



Safeguarding Strategy 2024 – 2030

March 2024



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**

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Introduction to the strategy

This document presents the safeguarding strategy 2024 – 2030 for the General Secretariat of SOS Children's Villages International and for SOS Children's Villages International run operations. The strategy is a starting point for a future Federation wide strategy.

In line with the Strategy 2030 goal 3: *we ensure and live safeguarding in our daily actions*, the safeguarding strategy sets up the direction for an integrated approach to safeguarding inclusive of child and youth safeguarding, adult safeguarding and anti-corruption and asset protection. The latter requires nurturing and efforts to integrate it into our mindset and processes: the strategy takes this into consideration.

The strategy is the guiding framework for the General Secretariat and CVI run operations to be able to monitor adherence to the safeguarding policies and regulations that form the binding safeguarding framework. It provides a guide to all departments of the General Secretariat and CVI run operations to identify and mitigate safeguarding risks from all operations and programs. The new safeguarding team owns this document, and it forms part of the GSC safeguarding mandate.

Background

The background section details the external and internal context of our safeguarding work.

External trends

Localization

Following the Grand Bargain localization commitment in 2016, when donors and aid organizations pledged to provide 25% of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders, localization has become a major trend across both the humanitarian and development sectors.

Localization aims to directly support financial and program management capacity in-country, shifting power and decision-making closer to the areas of need, making interventions more efficient and mitigating traditional top-down models. This demands a general approach to activate our partners and the communities in which we operate in shaping safeguarding measures, to ensure they are the first to take on their safety and they are not on the receiving end anymore.

Decolonization of aid

The colonial legacy of the aid system is under deconstruction. To decolonize, INGOs must examine and be honest and transparent about their history and the structure of international aid, and the inherent cycles of privilege and power within their organizations. Radical conversations and transformations of INGOs are resulting across the international aid sector to ensure aid does no harm in the future and is relevant in the modern day.

Decline of international aid and changing funding mechanisms

Across the sector, the reduction of funding coupled with increasing needs and a proliferation of development actors, are leading to more competition among NGOs, who are pressured to do more with less. NGOs are increasingly having to defend their role and articulate their unique value proposition. The reputation of SOS Children's Villages International as a relevant actor and trustworthy partner relies on its capacity to prevent harm and respond to incidents when they occur.

Increasing compliance requirements

INGOs are subject to increasingly stringent regulatory frameworks, governing financial management, reporting, and safeguarding. The increasingly stringent requirements are intended to support transparency, accountability, and safer programming, and help to restore an atmosphere of trust. We are committed to increasing transparency in our safeguarding work by being able to gather quantitative and qualitative data and improving on reporting.

Increasing media scrutiny and demand for transparency

Safeguarding incidents involving the most prominent international organizations show that the risk of misconduct and abuse is always present, even in values-based organizations. There is increased media and public scrutiny of safeguarding incidents and practices related to INGOs, with examples of media outlets with focused investigative journalists on safeguarding issues. Grassroots movements have opened space for people to share past experiences of abuse or

harassment and find support and solidarity in a broader community. We need to be among leaders who push safeguarding topics through the agenda.

Growing system-wide capacity for more effective safeguarding

UN agencies and INGOs have come together to develop shared principles to address sexual exploitation and abuse. Collective solutions are being built to address complex issues such as stopping perpetrators of sexual misconduct moving between organizations undetected. INGOs have made joint leadership commitments and strengthened their approaches to safeguarding, with increased resourcing for its capacity and infrastructure. It’s the momentum to build up a strong prevention system from our existing safeguarding structures, best practices and lessons learned over the years.

Internal context

The first steppingstones of our safeguarding journey can be traced back to the launch of our Child Protection Policy in 2008 and of the Code of Conduct in 2011 that complemented the policy and defined clear behavior expectations for all SOS Children’s Villages staff and associates.

Between 2012 and 2020 SOS Children’s Villages gained more experience and understanding of the factors that impact the prevention of, and response to, child abuse, and built on the foundation through strengthening existing child safeguarding networks and deploying awareness programs via regional teams. A focus was placed on addressing reporting and responding gaps, and to clarify roles and responsibilities of line management within the federation. As a result, three key policy support documents were updated and developed – on reporting and responding within member associations, child safeguarding investigations, and reporting and responding within the General Secretariat. SOS Children’s Villages also established a global pool of more than 20 certified child safeguarding investigators from all regions.

Since 2018, we have been able to report publicly on the status of child and youth safeguarding at SOS Children’s Villages. The Child and Youth Safeguarding Annual Report is based on the results of the annual child safeguarding survey, which comprises a self-assessment of compliance with organization-wide child and youth safeguarding requirements, a risk assessment, and incident statistics.



Safeguarding journey

Effective safeguarding relies on a broader framework of high-quality programming, good governance, and organizational culture. An important milestone in addressing key components of program quality was the introduction of SOS Care Promise in 2018, which serves as a binding program policy for all member associations and all employees. Our commitment to create and maintain a safe environment for our staff and participants is enclosed in the Sexual Misconduct Regulation (PSHEA) approved in 2020. The regulation outlines our prevention and response mechanisms to cases of suspected sexual misconduct.

In 2021, we developed a comprehensive Safeguarding Action Plan, to address key learnings of the recent past, including those gained through the commissioning of an Independent Child Safeguarding Review (ICSR). The plan approaches the broader challenge of achieving strong safeguarding through:

- Prioritizing, in everything we do, support for the people who experienced abuse towards healing, reconciliation, and becoming self-reliant.
- Improving overall program quality, which is essential for prevention of abuse.
- Improving our policies and systems specifically related to child and youth safeguarding.

Addressing broader governance and organizational culture matters – creating a safe environment for all.

As one of the priorities of the action plan, an Independent Special Commission (ISC) was established in 2021 by the International Senate, to investigate the allegations brought forward in the Duty to Act report, to assess the existing policies and frameworks, and to recommend appropriate action. The ISC report echoed the root causes stated in the ICSR report and, in addition, listed several other foundational elements that need to be addressed to ensure a safe environment for all. The root causes are summarized in the visual below. They guide our integrated approach to safeguarding, this strategy and its contribution towards an ethical, equitable and accountable federation that proactively delivers its commitments.

weak **governance and leadership** structures

- Factions, power imbalance (e.g. trademark ownership)
- Lack of environment of transparency, checks & balances, and accountability
- Lack of comprehensive dissemination of reform initiatives
- Persisting “cultures” and “norms” of previous leadership
- Lack of diversity (SOS CVI leadership)
- Lack of Children and Youth participation in decision-making

lack of federation wide **Human Resource framework**

- Key elements missing such as safe recruitment, fair compensation of Child Youth Care practitioners, retaliatory dismissals
- Lack of independent mechanism for HR complaints
- Insufficient or lack of whistle-blower protection

Culture

- Lack of meaningful Children and Youth participation
- Patriarchal norms persist
- Substantial evidence of abuse of power, nepotism, gender inequality, discrimination, and colonial attitude.
- Lack of performance appraisal and leadership accountability

Insufficient resourcing and implementation of **child safeguarding**

- *Insufficient investment in prevention (Including training)
- Lack of consistent implementation
- across all MAs
- Lack of adherence to policies
- Historical under resourcing

gaps in **programme quality**

- Unclear standards
- Gatekeeping
- Insufficient working conditions of Child and Youth Care practitioners

Inconsistent and weak **survivor-centric support**

- Failing to (consistently) address and provide justice
- Instances of questioning survivor experiences and veracity, further victimizing and re-traumatizing
- Inconsistent follow up to investigations

weak **asset protection**

- Lack of controls and standards
- Conflict of interest: deficiency of internal controls and mitigation
- Nexus between asset protection, child safeguarding, weak governance

In 2023 a new values-based Code of Conduct and two new misconduct management regulations (i.e. the incident management and the investigations regulation) were developed. The Child Protection Policy, adopted in 2008, was replaced by a new Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy, which is further detailed in the Child and Youth Safeguarding Regulation. The new regulations strengthen our approach to safeguarding in line with international standards. An anti-corruption regulation and a regulation on support for persons affected by child and youth abuse are under development.

In late 2023 within the International Office a new director of safeguarding was appointed and an integrated safeguarding team comprising child and youth safeguarding, adult safeguarding and anti-corruption and asset protection was established. The new safeguarding team owns the safeguarding strategy.

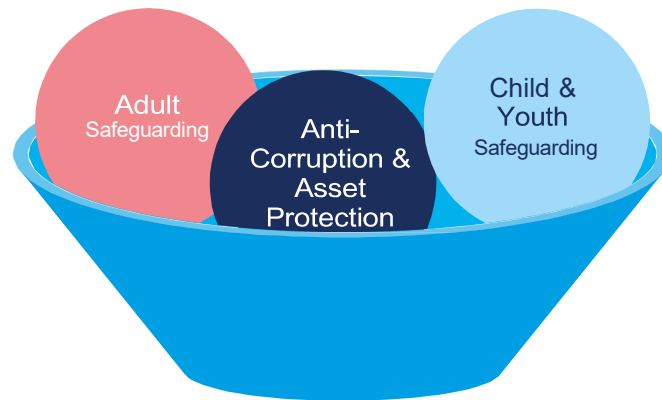
The purpose of the safeguarding strategy

SOS Children's Villages International and CVI-run operations are aware of the urgent need to continue to build and maintain a culture of protecting our assets and for keeping children, young people, adults, and all individuals who come into contact with the organization safe. All our leaders, staff and those working on our behalf have a role to play in creating safe environments including developing strong leadership, creating a culture of accountability with clear expectations and open communication; an environment where people are empowered through clarity, sense of ownership, commitment and understanding of how their individual accountability impacts our mission.

The safeguarding strategy forms part of the General Secretariat safeguarding mandate. It is not a stand-alone document but a key document in our safeguarding framework which includes the policies, regulations, and procedures to fulfil our duty of care, to safeguard our program participants, the community members we serve and our staff from harm and to prevent corruption and protect our assets. The strategy is a high-level plan to create an ethical, equitable and accountable GSC and CVI-run operations. Together with its operational workplan, the strategy aims to mainstream an integrated approach to safeguarding that will:

1. Prevent harm by using high functioning safeguarding mechanisms.
2. Enable, respond to, and resolve safeguarding reports in a timely and transparent manner.

These aims are named outcomes (1 and 2) in the safeguarding strategy. Other outcomes include good governance (3) and compliance with obligations and minimum requirements (4).



Integrated Approach to Safeguarding

GSC
Safeguarding
strategy

to enable

Safeguarding
workplan

1. A federation that prevents harm by using functioning safeguarding mechanisms

3. A federation that has accountable, equitable, and effective governance at all levels

2. A federation that responds and resolves safeguarding incidents in a timely and transparent manner

4. A federation that complies with obligations and minimum requirements defined in binding policy documents

Final Goal

An ethical, equitable, and accountable federation proactively delivers its commitments

Holistic Response

The Safeguarding Action Plan (2021 – 2024) and associated strategic federation projects end in December 2024. The safeguarding strategy covers 2024 – 2030 and sets us on a path to becoming an organization of safeguarding excellence. The strategy shifts our safeguarding focus from solely responding to past safeguarding failings to a greater focus on awareness and prevention and increased accountability. There will be quarterly internal reporting on the implementation progress of the strategy.

Strategy overview

The strategy details how the safeguarding policy framework will be implemented. The framework includes the Code of Conduct, child and youth safeguarding policy and regulation, the sexual misconduct (PSHEA) regulation, the misconduct management regulations, and the new anti-corruption regulation.

The safeguarding vision, goals and outcomes are detailed in the table below. The six safeguarding outcomes will be implemented via the safeguarding activities and monitored by KPIs.

Vision	In everything we do, children, young people and adults are safe, treated with dignity and their rights are respected.
Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We do not tolerate abuse, exploitation or violence against children, young people and adults participating in our programs or against people who work for and on behalf of our organization.2. We raise awareness, minimize risk of harm through the organizations staff, programs and operations, and protection of assets and respond appropriately and effectively when harm does occur.
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Staff in leadership and governance positions have the required commitment and competence to mitigate safeguarding risks in our daily operations.2. Essential safeguarding standards are set and monitored through independent oversight, with possible external certification.3. Anti-corruption and asset protection are integrated into federation-wide standard processes.4. Safeguarding risks are mitigated through programme quality and child and youth participation.5. Safeguarding risks are mitigated through a people and culture framework aligned with international standards.6. Individuals affected by misconduct receive appropriate, timely and transparent responses.

Implementation timeline

The implementation timeline for the strategy is 2024-2030. The implementation milestones during this period are detailed in the diagram below, starting with embedding the safeguarding policy framework in 2024 to having strong safeguarding mechanisms in place by 2030.



Post strategy situation

Following the implementation of the safeguarding strategy the following developments, as detailed in the table below, will be in place.

Participants ¹	Staff ²	Assets	Departments ³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know and understand their rights. • Their care, development, and support needs are met. • Participate in the process of identifying safe-guarding risks and appropriate risk mitigation actions. • Can discuss and co-decide on matters that affect them. • Are encouraged to speak up: their concerns are heard and properly addressed. • Are supported when their rights are violated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know and understand their rights. • Know what is expected from them. • Are guided and empowered by a clear (set of) standards. • Have the competencies they need to create a safe environment for all. • Are encouraged to speak up: their concerns are heard and properly addressed. • Are supported when their rights are violated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are utilized responsibly and protected adequately. • All stakeholders understand asset protection and work according to the defined standards and procedures. • The organization responds appropriately to misconduct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know and understand their safeguarding risk. • Elaborate the tools required for the needed competences. • Will embed mitigation measures in the daily operations. • Will take ownership of the safeguarding risk associated to their position.

¹Children, young people & adults participating in our programmes or otherwise in contact with the organization

²Staff, including volunteers, associates, partners, and everyone else working with and on behalf of SOS Children's Villages.

³Includes all departments of the General Secretariat and their management levels

Strategy activities and KPIs

The six safeguarding outcomes will be implemented through the safeguarding activities and monitored by the KPIs as detailed below.

Outcome 1: Staff in leadership and governance positions have the required commitment and competence to mitigate safeguarding risks in our daily operations.

Activities	KPIs
1.1 Create a framework of essential safeguarding skills to be adapted to each department, aligned with a leadership model focused on safeguarding	% of members of governing bodies who completed their onboarding on safeguarding
1.2 Develop onboarding curriculum for governing bodies and line management to ensure they have the needed competences and roles and responsibilities including values-based mindset & attitudes	% of line managers and staff who completed their onboarding on safeguarding
1.3 Develop and maintain a framework of an aligned safeguarding curriculum	% of job descriptions of management and staff positions with specific safeguarding roles and responsibilities included
1.4 Develop essential safeguarding competences (aligned with Living Our Values)	GSC departments carry out one safeguarding risk assessment and maintain one up to date safeguarding risk and mitigation plan
1.5 Include specific safeguarding roles and responsibilities in management job descriptions and evaluate their performance accordingly	
1.6 Analyze and report implementation of minimum standards for managerial decisions	

Outcome 2: Essential safeguarding standards are set and monitored through independent oversight, with possible external certification.

Activities	KPIs
2.1 Define and implement essential safeguarding standards	A federation-wide consultation on essential safeguarding standards has been conducted.
2.2 Conduct independent safeguarding audits in project location every 3 years at a minimum	% of project locations where an independent safeguarding audit has been conducted in the past 3 years
2.3 Obtain external certification in all SOS CVI operations and encourage all MAs to go through the certification.	# of SOS CVI operations with the external certification
2.4 Make a benchmarking analysis of the identified root causes of non-compliance.	# of MAs with the external certification*
2.5 Align with existing external safeguarding auditing/monitoring best practices.	
2.6 Maintain CHS Alliance membership incl. certification against the Quality Assurance Verification Scheme managed by CHS Alliance	<i>*Measurement to guide the federation - not on MAs' compliance</i>
2.7 Report transparently on a yearly basis on the number of incidents of people affected by misconduct (program participants and staff), and speed and appropriateness of response.	

Outcome 3: Anti-corruption and asset protection are integrated into federation-wide standard processes.

Activities	KPIs
3.1 Revise Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline and implement the minimum requirements	% of senior management teams (ND*, ID, EB, SMT) who completed the training on the implementation of the regulation
3.2 Integrate anti-corruption and asset protection essential standards in the different governing bodies, functional areas and levels of the organization	# of MAs* that have nominated a National Integrity Officer
3.3 Develop federation-wide training concept on anti-corruption and asset protection as part of the safeguarding curriculum	% of staff that completed training at MA level*
3.4 Design and roll-out a federation-wide anti-corruption risk management system	% of MAs* that have conducted annual corruption risk assessment
3.5 Design a federation-wide sanctions compliance mechanism	<i>*Measurement to guide the federation - not on MAs' compliance</i>
3.6 Report transparently on corruption cases on a yearly basis	
3.7 Report transparently on our progress to improve anti-corruption and asset protection	

Outcome 4: Safeguarding risks are mitigated through program quality and child and youth participation.

Activities	KPIs
4.1 Implement the minimum requirements of the program services regulation including systematic quality assurance across the federation.	# of SOS CVI operations with local and national safeguarding context analysis conducted
4.2 Implement the minimum requirements of the safeguarding policy framework in all programs operations and departments.	# of MAs with local and national safeguarding context analysis conducted*
4.3 Strengthen Child and Youth participation in individual development planning, local councils, national governance and international legal bodies, including activities with the care leaver's network on care issues.	In addition, we refer to the SOS Care Promise priorities KPIs until 2024 and existing monitoring tools – subject to change with future implementation of new systems/ framework.
4.4 Strengthen learning and development of child and youth care practitioners including CYC mentoring, supervision and participation.	# of MAs* that involve children and young people in training activities and shaping child safeguarding measures
4.5 Develop and integrate training for CYC practitioners on safeguarding.	# of MAs* that achieve a minimum 90% compliance rate with child safeguarding minimum requirements
4.6 Implement Sexual and Reproductive Health program for all participants.	# of MAs* that ensure access to learning and development opportunities for all care professionals (in AC and FS)
4.7 Establish MHPSS access in every program.	#of MAs* that include specific actions in their national plans to integrate MHPSS in into their program work
4.8 Do an assessment against defined quality requirements and close or change programs if there are significant gaps in providing quality programs and safeguarding services.	# of MAs* that follow a results-based management approach
4.9 Report annually on feedback and complaints mechanism being fully in place	#of MAs that have implemented their nationally contextualized youth concept, with strong participation of children and young people.
	<i>*Measurement to guide the federation- not on MAs' compliance</i>

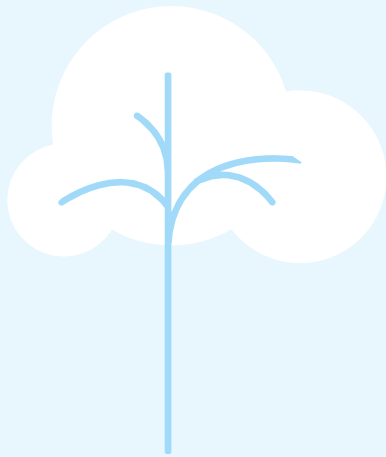
Outcome 5: Safeguarding risks are mitigated through a people and culture framework aligned with international standards.

Activities	KPIs
5.1 Develop and implement the minimum requirements of the People and Culture Policy including HR framework in support of an ethical and agile people management.	Subject to change with future implementation of new systems/ framework
5.2 Implement the minimum requirements of the Code of conduct including the values-based approach.	# of staff that have concluded the Code of Conduct e-learning # of staff that have participated in the Code of Conduct advanced training
5.3 Integrate the Sexual Misconduct Regulation training into new and existing processes i.e. as a special interest area.	# of MAs* that have had a touchpoint with Living Our Values concept
5.4 Implement Living Our Values including its mainstreaming into key HR processes.	Safe recruitment minimum requirements identified from pilot evidence.
5.5 Develop and implement minimum requirements of safe recruitment.	# of induction sessions done in MAs* rolling-out the PSHEA
5.6 Develop a regulation on diversity, equity and inclusion.	Guidelines on grievances, appeals, disciplinary processes, bullying & harassment, have been created and disseminated.
	<i>*Measurement to guide the federation - not on MAs' compliance</i>

Outcome 6: Individuals affected by misconduct receive appropriate, timely and transparent response.

Activities	KPIs
6.1 Finalize and implement the minimum requirements of the regulation on support for persons affected by abuse.	% of individual cases of abuse where support to persons affected by abuse has been defined and agreed to
6.2 Implement the minimum requirements of the misconduct incident management regulation and investigation regulation.	# of individual cases of abuse where individual support plan has been implemented / paid out
6.3 Develop a regulation to deal with grievance, appeals and disciplinary.	# of SOS staff confirmed as perpetrators, disciplinary actions taken (per individual incidents)
6.4 Develop a whistleblower policy or regulation.	% of incidents of abuse closed where a) mitigation actions have been fully implemented b) a closure notice has been signed off by the relevant line manager.
6.5 Support the mandate of the International Senate risk management and compliance committee.	
6.6 Support the integration of the Ombuds system.	
6.7 Develop and implement an incident management system across the federation.	
6.8 Set-up, maintain and monitor an investigation mechanism for critical misconduct incidents, including a pool of investigators from MAs and the GSC	# of safeguarding cases closed within 120 days
6.9 Do a mapping of safeguarding skills and locations for surge capacity.	
6.10 Create a platform for voices of survivors and victims.	

Note: highlighted points are a priority in 2024.



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SAFEGUARDING