

Public Relations Strategy for The National Organization of Nurses and Midwives of Malawi (NONM) 2023-2026



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Preamble

This is the first ever public relations (PR) strategy for the National Organization of Nurses and Midwives of Malawi (NONM) for the period 2023-2026, which was developed to guide its public relations endeavours; promoting and maintaining its image and reputation.

The strategy was developed by personnel from NONM Secretariat's technical team whose names are listed at the end of this document. The development process involved a careful analysis of the organisation's environment, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) Analysis. The developers designed the strategy in a way that will turn weaknesses into strengths, maintain strengths, tap into opportunities, and check threats. PEST ANALYSIS. This was achieved through a careful analysis of the environment in which NONM is operating, and identifying the strategic issues and strategies to be put in place to address the needs of the organization and its members. This Strategic Plan will assist NONM achieve the vision and mission of organisation as conceived in its current mandate.

As expected, the aim of this PR Strategy is to give a road map for what the organization aspires to achieve through PR over the next three years. The main expected outcome of the strategy is to make sure that the image of NONM is enhanced and that NONM continues to be reputable and attractive to potential partners; this is in line with the seventh objective of the 2019-2023 strategic plan. Generally, this PR strategy aims at contributing towards achieving NONM's core business, improving the wellbeing of the nurses and midwives, to enhance their professionalism as health care workers, and as members of NONM as a trade union, to empower and build their capacities through training and career development, to increase partnerships and networks, to lobby and advocate for the member's rights and to improve information and technology amongst members.

In this strategy, the important areas for effective public relations for NONM, as well as the vehicles through which the organisation will be able to achieve the PR strategy objectives have been incorporated. Implementation and action plans for the strategy have also been developed and attached.

Background

At the time of the development of this strategy, NONM had no public relations strategy. For a membership-based organisation like NONM, which directly deals with varying personalities from different backgrounds and ideologies coupled with the dynamism of the world we live in where negative news spread faster PR is paramount. This strategy was therefore long overdue. Operating without clear PR guidelines is like sitting on a ticking time suicide bomb. In such circumstances, it wouldn't be surprising finding the organisation being reduced to nothing with any other PR crisis, tarnishing the brand which may have been built for years in just a day.

In this initiative, the Norwegian Nurses Organization (NNO) was very helpful and generous to provide funding to ensure that this PR plan is developed and in place. The funding facilitated the meeting in which selected individuals from NONM secretariat were invited to provide inputs into the planning process.

The National Organisation of Nurses and Midwives of Malawi (NONM) was founded in 1979 as an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental and professional organization representing nurses and midwives of Malawi. Its goals are to safeguard nurses/midwives' professional, organizational, trade union and social economic interests; and to influence nursing education and nursing practice, thereby serving the population of Malawi.

Since 2006, the Norwegian Nurses Organisation (NNO) has been collaborating with NONM and has helped NONM receive support in form of funding from NORAD. From 2006-2011, a project called "Caring for HIV-positive care-givers and strengthening of NANM" was implemented. A follow-on project was initiated, namely the "Phase 2: Organisational Strengthening and Sustainability Project". Ever since, NONM has been assisted by well-wishers and partners in one form or another, to supplement on its usual resources which among other things include but not limited to physical structures for rent, restaurant and membership dues.

NONM has therefore seen a steady growth, from 50 members in 2006 to 6634 members in 2009 and to 9640 members in 2013. Currently, paid-up membership in NONM stands at least 5800. It should however be noted that NONM has a potential membership of around 11,000 to 14,000 nurses and midwives in the country, a very big potential for further growth.

So far, NONM has been providing its members a number of important services such as providing assistance to sick nurses including foreign referrals; providing legal counsel and assistance to some of its members; establishment of support groups throughout the country; lobbying and advocacy on HIV/AIDS intervention for health care workers; participating in policy reviews of health issues affecting the nurse/midwives; supported orphans of nurse/midwives; stigma reduction on nurse/midwives; encouraged nurse/midwives in counselling and harassment issues; and capacity building/training of nurse/midwives, all of which have been an important motivating factor in the recruitment and retention of more nurses and midwives into the organisation.

As a trade union organization, NONM is an affiliate of MCTU through which it has succeeded in resolving industrial disputes between nurses/midwives and their employers, the largest being MoH and CHAM, which the members see as satisfactory and helpful; and NONM has provided its members a lot of training activities in the areas of trade unionism, labour laws, leadership and management and in prevention/treatment of HIV/AIDS.

However, NONM, just like any other trade union organization, has experienced a number of challenges, notably reported to be dissatisfaction with the provision of scholarship for career advancement by nurses, reported dissatisfaction with the membership fee, lack of motivation of members to encourage fellow nurse/midwives to join NONM as members, and a reported poor relationship with the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi (NMCM).

On a positive note, NONM has of late made efforts to negotiate and bargain for a check-off system with key partners, MoH and CHAM, so that membership dues can be obtained at source and this is expected to improve its financial base. In this communication plan, strategies have been formulated to keep members, stakeholders and the general public informed and knowledgeable about NONM so that NONM continues to be an effective advocate for nurses and midwives in Malawi.

Rationale for NONMs existence

The Vision

NONM envisions “... **a strong, vibrant, and visionary organization that fully support and develop motivated and empowered nurses/midwives who are able to provide effective health care services to the population...**”.

The Mission Statement

NONM exists “... **to promote and maintain members’ professional interests and socioeconomic welfare to effectively contribute to quality health care services rendered to the nation....**”

The motto and slogan remain ‘**Viva NONM, Viva**’ ‘**An Injury to one is an injury to all**’.

Values of NONM

Members of NONM value the following in relation to their professional conduct and practice within the context in which they operate:

Unity and solidarity- Unity and solidarity within member organizations will enhance collective bargaining while discharging our duties professionally and to the satisfaction of our target groups.

Rights and Responsibility of members – There are agreed rights and responsibilities of members that are upheld at all times.

Justice and fairness- Justice and fairness are fundamental aspects to human rights of which the nurses and midwives are also entitled to.

Excellence in patient care - Use of available resources to effectively deliver quality patient care to our clients in and outside the health facilities

Empowering the members- Members must be empowered through knowledge sharing and powerful interaction in order to effectively deal with issues that hinder the provision of quality care to its clients.

Sustainability- NONM is able to effectively sustain its membership as well as resources for implementation of its activities.

Transparency and accountability - The association members at all levels starting with the secretariat must be transparent and accountable in all operations at all levels.

Dignity and professional commitment - Every patient/client as well as service provider requires dignity and through this, professional commitment will never be in question.

Safeguarding the profession - The professional conduct of nurse/midwives while discharging their duties will safeguarding the dignity of the profession.

Conducive and safe work environment for members- Patients need to be provided with quality patient care at all times. The safety of patients as well as the care giver will be safeguarded once the nurses and midwives are practicing within conducive and safe environments.

Preserving the natural environment- The environment remains key to the promotion of lives of Malawians and remains one of the major prevention strategies for various diseases in this country, thus important that nurses and midwives actively participate in the environment around them.

Partnership- Partnerships are key towards the growth and effective operation of the organization

Lobbying and advocacy- Continue to lobby and advocate for better welfare of nurses and midwives who is key in the provision of quality nursing care.

Gender sensitivity- Continue to be an equal opportunity organization recognizing potential in both male and female members.

Public Relations Strategy

Vision

NONM looks forward to a top-notch public relations venture that maintains and promotes the positive image of the organisation.

Mission

To promote & maintain a positive image of the organisation to effectively lobby and advocate for and achieve members' professional and socio-economic interests.

Main Objective

To reinforce and maintain good reputation of NONM.

Specific Objectives

Objective 1: To have public relations systems and tools in place

Objective 2: To ease access to NONM branded information that matters to potential development partners, nurses and midwives and the government.

Objective 3: To reinforce contact with media houses

Objective 4: To ensure that monitoring, evaluation and feedback tools for public relations are in place

Objective 5: To strengthen the capacity of leadership at all levels in public relations skills and PR crisis management

Objective 6: To facilitate the formulation of multi-stakeholder forums with organisations of similar interests

The Strategic Issues for the Plan

The following were identified as important PR strategic issues for NONM to address in order to realise its achievement of promoting and maintaining the image of NONM and protecting its reputation from possible negative PR in order to effectively lobby and advocate for nursing and midwifery issues.

1. Having public relations systems and tools in place.
2. Reinforcing contact with media houses.
3. Strengthening the capacity of leadership at all levels in public relations skills and PR crisis management.
4. Making NONM branded information available to relevant audiences.

5. Ensuring that monitoring, evaluation and feedback tools are in place
6. Facilitating the formulation of multi-stakeholder forums with organisations of similar interests

Objective 1: To have public relations systems and tools in place

Strategy 1: Develop PR systems and tools

Activities: Employ competent PR personnel

- : Develop crisis management plan

- : Indicate clearly who the spokesperson of the organization is

Strategy 2: Motivate public relations staff

Activities: Provide resources for work

Strategy 2: Draft proposal for fund raising

Objective 2: To ease access to NONM branded information that matters to potential development partners, nurses and midwives and the government

Strategy 1: Providing NONM branded information

Activities: Brand all NONM documents, presentations, publications, posters, etc

- : Publish success stories on website and in NONM publications

- : Launch policy documents and tools

- : Disseminate documents to relevant audiences

- : TV programs about NONM or involving NONM

- : Conduct meetings with stakeholders

Strategy 2: Enhancing use of existing media platforms

Activities: Invite more people to like NONM Facebook page

- (to have large followership)

- : Share website link on publications and social media platforms

- : Boost Facebook page if necessary

Objective 3: To reinforce contact with media houses

Strategy 1: Engaging media houses more

Activities: Pitching and sharing press releases with media houses

- : Where possible, select specific journalists to cover NONM activities

- : Make NONM readily available to respond to the media

- : Conduct media trainings

- : Scan for stories for NONM to comment on

Strategy 2: Striking and agreement with media houses to have NONM answer on nursing/midwifery issues

Objective 4: To ensure that monitoring, evaluation and feedback tools for public relations are in place

Strategy 1: Develop monitoring, evaluation and feedback tools

- Activities:** Employ monitoring and evaluation personnel
- : Develop monitoring and evaluation tools
 - : Monitor and evaluate reactions from the audience closely
 - : Address all reactions accordingly

Objective 5: To strengthen the capacity of leadership at all levels in public relations skills and PR crisis management

- Strategies:** Build the capacity of leadership.
- Activities: Train board and staff on PR
- : Raise awareness about PR among membership
 - : Make PR documents available to membership

Objective 6: To facilitate the formulation of multi-stakeholder forums with organisations of similar interests

- Strategies:** Initiate Partnerships
- Activities:** Attend events (national, international and health related)
- : Organise interface meetings with stakeholders
 - : Conduct courtesy calls to various organisations
 - : invite stakeholders to NONM activities

Swot Analysis of NONM Public Relations

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipment Ability to improvise in the absence of PRO Office space Many communication platforms and materials Funding Organised Rich information (database) Partnerships Contact with the media Availability of governance structures at all levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of functions that allow NONM to show up A vibrant network of partners/allies Many potential donors External information platforms Availability of success stories Positive response from stakeholders Exploitation of other media platforms Similar agenda with government Support from NNO and other stakeholders
WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of funds to recruit PR staff Intern turnover Inadequate staff Limited knowledge of staff, board and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging competitors High costs of PR Decreasing trends of funding from traditional donor

members
on PR

- Unregulated information sharing
- Poor linkage between NONM and media
- Lack of communication monitoring and evaluation
- Poor social media reach

- Misconceptions from nurses/midwives and the public
- Sabotage