

Terms of Reference for KWTRP Media Advisory Group

Background

Over the years KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme (KWTRP) has successfully adopted the use of advisory groups as one of the engagement initiatives that provides the inclusion of the public voices into research, for decision making and influencing how research work is done. This is with the aim of having people-centred research. The media engagement in the programme has also evolved from the traditional dissemination of research to the deepening of the existing relationships with journalists through capacity building initiatives, workshops, media tours and an active WhatsApp engagement that ensure constant engagement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased scrutiny by the public and the media on research processes. This is further compounded by 'alternative truths' pushed by those seen to be against science i.e. the antivaxxers movement. The Media Advisory Group (MAG) seeks answer to the call to include different media and public voices into our research process. We will pilot this initial MAG with the aim of creating a multidisciplinary team that will include both media teams and members of the public to provide advice to our various research teams related to the COVID-19 response in KWTRP.

Objectives

The overall objective of the MAG is to help shape the media response by;

1. Inclusion of the media voices in research activities to provide insights in communication initiatives through the MAG's collective experiences
2. Stimulate research discourse with the public by supporting the generation and dissemination of research knowledge
3. To build capacity within our researchers to effectively engage with the media

Composition

The team includes

- a) 4 senior mainstream science journalists/editors from local, national and international media.
- b) 5 Journalists drawn from print, radio and T.V.
- c) 2 Social media practitioners
- d) 2 members of the public drawn from an agreed set of publics
- e) Facilitated by the KWTRP communication group

Terms of Operation

- The MAG will serve a One-year renewable term.
- They will meet 4 times a year with 1 physical meeting and 3 online meetings (When there is need for additional meetings this can be determined by the team) and facilitated by KWTRP
- The team will be required to undertake a two-day training on research and familiarization of programme activities. Subsequent trainings will be organised as part of the growth of the engagement.
- After the initial inception meeting, the team will decide on the leadership and communication channels to adopt throughout their tenure

Responsibilities

- Development of the terms of reference for the MAG
- Development of scope of work for the MAG
- Development of an M&E tool based on the expected outcomes and deliverables
- Provide insights, inputs and feedback for planned media strategies.
- Support in the dissemination of research information and provide learnings from this experience
- Evaluation of the performance of media initiatives through agreed matrices.

Expected deliverables

- Quarterly reports of the performance of programmes media initiatives.
- Bi-annual reporting of the team evaluating their MAG experiences
- Advice for media campaign strategies by the editorial teams
- Agreed number of publications or digital reporting by the journalist teams involved in the MAG
- Active involvement in communication campaigns involving COVID-19 research by the programme
- Hosting of researchers in designated online or broadcast platforms.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased participation and improved public understanding of research.
- Increased accountability of researchers to the public
- Mutual respect for researchers and media practitioners.
- Public support of emerging research initiatives in Africa
- Increased capacity within our researchers to engage the media