

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA



GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION POLICY



MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND
BROADCASTING SERVICES

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FOREWORD



This Government Communication Policy is aimed at promoting proactive disclosure of public information and facilitating a coordinated approach to Government communication. The Policy provides a framework for access to information legislation and defines the roles of different participants in Government-related communication to ensure effective and coherent communication.

Zambia is a democratic country and is fully committed to greater transparency and accountability, which are the main pillars of participatory democratic governance. The Government of the Republic of Zambia is cognisant of the fact that citizens have the right to comprehend how public affairs are being managed at all levels of Government. It is for this reason that Government is determined to make information available to the public. In this regard, government is committed to proactive dissemination of information to the public. To actualise this commitment, the government has formulated this Policy to serve as a basis for the subsequent enactment of various pieces of legislation.

In addition, the Government has formulated this Policy to ensure that there is enhanced credibility in Government communication, devoid of inconsistencies and contradictions. In this respect, all participants in Government communication, from the highest to the lowest office, have had their jurisdictions clearly defined.

This bold step, of formulating a Communication Policy for the entire Government, is necessary to restore confidence in the Government and its leadership, which has been eroded by the culture of secrecy and inconsistent Government communication over the years.

Hon. Dora Siliya, MP,
**MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING SERVICES
& CHIEF GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON**

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Our Ministry is particularly indebted to Cabinet Office, line Ministries, the Parliamentary Committee on Media, Information and Communication Technologies, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the media fraternity, the Church, Human Rights advocacy groups, Civil Society and other Non-State Actors.

Last but not the least, my special tribute goes to the members of staff in our Ministry who, diligently and dedicatively, worked tirelessly to prepare this policy document.

Amos Malupenga

PERMANENT SECRETARY

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING SERVICES

WORKING DEFINITIONS



Government Communication Policy:	Refers to a policy framework that provides guidance regarding how and what type of information different institutions of Government are supposed to disseminate to the public.
Information:	Refers to data that has been collected, processed and packaged for public access and consumption.
Media:	In this context, media refers to the various channels through which information is conveyed and accessed. This may include the newspapers, radio, television, and the internet.
Online media:	Is a term referring to the electronic media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube, which have emerged as a result of advances in the ICTs in recent years. They are distinguished from the traditional media, namely the newspaper, radio and television which have been on the scene for a long time.
Stakeholders:	These are individuals or institutions who have an interest in the information sector.
Courtesy call:	Official visit on an office holder, normally on arrival in a given place, as a demonstration of politeness and respect for that office.
Fake news:	Deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread especially via traditional news media or online social media.
Good governance:	Management of public affairs and public resources that meet the needs of society.
Press Briefing:	Meeting called by an organisation to inform the public, through the media, on a particular issue or issues.

ACRONYMS



ATI:	Access to Information
CGS:	Chief Government Spokesperson
MIBS:	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services
M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
PROs:	Public Relations Officers
ZANIS:	Zambia News and Information Services

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION



It is widely recognised that information is power and countries that have harnessed the potential of information have attained significant social and economic development. In addition, it has been observed that such countries are rapidly transforming into information and knowledge-based economies.

As the country continues to pursue good governance, demand for public information has increased. The public want information in order to reach consensus on national issues, assess accountability, participate in decision making and monitor the application of the rule of law and assess equity and inclusiveness in the implementation of public policies. Transparency, a cardinal principle of good governance, is also another area that cannot be realised without a well-coordinated information dissemination mechanism.

Government, therefore, recognises the role of information in the socio- economic development of the Nation and intends to formulate the Government Communication Policy in order to enhance access to and effective coordination and dissemination of information to the public in order for the citizenry to make informed decisions and meaningfully the socio-economic transformation of the country.

This policy document is segmented into seven chapters. Chapter one of the document is the introduction. The situation analysis is Chapter two whilst the vision, rationale and guiding principles form Chapter three of the document. The objectives and policy measures is the fourth Chapter. The implementation framework, Resource Mobilisation and Monitoring and Evaluation are the fifth, sixth and seventh Chapters respectively.

CHAPTER TWO

SITUATION ANALYSIS



The situation analysis consists of the historical background and current emerging issues.

2.1.1. Historical Background

Nations around the globe have been mobilising themselves to create an information society aimed at fostering unity, development and democracy. For Zambia, even before independence, the country had already established its Government information service called the Northern Rhodesia Information Services. The information agency was established in 1939 by the British colonial government to further their interests as a governing authority.

Upon attaining independence in 1964, Zambia Information Services (ZIS) was created and took over the functions of the Northern Rhodesia Information Services and the services of what was called Central African Film Unit during the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. ZIS, like other information agencies on the African continent, was established as part of the Organisation of African Unity's strategy to decolonise information dissemination geared towards the promotion of development activities. The mandate of ZIS was to serve as public relations agency of Government as well as civic education to the public on topical issues as well as political ideologies such as humanism and socialism.

Then, Zambia News Agency (ZANA) was established with the core role of professionally packaging information generated by ZIS and disseminating it to Zambia Broadcasting Services (ZBS), Times of Zambia and Zambia Daily Mail. When the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services (MIBS) was established in 1968, it was decided that the newly created Ministry should take charge of both the information service and the news agency. The responsibility of the Ministry was to inform and educate the public with regard to Government policies and development programmes.

The mandate of the Ministry, in the area of news, was to provide news coverage stretching to the remotest parts of the country, particularly the rural areas which were not reached by the urban concentrated media organisations. One of the key features of ZIS was its ability to translate the news into local languages for use by local radio stations under ZBS and local newspapers, which were in vernacular. Apart from that, ZIS also maintained a Photo Library. In short, ZIS used to

generate content for Zambia News Agency, which the then latter would package and sell through subscription payment to other media houses as noted earlier. With time, ZIS purchased news processing equipment and employed qualified journalists who were responsible for processing of information, generating news content and directly disseminating it to the public without sending it to ZANA for repackaging. Eventually, ZANA and ZIS started doing the same work. It was at that stage that a policy decision was made to merge ZANA and ZIS, giving birth to the Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS).

The role of ZANIS was to carry out Government public relations functions as well as to disseminate news and information to various media outlets, both at home and abroad. ZANIS, as a Department in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, was very instrumental in documenting and disseminating Government events. It maintained a network of offices across the country and maintained a diary of events that it shared with the various media houses.

Throughout the First and Second Republics, the Presidents of the Government of the Republic of Zambia served as the Chief Government Spokespersons and used various channels to communicate Government policy. It was in the Third Republic that the office of the Chief Government Spokesperson was established. Under this arrangement, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services was designated as Chief Government Spokesperson. This arrangement was not, however, given any legal or policy framework and has remained as such to date. Therefore, the scope of the mandate of the Chief Government Spokesperson remained very much dependant on the preference of the office holder.

As the need for transparency and accountability began to grow, Government drafted the Access to Information Bill in 2002, which was later refined in 2012. The Bill was aimed at providing a legal framework for public bodies to provide information to the general public proactively. The Bill was, however, drafted in a vacuum as there was no policy on which it was to be anchored. To that effect and because policies which were deemed necessary to support the Access to Information Bill had in themselves inadequacies, the draft Bill remained on the shelf for several years.

2.1.2. Current Emerging Issues

2.1.2.1 Access to Information

Since independence Zambia has never had a policy or legal framework that compels public bodies to proactively publish information that is of public interest. Information pertaining to activities of public bodies is released at the discretion of the public bodies. Members of the general public do not have an express legal

right to demand for information held by public bodies. Citizens, therefore, depend on the media for information. The media has, however, sometimes quoted sources that are neither reliable nor credible. Further, some users of social media have taken advantage of the information gap to engage in spreading falsehoods and other misrepresentations, which have dented the image of Government.

2.1.2.2. Coordination of Government Communication

Coordination among the various Government institutions is vital in ensuring that provision of information to the public is coherent, consistent and timely.

Currently, there is no established mechanism for coordinating press statements to ensure that various pronouncements on Government policies, programmes and services are consistent, credible, relevant and accurate. This results in contradictory statements among Government officials on various issues of national importance.

Most line Ministries also lack communication strategies to guide their interface with the public resulting in conflicting statements, overlaps and duplication among them in the dissemination of information to the public.

This is compounded by the fact that while some line Ministries may have Public Relations Officers (PROs) they are not directly recruited and seconded from MIBS as there is no deliberate policy for MIBS, as the principal coordinator and disseminator of public policy information, to do so. Such PROs are delinked and may not be accountable to the office of the Chief Government Spokesperson in the supply of regular updates on what is happening in their Ministries for the information of the public.

The situation is the same regarding the Press Attaches in the Zambian Missions abroad as they are equally not seconded from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services (MIBS) to render services in those Missions. This again presents a weak link between the Missions abroad and the office of the Chief Government Spokesperson in the course of coordinating of public information resulting in some information not being given or explained in full to the public because players are not properly placed to communicate on particular issues.

2.1.2.3. Utilisation of Feedback

Feedback is one of the most important factors in the process of communication. It is important that communicators of Government information pay attention to the responses given by the receivers of

the information. Feedback is useful for clarifying myths and misconceptions about the Government. This requires that all players in the dissemination of Government information consistently monitor the feedback from their communication efforts and activities of their institutions.

Currently, there is no deliberate policy of ensuring that those who communicate Government information monitor and utilise feedback to ensure that information on Government policies, programmes and services is being appreciated by stakeholders.

2.1.2.4. Use of Social Media and other Online Platforms

The use of social media has enhanced communication in Government and outside Government. However, it has also brought a lot of notable challenges. Many users of social media and other online platforms have resorted to the use of fake social media accounts or use of pseudonyms. This has led to abuse of social media characterised by fake news and false alarm, among many other abuses. The anonymity in the use of social media and other online media platforms has promoted non-compliance with applicable privacy and confidentiality policies, rules, regulations and laws.

While social media has brought many advantages in enhancing communication within and among government operatives and institutions, it has also heightened leakages of documents that should not be in the public domain. Irresponsible use of social media is responsible for premature release of information which is adversely affecting the operations of Government.

The historical background and the current issues outlined above, have made it imperative for the Ministry to formulate a policy that would provide direction on the access to information and other critical issues that the Ministry intends to implement such as the Journalists self-regulation, the regulation of Public Relations Practitioners as well as the Filmmakers Guild.

CHAPTER THREE

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION POLICY



3.1.1. **Vision**

The vision of this Policy is “*A well-coordinated approach to Government communication that leads to a well-informed public*”.

3.1.2. **Rationale**

The situation analysis above has brought out a number of challenges that are impeding smooth communication between Government and the general public. Currently, the biggest challenge that the Ministry is facing is the difficult in coordinating and disseminating public information especially with regard to prescription of what information should be released to the public by various institutions of Government. As a result, public access to information or indeed Government's dissemination of information to the public has remained unstructured. This situation has created a gap in the information flow from Government to the members of the general public and from the members of the general public to the Government.

In addition, currently, there is no well prescribed procedure or guidance on tackling of feedback from the general public once they have received information from Government. Also, the advent of social media has brought a complete new dimension in the broader spectrum of mass media. Above all, from independence, public bodies including public media houses have been publishing information that is skewed towards Government's interest instead of focussing on the interest of the general public in order to elicit their participation in national development.

It is due to the above shortcomings that, the Ministry has embarked on the formulation of the Government Communication Policy. It is envisaged that the Government Communication Policy will endeavour to address all the challenges highlighted above.

3.1.3. **Guiding Principles**

This policy is premised on Government's commitment to democratic governance that places high premium on proactive, predictable, coordinated and consistent dissemination of information to the public. In that regard, the Government Communication Policy will be anchored on

the following guiding principles:

- 3.1.3.1. Right to information**
The Government holds public information in trust for the people of Zambia. The information should thus be made available to the people to whom it truly belongs.
- 3.1.3.2. Transparency**
Zambia is a democracy. Democracy entails inclusiveness in governance issues by the governed. The governed cannot, however, participate in governance if the information that is critical for decision-making is inaccessible to them.
- 3.1.3.3. Accountability**
The public officers that expend public resources do it on behalf of the greater majority and they are, thus, under obligation to account to those on whose behalf they act. This accountability is only tenable where information on the various Government transactions is accessible to the citizens.
- 3.1.3.4. Separation of Powers**
Zambia has three arms of government namely the Executive, the Judiciary and the Legislature. These branches of Government should work without interfering in the work of the other. Interference in the work of the other includes members of one arm taking over the communication mandate of the other. Each arm should be left to speak on its own behalf.
- 3.1.3.5. Integrity**
Individuals charged with the responsibility of communicating information on behalf of public bodies should carry out their mandate with honesty.
- 3.1.3.6. Inclusiveness**
Individuals charged with the responsibility of communicating public information must take into consideration persons with disabilities and ensure that they are equally effectively communicated to.
- 3.1.3.7. Consultative**
Those charged with the responsibility of communicating government information ought to be consultative in order to ensure that there are no contradictions in terms of government position on any given issue.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLICY OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

This policy will be anchored on the following two (2) objectives; each of which is immediately followed by measures aimed at achieving it:

4.1.1. **Objective 1**

To promote public access to information to enable citizens effectively participate and contribute to national development

The following are the measures that Government shall implement in order to achieve this objective:

- Measure 1: Strengthen the capacity of public institutions to effectively disseminate information to the public;
- Measure 2: Encourage the public to access and use information from government to contribute to national development;
- Measure 3: Strengthen capacity of public institutions to effectively deal with the feedback from the public; and
- Measure 4: Strengthen the legal and regulatory framework to enhance public access to information.

4.1.2. **Objective 2**

To promote coherent communication of public information by public service workers and government officials in order to avoid contradictions and inconsistencies

The following are the measures that Government shall implement in order to achieve this objective:

- Measure 1: Strengthen enforcement mechanisms of secrecy and confidentiality in the public service;
- Measure 2: Strengthen communication channels between and within government institutions;
- Measure 3: Strengthen the legal and regulatory framework for dealing with non-compliant officers and use of social media to disseminate official information; and
- Measure 4: Strengthen mechanisms for clearing of press statements.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK



The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services will have an oversight role in spearheading the implementation of the Government Communication Policy. In doing so, the Ministry will utilise an interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral approach which will focus on partnerships between Government and all relevant stakeholders. Further, the successful implementation of the Government Communication Policy will depend on the effective institutional and legal framework, resource mobilisation as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

5.1.1. Institutional Framework

Collaboration of key stakeholders will be critical to the successful implementation of this policy. All stakeholders both in the private and public sectors will play a pivotal role in ensuring that the objectives of this policy are achieved. In order for the policy to be adequately backed by law, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services will review some of its existing legislation and formulate new ones where necessary. The following are the key institutions that will be cardinal in the implementation of this policy:

5.1.1.1. State House

State House shall be responsible for the formulation and implementation of the President's communication plans and support systems as shall be prescribed in the communication strategy.

5.1.1.2. Office of the Vice President

The Office of the Vice President shall be responsible for the formulation and implementation of the Vice President's communication plans and support systems as shall be prescribed in the communication strategy.

5.1.1.3. Cabinet Office

Cabinet Office shall facilitate the creation of structures and recruitment of personnel for the purposes of smooth implementation of this policy. Cabinet Office shall also provide logistical support to the Secretary to the Cabinet for the office to perform the communication roles as shall be prescribed in the communication strategy.

5.1.1.4. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services (MIBS)

shall be responsible for the overall coordination of this policy. In doing so, it shall accommodate the office of the Chief Government Spokesperson through provision of necessary support systems for it to perform its functions as shall be prescribed in the communication strategy.

5.1.1.5. Other Line Ministries

Line Ministries shall be responsible for formulating and implementing communication plans for their respective Cabinet Ministers and Permanent Secretaries as shall be prescribed in the communication strategy. The line Ministries shall, therefore, provide office space and other facilities necessary for the performance of duties necessary for the implementation of the communication strategy. In addition, line Ministries shall be responsible for review of laws, rules and procedures that are inconsistent with the implementation of this Policy. Line Ministries shall also accommodate information officers that shall be seconded by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services. The information officers will serve as a link between the office of the Chief Government Spokesperson.

5.1.1.6. Provincial Administrations

Provincial Administrations shall be responsible for formulating and implementing communication plans for Provincial Ministers and Permanent Secretaries as shall be prescribed in the communication strategy. Provincial Administrations shall, therefore, provide office space and other facilities necessary for the implementation of the communication strategy.

5.1.1.7. District Administrations

District Administrations shall be responsible for formulating and implementing communication plans for District Commissioners as shall be prescribed in the communication strategy. District Administrations shall, therefore, provide office space and other facilities necessary for the implementation of the communication strategy.

5.1.1.8. Missions Abroad

The Missions abroad shall be responsible for formulating and implementing communication plans for Ambassadors and High Commissioners and shall accommodate Press Attaches as well as provide them with the necessary logistics to enable them perform the functions as shall be prescribed in the communication strategy.

The Press Attaches shall be seconded by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services to strengthen the linkage

between the Missions and the office of the Chief Government Spokesperson.

51.2. Legal Framework

For this policy to be successfully implemented, there will be need for an enabling legal and regulatory framework. The implementation of the National Information and Communication Policy will, therefore, be guided by various pieces of legislation which are either under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services or domiciled in other Government line Ministries. The following are the pieces of legislation that will guide the implementation of this policy:

- The Constitution of Zambia;
- State Security Act;
- The National Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act;
- The Official Oaths Act; and
- Other Acts with disclosure clause.

Moreover, to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework for implementation of the National Information and Communication Policy, the Ministry will review all the relevant pieces of legislation and formulate new ones where necessary.

5.1.3. Resource Mobilisation

The successful and sustainable implementation of this policy will require robust and proactive resource mobilisation in both human, financial and material. This will be done through annual budgetary provisions and engagement with the Private Sector, Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organisations as well as Cooperating partners.

5.1.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to ensure effective implementation of this policy so as to achieve its objectives, government through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services will develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system that will track the various activities that will be implemented in line with the measures that have been set forth to achieve the policy's objectives vis-à-vis the planned outcome and impact targets. Therefore, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services through the Department of Planning and Information shall undertake periodic reviews and evaluations to assess the policy's implementation and produce reports to inform decision making and corrective actions.

