

# Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Annual Report 2024/2025



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES



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# About this report

Keeping children and young people safe is an absolute pre-requisite for SOS Children's Villages to deliver on our purpose – to ensure children and young people grow up with the nurturing relationships they need to become their strongest selves. By supporting accountability and learning, our annual safeguarding reports are an important part of this process. Our focus remains on creating a safe environment for every person who comes in contact with our organization, including the children, young people and adults we work for and our staff.

In line with our integrated approach to safeguarding, this eighth annual report brings together information and data on safeguarding and anti-corruption for the first time. Among other things, it discusses progress made in safeguarding and anti-corruption between July 2024 and August 2025, data on compliance with minimum requirements by national organizations in 2024, and 2024 statistics on reported concerns. Data on compliance, risk and child and youth safeguarding concerns is aggregated across SOS Children's Villages globally. Child and youth safeguarding covers children under the age of 18 and young people up to the age of 24.

Please visit the [Safeguarding Info Hub](#) on our international website for more information on our safeguarding work, including previous child and youth safeguarding reports. If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at [safeguarding.integrity.info@sos-kd.org](mailto:safeguarding.integrity.info@sos-kd.org). We appreciate your feedback!

# Foreword

Since our previous report, we have continued to strengthen our safeguarding practice to ensure we are well-equipped to protect the rights, dignity and well-being of children, young people and adults involved in our programmes as well as those of our staff.

By introducing the Safeguarding Action Plan in 2021, our organization started moving towards a holistic approach to safeguarding that sought to break down silos and eliminate blind spots in how we understand, prevent and address misconduct. A key milestone in implementing this vision was the formation of the General Secretariat's integrated safeguarding department shortly after I joined SOS Children's Villages.

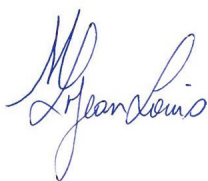
Today, I am pleased to see this vision of a collaborative, cross-functional safeguarding practice coming together. Our new integrated safeguarding framework, which unites child, youth and adult safeguarding with anti-corruption measures, emphasizes prevention, accountability and survivor-centred support. This shift reflects an important reality: safeguarding concerns rarely occur in isolation. They are often linked to poor governance, mismanagement or corrupt conduct.

Standardized incident management procedures are an essential component of this approach, and I am particularly encouraged by the work of our cross-functional incident management teams, which are now in place in most national organizations.

Bringing together evidence across safeguarding and anti-corruption for the first time, this report outlines our progress in implementing this integrated approach between September 2024 and August 2025. While the advances covered in this report – from standardized procedures to better awareness of safeguarding roles – mark real progress, we recognize our safeguarding and anti-corruption work is never complete. Building safe, ethical environments requires continuous reflection, learning and improvement. In releasing this report, we hope that it will serve as a source of learning not only for ourselves but also for other organizations working directly with children, young people and adults.

I am deeply grateful to the safeguarding professionals, incident management teams, and SOS Children's Villages staff and leaders worldwide who have embraced this shift and contributed to its implementation and improvement. Their dedication ensures that we do more than respond to harm: we work to prevent it.

Together, we remain committed to ensuring that safeguarding and values-based principles are firmly woven into our organization's culture and identity.



**Ma-Luschka Jean-Louis**

International Director, Global Safeguarding  
SOS Children's Villages International

# Executive summary

At the end of 2024, we [concluded our Safeguarding Action Plan 2021–2024](#), achieving most of the plan's objectives. One of the most fundamental changes that has emerged in recent years is a holistic approach to safeguarding, which acknowledges that safeguarding failures often go hand in hand with mismanagement, corrupt conduct and governance failures and that addressing concerns requires cross-functional effort. This holistic understanding is now at the core of the General Secretariat's [Safeguarding Strategy 2024–2030](#), which guides our efforts across child, youth and adult safeguarding and anti-corruption, with protection from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse integrated as a cross-cutting issue.

In line with this approach, this annual report is our first to bring together discussion of child, youth and adult safeguarding and anti-corruption at SOS Children's Villages as part of a unified framework.

## Progress made in safeguarding and anti-corruption

We have continued to support the implementation of the safeguarding policy framework by providing ongoing training opportunities at the global and national level, such as online courses, webinars and a variety of virtual and in-person workshops.

Cross-functional incident management teams, which ensure coordinated, expert-led responses to reports of misconduct, have been set up by 114 national organizations so far. Specialized training and peer learning forums are available to develop incident management capacity.

A project to pilot a new whistle-blowing system for corruption concerns is under way. After piloting, the system is expected to be adopted for reports involving other types of misconduct. In October 2024, we introduced a new *Anti-Corruption Regulation*, which provides the foundation of the SOS Children's Villages anti-corruption management system. The anti-corruption management system enables national organizations to structure anti-corruption strategies and define priorities according to their particular context.

We updated our methodology for child and youth safeguarding audits in September 2024 to strengthen its focus on prevention, particularly risk management. The new methodology was used to complete child and youth safeguarding audits in three national organizations by the end of 2024, and another 15 audits are expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

In 2024, 21 national organizations reported holding valid external child and youth safeguarding certification.

## Compliance with organizational minimum requirements

The scope of our annual safeguarding survey, which is a self-assessment monitoring tool, has been expanded to include anti-corruption and the prevention of sexual misconduct as a cross-cutting issue.

According to the survey data, the average global rate of compliance with organizational minimum requirements across child and youth safeguarding, anti-corruption and prevention of sexual misconduct against children, young people and adults was 78%, which falls short of the minimum target of 90%. Child and youth safeguarding was the strongest-performing area assessed. Achieving consistent implementation of the more recently introduced requirements, particularly for anti-corruption, where a new regulation was introduced as recently as in October 2024, will take more time.

## **Child and youth safeguarding concerns reported in 2024**

In 2024, 3,213 child and youth safeguarding concerns were reported to SOS Children's Villages – 469 fewer than in 2023. This represents incidents that were reported to have occurred in 2024. Of these reports, 1,874 involved allegations of peer-on-peer or adult-on-child abuse; 1,489 were confirmed. We found 428 staff or other individuals working for or on behalf of SOS Children's Villages to have perpetrated abuse towards children and young people, dismissing 127 and reporting 77 to the authorities. Individual support plans were put in place for all but three of the children and young people identified as victims of abuse. For 54% of the children and young people, the plans were implemented in full by the end of 2024.

In 2024, we also received 216 reports of child and youth safeguarding incidents believed to have occurred before 2024, which is the lowest number of such reports in the past five years. We were able to confirm 116 reports of abuse, with the confirmed incidents involving 78 individual staff perpetrators. Of the 78 staff perpetrators, 12 were dismissed and 18 were reported to the authorities. Individual support plans were put in place for all children, young people and adults identified as victims of abuse, and 39% of the support plans were implemented in full.

## **Concerns of forced placements without proper documentation in Syria**

In 2017, SOS Children's Villages International became aware of cases where children had been forcibly separated from their families and placed in our programmes in Syria. Once we understood the full scale of the issue in 2018, we took decisive action to stop the practice.

In late 2024, concerned citizens, organizations and families began contacting the General Secretariat via its online reporting channels. Between 16 December 2024 and 14 June 2025, the General Secretariat received 297 concerns, of which 285 were general concerns or demands for accountability. A dedicated incident management team is working to ensure all concerns, allegations and requests for information are thoroughly addressed. An internal review conducted in early 2025 identified 139 children had been placed with SOS Children's Villages Syria under circumstances indicating forcible family separation.

Two independent investigations have been commissioned to examine the circumstances of the placements and the role of SOS Children's Villages. Support for family tracing remains a priority, in cooperation with institutions, communities, and intergovernmental and humanitarian organizations.

## **Corruption concerns reported to the General Secretariat in 2024**

In 2024, the General Secretariat received 138 reports via its online whistle-blowing channel for corruption concerns. Of the 138 reports, 32 did not contain allegations of corrupt conduct and were referred to appropriate units for follow-up.

By the end of 2024, 50 reports were closed, of which 5 were confirmed.

## **Focus areas for 2025 and 2026**

In line with our global strategic goals, we will continue to foster leadership commitment at all levels, strengthen risk management, and listen to survivors' voices and learn from their experiences to drive further improvements. A key focus will be deepening our integrated safeguarding approach. This includes ensuring cross-functional incident management teams are fully in place across SOS Children's Villages worldwide. To standardize responses to reports of misconduct, the General Secretariat will introduce a new whistle-blowing system, which will serve as a centralized feedback and complaints mechanism for all types of concerns.

# Progress made in safeguarding and anti-corruption

At the end of 2024, we [concluded our Safeguarding Action Plan 2021–2024](#), which we put in place to address the gaps we had identified in preceding years in developing our safeguarding systems. While some of the work will need to continue beyond the originally anticipated time frame, by the end of 2024 we achieved most of the plan's key objectives, including the following:

- overhauling our safeguarding and anti-corruption policies and procedures and bringing them together into an integrated framework
- establishing an independent global Ombuds Office
- introducing a values-based competency framework and a new code of conduct
- spreading awareness of safeguarding and values-based conduct across the organization

These foundational elements have enabled us to advance the overall maturity of our safeguarding systems and will support future improvements.

One of the most fundamental changes that has emerged in recent years is a holistic approach to safeguarding, which acknowledges that safeguarding failures often go hand in hand with mismanagement, corrupt conduct and governance failures and that addressing concerns requires cross-functional effort.

This holistic understanding is now at the core of the General Secretariat's [Safeguarding Strategy 2024–2030](#), which guides our efforts across child, youth and adult safeguarding and anti-corruption, with protection from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse integrated as a cross-cutting issue. These areas of work are closely linked by their shared focus on preventing abuse of power and promoting ethical practice.

In 2024, we saw several advantages of this approach, such as reduced siloed thinking, better understanding and management of interconnected risks (for example, in situations where corruption enables abuse), and joint preventive activities. Work has also begun on resource optimization, for example by combining reporting channels.

In line with this approach, this annual report is our first to bring together discussion child, youth and adult safeguarding and anti-corruption at SOS Children's Villages as part of a unified framework.

## Implementation of the *Anti-Corruption Regulation*

In October 2024, we introduced a new *Anti-Corruption Regulation* following extensive stakeholder consultations. The regulation establishes binding organization-wide standards for preventing, detecting and responding to corruption across SOS Children's Villages, emphasizing proactive prevention strategies.

The regulation is at the foundation of the SOS Children's Villages anti-corruption management system, which is a framework of policies and practices designed to reduce the impact of



corruption within the organization. The anti-corruption management system enables national organizations to structure anti-corruption strategies and define priorities according to their particular context.

### **Applying the anti-corruption management system in practice in Serbia**

To establish an anti-corruption management system in line with the *Anti-Corruption Regulation*, SOS Children's Villages Serbia has implemented the following initiatives so far:

- The *Anti-Corruption Regulation* has been translated and adapted into a national policy document.
- Internal processes related to anti-corruption, anti-money laundering, counter-terrorism efforts, and the prevention of conflicts of interest have been integrated with existing procedures across human resources, procurement, infrastructure management, internal control, financial operations and business continuity. Among other things, this includes maintaining a risk register.
- Workshops are being conducted across the national organization's locations to raise awareness of the monetary value of organizational assets, the importance of maintaining them and the risks associated with negligent use of assets.

To support implementation, we launched an online course on the *Anti-Corruption Regulation* in April 2025. The course is designed to help staff, board members and others working for or on behalf of SOS Children's Villages recognize corruption and implement anti-corruption measures in line with the regulation. In addition, the General Secretariat's Anti-Corruption and Asset Protection team has developed a comprehensive set of practical tools to support systematic corruption risk management, sanctions compliance, and the prevention of money laundering and terrorism financing.

The first half of 2025 saw the global Anti-Corruption Network grow with the appointment of over 60 anti-corruption focal points, whose task is to coordinate the implementation of the *Anti-Corruption Regulation*.

### **Empowering children and young people to recognize and speak up against corruption**

In a partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, SOS Children's Villages launched a pilot project in Kenya to equip children and young people with tools to recognize and speak up against corruption. Through interactive workshops on ethics, integrity and anti-corruption, 120 participants aged 7 to 23 learned about what corruption is, how it affects individuals and how to be an agent of change.

## Training and awareness

In 2024–2025, we have continued to support the implementation of the safeguarding policy framework by providing ongoing training opportunities at the global and national level. This includes online courses, webinars and a variety of virtual and in-person workshops.

Global online courses are available on all major policy documents relevant to safeguarding and anti-corruption. This includes the *Code of Conduct Regulation*, the *Sexual Misconduct Regulation*, the *Anti-Corruption Regulation*, the *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy*, the *Misconduct Incident Management Regulation* and the *Misconduct Investigation Regulation*. The online courses on the *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy* comprise a foundational course and three specialized courses, for board members, line managers and care practitioners.

The regional office for CEE, CIS and the Middle East launched a regional capacity-building initiative to equip cross-functional national safeguarding and incident management teams with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, with in-person and virtual sessions incorporating real-life case scenarios, group discussions and content adapted to regional and national contexts. Specialized workshops were also held for board members to clarify their oversight role, support accountability and build confidence in applying safeguarding principles at governance level.

National organizations have continued to translate the federation-wide child and youth safeguarding policies into local languages and have been implementing workshops to contextualize the content for different audiences. Ensuring age-appropriate and culturally appropriate safeguarding information at entry points into our programmes remains a priority:

- In Ukraine, the national team has released an interactive child-friendly book, which was developed in collaboration with psychologists and education experts to explain safeguarding principles in a way that children can easily understand. In addition to being used as a learning tool in national programmes, the book has been shared with local communities and partner organizations, receiving positive feedback.
- SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka has produced a series of materials on child and youth safeguarding, including short video messages, voice cuts, social media posts, animations and print materials. Narrated or subtitled in different languages to cater to all communities, the materials were promoted on social media. The national organization has made it a point to display at least one of the videos before starting a workshop or training.
- In Guatemala, the child and youth safeguarding coordinators developed a puppet video to explain the organizational child and youth safeguarding policy for children under the age of 10. The characters, Valentin and Valentina, explain how safeguarding is structured, how to report concerns and who is part of the local safeguarding teams. Local safeguarding focal points have received a puppet to use in their work with children.
- In addition to training for staff, SOS Children's Villages Venezuela held fun, participatory activities for local families to disseminate safeguarding messages. They also developed materials including comics, a board game and informational flyers.

Some national organizations, after recognizing that staff might be reluctant to report safeguarding concerns because they believe safeguarding mechanisms serve a primarily punitive purpose, have implemented awareness strategies to change these perceptions and are reporting progress, including an increase in safeguarding-related reports.

## Incident management and investigation capacity

Cross-functional incident management teams, which ensure coordinated, expert-led responses to reports of misconduct, have been set up in 114 national organizations so far.

To develop incident management capacity, specialized training and peer learning forums, including communities of practice, have been offered across the organization.

In support of the integrated safeguarding approach, the General Secretariat has implemented three global safeguarding investigation training workshops, in English, French and Spanish. The workshops were designed to enhance the investigative capacity of staff handling non-criminal safeguarding concerns that fall outside the remit of state authorities. Participants included child and youth safeguarding, anti-corruption and human resources staff.

## New whistle-blowing system

At the beginning of 2025, the Anti-Corruption and Asset Protection team at the General Secretariat started a one-year project to pilot a new whistle-blowing system for corruption concerns. The goal is to solicit user feedback and evaluate ways to improve case management efficiency. After piloting, the system is expected to be adopted for incidents involving other types of misconduct.

## Auditing

In 2024, the General Secretariat's Internal Audit unit performed 31 cross-functional internal audits, which serve to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control systems and governance processes within SOS Children's Villages International and national organizations.

In addition, our *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy* requires regular internal child and youth safeguarding audits. We updated our methodology for child and youth safeguarding audits in September 2024 to strengthen its focus on prevention, particularly risk management. It is now available in English, French and Spanish. The updated methodology was used to complete child and youth safeguarding audits in three national organizations by the end of 2024. A further 15 child and youth safeguarding audits are expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

## External child and youth safeguarding certification

Our *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy* recommends that national organizations seek external certification of their child and youth safeguarding systems. In 2024, 21 national organizations reported holding valid external certification. This includes five national organizations that completed Keeping Children Safe certification in 2024. Another five national organizations are currently undergoing Keeping Children Safe certification.

### **Keeping Children Safe certification of SOS Children's Villages Bosnia and Herzegovina**

In 2024, SOS Children's Villages Bosnia and Herzegovina achieved Level 1 certification from Keeping Children Safe. The certification was pursued to seek external feedback and ensure alignment with international standards.

The certification audit included a self-assessment, a desk review of global and national documents, and interviews with seven staff members.

The audit found 90% compliance with Keeping Children Safe's International Child Safeguarding Standards. The process highlighted strengths, including documentation management and organizational readiness, but also emphasized the importance of regular internal audits and helped identify areas for improvement, especially in documenting feedback from children, young people and the community. A post-certification action plan is being implemented to address the areas for improvement.

## **Data protection**

SOS Children's Villages is committed to safeguarding the personal data it collects and processes. Risk-based and context-sensitive measures are implemented by the General Secretariat and national organizations, including but not limited to:

- staff training, including an online cybersecurity course and in-depth training and awareness-raising for staff handling personal data
- development of internal policies and awareness materials
- management of data protection and confidentiality agreements
- endpoint management
- regular review of access rights

# Compliance with organizational minimum requirements in 2024

In 2024, in line with our integrated approach to safeguarding and anti-corruption, we broadened the scope of our annual child and youth safeguarding survey to include anti-corruption and the prevention of sexual misconduct as a cross-cutting issue.

The annual survey is a self-assessment tool designed to monitor the status of national safeguarding and anti-corruption systems based on our safeguarding policy framework.

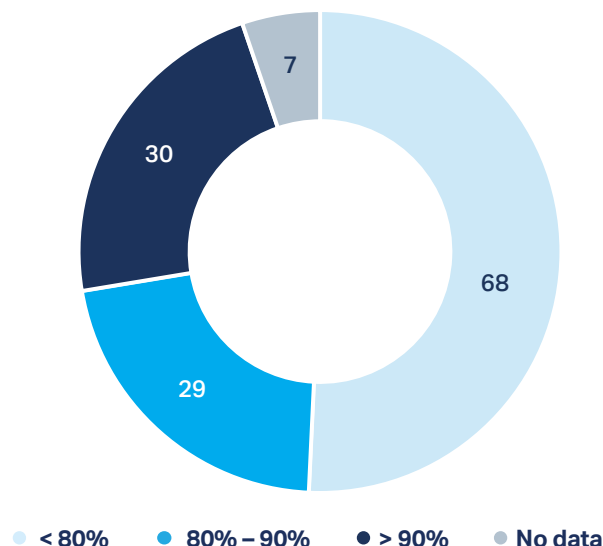
In 2024, the expanded survey was completed by 127 of 134 national organizations.

In this report, the term “national organization” refers to national entities that are active formal members; legally dependent entities operated by SOS Children’s Villages International; and entities affiliated with national organizations but reporting their safeguarding data independently.

It is important to bear in mind that the survey data is self-reported and may therefore be subject to bias.

According to the survey data, the average global rate of compliance with organizational minimum requirements across child and youth safeguarding, anti-corruption and prevention of sexual misconduct against children, young people and adults was 78%, which falls short of the minimum target of 90%. Fundraising national organizations without domestic programmes reported the lowest average compliance at 67%.

**Figure 1. Number of national organizations reporting compliance with organizational minimum requirements in 2024 below 80%, at 80–90% and above 90%**



As can be expected given its much longer evolution within the organization, child and youth safeguarding was the strongest-performing area assessed. Achieving consistent implementation of the more recently introduced requirements, particularly for anti-corruption, where a new *Anti-Corruption Regulation* was introduced as recently as in October 2024, will take more time.

At 87% on average, compliance with reporting and responding procedures remained at a level comparable to the 2023 self-assessment, which covered child and youth safeguarding only. Cross-functional incident management has received a lot of attention in recent years, and structures for reporting, follow-up and victim support have been widely established. Of the 127 national organizations that completed the survey, 114 reported they had set up a national incident management team.

The same average level of compliance in 2024 (87%) was reported for requirements to assess the national legal environment and to incorporate the implementation of global organizational policies into national strategies, plans and budgets.

Compliance with training and awareness requirements was at 78% on average. The survey showed low compliance scores in some areas of training on the prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, including induction training and training of board members.

Risk management (at 72% on average) and monitoring, evaluation and learning (at 71% on average) had the lowest average compliance ratings of the areas assessed. These areas included components introduced recently, such as the recently revised anti-corruption requirements, and will require additional effort to ensure consistent compliance across child, youth and adult safeguarding and anti-corruption. For example, while only about 50% of the national organizations surveyed submitted an annual anti-corruption and asset protection report to their national board, this is to be expected given the new *Anti-Corruption Regulation* came into effect in October 2024.

In addition, the survey has identified the need for improvement in feedback gathering from children and young people on organizational safeguarding practices.

### **Improving mechanisms for reporting concerns in Togo**

After several unreported child and youth safeguarding cases were discovered in Togo, it was found that children did not fully understand how to report concerns and that existing reporting channels were not accessible enough for children. In response, the national child and youth safeguarding team implemented improvements including the following:

- a revised reporting mechanism
- multiple child-friendly reporting channels, including suggestion boxes placed in locations chosen by children themselves
- regular awareness-raising sessions
- materials explaining how to report concerns, including a simplified leaflet for children, banners displayed on the premises, and roll-up banners for use during training sessions and community awareness campaigns

These measures have helped strengthen understanding of the reporting mechanism among both staff and children, with the majority of children's reports now received via the reporting boxes. A testament to the effectiveness of the awareness efforts is that a three-year-old child now routinely comes to a reporting box to tell it about misunderstandings or disputes with peers.

The changes implemented have also contributed to improvements in incident management and monitoring, including a reduction in the time required to process and respond to reports of abuse.

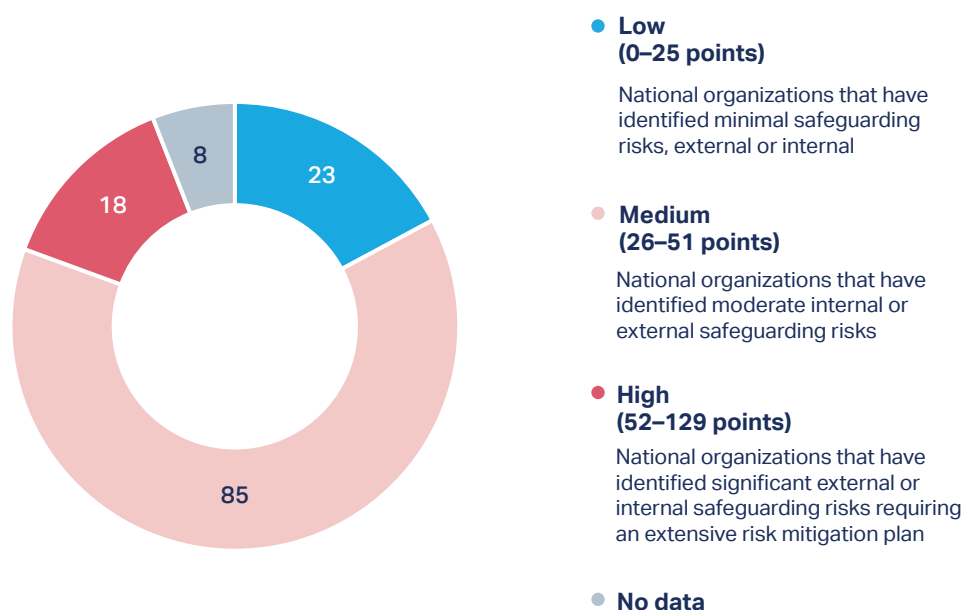
# Safeguarding risk profiles of national organizations

The risk profiler included in our annual safeguarding annual survey enables national organizations to assess their safeguarding risks across four main areas – programming, staffing, external risks and partnership arrangements – as well as any additional risks beyond these four areas.

The risk profiler is not designed to assess the quality of a national organization's work, and a high risk level does not necessarily indicate a high likelihood of children and young people being harmed due to their contact with SOS Children's Villages. Rather, the risk level refers to external and internal factors that require proactive management. For example, working with partner organizations or having high staff turnover calls for more risk mitigation planning.

For 2024, 126 of 134 national organizations reported their risk profiler data. The results are shown in [figure 2](#).

Figure 2. Number of national organizations reporting high, medium and low risk levels in 2024



National organizations operating in countries affected by armed conflict are automatically categorized as having a high risk level. The countries reporting the highest risk levels in 2024 were facing a convergence of external risk factors, including fragile state institutions, ongoing violence and limited child protection frameworks.

Used since 2021, the risk profiler enables us to track trends, allocate resources more effectively and provide support where it is most needed. The 2024 results are being used to plan internal safeguarding audits and prioritize support, monitoring and capacity building.



# Child and youth safeguarding concerns reported in 2024

National organizations report data on child and youth safeguarding concerns reported to them via the annual safeguarding survey. We separately record data on incidents said to have occurred the same year they were reported and allegations of past abuse.

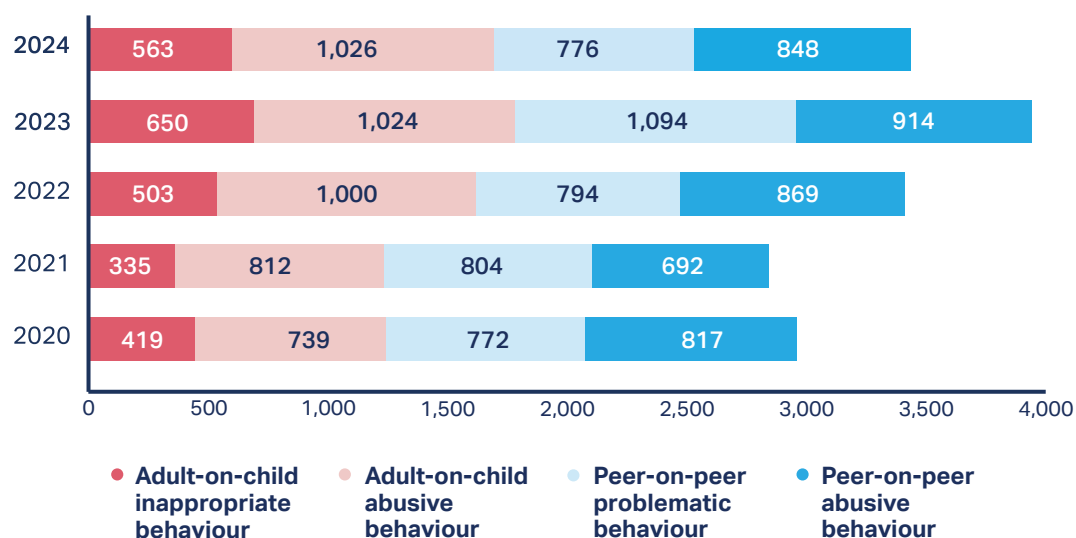
In 2024, SOS Children's Villages programmes worldwide reached over 7.7 million children, young people and adults. This includes 65,300 children and young people for whom we provide alternative care.

## Reported concerns

In 2024, 3,213 child and youth safeguarding concerns were reported to national SOS Children's Villages organizations and General Secretariat offices – 469 fewer than in 2023. This number represents incidents that were reported to have occurred in 2024.

Of the 3,213 reported concerns, 1,874 (58%) involved allegations by abusive behaviours by children, young people or adults, and 1,339 (42%), allegations of problematic behaviours by children and young people or inappropriate behaviours by adults. We define problematic behaviours as behaviours that create a risk of harm for the child or young person involved or for their peers but do not involve a power imbalance. Examples include self-harm or physical fights among peers. The term "inappropriate behaviours" refers to isolated incidents where actions by a care practitioner or another adult do not meet expected standards but do not amount to abuse, for example when an adult responds to a child's behaviour inappropriately. While confirmed problematic and inappropriate behaviours are not treated as abuse, they always require a corrective and preventive response.

Figure 3. Child and youth safeguarding concerns reported in 2020–2024



While most of the reports (86%) were received in various alternative care settings including family-like care, foster care and supervised independent living, both the absolute number and the relative share of reports received in these settings decreased compared to 2023. Conversely, more reports were received in family strengthening and education programmes than in 2023. Although the absolute numbers of reports received in these non-care settings remain low and still likely suggest under-reporting, this is a welcome development since we believe this indicates improving awareness of reporting options.

### Confirmed reports of abuse

Of the concerns reported in 2024, 1,489 were confirmed to have involved peer-on-peer or adult-on-child abuse.

Figure 4. Reports of abusive behaviour confirmed in 2020–2024



Compared to 2020–2021, the total volume of reported concerns went up considerably in 2022–2023 before decreasing again in 2024, whereas the number of confirmed reports of abuse peaked in 2022 and has been slightly declining since. We attribute this trend to the extensive efforts to raise awareness, enhance staff training and strengthen reporting mechanisms undertaken since 2021. The reduction in both the total number of reported concerns and the number of confirmed reports of abuse in 2024 compared to 2023 may be indicative of the impact of preventive work, although it is too early to determine whether that is indeed the case.

Of the 1,874 reports of abusive behaviour received in 2024, 1,301 were closed by the end of the year. A report is closed after a full assessment or investigation is complete, any corrective actions have been implemented and, where appropriate, legal action has been initiated.

## Children and young people who were victims of abuse

The incidents confirmed in 2024 involved 2,022 children and young people who were victims of peer-on-peer or adult-on-child abuse. Most of these children and young people (93%) were in SOS Children's Villages care, which includes settings such as family-like care, foster families and supervised independent living.

Of the 2,022 children and young people, 780 (39%) were abused by SOS Children's Villages staff or others working for the organization or on its behalf. This is 78 children and young people fewer than in 2023.

## Support provided to children and young people who were victims of abuse

All but three of the 2,022 children and young people had an individual support plan by the end of 2024. The remaining three persons who did not have a support plan could not be offered support for reasons beyond the control of SOS Children's Villages.

At a minimum, an individual support plan includes psychological counselling. Based on the person's individual needs, other types of support – medical, legal, educational or financial – may be provided as well.

By the end of the year, the individual support plans of 1,092 children and young people (54%) were implemented in full. The rest are in progress.

## Staff perpetrators of abuse

In 2024, 428 staff or other individuals working for or on behalf of SOS Children's Villages were found to have perpetrated abuse (62 fewer than in 2023).

As some of the perpetrators were involved in multiple incidents and some incidents involved more than one perpetrator, the total number of staff perpetrators we recorded in our incident data was 446 (68 fewer than in 2023). This represents about 1.1% of the 40,200 staff working for SOS Children's Villages worldwide.

Four-fifths of the staff perpetrators were caregivers, including caregivers in family-like care, professional foster parents and youth care workers. However, the number of caregivers found to have perpetrated abuse has decreased by 58 compared to 2023.

Since caregivers' close and continuous engagement with children and young people elevates safeguarding risks, especially in environments marked by chronic stress and limited support, it is essential that we continue investing in preventative training, mental health support, safe staffing ratios and a stronger culture of positive discipline.

### Investing in positive parenting and trauma-informed care

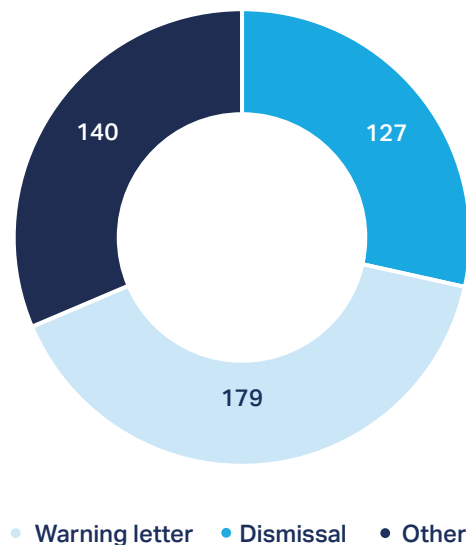
Several national organizations report efforts to strengthen caregiving capacity in 2024.

In Bangladesh, the national team commissioned a training module on positive parenting and conducted a training-of-trainers session with 18 members of staff.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the regional safeguarding coordinator is offering a specialized course for national organizations on trauma-informed care, with two sessions held in 2024. After participating in one of the sessions, SOS Children's Villages Peru has implemented a specialized in-person course on trauma-informed care for child and youth safeguarding teams in its 13 locations. The 23 staff who have completed the training are expected to replicate it with their colleagues (including care support staff and caregivers) and programme participants.

Disciplinary actions against staff perpetrators in all 446 cases are shown below. In addition, we reported 77 individuals to law enforcement authorities.

Figure 5. Disciplinary measures taken against staff confirmed as perpetrators of abuse<sup>1</sup>



### Sexual coercion and abuse perpetrated by staff

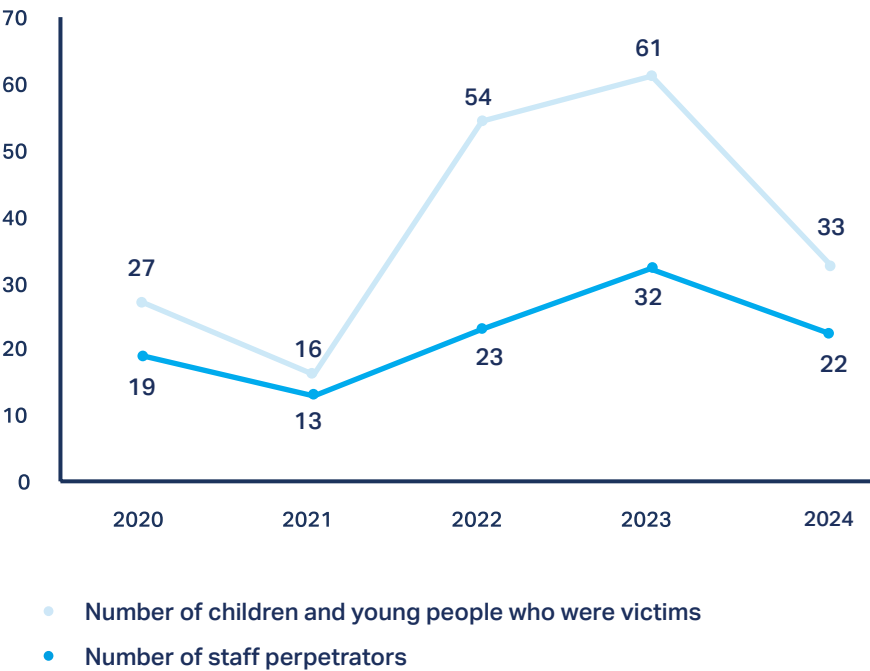
In 2024, we confirmed 22 incidents of sexual coercion and abuse by staff (11 fewer than in 2023):

- 17 incidents of sexual harassment or inappropriate touching
- 5 incidents of sexual coercion

1. Other disciplinary measures include, for example, demotion, loss of discretionary pay or measures to ensure that the person involved is not allowed to work unsupervised.

In these 22 incidents, 22 staff were confirmed as perpetrators and 33 children and young people were confirmed as victims.

**Figure 6. Staff perpetrators and victims in confirmed incidents of sexual coercion and abuse in 2020–2024**



As a direct result, 17 staff members were dismissed, 2 individuals employed by external security companies were barred from working for SOS Children’s Villages, 1 staff member received a warning letter, 1 was suspended pending the outcome of a police investigation, and 1 resigned before disciplinary action could be taken.

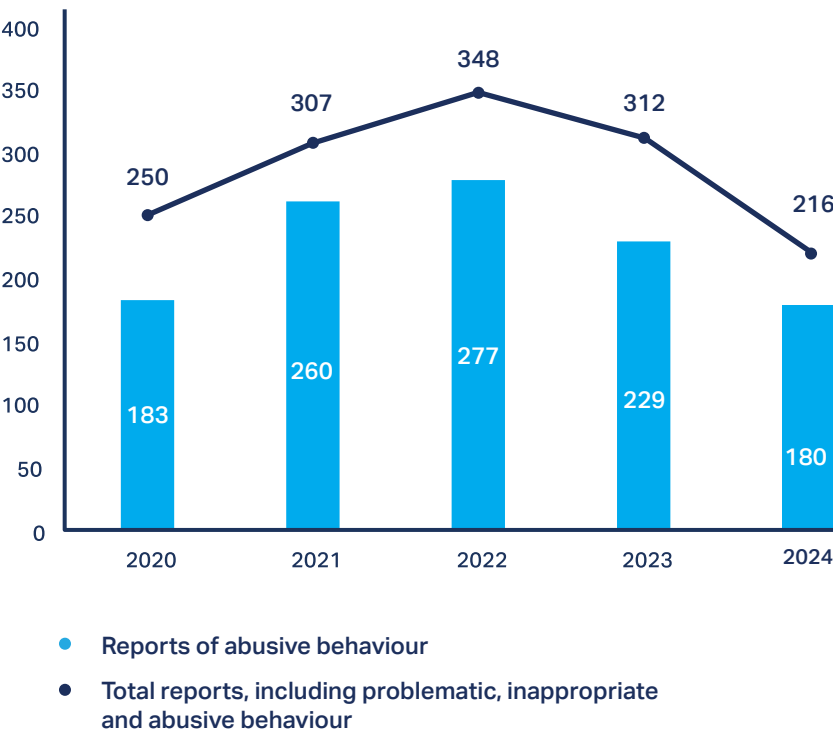
Of the 22 incidents, 15 were criminal offences according to national law. Of these, 11 were reported to law enforcement. In the remaining 4 cases, the victims or their family decided not to pursue legal action.

### Reports of past child and youth abuse received in 2024

This section discusses data on child and youth safeguarding reports received in 2024 of incidents believed to have occurred in years prior.

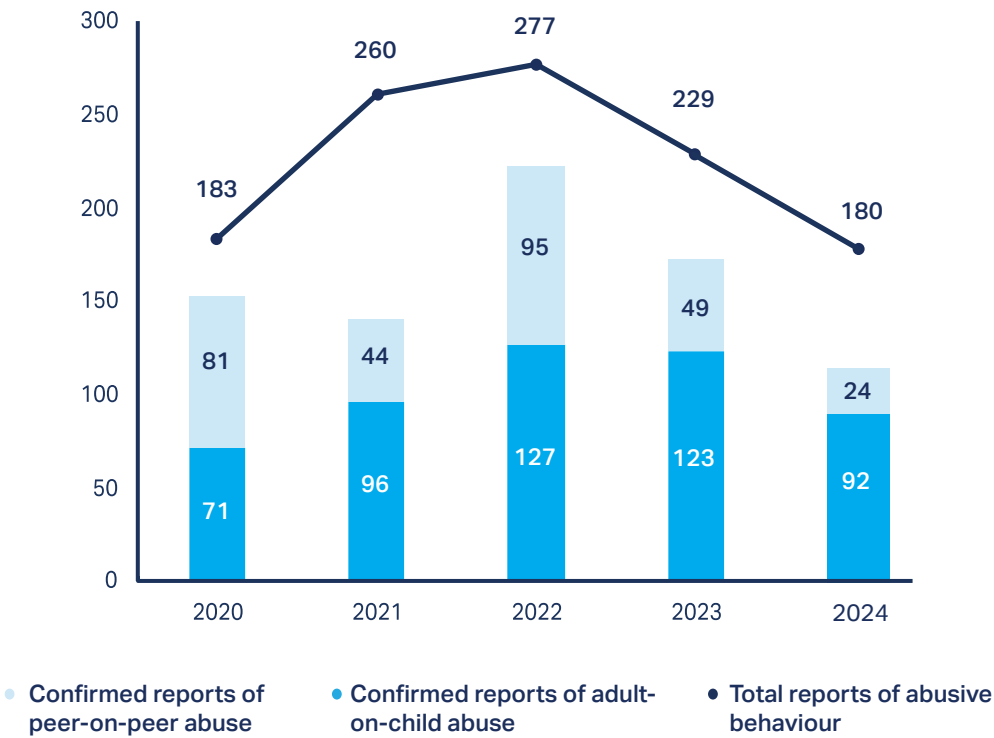
In 2024, we received 216 such reports, which is the lowest number in the past five years. Of these, 116 were confirmed and 99 were closed by the end of 2024.

Figure 7. Reports of past child and youth abuse, 2020–2024



The confirmed incidents harmed 158 children and young people, 155 of whom were or had been in SOS Children’s Villages care. All 158 children and young people had an individual support plan in 2024, with 62 (39%) of the plans fully implemented by the end of the year.

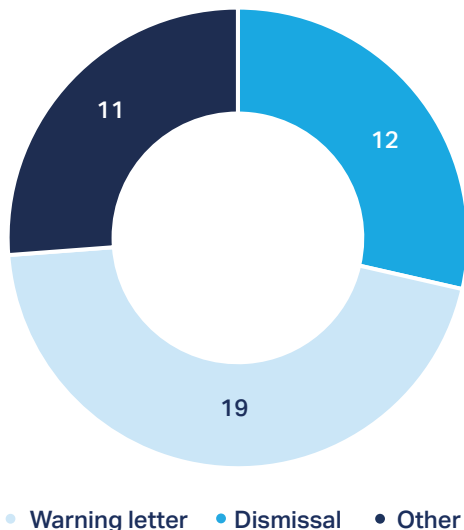
Figure 8. Confirmed reports of past child and youth abuse, 2020–2024



We found 78 individual staff members or others working for or on behalf of the organization to have perpetrated abuse. As some were involved in multiple incidents and some incidents involved more than one perpetrator, the number of staff perpetrators we recorded in our incident data was 84 (which represents 0.2% of SOS Children's Villages staff worldwide).

Disciplinary measures implemented in 42 of these cases are shown in [figure 9](#). In the remaining cases, the organization was unable to take disciplinary action because the individuals involved were no longer on staff. We reported 18 staff members to law enforcement authorities.

**Figure 9. Disciplinary measures against staff confirmed as perpetrators of past abuse<sup>2</sup>**



**Gender-sensitive approach to preventing and responding to sexual abuse**

The regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean has been working to improve gender sensitivity in preventing and managing incidents of sexual abuse since 2020, based on the needs identified by the regional child and youth safeguarding network. In 2022, it developed guidance on applying a gender-sensitive approach to preventing and responding to sexual abuse of children and young people and then held workshops and training sessions for national safeguarding coordinators, who were encouraged to replicate the training with their colleagues in 2024.

SOS Children's Villages Nicaragua has been a pioneer in developing gender-sensitive activities to raise awareness of what sexual abuse might look like and how to report it. Today, SOS Children's Villages Nicaragua has recorded the largest number of concerns reported in a single national organization from a preventive perspective, which means patterns of abusive behaviours are recognized and addressed early, before they can escalate to cause serious harm.

<sup>2</sup>. Other disciplinary measures include, for example, demotion, loss of discretionary pay or measures to ensure that the person involved is not allowed to work unsupervised.

# Concerns of forced placements of children without proper documentation in Syria

In 2017, SOS Children's Villages International became aware of cases where children had been forcibly separated from their families and placed in our programmes in Syria. Once we understood the full scale of the issue in 2018, we took decisive action to stop the practice, strengthen oversight and align all placements with international child protection standards.

With the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, public awareness of these placements increased.

In early 2025, we conducted an internal review, which identified 139 children placed with SOS Children's Villages Syria under circumstances indicating forcible family separation and without proper documentation.<sup>3</sup>

In late 2024, concerned citizens, organizations and families began contacting the General Secretariat via its online reporting channels. Between 16 December 2024 and 14 June 2025, the General Secretariat received 297 concerns referring to placements of children who had been forcibly separated from their families. Of the 297 messages:

- 285 were general concerns that did not contain specific allegations but rather referred to human rights violations and the organization's role in forced placements of children; requested information on missing children; or demanded accountability. Of these, 138 had identical content.
- 7 referred to specific individuals or contained specific allegations such as lack of cooperation with inquirers or involvement in child abuse, child exploitation or child trafficking
- 2 were inquiries by two mothers looking for their missing children
- 2 were inquiries by two persons looking for their missing adult and child relatives
- 1 was a report by a person who alleged that they had experienced abuse while in the care of SOS Children's Villages Syria and that their identity information had been withheld from them

We deeply regret delays with our responses to inquirers due to resource constraints. We have established a dedicated incident management team that is now working to ensure all concerns, allegations and requests for information are thoroughly addressed.

Two independent international investigations have been commissioned to ensure transparency and accountability. Findings from the investigation commissioned by SOS Children's Villages International are expected in November 2025. A summary report of the separate independent investigation commissioned by our German member organization SOS-Kinderdörfer weltweit

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3. In addition to the 139 cases, there is one disputed case where classification in this group is unclear.



was published on 18 August.<sup>4</sup> Both investigations are looking into the circumstances surrounding the forced placement of children without proper documentation in our interim alternative care programmes and the role of SOS Children's Villages.

Support for family tracing remains a priority, in cooperation with institutions, communities, and intergovernmental and humanitarian organizations.

For updates, please visit <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/news/statement-syria>.

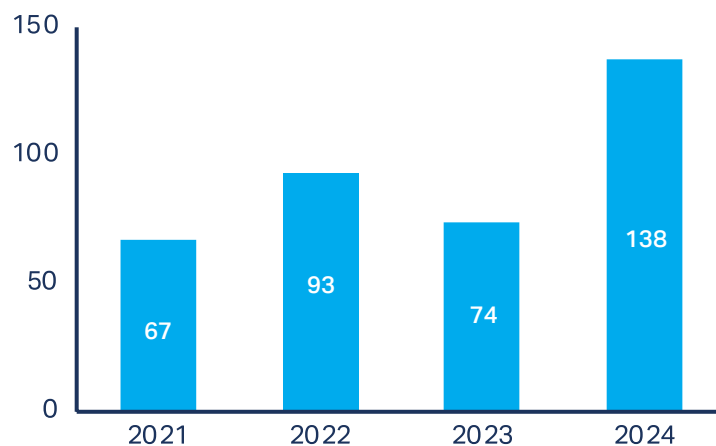
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4. SOS-Kinderdörfer weltweit Hermann-Gmeiner-Fonds Deutschland e.V., *Summary Report Concerning the Tracing of the Compulsory Indeterminate Placement Children and SOS Children's Villages Syria: Reporting as of 01 August 2025*, [https://www.sos-kinderdoerfer.de/getmedia/ae3f609c-ce27-425f-8a6a-fdac0ad818c5/report\\_sos-kinderdoerfer\\_syrien.pdf](https://www.sos-kinderdoerfer.de/getmedia/ae3f609c-ce27-425f-8a6a-fdac0ad818c5/report_sos-kinderdoerfer_syrien.pdf).

# Corruption concerns reported to the General Secretariat in 2024

In 2024, the General Secretariat received 138 reports via its [online whistle-blowing channel for corruption concerns](#).

Figure 10. Reports received via the General Secretariat's online whistle-blowing channel for corruption concerns in 2021–2024



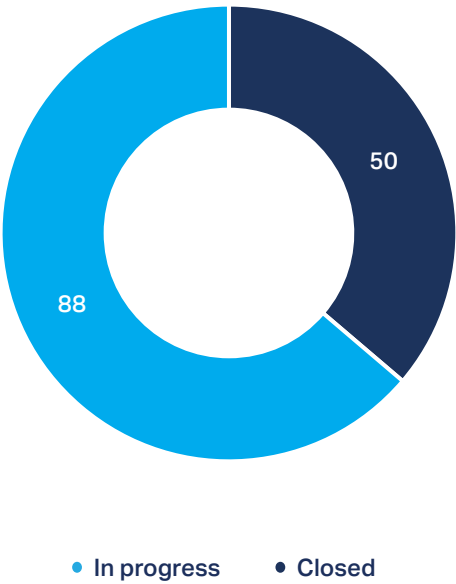
Of the 138 reports, 32 did not contain allegations of corrupt conduct but rather constituted programme quality or human resources concerns or general complaints. Non-corruption reports were referred to the appropriate units of the General Secretariat for further assessment and follow-up.

We believe the 86% increase from 74 reports of suspected corrupt conduct in 2023 to 138 in 2024 can be attributed to the introduction of the *Anti-Corruption Regulation* in 2024 and the associated efforts to encourage staff to report any concerns.

As in previous years, some regions have been under-represented among the reports received. In 2024, no reports were received from Western Europe and North America, whereas only three reports were received from West, Central and North Africa and four, from Latin America and the Caribbean. This requires further analysis and monitoring to improve awareness of reporting options.

In 2024, we configured our system to set up secure postboxes by default for all incoming reports. This has helped increase the likelihood of receiving the details necessary for assessment and follow-up from reporters.

Figure 11. Status of concerns reported via the General Secretariat's online whistle-blowing channel in 2024, as of the end of 2024



By of the end of 2024, 50 reports were closed, of which 5 were confirmed, and the remaining cases were in progress. A report is closed after a full assessment or investigation is complete, any corrective actions have been implemented, and, where appropriate, legal action has been initiated.

# Focus areas for 2025 and 2026

In June 2025, the General Assembly of SOS Children's Villages International formally introduced a new governance structure, including improved mechanisms to address issues of non-compliance by member organizations. By making a clearer separation between supervisory and executive roles, by improving oversight, and by facilitating informed decision-making, the changes are expected to accelerate cultural change and strengthen our safeguarding and anti-corruption efforts.

The reports concerning Syria serve as a profound reminder of the responsibility we hold towards every child, young person and family we support. The findings from the ongoing investigations will directly inform how we improve our policies, oversight and accountability mechanisms, and organizational culture.

Our recently updated global Strategy 2030 has defined three major safeguarding objectives – values-based leadership, safe programming and accountability to people affected by misconduct – with 12 indicators to measure progress. This reinforces the commitments made in the General Secretariat's Safeguarding Strategy introduced in 2024. Both these strategic frameworks will guide our work in 2025 and 2026. In line with our global strategic goals, we will:

- continue to foster leadership commitment at all levels, which includes ensuring appropriate training and onboarding for board members and managers and tracking leadership-related indicators
- invest in efforts to ensure all staff, volunteers and others working for or on behalf of the organization understand safeguarding risks associated with their job and have the knowledge, skills and support they need to mitigate them
- listen to survivors' voices and learn from their experiences to drive further improvements, including by collaborating with a growing ombuds network, which provides an additional layer of accountability

A key focus in the coming months will be deepening our integrated safeguarding approach. Efforts to safeguard adults, previously overlooked in our safeguarding systems, will receive more attention, including in terms of data collection.

To standardize responses to reports of misconduct, the General Secretariat will introduce a new whistle-blowing system, which is currently being piloted. The new system will serve as a centralized feedback and complaints mechanism for all types of concerns, including service quality concerns and staff grievances – two areas where our reporting channels needed improvement. In addition, we are harmonizing the terminology used internally to assess and categorize the feedback and complaints we receive. The goal is to ensure consistent triage, clarify escalation requirements, ensure appropriate handling of reports and provide better support for national organizations when conflicts of interest arise.

Finally, we will work to ensure incident management teams are fully in place across SOS Children's Villages worldwide, and we will continue to invest in quality assurance and capacity building.

With these efforts, our goal is to reduce delays and any bias in our responses to concerns while also reinforcing the structures, practices and attitudes that prevent misconduct from occurring in the first place.



**SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES**

To report a concern, please go to  
<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/about-us/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints>.