

The Challenges of Public Relations Practice in Developing Nations and the Way Forward: Ethiopian Perspective

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Abstract : Public Relations often referred to as 'PR', is the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or organization, such as a business, government agency, or a nonprofit organization, and the public. Public Relations are important because they help organizations or entities cultivate and maintain meaningful connections with society at large through platforms like print media and social media. Individuals that identify as public relation specialists establish and maintain relationships with an organization's target audiences, relevant media sources, and opinion leaders. With regard to the challenges, when trying to practice public relations for government institutions, the priority for specialists is often to help members of society exercise a positive attitude and impression of a country's political systems and practices. If you consider the case of public relations for government entities in Ethiopia there are several factors to consider. First, public relations in Ethiopia are very much driven by a desire to create a good image of the country and prevent the spread of any information that creates a bad image of Ethiopia. Also, the current ruling party dominates public relations in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, this means that more often than not, public relations specialists are forced by the government to spread and mass communicate false information to the public instead of the truth. Any opposition to government's agenda will result in seriously negative repercussions for public relations specialists. Although public relations is supposed to create a positive and honest relationship between an organization or the government with the public, in Ethiopia, that is not the case. As a result, very few people express an interest in practicing public relations here. Despite this, there is an opportunity for the development of an accountable public relation affairs in developing nations, taking Ethiopian's case. For instance, the fact that Public relations are provided as a field of study in college or university to produce competent and trained specialists, the enormous contribution of good communication to the public developmental efforts linking the government to the people, and the better payment to employees of public relation officers are some of them. Therefore, there is a need by the respective stakeholders to work in coalition in raising awareness of the youth regarding the importance of a responsible public relations officer to the country's developmental efforts, encouragement of Civil Society Organizations working in promoting free press and expression of ideas, improving the governmental structure to be transparent and that allows independent officers, and hosting international conferences on public relations practice so that the specialists can exchange knowledge and skills.

Keywords : developing nations, Ethiopia, public relations, public relations specialist

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