



SEYCHELLES BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Policies and Procedures

Faith-based Content

Document Name: **SBCPOL-10-Policy on Faith-based Content**

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1.0 Introduction

Seychelles is a multicultural and multi-faith society that is united by a common humanity and moral order. Within its diversity, there are human values that call for the promotion of social harmony, national healing, reconciliation, social reconstruction, and nation building.

Most Seychellois acknowledge the Divine, which is expressed through a variety of spiritual and religious beliefs and practices, and religious institutions.

The right for every person to be able to manifest and propagate their faith or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance is one of the values enshrined in Chapter 3 of our constitution.

The Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) is guided in the discharge of its functions by specific objectives outlined in the SBC Act 2011 9 (2) which is to *'ensure that a wide range of subjects are covered that appeal to the needs and tastes and serve the best interest of the public, while upholding the unity and integrity of the country and the values enshrined in the constitution'*.

The vision of the SBC as outlined in its Strategic Plan 2019 - 2021 includes:

- Inspire citizens to do good and to excel.
- Work with all stakeholders in mutually agreeable and collaborative ways to help bring about lasting social and moral advancements.

As the national broadcaster, the SBC has an obligation to broadcast faith-based materials and programmes as part of its vision to inspire citizens and educate them morally.

The SBC also has the responsibility to ensure that such contents are respectful towards spiritual groups and are representative of Seychelles religious plurality. In so doing, the SBC seeks to promote mutual respect and tolerance for religious and spiritual beliefs among the country's different faith-based, spiritual and religious groups and to play a meaningful part in the moral regeneration of the Seychellois nation.

This document outlines how the SBC aims to offer meaningful and sufficient spiritual programming on its radio and television services while ensuring that all faiths are treated fairly in the allocation of airtime on the SBC platforms.

In publishing this policy document, the SBC is reaching out to the local spiritual and religious community to better contribute towards:

- Spiritually inspiring and empowering our citizens to manifest in their daily lives, universal values such as love, honesty, humility, discipline, truthfulness, excellence; that will create the dynamism necessary for an effective working force contributing to the progress of the nation.
- Strengthening the moral and ethical foundation of our society in order to improve human relationships in all aspects, at work, in communities and institutions of education and governance
- Strengthening the fabric of the family, leading to more stable family units, better care and development of our children and a more unified nation.
- Fulfilling its mandate of informing and educating the public, including aspects of the history, beliefs, values and guidance of diverse religions.
- Promote interfaith tolerance, respect and harmony so that deeply rooted prejudices do not become a source of conflict in the future.

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In publishing and implementing this policy, the SBC will consult with all faith-based bodies, notably SIFCO and the faith-based commission of the Civil Engagement Platform (CEPS).

2.0 Definition of faith-based programme

A faith-based programme is a programme which deals with matters of religion and spiritual belief as the central subject or significant portion of the programme. This can also be in the form of interviews with spiritual/religious figures, spiritual/ religious services, and spiritual/religious music.

Faith-based content can be produced locally and/or internationally, and they can be of various genre, ranging from debates, discussions, documentaries, films etc.

For the purpose of this policy, a faith group is defined as one which is registered as such with the Office of the Registrar.

3.0 SBC's approach to faith-based content and programming

As asserted in the SBC's Editorial Guidelines "*religious programming shall, as far as practicable, reflect the mix of faiths in the country. The SBC will not support any one religion over another nor provide a medium for one religion to denigrate another.*"

The SBC therefore aims to provide opportunities for all faith groups to be able to use its platforms for contents, either faith-specific or multifaith or both.

Faith specific programmes will give the various religious groups the scope to celebrate their life of faith and understanding of the Divine fully and without censure.

Multifaith programmes will promote spiritual dialogue, respect and understanding among all the faith groups in Seychelles. These can also inform the public on different spiritual perspectives and interpretations on issues of common interest such as creation, the soul and life after death, moral values, governance, politics, environment etc

SBC will take particular care to ensure that, in such programmes, there is sensitivity to the beliefs of others, and that no faith is either attacked or undermined.

This is in line with the Constitution which asserts that 'the freedom to manifest and propagate a religion or belief may be subject to such limitation as may be prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society.'

- a) in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health or
- b) for the purpose of protecting the rights or freedoms of others'

SBC will also undertake a regular review of existing programmes of spiritual and/or religious nature to ensure that there is fairness to all and that any airtime is being used to reach out to the public to inform and educate while discouraging proselytizing.

Presenters - SBC presenters shall not show preference for any faith or spiritual groups over others, either through giving extra airtime or by making public declarations to that effect.

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3.1 Spiritual and Religious Services

Broadcasting of spiritual services, whether live or delayed live, are subject to the following criteria:

- Advance request made at least two weeks in advance of ceremony
- Length of service being restricted to not more than 90 minutes
- Provision of IP link to SBC at no cost to the Corporation
- Provision of Anchor person

3.2 Languages

All content to be considered by the SBC under this policy should be in one of our three national languages: English, Creole and/or French.

Contents that are not in these three languages will NOT be considered by the SBC.

However, exceptions can be made when not more than three words in another language are used, provided definitions are proffered and/or there is subtitling.

3.3 Scheduling

Faith-based contents shall not be confined to Sundays, or the fringes of the programme schedules, but be placed at times when audiences are available and on days that are appropriate to individual faiths.

4.0 Review of Existing Content to ensure adherence to Policy

The SBC shall also review all existing content, to ensure equitable treatment of all faith-based groups as asserted by this policy, and to adjust where this is not the case.

Different types of existing content have been categorised as per below:

4.1 News Coverage

Important annual events or festivals on the calendar will be included in the calendar of activities to be covered by the main SBC channels. The faith groups shall be proactive to provide this information to the SBC in advance where needed.

4.2 Existing Local Content

All existing faith-based content opportunity available on TV and Radio will be extended to all either on an equal airtime basis or on a proportionally calculated basis.

This includes:

- programmes such as *Radio Religion* on Radyo Sesel
- the opportunity to record a spiritual/religious service not exceeding an hour per week for broadcast on SBC3,
- inclusion in TV and Radio programmes such as Senm Laglwar, Gospel Hour and Refleksyon.

Weekly Services on TV – All faiths have the opportunity to submit a recorded service of not more than 90 minutes to be played on SBC3, once a week at an agreed time. Any cost associated with the recording of the service is to be borne by the religious group.

Weekly live Services on radio – Live spiritual/religious services on radio will be extended to other faiths subject to the venue and meeting all technical requirements for a live radio service.

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Radio Religion - This programme is extended to all faith groups that are registered. All groups will have to conceive, plan, and produce their own programmes at their own cost in line with the SBC's standard and submit to SBC in a timely manner for broadcast.

Refleksyon – The daily Refleksyon on both TV and Radio will move from being faith-based to being motivational and inspirational so that participation is not limited to spiritual personalities. When it does concern such personalities, the same opportunity will be extended to all faith groups to record at least a few of these.

Spiritual Music - All faith-based group should have an equitable chance to have their music played on air. It is the responsibility of each faith to ensure that SBC has a collection of their music to be played as part of a playlist.

Spots – All spiritual groups can contribute in raising the moral values in the country by educating the public through informational and educational spots. These spots should generally be promoting values and not that particular faith. Such spots shall be considered for free airtime under the SBC's Airtime Policy.

All of the above will be subject to scheduling constraints.

4.3 Commissioning of Local Content

SBC will not pay for local content promoting a specific faith.

The SBC shall, however, consider commissioning multifaith content and musical shows where most religions have been included either on an equal airtime basis or on a proportional basis based on their number of followers.

The SBC will also acquire content related to a particular faith for broadcast on an occasion specific to that faith. (For example: Easter Programmes or movies.)

4.4 Foreign Religious Content

SBC will be cautious when acquiring foreign content promoting a particular faith even if these are offered for free.

It will also not acquire any content promoting disharmony and ill-will amongst the various faith. Where necessary, the SBC can also seek advice from SIFCO on a particular content, if there are concerns.

5.0 Sponsorship of Programmes

Faith and spiritual groups are not allowed to sponsor programmes where the bulk of it is faith-based content.

If a faith group decides to sponsor a programme that is not faith-based, for example a movie or a local programme, any benefits gained from this sponsorship will be the same as any other sponsors and can be used for any purpose including promoting that particular faith..

6.0 Advertisements

All faith groups are free to buy airtime to be used to promote their services, activities, or ideals. These airtimes are payable at the SBC's published market rate for adverts.

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7.0 Standard of Content

All faith-based programmes must be in line with the SBC's Editorial Guidelines and must be submitted according to the SBC's Video and Audio Standard document.

8.0 Complaints

Any complaints related to this policy must be channelled through the SBC's Complaints Procedure and sent to complaints@sbc.sc

9.0 Monitoring and Implementation

The SBC will monitor the implementation of this policy and provide feedback to the faith-based groups on a regular basis on their content and areas needing improvement.

10.0 Associated Documents:

- Editorial Guidelines
- Video and Audio Standards

Editorial Guidelines for Faith-based Content on SBC

All content broadcast on the SBC is guided by the SBC's Editorial Guidelines.

Section 20 of the Guidelines focusses on Religious Programmes and recognizes that as Seychelles is religiously diverse, the SBC will not support any one faith over another nor provide a medium to denigrate one another.

It also outlines that:

- References to faith and spirituality shall be presented accurately and in a dignified manner.
- Programmes that denigrate or satirize any racial or religious group will not be broadcast.
- Programmes that feature the views or beliefs of any race or religion must be acceptable to the target audience and shall not be converting or agitating in nature.
- Programmes that cause offence through profane references or disrespect, whether verbal or visual, directed at deities, scriptures, holy days, and rituals which are at the heart of various faith groups.

In addition, while giving due regard to the freedom of religion and religious expression, the SBC shall ensure that faith-based programmes do not:

- improperly exploit any susceptibilities of the audience e.g. religious personnel should not misuse faith to exploit audiences by asking them to support them financially or convince a person to change her /his belief
- involve any abusive treatment of the religious views and beliefs of those belonging to different religious persuasions
- spread false charges or accusations against persons or organizations with differing beliefs.
- maliciously attack, insult, harass, or ridicule other religions, faiths, sects or denominations or their followers for any reason whatsoever.
- attack those who have no religious belief or faith in God or have a different non-traditional view of the Creator.
- religious programmes do not misuse or appeal or exploit the susceptibilities or vulnerabilities of any member of the audience.
- solicit funds nor support any programme of a political or ideological nature. Permission for any fundraising, whether for emergency relief and/or religious causes must be obtained from the SBC before the broadcast.
- primarily seek to recruit viewers to any particular faith.

Programmes exploring occult or psychic practices, belief in superstition etc shall be treated with caution and where judged appropriate for broadcast shall be broadcast after 9 p.m. only.

Any programmes based on fortune telling, palm reading, numerology, mind-reading, tarot reading, astrology, new age healing shall not give the impression that these practices are exact sciences.