

GRC/HQ/ADM/57/2019

February 2019

GHANA RED CROSS SOCIETY

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Approved and Adopted at Central Council Meeting of November 2018, NASCO Hotel, Koforidus

Signed by

**Nana Dr. Michael Agyekum Addo
President**

Signed by

**Samuel Kofi Addo
Secretary General**

GHANA RED CROSS SOCIETY

COMMUNICATION POLICY

1. Introduction

The Ghana Red Cross society started as the league of maternal and child welfare formed by Dr. Selwyn Clarke in 1929. The league consisted of mother, teachers, nurse and housewives. The league aim was a). The welfare of pregnant and nursing mothers, b). The care of infants and Children and c).The cleanliness of the home

In 1932, the league become the Gold Cost branch of the British Red Cross Society. After independence in 1957, the Ghana Red Cross society Act No. 10 of 1958 was passed by Parliament leading to the Recognition as a National Red Cross Society by ICRC in February 1959 and admitted into the league of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in November 1959.

The Society is operational in 216 Districts and has offices in all the 10 Regional Capitals and has a national headquarters located in Accra. Various programmes are available and are organised under programmes areas of Disaster Preparedness, Disaster Response, Health and Care in the Community, Organisational Development, Communication and Public Relations.

Communication is key in the work of the Ghana Red Cross Society as it enhances public knowledge of the National Society's humanitarian work and its advocacy role. Well targeted communication will enable the National Society to address negative perceptions, maintain beneficial partnerships as well as positioning the organization among external and internal audiences as a humanitarian organization of choice. The Ghana Red Cross Society shall use this Communication Policy as a guiding tool as to how it will be conveying and receiving messages to and from the Ghanaian public.

2. Vision

To be the leading based humanitarian service provider in Ghana with the aim of working together for humanity and efficient service delivery to support the vulnerable in society

3. Mission

Ghana Red Cross Society Seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering by mobilising the power of humanity.

4. Principles

This policy is a guiding document for the communication activities of the Ghana Red Cross National Society to external and internal audiences across the National, Regional, District and Community levels. This policy shall apply to all staff, volunteers and members of the National Society and its affiliate organisations. The implementation of the Communication Policy will be in full compliance with the Red Cross Movement's Seven Fundamental

Principles: **Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary service, Unity and Universality.**

5. Policy Guidelines

- 5.1 The President shall be the spokesperson of the National Society on policy and strategic issues.
- 5.2. No staff or volunteer will be allowed to be a representative of the National Society on any forum without prior authorisation.
- 5.3. The National Society will maintain a policy of full disclosure on information held by it and relevant to its work. The National Society also acknowledges that full disclosure is not always possible for legal or practical reasons.
- 5.4. The National Society recognises that information, communication and media are useful tools for addressing vulnerability of populations.
- 5.5. All staff, volunteers and members of the National Society, will in communication with external parties, conduct themselves in a respectful manner that does not compromise the objectives of the National Society.
- 5.6. The National Society will strive to provide transfer of information to the public and all that benefit from, or support the services of the National Society to maintain the goodwill of partners and beneficiaries.
- 5.7. Staff and volunteers of the National Society shall desist from publicly expressing any opinions on events connected with Socio-political issues or engaging in other activities that could reflect adversely on the impartiality, neutrality, independence or other Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- 5.8. The National Society will safeguard the privacy of its staff and volunteers and protect non-public business information of the National Society, its sponsors, partners, suppliers and beneficiaries.
- 5.9. Information about the National Society availed to staff or volunteers in the course of performing their assigned duties will remain the property of the National Society and may not be divulged to unauthorised persons without written permission during or after the officer's time of service at the National Society.
- 5.10. No staff and volunteer will be allowed to be a representative of the National Society on any forum without prior authorisation.

6. Internal Communication

- 6.1. All departments within the National Society will participate in the implementation of internal communication strategies to enhance employee outputs and the National Society's image.
- 6.2 National Society will ensure that all information for internal circulation (for members, staff and volunteers working with the National Society) is made accessible and available as needed in the facilitation of its work.
- 6.3 Staff or volunteers may not divulge to unauthorised persons, without written permission, any information given to them during or after their time of service at the National Society.
- 6.4 Communication of decisions and resolutions of the GRCS Governing Board National Council will be done in writing through the office of the Secretary General.
- 6.5 All official external visits to the Regions/Branches will be co-ordinated by the office of the Secretary General through the Communications Department.

- 6.6 All official communication from headquarters that requires action from the Regions/Branches will be channelled through the Regional Managers.
- 6.7 The Regional Managers will strengthen communication infrastructure in the Regions.
- 6.8 All departments of the National Society and affiliate companies must work with Communications Department to standardize branding and other communication.

7. External Communication and Public Relations.

- 7.1. The National Society will develop strategies to enhance communication with stakeholders.
- 7.2. The National Society will issue periodic reports, including narratives and financials, to its stakeholders.
- 7.3. The National Society will also publish regular supplements in newspapers and other media.
- 7.4. Policy level communication between the National Society and other National Societies will be done through the office of the Secretary General.
- 7.6. In emergency and conflict situations where there is joint Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement response, the National Society will harmonize its Public Relations and Communication activities with those of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), so as to present a common image and contribute to a greater understanding of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement within Ghana.
- 7.7. No staff, volunteer or member of the National Society, either alone or in association with any person, may hold a fundraising event, issue any public appeal, receive any donation or take part in any public activity, with the object of raising funds for the National Society, without the consent of the Secretary General.
- 7.8. All communication with the corporate sector on resource mobilisation initiatives should officially pass through the office of the Secretary General and the Resource Mobilisation section of the National Society.

8. Communications and the Media

- 8.1. The Secretary General, the President of the Governing Board or any duly authorised person shall make policy statements and broadcast or televise communication to the press concerning National Society.
- 8.2. Regional Managers are duly authorised to engage the media on activities that are ongoing in their Regions.
- 8.3. The National Society will develop and nurture close working relations with the media.
- 8.4. The Communications Department will cultivate high media visibility both in peace time and during emergencies.
- 8.5. Departments and programmes will work with the Communications Department to promote their initiatives and activities on radio and television and any other mass media.
- 8.6. Regions may invite the media to their functions and events with facilitation from the Communications Department.
- 8.7. The National Society will make every effort to be pro-active on negative publicity and bad press. In the event that the National Society suffers negative publicity, the President in consultation with the Secretary General will take responsibility for damage control.
- 8.8. Where necessary, the Secretary General in collaboration with the Public Relation Adviser will call a press conference or issue a press release, letters or verbal explanations. A permanent record of this communication will be kept.

- 8.9. Where there is a need for an offending party to apologize to the National Society, the Secretary General will work with the Communications Department and the National Society's Legal Advisor to ensure that the apology is received, and in some cases, published.
- 8.10. Communication with the media must not violate the National Society's privacy, confidentiality, and legal guidelines.

9. Communications and Social Media

- 9.1. The Communications Department, shall take the lead in social media activities for the National Society and will have the responsibility of co-ordinating all interactions on social media on behalf of, or as a representation of the National Society.
- 9.2. Staff and volunteers may not share information and/or images that belong to the National Society, and which have not already been shared publicly by the National Society. Sharing includes, on personal social media platforms.
- 9.3. Where a programme or department wants to use social media to promote the National Society's activities, authorization must be sought from the Communications Department.
- 9.4. Personal blogs and websites that touch on work-related issues must have a disclaimer added to each page stating that the views expressed on the blog are personal views. Such disclaimers shall not absolve staff or volunteers from their legal obligations under the confidentiality policy, code of ethics and any other policy of the National Society or law of the country.
- 9.5. Where a member, staff or volunteer comes across a misrepresentation of the National Society on social media, they should alert the Communications Department as soon as possible.
- 9.6. All staff and volunteers must obtain authorisation from the Communications Department before publishing anything related to their functions or assignments on social media.
- 9.7. Where a member, staff or volunteer publishes information on a blog or social media that is incorrect, they should correct the mistake visibly.
- 9.8. Staff and volunteers may not post on social media any information on routes or times of planned convoys or distribution of goods. This will include disabling geo-tagging on cameras during field work, which may show the exact location of photos or recordings.
- 9.9. Personal details such as home addresses of staff and volunteers may not be disclosed on social media.
- 9.10. Staff and volunteers will not create any public groups or social media platforms in support of causes or a call to action without authorization from the Communications Department.

10. Crisis Communication

- 10.1. The National Society shall not divulge or publish any information on the number of fatalities that have occurred post-incident to the media, unless attributing the source to official government reports, or authorized by the Secretary General.
- 10.2. Information on causalities or situational updates post-incident shall only be done by the Secretary General or his/her authorized representative.
- 10.3. Only authorized staff may be allowed to take photos and/or videos during emergencies.
- 10.4. The Staff and Volunteers at emergency should prevent / appeal / persuade not to take photos and videos to protect and respect the dignity of the victim

- 10.5. The PR and Communications Department shall sustain the visibility of the National Society by sharing and posting information on the National Society's websites/social media and general media.
- 10.6. During an emergency, all information received/released will be channelled as stipulated in the Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) Protocol or any other document that shall from time to time be approved by the various relevant Boards of the National Society.

11 Reputation Management

- 11.1. The Ghana Red Cross Society is not immune to issues of reputational management and communication is key in minimizing the impact of risks to the image of the organization if such issues are not handled or responded to timely and efficiently. The following important issues have to be taken into consideration: Assess possible risks and potential impact and Implement mitigation strategies.
- 11.2. Monitor what others are saying about you: Monitor media on the crisis and emergency situations and, if necessary respond with releases in line with the National Society's Communication Policy.
- 11.3. Create key messages and reactive lines (Questions &Answers)
- 11.4. Create a response plan and communication plan for partners and stakeholders
- 11.5. Select the right media for your response: traditional or social media platforms- The National Society will respond to the criticisms with printed documents using events such as press conferences, press releases and on its various social media platforms.
- 11.6. The President, Secretary General, The Public Relations Adviser or an authorized representative shall be the spokesperson to represent the National Society during crisis times.
- 11.7. Continuously update communication channels
- 11.8. Monitor incoming/Outgoing communication channels
- 11.9. Build on communication lessons learnt
- 11.10 The National Society will update the crisis plan on an annual basis in order to adapt to the environmental changes internally or externally. This should include a clear plan of action and assessment of potential risk areas.

12. Beneficiary communication

- 12.1. Beneficiary communication shall be prioritised to ensure accountability to beneficiaries.
- 12.2. Where beneficiaries already have a communication system in place, prior approval from the Communications Department will be required before engaging in the beneficiary communication system.
- 12.3. All relevant two-way communication between the National Society and beneficiaries, must be documented and reports submitted to the Monitoring and Evaluation Department.
- 12.4. Beneficiary contacts and personal information acquired during the engagement with beneficiaries shall be kept confidential.
- 12.5. All beneficiary information shall be stored centrally.

13. Digital communication

- 13.1 Communications Department shall work hand in hand with the Information Technology (IT) Unit to ensure that the National Society keeps up with technological trends.
- 13.2. The Communications Department will work with the IT unit to set up and maintain the website and intranet. Heads of departments and Regional Managers will ensure that the

information on the website relating to them is updated regularly and is factually accurate and technically correct.

- 13.3. Staff and volunteers will not enter any internet chat rooms or chat-channels representing the National Society unless authorized by the Communications Department.
- 13.5. The National Society's electronic communication resources may not be used for unlawful activities, commercial purposes not under auspices of the National Society, or for personal financial gain.
- 13.6. Staff or volunteers using electronic communication resources and platforms provided by the National Society such as the internet, will be used for official work only, and may not visit pornographic or unauthorised sites using National Society time and resources.
- 13.7. Staff and volunteers will not use office email addresses for private communication.
- 13.8. All staff and volunteers email communication will include an email signature containing contact details.
- 13.9. The use of the National Society's electronic communications equipment and facilities shall subject to the normal conditions of use as outlined in the National Society IT policy.

14. Telephone Communication:

- 14.1. Audio or video telephone conversations will not be recorded or monitored without advising the participants unless a court order has explicitly approved such monitoring or recording.
- 14.2. Personnel shall be informed when a call is being monitored or recorded for the purpose of evaluating customer service, assessing workload, or other business purpose permitted by law.
- 14.3. Except court order all communication, text and images cannot be disclosed to law enforcement or other third parties without consent of the sender or receiver in a case of an investigation.

15. National Society emblems or logos. Red Cross Decree 1973 (NRCD 216)

- 15.1. Staff and volunteers shall not add photos of themselves or others with any of the National Society's emblems visible on their personal blogs, websites or social media accounts.
- 15.2. Staff and volunteers will not use the National Society's emblems or logos to conduct non-National Society business.
- 15.3. All use of the National Society's logos must be uniform and standardised as outlined in the National Society's branding guidelines.
- 15.4. All staff and volunteers of the National Society involved in response activities shall have the protective/reflective emblem jackets as a form of identification and protection in accordance with protective emblem use guidelines.
- 15.5. All staff and volunteers interviewed by the media or representing the National Society in public debates must always wear a jacket or any approved uniform dress with the Red Cross emblem for identity purposes
- 15.6. The logo is the representation of the National Society, therefore all creative designs must be in line with the National Society's branding guidelines.

16. Privacy

- 16.1. The National Society shall respect its beneficiary's right to privacy and shall not take photos or videos without permission to do so. Beneficiaries must be informed on the use to which the pictures and recordings will be put prior to taking the pictures, except where such permission cannot be obtained because the beneficiary is incapacitated.

- 16.2. Special care must be taken when taking or displaying photos of children and people who have been through a traumatic event.
- 16.3. The dignity of persons portrayed in the photos or videos shall be priority.
- 16.4. Photographs and videos about beneficiaries that could lead to anyone identifying them or where they live should not be posted, unless with their consent.
- 16.5. Sharing of any photos with external persons will be done through the Communications Department.

17. Central Filing System

- 17.1. All National Society official files (soft/hard) will be saved within a central-filing system with a password that is known to authorise staff.
- 17.2. Confidential material will be saved in the central filing system, but with a password known to at least one other person within the department.
- 17.3. Information that is not ready for public consumption, e.g. work in progress and drafts, may be kept in personal files and folders and secured with secret passwords for the period it is under development.
- 17.4. All staff will write handover notes, including passwords on the central filing system, whenever they have to be away from the office for more than 48 hours, whether on official or personal business.
- 17.5. All photos taken by members, staff and volunteers of the National Society must be shared with the Communications Department for proper filing.
- 17.6. All publication artworks, including but not limited to brochures, manuals, books magazines, fliers, etc., done for the National Society, should be shared with the Communications Department for filing with proper captioning.

18. Publications

- 18.1. The Communications Department will coordinate the design and development of uniform formats for use in all IEC materials and printed publications as well as presentations of the National Society.
- 18.2. All publications, including IEC materials, publicity materials, annual reports, strategic plans or advertisements bearing the logo and print of the National Society, will be coordinated from the Communications Department.
- 18.3. Contracts for printing of documents with the printers will be negotiated as per the National Society's Procurement Policy.
- 18.4. All departments and Regions will use only approved formats or branding for all National Society publications and presentations.
- 18.5. The departments with material to be printed will generate and edit all material for their technical accuracy and be responsible for the content. The material will then be discussed and agreed with the Communications Department, which will then release them for printing and publication.

19. Communications and Intellectual Property (IP) rights (Copyright)

- 19.1. The contents of all electronic communications shall conform to the Copyright Laws of Ghana and the National Society's policies regarding protection of intellectual property, including laws and policies regarding copyright, patents and trademarks.
- 19.2. When the content and distribution of an electronic communication would exceed fair use as defined by the Copyright Act, users of the National Society's electronic communication

resources shall secure appropriate permission from copyright owners to distribute protected material in any form, including text, photographic images, audio, video, graphic illustration and computer software.

20. Use of new technologies

- 20.1. With the development of new technologies for effective communication, the National Society shall continuously explore the use of innovative tools, including high-tech and low-tech innovations at national and regional levels.
- 20.2. The National Society shall also adapt innovative ideas into various project and initiatives so as to provide the best solutions to beneficiary needs.
- 20.3. Some of the innovative approaches and ideas include, but not limited to the use of Mobile Data Collection using Magpie, the Ghana Red Cross Society App, Beneficiary and Client Mapping, drone technology, geographic information system (GIS), WhatsApp platforms, Red Cross Messages (RCM), Kobo collect/CDK among others
- 20.4. Within the use of these technologies, the users within the National Society will ensure appropriate and proper use, abiding by the IT policy of the National Society and all laws of Ghana, while ensuring that these communication tools are at the disposal of all departments to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness, and not for any personal gain.

21. Communication Officers deployed in emergency missions

- 21.1 Whenever communication officers of the National Society are enlisted as part of any emergency response teams and missions, the rules of engagement will be defined by the Operations Support Department of the IFRC depending on the nature of the disaster, and all information officers will be expected to adhere to them.

22. Information Dissemination and Advocacy

- 22.1. The National Society will maintain an office to specifically research on and disseminate issues pertaining to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and disaster response rules, laws and principles.
- 22.2. The tasks of the office will include, research in the laws, domestication, dissemination and legal education of the public and relevant government officers.
- 22.3. The Communications Department will maintain a Resource Centre that will host material on IHL, the National Society, Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, among others.
- 22.4. The National Society will collaborate with ICRC and IFRC in the promotion, development and dissemination of IHL, Fundamental Principles, agreements and statutes of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.
- 22.5. Ghana Red Cross Society will promote the understanding and respect for human dignity, diversity, gender equity, reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

23. Terminology

The National Society will avoid acronyms and jargon where possible in order to reinforce consistency in its daily communication especially with external audiences. The words must be used according to the National Society's guide on glossary.

24. Support and Training

- 24.1. The National Society shall provide adequate and reliable resources for communication by allocating at least five per cent of all operational budgets for communication activities.
- 24.2. The Communications Department will coordinate the development of a Communication Strategy and provide technical support for all communication matters to enhance its image internally and externally.
- 24.3. The Communications Department will work with the Human Resource (HR) Department to provide appropriate communication training to improve communication skills of the National Society's staff, volunteers and members, to enable them to provide better services.

25. Exit of staff

- 25.1. At resignation of staff or volunteers Communication Department shall collaborate with HR Department to have exit interviews conducted by their line managers to give reflection on their experience and lessons learnt.
- 25.2. The HR policy shall implement the signing of a restrictive contract for existing staff and outgoing staff prohibiting the use of the National Society's photos, videos, publications, emblems, and logos or representing the National Society in any other way without prior authorization from the Secretary General.
- 25.3. Written consent must be given to any ex-staff/ex-volunteer for representation of the National Society in any forum.

26. Policy review

- 26.1 The National Society will continuously assess its communication needs and bring up this policy for review as and when needed.

27. Sanctions

- 27.1 In breach of any of these guidelines by staff or volunteer a reprimand, demotion, suspension or legal prosecution shall apply depending upon the gravity of the offence.

Endorsement

October, 2018