
Blueprint for Stabilizing Football Legends Structures

By Dennis Mumble

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Background

On 26 July 2025, Football Legends gathered in Pretoria to reconcile their differences and selected a steering committee to lead the Legends of Football to a unified national structure that is representative of the broader community of Legends.

A national elective conference is anticipated to be held sometime in 2026. This is a reasonable timeline because ordinary electoral processes and timelines can be met and will avoid any legal challenges that may arise.

Ordinarily, affiliate structures need time to prepare their congresses for regulatory consolidation; electoral committee selection; and delegate & national nominee selection. Candidates for office would need time to register their candidacies and campaign to promote their proposals for a better future for the Legends. The 2026 deadline lends itself to mounting a campaign focused on the best solutions.

But any election conducted under rules not approved by a majority of the members and unrealistic timelines will not be credible. Therefore, the new leadership must be commended for their vision for a new SAMFLA.

A Brief History

In 2004, the South African Masters Football Association (SAMFA) was admitted as an Associate Member of the South African Football Association (SAFA).



In 2008, the NEC appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to facilitate discussions with another group named the South African Legends Football Association, who sought admission as a member. Following a report from the Ad Hoc Committee, the SAFA NEC resolved on 26 September 2008 not to recommend admission of the Legends structure as an Associate Member and that the group be absorbed into the constitutional structure named the South African Masters Football Association.

Initially led by Chief Mwelo Nonkonyana, the then SAFA Vice-President, and supported by this writer (COO), Morio Sanyane (Stakeholder Relations Manager), and Peter Sejake (Manager: Membership Affairs), negotiations to form a unified structure was commenced.

Discussions to merge these structures continued until 2012 when an agreement was reached between three groups (Masters, Legends, and the South Africa Soccer Legends, led by the late John Tlale). The name "South African Masters and Legends Football Association (SAMLFA)" was

proposed by Peter Sejake and accepted by all the parties in attendance in my office. A recommendation was then forwarded to the NEC for adoption of the SAMLFA name.

Thereafter, Peter Sejake, Morio Sanyane and I met the leaders of the groups to create a roadmap for consolidation of the structure and the adoption of a new constitution to enable it to be presented to the NEC for a recommendation for approval by the SAFA Congress. The SAFA Congress of 29 September 2012 formally accepted the name change (paragraph 16 on page 8 of that Congress Minute).

However, the discussions on a constitution for the renamed structure stalled in 2013 when a few individuals who were not part of the unity discussions hastily convened a meeting on 18 August 2013, ostensibly to discuss the consolidation of the structure. The then-President of SAFA, Kirsten Nematandani, was invited to attend and asked me to accompany him to that meeting. At that stage, Nematandani was unclear about the purpose of the meeting.

It was only upon entering the meeting that Nematandani discovered that it appeared to be an elective meeting. He thought it would merely be another logistical meeting in line with the ongoing consolidation effort, and he expected to deliver just a few words of encouragement.

The meeting was attended by only a handful of former players but quickly devolved into an elective meeting. For good measure, when Fran Hilton-Smith entered the meeting, having been invited informally and late, she was informed by Buddha Mathathe that she was also added to the executive committee. Fran, surprised, just shrugged her shoulders and took a seat in the meeting, held in the SAFA House Main Boardroom.

Following that meeting, Nematandani requested that we try to ascertain the legitimacy of this

meeting. We engaged in correspondence with the “Interim Committee” regarding the procedures used to convene the surprise election.



The final letter sent to the Interim Committee “elected” on 18 August 2013, dated 22 August 2013, requested:

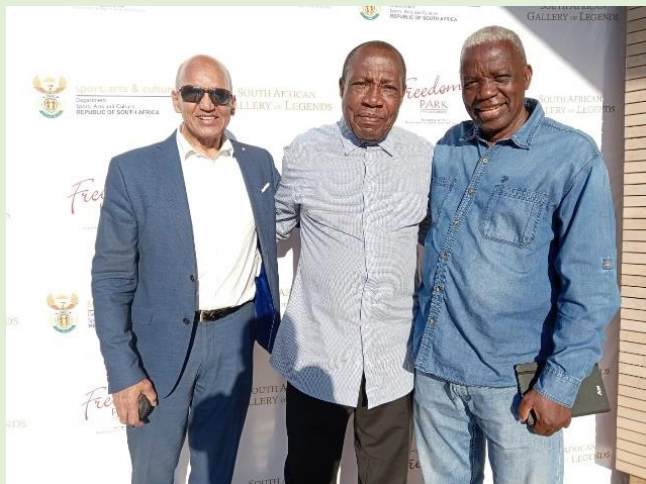
- (i) the Notice convening that meeting of 18 August 2013;
- (ii) the Minutes of the 18 August 2013 meeting;
- (iii) the attendance register for the same meeting;
- (iv) the Statutes of SAMLFA approved by a duly constituted congress.

No reply was forthcoming.

Since then, the “Interim Committee” has failed to produce an approved constitution; convene a congress; never accounted for the finances of the organization; and did not issue a single report since its inception on 18 August 2013.

Therefore, the South African Masters and Legends Football Association (SAMLFA) does not have a legitimate constitution since it commenced its activities in 2013. An attempt was made to convene a SAMLFA Congress in June 2019, under the supervision of SAFA (then-Head of Legal, Tebogo Motlanthe and then-Head of Football Business, Mzwandile Maforvane), following a complaint to the SAFA President by SAMLFA

Gauteng Province, but the CEO of SAMLFA, David Nyathi was not capable of issuing the proper notices and to prepare the financial and activity reports, so the meeting was postponed to be reconvened within 3 months. To date, that congress was never reconvened.



The Recent Attempts to Unite the Former Players

A draft constitution, clearly copied and pasted from the SAFA Statutes, is now in circulation following the meeting of former players held in Pretoria in July 2025. The wording of that constitution is derived from selected parts of the SAFA Statutes, which structure was adopted for the first time on 1 December 2010. The composition of the NEC also clearly reflects a breakdown of an executive committee only adopted by the SAFA Congress in September 2015.

The “constitution” has many fatal flaws, mostly by omission of key provisions:

- It has no regard for the standard principles of constitutional construction, i.e. the separation of powers, how rules are made, what is the organizational framework (the bodies and their roles), the founding principles, definition of the relationship between the organization and its members, who the members are other than that “the founder members of SAMLFA

are the NEC members”. It does not state who the NEC members are.

- There are no dispute resolution mechanisms.
- It does not state how the constitution can be amended.
- There is an “Ethics Code and Conduct” heading with no content.
- It does not define key phrases in the “constitution”.
- It does not have an Article that spells out the composition of the executive committee.
- The Article on the election procedures makes provision for a President; four Vice-Presidents; two representatives from each Province, taken from the Provincial List; and an undefined number of additional members from the National List. It does not specify how these lists are constructed. The assumption is that the executive body will be as large as SAFA’s NEC.
- The criteria for “nominations for the Provincial Representatives can only be made by a Member (Region) from that particular Province nominating such a Representative” (page 4).
- The Articles have no unique numbers.
- It states that “*Only two (2) Members per Province, Region and Local football association are eligible to vote*”, without clarifying what it means. Does that mean that each Province, Region and LFA get two votes each?
- NEC Members are allowed to vote in contravention of a well-established FIFA principle that only institutional members can vote. Elected officials are not institutional members.
- The language of the circulated “constitution” only entered the SAFA constitutional lexicon for the first time on 26 March 2022 when the SAFA Statutes was last amended. The “constitution” therefore appears to have been cobbled together only after March 2022.

In the absence of a duly approved constitution and any accompanying regulations, no approved

election rules exist. Ordinary procedure would have necessitated that a national congress first be convened for the purpose of adopting a constitution and electoral rules.

The Way Forward

What are the alternative paths to arrive at the end result of having free, fair, and credible elections through independent oversight? FIFA has provided a guideline named the *FIFA Standard Electoral Code*, which requires that all its members abide by its general principles. SAFA adopted a *SAFA Electoral Code* in 2012, based on the FIFA Standard Electoral Code. The Code is applicable to all SAFA Members (Article 1b) and any elections must therefore be conducted under this Code.

In 2015, SAFA adopted a set of *Standard Statutes for Provinces, Regions and Local Football Associations* to standardize governance in all its members. However, no Standard Statutes were adopted for Associate Members. The *SAFA Standard Statutes* contained electoral timelines, nomination procedures and how to conduct the elections in a conference.

The SAFA Electoral Code governs the election of an Electoral Committee to oversee the elections. This Committee is responsible for overseeing the election as prescribed in the constitution of the association/member. The Code governs the appointment and operation of the Electoral Committee. It therefore stands to reason that an Electoral Committee must be appointed by a **representative gathering** to conduct the elections independently, freely, and fairly.

Step 1

Convene a national congress to approve a constitution. The draft constitution does have election procedures but it does not specify the size of the national executive committee to be elected. Instead, it uses part of the template of

the SAFA Statutes (a National and Provincial List structure similar to SAFA National). This would result in a very bloated executive committee and is unsustainable for a fledgling organization with very few resources.

Article 1 of the Draft Constitution outlines the election procedure and makes provision for positions on the national executive committee as follows:

- 1 x President
- 4 x Vice-Presidents
- National List Members (number not specified)
- 2 x Provincial List Members from each Province (18)



SAFA has the world's largest national executive committee but is functionally/financially the world's poorest federation, with its liabilities outstripping its assets by a factor of 10:1. SAMLFA has even fewer resources and cannot sustain a large executive committee.

Step 2

Set a date for all Regional or Provincial structures to convene their electoral congresses. This

assumes that the members will be Regional structures which will not be established as *universitates*, which requires the adoption of a constitution first.

If each affiliate is established as a *universitas*, then each affiliate will be required to first adopt a constitution and then convene an elective congress.

Step 3

Determine the competencies required to convene an elective congress, with strict adherence to the timelines and procedures set out in the rules and regulations (constitution and electoral code).

Key Competencies

1. Governance & Legal Compliance

- Interim Governance Framework: Since the national constitution is not yet adopted, a temporary election framework or “interim electoral code” must be drafted and adopted by consensus to regulate the process.
- Understanding of the Regulatory Framework: Knowledge of sports governance rules and regulations, especially FIFA, SAFA, and related guidelines.
- Dispute Resolution Awareness: Ability to set up internal dispute resolution structures (appeals, objections) to prevent escalation to courts or SAFA before exhausting internal remedies.

2. Constitutional & Policy Drafting Competence

- Drafting Skills: Ability to prepare basic election rules: eligibility of voters, nomination procedures, election timelines, voting methods, and quorum requirements.
- Harmonisation: Ensure that Provincial election rules anticipate eventual alignment with a national constitution once adopted.

3. Organisational & Project Management

- Planning Competence: Develop election timelines, milestones, and checklists.
- Resource Management: Budgeting for venues, logistics, printing of ballots, or digital systems.
- Risk Management: Identify risks (e.g. disputes, low turnout, manipulation) and prepare contingencies.

4. Electoral Administration

- Voter Management: Compile and verify a credible provincial voter register (eligibility criteria must be transparent and defensible).
- Nomination Management: Process nominations fairly, ensure vetting for eligibility, publish candidate lists.
- Voting & Counting: Competence in designing ballots, securing ballot boxes, electronic or manual vote counting, and ensuring transparency in counting.
- Independent Oversight: Ability to engage independent observers or auditors to validate the process.

5. Communication & Stakeholder Engagement

- Information Management: Clear communication of rules, timelines, eligibility criteria, and results.
- Conflict Sensitivity: Ability to handle tensions, grievances, and competing factions diplomatically.
- Transparency & Record-Keeping: Ensure proceedings are minuted, results published, and records archived.

6. Ethics & Integrity Management

- Code of Conduct: Develop and enforce rules for candidates, officials, and voters to prevent

misconduct (vote buying, intimidation, abuse of position).

- Training: Train election officials in neutrality, fairness, and confidentiality.

7. Technical Competencies

- ICT Systems: Basic competence in digital tools for communication, voter database management, and possibly e-voting (if feasible).
- Data Protection: Secure handling of personal data in compliance with POPIA (Protection of Personal Information Act).

In short:

To move toward Provincial elections, **governance, legal, project management, electoral administration, communication, integrity, and technical competencies** are needed. Each Province should set up a Provincial Electoral Committee (PEC) composed of respected, skilled and independent individuals to oversee the process with credibility.

Roadmap for Organising Provincial Elections Leading to a National Election

Step 1: Establish Interim Rules (Before Elections Begin)

- Accept the **SAFA Electoral Code** (a clear set of rules) that will govern all Provincial elections until a national constitution is adopted.
- Key elements to include:
 - Eligibility to vote and stand for election
 - Nomination process and deadlines
 - Election date and timelines
 - Voting method (secret ballot, show of hands, etc.)

- Quorum requirements
- Dispute resolution and appeals process
- Circulate the draft to provincial stakeholders for comments → adopt by consensus.

Step 2: Set Up Electoral Structures

- National Interim Electoral Committee (NIEC): A respected, neutral body to oversee the entire process.
- Provincial Electoral Committees (PECs): Appointed by the NIEC to run elections at provincial level.
- Define roles (this is already contained in the SAFA Electoral Code):
 - Chairperson (overall responsibility)
 - Returning Officer (manages nominations, ballots, counting)
 - Observers (ensure transparency)
 - Secretary (minutes, communication)

Step 3: Prepare for Provincial Elections

- *Voter Register:*
 - Compile a credible list of eligible members in each province.
 - Make the register public for inspection → allow objections/corrections.
- *Nomination Process:*
 - Open and public call for candidates.
 - Nomination forms, with proposer/seconded requirements.
 - Verification of eligibility (age, membership, good standing).
- *Election Notices:*
 - Announce election date, venue, time, and procedures well in advance.

Step 4: Conduct Provincial Elections

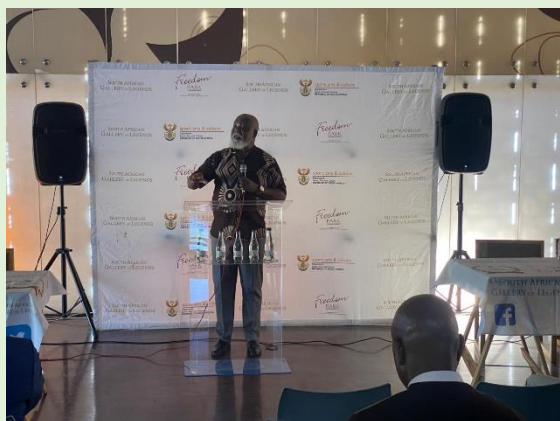
- Pre-Election Briefing: Train election officials and brief candidates on the rules.
- Voting Process:
 - Secure ballot papers or electronic system.
 - Ensure secrecy and integrity of vote.
- Counting & Results:
 - Counting done in public view.
 - Results recorded, signed by officials and candidates' agents.
 - Results announced immediately and published officially.

Step 5: Dispute Resolution

- Provide a clear objections and appeals window (e.g. 48 hours).
- Appeals go first to the PEC, then (if unresolved) to the NIEC.
- Record all complaints and decisions in writing for transparency.

Step 6: Consolidate Provincial Outcomes

- Each province submits certified election results to the NIEC.
- NIEC compiles a National Register of Elected Provincial Representatives.
- Publish results to build credibility and trust.



Step 7: Prepare for National Election

- Once provincial elections are concluded:
 - Convene the National General Assembly of Provincial / Regional delegates.
 - Draft and adopt a National Constitution (drawing on provincial experience and interim rules).
 - Elect national office-bearers in line with the new constitution.

Step 8: Post-Election Administration

- Archive all election materials (ballots, minutes, registers).
- Publish a final Election Report with outcomes and lessons learned.
- Begin capacity-building for the new provincial and national leadership.

Guiding Principles for the Process

1. **Transparency** – publish rules, registers, results.
2. **Fairness** – equal treatment of all candidates and provinces.
3. **Credibility** – independent observers, respected election officials.
4. **Continuity** – ensure provincial rules anticipate eventual national alignment.
5. **Integrity** – zero tolerance for manipulation, vote-buying, intimidation.