



Code of Ethics

Approved by the CHOSA Board of Directors

March 22, 2009



CHOSA's code of ethics is intended to delineate the conduct with which we will carry out our mission. CHOSA believes that every South African child is entitled to grow up in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment; it is our ethical imperative not only to address child poverty but also to confront the forces that sustain a community's impoverishment, sense of powerlessness and oppression.

CHOSA, an international non-profit organization, acknowledges its institutional power in relation to the communities it supports. CHOSA is designed to use its financial and personnel resources to support democratic community-based organizations and to respect communities' autonomy in developing and carrying out social programs. CHOSA seeks to develop relationships with communities that help foster democracy and participatory decision-making.

CHOSA supports *Fair Aid*, a holistic approach to funding that demonstrates our commitment to a community's economic, political and social right to autonomy and ownership of the development process. CHOSA's funding activities are designed to enable communities to retain decision-making authority concerning their social programs. In other words, CHOSA recognizes that it must be accountable to its beneficiaries. Through *Fair Aid*, CHOSA leverages funds to autonomous community-based projects, helps communities develop relationships outside the immediacy of their borders and provides training, education and infrastructural support to communities.

To carry out this mission, CHOSA's internal governance model abides by the following principles:

1. Transparency and accountability to its beneficiaries
2. A participatory, cooperative and non-hierarchical governance model that includes input from staff, volunteers and beneficiaries
3. A representative structure that includes open meetings and decision-making by consensus

I. CHOSA collective philosophy

CHOSA supports flexible visions of an alternative society based on values of cooperation, equality and pluralism which are defined collectively by poor people from below.

Principle 1: CHOSA is committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations. Universal Human rights apply to all human beings, particularly children, regardless of race, sex, creed or religious orientation, etc. As a children's organisation, CHOSA is particularly invested in these rights and other rights as they relate to children.

Principle 2: CHOSA is committed to the South African tradition of Ubuntu defined as the concept that human beings are interdependent and that their humanity is reliant on their relationships of cooperation with one another.

Principle 3: We believe that poverty is an oppressive human relation and is therefore a violation of human rights.

Principle 4: CHOSA recognizes and respects peoples' and communities' right to an autonomous social and political environment where each person is valued.

- Community committees, democratic people's assemblies and progressive social movements are an expression of this right.
- Communities have the right to speak for themselves
- All people, regardless of education level, socioeconomic status or other social construct, hold valuable opinions, skills and experiences. Their input should be valued as such.

Principle 5: People have the right to equality in all social forms including political and economic equality. CHOSA must therefore support:

- Equal pay
- Egalitarian organizational structures
- Institutional arrangements that support autonomous organization from the bottom-up.

Principle 6: CHOSA supports communities' efforts to demand and establish their individual and collective rights including those delineated above.

Principle 7: CHOSA supports communities and their concerns regarding environmental racism and environmentally sustainable development.

- Communities in poverty tend to be at the same time the smallest contributors to and those most affected by environmental destruction.
- Community projects should promote sustainable life-styles.

Principle 8: CHOSA believes that education does not happen exclusively in school. Education includes formal, social, cultural, life-skills based and spiritual guidance.

II. CHOSA Principles of Governance

Principle 1: CHOSA will maintain a participatory, cooperative and non-hierarchical governance model that includes input from staff, volunteers and beneficiaries.

Principle 2: CHOSA is committed to egalitarian internal governance principles of open meetings and decision-making made by consensus.

- All decisions in Board, staff or any other meeting are to be discussed through dialogue taking into account everyone's opinions and concerns.
- The goal of any dialogue should be to arrive at a holistic and well thought-out decision that takes into consideration everyone's beliefs and opinions.
- All decisions are to be made by consensus of all those present with voting power
- If consensus cannot be reached and if a vote is deemed necessary, a 2/3rds vote will be required on all these decisions.

Principle 3: All board meeting minutes are to be available to any board member or staff upon request.

III. CHOSA Principles of Fair Aid

CHOSA is committed to the *Principles of Fair Aid* as outlined below. CHOSA expects all the organizations and communities connected to CHOSA to understand and also be committed to *Fair Aid* as the basis for ethical partnerships.

Principle 1: In acknowledging communities' right to speak for themselves, CHOSA will not determine a community's identity and/or issues but, rather, ask communities to define it for themselves.

Principle 2: Communities should *own* their development.

- Financial support for communities should not and will not compromise their autonomy.
- CHOSA is committed to people centered development using local participatory decision-making structures. This includes respecting the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of the people and communities it assists.
- CHOSA rather than promoting dependency through its assistance will seek to foster the self-determination and self-reliance of communities.
- CHOSA will help democratize access to information.
- Communities should be independent and should not be beholden to any government, political party or NGO.

Principle 3: Fundraising shall not be donor driven

- CHOSA will not accept restricted grants from any government or government affiliated agency.
- CHOSA will only solicit unrestricted grants from private foundations. CHOSA is committed to financial transparency towards its beneficiaries. This includes informing communities of fundraising being done on their behalf or in their names.
- All grants to CHOSA's beneficiaries will be used for any unrestricted purposes determined by the community and its representative structures so long as they deem to be 'child-related'.

Principle 4: CHOSA will support democratic and participatory approaches to improving the lives of South Africa's children.

- CHOSA supports local participatory and democratic decision-making structures which put communities in control of the development process. These structures can include neighborhood associations and committees, progressive social movements, shadow community governance structures and community assemblies.
- These structures should:
 - Be highly participatory in nature
 - Be autonomous from outside control
 - Support efforts towards structural changes that advance social and economic equality
 - Not be affiliated with any political party
- The projects supported by CHOSA should be accountable to their communities through a regularized consultative process that involves the people in the decision-making of the organization.
- All child-related projects should be open and transparent to its community.

IV. CHOSA Transparency and accountability

Principle 1: CHOSA commits to a fully transparent annual budget and annual report which will be available on its website and to anyone who requests it.

- All of CHOSA's beneficiaries will be provided a copy of the annual budget once it has been completed.
- All CHOSA's beneficiaries will be provided a copy of the annual report once it has been completed. The annual report will include a list of all major decisions made by the board of directors during that year.

Principle 2: CHOSA will be accountable for financial resources received from donors, members, other partner organizations and/or from self-generated activities.

Principle 3: CHOSA commits itself to adhere to professional standards of accountancy.

Principle 4: CHOSA commits to a policy of preventing conflict of interest in all financial dealings. No one in any way associated with CHOSA will profit off of their connection to CHOSA.

Glossary

Community-based Organisation

A community-based organisation implies that the organisation is based in the locality of the community it serves. Control and/or management of the organisation should be based in the community itself through a local board of directors, local management as much as possible. The organisational structure (formal and/or informal) should be reasonably inclusive of the community. There are many ways to do this: through mass meetings, through committees, through informal consultations, through parent-teacher meetings, etc (it does not necessarily imply one vote per member). A community-based organisation should, as much as possible, avoid hierarchical structures. Instead there should be an effort to gain input from and work with all those who are effected by or have a stake in the project.

Community

As far as a general definition of community is concerned, it is not necessarily based on geographical space. However, for the purposes of the work that CHOSA does, there is acknowledgement that in poorer communities in South Africa (with limited access to transport, cell phone airtime, and internet), one of the more important factors in defining a community is *place*. Among less mobile people and families, ones geographical position forces one to connect to and have relationships with their neighbours on a daily basis. This provides a sense of community that is both stronger and more inclusive with regards to community-run projects because, by definition, it promotes within everyone (no matter their ethnicity, religious affiliation, party affiliation) the possibility of unity with one another.

Participation

The concept of participation has both moral and pragmatic aspects to it. Morally, it is the belief in the intrinsic importance of self-determination and self-control over one's personal or community's development. Pragmatically, it supports the idea of citizens assuming responsibility for decisions and actions for more effective social and democratic development.

All people, regardless of education level, socioeconomic status or other social construct, hold valuable opinions, skills, and experiences. Participation is “people centered” and therefore involves the redistribution of power or, rather, the creation of new centers of power, that enables the “have-nots” (those who have been marginalised) to be deliberately included. It is the concept that, ideally, everyone would have a say in decisions proportional to the degree that particular decision affects him or her. Participatory decision making infers a level of proportionate decision making power and can take place along various forms of social activity (economic, political, cultural, and/or familial). It is not just about meeting people’s needs and is therefore not 'welfare-ism'. It is about helping to create an environment where people can more effectively identify and address their own needs.



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