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Media Policy

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Communications**

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Document Versions

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1	14 December 2018	Babs Naidoo	Stakeholder Management and Communications	Approved
2	14 March 2023	Babs Naidoo	Stakeholder Management and Communications	

Document Reference Library

Document File Name	Context and Relevance
Conditions of Employment	Legislation
Media Policy	Policies
Staff code of conduct	Procedures

Business Areas Impacted By This Policy

Name Business Unit / Area	Context and Relevance
GEPF Staff	
Board of Trustees and Substitute Trustees	

Glossary of Terminology

Abbreviation/Terminology	Description
Advertorial	An insertion (usually a page or half-page) in a newspaper or magazine in a space paid for by the GEPF but featuring editorial content rather than an advertisement.
Board of Trustees	Includes Trustees as well as Substitute Trustees
Chairperson	The Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the GEPF
EXCO	Executive Committee of the GEPF

Abbreviation/Terminology	Description
Crisis Communication	A crisis or emergency is a significant event which results in extensive news coverage and public scrutiny, and which has the potential to cause long-term reputational damage to the Fund. Crisis communication is a planned public relations strategic tool designed to protect and defend the reputation of the Fund in times of a crisis.
Editorial	Editorial refers to all the written news reports, viewpoints/perspectives in a newspaper/publication.
Embargo	A news or press embargo is a request by the information source (e.g., Board or Minister or GEPP) that the information or news provided should not be published until a certain date/time or before certain conditions have been met.
GPAA	Government Pensions Administration Agency
Media briefing / conference	A formal media briefing or conference briefs media on specific issues as directed by the Executive Management or the Board.
Media liaison	This refers to the process of dealing with all the media institutions.
Media enquiry	Media enquiries include all the contact made by journalists with the GEPP requesting interviews and official comment/responses.
PEO	Principal Executive Officer
PIC	Public Investment Corporation

1. Policy purpose

The primary objective of this policy is to build and protect the integrity, image, and reputation of the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF), by ensuring that approved procedures are followed when dealing with the media.

The policy affects all authorised and designated spokespersons, GEPF employees, GEPF Trustees and Substitute Trustees, intermediaries such as the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) and the Government Pensions Administration Agency (GPAA) and GEPF service providers (including their employees) when engaging with media of all types. Strict adherence to the policy will help to avoid dissemination of incorrect information, stakeholders' expression of uninformed views and reputational damage.

The policy also helps facilitate the flow of information between the GEPF, the media and all other relevant stakeholders, while ensuring that the GEPF is appropriately positioned and positively represented in the media at all times.

2. Policy Statement

The strategic objectives of this media policy are:

- To ensure that all messages coming from the GEPF are consistent, managed and in support of the GEPF mandate, strategic goals, and vision, taking into account the operational requirements and interests of the GEPF;
- To give guidance on when and how the Government Pensions Administration Agency (GPAA) and the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) can deal with the media on behalf of the GEPF;
- To outline responsibilities of designated GEPF personnel during their interactions with the media; and
- To help guide and manage the institution's public interventions (through the media) that might affect the organisation's image and reputation.

The GEPF's approach when interacting with the media is:

- To be open, honest, factual and proactive (proactive means being prepared and ready to respond with factual information to any media situation). However, there are circumstances where the organisation will adopt a reactive media approach whereby the holding statement/comment will be ready (but waiting for media to make enquiries before issuing the statement) or when reacting to issues raised by the media;

- To establish and maintain a positive relationship between the organisation and the media by providing a reliable and timeous service with accurate information and a professional and interactive information service;
- To deal with the media in an ethical manner by building and managing relationships with journalists to ensure optimal value for the GEPF whilst recognising and adhering to professional standards; and
- To assist and guide the media on GEPF issues to ensure that the media reflect informatively and accurately when writing and publishing their stories on the organisation.

2.1 Policy Audience

The policy applies to:

- All GEPF employees without exception (including contract employees)
- All GEPF Board of Trustees
- All PIC and GPAA employees (including contract employees and service providers)
- All GEPF service providers (including their employees)

Adherence to this policy will be incorporated into the standing service level agreements (SLAs) entered with all service providers including the PIC and GPAA.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) with regards to dealing with the media and other communication matters will be agreed with the PIC and GPAA. The SOP's will give clear guidelines on the matters that these two intermediaries are allowed to deal with the media directly. The provisions of this policy supersede the provisions of all SOPs with the GPAA and the PIC respectively.

2.2 Overview of the Media

Different forms of the media

- Broadcast – television and radio
- Print – magazines and newspapers
- Digital/Electronic – newswires / internet/radio/television
- Social media – social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.

2.3 Who is the media?

Broadly, categories of media are as follows:

- National news media such as television, nationwide radio stations, digital platforms and print publications that have a national footprint;
- Regional media such as publications and radio stations in specific provinces;
- Local media such as publications community radio stations including community platforms, trade and professional publications;
- Foreign media; and
- Social media, including personal networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.

2.4 Interaction with the Media

2.4.1 Different ways in which the GEPF interacts with the media

The GEPF interacts with the media in the following ways:

- Disseminating press/news releases
- Responding to media enquiries
- Participating in broadcast interviews on radio or television
- Advertorials/features/surveys
- Briefings and meetings
- Media conferences
- Informal relationship-building activities

2.4.2 Who deals with the media on behalf of the GEPF?

On matters related to the Board of Trustees of the GEPF, the Chairperson of the Board is the spokesperson, meaning that he/she is the only person authorised to liaise with the media on behalf of the GEPF Board. He/she will comment on or deal with all media issues relating to critical, strategic (vision) and policy matters. However, the Chairperson may delegate to any suitable person to handle media matters on his/her behalf, and only people specifically authorised by the Chairperson may interact with the media. As such, all media interactions – interviews and/or direct responses to media enquiries – regarding the GEPF Board business are undertaken only by the Chairperson of the Board and/or any other person delegated by him/her.

If, for whatever reason, the designated spokesperson cannot participate in a media interview or provide official commentary, the Chairperson may designate a suitable person where this is essential to carry out the task.

On operational matters of the GEPF, the Principal Executive Officer of the Fund is the spokesperson, meaning that he/she is the only person authorised to liaise with the media. He/she will comment on or deal with all media issues relating to operational, and policy matters. However, the Principal Executive Officer may delegate such a responsibility to the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications, an official responsible for the media portfolio or any suitable person to handle media matters on his/her behalf. Only people specifically authorised by the Principal Executive Officer may interact with the media.

In the absence of the Principal Executive Officer all media issues will be the responsibility of the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications who will engage an employee responsible for media relations in dealing with media issues.

2.4.3 Procedures to be followed when dealing with the Media

All media queries on behalf of the GEPF should adhere to the following approaches and timelines:

2.4.3.1 Media Enquiries

All communication needs and media enquiries (including requests for comment) must at all times be channeled to the official responsible for media relations, who in consultation with the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications will develop an appropriate response. All final responses must be approved by the Principal Executive Officer and the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications.

The Principal Executive Officer would decide on whether the Chairperson or the Board Trustees should be engaged on the final response.

In the event the official responsible for media relations cannot be reached, all matters must be referred to the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications.

2.4.3.2 Media Conferences/ Briefings

The Principal Executive Officer and the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board or someone delegated by him/her will decide on the need for a media conference. The Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications and the Media Unit will be responsible for implementation.

2.4.3.3 Media interviews

All requests for media interviews must be referred to the official responsible for media relations, who will then make appropriate arrangements in consultation with the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications.

Depending on the nature of the media request, Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications would engage the Principal Executive Officer on the identified spokesperson on the issue.

2.4.3.4 Managing reputation issues during interviews with designated spokespeople

At all times, the official responsible for media relations should brief designated spokespeople, accompany them where required to media interviews and where possible sit in at media interviews. This will allow for quality control and continued evaluation of GEPP media management.

2.4.3.5 Dealing with media during parliamentary hearings

When the GEPP appears before Parliament, the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications will be required together with the Media Unit consider the media implications of possible sensitive issues. Members of the delegation will have to be briefed and the head of the delegation be prepared to deal with the parliamentary media where needed.

2.4.3.6 Deadlines in response to media enquiries

Designated media spokespeople should strive to meet media deadlines at all times. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, the Chairperson or designated GEPF spokesperson cannot meet a media enquiry deadline, the official responsible for media relations should notify the journalist in good time that his/her deadline will not be met, and an alternative and reasonable deadline should be suggested and adhered to.

2.5 Policy implications for GEPF employees and service providers

2.5.1 Policy implications for GEPF employees

All GEPF employees have an obligation, expressed in the GEPF Staff Code of Conduct, to act in the best interest of the organisation at all times. They also have the responsibility to protect the reputation and integrity of the GEPF.

Employees are expected and encouraged to participate fully in the organisation's consultation and decision-making processes on all official GEPF matters, and to refrain from debating opinions on such internal matters through various types of media.

Employees are prohibited from:

- Leaking or releasing any confidential GEPF information/documents to the media or any external party. This includes airing of internal grievances in public through the media (including social media). Aggrieved employees who feel they have been wronged or treated unfairly by the organisation are encouraged and advised to follow existing internal channels and procedures to register their concerns for proper investigation and resolution;
- Expressing views and opinions in the public domain with the intention of discrediting the organisation; or
- Expressing views on behalf of the organisation unless authorised to do so by the Principal Executive Officer.

Employees are also expected to practice the following:

- All business units and/or employees who interact with service providers (audit firms, vendors or contractors) should explain to their service

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providers that while they (providers) are retained by the GEPF, they may not use the organisation's name in promoting their businesses without alerting, consulting and obtaining the approval of the GEPF through approved channels. This provision should be explained and agreed upon when GEPF employees sign service agreements with the service providers.

- If employees in GEPF offices receive media requests to film in the GEPF offices and/or to conduct media interviews, the journalist(s) should be referred to the official responsible for media relations or the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications for assistance.
- All EXCO members should ensure that their direct reports and all their staff are aware of and understand the content of this media policy. They are therefore responsible for implementing this policy, ensuring compliance with and knowledge of its provisions, and for taking immediate and appropriate corrective action where necessary.

2.5.2 Contact with the media as private individuals

The organisation (GEPF) acknowledges that employees may at times interact with the media in their private capacity or on behalf of their social organisations (e.g., sports clubs or societies) outside their scope of work.

In such instances when employees discuss with the media or write about matters outside their areas of work, they should observe the following:

- They should make it clear that they are speaking as private individuals and not as employees of the organisation;
- The use of GEPF position titles, letterheads, email or postal addresses is prohibited in this context;
- GEPF property/buildings should not be used as a backdrop for filming or photographic purposes; and
- Comments should not be in conflict with GEPF policy or bring the institution into disrepute.

In addition to the above, all GEPF employees must adhere to the GEPF confidentiality policy.

2.5.3 Policy implications for service providers

- No service provider may use the organisation's name to promote their business and/or represent the GEPF in any way without obtaining the consent of the GEPF.
- All GEPF service providers must sign and adhere to the GEPF confidentiality policy.
- Failure by the organisation or any employee of such an organisation to adhere to the GEPF's confidentiality policy will lead to disciplinary or legal action taken.

This should be part of the terms of agreement of any contract.

2.5.4 Policy implications for GPAA and PIC employees

- No GPAA or PIC employee must speak on behalf of the GEPF without obtaining prior permission from the GEPF Media Unit.
- All media queries/requests received by GPAA and the PIC which relate to the GEPF must be referred to the GEPF Media Unit. The GEPF Media Unit together with the intermediary will decide on the response and who responds.
- No GEPF related statements/comments/interviews/articles are to be issued without prior engagement and approval of the GEPF Media Unit.

2.6 Media requests for information under the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA)

2.6.1 GEPF information

GEPF information should not be disclosed to the media under any circumstances. Requests for information in terms of PAIA that is confidential should be referred to the GEPF Legal Services.

2.6.2 GEPF Annual Report

- The GEPF Annual Report should be regarded as confidential until it has been submitted to Parliament and should never be released/leaked to the media before this.
- The Principal Executive Officer in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board may pre-release such reports (e.g., general and performance financial reports) to the media under strict embargo. The annual report will only be pre-released if the intention is to allow the GEPF an opportunity

to explain and give the media a better understanding of such report(s) to enable journalists to interpret it correctly when writing their stories.

2.6.3 Disclosure of personal details to the media

Under no circumstances should GEPF employee's and Board members' personal details be shared with the media, unless prior approval has been obtained from the person.

2.6.4 Media access to GEPF premises

The organisation's policy is to be helpful, open and honest, and factual rather than speculative, at all times when working with the media. The following are the official guidelines for media access to any GEPF premises/offices. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in the media representative(s) being asked to leave the premises/offices.

2.6.5 Media permission and access

All media should make the necessary arrangements with the official responsible for media relations or the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications before entering any GEPF office. Although the GEPF welcomes the media to its premises, the GEPF reserves the right to deny access.

2.6.6 Access to GEPF-organised open events

The official responsible for media relations will make prior access arrangements for all reporters covering GEPF-organised open events such as media conferences or briefings. Such arrangements will allow these journalists access only to the function venue but will prohibit them from venturing into other unauthorised areas of the organisation.

As television equipment could interfere with the organisation's daily operations, television crews should seek permission from the Media Unit to record or broadcast live from GEPF premises. Such permission will be granted for exterior work, provided it does not interfere with daily operations.

2.6.7 News filming and photographing of GEPF premises

News crews are allowed to film and take exterior photographs of GEPF premises, provided they do not interfere with the GEPF's daily operations.

Permission to film interior spaces of GEPF offices is required from the GEPF Media Unit at all times.

For all television broadcasts and photographs, the venue should meet the GEPF's branding and visual standards.

2.6.8 Commercial, non-news filming or photographing of GEPF offices

All commercial, non-news photographing or videotaping of GEPF offices is prohibited unless approved by the GEPF Media Unit.

2.7 Media monitoring and evaluation

The official responsible for media relations will report on news coverage of the GEPF. This helps the organisation anticipate issues and trends that could affect or enhance the organisation's corporate reputation and image, and to develop effective plans to proactively deal with issues raised and to advise GEPF Board accordingly. Media coverage clippings are to be sent to the Board and EXCO members daily.

2.8 Managing Media during crisis

This media crisis communication provision should be read in conjunction with the procedures and guidelines on how to deal with the media during crisis situations.

2.8.1 The GEPF's crisis communication management approach

The GEPF policy is to be pre-emptive when communicating crises that affect the institution, using disclosure whenever possible as the preferred strategy for preventing or minimising public relations crises.

2.8.2 Establishing clear media communications lines during crises

Where a crisis situation arises, the Principal Executive Officer shall, in consultation with the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications establish a crisis communication-team made up of members whose area of work relates to this crisis. This team will determine strategy to deal with the media in the specific instance at hand.

2.8.3 Informing GEPF external stakeholders of crises

The official responsible for media relations will provide crisis information at his/her disposal to all affected parties and other relevant parties that might be interested in the crisis when necessary.

2.8.4 News monitoring, evaluation, and issue management

The official responsible for media relations document the news coverage surrounding a crisis, including newswire stories, newspaper articles, radio and television broadcasts. This allows and presents an opportunity to restate/emphasise key messages during a crisis.

When the crisis is over, the Media Unit will supply the Principal Executive Officer and Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications with a summary and an analysis of the news coverage.

The Principal Executive Officer will review this report and evaluate the GEPF's performance during the crisis. The team will note the overall success or failure of the crisis communication effort, problems to be avoided in future, and appropriate follow-up measures to be taken in anticipation of similar occurrences in future. The final report should be presented to the Chairperson and subsequently communicated to the Board.

2.9 Policy Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as and when required, but at least annually.

2.10 Co-ordination and Implementation

All GEPF employees and Board members will be held accountable and responsible for complying with this policy. Failure to comply with the provisions of this policy is a serious disciplinary transgression and the necessary disciplinary steps will be taken against those who are in breach of the policy.

Should the Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications be aware of any contravention of this policy, they should bring this to the attention of the Principal Executive Officer for the necessary action to be taken.

The Head: Stakeholder Management and Communications is responsible for ensuring that this policy is distributed to all EXCO and Board members through appropriate channels, who will in turn; ensure that their direct reports receive and sign a copy of the policy.

All Board members and substitutes should ensure that they are aware of and understand the content of this media policy. Board members and their substitutes should ensure compliance with and knowledge of its provisions and are responsible for taking immediate and appropriate corrective action where necessary.

Breach of this policy shall constitute misconduct and a disciplinary procedure will be followed.

3. Related Policies

Should be read in conjunction with:

- Legislation Conditions of Employment
- Policies – Media Policy
- Procedures – Staff code of conduct

4. Non-compliance with the Policy

Non-compliance with this Policy and the procedures described in it by any Trustee will be dealt with in accordance with Chapter 7 of the Board Charter.

5. Acceptance of the Media Policy

As part of the Trustee induction each new Trustee shall be required to review a copy of this Policy and to acknowledge in writing that he/she has reviewed the Policy, understands the content and agrees to be bound by it.

6. Policy Review and Evaluation

This Policy will be reviewed as and when required, but at least every three years.

The Benefits and Administration Committee (BAC) is responsible for implementing, updating and reviewing this Policy.

Any changes to the Policy shall be communicated immediately to all Trustees.

7. Interpretation

In the event of any inconsistency between this Policy and the Rules of the Fund, the Rules shall prevail.

8. Policy Approval

RECOMMENDED / ~~NOT RECOMMENDED~~



**MS HK MAKHUPOLA
CHAIRPERSON: BENEFITS AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES PENSION FUND
DATE: 2023-06-22**

APPROVED / ~~NOT APPROVED~~



**MR AD MOGAJANE
CHAIRPERSON: BOARD OF TRUSTEES
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES PENSION FUND
DATE: 2023-06-22**
