



National Alliance for the Development
of Community Advice Offices

Community Advice Offices

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

CAOs extend into a majority of towns and communities and mainly rural and poor areas.

CAOs are staffed by salaried or volunteer community-based paralegals. These individuals have the knowledge and experience to help people with legal and social problems.

The value of CAOs

CAOs have a history of assisting and mobilising communities that dates back to the apartheid era. In addition to rights-based information, CAOs educate communities on how and where to access services offered by government departments and agencies. The uniqueness of CAOs also resides in their ability to form long-term partnerships with governmental departments, social agencies and civil society organisations.

CAOs work to ensure that the justice system functions better and that the South African Constitution becomes a living reality for individuals and communities. CAOs support clients with issues ranging from social grant access, civil matters, labour disputes and land entitlements, among others. CAOs are commonly seen as primary-level entities for marginalised, rural communities.

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General objectives of CAOs

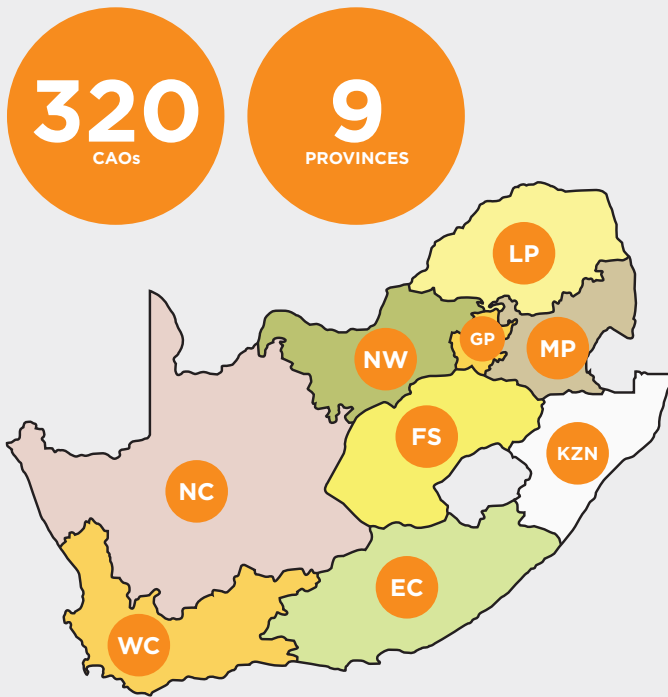
- To serve as a unified voice for CAOs and community-based paralegals (CBPs).
- To promote human rights and access to justice for all.
- To establish, promote and uphold uniform standards of professional competence.
- To create a platform for advice offices to lobby government to recognise the value of CBPs.

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The involvement of Nadcao:

The community-based paralegal sector has been enhanced and strengthened through the support and involvement of Nadcao, the National Alliance for the Development of Community Advice Offices. Nadcao was formed in 2005 by an alliance of human rights organisations in response to a weakened CAO sector in South Africa.

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The provinces include:

- **Eastern Cape:** Launched in November 2010, the Forum represents 65 Community Advice Offices in 5 regions.
- **Free State:** Launched in March 2009, the Association represents 22 Community Advice Offices in 5 regions.
- **Gauteng:** Launched in November 2009, the Gauteng Association represents 22 Community Advice Offices in 5 regions.
- **KwaZulu-Natal:** Launched in November 2010, the Association represents 56 Community Advice Offices in 5 regions.
- **Limpopo:** Launched in November 2010, the Forum represents 18 Community Advice Offices in 5 regions.
- **Mpumalanga:** Launched in November 2010, the Consortium represents 16 Community Advice Offices in 5 regions.
- **Northern Cape:** Launched in 2011, the Forum represents 26 Community Advice Offices in 5 regions.
- **North West:** Launched in March 2006, the Cluster represents 25 Community Advice Offices in 4 regions.
- **Western Cape:** Launched in September 2006, the Association represents 45 Community Advice Offices in 6 regions.



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Currently, Nadcao works with approximately 320 CAOs in all 9 provinces throughout South Africa.

Provincial Forums

The provincial forums are non-profit umbrella organisations representing Community Advice Offices in all 9 provinces in South Africa. Each provincial forum is independent and has an Executive Committee. These Committees represent the AOs in their respective provinces and create partnerships with relevant stakeholders for provincial funding.

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