

1. Good Governance

This guideline contains requirements for the proper logistical functioning of a CSO,¹ i.e. the minimum requirements for a CSO to conduct its affairs effectively.

1.1. The CSO shall have a constitution encompassing the 8 Golden Rules contained in this document

1.2. The CSO shall have a policy of adherence to the letter and spirit of its constitution and all adopted policies, procedures, processes, etc.

1.3. The CSO shall have a clear and concise definition of its vision, mission, values and principles

- All objectives, goals, strategies, programs, projects, etc. engaged by the CSO shall be strictly aligned to these definitions

1.4. The CSO shall have a board of directors

1.4.1. The criteria and a procedure for selecting board members shall be defined

1.4.2. Length of term, number of consecutive terms, conditions for early dismissal, etc. of board members shall be defined

1.4.3. Board members shall serve on a voluntary basis

- This may include reimbursements for essential costs such as travel, etc.

1.4.4. The board of directors shall be responsible for implementing the vision, mission, values and principles of the CSO

1.5. The CSO shall have a decision making process that is professional and demonstrably disciplined

1.5.1. It shall include criteria and a procedure for accepting/rejecting proposals, etc.

1.5.2. It shall be applicable to the board of directors

1.5.3. It may be extended to executive staff

1.6. The CSO shall have a monetary policy

1.6.1. It shall contain a process for handling donations

1.6.2. It shall contain a process for handling money earned through fund raising, accrued interest, etc.

1.6.3. It shall include a structure for fees and administrative charges

1.7. The CSO shall have a process for handling non-monetary donations

¹ Civil Society Organization, or CSO, is used here in the broadest sense to include any kind of organization which works for the betterment of society.

1.8. The CSO shall have a donor, partner, supplier relations policy

- It shall include criteria and a process for selection

1.9. The CSO shall have a process for making changes to its constitution, policies, procedures, processes, etc.

1.10. The CSO shall institute mechanisms to guard against malpractice

- 1.10.1. Including access to funds and abuse of resources
- 1.10.2. Including decision making
- 1.10.3. To ensure fair and consistent supplier sourcing by preventing nepotism, etc.
- 1.10.4. To prevent undue influence of donors
- 1.10.5. To prevent undue influence of partners

1.11. The CSO shall have a risk management policy

- 1.11.1. Including an analysis process with acceptability criteria
- 1.11.2. Including mitigation options and procedures
- 1.11.3. Including guidelines for contingency plans

2. Legitimacy

This guideline defines the authority of the CSO, i.e. whose voice is involved when the CSO speaks and acts.

2.1. The CSO shall be democratically managed

- 2.1.1. Democratic decision making
 - By the board of directors
 - May be extended to executive staff

2.2. The CSO shall conduct a stakeholder analysis

- 2.2.1. To identify beneficiaries
- 2.2.2. To identify contributors
 - Including members, volunteers, donors, board members, staff, etc.
- 2.2.3. To identify the general support base
- 2.2.4. Including admirers, media, academics, governments, other CSOs, etc.

2.3. The CSO shall ensure meaningful participation of stakeholders, namely beneficiaries and contributors, in decision making

- Beneficiary input shall be actively sought, especially at program level, and from the initial stages of planning

3. Transparency

This guideline entails openness and access to information of the CSO, both internally and externally.

3.1. The CSO shall have a Right to Information (RTI) policy encompassing the guidelines in this section

3.2. The CSO's constitution and all adopted policies, procedures, processes, etc. shall be publicly available

3.2.1. Including annual reports, financial summaries, board meeting minutes, board-member profiles, interest registers, partners list, donors list, suppliers list, etc.

3.2.2. Including the document legally registering the CSO in the country of operation

3.2.3. Including any specific laws and/or bylaws followed by the CSO

3.2.4. The CSO shall disclose its bias if any

3.3. Any withheld information shall be stated explicitly with a valid reason

3.3.1. Reasons include proprietary, strategic advantage, security, etc.

3.3.2. Individual donors of nominal amounts shall remain anonymous

3.4. The CSO shall provide for independent, i.e. external, auditing of financial accounts

3.5. The CSO shall ensure easy access to information

3.5.1. Directly accessible via website

3.5.2. Emailed and/or mailed upon request

3.6. The CSO shall ensure active communication of information

3.6.1. Regular updates via web posts, newsletters, press releases, advertising campaigns, etc.

3.6.2. Including contact information

4. Accountability

This guideline outlines how the CSO can be held accountable by stakeholders, i.e. who shall take responsibility for the actions of the CSO.

4.1. The CSO shall have an accountability structure that includes the board members, executive directors, managers and staff

4.1.1. It shall define who is accountable to whom and for what

- Using objective criteria

4.1.2. There shall be a consensus among all parties as to their position in the structure and the respective responsibilities

4.2. The CSO shall have a feedback mechanism

4.2.1. That caters to both internal and external feedback

4.2.2. That has the capacity to handle questions, comments, suggestions, concerns, grievances, etc.

4.2.3. That contains a process for addressing the feedback, i.e. a response mechanism

- Including criteria for prioritising
- Including accountability panels or committees to take action
- Including a timeline for response

4.3. The CSO's constitution and all adopted policies, procedures, processes, etc. shall be properly and clearly documented

5. Integrity

This guideline defines general principles that build and improve a CSO's reputation.

5.1. The CSO shall have a code of ethics

- It shall include conflict of interest

5.2. The CSO shall have a whistle blower policy and mechanism

5.2.1. It shall encourage evidence based reporting

5.3. The CSO shall be politically independent and non-partisan

5.4. The CSO shall be law abiding

5.4.1. Both local and international laws

5.4.2. Including international agreements, covenants, conventions, protocols, etc.

5.4.3. The CSO may lobby for changes to laws, international agreements, etc.

5.4.4. The CSO shall be strictly non violent

5.4.5. The CSO may break a law only if doing so is directly related to its vision, mission, values and principles which are not in contrary with any accepted human rights standards and conventions.

5.5. The CSO shall be a champion of human rights

5.5.1. It shall abide by and advocate human rights laws

5.5.2. It shall preserve the culture, beliefs and dignity of the beneficiaries

5.5.3. It shall foster diversity

5.5.4. It shall not discriminate under any circumstances

5.6. The CSO shall comply with international accounting standards

5.7. The CSO shall strive for a diversified funding base

5.8. The CSO shall not compete with other CSOs

5.8.1. It shall seek a vision and mission independent from existing CSOs

5.8.2. It shall forge partnerships when and/or where an overlap may occur with other CSOs

5.9. The CSO shall place equal focus and importance on the means of delivery as well as the end results

5.10. The CSOs performance shall be based on actions and effect on society rather than purely financial

5.10.1. The CSO shall demonstrate value for money

5.10.2. The CSO shall be strictly non profit

- Surpluses must be reinvested in furthering its vision, mission, values and principles

5.11. The CSO shall use established best practices when adopting/developing its constitution, policies, procedures, processes, etc.

5.12. The CSO shall implement a quality management system

5.12.1. Including proper referencing procedures in research

5.12.2. Including an approval structure for reports and publications

5.12.3. Including mistake proofing mechanisms

6. Monitoring

This guideline defines principles for monitoring programs/projects to ensure alignment with goals in the interim, upon and beyond completion. Also included is compliance monitoring of the CSO against adopted values and principles.

6.1. The CSO shall conduct internal audits to ensure compliance with its constitution and all adopted policies, procedures, processes, etc.

- Including updating them as necessary

6.2. The CSO shall have a performance evaluation process for board, donors and suppliers

- Including feedback from superiors, subordinates and peers

6.3. The CSO shall conduct objective comparisons of the results of its work to stated targets and established standards

6.3.1. It shall focus on measures that make a difference rather than measures that are simply countable

- It shall prove effectiveness of output based on delivery, cost, quality, resource management and decision making
 - It shall show compliance with policies, values, rules, standards, etc.
- 6.3.2. It shall regularly assess its progress against the adopted action plan
- 6.3.3. It shall conduct an assessment at the completion of a program/project
- 6.3.4. It shall conduct regular assessments of programs/projects post completion
- 6.4. The CSO shall obtain narratives and personal accounts of the impact of its work directly from the beneficiaries**
- 6.5. The CSO shall incorporate monitoring activities into its strategic plans and program planning**
- Including budget allocation for monitoring purposes
- 6.6. The CSO shall take action to correct any deviation or lapse from stated action plan, targets, standards, etc.**
- It shall make appropriate adjustments to program execution, planning, budgeting, etc. with respect to the insight and knowledge gained from monitoring activities

7. Sustainability

This guideline is concerned with the long term impact of CSO work on the communities/people they serve and the environment in which they function. Also included is the long term viability of the CSO itself.

7.1. The CSO shall be cognizant of the rights of all life on earth

- Including the environment

7.2. The ultimate goal of the CSO shall be to empower the beneficiaries to assume responsibility for their own development

7.2.1. By empowering people to think, speak and act for themselves

- Through information sharing
- Through skills development

7.2.2. By seeking the root cause of problems

7.3. The CSO shall implement strategic plans with 10 to 20 year timelines for programs

7.3.1. To ensure long term strategies instead of “quick fixes”

7.3.2. Short term action plans shall be used to aid implementation

7.4. The CSO shall make every effort to adapt to changing circumstances

- By incorporating flexibility and responsiveness in all its policies, procedures, processes, etc.

7.5. The CSO shall be committed to continuous improvement

- 7.5.1. Based on knowledge, experience and feedback gained
- 7.5.2. Including constitution and all other policies, procedure, processes, etc.
- 7.5.3. It shall create new policies, procedures, processes, etc. as necessary

7.6. The CSO shall endeavour to be self sustainable

- Through income generation

8. Human Resources

This guideline contains principles for hiring and managing human resources.

8.1. The CSO shall empower staff and managers for decision making

- 8.1.1. By empowering employees to think, speak and act for themselves
- 8.1.2. By clearly communicating expected results, available resources, etc. to all concerned parties in a timely manner
- 8.1.3. By providing easy access to all relevant information and resources
- 8.1.4. By providing easy access to senior managers and experts
- 8.1.5. By providing guidance and support at all stages of a program/project

8.2. The CSO shall monitor and assess the exercise of authority and responsibility by its staff and take appropriate action as necessary

- 8.2.1. By conducting regular performance assessments including superior, subordinate and peer feedback

8.3. The CSO shall provide proper training and development to its staff

- 8.3.1. By having a personalised development plan for each staff member
- 8.3.2. By providing orientation for new hires

8.4. The CSO shall have properly defined roles and responsibilities for each staff member

- Including a clear definition of scope of work and authority

8.5. The CSO shall provide for democratic participation of the staff members in its management

- Including meaningful participation in decision making

8.6. The CSO shall be an equal opportunity employer

- Strict non discriminatory hiring practices

- Hired individuals are aligned with the CSO's values and principles

8.7. The CSO shall have fair and merit based remuneration and promotions

8.8. The CSO shall fulfill all statutory obligations

- Including benefits, EPF, ETF, etc.

8.9. The CSO shall provide for the health and safety of the staff according to international regulations

8.10. The CSO shall nurture creativity and resourcefulness among its staff