



Safeguarding Action Plan

Progress Report

March 2022 – February 2023



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**



Contents

Foreword.....	3
Note on KPI target count.....	6
Progress against plan	7
A. Holistic support, justice and incident management.....	7
B. Participation of children and young people in shaping safeguarding measures and understanding their rights	12
C. Child and youth care practitioner working conditions, role, wellbeing, learning and development	15
D. People, culture and human resources practices for safeguarding.....	19
E. Oversight, leadership, governance and accountability for safeguarding	30
F. Investment for high quality programmes across the federation	36



Foreword

In June 2021, SOS Children's Villages put in place a four-year Safeguarding Action Plan in response to reports commissioned by the organization to better understand past safeguarding failures and identify ways to improve safeguarding practice. With the release of this progress report, we are now nearly halfway through the plan. This moment provides us with the opportunity to take stock of where we stand – not only against the plan itself but also with respect to safeguarding as a whole at SOS Children's Villages. While facing the challenge of transforming a federated organization across more than 130 countries, we have made good progress.

We are seeing significant changes in our systems and procedures through the implementation of critical safeguarding frameworks and transformational initiatives such as our global ombudsperson project. Since our last report of April 2022, we have advanced on all 24 actions of our Safeguarding Action Plan. Nearly 70% of the 35 indicators defined in the plan are on track or completed. At the same time, we also face the reality of the resources and time needed to implement actions across the entire federation. Based on the learnings, we have identified the need to revise the Safeguarding Action Plan moving forward.

The biggest change I have seen is the **significant shift in awareness** throughout the organization. There is recognition that safeguarding, creating an environment where everyone we are in contact with is safe, is central to achieving our mission. We have had difficult conversations and made critical decisions necessary for transformation.

We are eagerly awaiting the final report of the Independent Special Commission (ISC), expected to be made public in the next month. The establishment in 2021 of the ISC, a body of high-level independent experts, was a crucial milestone in investigating past organizational failures and finding the way forward. The ISC's interim report provided valuable suggestions for improvement, and their final report will be feeding into the review and revision of the Safeguarding Action Plan.

Our goal is twofold: to listen to and provide individualized support to anyone in the past who has experienced harm, and to prevent harm in the future.

Responding to people who come forward – listen and support

We have encouraged – and continue to encourage – everyone with any knowledge of abuse or other misconduct to come forward, and we are thankful to those who have spoken out or are currently considering doing so. The most important proof of this shift in mindset is demonstrated by the many people who felt they could come forward. Supporting these victims/survivors of past abuse has brought insights and learnings that feed directly into the prevention work we do across the federation.

In my conversations with victims/survivors, there is one that stands out for me. A young man shared that due to the prolonged trauma of abuse he experienced in care, he lost all his confidence. His primary goal was to become self-reliant, to feel in control of his life. He shared with me that finally being seen and his abuse being acknowledged by individuals and by the organization has helped him in his healing process. I am incredibly honoured he felt safe to share his experience with me. Fortunately, since coming forward and receiving support to finish his education and find work, he is on the path to regaining his confidence and independence.

Addressing past abuse is an extremely sensitive and personal topic. Making sure we respond to allegations and providing individualized support as professionally as possible has been our top priority of the last two years. In the vast majority of cases, we are responding appropriately, but we acknowledge that some



individuals have experienced unacceptable delays in receiving the support they need. We are committed to improving our response and response time by **making fundamental changes in our systems and procedures**, many of which will be in place by mid-2023.

Creating a safe environment

Since our previous progress report, a number of major policy frameworks and procedures to regulate conduct, manage risks and handle incidents have been finalized or are under way. For example:

- Regulations on incident management and investigations have been completed, and the process of implementation across the federation of more than 130 countries and territories has begun.
- Roll-out of the regulation on the prevention of sexual misconduct (PSHEA) is progressing well and will continue in about 40 national associations this year.
- The Code of Conduct and the *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy* have been revised and will be implemented after their anticipated final approval mid-2023.
- A values-based competency framework was approved in 2022 and is being rolled out.

These frameworks will have a significant impact on our ability to create a safe environment for the people participating in our programmes as well as staff. The policies and procedures will standardize our processes, bringing them up to international standards. For example, our incident management and investigation regulations will provide transparent reporting and responding processes and procedures across child safeguarding, adult safeguarding and asset protection. They define the necessary steps to manage incidents from receiving a complaint to its closure and detail the methodology of how to conduct an investigation. Most importantly, these regulations increase the protection of victims/survivors and the subjects of complaints.

Another important insight we have obtained regarding our Safeguarding Action Plan is through **our Ombuds project**. While the pace of implementation has been slower than we originally planned, there have been unexpected benefits. The project is innovative in that it brings in full participation of children and young people in establishing an independent system that represents their needs. Associations that have piloted this novel approach are observing that it is increasing child and youth participation within programmes overall and contributing to a more balanced power dynamic. We consider this an improvement in programme quality and something we have been striving for.

In addition, prevention work continues to be strengthened. This involves, for example, training child and youth care practitioners in recognizing, preventing and responding to harmful behaviour. We also run a programme called Protective Behaviours which teaches children to recognize abuse and seek help when they feel unsafe.

The way forward – structural transformation

We continue to make progress in the key areas that the Safeguarding Action Plan is designed to address. However, at the same, we face the reality of the resources and time needed to implement fundamental changes across the entire federation. COVID-19 and inflation have added pressure on budgets and timelines. In addition, our work has identified the need to revise the Safeguarding Action Plan in order to achieve the necessary transformation.

Our federated structure of 121 national member associations presents challenges for the implementation of our safeguarding goals. Enforcing compliance in certain instances remains difficult. We must find a way to better balance the need for independence alongside compliance with global safeguarding requirements. We aim to address this when our highest governing body convenes in July of this year. The General Assembly will be reviewing the Statutes of SOS Children's Villages International and the accompanying rules of procedure.



A **cross-functional safeguarding unit** is being set up at the General Secretariat to drive implementation of the Safeguarding Action Plan and ensure consistent monitoring and oversight of safeguarding activities across the entire federation. It will be in place by the end of 2023. The unit will be led by an international director reporting directly to the CEO. An interim director is in place, and recruitment for the permanent position is close to completion. The unit will monitor and promote compliance with binding federation-wide safeguarding policies and regulations.

The results of this progress report, along with the Independent Special Commission's recommendations next month, will feed into a revised Safeguarding Action Plan. This will include refinement of timelines and key performance indicators.

Learning how to address safeguarding failures in our organization's past is critical to our ability to move forward with delivering our mission: we exist to ensure all children and young people grow up in a safe, secure family environment with someone by their side they can trust – so they can become their strongest selves.

I thank everyone, including staff, donors, partners, and the Independent Special Commission, who has worked hard and continues to dedicate their efforts to transforming our organization. We remain committed to creating a safe environment for everyone who engages with us.

Ingrid Maria Johansen
Chief Executive Officer
SOS Children's Villages International



Note on KPI target count

There are 137 SOS Children's Villages entities operating at the national level. This includes 121 formal members and 16 legally dependent entities operated by SOS Children's Villages International. The target count for most key performance indicators (KPIs) presented is set at 137 entities which we call national associations in this report; in some instances, however, this number differs due to variability in the scope of individual actions. The rationale for the reduced scope of specific actions will be explained under "Further Information."



Progress against plan

A. Holistic support, justice and incident management

Action 1 (priority):

Immediate support for those who have experienced abuse

To ensure those affected are supported towards healing, reconciliation, and becoming self-reliant



We have taken proactive steps to reach out to people who have experienced or may have knowledge of past abuse or other misconduct within the organization.

For those national associations that do not have sufficient resources to cover immediate support for persons affected by abuse, a project has been established to provide them with dedicated funding. Since May 2021, 19 national associations have received approval for additional funding.

At the end of 2022, 545 people (110 children and young people in our care and 435 adults) were receiving or were expected to receive support under this project. This group includes individuals who were confronted by abuse in different ways:

- people who have experienced or witnessed abuse while in our care
- children and young people who experienced abuse before entering our care, when the national association does not have sufficient resources to provide specialized care
- staff who have experienced or witnessed abuse or who need to be able to respond to the needs of children and young people affected by abuse

The approach to providing support for people affected by abuse centres on developing individual support plans with realistic actions that are likely to help the person the most in their recovery. Each person agrees on their plan with their caseworker. Support and services may include, for example, the following:

- People affected by abuse can receive **immediate support in meeting urgent needs**, such as living allowances or support with access to shelter and medical care. If the organization is unable to arrange the support someone needs right away, the person can receive financial support so that they can make their own arrangements.
- **Psychological counselling** is provided by an internal or external mental health practitioner as needed, if the person wishes to receive this support.
- A caseworker is available to help the person affected by abuse make **a longer-term individual plan** that can include, for example, skills training for a job the person is interested in, studies that would help them find a good job, a small amount of money to start a small business, coaching, help with parenting or social skills, or help with securing identity documents.

In addition to the support services provided as part of an individual plan, persons affected by abuse can also receive **legal support**. This includes facilitating access to legal services and engaging lawyers experienced with cases of abuse so that victims/survivors can bring their abusers to justice. In some countries, the project has helped in reserving slots in courts so cases can be dealt with in an acceptable and timely manner.

While in most of the incidents of abuse reported since May 2021 national associations and the General Secretariat followed the approach described above, there have been several cases where the organizational response was very slow, and the persons affected by abuse were not offered all the support they needed.



Improvements in overall monitoring, as discussed in action 3, steps to increase resources continuously available to national safeguarding teams, and further clarification of procedures that are to be applied with past incidents of abuse will help lower the risk of similar issues occurring in the future. Additionally, it is important to continue strengthening investigative capacity on the national and global level, so that SOS Children's Villages can swiftly conduct high-quality investigations and assessments of abuse.

A full overview of the child safeguarding incidents reported in 2022 will be provided in the Child Safeguarding Annual Report, to be published later this year. Our latest annual statistics can be found in the [Child Safeguarding Annual Report 2021/2022](#).

KPI

106

National associations implement global user guide, *Listening and Responding to Individuals Experiences of Past Child Abuse*, including minimum standards for individualized support, by December 2024

KPI status

On track

December 2022: **83**

Further information

No data has been received from national associations in Western Europe and North America. Hence, the region has been left out of the target count, bringing the total to 106 national associations.



Action 2 (priority): Ombudsperson

To represent the rights of children, young people and others affected by abuse



An independent global Ombuds Board has been established with the main duty to select the global ombuds, who will be accountable to the Board. This is a crucial step to ensure the independence of the whole Ombuds Office. The five board members have vast experience in the fields of child rights and academia as well as in the ombuds arena.

Until the global ombuds has been selected and onboarded, Judi Fairholm and Andrew Azzopardi, senior consultants from the child protection consulting company Proteknôn, have taken on the role on an interim basis. They will be leading the Ombuds Office, whose role is to supervise national and regional ombuds, build capacity and manage issues and complaints at the global level. A permanent global ombuds is expected to be recruited by mid-2023.

The positions of two regional ombuds, for West, Central and North Africa and for Latin America and the Caribbean, are also being filled on an interim basis. The recruitment of permanent staff has been challenging due to the rare profile. Final interviews with candidates for the position of permanent regional ombuds for West, Central and North Africa are expected to close shortly.

National ombuds have been recruited in Benin and Sierra Leone, and the national association in Uruguay is currently finalizing recruitment. The delay is due to difficulties in finding suitable candidates who have ombuds expertise and have experience working and communicating with children.

Based on a global ombuds master charter, which serves as the framework for the approach, a detailed implementation toolkit has been developed to support roll-out at the regional and national level.

The overall rate of progress with the implementation of the ombuds system has been slower than originally planned. An ombuds system for children and young people has never been implemented before in the development sector, which means considerable time is required to design and roll out the approach while keeping children and young people at the centre.

There are signs that implementation of the ombuds approach, which includes the participation of children and young people, is facilitating more child and youth participation overall and is contributing to a shift in power to programme participants.

KPIs

KPI status



Global ombudsperson for the federation by December 2023

On track

137

national associations covered by system by December 2023

Off track

February 2023: 2
Expected by December 2023: 30



Implementation of the ombuds approach in Benin



SOS Children's Villages Benin was keen to pilot the ombuds approach to provide children and young people with an independent contact point in addition to its existing safeguarding mechanisms.

First, children and young people were consulted to inform the development of the ombuds master charter as well as the job description for the national ombuds.

After receiving appropriate training, child and youth representatives interviewed and rated six shortlisted candidates. The interim global ombuds, who were responsible for making the decision, selected the children and young people's first choice candidate, Dona Houansou.

The newly appointed national ombuds visited all programme locations in the country to introduce herself and the new role and to explain how children and young people can contact her (personally, during a regular visit, via a website, by phone, by email, or via youth representatives or designated staff).

A young person who participated in the project sees Ms. Houansou's next steps as follows: "In her first 100 days of work, I hope she will get in touch with us and try to create strong bonds."

In addition to working with children and young people, the national ombuds will submit annual reports and recommendations for improvement to the national director and the Ombuds Office. Her work will be monitored and evaluated by the regional ombuds based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative tools such as questionnaires and focus groups.



Action 3 (priority): Incident management system for persons that have experienced abuse

Consistently implemented across the entire federation



As reported previously, the General Secretariat is developing a federation-wide web-based Safeguarding Information Management System that will collect and securely store data on safeguarding incidents and compliance with binding safeguarding requirements. In the first phase, the system will include data on child safeguarding, sexual misconduct and asset protection incidents. At a later stage, the system will also capture information on adult safeguarding and overall compliance with binding policies and regulations.

The software will be developed in 2023 and rolled out from 2024 onwards. A business analyst and a project manager have been appointed.

Piloting of an interim real-time reporting system in West, Central and Northern Africa has brought significant improvement in internal communication and monitoring of incidents. This functionality to manage real-time information flow will be included in the Safeguarding Information Management System, so no further implementation of the interim solution is planned.

National associations will be required to implement either the Safeguarding Information Management System or an equivalent locally developed solution.

KPIs

KPI status



Real-time reporting platform on child safeguarding incidents of abusive behaviour developed by the end of 2021

Completed

137

national associations implement the incident management system by December 2023

Not started

System roll-out has been delayed until 2024.

Further information

The development of the real-time reporting platform was a response to the urgent gap in communication flow on and monitoring of reported child safeguarding incidents among various stakeholders in the federation.



B. Participation of children and young people in shaping safeguarding measures and understanding their rights

Action 4 (priority): Child and youth empowerment

Ensure children and young people are involved in decisions regarding their care, prevent peer-to-peer violence and abuse, and give them a stronger voice in safeguarding

The two-year **Applying Safe Behaviours** project (2021–23) co-funded by the EU is being implemented in Belgium, France, Italy, Romania and Spain. The aim is to equip children and young people with tools and strategies to protect themselves from peer violence, and to educate professionals on preventing and appropriately responding to this form of abuse.

Consultations with young people informed the development and delivery of the training packages in 2021–22. By the end of 2022, trainings and workshops were delivered to about 500 professionals and 450 children (aged 11–15) in schools, community centres, social programmes and SOS Children's Villages programmes.

In 2023, the project team will be disseminating [educational materials](#) developed for each age group:

- for children (aged 8–11), a booklet of stories written by children
- for young people (aged 16–19), two awareness-raising videos produced by young people
- for adults, a one-hour online course

In 2022, we collaborated with our consulting partner Proteknôn to **assess understanding of child rights and organizational safeguarding processes** in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Senegal and Tanzania. In total, 238 children and young people (aged 12–18) and 103 staff took the survey. Action plans to address the findings were then developed. Children and young people were asked for input both on the findings and the action plans. In 2023, this assessment will be carried out in Burundi, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India and Laos.

The **Protective Behaviours** programme teaches children to recognize violations of boundaries and seek help when needed. It has been taken up by some associations as an ongoing training programme. In Bulgaria, for example, the training is regularly offered to community partners, particularly schools.

KPI

30

national associations implement Protective Behaviours by December 2023

KPI status

Completed



Action 5: Youth development and participation

To ensure young people are empowered to participate in decisions affecting their care and development, and are supported in the leaving care process

Since the launch of a global youth development guide in 2020, national associations have been developing their locally contextualized youth development concepts. In February 2023, 25 associations were implementing their concepts, 22 had finalized their concepts and were awaiting the start of implementation, and 46 were still developing their concepts. Almost 2,500 young people have participated so far.

We have been working on improving child and youth participation. In 2022, youth representatives participated in Management Council and International Senate meetings and various management meetings at the national and regional level. Members of the International Youth Coalition created spaces to strengthen youth participation in ten national associations, for example youth councils in Jordan and Kenya, a child protection committee in Uruguay, and discussions with leadership on youth strategy and budget in Liberia. Children and young people are also increasingly involved in the design and monitoring of the programmes from which they are receiving support.

Newly introduced global guidance on programme services and programme change has provided additional recommendations on improving the quality of group-based care settings for young people.

An e-learning course on youth development, available in six languages, had almost 1,000 certified users by the end of 2022. Other training on youth care and development was provided to 3,400 staff members globally.

The Leaving Care: Never Walk Alone project, based on its predecessor [Leaving Care](#) and focused on training care practitioners and strengthening networks of young people who have left care, is being implemented by ten national associations in Eastern and Southern Africa and five in Asia.

In 2022, 47 national associations participated in the global youth employability initiative [YouthCan!](#), which reached 14,253 young people. It was the second year of the YouthCan! Youth Advisory Board, a group of ten young people from five countries advocating for equal youth participation in the development of YouthCan!



KPIs		KPI status
106	national associations implement a locally contextualized youth development concept by December 2024	On track February 2023: 25
20,000	young people reached through global youth employability initiative by 2024	On track December 2022: 14,253
106	national associations involve children and young people in training activities and shaping child safeguarding measures by December 2024	On track Actual 2021: 99

Further information

No data has been received from national associations in Western Europe and North America to date, so the region has been left out of the target count, bringing the total to 106 national associations.



C. Child and youth care practitioner working conditions, role, wellbeing, learning and development

Action 6: Working conditions for child and youth care practitioners

To improve the working conditions and strengthen learning and development of child and youth care practitioners

An assessment of national pay was completed by the end of 2022, which identified serious underpayment of employees including care practitioners. Funds to rectify the underpayment have been included in 2023 budgets.

Further reviews of pay will be completed in 2023 for live-in care practitioners and in 2024 for all other care practitioners. These reviews will cover all associations that receive international funding from other SOS Children's Villages associations. The resulting remuneration adjustments will be integrated into national strategies.

Full implementation of the *SOS Parent Profession User Guide*, a complex process that spans the entire employee cycle, has so far proven challenging. There is a need to improve human resources monitoring and data collection systems in all associations.

KPI

101

national associations contextualize and implement the *SOS Parent Profession User Guide*, including filling pension and compensation gaps, by December 2024

KPI status

On track

February 2023: **49**

Further information

No data has been received from national associations in Western Europe and North America to date, so the region has been left out of the target count. In addition, five national associations will start contextualizing the guide only in 2024 due to other project commitments. This brings the target to 101 national associations.



Action 7: Research on gender equality

To improve understanding of attitudes and beliefs around gender and women's rights, experiences of discrimination, differentials in pay and conditions, and gender balance in leadership

The scope of the gender equality research has been agreed on, and initial resources to implement the first phase have been allocated.

Work to promote gender equality is ongoing. Over the past year, it encompassed the following:

- Twenty-seven national associations conducted gender audits and developed action plans while another eighteen continued implementing their action plans from the previous years.
- A global programme expert group on sexual and reproductive health and rights was established under the lead of the associations in Peru and Sweden and the regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- An annual monitoring process for national associations and the General Secretariat, the Gender Equality Dashboard, is expected to be introduced in 2023.
- Capacity-building webinars and training continued throughout the federation.
- The Global Gender Network has been reactivated to support implementation of the *Gender Equality Policy*.
- The organization participated in the global Orange the World campaign against gender-based violence, with a variety of awareness materials and activities involving all regional offices and more than 60 national associations. In the two African regions, for instance, awareness raising reached over 4,350 children and young people and over 3,690 adults.

KPI



Research findings including recommendations available by December 2024

KPI status

On track



Action 8: Learning and development for care practitioners

To provide opportunities for individual, face-to-face, and digital training

In 2022, the previously piloted **Learning and Development (L&D) Framework** was rolled out in 26 African national associations. In total, 104 L&D facilitators and L&D support staff were trained.

A community of practice to provide support and follow-up to facilitators has been set up at the regional office for West, Central and North Africa. A similar community in Eastern and Southern Africa is also being created.

Across ten of the participating associations, 522 caregivers have completed initial training workshops. In two associations, Tunisia and Somaliland, the full five-week training programme has already been delivered to the first group of caregivers.

In 2022, the digital assistant chatbot **Rafiki** expanded its user base in the three initial pilot countries as well as in Ghana and Kenya. Yet another two national associations, in Lesotho and Zimbabwe, are about to start implementation. So far, Rafiki is being used by 455 care practitioners.

KPI

106

national associations ensure access to learning and development opportunities for all child and youth care practitioners

KPI status

On track

February 2023: 84

Further information

No data has been received from national associations in Western Europe and North America to date, so the region has been left out of the target count.



Training caregivers in Tunisia



SOS Children's Villages Tunisia is currently using the new L&D Framework to train its tenth group of prospective caregivers since 1999. Before the new framework, the training programme consisted of a 3-month theoretical course and 21 months of practical training. The theoretical course was set up with trainees assuming a mostly passive role.

Each of the current 13 trainees has drawn from the 22 competencies of the new competency portfolio for caregivers. The full theoretical and practical training, which includes interactive workshops and an internship in a nursery, will take a maximum of 12 months. At the end of the training, each trainee will be evaluated.

The new interactive format of the initial workshop and the new learning tools have had a positive effect on trainees' daily practice.

The national association is working with the learning platform L'éducanet to provide caregivers on-demand access to learning materials and tools.



D. People, culture and human resources practices for safeguarding

Action 9: Federation culture development

To build a safeguarding environment through practical, targeted initiatives

Awareness-raising sessions on organizational culture and safe environments have been launched with various leaders at the international, regional and national level as well as with two regional human resources and organizational development networks. Altogether, around 250 leaders including board members have participated in at least one session on safeguarding leadership skills or speak-up culture. These sessions will be intensified throughout 2023, with up to nine sessions offered to participating leaders. In addition to groups from the General Secretariat offices, the initiative will start to be replicated at the national level as of February 2023.

Last year's **Safe and Caring Environment survey** carried out in the General Secretariat indicated positive assessment in the dimension of belonging (a sense of meaningful connection between employees as well as with the overall organization) and awareness (understanding of ethical values, standards, policies and ways to raise issues). At the same time, the indicators of perceived fairness, accountability, trust and transparency revealed the need to improve. The survey will be repeated in the same format or an adapted one, depending on lessons learned from other safeguarding initiatives, before the anticipated closure of the Safeguarding Action Plan in 2024.

The **Courageous Conversations initiative** was carried out in a pilot format with voluntarily participating staff from the International Office. The scope of this initiative has been limited, so the methodology and results are currently being evaluated.



KPIs

KPI status

3

targeted initiatives for federation culture development on holistic safeguarding developed by December 2023

Off track

The Courageous Conversations initiative requires discussion.

80%

of safeguarding survey respondents at the General Secretariat evaluate work environment as positive overall by December 2024

Off track

80%

of all federation leadership, including board representatives, reached with safeguarding awareness raising and training by December 2024

On track

Further information

In the third indicator, *federation leadership* refers to the management and boards of national associations and the management of the General Secretariat's international and regional offices.



Action 10 (priority): Code of Conduct / values-based conduct



To ensure the mandatory, global code is fully embedded across the federation; it will address bullying, power imbalances, and gender disparities

Based on extended consultations on the optimal framing of the Code of Conduct, we have selected a hybrid approach that offers values-based principles to foster a common understanding of expected behaviour but also delineates behavioural red lines.

The revision of the Code of Conduct is almost finished. The revised version is expected to be approved in April 2023.

We are working on a roll-out plan, KPIs for monitoring, an online course, and a training-of-trainers programme for focal points. Awareness raising, training and monitoring are expected to start immediately after approval.

KPIs

KPI status



New Code of Conduct established by January 2023

Off track

Approval has been delayed until April 2023.

100%

of the General Secretariat staff trained on new Code of Conduct by December 2023

On track

3

senior staff added to drive Code of Conduct and initiatives in support of enabling a safeguarding environment by September 2021

Completed



Action 11: Human resources values-based competency framework

To demonstrate how staff can live our organizational values in our day-to-day work and integrate them into recruitment, performance management, and development

The values-based competency framework was approved in June 2022.

An online toolkit and a communication strategy have been drafted.

Throughout the second half of 2022, leaders, the global human resources community and other staff across regions were invited to awareness-raising events to explain the new framework and the way it complements the upcoming revised Code of Conduct and other HR processes. Thirty-six human resources and organization development experts across all regions completed training to roll out the framework.

The framework was launched in January 2023, supported by a dedicated collaboration workspace visualizing Living Our Values initiatives across different regions and providing tools and training materials in various languages.

A network of Living Our Values ambassadors (currently more than 50 General Secretariat and national association employees) has been expanding. Regional leaders have been mobilized to mainstream the framework within their teams.

The values-based competency framework has been incorporated into the *Safe Recruitment Guideline* (see action 13), including guidance on job profiles and assessments.

The values-based competency framework promotes self-regulation and individual accountability.

The framework will also be integrated into key HR processes such as recruitment, onboarding, performance management, leadership, and learning and development, so that the change is sustainable. It will also underpin training on the updated Code of Conduct once it enters into force.

KPIs

KPI status



Values-based competency framework finalized by end 2021

Completed

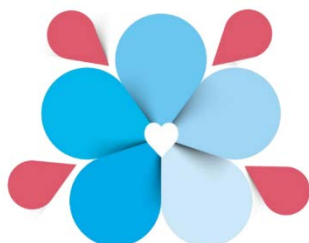


Values-based competency framework integrated into all key HR processes by December 2023

Off track



Living our values



By defining expected behaviours, the values-based competency framework, Living Our Values, serves as a foundation for all initiatives that focus on creating a safe, responsive organizational environment.

In awareness-raising sessions, more than 300 employees and leaders in various positions and with various backgrounds were invited to express their opinions about the behaviours defined in the framework and the significance of the values-based mindset in the organization.

A particular focus has been placed on preparing leadership and human resources teams to be the main stewards of change.

A toolkit for self-paced learning has been developed. Through bite-sized pieces of content, employees should be able to gain a common understanding of the behaviours expected of them and ways to implement them at work.

By May 2023, all employees and leaders are expected to have interacted with the Living Our Values initiative in at least one way. In the second half of 2023, the focus will turn to a continuous learning approach on the competencies and expected behaviours.



Action 12: Review of all human resources policies

To ensure safeguarding is reflected and mandatory

The project lead has been recruited.

An analysis of policies to document gaps and needs in the global human resources system has been in progress since September 2022. This process has required additional time to ensure alignment with the federation-wide policy review process and the transformation of the Human Resources and Organization development functional area, which is being undertaken to improve HR governance and ensure a more prominent focus on the development of organizational culture.

A survey and interviews with key stakeholders are being conducted.

The final analysis will be available by June 2023.

KPI



A review of existing federation HR frameworks and policies by the General Secretariat completed by the first quarter of 2023

KPI status

Off track

The review will be completed by June 2023.



Action 13: Safe recruitment regulation

To ensure consistent and mandatory steps are taken to ensure the necessary safeguarding element in the recruitment process

The *Safe Recruitment Guideline*, which will eventually be shaped into binding minimum standards, was approved by the Executive Board in December 2022. It incorporates the values-based competency framework (see action 11) and spells out procedures and practices to ascertain that every person who joins the organization understands and identifies with its purpose and values, has the right qualifications, and has undergone appropriate background checks.

Safer recruitment is one of the minimum requirements under the regulation on the prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (PSHEA); see action 16. The *Safe Recruitment Guideline* is therefore being trialed by the General Secretariat and the national associations as part of piloting PSHEA implementation. Other associations are encouraged to start implementing *Safe Recruitment Guideline* on their own initiative as well.

Roll-out of the guideline is supported by training human resources and organization development practitioners in all regions. A group of 20 HR employees is being set up to exchange best practice, challenges and experience.

Implementation of safe recruitment practices will be tracked and findings used to define minimum requirements for the upcoming *People and Culture Policy* (see action 15).

KPI



Recruitment regulation ready for implementation in national associations by December 2024

KPI status

On track



Action 14: Strategy for safeguarding capacity building

To ensure we have the right learning and development systems to support all our people, including child and youth care practitioners, support staff, managers and leaders

A learning and development framework has been developed. A process for its implementation is being discussed.

In the meantime, extensive safeguarding training and awareness raising are ongoing at the national, regional and global level. This includes the projects focused on developing organizational culture (action 9), preventing sexual misconduct (action 16) and promoting values-based conduct (action 11). Other capacity-building initiatives are being initiated by regional offices. For example, the regional office for West, Central and North Africa is working on an action plan to strengthen national child safeguarding; it is also providing safeguarding and compliance training to national management and boards.

The concept of safeguarding capacity building under this initiative is currently defined broadly.

KPI

137

national associations implement continuous safeguarding capacity-building programmes by December 2024

KPI status

On track



Action 15: New global human resources policy with binding standards

An umbrella policy to ensure clarity and consistency across the entire federation

Development of the new policy will be based on the outcomes of the ongoing review of HR policies and systems, which will be completed by June 2023 (see action 12).

The project to develop the new policy is currently being set up, and the content areas to be covered in the policy are under discussion.

KPI

137

national associations implement global HR policy by December 2024

KPI status

Not started

Since the policy will require General Assembly approval, its adoption and implementation will likely to be delayed until 2025.



Action 16 (priority): Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA) regulation implementation

To fully implement the regulation already adopted by the International Senate, to promote awareness and prevention and to implement reporting and responding



The pilot project to implement the regulation ran between September 2021 and January 2023. The project included all General Secretariat offices and ten national associations. Each association completed a PSHEA audit and developed an action plan with a primary focus on prevention:

- appointing and training PSHEA leads and integrity and safeguarding teams
- starting training of staff and raising awareness with programme participants
- training on PSHEA risk and working with partners
- putting in place reporting channels
- implementing safer recruitment procedures

As the pilot countries continue implementing their plans, they will receive training on the recently approved binding *Misconduct Incident Management Regulation* and *Misconduct Investigation Regulation*.

As part of the pilot, a user guide and toolkit to accompany the PSHEA regulation were developed to facilitate roll-out from 2023 on.

The roll-out plan for 2023 includes around 40 national associations. This process will follow the same format as the pilot but will now run in parallel with implementing the *Misconduct Incident Management Regulation* and the *Misconduct Investigation Regulation* (see also action 18 below).

KPI



PSHEA regulation implemented in 100% of federation (national associations, regional offices and the international office) by December 2024

KPI status

Off track

Roll-out is under way. Based on progress so far, full implementation is expected to take longer than originally envisaged.



Partnerships to tackle abuse



As part of its plan to implement the PSHEA regulation, SOS Children's Villages Guinea signed an agreement with the specialized police unit Office for the Protection of Gender, Children and Morals (OPROGEM) to secure its support in carrying out background checks during recruitment. So far, the unit has helped with four background checks.

To facilitate reporting, the association set up an email address, anonymous reporting boxes and anonymous online reporting.

Building on the association's ongoing partnership with child protection committees operating at the community, regional and national level, arrangements have been made for referral of harassment, exploitation and abuse cases to the authorities. Contacts of committee members who can help with reporting and referral have been made known to the communities.



E. Oversight, leadership, governance and accountability for safeguarding

Action 17 (priority): Independent Special Commission



To take up past and contemporary cases of failings, including child abuse, corruption, and breaches of regulations

The Independent Special Commission has been operating since October 2021. Its mandate is threefold:

- evaluate SOS Children's Villages policies and procedures for compliance with international standards
- assess and prioritize allegations and concerns, investigate them where necessary, and confirm whether misconduct has occurred
- recommend appropriate measures to the International Senate of SOS Children's Villages International

In mid-2022, the commission issued its interim report, which mainly focused on recommendations for improvement in internal policies and frameworks. These recommendations have been considered in the ongoing review of organizational policies.

The commission is currently concluding its work and preparing to release a final report. Its findings and recommendations will help validate a revised version of the Safeguarding Action Plan, which is currently being revisited in light of the lessons learned so far.

KPI



Commission established by end May 2021

KPI status

Completed

Established 1 October 2021



Action 18: Alignment of integrity, compliance and safeguarding

To ensure our processes and procedures are working together effectively, including improved and integrated reporting and responding procedures

An aligned reporting and responding mechanism for all types of misconduct has been developed and formalized into two binding documents: the *Misconduct Incident Management Regulation* and the *Misconduct Investigation Regulation*.

Drafts of the two documents were completed by September 2022. The timeline for drafting was extended to allow additional time for cross-functional consultations. Among other considerations, the final versions of the regulations incorporate several recommendations by the Independent Special Commission.

The regulations were approved in January 2023.

In January 2023, a roll-out plan and a concept for training of trainers were developed in collaboration with the external consultancy firm Proteknôn.

The training will start in the second quarter of 2023, once e-learning packages become available.

KPI



Aligned reporting, responding and investigation procedures implemented across the federation by December 2023

KPI status

On track



Action 19: Child safeguarding policy update

To ensure ICSR recommendations and current best practice are reflected

The General Secretariat's child safeguarding team in collaboration with the global child safeguarding network developed a draft of the new *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy* at the end of 2022. The draft policy was then submitted to the Executive Board for endorsement. It will be submitted to the International Senate in April, and then to the General Assembly for their approval in July 2023.

Feedback collection from national associations and General Secretariat staff is ongoing. A small working group is currently working with an external consultant to review feedback from the federation and to benchmark the new policy against standard practice within the sector.

Implementation of the new *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy* is expected to start the second half of 2023 and continue in 2024.

KPI

137

national associations achieve at least 90% compliance with child safeguarding minimum requirements by December 2024

KPI status

Not started

Implementation of the updated policy will start once it receives General Assembly approval.



Action 20 (priority): Child safeguarding strengthening in high-risk environments



To provide extra financial and management support to 25 national associations with a high risk profile or operating in high-risk environments

The project started in 2021 with a pilot phase in ten associations in Eastern and Southern Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. In early 2022, the project expanded to fifteen more associations in Asia, Latin America and Western and Central Africa.

The project includes the following key activities:

- child safeguarding risk assessment and development of risk mitigation plans
- staff training
- child safeguarding audits to verify the implementation of both the mitigation actions and minimum child safeguarding requirements

The activities under the risk mitigation plans are defined based on each association's specific needs and can include, for example, training on positive parenting and trauma-informed care, work to improve reporting and responding procedures at the national office, or running campaigns to raise awareness of specific types of abuse.

Of the piloting countries, five have concluded project implementation and four are currently undergoing audits. The tenth pilot country has had to put the project on hold. Several countries in Western and Central Africa that started implementation in 2022 have already conducted their audits or are about to conduct them.

An additional four countries have been identified for support under this project. Project activities in these countries will begin shortly.

KPI

25

national associations implement the project process and are audited by December 2024

KPI status

On track

February 2023: **24**

A 25th country that started implementation has had to put the project on hold.



Action 21: Early warning system

To ensure safeguarding risks are monitored and escalated appropriately

The new risk assessment tool was used by national associations for the first time during the 2022 annual child safeguarding survey.

The risk assessment tool combines risk scores (external and internal) and assessment of overall compliance with minimum child safeguarding requirements.

The 2022 data showed that 73% of associations determined they had a low risk profile, 27%, a medium risk profile, and only one was categorized as having a high risk profile. However, this data needs to be approached with caution: self-assessment of compliance with minimum requirements tends to be overly optimistic, which can skew risk ratings. The risk assessment tool will be reviewed to compensate for this effect in the future.

KPI

137

national associations complete the first annual assessment of the tool to assess their risk profile and define mitigating actions to address their internal and external risks by December 2022

KPI status

Completed

Of the 137 associations, 96% completed the assessment.



Action 22: Safeguarding resources in institutional donor projects

To ensure appropriate resources are in budgets

For all grant-funded projects, the General Secretariat has been advocating with applicant associations for inclusion of adequate safeguarding budgets. The focus is placed on ensuring compliance with project cycle management guidelines so that risks, problems and deviations can be detected and addressed.

Other efforts towards creating a safeguarding environment include the following:

- A UNICEF PSHEA education drive was initiated for staff involved in managing grant-funded projects (25 at the General Secretariat and 200 with national associations). Over 100 staff members have attended UNICEF's course on the prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and received certificates of completion.
- An anti-corruption course was launched; more than 20 employees have completed the course.
- All partners involved in institutional donor projects managed by the General Secretariat and national associations sign and are bound by Code of Conduct.

Note: we plan to revise this KPI in the upcoming revision of the Safeguarding Action Plan as it is not capturing the full scope of work in this area.

KPI



All institutional funding applications include child safeguarding risk analysis and budgets by December 2022

KPI status

Off track

This KPI will be revised.



F. Investment for high quality programmes across the federation

Action 23: Increased investment in 70+ programmes to fix quality gaps

Including monitoring, ensuring the necessary financial investment is made to improve quality in 70–100 programme locations

Federation-wide guidance has been developed to support programme change.

Programme change proposals put forward in 2022 reveal a particular focus on the following aspects:

- scaling up prevention services, including by supporting existing community-based approaches
- diversifying alternative care services, notably through foster care, as part of a range of care options
- taking steps to improve the quality of youth care by enabling more opportunities for individualized attention and encouraging social integration

KPI

98

subsidy-receiving national associations have a strategy to ensure relevance, efficiency and sustainability of programmes by December 2024

KPI status

On track

February 2023: **60**



Action 24: Increased support for national associations to implement the SOS Care Promise

including regular self-assessment and continuous improvement in areas such as programme admission standards

National associations have continued to take locally relevant steps to improve programme quality in line with our programme policy, the *SOS Care Promise*, including in the following areas:

- Supporting children and young people in returning to their families when this is in their best interests. This requires systematic support for the child's family and close collaboration with governments, service providers or community-based organizations. The development of national gatekeeping guidelines to prevent unnecessary or unsuitable placements in care is also continuing.
- Social integration in family-like care. The share of families living in community-integrated spaces is increasing. As of the end of 2022, it accounted for 12% of families.
- Mental health services. Evidence-based psychological support trainings for staff were implemented in 27 national associations. A needs and resource assessment conducted by the global expert group on mental health and psychological support in 55 associations showed that technical expertise and staffing tend to be insufficient to meet local needs. This calls for further efforts in this area.

KPIs

KPI status

91

national associations have board-approved national gatekeeping guidelines by December 2024

On track

February 2023: **61**

106

national associations implement a range of locally relevant measures to improve social integration by December 2024

On track

February 2023: **73**

106

national associations include specific actions in their national plans to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into their programme work by December 2024

On track

February 2023: **69**

Further information

National associations operating within well-defined state gatekeeping systems are excluded from the target count. For such national associations, national legal requirements override board-approved national gatekeeping guidelines.

National associations in Western Europe and North America have been left out of the target count for social integration and mental health since they have not provided any data.



Returning home



Assessments of the situation of children and young people in alternative care at SOS Children's Village Jimma, Ethiopia, in 2022 revealed that several children could safely return to their families.

To support the process, SOS Children's Village Jimma established a case management team, which included its own staff, government representatives, religious leaders and representatives of community-based organizations. Working with partners helped mobilize a support system for the children and their families within their communities.

The following actions were crucial to set the families up for success:

- preparing the children and their families and involving them throughout the process
- improving the caregivers' skills and providing livelihood support
- follow-up monitoring and support

As a result, eight children returned home and their families improved their economic situation. The success reinforced awareness of the potential of reintegration work among programme staff but also partners and the community. Reintegration efforts as part of regular care reviews are an integral part of programme work at SOS Children's Village Jimma.