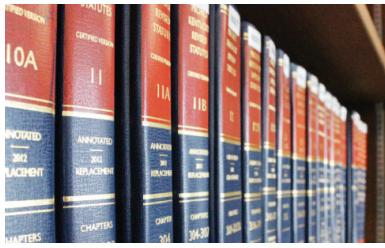
Republic of Namibia



SOCIAL MEDIA

USE POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

2016/17 -2019/20

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ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

GRN ..... Government of the Republic of Namibia
HPP ..... Harambee Prosperity Plan
ICT ..... Information and Communication Technology
MICT ..... Ministry of Information and Communication Technology
MP ..... Member of Parliament
NDPs ..... National Development Plans
O/M/As ..... Offices, Ministries and Agencies
PROs ..... Public Relations Officers
TV ..... Television
SMS ..... Short Messaging Service
WPC ..... Web Points of Contact

FOREWORD

Pillar One (Effective Governance and Service Delivery) of the Harambee Prosperity Plan under the responsible social media deployment perspective, requires that the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology develops a Social Media Use Policy and an Implementation Plan by July 2016 as part of the overall government Communication Strategy. This directive ties well with the statement by His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob in the Harambee Prosperity Plan, when he stated that it is no longer business as usual when it comes to the implementation of government projects and programmes. This means we are not only required to act with more urgency to reform processes but also to reform our minds and attitudes and to pull in the same direction in order to create a new culture of efficiency and accountability in delivering services to our people.

As government, we are required to deploy all available resources at our disposal to ensure that our citizens have access to relevant government information in order to make meaningful and informed decisions to improve their livelihood. Therefore, the use of social media is one of the tools that government intends to deploy for information dissemination to the citizenry to improve government service delivery.

However, the use of social media in government should not be seen as a replacement of traditional media, but as a complimentary tool to enhance information dissemination to the public. Under this Social Media Use Policy all O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities are required to establish social media platforms and Web Points of Contacts (WPC) to serve as primary links between their offices and the public. In this regard, I wish to implore all government communicators to ensure that this policy becomes a living document that will empower them in disseminating government information to the public in accordance with Vision 2030, the National Development Plans (NDPs), and the Harambee Prosperity Plan.

I am therefore confident that this policy will promote dialogue between the government and the citizenry in enhancing participatory democracy, transparency and accountability.

HON. TJEKERO TWEYA (MP)
MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

BACKGROUND

Article 21 of the Namibian Constitution states that all persons shall have the right to "freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media". This right is guaranteed for all people while at the same time necessitating the need for equal and unfettered access to information. The pace at which technology is advancing and the emergence of social media have revolutionised the way in which people communicate and share information. The growth in technology also entails that the modes through which people communicate and share information has changed, culminating in the mushrooming of social media networks that fast track the pace of communicating information. The use of social media as a tool for information dissemination around the world has been gaining acceptance in all spheres of government, and Namibia is no exception.

Social Media refers to the interaction among people in which they create, share, and or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social Media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content.

With the growing demand of information, social media networks has made communication easier and has so far brought everyone into one place called a "Global Village".

This policy thus seeks to provide guidelines on the use of social media by O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to share information and provide a platform through which the government will engage citizens in social dialogues.

Moreover, the policy is vital for the process of creating a transparent, effective and efficient government as well as service delivery in line with the National Development Plans (NDPs), Vision 2030 and the Harambee Prosperity Plan. The policy also creates favourable prospects for government's envisioned methods of implementing the National Information Policy and Access to Information legislation.

PURPOSE

Social media is a term for the platforms that can be used to engage with internal and external stakeholder audiences in the form of highly accessible digital technologies such as blogs, podcasts, social networks, wikis, micro-blogs and message boards.
The purpose of this Social Media Use Policy is to guide the use of social media by O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities functionaries as part of information dissemination to the public. It helps to add value to the methods through which government engage the public in social dialogue with the purpose of providing access to public information in order to create knowledge based society.

Furthermore, the social media use policy focuses on guidance in the use of social media within the Namibian government communication environment with the aim of improving government transparency, participation and interaction with the public. By taking advantage of Social Media networks, the policy provides a more practical way through which, government communicators will make use of the three keys components of Social Media Platforms, which are:

- Virtual Engagement – through Social Media the government provides interactive communication with the public where the public contribute in reshaping government policies and programmes.

- Re-purpose – through Social Media the government embraces the opportunity to translate print, audio and video information into web-based information that can be shared and accessed through the web by the public. Social Media should therefore be used as a complementary communication channel to the traditional media such as broadcasting and print media.

- Search – through social media the government presents an opportunity for the public to search for any public information uploaded on to the social media platforms at any time.

This presents government with the opportunity to maintain a historical web based archive.

Furthermore, the policy establishes the principles for:

- Government employees using social media for official government communication purposes; and
- Personal use of Social Media by government employees, when the employees' affiliation to government is identified, known or presumed.

The intention is to provide:

- A unified and standardized way of using social media by government communicators;
- A certain degree of responsibility and accountability for government communicators;
- An introductory overview of the social media tools that are relevant to the Namibian government;
- The potential benefits and risks associated with these tools;
- Guidance in best-practice and use of social media;
- General advocacy methods.

BENEFITS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA

The use of social media benefits the government by:

- Increasing government's access to the public;
- Improving the pace of accessibility of government information and services by the public;
- Allowing government to adjust or refocus communication promptly where necessary;
- Reducing the cost of information dissemination by government;
- Providing cheaper way for the public to engage government;
- Increasing the effectiveness of government communication;
- Increasing the speed of government response to any queries from the public;
- Reaching target audience on specific issues timely;
- Diversified engagement with the public thereby reducing government dependency on traditional media channels in disseminating information;
- Increasing public participation in shaping government agenda and policies;
- Assisting the public to access government information in order to make informed decisions.

WEB POINTS OF CONTACT (WPC)

The Web Points of Contact (WPC) are established under this policy to serve as the primary point of accountability for the effective oversight, coordination and management of information shared on Social Media networks by the respective O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities. This is not withstanding the fact that the O/M/As, Regional Council and Local Authority return the right as a legal owner and official administrator of any social page administered by that O/M/As, Regional Council or Local Authority's WPC.

For the purpose of effective and efficient information dissemination and public engagement, Public Relations, Information and Media units in all O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities will act as the primary WPC for these organisations and organs

In order to ensure professional government engagement with the public:

- All employees assigned with the responsibility of WPC shall sign an oath as a demonstration of commitment to the Government Social Media policy.
- WPC shall be the first points of contact on social media and other web activities
- All employees assigned as WPC shall be provided with online training and refresher training on a regular basis
- A WPC Committee set up by the Ministry of ICT, shall meet quarterly to share best practices and coordinate efforts. The Committee shall comprise of all Heads of Public Relations, Information and Media units of all O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities.
- The Committee shall be deployed to assist and advise O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities in the event of a communication crisis where necessary.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS RELEVANT TO THE NAMIBIAN GOVERNMENT

Social Media platforms that can be used by O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities include the following, but not limited to:

Facebook

- Arguably the most popular social media platform;
- Provides a way for users to build connections, share information and interact with the public
- Used by all ages, but biggest age group in Namibia is now 18-50;
- Good for building communities quickly.

Twitter

- Platform allows O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local authorities to disseminate information and interact with the public instantly ;
- Only allows 140 character and this limit forces it to be clear and concise
- Average age of Twitter user is 25 – 50;
- Is conversational, and provides a way for users to build connections, share information

Instagram

- Instagram is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service
- Enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them either publicly or privately on the app
- Is used by all ages, but biggest age group in Namibia is now 18-50;

YouTube

- Is a social media platform that allows users to share and view video content
- Very popular among young people;
- Is used by all ages, but biggest age group in Namibia is now 18-50

Blogging

- Allows direct engagement;
- Allows authority and leadership;
- . Is interactive
- Used by all ages, but biggest age group in Namibia is now 25-50

LinkedIn

- Is a professionally oriented platform
- Used by individuals and companies to create profiles;
- Allows users to disseminate and share information

Short Messaging Service (SMS)

- O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities shall create a toll free SMS line on which the public can send queries and complains;
- Helps O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to reach a wider audience through bulk messages.

WhatsApp

- Allows the public to send queries and complains;
- Allows O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local authorities to share information with certain target groups.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES

General social media guidelines / codes of conduct to be observed by government communicators when using any type of social media for official purposes:

- Be credible – accurate, fair, thorough and transparent;
- Be respectful – encourage dialogue and accept criticism;
- Be cordial, honest and professional at all times;
- Listen before you talk – before entering any conversation you need to understand the context;
- Determine the potential audience when choosing the social media platforms to share information ;
- Determine good reasons to place a comment or response;
- Write what you know – you have to know your facts and cite credible sources;
- Research on topics before commenting to be well informed first, making sure facts such as statistics are accurate;
- Acknowledge mistakes made through your comment or response and correct immediately;
- Be both pro-active in disseminating information;
- Pro-actively portray a formal / official image of government in all social media communications at all times;
- Always engage relevant units before responding to a question concerning their unit.
- Do not control, modify, or endorse comments or opinions provided by visitors to your social media sites.
- Do not engage in vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks of any kind or offensive terms targeting individual or groups;
- Do not endorse or promote commercial products, services or entities;
- Do not endorse political parties, candidates or groups or their slogans and affiliations;
- The protocols that apply when you are acting as an official representative of government and/or O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities should be the same whether you are talking to the media, speaking at a conference or using social media;
- Government employees making comments or contributions on behalf of government and/ or O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities should only do so with expressed approval or authority.

THIRD-PARTY WEBSITES

- Third party refers to an instance where you are neither the original author of the information nor the original owner of the site or the original receiver of the information being circulated on social media on behalf of your profile;
- Any activities on third party websites are governed by the security and privacy policies of the third-party sites.
- Always review the privacy policies of the sites before using them in order to understand how the information you make available on those sites will be used.

TERMS OF USE AND DISCLAIMER

The following terms of use and disclaimer language shall be posted on each O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities' social media platforms:

We welcome comments and questions from the public. We respect your right to freedom of expression and the principle that people are entitled to different opinions and hope to foster conversation within our online presence. To that end, we do not pre-moderate users' comments on our websites and social media platforms. This means person/s posting on this page is accountable for his/ her/ their information.

Users' comments are automatically published, but we return the right to remove comment/s that:

- Contain obscene, indecent, or profane language;
- Contain threats, defamatory statements or personal attacks;
- Encourage illegal activities prohibited by the Namibian and international laws;
- Contain hate speech directed at race, color, gender, sex, identity, national origin (xenophobia), ethnicity, age, religion or disability; status,
- That contain remarks that encourages tribalism and stereotyping
- Contain sensitive or personally identifiable information;
- Infringe on other persons' right to privacy;
- Promote or endorse special commercial services, products or entities;
- Repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple users, spam, or chain mail.
- Contain vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks of any kind or offensive terms targeting individual or groups;
- Promote or endorse political parties, candidates or groups or their slogans and affiliations

Note: Views expressed on this page, the appearance of external links posted by individuals on this page and followings, liking, or reposting or tweets does not constitute the official endorsement on behalf of the administrators of this page or the government of the Republic of Namibia. We are not liable in any way for any loss or damage resulting from any comment/s posted on this page by individuals. The administrator of this page reserves the right to block and if necessary seek legal recourse against any individual/s that persistently and continuously violate the above rules as outlined on this page.

NON-OFFICIAL / PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS

Public Servants and all employees working on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Namibia who use social media for strictly personal use outside of the workplace do not require approval to do so. However, the Government of the Republic of Namibia recognizes that the use of social media networks can sometimes blur the line between professional and personal lives and interactions. Therefore employees are reminded that, as representatives of their offices the above rules and guidelines must be taken into consideration when participating in these services at anytime, but particularly when identifying themselves as public servants or employees of the O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities, or when the context might lead to that conclusion.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Action steps (How to achieve targets)	KPI/Outcomes (Measurable success criteria)	Time frame (When)
1. Set up Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Blogging, Linkedin, SMS	• Each O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to set up 1 social media page on each of the following platforms : Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, WhatsApp, Blogs, Linkedin	June 2017
2. Update O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities social media platforms proactively. (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Blogging, Linkedin, SMS)	• Gather and package information for the social media platforms. • Regularly upload policies, legislations, programme documents, statements of ministers, governors and other policy makers on the social media platforms.	Daily/Ongoing
3. Respond promptly to queries and complaints on social media platforms	• Each O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to monitor and respond promptly to queries and complaints	Daily
4. Embrace the use of Social media	• Each O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to encourage the public to engage and have dialogue with them on social media platforms.	Daily
5. Monitor the media regularly	• Each O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to provide feedback on every query received within 24 hours	Daily
6. Display O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities high level statements through social media platforms.	• CreateO/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities profile detailing the mandate, vision and mission on social media platforms.	June 2017
7. Publish Newsletters and other publications on social media platforms.	• Each O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to publish their newsletters and other publications on social media.	Monthly/Quarterly
8. Brand O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities in line with their mandates.	• Create O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities profiles detailing the mandate, vision and mission on social media platforms.	June 2017
9. Issue Press releases on social media platforms.	• Each O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities circulates press releases on social media platforms.	Regularly
10. Market O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities programmes, projects and activities on social media platforms.	• Each O/M/As, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to undertake marketing campaign on their programmes, activities and projects on social media platforms.	Regularly

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