



Safeguarding Action Plan

Progress Report

March 2024 – March 2025



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**



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Foreword: Reflecting on four years of strengthening safeguarding

Four years ago, we adopted our Safeguarding Action Plan, which was a major milestone in our safeguarding journey. This fourth and final full progress report provides an opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved since 2021, what we have learned and what we need to improve in the coming years.

The purpose of the Safeguarding Action Plan

We introduced the Safeguarding Action Plan in 2021 to address the gaps we had identified in preceding years in developing our safeguarding systems, notably those highlighted by the [Independent Child Safeguarding Review](#). Both the independent review and our own findings underscored the need for a holistic approach to safeguarding – one that would address not only immediate gaps but also systemic factors including organizational culture and accountability, enabling us to actively prevent safeguarding incidents and not just respond to them. With the Safeguarding Action Plan, our objective was to establish robust standards and reinforce behaviours that would help place safeguarding at the centre of everything we do.

Early in implementation, we prioritized addressing immediate concerns: identifying and providing appropriate support to those affected by abuse, establishing an [Independent Special Commission](#), and helping build safeguarding capacity in higher-risk environments. In parallel, we started developing policies and other frameworks necessary for longer-term change, adjusting our course in response to new findings as we went along.

Our progress in delivering on the plan

Today, we can confidently say we are on the right track.

Guided by external reviews and our own experience, we have overhauled our safeguarding and anti-corruption policies and procedures and brought them together into an integrated, cross-functional framework with explicitly defined minimum standards. This includes a new child and youth safeguarding policy, an anti-corruption regulation, and cross-functional incident management and investigation procedures for all types of misconduct. In addition, support provided to people affected by abuse, whether past or recent, is now based on standards defined in a binding regulation.

Our accountability to and support for children and young people is now reinforced by an independent Ombuds Office, developed in consultation with over 1,500 children and young people and with their participation.

We have laid the groundwork to develop our human resources practices in a way that supports a safe, empowering environment for every person that interacts with our organization, including people participating in our programmes and our staff. To support behavioural change, we have introduced a values-based competency framework and a new code of conduct.

We have focused on tackling factors that may put our staff – and particularly child and youth care practitioners working in our programmes, most of whom are female – at risk of mistreatment and abuse. This has entailed making progress towards improving pay structures and providing training and support.



Recently concluded research into gender and power dynamics will support future efforts towards workplace gender equality, including an updated gender equality policy.

Combined, these efforts have advanced the overall maturity of our safeguarding systems, particularly with regard to the following:

- ensuring standardized processes are in place across the whole federation for responding to all types of misconduct, including abuse of children and young people, sexual misconduct, and corruption
- improving awareness of safeguarding as an integral part of all operations and of the need to embed it into all core management functions, with the vision of a safe environment, and the holistic approach needed to deliver it, now being well understood

Challenges and lessons learned

The past four years have not been without setbacks, however, and we acknowledge that a lot of work is still ahead of us.

In several cases, our initial planning underestimated both the complexity of navigating different national contexts and the time scale required to see change through to the desired outcome. Several major work streams will extend well beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan, including the introduction of a new people and culture policy and the full implementation of the *Sexual Misconduct Regulation*, the *Code of Conduct Regulation* and the *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy*. Similarly, because we are developing the Ombuds Office following a ground-up approach, where national associations appoint an ombuds or select an appropriate equivalent external service in their country in consultation with children and young people, we will need considerably more time to cover all SOS Children's Villages associations worldwide.

Additionally, several key performance indicators we originally set were reconsidered and discontinued based on lessons learned in implementing the plan and with the development of a more sophisticated approach, encapsulated in our [Safeguarding Strategy 2024–2030](#). One of the original 35 indicators was found to no longer be relevant, and the action was closed. Three were found to no longer be useful measures of progress, with the work related to the indicator continuing under the new strategy (for more details, see [annex 2](#)). For example, the project to develop a centralized global system to collect incident management data has been discontinued due to cost as well as national legal limitations. However, work to facilitate the collection of incident management data continues. In 2025, we are piloting a new platform for reporters around the globe, which will integrate the full spectrum of concerns including various types of staff misconduct, data breaches, and safety and security.

Moving forward: The Safeguarding Strategy

Consistent with the intention behind the Safeguarding Action Plan, one of the most fundamental changes that emerged in recent years is a holistic approach to safeguarding, which acknowledges that safeguarding failures often go hand in hand with mismanagement, financial misconduct and governance failures and that addressing concerns requires cross-functional effort.

This holistic understanding is now at the core of the Safeguarding Strategy, adopted in 2024 by the General Secretariat. The strategy will guide and structure our work until 2030, which includes continuing the actions that could not be completed by the Safeguarding Action Plan's conclusion.



Spanning child and youth safeguarding, adult safeguarding and anti-corruption, the Safeguarding Strategy establishes measurable indicators of success and provides a unified framework to connect all safeguarding-related policies, support the management of safeguarding risks in all operations and programmes, and guide the monitoring of progress.

In developing our safeguarding systems in the next five years, we will pursue six outcomes:

1. Staff in leadership and governance positions have the required commitment and competences 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 response.

This year, the Safeguarding Strategy will inform a refresh of our global federation Strategy 2030, which commits the organization to ensuring we live safeguarding in our daily actions. The refreshed Strategy 2030, expected to be formally approved at this year's General Assembly, will define the key components necessary for us to deliver on our safeguarding commitments federation-wide. Notably, it will specifically articulate expectations for ensuring leaders and managers, including governing bodies, have developed and demonstrated the required commitment and competence to foster a culture of safety, accountability and transparency.

Governance and organizational transformation

With the development of the Safeguarding Strategy, we have put in place a mature technical plan to guide the organization in its safeguarding practice. At the same time, we recognize that safeguarding relies on a foundation of good governance and a strong organizational culture. Ensuring this foundation will be our focus in the coming years.

Throughout 2025, SOS Children's Villages will be undergoing a considerable transformation – both structurally in its General Secretariat and in its overall governance. This transformation is necessary to better meet the needs and expectations of SOS Children's Villages associations worldwide, supporting greater accountability and providing a more inclusive and equitable environment for our members to shape our collective future.

As a federation of independent member organizations, we depend on shared policies and standards of practice that are equally applicable to each of our members if we are to be successful. In December 2024, the General Assembly voted in favour of substantially revised statutes, which provide for a fundamental reshaping of our governing bodies and the way they operate. Changes to take effect following the General Assembly in June 2025 will give more direct decision-making power to members, including the creation of member-led committees. Significantly, a compliance committee will be established, empowered to hold members to account if they do not comply with binding frameworks. Additional changes include the removal of automatic board seats based on fundraising income. We expect these reforms to provide a solid foundation on which we can continue building a culture of trust and accountability, developing a more



equitable federation in which all members share the same commitment to consistent application of mandatory policies.

Importantly, these governance improvements will help deliver on our accountability to those who have been affected by abuse within our operations, many of whom have come forward driven by a desire to ensure that failures from the past are fully addressed and never repeated in the future.

The work to improve organizational culture will be shaped by a new people and culture policy. This long-anticipated policy follows through on the corresponding action in the Safeguarding Action Plan and addresses concerns raised by the Independent Special Commission about power dynamics within the organization that increase safeguarding risks. Due to be finalized in 2025, the policy goes hand in hand with the holistic approach set out in the Safeguarding Strategy, ensuring safeguarding is woven into everything we do, from individual responsibility to leadership competence.

Conclusion

As we wrap up the Safeguarding Action Plan 2021–2024, we recognize the significant progress made, particularly in developing policies and standardized processes and in raising everyone's awareness of their role in safeguarding. At the same time, we acknowledge that the pace of implementation of certain policies as well as change to address culture and governance concerns has been slower than we would have liked. We are confident, however, that the governance reform currently under way will help to speed up the rate of progress, especially given the fact that the General Assembly will now be meeting once a year – up from once every four years at the start of the plan.

We are committed to building on the momentum and the lessons learned over the last four years, with a clear vision of creating a safe environment for everyone our work touches and thus delivering on our purpose – to ensure children and young people grow up with the bonds they need to become their strongest selves.

Ma-Luschka Jean-Louis

International Director, Global Safeguarding

SOS Children's Villages International



Note on KPI target count

In November 2023, SOS Children's Villages International formally withdrew its operations in Algeria. As a result, there are currently 136 SOS Children's Villages entities operating at the national level, which is one entity fewer than in our reports released before 2024. Of the 136 entities, 121 are formal members and 15 are legally dependent entities operated by SOS Children's Villages International.

The target count for most key performance indicators (KPIs) presented in this report is set at 136 entities (referred to as national associations); in some instances, however, this number differs due to variability in the scope of individual actions. The rationale for the reduced scope of specific actions will be explained under "Further Information."



Progress against plan

Overall in 2024, we continued to make progress against the Safeguarding Action Plan. While the plan formally ends with this final report, all open areas of work will continue under our [Safeguarding Strategy](#). It is important to note that some actions in the plan were targeted and time-bound and thus, once the key performance indicator was met, the action was closed. Most of the actions, however, even when the key performance indicator has been completed, will continue as part of the ongoing work to mainstream safeguarding into everything we do.

Of the 35 key performance indicators originally defined in the Safeguarding Action Plan, 19 remained open and were still being monitored at the closing of our [previous report](#), released in early 2024. One indicator has since been discontinued as we found it was no longer useful as a measure of progress. Of the 18 remaining indicators, eight were completed and another indicator, which was redefined at the beginning of 2024, is on track. Nine indicators are designated off track, since reaching the targets will require more time than originally planned.

The section below discusses only the actions that remained open when we released our previous progress report. For an overview of what we have achieved across all 24 actions of the Safeguarding Action Plan, please refer to [annex 2](#).

A. Holistic support, justice and incident management

Action 1 (priority):

Immediate support for those who have experienced abuse

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

Based on organization-wide experiences gathered in recent years, we have introduced a *Regulation on Support for Persons Affected by Child and Youth Abuse*. The document defines binding standards for providing support to those affected by abuse, including the following:

- Due diligence must be performed to assess the impact of abuse, and the support offered must address the person's specific needs.
- The funds made available to provide support must consider the impact and severity of abuse as well as the local socio-economic context, to ensure comparable levels of support regardless of geographical location.
- The affected person must receive assistance in accessing support services available in their community. If the services required are not available, these services must be provided by SOS Children's Villages directly.

These standards are already being implemented throughout SOS Children's Villages in managing all incidents of child and youth abuse.



Finalization and implementation of individual support plans for those who have experienced abuse is monitored via our annual child and youth safeguarding survey. For more information, see our [Child and Youth Safeguarding Annual Report 2023/2024](#). The 2024 statistics will be published later this year.

Applying the principles

Beyond codifying the support that all member associations must provide to those who have been affected by abuse, the regulation has served, on a higher level, to demonstrate respect for victims/survivors, which aids in the healing and reconciliation process. Through individual meetings in which SOS Children's Villages senior managers have apologized for past failures, many victims/survivors said that their main motivation in coming forward was to ensure that similar abuse would not happen again. They asked for their story to contribute to better policies and procedures and for SOS Children's Villages to do everything possible to hold abusers accountable. Some said they would not accept monetary compensation; they simply wanted to be listened to and be reassured that the abuse they encountered would not be forgotten.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Support for people who have experienced abuse will remain a top priority under the Safeguarding Strategy:

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

KPI

105

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

KPI status

Completed

The minimum standards for individualized support are now defined in a binding regulation.

Further information

No data has been received from national associations in Western Europe and North America. Hence, the region has been left out of the target count, bringing the total to 105 national associations.



Action 2 (priority): Ombudsperson

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

The Ombuds Office is now fully operational, with a global team that includes a global ombuds, five regional ombuds and three coordinators. The Ombuds Office is governed and overseen by a board made up of seven members with expertise in child rights, child safeguarding and ombuds practice.

The ombuds approach was integrated into the Statutes of SOS Children's Villages International in December 2024, which require all members to appoint a national ombuds or select a suitable local alternative.

By the end of 2024, 14 national associations had a national ombuds in place in their country, and alternative, state-led ombuds mechanisms were approved in another 11 countries. The Ombuds Office was supporting an additional 56 national associations on their path towards implementing the ombuds approach.

Most inquiries received in 2024 were in the three pilot countries. Positive changes were observed, including reductions in peer-to-peer violence and strengthened systems for safeguarding and care quality. The average time for an ombuds to resolve an inquiry in 2024 was 34 days.

Over 1,500 children and young people from 30 countries have participated in consultations. Children and young people from 17 countries have been involved in recruitment of national, regional and global ombuds. Many national associations report that they are building on the child participation learning experiences they have gained throughout this process.

The pace of ombuds implementation has been much slower than anticipated in 2021, when the Safeguarding Action Plan was put in place, which means implementation will continue well beyond 2025. The ground-up, locally driven, participatory approach we are employing requires time to secure buy-in at the national level, ensure true accountability to inquirers, lay the groundwork for long-term sustainability and build trust among stakeholders. While the Ombuds Office was initially conceptualized to handle individual child and youth safeguarding concerns, in practice its scope has broadened to tackling deep-seated drivers of safeguarding risks, such as underpayment of staff, inadequate training or lack of supervision. This means that appropriate training, support and follow-up by regional ombuds is critical.

We will report on our progress in implementing the ombuds approach globally on the [Ombuds Office website](#) as well as in our [annual safeguarding reports](#).

Looking ahead beyond Safeguarding Action Plan

Ongoing collaboration with the Ombuds Office will continue under the Safeguarding Strategy:

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



KPIs

KPI status



Global ombudsperson for the federation by
December 2023

Completed

136

national associations covered by system by
December 2023

Off track

March 2025: **25**



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

Consistently implemented across the entire federation

We have discontinued the project to develop a centralized global system to collect incident management data due to cost as well as legal limitations at the national level. The General Secretariat will continue to monitor organization-wide incident data using existing processes and tools.

Additionally, an improved online whistle-blowing system is being implemented to manage concerns reported to the General Secretariat. The system will be first piloted for anti-corruption incidents during 2025, after which it is expected to be adopted for incidents involving other types of misconduct. The system will help ensure efficient cross-functional collaboration within SOS Children's Villages International.

In the meantime, both the General Secretariat and national associations have continued implementing the *Misconduct Incident Management Regulation*. In 2024, incident managers received training, and the General Secretariat held webinars and training sessions on cross-functional incident management for national associations. To support implementation of the regulation with detailed practical guidance, an updated investigations how-to guide has been released and an incident management how-to guide is in development. Monthly community of practice meetings have been established to provide a space for incident management teams to share case studies and lessons learned. As of March 2025, 88% of national associations had an incident management team in place.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Continuous improvement of incident management remains a top priority under the Safeguarding Strategy:

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

KPIs

KPI status



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

Completed

136

national associations implement the incident management system by December 2023

Indicator discontinued

Further information

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



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



Action 5: Youth development and participation

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

In February 2025, 75 national associations were implementing locally contextualized youth development concepts. Shaped with the participation of more than 3,900 young people, these documents help translate global requirements into national quality standards.

SOS Children's Villages is currently supporting 89 national and over 200 local youth councils worldwide, which enable young people to organize and speak up on topics that matter to them.

In the past four years, the global YouthPower programme has enabled 1,510 young changemakers from 77 countries to implement their initiatives to advance the Sustainable Development Goals, addressing issues such as poverty, inequality and climate change (to learn more, see the programme's most recent [report](#)). Another project, Eco Champions, is supporting 25 young climate activists to drive local solutions ranging from tackling water scarcity in Jordan to promoting sustainable agriculture in Uganda.

In 2024, young people with experiences of care co-delivered leaving care workshops for 430 child and youth care practitioners. Over 400 members of care leaver networks have received advocacy training and over 100, mental health training. SOS Children's Villages supported young people with experiences of care in advocating for better leaving care systems in more than 20 meetings with policymakers.

In 2024, the global youth employability initiative YouthCan! reached 22,707 young people in 48 countries. Our YouthLinks Community platform, which offers young people access to networks, upskilling, participation opportunities and self-paced education, is used by approximately 4,000 young people.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Youth development and employability will be primarily addressed and monitored via a revised Strategy 2030. Effort to facilitate child and youth participation in shaping organizational safeguarding will continue under the Safeguarding Strategy:

- Outcome 4: Safeguarding risks are mitigated through programme quality and child and youth participation



KPIs		KPI status
105	national associations implement a locally contextualized youth development concept by December 2024	Off track February 2025: 75
20,000	young people reached through global youth employability initiative by 2024	Completed
105	national associations involve children and young people in training activities and shaping child safeguarding measures by December 2024	Completed

Further information

No data has been received from national associations in Western Europe and North America to date, so the region has been left out of the target count, bringing the total to 105 national associations.



C. Child and youth care practitioner working conditions, role, well-being, learning and development

Action 6: Working conditions for child and youth care practitioners

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

Based on the Management Council's 2023 statement on remuneration for child and youth care practitioners, we have run a pilot project to test implementation of living wages. The project was completed in three countries in the first half of 2024.

The pilot project showed a clear need to define minimum remuneration standards as part of a broader people and culture framework. As a result, we have developed a regulation on living wages, mandatory for all SOS Children's Villages associations. Endorsed by the Management Council in March 2025, the regulation is expected to enter implementation in 2026. To support implementation, a practical guide and tools have been developed and relevant budgeting procedures reviewed. A global benchmarking data provider is also available. National associations will manage implementation independently, reporting on their progress annually.

Minimum remuneration standards defined in the regulation will be incorporated into the upcoming people and culture policy, expected to be finalized by the end of 2025 (see also [action 15](#)).

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Work to improve conditions for care practitioners will be managed under the overall people and culture framework, supported by the Safeguarding Strategy:

- Outcome 4: Safeguarding risks are mitigated through programme quality and child and youth participation

KPI

101

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

KPI status

Off track

December 2024: **89**

Further information

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



Action 7: Research on gender equality

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

Gender research project

Research on gender and power dynamics in child and youth care has been completed.

The research was commissioned by SOS Children's Villages International and carried out by an independent consultant. The aim was to comprehensively examine the impact of organizational culture, gender roles and power dynamics within SOS Children's Villages on the quality of care and safeguarding risks for children and young people.

The research covers both the broader international context and the context of one national association, SOS Children's Villages Nigeria. The research combined a desk review of relevant internal documentation with focus groups, interviews and an online survey with the staff of SOS Children's Villages Nigeria.

The findings and recommendations are intended for SOS Children's Villages decision makers at the national, regional and international level. The final report provides insight into how discriminatory organizational structures and norms affect care practitioners and how these structures and norms can be transformed.

Revision of the Gender Equality Policy

A revised version of our *Gender Equality Policy* is currently being finalized as a regulation, which is expected to be approved by in 2026. The process has involved several consultations, including those with more than 1,000 children and young people. The revision is necessary to bring the now ten-year old policy up to date with contemporary gender equality discourse and to address gaps in the document's coverage, as discussed in our [previous report](#).

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Efforts to address gender equality will be supported by the Safeguarding Strategy:

- Outcome 4: Safeguarding risks are mitigated through programme quality and child and youth participation

KPI



Research findings including recommendations available by December 2024

KPI status

Completed



D. People, culture and human resources practices for safeguarding

Action 9: Federation culture development

To build a safeguarding environment through practical, targeted initiatives

With the introduction of several key policy documents and a shift towards an integrated approach to safeguarding, we have observed greater engagement with safeguarding issues among leaders at various organizational levels. One example of this engagement is that safeguarding is now on the agenda of most regional leadership meetings.

A range of training and awareness-raising opportunities are available federation-wide to support understanding of key policy documents and application of safeguarding concepts. This includes structured courses on the *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy*, the *Sexual Misconduct Regulation*, and the *Code of Conduct Regulation* as well as awareness sessions on values-based conduct (see also [action 11](#)).

Building on the Living our Values framework and the experience gathered in implementing the 2022–2023 safeguarding leadership awareness-raising programme, the upcoming people and culture policy will address the role of leadership in steering organizational culture and define requirements for staff development, onboarding and mandatory training, including when it comes to leaders.

The integrated Safeguarding Strategy, introduced by the General Secretariat last year to guide our effort beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan, recognizes leadership and organizational culture as a foundation for effective risk management.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Work to develop organizational culture will be managed under the overall people and culture framework and supported by the Safeguarding Strategy:

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



KPIs	KPI status
3 targeted initiatives for federation culture development on holistic safeguarding developed by December 2023	Indicator discontinued
80% of safeguarding survey respondents at the General Secretariat evaluate work environment as positive overall by December 2024	Indicator discontinued
80% of all federation leadership, including board representatives, reached with safeguarding awareness raising and training by December 2024	Completed Safeguarding awareness raising and training included the leadership awareness-raising programme and various training opportunities focused on recently introduced policy documents.

Further information

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



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

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

During 2024, we developed and disseminated materials to support implementation of the 2023 *Code of Conduct Regulation*, including the following:

- translations of our e-learning course into three additional languages
- age-appropriate posters with key messages for staff and programme participants
- offline training programmes to facilitate discussion and reflection, based on case scenarios and attributes of values-based conduct

As reported earlier, in some legal contexts the *Code of Conduct Regulation* has required adjustments to be legally enforceable. By December 2024, the regulation was confirmed to be legally enforceable in more than 60% of national associations.

More than 7,000 employees have completed online training, and an additional 18,000 employees and leaders received training in other formats. This accounts for about 55% of SOS Children's Villages staff worldwide. All supervisors have been trained in about 65% of national associations.

With support from external advisors, a cross-functional expert group has developed a version of the code of conduct for external partners. The document will be disseminated to national associations.

A global monitoring survey will be completed during the first quarter of 2025 to assess the status of implementation.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Work to promote values-based conduct will be managed under the overall people and culture framework and supported by the Safeguarding Strategy:

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



KPIs

KPI status



New Code of Conduct established by January 2023

Completed

100%

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

Completed

Note: General Secretariat staff received training by the end of 2024.

3

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

Completed

From values to behaviours: Implementing the code of conduct in Armenia



Implementation of the revised code of conduct at SOS Children's Villages Armenia began in 2023 with the Living Our Values initiative, which familiarized the team with core and leadership competencies and behavioural expectations. The new code of conduct was then introduced to the staff, with signed copies filed in personnel files.

In early 2024, a webinar was held to explain the document's content and its connection to the Living Our Values framework, emphasizing the importance of self-accountability. The document's values-based design was well received by staff.

Later that year, SOS Children's Villages Armenia conducted advanced training sessions for 235 participants, including its own staff, service providers, volunteers, and the staff of partner organizations. Case studies adapted to the local context helped keep participants engaged. Subsequent feedback showed that, while many had read the code of conduct multiple times before participating, the case studies significantly improved understanding of how to apply the principles and provisions in practice. For example, shortly after the advanced training the newly established national misconduct incident management team received a report of potential misconduct.

With the new code of conduct, staff have become more aware that early reporting is key to preventing future misconduct. The new reporting options, which include regional, international and anonymous channels, have received positive feedback.



Action 11: Human resources values-based competency framework

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

During 2024, we focused on maintaining and spreading awareness of values-based competencies and behaviours and reinforcing their relevance to various areas of the organization's work. For example, infographics shared around significant dates such as International Youth Day or International Anti-Corruption Day helped inspire reflection on how each member of staff can demonstrate value-based behaviour to contribute to a healthy organizational culture.

The Living Our Value framework is part of the e-learning course on the *Code of Conduct Regulation*, and its link to the regulation has been reinforced in communications.

A community of experts has continued to exchange ideas on providing training and embedding values-based competences in business processes.

By the end of 2024, over 55% of national associations reported that they had carried out awareness-raising sessions and were working to integrate the Living Our Values framework into human resources processes.

Due to significant organizational changes within the General Secretariat, work to integrate the Living Our Values framework into performance management guidance has been postponed and will resume in 2025.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Work to promote values-based conduct will be managed under the overall people and culture framework and supported by the Safeguarding Strategy:

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

KPIs

KPI status



Values-based competency framework finalized by end 2021

Completed



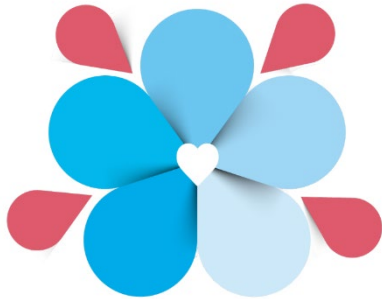
Values-based competency framework integrated into all key HR processes by December 2023

Off track

Work to integrate the framework into performance management will resume in 2025.



Adopting the Living Our Values framework in Cabo Verde



SOS Children's Villages Cabo Verde was among the earliest adopters of the Living Our Values framework at the initiative of its HR director, who says she immediately felt that it was something the organization had been missing. In 2023, SOS Children's Villages Cabo Verde was undergoing significant staff changes. The national director was preparing for retirement after 30 years with the organization, and employees were understandably anxious.

The HR team first presented the framework to the team at the national office. The meeting took place in a relaxed setting to facilitate reflection and open discussion and enable the group to share their experiences and concerns.

Similar sessions were then held with other groups. For example, in 2024, several key staff including a new national director, a new programme development manager and a new programme manager joined the organization, bringing in new ideas and various management styles. To establish shared expectations, the HR team held a dedicated Living Our Values session for managers.

Meant to be repeated regularly, the Living Our Values sessions aim to improve communication, reduce conflicts and rework, support employee engagement and ultimately strengthen organizational culture. While it might be too early to assess the initiative's impact, awareness of the Living Our Values framework has already proven effective at improving alignment between individual and collective objectives.



Action 13: Safe recruitment regulation

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

After the *Safe Recruitment Guideline* was piloted by the General Secretariat and ten national associations in 2023, we ran a survey to assess implementation of the guide's recommendations and determine which of the recommendations should become minimum requirements under the upcoming people and culture policy framework (see also [action 15](#)).

The survey found that over 80% of the recommendations were already in use and easy to implement. However, the piloting entities highlighted a few areas where they needed additional guidance:

- how to assess safeguarding impact (additional guidance has been developed by the Safeguarding Department)
- how to set up onboarding in a way that ensures understanding of all binding documents (online modules on the topic have been made developed)

The piloting entities also reported they were experiencing difficulties gathering complete and linear employment histories and conducting financial background checks, which they resolved by requiring such checks only in specific cases.

In 2025 and 2026, we will use the outcomes of the piloting to define a set of minimum requirements and incorporate them into our new people and culture framework.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Recruitment requirements will be managed under the overall people and culture framework. Their implementation will be supported by the Safeguarding Strategy:

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

KPI



Safe recruitment minimum requirements defined in a binding document within the people and culture policy framework by December 2026

KPI status

On track



Action 15: New global human resources policy with binding standards

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

Since a new director of people and culture joined the organization in January 2024, the organization's commitment to a people and culture approach and the significance of a new policy in bringing it to life have been reconfirmed.

A preliminary draft of the new people and culture policy has been developed and is being challenged with experts from the non-profit sector.

The project structure has been revised, and an extended project team has been put together to continue work on the policy, building on the preliminary draft and the outcomes of the policy review finalized in early 2024 (see our [previous progress report](#)). The policy is expected to be finalized by the end of 2025. Due to ongoing governance reform, however, its approval is expected to take until 2026.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

The development and implementation of a new people and culture framework is a key outcome of the Safeguarding Strategy:

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

KPI

136

national associations implement global HR policy by December 2024

KPI status

Off track

The policy is expected to be approved in 2026.



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

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



Initially managed as a separate project, implementation of the *Sexual Misconduct Regulation* has now been integrated into the Safeguarding Strategy as a cross-cutting subject, with responsibility for implementation shared by the safeguarding, anti-corruption and human resources teams. From 2025 onwards, compliance with the regulation will be tracked as part of holistic safeguarding and anti-corruption audits and monitoring systems. Similarly, training on the regulation will be embedded into broader safeguarding training programmes. This represents a more sustainable approach, which should accelerate full implementation globally.

As of December 2024, 60 national associations reported having implemented the regulation in full and another 40, in part, with a plan to achieve full implementation. The regulation is fully implemented within the General Secretariat.

Key concepts relevant to preventing sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse have been integrated into our revised *Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy*, introduced in 2023, and *Anti-Corruption Regulation*, introduced in 2024.

Various materials including a guide, a toolkit, posters and an online learning course are available to support implementation.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Ongoing implementation will be managed as a cross-functional subject under the Safeguarding Strategy:

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

KPI



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

KPI status

Off track

Full implementation at the national level will require more time. The regulation is fully implemented at the regional and international offices.



E. Oversight, leadership, governance and accountability for safeguarding

Action 19: Child safeguarding policy update

To ensure ICSR recommendations and current best practice are reflected

In 2024, we ran our first annual child and youth safeguarding survey since the introduction of the new [Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy](#), approved in April 2023. According to the survey, in 2023 the average global rate of compliance with the new policy requirements was 81%, which falls short of the targeted 90%. Of the reporting national associations, 30% reported compliance above 90%. The new policy and accompanying regulations have defined many areas not explicitly covered previously, and the survey results show that implementation of these requirements will take time and sustained effort. For instance, understanding of safeguarding responsibilities, where many requirements are new, had the lowest compliance rating of the areas assessed. For more information on the 2023 survey, see our [Child and Youth Safeguarding Annual Report 2023/2024](#).

The 2024 annual safeguarding survey, which will now cover not only child and youth safeguarding but also adult safeguarding and anti-corruption, is currently in progress. Its findings will be published later this year on [our website](#).

Throughout 2024, we invested considerable effort in training staff on the policy. Alongside webinars and other training opportunities offered by the General Secretariat, several online courses are available, including a general introductory course and specialized courses for board members and line managers and for care practitioners.

According to voluntary reports submitted in October 2024 by 112 national associations, about 74% of national staff have received training on the new policy on average. The average reach of training by key target group was reported to be as follows:

- 54% of national board members
- 79% of child and youth care practitioners
- 88% of staff with child and youth safeguarding responsibilities

In addition, an average of 63% of children and young people in SOS Children's Villages care were reported to have received information or training on the policy.

National associations are employing a variety of creative age-appropriate methods to engage children and young people with key safeguarding principles and involve them in assessing safeguarding risks. Examples include an interactive puppet show in Bolivia to communicate the national safeguarding strategy; a child-friendly version of the policy disseminated by young people among their peers in Italy; and art therapy used during risk assessments in Mauritius to support younger children in communicating situations that make them feel unsafe.



Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Implementation of the policy and associated regulations, both at the national and international level, will be managed under the Safeguarding Strategy:

- Outcome 2: Essential safeguarding standards are set and monitored through independent oversight, with possible external certification
- Outcome 4: Safeguarding risks are mitigated through programme quality and child and youth participation
- Outcome 6: Individuals affected by misconduct receive appropriate, timely and transparent response

KPI

136

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

KPI status

Off track

We expect to achieve the targeted 90% compliance by the end of 2027.



Putting policy into practice in Côte d'Ivoire



To support implementation of the Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy, national child and youth safeguarding coordinators and national care coordinators carried out several programme support missions. During the support missions and risk assessment exercises with various stakeholders including children and young people, the team received reports of physical and emotional abuse of children and young people by staff.

In addition to responding to the specific allegations, the national association took action to prevent similar incidents from reoccurring.

The human resources department held meetings with caregivers, youth educators, psychologists, social workers and programme managers to discuss the organization's policies, provide clarifications and address concerns. The staff participated in training and awareness sessions, which covered different types of abuse, care practices and mental health. Various discussion opportunities, such as round tables, monthly caregiver meetings and discussion groups, were also organized for caregivers, with technical support from psychologists and local alternative care coordinators.

Based on the outcomes of incident management, disciplinary action ranging from warning to dismissal was taken against staff found to have perpetrated abuse.

Feedback received from children and young people during subsequent programme support visits has shown a reduction in safeguarding concerns, increased awareness on the part of caregivers, and good relationships between children and young people and the staff directly involved in their care.



F. Investment for high quality programmes across the federation

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

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

Of the 98 targeted national associations, 81 (83%) now have national strategies in place to ensure their programmes are relevant, efficient and sustainable. This is more than three times as many as at the end of 2021.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Frameworks to monitor and develop programme quality in the future will be guided by a refreshed Strategy 2030. Safe programming will be supported by the Safeguarding Strategy:

- Outcome 4: Safeguarding risks are mitigated through programme quality and child and youth participation

KPI

98

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

KPI status

Off track

December 2024: **81**



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

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

Results achieved in implementing our programme policy, the *SOS Care Promise*, include the following:

- National associations are implementing locally appropriate measures to enable the children and young people in their care to be better integrated into the community. For example, over 400 families in our family-like care programmes live in community-integrated housing.
- Of the targeted 92 national associations, 90 have adopted results-based management in their programming.
- More than twice as many national associations as in 2021 have included actions focused on mental health in their national plans. A global expert group on mental health and psychosocial support continued to provide training on various practices and interventions that can be used to support mental well-being.
- The federation-wide Learning and Development framework has considerably strengthened the quality of learning and development opportunities offered to child and youth care practitioners.

Looking ahead beyond the Safeguarding Action Plan

Frameworks to monitor compliance with programming standards in the future will be guided by a refreshed Strategy 2030. Safe programming will be supported by the Safeguarding Strategy:

- Outcome 4: Safeguarding risks are mitigated through programme quality and child and youth participation



KPIs

KPI status

91

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

Off track

December 2024: **82**

105

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

Completed

105

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

Completed

Further information

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

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



Annex 1: Key milestones since 2021

June 2021	Independent Child Safeguarding Review report published Safeguarding Action Plan published General Assembly adds a safeguarding goal to Strategy 2030
October 2021	Independent Special Commission begins work Interim progress report on Safeguarding Action Plan published
March 2022	Full progress report on Safeguarding Action Plan published
June 2022	Independent Special Commission submits interim report
January 2023	Misconduct Incident Management Regulation approved Misconduct Investigation Regulation approved
March 2023	Second full progress report on Safeguarding Action Plan published
April 2023	New Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy approved by the International Senate
June 2023	Independent Special Commission publishes final report <i>Programme Services Regulation</i> approved Child and Youth Safeguarding Regulation approved
September 2023	International Director for Safeguarding (Ma-Luschka Jean-Louis) begins in post General Counsel (Dominik Lentz) begins in post
January 2024	International Director for People and Culture (Mihaela Ionasc) begins in post
March 2024	Regulation on Support for Persons Affected by Child and Youth Abuse approved
April 2024	Safeguarding Strategy for SOS Children's Villages International approved Third full progress report on Safeguarding Action Plan published
October 2024	Anti-Corruption Regulation approved
December 2024	Extraordinary General Assembly adopts new Statutes of SOS Children's Villages International, introducing major changes in governance structure including the introduction of a compliance committee
April 2025	Fourth and final full progress report on Safeguarding Action Plan published
June 2025	General Assembly to elect a new board



Annex 2: Summary of progress and next steps

The table below provides a summary of our progress across all 24 actions of the Safeguarding Action Plan. In 2025 and beyond, continuous improvement will be guided by our Safeguarding Strategy and our federation-wide Strategy 2030.

The status of all 35 key performance indicators is as follows:

- 21 are **completed**
- 9 are **off track** due to taking longer than planned
- 4 have been **discontinued** as they were no longer useful measures of progress, with work related to 3 of the indicators continuing under the Safeguarding Strategy
- one indicator, replaced in early 2024, is **on track**

Action	Summary of progress	KPI	KPI status, March 2025	Next steps
1. Immediate support for those who have experienced abuse	• A project to provide funding to national associations that do not have sufficient resources to respond to cases of past abuse closed at the end of 2023. Support funded by the project reached 730 people. • Standards for providing support to those affected by abuse have been defined in a binding document. These standards are already being implemented throughout SOS Children's Villages.	105 national associations implement global user guide, <i>Listening and Responding to Individuals Experiences of Past Child Abuse</i> , including minimum standards for individualized support, by December 2024	Completed	Support for people who have experienced abuse to remain a top priority under the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 6)



Action	Summary of progress	KPI	KPI status, March 2025	Next steps
2. Ombudsperson	- The Ombuds Office is fully operational. - National ombuds or equivalent external mechanisms are in place in 25 countries.	Global ombudsperson for the federation by December 2023	Completed	Ongoing collaboration with the Ombuds Office to continue under the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 6)
		136 national associations covered by system by December 2023	Off track	
3. Incident management system for persons that have experienced abuse	- We have discontinued the project to develop a centralized global system to collect incident management data due to cost and legal limitations. - An improved online whistle-blowing system is being implemented to manage concerns reported to the General Secretariat.	Real-time reporting platform on child safeguarding incidents of abusive behaviour developed by end of 2021	Completed	Continuous improvement of incident management to remain a top priority under the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 6)
		136 national associations implement the incident management system by December 2023	Indicator discontinued	
4. Child and youth empowerment	- The Applying Safe Behaviours project has concluded. - A project to assess awareness of child rights and organizational safeguarding has been implemented in nine countries.	30 national associations implement Protective Behaviours by December 2023	Completed	Child and youth empowerment to remain an integral component of our work under the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 4)
5. Youth development and participation	- National associations are developing locally contextualized youth development concepts, involving young people in the process. - SOS Children's Villages is supporting 89 national and over	105 national associations implement a locally contextualized youth development concept by December 2024	Off track	Child and youth participation in shaping organizational safeguarding to continue under the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 4)
		20,000 young people reached through global youth employability initiative by 2024	Completed	



Action	Summary of progress	KPI	KPI status, March 2025	Next steps
	200 local youth councils worldwide.	105 national associations involve children and young people in training activities and shaping child safeguarding measures by December 2024	Completed	
6. Working conditions for child and youth care practitioners	A regulation on living wages, mandatory for all SOS Children's Villages associations, is expected to enter implementation in 2026. National associations will manage implementation independently, reporting on their progress annually.	101 national associations contextualize and implement the SOS <i>Parent Profession User Guide</i> , including filling pension and compensation gaps, by December 2024	Off track	Work to improve conditions for care practitioners to be managed under the overall people and culture framework, supported by the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 4)
7. Research on gender equality	Research on gender and power dynamics in child and youth care has been completed.	Research findings including recommendations available by December 2024	Completed	Efforts to address gender equality to be supported by the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 4)
8. Learning and development for care practitioners	- Training workshops under the global learning and development framework have reached around 1,100 participants. - National associations are also developing and implementing their own learning and development programmes.	105 national associations ensure access to learning and development opportunities for all child and youth care practitioners	Completed	The mainstreaming of effort in this area integrated into the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 4)
9. Federation culture development	The upcoming people and culture policy will address the role of leadership in steering organizational culture and define requirements for staff development, onboarding and mandatory training.	3 targeted initiatives for federation culture development on holistic safeguarding developed by December 2023	Indicator discontinued	Work to develop organizational culture to be managed under the overall people and culture framework, supported by the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 5)
		80% of safeguarding survey respondents at the General Secretariat evaluate work environment as positive overall by December 2024	Indicator discontinued	



Action	Summary of progress	KPI	KPI status, March 2025	Next steps
		80% of all federation leadership, including board representatives, reached with safeguarding awareness raising and training by December 2024	Completed	
10. Code of Conduct / values-based conduct	- The <i>Code of Conduct Regulation</i> was approved in 2023. - An estimated 55% of SOS Children's Villages staff worldwide have received training on the regulation.	New Code of Conduct established by January 2023	Completed	Work to promote values-based conduct to be managed under the overall people and culture framework, supported by the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 5)
		100% of the General Secretariat staff trained on new Code of Conduct by December 2023	Completed	
		3 senior staff added to drive Code of Conduct and initiatives in support of enabling a safeguarding environment by September 2021	Completed	
11. Human resources values-based competency framework	- The Living Our Values framework has been integrated into guidance on recruitment, onboarding, learning and development, and leadership. Work to integrate it into performance management will resume in 2025. - By the end of 2024, over 55% of national associations reported that they had carried out awareness-raising sessions and were working to integrate the Living Our Values framework into HR processes.	Values-based competency framework finalized by end 2021	Completed	Work to promote values-based conduct to be managed under the overall people and culture framework, supported by the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 5)
		Values-based competency framework integrated into all key HR processes by December 2023	Off track	
12. Review of all human resources policies	The review has been completed and will serve as an input for a new people and culture policy.	A review of existing federation HR frameworks and policies by the General Secretariat completed by the first quarter of 2023	Completed	Action closed



Action	Summary of progress	KPI	KPI status, March 2025	Next steps
13. Safe recruitment regulation	- The outcomes of piloting the <i>Safe Recruitment Guideline</i> will be used to develop minimum requirements in 2025 and 2026. - The requirements will be incorporated into a broader people and culture policy document rather than becoming a separate regulation.	Safe recruitment minimum requirements defined in a binding document within the people and culture policy framework by December 2026	On track	Recruitment requirements to be management under the overall people and culture framework; implementation to be supported by the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 5)
14. Strategy for safeguarding capacity building	Safeguarding capacity is being built through initiatives to develop organizational culture and prevent misconduct.	136 national associations implement continuous safeguarding capacity-building programmes by December 2024	Completed	Safeguarding capacity building to continue as an integral part of preventing misconduct
15. New global human resources policy with binding standards	The policy is expected to be finalized by the end of 2025 and approved in 2026.	136 national associations implement global HR policy by December 2024	Off track	The development and implementation of a new people and culture framework is a key outcome of the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 5)
16. Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA) regulation implementation	- At the end of 2024, 60 national associations reported having implemented the regulation in full and another 40, in part, with a plan to achieve full implementation. - The regulation is fully implemented within the General Secretariat.	PSHEA regulation implemented in 100% of federation (national associations, regional offices and the international office) by December 2024	Off track	Ongoing implementation to be managed as a cross-functional subject under the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 5)
17. Independent Special Commission	The commission issued its final report on 6 June 2023.	Commission established by end May 2021	Completed	Findings to continue to be addressed under the Safeguarding Strategy



Action	Summary of progress	KPI	KPI status, March 2025	Next steps
18. Alignment of integrity, compliance and safeguarding	- Cross-functional incident management teams have been set up. - A new <i>Anti-Corruption Regulation</i> has been introduced.	Aligned reporting, responding and investigation procedures implemented across the federation by December 2023	Completed	Improvement of incident management to remain a priority under the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 6)
19. Child safeguarding policy update	- The new <i>Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy</i> and an accompanying regulation were introduced in 2023. - By the end of 2023, the average global rate of compliance with the new policy requirements was 81%.	136 national associations achieve at least 90% compliance with child safeguarding minimum requirements by December 2024	Off track	Implementation of the policy and associated regulations to be managed under the Safeguarding Strategy (outcomes 2, 4 and 6)
20. Child safeguarding strengthening in high-risk environments	28 national associations received support and completed their final audits.	25 national associations implement the project process and are audited by December 2024	Completed	Action closed
21. Early warning system	Our safeguarding risk assessment tool has been revised.	136 national associations complete the first annual assessment of the tool to assess their risk profile and define mitigating actions to address their internal and external risks by December 2022	Completed	Action closed
22. Safeguarding resources in institutional donor projects	An assessment of project management practices has confirmed that all grant-funded project budgets and plans fully cover safeguarding-related activities.	All institutional funding applications include child safeguarding risk analysis and budgets by December 2022	Indicator discontinued	Action closed
23. Increased investment in 70+ programmes to fix quality gaps	Of the 98 targeted national associations, 81 now have national strategies in place to ensure their programmes are relevant, efficient and sustainable.	98 subsidy-receiving national associations have a strategy to ensure relevance, efficiency and sustainability of programmes by December 2024	Off track	Safe programming to be supported by the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 4)



Action	Summary of progress	KPI	KPI status, March 2025	Next steps
24. Increased support for national associations to implement the SOS Care Promise	- More than twice as many national associations as in 2021 have included actions focused on mental health in their national plans. - The federation-wide Learning and Development framework has considerably strengthened the quality of learning and development opportunities offered to child and youth care practitioners.	91 national associations have board-approved national gatekeeping guidelines by December 2024	Off track	Safe programming to be supported by the Safeguarding Strategy (outcome 4)
		105 national associations implement a range of locally relevant measures to improve social integration by December 2024	Completed	
		105 national associations include specific actions in their national plans to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into their programme work by December 2024	Completed	