

Safeguarding Action Plan Interim Progress Report



Overview

The [Safeguarding Action Plan](#), available on our [safeguarding info hub on our international website](#), aims to address key learnings of recent years, including those gained through our commissioning of the [Independent Child Safeguarding Review](#). The plan approaches the broader challenge of achieving strong safeguarding through:

1. Prioritizing, in everything we do, support for the people who experienced abuse towards healing, reconciliation, and becoming self-reliant;
2. Improving overall programme quality, which is essential for prevention of abuse;
3. Improving our policies and systems specifically related to child safeguarding;
4. Addressing broader governance and organizational culture matters - creating a safe environment for all.

We are making progress across the areas identified in the Safeguarding Action Plan, and in particular the eight prioritized actions (see below), which are the focus of this interim progress report. The next progress report will be provided in March 2022, which will cover all actions in the plan.

Our highest priority continues to be to ensure we address any immediate risks to children and young people in our programmes, and in addition we are making progress in putting in place the foundations required for consistent application of longer-term changes across the 137 countries and territories in which we operate. In many cases, the process involves establishing pilot programmes in a small number of member associations, the learnings from which are fed back into the process of strengthening our global standards and processes.

The following provides information about progress against the **eight prioritized actions**.

Eight prioritized actions

Immediate support for those who have experienced abuse

Funding from existing reserves has been made available for direct individual support to all children, young people and other persons that have experienced abuse in SOS Children's Villages programmes, to ensure those affected are supported towards healing, reconciliation, and becoming self-reliant. A system has been established for member associations to apply for extra funding, where needed. The first application has been approved, with about 20 more applications in development.

Ombudsperson system

A safeguarding ombudsperson system throughout our global organization will represent the rights of children, young people and others who have experienced abuse. On the international level, an interim Ombudsperson position for the General Secretariat will be piloted by an organization called [Proteknôn Foundation](#), beginning in November 2021. On a national level, the ombudsperson approach is currently being piloted in two regions (three countries) involving the participation of children and young people. In 2022, we expect that the approach will be scaled up across regions to involve an additional 20 member associations with more to follow in subsequent years.

Incident Management system

Many incident management systems are already in place, and we will ensure a single global incident management system is consistently implemented across the entire federation by the end of 2023, addressing all major incidents across safeguarding and other compliance areas. A review of existing protocols and tools for reporting and responding and investigation procedures and practices at all levels will start in November 2021. Then we will produce clear reporting and response procedures and an investigations user guide, both of which should make sure incident management is the same across child safeguarding, prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (PSHEA), human resources and corruption issues.

Child and youth empowerment

We will roll out our Protective Behaviours programme across the entire federation and ensure children and young people understand their rights. This programme, which has already been running in many countries, helps to ensure children and young people are involved in decisions regarding their care, serves to prevent peer-to-peer violence and abuse, and gives them a stronger voice in safeguarding. We have already received European Union funding for a new, two-year "Applying Safe Behaviours" project which will focus on preventing and responding to peer violence and will train child and youth care practitioners to prevent and respond to peer violence amongst children, as well as increase awareness in the surrounding communities on preventing and responding to peer violence.

Code of Conduct and other human resources initiatives

We will update our Code of Conduct and ensure it is fully embedded across the General Secretariat and in all member associations by January 2023. We are also developing a competency framework which defines values-based behaviours in support of fostering a safe environment. The framework will be submitted for International Senate endorsement before the end of this year. In a second phase, this framework will be integrated into key human resources processes such as recruitment, performance management and talent development. This will underpin our efforts to bring our values Accountability, Commitment, Courage and Trust closer into our day-to-day work. Meanwhile, three senior staff have been recruited to drive “enabling safeguarding initiatives” (a PSHEA Lead, a Global Gender Advisor, and a Safeguarding Environment Lead).

Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA) regulation implementation

The International Senate has already adopted a PSHEA regulation, and this will be fully implemented across the General Secretariat and all member associations. This includes promoting awareness and prevention and implementing reporting and responding processes. A process of piloting implementation of the regulation has begun in ten countries and General Secretariat offices, where audits and action plans are being developed.

Independent Special Commission

The Independent Special Commission will address past and contemporary cases of failings, including child abuse, corruption, misuse of funds, and breaches of UN guidelines and regulations that protect children’s and employees’ human rights. The Independent Special Commission has begun its work, and updates are being provided on [a dedicated page on our international website](#).

High-risk country support

We will provide extra financial and management support to 25 member associations operating in countries with a high-risk profile to strengthen their child safeguarding. Staff training and workshops with children and young people have already been organized in the Eastern and Southern Africa region. In our Central/Eastern Europe/ CIS/ Middle East region, local mapping and child safeguarding risk assessments have been completed in three member associations. As support for all member associations across the federation, an online course on child safeguarding was launched in June 2021.

Progress against plan

ACTION	Immediate support for those who have experienced abuse
SUMMARY	<p>Funding from existing reserves has been made available for direct individual support to all children, young people and other persons that have experienced abuse in SOS Children's Villages programmes, to ensure those affected are supported towards healing, reconciliation, and becoming self-reliant. This includes medical, mental health, psychosocial and legal support as well as support to improve their individual living situations. Support to be individualized, supportive, realistic, and empowering to the individual.</p> <p>To deliver this, we are setting up a system that can be monitored globally to ensure that every affected individual has a dedicated support person and plan, and every case is handled according to protocol. This is connected to the Incident Management action described below.</p>
KPIs	<p>By 2024, 100% of member associations (MAs) will have implemented strict minimum standards on delivering individualized support;</p> <p>15% MAs by end of 2022</p>
PROGRESS	<p>Member associations continue to support individuals affected by abuse. Where needed, MAs apply for additional funding from the General Secretariat.</p> <p>One member association application for funding for individualized support was approved in September. Several additional applications are in development.</p> <p>Numbers of new Child Safeguarding cases will be reported in the Child Safeguarding Annual Report, to be published in November.</p>

ACTION	Ombudsperson
SUMMARY	<p>A safeguarding ombudsperson system throughout our global organization will represent the rights of children, young people and others who have experienced abuse. Building on the model already practiced in some member associations, it will support children and others that have experienced abuse and anybody seeking resolution of concerns. The means by which support will be made available will be clearly communicated on our international website and across the 137 countries and territories where we work.</p>
KPIs	<p>Interim Ombudsperson in GSC by end Sept 2021;</p> <p>100% of MAs covered by system by December 2023</p>
PROGRESS	<p>Interim GSC Ombudsperson position will be filled by Proteknôn Foundation consultants, to start by November. The exact concept and scope of the role is currently being finalized.</p> <p>On the national level, the ombudsperson approach will be piloted in Benin, Sierra Leone and Uruguay. For 2022, it is foreseen that the approach will be scaled up across regions to an additional 20 member associations with more to follow in the subsequent years.</p>

	Pilots will be informed by the consultation with, and participation of, children and young people.
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ACTION	Incident Management system
SUMMARY	We will ensure a robust incident management system is consistently implemented across the entire federation. This includes additional staffing in member associations and regional offices. This will provide better support and access to justice for children, young people, staff and others who have experienced abuse and will be complemented by the Ombudsperson system.
KPIs	Urgent gaps filled by end of 2021; 100% of MAs implement the new system by December 2023
PROGRESS	A review of existing protocols and tools for reporting and responding and investigation procedures and practices at all levels will start in November 2021. Then the following will be produced, for all forms of serious misconduct: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear reporting and response processes and procedures. 2. An investigations user guide. Both of which should make sure processes are the same across Child Safeguarding, PSHEA, Human Resources, and Integrity, Compliance and Legal (including corruption) issues.

ACTION	Child and youth empowerment
SUMMARY	We will roll out our Protective Behaviours programme across the entire federation and ensure children and young people understand their rights. This programme, which has already been running in many countries, helps to ensure children and young people are involved in decisions regarding their care, serves to prevent peer-to-peer violence and abuse, and gives them a stronger voice in safeguarding.
KPIs	100% of programmes implement Protective Behaviours by end of 2023
PROGRESS	We have received funding for a project focusing on prevention of peer violence. “Applying Safe Behaviours” is a 2-year EU co-funded project (2021-2023) that will focus on preventing and responding to peer violence amongst our target group. The project began in May 2021 and aims to empower children and young people to be active agents for creating a safe environment for themselves and their peers. The project also aims to enable child and youth care practitioners to respond appropriately to peer violence amongst children. The project will also train child and youth care practitioners to prevent and respond to peer violence amongst children, as well as increase awareness in the surrounding communities on preventing and responding to peer violence amongst children.

ACTION	Code of Conduct and other human resources initiatives
SUMMARY	<p>We will update our Code of Conduct, already mandatory across the federation, and ensure it is fully embedded across the General Secretariat and in all member associations. The revised Code will address stronger focus on bullying, power imbalances, and gender disparities. The rollout will include multilingual e-learning tools to ensure consistency across the federation.</p> <p>We are also developing a competency framework which defines values-based behaviours in support of fostering a safe environment. The framework will be submitted for International Senate endorsement before the end of 2021. In a second phase this framework will be integrated into key human resources processes such as recruitment, performance management and talent development. This will underpin our efforts to bring our values of Accountability, Commitment, Courage and Trust closer into our day-to-day work.</p> <p>The Code of Conduct project will also be complemented with a comprehensive revision of all human resources policies to ensure safeguarding is prioritized and foregrounded in our key HR processes such as recruitment procedures, job descriptions, and appraisal processes.</p> <p>Underpinning the entire performance management system, there will be a new competency framework which ensures that our values are well integrated and lived in our day-to-day work.</p>
KPIs	<p>Competency framework finalized by end 2021;</p> <p>New Code of Conduct established by January 2023;</p> <p>100% GSC staff trained in new Code by Dec 2023;</p> <p>Three senior staff added to drive Code of Conduct and initiatives in support of enabling a safeguarding environment by September 2021</p>
PROGRESS	<p>The competency framework has been drafted and will be submitted to the International Senate later in 2021.</p> <p>Interviews for HROD Policy Advisor (to revise Code of Conduct) took place in September.</p> <p>Three senior staff have been recruited to drive “enabling safeguarding initiatives” (PSHEA Lead, Global Gender Advisor, Safeguarding Environment Lead).</p>

ACTION	Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA) regulation implementation
SUMMARY	<p>The International Senate has already adopted a PSHEA regulation, and this will be fully implemented across the General Secretariat and all member associations. This includes promoting awareness and prevention and implementing reporting and responding processes.</p>
KPIs	<p>Implemented in 100% of federation by December 2024</p>

PROGRESS	<p>Pilot countries have been selected for implementation of PSHEA regulation in all General Secretariat offices plus ten member associations (Senegal, Benin, Niger, Guinea, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania).</p> <p>Train the Trainer conducted for safeguarding and integrity teams in the pilot countries, regional offices and international office.</p> <p>PSHEA audits and action plans are being developed for the ten pilot countries.</p>
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ACTION	Independent Special Commission
SUMMARY	The independent Special Commission will address past and contemporary cases of failings, including child abuse, corruption, misuse of funds, and breaches of UN guidelines and regulations that protect children's and employees' human rights. The commission will investigate why failures occurred, while in other instances the organization's policies and processes were appropriately followed through and important changes achieved.
KPIs	<p>Established by end May 2021;</p> <p>Further KPIs to be established as work proceeds</p>
PROGRESS	<p>The Special Commission has begun its work, and further information about its members was provided on our international website on 5 October 2021.</p> <p>The mandate of the commission remains unchanged.</p>

ACTION	High-risk country support
SUMMARY	We will provide extra financial and management support to 25 member associations with a high-risk profile to strengthen their child safeguarding through actions such as: assessment of risks; embedding of reporting mechanisms; involvement of external partners; training for management, boards and practitioners; and more frequent safeguarding audits. Includes targeted prevention and holistic mental health support in each programme location.
KPIs	All 25 MAs to complete process and be audited by end December 2024
PROGRESS	<p>An online course on child safeguarding launched in June 2021 and made available to all MAs.</p> <p>Various trainings for the staff and workshops with children and young people organized in Eastern and Southern Africa region.</p> <p>Local mapping and child safeguarding risk assessment completed in three MAs in Central/Eastern Europe/ CIS/ Middle East region.</p> <p>Total of €189,600 in funds have been allocated to supporting five MAs in Eastern and Southern Africa Region.</p>



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**