



# Reporting Disasters

Code of Conduct and Editorial Guidelines

Kamana News Publications Private Limited

Bhimsensthan, Kathmandu, Nepal  
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## **1. PREAMBLE**

The policies and codes outlined in this document are to guide the journalists and editorial management team of Kamana News Publications—hereafter referred to as the Kamana Group—in reporting disasters. It has been produced in consultation with researchers at Bournemouth University as well as in-house media experts and senior journalists. The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for self-regulation for all publications of the Kamana Group. It should be seen as a set of guidelines to strengthen the disaster-preparedness of our reporting and editorial teams, and also to guide our newsgathering and publishing processes during disasters. By adhering to the principles in this document, those working for the Kamana Group will be protecting the independence, standing, safety, and reputation of themselves and their colleagues. It is important that freelancers also use these guidelines as a fundamental point of reference while on assignment for the Kamana Group.

## **2. KAMANA GROUP**

Founded in November 1984, the Kamana Group is the pioneer private publication house of Nepal. It publishes Kamana (the largest selling entertainment monthly magazine), Sadhana (the largest selling monthly health and beauty magazine), Mahanagar (the first and largest selling evening daily newspaper – currently discontinued), Nepal Samacharpatra (the fifth largest-selling newspaper of Nepal and the second most-read newspaper in Kathmandu Valley), and [www.newsofnepal.com](http://www.newsofnepal.com) (one of the top 10 Nepali online portals of Nepal). The combined readership of Nepal Samacharpatra and newsofnepal.com is 850,000 per day. Further, the Kamana Group also organises the Kamana Film Awards (the largest awards ceremony of Nepal).

Journalism that promotes broad-based sustainable development has been the hallmark of the Kamana Group since its establishment. The late Pushkar Lal Shrestha is the founder of Kamana Group. At present, Direk Lal Shrestha, a US graduate in Mass Communications, holds the position of President and CEO. Altogether, the Kamana Group employs five hundred staff, including journalists, technicians, administrators, distributors, advertisers and several others.

### **3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Kamana Group believes in national and international documents of press freedom and responsibility of media. Our major sources of inspiration for this Code of Conduct and Editorial Guidelines are:

3.1 *Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, according to which

‘everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers’.

3.2 *The Constitution of Nepal, 2015*, the preamble of which guarantees ‘full freedom of the press’ in the country. We draw from Articles 16 and 17 of the Constitution, which provide the right to live with dignity for all citizens of Nepal, and the right to freedom of expression, respectively. Article 27 guarantees the right to information: ‘every citizen will have the right to demand and receive information on any matter of his or her interest or of public interest.’ Our Constitution stipulates that no one shall be compelled to provide information that violates their right to privacy. The Kamana Group respects this provision and believes that ‘the privacy of any person, his or her residence, property, document, data, correspondence and matters relating to his or her character shall, except in accordance with law, be inviolable’.

3.3 *The Code of Conduct for journalists and publishers* adopted and issued by the UN Agencies and International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in its symposiums and meetings.

3.4 *The Journalist Code of Conduct, 2016*, promulgated by the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) and Press Council Nepal, the preamble of which mentions the importance of making ‘the exercise of journalism highly professional, decent, accountable and responsible in accordance with the principles of journalism and international norms and values’ and requires ‘the protection, promotion and usage of

right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to information and press freedom including fundamental rights of the citizen'.

3.5 *Provisions related to freedom of expression, right to information, and privacy* made by international conventions led by United Nations and human rights organisations, as well as the National Human Right Commission in Nepal.

3.6 *UN Sustainable Development Goal 11*, which promotes sustainable cities and communities for 'resilience to disasters', and to 'develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels'.

3.7 Research recommendations made after a comprehensive study in Nepal on the impact of devastating earthquake of 2015 by Bournemouth University, United Kingdom, which highlights that besides ensuring the physical safety of journalists, it is important that media organisations put in place effective post-disaster news strategies well in advance.

#### **4. COMMITMENTS OF KAMANA GROUP**

Duties and commitments of the Kamana Group's journalists and editorial management team for reporting disasters are as follows:

##### **4.1. Operating principles**

4.11 *Protection and Promotion of Press Freedom*: We commit to disseminating factual information for the protection and promotion of citizen's fundamental rights and the freedom of expression and opinion.

4.1.2 *Respect for Human Rights, International Relations and Right to Information*: We commit to enhancing the protection and promotion of democracy, justice, equality,

freedom, inclusion, humanity, peace and international understanding. We will remain active and dedicated to safeguarding citizens' rights to be well-informed.

*4.1.3. Special considerations to those affected by disasters:* We undertake to treat people affected by adversity, conflict and marginality with respect and sensitivity. We will take all possible care to ensure that our journalism is not damaging to the prestige of individuals or organisation, nor that it harms public interest, morality and public health.

*4.1.4. Social Responsibility:* Our journalists commit to render special assistance to those affected through the dissemination of information towards the uplift and development of women, children, and the elderly; the incapacitated and the differently abled; and the marginalised communities, regions and linguistic groups.

*4.1.5. Readiness to rectify error:* We commit to bear in mind public concerns and sensitivities while reviewing our published work and advertorial. Should we receive questions over the reliability of any of our published material, we commit to investigate the issues raised and, as required, rectify our errors, giving appropriate space for any refutation or response that comes accompanied by evidence.

*4.1.6. Readiness to undertake disaster management and public awareness campaigns for risk mitigation:* We adopt the view that disaster resilience cannot be brought about solely by editorial preparedness, but that it also involves contributing to the advancement of knowledge about risk mitigation and disaster responses to foster behavioural changes in the communities that we serve. We therefore commit to supporting disaster management and public awareness campaigns to help bring about sustainable societal changes. Towards this, we will actively seek to disseminate information and programmes on disasters such as climate change, floods, landslide, fires, storms, and earthquake, to further the understanding of our community members on why disaster events occur, how to respond to them, and how to minimise loss of life and property.

## 4.2. Editorial guidelines

4.2.1. *Decency of language and behaviour:* We undertake to employ appropriate language and behaviour in our reporting of disaster situations. We will take into consideration the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of victims and affected communities in the journalism that we produce. We will also ensure that we keep in mind the reputation of our readers, listeners and viewers, and show social courtesy in our professional conduct.

4.2.2. *Respect privacy and confidentiality:* Our journalists and editors commit to respect individual's right to privacy during our reporting of disasters. As always, as required, we will protect the confidentiality of the sources that we draw on for our disaster reporting.

4.2.3. *Clarity, context and transparency:* Disaster reporting often involves the dissemination of complex information, including scientific and research material. Our journalists commit to presenting such material in context and in a transparent manner so that findings are not misrepresented.

4.2.4. *Maintain relevant contacts for a range of disaster scenarios:* Our journalists will maintain contact with regional, national and international disaster management experts as part of our disaster preparedness. Towards this, we will identify and contact experts on urban risk, early warning systems, climate change, environment, health, development, and gender inclusiveness.

4.2.5: *Maintaining contacts with relevant authorities:* Contacts in the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, Department of Water-Induced Disaster Prevention, the Disaster Management Division (under the Ministry of Home Affairs), Disaster Management Authority, security agencies and humanitarian organisations working in rescue, relief and recovery are important sources of information. We will maintain regular contact with such sources.

4.2.6. *Identifying disaster-prone areas and maintaining contingency plans:* We commit to identifying vulnerable areas and communities and maintaining a state of permanent

preparedness pertaining to our journalism from those areas. This includes regularly reviewing our disaster response routines (including newsgathering logistics), as well as editorial plans for providing coverage from specific areas.

### **4.3. Actions for building journalism resilience**

*4.3.1 Implementing plans for improving physical resilience:* The physical safety of our journalists is of paramount importance to the Kamana Group. It is our goal to support where possible the personal contingency plans of our employees, and provide access, as much as possible, to such equipment as PPE, disaster survival kits, backup batteries for phones/laptops, etc.

*4.3.2 Regular training in coping with disasters for journalists:* We commit to conducting operational drills and training related to disasters on, at the very least, an annual basis. This will prevent the perception of risk-mitigation equipment and procedures as unlikely and hypothetical scenarios.

*4.3.3 Create forums for regular discussion about disaster preparedness:* We subscribe to the view that journalists should assess the government's steps on disaster risk reduction, planning and strategy. To facilitate this, we commit to foster regular discussions on disaster preparedness within our newsrooms.

*4.3.4 Establish sustainable risk-mitigation partnerships:* Kamana Group is committed to establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with other likeminded media houses to draw on each other's resources in the event of one (or more) falling victim to disasters.

*4.3.5 Support to disaster media networks:* Disaster-focussed media networks (eg: collectives of disaster management experts who can help news reporting or share good practices, peer-support for journalists experiencing trauma, etc) are critical for productive and sustainable disaster journalism. It is our intention to actively

seek out, support, and be part of such networks—both national and international—  
as part of our disaster resilience strategy.

## **5. AMENDMENTS**

This document may be amended, as required, to update and align with the changes in the national and international provisions and guidelines relating to disasters and disaster journalism.