

Thus, all broadcast networks are regulated by the MTRCB since they are required to get a permit before they air their television programs. Consequently, their right to enjoy their freedom of speech is subject to that requirement.

The Optical Media Board (OMB) has the power to evaluate the qualifications of any individual, establishment or other entity to engage in the mastering, manufacture or replication of optical media. For this purpose, the OMB shall require such person to substantiate its capability to engage in said activities. It also has the power to supervise regulate, grant, or renew licenses for specific periods, or deny, suspend, or cancel the same, subject to such conditions as it may impose.<sup>11</sup>

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### **III. SOME EXISTING CODES AND PROPOSED CHANGES**

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Below are existing codes of media. Some already have provisions on gender equality (*original text in blue and italics*) and are mentioned for other media to emulate, with suggestions/additions in **bold** text. A supplement to this Code of Ethics is an excerpt of definitions and alternative terms of

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Section 10 RA 9239 "Optical Media Act of 2003"

non-sexist or gender-fair language from the Inter Press Service Gender and Development Glossary.

## **A. The Philippine Journalist's Code of Ethics**

Drafted by the Philippine Press Institute and the National Press Club, the Code of Ethics states that, *"VII. I shall not in any manner ridicule, cast aspersions on, or degrade any person by reason of (sex), creed, religious belief, political conviction, cultural or ethnic origin.*

**Suggested Edit:** *I shall not in any manner ridicule, cast aspersion on, or degrade any person by reason of **gender and sexual orientation**, creed, religious belief, political conviction, cultural or ethnic origin.*

## **B. Philippine Daily Inquirer Manual of Editorial Policies**

### *Section III Accuracy*

*1. How to ensure the accuracy of a story*

*1.2 Authoritative Sources -- When direct observation is impossible, the story a reporter gets is a second-hand or third hand account of an event.*

*1.2.1 When important matters are raised in second-hand or third-hand accounts, the reporter looks for documents and records that confirm or support the account.*

*1.2.2 When only human resources are available for verification, the reporter checks the person's reputation for credibility.*

*1.2.3 The farther a reporter is from a direct observation of an event, the more concerned he or she should be about a report. The reporter has to check and double-check it.*

#### **1.2.4 Use women experts and sources when relevant.**

### *3. Accuracy in the use of words*

*A reporter can commit an inaccuracy by using the wrong word or words in a story. Without precision in language, a reporter cannot report an event correctly and accurately. For instance, the sense of a sentence can be changed entirely if one uses the word **adverse** when what he means is*

**averse** or when he uses **effect**, when what he means is **affect**.

**Suggested edit : Accuracy includes the use of non-sexist language that does not exclude women and does not reinforce stereotyped roles of women and men.**

## Section XII. Canons of Taste for Journalists

### *1.3 Rape and sex crimes*

### *1.5 Slurs on people*

*1.5.1 Avoid language that stereotypes and insults women or ignores the changing role of women. Language that stereotypes women is false and demeaning. Journalists should keep in mind that women, like men, are human beings, not primarily housewives and sex objects.*

## **C. Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP)**

The Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP or Association of Broadcasters of the Philippines) is a self-regulatory body for the broadcast industry.

It is the foremost broadcast media organization in the country. It is composed of owners and operators of the radio and television stations, as well as the radio and television stations themselves. The KBP was organized to elevate professional and ethical standards of the Philippine broadcasts, promote social responsibility, work in advancement of the broadcast industry and protect the rights and interests of broadcasters.

The Code is extremely detailed but the KBP faces a problem in enforcing them due to lack of personnel to monitor all the radio and television stations in the Philippines. The following are just some of the existing provisions that refer to gender equality and some suggestions.

### **(1) Broadcast Code of the Philippines 2007 (KBP)**

*Article 22 Discrimination. "A person's race, religion, color, ethnic, gender and physical or mental disability shall not be used in a way that could embarrass, denigrate or ridicule him."*

**Suggested edit:** *"A person's race, religion, color, ethnicity, gender and physical or mental disability shall not be used in a way that could embarrass, denigrate or ridicule anyone."*

*Article 27 On-Air Language.*

*Section 1. Vulgar, obscene or indecent language is prohibited.*

*Section 2. Language tending to indicate violence, sedition or rebellion is prohibited.*

*Section 3. Name-calling and personal insults are prohibited.*

**Section 4. Use non-sexist language**

**(2) Self-regulation in the KBP**

The authority of KBP to enforce discipline from within its ranks, or self-regulation, has been honored by government authorities since 1975 and upheld by a 1987 Supreme Court decision. A ruling by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in January 1992 likewise upheld KBP's authority to require the accreditation of all broadcasters.

The KBP continually updates and reinforces the Television Code, Radio Code, and the Technical Standards, which are recognized by government authorities. Rules are enforced through a system of reprimands and sanctions<sup>12</sup>.

The KBP has a Standards Authority that enforces standards in programming, advertising, and trade practice through its Radio and Television Codes. The Authority observes established procedures in investigating, hearing, and adjudicating cases involving violations of the Codes. It imposes penalties that can include suspension or permanent disqualification from KBP membership and fines. A number of radio and TV stations have been sanctioned by the Authority, but because the penalties, in particular the fines<sup>13</sup>, have been minimal, so violations of the Code continue.

#### **D. Standards of Advertising of the Ad Standards Council Inc. (2010)**

##### *Article 1 General Standards of Presentation*

##### *Section 4 Sex, Profanity, Obscenity and Vulgarity.*

*c) Advertisements should not depict or exploit persons as sex objects and should not contain offensive, obscene, blasphemous, profane and vulgar words or any sexual double entendres.*

*e) Salacious, violent or indecent themes, sexual innuendo or stereotyping likely to cause serious or general offence should be avoided.*

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Php. 5,000 for individuals and Php 10,000 for stations who commit a First Offense.

## *Article IV Other standards of presentation*

### *Section 1 Disparagement.*

*b) Advertisements shall not directly or indirectly disparage, ridicule, criticize or attack any natural or juridical person, groups of persons or any sector of society especially on the basis of gender, social or economic class, religion, race or nationality.*

As self-regulating bodies, many provisions in the Broadcast and Advertising Codes are not followed. Enhancing the code is one, implementing it is another. That is why monitoring is essential and more so, educating the public.

## **E. Other Self-Regulatory Mechanisms**

Most newspapers have an Ombud who is in charge of handling complaints from readers. “Letters to the Editor” also serve as a forum for readers to air their views and opinions on various issues.

The Philippine Press Council is a regulatory body within the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), the national organization of newspapers, which

guarantees every news subject's right of redress.

Press Councils (PCs) promote press accountability by accepting complaints against the press. Initially, three press councils were organized in Cebu, Baguio, and Palawan.

PCs provide a public forum for the discussion of media and related issues, including the relevance of reports and usefulness of news programs and publications to the communities they serve. Apart from key representatives in the local media, press councils include members from the academe and civil society. The inclusion of non-journalist members has been designed to make the grievance process more accessible. The regional PCs are envisioned as growing models for replication in different areas of the Philippines. The PC can provide a venue for hearing complaints and recourse for offended parties.

“Where the press is freest, the press council should also be most useful, at least, as a venue that connects the press to the public it has pledged to serve,” noted Melinda Quintos de Jesus, CMFR Executive Director.

“Public involvement in press councils,” she added “paves the way for

an emergent community that is truly media literate, a public that can become more critical of flawed, inaccurate, biased and unfair reporting and commentary. That public will, in the long term, be the one to force members of the press and the institution itself to be held to a public accounting.”<sup>14</sup>

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#### **IV. DEVELOPING GENDER – FAIR STORIES**

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A gender lens allows one to gain deeper insight into all issues that are covered by media, because events, policies, politics, and business impact men and women differently, just as they do the rich and the poor. Understanding the difference can help us to see dimensions of a story that would be otherwise overlooked.

“In developing stories, as well as editing them, it is useful to remember that gender is part of every quality story. Below are **some questions that help make a gender fair story**:

- How varied are the voices in this story? Where are the women in it?

- How are the women portrayed? (Is it in a manner that reinforces stereotypes that unduly shows them as victims?)
- What roles do these men and women have (thinking also about age, class, race, and ethnicity) and how do these factors shape the issue and story?
- What are the power relationships between men and women and how do these roles and power relationships further explain the issue being addressed?
- How are the impacts of events and processes different for women and men?<sup>15</sup>

## CODE OF ETHICS FOR MEDIA

This Code of Ethics is offered in view of the recently passed Republic Act No. 9710, otherwise known as the Magna Carta of Women. Under Section 16 of RA 9710 it calls for non-discriminatory and non-derogatory portrayal of women in media and film –

*“The State shall formulate policies and programs for the advancement of women in collaboration with government and non-government media-related organizations. It shall likewise endeavor to raise the consciousness of the general public in recognizing the dignity of women and the role and contribution of women in the family, community, and society through the strategic use of mass media”.*

*“For this purpose, the State shall ensure allocation of space, airtime and*

*resources, strengthen programming, production, and image-making that appropriately present women's needs, issues, and concerns in all forms of media, communication, information dissemination, and advertising."*

Under the Implementing Rules and Regulations, Section 19 B(3) states that:

*"The Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) and its attached agencies shall ensure the formulation of policies and implementation of programs pursuant to the Act and these Rules and Regulations. It shall also...create a gender equality committee composed of representatives from OPS, PCW, various self-regulatory bodies and the NTC, MTRCB, FAP, FDCP, OMB, NCCA, representative of women's*

*media NGOs to promote gender mainstreaming, formulate the gender equality guidelines and Code of Ethics for media, and monitor and evaluate the implementation thereof.”*

In recognition of the self-regulatory function of media, this Code of Ethics seeks to enhance existing codes of media in adherence to the provisions of the Magna Carta of Women.

## **PREAMBLE**

*We respect the dignity of all persons of any race, ethnicity, age, disability, gender and sexual orientation, religious and political beliefs;*

*We believe in the equality of men and women and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, and civil and any other field;*

*We believe in the fundamental rights inherent in all human beings and recognize that women's rights are human rights;*

*We recognize the international instruments and national commitments that set direction and standards for addressing issues of gender inequality and discrimination;*

## **A. Content**

1. Recognize that all issues impact women in a different way and as half the population of the world, they need to be included in the public debate and their voices heard. All issues are women's issues;
2. Stories and reports must be based on verified facts. Include background information and context so the audience can understand the issues better;
3. Encourage stories and reports on women and other marginalized groups such as but not limited to -- children, elderly, persons with disabilities, and indigenous peoples -- to celebrate diversity;

4. Women should not be treated as an object or commodity. Focus on her expertise and substantive contribution to community and society.

## **B. Balance**

1. Present both or all sides of the issue
2. Do not malign, destroy, insult or disrespect anyone based on ethnicity, gender, age, language, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, political, or other opinion, national, social, or geographical origin, disability, property, birth, or other status as established by human rights standards<sup>1</sup>
3. Provide airtime and space to women's needs, issues and concerns.

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Par. 4, Section 3, Chapter 1 of RA 9710.

## **C. Accuracy**

1. Avoid trial by publicity.
2. Label “advertorials” and advertisements.
3. Press releases may be used as news sources only after verification that sources are authentic.<sup>2</sup>
4. Use realistic images and photos without resorting to computerized techniques.
5. Do not editorialize the news.

## **D. Sources**

1. Do not plagiarize.
2. Double check sources and corroborate information.
3. Indicate the reference source – if findings or results of a study

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Sec. 4(F) Art.1, News Sources, News and Public Affairs KBP.

or survey, identify who made the study and the year it was done.

4. Consult a broad range of sources. Include women as experts and sources of news.

## **E. Language**

1. Avoid stereotypes.
2. Use gender inclusive language and terms, which include both sexes or gender fair language.
3. Avoid the use of offensive language. Avoid messages that are vulgar, indecent, promote substance abuse, gender discrimination, racism, Satanism, violence or sexual perversion or demean a member of any sector of society.
4. Avoid the use of double meaning words with sexual innuendos.
5. Avoid the use of labels.

## **F. Images of Women**

1. Do not exploit the image of women.
2. Show realistic portrayals of women.
3. Never encourage violence.
4. Avoid visuals and portrayals that appeal to the prurient interest.

## **G. From the eye of the camera to the screen/page**

1. Protect the identity and privacy of women and survivors of violence at all times.
2. Recognize the right of the survivors of violence to decide whether to be identified or not.
3. Respect the dignity of persons, especially in death.
4. Focus on the issues in covering disasters.

5. Ask permission before taking a picture or filming your subject.

## **H. Integrity**

1. Avoid offering or accepting any gifts or other considerations in news media organizations and their practitioners.
2. Admit and correct mistakes immediately.
3. Avoid conflicts of interest.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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