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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUPPORTING MENTAL WELLBEING OF JOURNALISTS

NAIROBI, 3rd September 2021 – The rise in mental breakdown among Kenyan journalists has been attributed to the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and work-related stresses. The situation has also been credited to deaths of journalists from the pandemic and closure of several media houses over dwindling incomes.

Arising from this, the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) has signed a partnership agreement with Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya to support training and empowerment of journalists on mental health. The partnership will involve joint training sessions for Kenyan journalists working for Kenyan national/local/community media outlets.

The two organisations will jointly participate and organise activities, trainings and programmes to review policy and emerging issues on mental health in the media industry. They will also document and reward best practice in effectively reporting on mental health.

Under the partnership, the Media Council of Kenya will collaborate with Basic Needs Kenya to develop training content and material for journalists and media stakeholders on matters mental health. It will also collaborate with Basic Needs Kenya on conducting Mental Health awards for the best of journalists and media outlets who report effectively on Mental Health.

Through the Media Council Academy the Council will support in developing a Mental Health reporting curriculum and engage academic institutions on how best to use the curriculum.

Promoting Media Freedom and Responsible Journalism

Additionally, Basic Needs Kenya will join forces with the MCK to develop a toolkit that will be incorporated into the training curriculum for journalists and media stakeholders. It will also sponsor an award for best reporting on Mental Health 2022 and 2023.

Media Council of Kenya CEO Mr David Omwoyo said the Council is implementing initiatives to promote mental health of media workers; to sensitise them while at the same time enabling them to report professionally on mental health.

“The partnership will help us to empower journalists and reflect on the challenges that journalists experience by securing a mentally healthy society. We welcome partnerships to support media workers in this sensitive area”, said Mr Omwoyo.

“We will work in collaboration with the Media Council of Kenya for continuous media advocacy on mental health”, said Basic Needs Kenya Executive Director Rosemary Gathara.

She added that her organisation will work closely with the media to break down mental health terms to make reporting clear, objective and sensitive. This she said in appreciation of the important role media plays in shaping the attitudes, perceptions and behaviour of society around mental health.

About the Media Council of Kenya

The Media Council of Kenya is an independent national institution established by the Media Council Act, No. 20 of 2013 for purposes of setting of media standards and ensuring compliance with those standards as set out in Article 34(5) of the Constitution and for connected purposes.

About Basic Needs Kenya

Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya is a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that intervenes in mental health. The organization supports people with mental disorders, those at risk, and their caregivers to live and work successfully in their communities.