

Report-writing

(A resource for community advice offices and community-based paralegals brought to you by NADCAO, from the Paralegal Manual published by the Education and Training Unit and the Black Sash.)

Reports are written to **report back** about what a person, group or committee has done.

Paralegals might have to write regular reports on their work for their management structures, for donors and partner organisations.

A community-based paralegal who is monitoring a situation in a community, for example a demonstration, should write a report on what was witnessed. This should include relevant dates, times, venue, people involved, etc.

Office-bearers in an organisation should also write regular reports, for example a treasurer can write a monthly report on the finances of the organisation, a community liaison person should write a brief report on meetings attended on behalf of the organisation and the outcomes of those meetings. Report-writing is a very important communication tool which enables people to share information in a structured way and it means everyone is kept informed on what is happening.

Planning a report

Whenever you write a report remember to follow certain planning steps:

- Ask yourself:
 - Who am I writing for?
 - What do I want to tell them?
 - Why should they know this?
- List the things you want to say
- Plan the order in which you will put things
- Write the report

Reports to funders

Here is a simple outline for a report for donors (after they have given money):

- Introduction
- Achievements of the organization in terms of the funding proposal - describe what you have done and link this to what you said you would do when you asked the donors for money.
- Plans for the next year
- Financial statement
 - A full financial statement and records, to show how you have spent the money.

Reports to your own members or to a community

These reports are usually given verbally in a meeting. Here is a useful outline to make sure you come across clearly:

1. Issue
Explain what issue is covered by the report.
2. Facts
Give people the basic facts about the issue or any events that have taken place.
3. Options
Often you report on something where the meeting must make a decision. Try to outline the main options open to people.
4. Proposal
Say which option you think is the best one, or propose a clear way forward. The meeting may disagree, but the proposal provides a good starting point for discussion.

Example of an Annual General Meeting report

Chairperson's Annual Report 2009

1. Membership

We have set up a membership sub-committee under Maria Hendricks. They have been very successful and the membership has increased from 200 to 700 members.

2. Fundraising

We held a film show at the start of the year and raised R900.

3. General meetings

We have held general meetings in different areas this year. Many members came to these meetings and met the committee. This helped the committee to hear what members think.

4. Projects

HIV/Aids community forum

The HIV/Aids Community Forum was established in May 2009. It's focus is:

- education and awareness around HIV and Aids in the Mulati farming area (26 farms)
- a Voluntary and counseling and testing campaign to have all people living on farms in this area tested

We have held 3 workshops on farms in the past 3 months.

5. Partnerships

We are working in partnership with the Agricultural Workers Union (AWU) and Education for Farmworkers (EFF) to get this project off the ground. They were very helpful in giving us advice and support. EFF assisted with the workshops.

6. Future projects

In the next year we need to:

- Run workshops on all 26 farms
 - Initiate the VCT programme
8. I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work.