

LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY ADVICE OFFICES

The National Alliance for the Development of Community Advice Offices (Nadcao) is a non-profit organisation committed to the long-term development and sustainability of Community Advice Offices (CAO).

Community Advice Offices are small, non-profit organisations that offer free basic legal and human rights information, advice and services to people who are marginalised through poverty, social circumstances and geographical location.

Nadcao was formed as an alliance of human rights organisations in 2005, supported by several key donors including the CS Mott Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies. These donors were concerned about the fragmented and weakened state of the community advice office sector. They initialised processes that would help secure long-term support to community advice offices as a sustainable way of ensuring access to justice within poor and marginalised communities.

After ten years of existence in 2015, Nadcao proudly boasts having strengthened a sector that was on the brink of collapse through building partnerships, advocacy and resource mobilisation. Nadcao also launched the Association of Community Advice offices of South Africa (ACAOSA), a voice organisation for the CAO sector. Nadcao currently has 312 community advice offices in all nine provinces throughout South Africa, 290 of which are members of ACOASA.

VISION

We envisage a sustainable CAO sector, providing effective service delivery and having an effective voice able to attain recognition, institutionalisation and support from society.

CENTRAL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Nadcao's centralised case management system (CCMS) assists community advice offices with the administrative aspects of case filing as well as advocacy. The CCMS enables CAOs to generate statistical reports of their casework, which will be a useful tool when meeting with potential funders, stakeholders and partners as well as for the planning, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of options and services required to meet not only community needs, but the needs for the community advice office. The system enables offices and the sector to formulate campaigns on the basis of strong evidence-based arguments that demand accountability from government departments and social agents.

The system, however, has recorded a lower-than-expected usage rate due to the lack of technological infrastructure characteristics in many community advice offices.

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SECTOR REGULATION AND RECOGNITION

For many years, CAOs managed without sufficient regulation. Nadcao, together with the National Task Team (NTT) on community-based paralegals, made an oral submission to Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development calling for the inclusion of community-based paralegals in the Legal Practice Bill. The bill was assented in September 2014 with the inclusion of a Section 34 which calls for regulatory framework for the community advice office sector. The approval coincided with the recognition of CAOs by the Portfolio Committee on Justice in South Africa in Gazette No. 64-2014.

COMMUNITY ADVICE OFFICE SECTOR PARTNERS

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Content

- Tshwaranang (Gender Based Violence)
- PCRD (ADR)
- Justice College (Legal Administration) (MoU)

Non-accredited paralegal

- Black Sash
- SAULCA/University Law Clinics

Accredited Paralegal

- SA Paralegal School
- Rhodes University/SA Law School

LEGAL REFERRAL & SUPPORT

- ProBono.org
- Legal Resources Centre
- Southern Cape Land Committee
- Legal Aid South Africa
- University Law Clinics (SAULCA)
- CLASI
- Rural Legal Trust
- Centre for Rural Legal Studies

RESOURCE ORGANISATIONS

- SCAT
- MAGI
- Foundation for Human Rights (FHR)
- UWC Community Law Centre (MOU)
- National Youth Development Agency (MOU)
- Casual Workers Advice Office
- Education and Training Unit (Paralegal Manual)
- National Debt Management Association (NDMA)

NETWORK ORGANISATIONS

- Community Law & Rural Development Centre
- Centre for Community Justice & Development
- Ithembalabantu
- ACAOSA Provincial Forums