



**Civil Society  
Unmuted Coalition  
South Africa**

**National**

# **CIVIL SOCIETY UNMUTED COALITION SOUTH AFRICA**

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

**Voices Unmuted. United for Change.**

**Reg.:** 316-432 NPO

**Address:** Johannesburg Central, South Africa

**Email:** [info@csuc.org.za](mailto:info@csuc.org.za)

**Website:** [www.civilsocietyunmutedcoalition.org.za](http://www.civilsocietyunmutedcoalition.org.za)

### **National Executive Committee:**

Cynthia Chishimba: National Chairperson | Ndodana Hadebe: Deputy Chairperson  
Dladla Mokeki: Secretary General | Bandile Mdlalose: Deputy Secretary General  
Elias Mkwana: Treasurer General



South Africa has experienced several decades of its transition to a democratic dispensation and yet challenges remain on every front. There are huge developmental backlogs. Inequality is unacceptably high and millions of people live in poverty. Our government and the political order have failed to lead our society towards the future all our children deserve. The governance system has been undermined by corruption, self-interest and failure to prioritise the needs of the people.

The majority of South Africans want our constitutional democracy to succeed and to deliver on the post-apartheid promises of an equitable and prosperous country in which the opportunity for self-realisation is available to all. We believe that government will not be able to implement effective reconstruction and development nor build a vibrant prosperous society without strong, informed and effective Civil Society Organisations. We believe democracy needs to be strengthened, systems of accountability restored and citizen participation increased at every level. We therefore commit ourselves to strengthening the sector, to improving the quality and impact of our services and delivery in general and, to contributing to a vibrant and dynamic society. As organisations, we therefore agree to adhere to this Code of Ethics.

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## 1. Values

As diverse as our activities are, we have common value systems. Based on the desire to advance and improve people's lives, and combat poverty and inequality, we are committed to the following fundamental values that underpin the mission and objectives of signatories. We therefore commit ourselves to:

- Being responsive to the needs and welfare of the people of South Africa.
- Accountability and transparency.
- Participatory democracy.
- People-centred development.
- Respecting the rights, culture and dignity of all people within the framework of the Bill of Rights, as enshrined in the South African Constitution, and enhancing race and gender equity (adhering to the spirit of 'Ubuntu').
- Ensuring the Coalition remains true to its mission and objectives.
- Promoting voluntarism, and active volunteer involvement at all levels.
- Mutual co-operation, collaboration and networking with other agencies around issues of mutual concern.
- Striving for excellence, including efficient and effective service provision at all levels.

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## **2. Governance A: General**

The effectiveness of our work depends on the organisation's governance structures, whether this be member organisations of Civil Society Unmuted Coalition S.A. We recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining stable bodies that will govern the internal functioning of our individual organisations. Committed, experienced and responsible individuals are a critical ingredient for this. To this end we will:

- Ensure the Coalition at national and provincial levels has a clear vision and mutually agreed objectives and adheres to them.
- When the Coalition is properly formed, ensure the development of clear operational policies and adhere to them.
- Ensure that as members of the Civil Society Unmuted Coalition S.A our organisations have a clear vision, a clear mission and agreed objectives and adhere to them.
- Provincial coalitions and the Coalition nationally should have clear policies to guide how they work.
- Those working in and occupying roles in the Provincial and National structures of the Coalition should abide by the values cited above and the values adopted at the inaugural national conference (NC) of CSUCSA. (see Annexure). Over and above this they should work together in a spirit of democracy and mutual respect and respect for each person's agreed roles,
- Specify the frequency of governance structures' meetings, quorums, and the role and powers of the governance structure.

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- Develop a policy that prohibits direct or indirect conflict of interest by members of the governance structure, members, employees and volunteers.
- Ensure that members of the governance structure and staff excuse themselves from decisions where they have, or are perceived to have, a vested interest.
- Be cautious about instances where family members are employed or jointly involved either in management or in the same governance structure; they should ensure any such relationships are transparent and constantly monitored so as not to undermine proper processes and governance.
- In the case of an independent Board or Trust, adopt a policy that discourages members from submitting tenders to the organisation or applying for staff positions within the organisation. This policy must stipulate that if they desire to do either, they must resign from the governance structure.
- Wherever funds are involved to be spent by the Coalition, ensure the governance structure approves the budget, appoints independent auditors and receives audited statements.
- Where smaller amounts of funds are to be used, that this is subject to proper accounting procedures and proper reports are given.
- Ensure the governance structure understands and is responsible for overall policy-making and accepts ultimate responsibility for governance of all aspects of the organisation.
- Within financial constraints ensure the governance structure reflects the race and gender composition of South African society and the various target constituencies that the NGO works with, with regard to both their composition and their geographic spread.

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### **3. Accountability**

Our commitment to promote democracy is enshrined in a culture of participation and complete accountability within our organisations. Transparency in all the work we do is key. To this end, we will:

- Develop mechanisms to enable all our stakeholders to be involved in planning programmes that directly affect them.
- Provide opportunities for regular evaluations and updating of programmes that include stakeholder and community input.
- Hold an Annual General Meeting with full, open and accurate disclosure of relevant information concerning goals, programmes, finances and governance.
- Hold regular strategic planning sessions to which relevant stakeholders are invited to contribute.

### **4. Governance B: Non-partisanship in relation to Elections**

Recognizing the critical importance of non-partisanship, Civil Society Unmuted Coalition S.A upholds a steadfast commitment to maintaining nonpartisan stance in political affiliations, thereby ensuring we remain autonomous voices and ones that respect the diversity in our community. Civil society operates in a different sphere from political parties. They may engage with political parties, interacting with them on issues and policy frameworks. Its autonomy is one of the hallmarks of open democratic space of Civil society as a sector does not seek political power, but seeks to engage with those in power from a position of independence. Any attempt to make a civil society organisation an extension of a political party would foster division and conflict in our communities and undermine political tolerance.

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The following guidelines delineate the principles and behaviours necessary to separate party politics from our mission and work.

- Office bearers or representatives of the organization should refrain from publicly declaring their political affiliations in any official capacity related to the organization. This includes public statements, events, or representations that might associate the individual directly with a specific political party.
- Individuals – those acting as office bearers or representatives – in the Coalition must abstain from participating in political rallies, endorsing political candidates, or engaging in any activity that directly supports only a single political party or figure while representing the organization.
- Members or aspiring members should not actively participate in or support political campaigns, as this could be perceived as the organization favouring one party over another.
- While individuals have personal rights to political affiliations, when acting on behalf of the organization, they must strictly maintain a neutral stance, refraining from using their association with the organization to promote any political agenda.
- Our members will make it clear to members and representatives that the organization stands for non-partisanship. Clear guidelines and internal communication must emphasize the importance of neutrality and the consequences of breaching these principles.

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- Should any staff member or office bearer of our organization actively engage as an independent political candidate or work part-time for a political party, it poses a conflict of interest, potentially undermining the non-partisan stance of our coalition. In such instances, a respectful dialogue will be initiated to address the situation, considering the potential conflict and the individual's roles within our organization and external engagements. Resignation or a re-evaluation of responsibilities may be required to ensure the upholding of our non-partisan values and to maintain the integrity of our organization's mission.

## **5. Management & Human Resources**

Human capacity and skilled leadership are a critical component of the effectiveness of our work. In instances where staff are employed by the Coalition, we shall endeavour to follow the best management practices appropriate to the organisation's mission, operations and governance structure. To this end we will:

- Periodically reassess the organisation's mission, objectives and operations, in the light of changing context and constituents' needs.
- Critically analyse our own practices and our organisational culture and implement those changes necessary to build a culture that encourages creativity, diversity, responsibility and respect that will recognise all cultural groups as equal partners in developing the organisation.
- Develop clear, well defined written policies and procedures to be followed, which relate to all employees, members and volunteers. Such policies must adhere to the Labour Relations Act and other relevant legislation and must protect the rights of employers, employees, members and volunteers.

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- Establish and maintain disciplinary and grievance procedures with clear lines of authority and accountability.
- Have fair and documented procedures for employing new staff, and disengaging existing staff.
- Have clear staff development policies that seek to empower all staff volunteers to increase their skills in order to enable them to move to greater levels of responsibility.
- Develop adequate and acceptable systems of assessing skills, experience and qualification, levels of responsibility and performance, and remunerate on this basis.
- Encourage management to adopt interactive leadership styles and an 'open door' policy to facilitate good communication between staff and themselves.

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## 6. Finance

Member organisations of the Coalition need to prioritise the development and maintenance of proper financial management strategies. Our finances shall be managed to ensure appropriate use of funds and accountability to members and donors. To this end, for those of our member organisations who are formally constituted and manage funds, we will:

- Comply with accepted business accounting and auditing practices, including voucher and authorisation processes.
- Set up appropriate financial systems and employ qualified persons to administer and manage these systems.
- Conduct annual audits for incomes exceeding R50,000.
- Have clear policies on loans and staff advances.
- Develop a policy regarding the receipt of outside honoraria and/or remuneration in order to avoid 'double' or inappropriate payment.
- Set up mechanisms for purchasing goods and services that are free from vested interests of individuals in our organisation and that are cost effective.
- Prepare realistic project or organisational budgets, then monitor and adhere to them. In instances where it becomes necessary to make changes, the appropriate consultations should be undertaken and any amendments recorded.
- Formally and publicly charge members for any attempt at fraud, theft or misappropriation.

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- Wherever possible, ensure that the funding base of the organisation is diversified.
- Keep fundraising and administration costs to a minimum.
- Ensure that funds provided are only used for the intended purpose.
- Ensure that tenders and contracts called for encourage the participation of small and emerging business, in particular those owned by previously disadvantaged sectors of our society.
- Provide clear and transparent accounting to the broader membership and/or constituency of the organisation.

## **7. Resources**

We need systems to manage organisational assets in a sustainable and cost effective manner. This is a vital tool towards the sector maintaining its original values of being effective and efficient in our work. To this end we:

- Develop internal procedures and control mechanisms and implement these to ensure the proper use of the assets of the organisation and to clearly separate organisational use from private use.
- Develop and implement mechanisms to track the use of staff time.
- From time to time do a cost-benefit analysis of projects and review resource allocations in the light of these.

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## **Annexure**

Principles and Values of Civil Society Unmuted Coalition S.A, Adopted at the  
Inaugural Conference

### **Principles**

- No bias
- Youth and Women empowerment
- No prejudice
- Care
- Fairness
- Justice
- Equality and Equity
- Ethical Leadership
- Asserting principles without fear or favour

### **Values**

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Mutual Respect

### **Beliefs**

- Community Centred
- Integrity and Honesty
- Embrace the Diversity

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