**WRITING OP-EDS AT KIPPRA: THE PROCESS**

In 2012, KIPPRA developed guidelines for effective engagement with the media, and more specifically writing of media articles, whether editorials, op eds, press releases, etc. The objective was to increase dissemination of research findings from the Institute to a wider group of readers and stimulate debate and influence public policy. Aware that too much visibility could be counterproductive, however, it was also important that the Institute defines and achieves optimal level of visibility.

In order to strengthen and maintain a strong public reputation of KIPPRA while engaging with the media, the Institute’s staff members will, at all times and to the best of their ability, observe objectivity and professionalism, rely on high quality evidence-based analysis rather than mere conjecture, and adhere to the laid down policy and procedure.

Engagement with the media includes publishing of media articles; giving telephone, email, or face to face interviews to the various media outlets (including print, electronic and audio; both in local and international); participating in Talk Shows and Media Discussion Forums; holding of press briefings; and issuing press releases.

In engagement with the media, the Executive Director is the official spokesperson of the Institute but can delegate this responsibility to specific members of staff, in writing (including by email) when necessary. Unless done in a personal capacity, media engagement through press briefings and issuance of press releases shall be expressly authorized by the Executive Director. It is the policy of the Institute NOT to engage media on issues it has not carried out research unless expressly authorized by the Executive Director.

All researchers (and indeed other Institute staff with the inclination) are encouraged to write good media articles either alone or jointly with others for reputable[[1]](#footnote-1) media outlets within and outside the country.

Media articles should be based on research that has gone through the Institute’s quality control process[[2]](#footnote-2) except in cases when an urgent matter has arisen in which case an urgent paper or policy brief is prepared and discussed in at least one internal seminar at the Institute. This also applies to other forms of engagement with the media, as much as is practically possible. In cases where this standard has not been met, the **staff member should explicitly state that their opinions are not necessarily the opinions of KIPPRA**.

Where a KIPPRA member of staff may hold views within their area of expertise, but which could be controversial or cause offence to some stakeholder groups, the respective members of staff are required to consult with the Communications Officer or with the Executive Director, before such views are expressed in the media. This will allow KIPPRA to exercise its duty of care for staff members who might otherwise be subject of a public controversy as well as effectively manage KIPPRA’s stakeholder relations.

Articles should be submitted to the Communications Officer who reads and provides editorial comments to the author(s). The Communications Officer also liaises with the media outlets for potential publication.

Whenever a staff member is sure that their positions or views have been distorted in the process of editing/shortening of the articles by the media editor, or by the manner in which the interview has been presented by the media outlet, such information should be brought to the attention of the Communications Officer in writing, with a copy to the Executive Director, to facilitate follow up and official lodging of complaints. The Communications Officer will ensure that the Institute receives copies of the KIPPRA quotes, in context, to facilitate fact verification.

The main advantage of KIPPRA researchers writing for newspapers is that they can reach a wider audience. The main concern is that once the submissions have been sent to the newspaper, in most cases the researcher has no control over what is finally published, what is removed or added, and any potential distortion. And there have been a number of these ‘unhappy endings’.

1. These are media outlets that, if KIPPRA staff engaged with them, it would not embarrass the Institute or injure its reputation as an independent, objective and professional institution. Staff members could consult the Communications Officer for advice in situations of doubt. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. So long as the facts and positions taken in the quality controlled research are not misrepresented, the matter of how the article is written and its size is left to the author and the media editor. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)