



# SAN CODE OF RESEARCH ETHICS

South African San Institute 2017



# RESPECT

We require respect, not only for individuals but also for the community.

We require respect for our culture, which also includes our history. We have certain sensitivities that are not known by others. Respect is shown when we can input into all research endeavours at all stages so that we can explain these sensitivities.

Respect for our culture includes respect for our relationship with the environment.

Respect for individuals requires the protection of our privacy at all times.

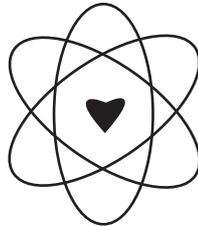
Respect requires that our contribution to research is acknowledged at all times.

Respect requires that promises made by researchers need to be met.

Respectful researchers engage with us in advance of carrying out research. There should be no assumption that San will automatically approve of any research projects that are brought to us.

We have encountered lack of respect in many instances in the past. In Genomics research, our leaders were avoided, and respect was not shown to them. Researchers took photographs of individuals in their homes, of breastfeeding mothers, or of underage children, whilst ignoring our social customs and norms. Bribes or other advantages were offered.

Failure by researchers to meet their promises to provide feedback is an example of disrespect which is encountered frequently.



# HONESTY

We require honesty from all those who come to us with research proposals.

We require an open and clear exchange between the researchers and our leaders. The language must be clear, not academic. Complex issues must be carefully and correctly described, not simply assuming the San cannot understand. There must be a totally honest sharing of information.

Open exchange should not patronise the San. Open exchanges implies that an assessment was made of possible harms or problems for the San resulting from the research and that these possible harms are honestly communicated.

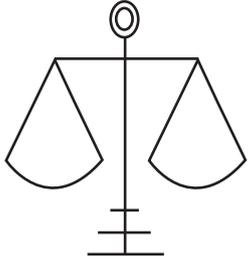
Prior informed consent can only be based on honesty in the communications, which needs to be carefully documented. Honesty also means absolute transparency in all aspects of the engagement, including the funding situation, the purpose of the research, and any changes that might occur during the process.

Honesty requires an open and continuous mode of communication between the San and researchers.

We have encountered lack of honesty in many instances in the past. Researchers have deviated from the stated purpose of research, failed to honour a promise to show the San the research prior to publication, and published a biased paper based upon leading questions given to young San trainees. This lack of honesty caused much damage among the public, and harmed the trust between the collaborating organisation and the San.

Another common lack of honesty is exaggerated claims of the researcher's lack of resources, and thus the researchers' inability to provide any benefits at all.

# JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS



We require justice and fairness in research.

It is important that the San be meaningfully involved in the proposed studies, which includes learning about the benefits that the participants and the community might expect. These might be largely non-monetary but include co-research opportunities, sharing of skills and research capacity, and roles for translators and research assistants, to give some examples.

Any possible benefits should be discussed with the San, in order to ensure that these benefits do actually return to the community.

As part of justice and fairness the San will try to enforce compliance with any breach of the Code, including through the use of dispute resolution mechanisms.

In extreme cases the listing and publication of unethical researchers in a “black book” might be considered. An institution whose researchers fail to comply with the Code can be refused collaboration in future research. Hence, there will be “consequences” for researchers who fail to comply with the Code.

We have encountered lack of justice and fairness in many instances in the past. These include theft of San traditional knowledge by researchers. At the same time, many companies in South Africa and globally are benefitting from our traditional knowledge in sales of indigenous plant varieties without benefit sharing agreements, proving the need for further compliance measures to ensure fairness.

## CARE

Research should be aligned to local needs and improve the lives of San. This means that the research process must be carried out with care for all involved, especially the San community.

The caring part of research must extend to the families of those involved, as well as to the social and physical environment.

Excellence in research is also required, in order for it to be positive and caring for the San. Research that is not up to a high standard might result in bad interactions, which will be lacking in care for the community.

Caring research needs to accept the San people as they are, and take note of the cultural and social requirements of this Code of Ethics.

We have encountered lack of care in many instances in the past. For instance, we were spoken down to, or confused with complicated scientific language, or treated as ignorant. Failing to ensure that something is left behind that improves the lives of the San also represents lack of care.





## PROCESS

Researchers need to follow the processes that are set out in our research protocols carefully, in order for this Code of Ethics to work.

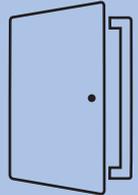
The San research protocol that the San Council will manage is an important process that we have decided on, which will set out specific requirements through every step of the research process.

This process starts with a research idea that is collectively designed, through to approval of the project, and subsequent publications.

The San commit to engaging fairly with researchers and manage effectively all stages of the research process, as their resources allow. They also commit to respecting the various local San structures (e.g. Communal Property Association, CPA leaders) in their communications between San leaders and San communities.

Andries Steenkamp, the respected San leader who contributed to this Code of Ethics until he passed away in 2016, asked researchers to come through the door, not the window.

The door stands for the San processes. When researchers respect the door, the San can have research that is positive for us.



### Contact Details: [admin@sasi.org.za](mailto:admin@sasi.org.za)

South African San Institute, 4 Sanda Park,  
Platfontein Farm, Barkly-West /  
Kimberley Road, Kimberley,  
Northern Cape, South Africa.

