

Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Annual Report 2025/2026



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES



Contents

Foreword	i
Executive summary	iii
Integrity, Reporting and Response	1
Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Statistics	2
Whistleblowing and Case Management	12
Crisis Response	13
Awareness, Capacity Building & Prevention	14
People and Culture Practices	16
Ombuds Office	23
Focus areas for 2026 & beyond	25
Appendices	27

Foreword

Dear National Directors and Safeguarding Colleagues,

Since our previous report, we have continued to strengthen our safeguarding practice to better protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of children, young people, adults, and our staff.

By introducing the Safeguarding Action Plan in 2021, our organization began moving towards a holistic approach to safeguarding that sought to break down silos and eliminate blind spots. A key milestone was the establishment of the General Secretariat's integrated safeguarding department.

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

Standardized incident management procedures are an essential component of this approach, and I am particularly encouraged by the work of our cross-functional incident management teams, which are now in place in 114 out of 130 Member Organizations (87.7% official global coverage).

This past year has also been a difficult one. In 2025, two Member Associations faced crises that required support and intervention from SOS CVI. Both tested our systems, culture, and resolve. While they revealed serious challenges, they also reinforced our determination to act decisively, learn openly, and strengthen our safeguarding practices further.

We maintain a clear and uncompromising position to zero tolerance for abuse, exploitation, and corruption in any form. This principle guides our decisions, systems, and culture. To reinforce this commitment, we launched the “[Zero Tolerance in Action: Closing the Gap](#)” campaign, encouraging every leader, supervisor, and board member to implement our *Big 5 Safeguarding Actions for Leadership*.

As we enter 2026, it is essential to consolidate the comprehensive information we've collected on safeguarding and anti-corruption developments in 2025, including incident statistics and the safeguarding risk profiles of each Member Association. To support this, the 2025 Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey was launched. They comprised of three components:

- **Compliance Monitor:** Tracks compliance with safeguarding and anti-corruption requirements.
- **Safeguarding Risk Profiler:** Identifies safeguarding risks across operations and programmes.
- **Incident Statistics:** Captures safeguarding and corruption cases reported in 2025.

We hope this report supports learning and continuous improvement across SOS Children's Villages and other organizations working with children, young people, and adults.

My sincere thanks to our safeguarding professionals, incident management teams, and colleagues worldwide. Their commitment continues to help us prevent harm and fortify our safeguarding culture. Together, we remain committed to embedding safeguarding and our values into everything we do.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ma-Luschka Jean-Louis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Ma-Luschka Jean-Louis

Safeguarding, Integrity, Legal & Risk Management Director
SOS Children's Villages International

Executive summary

The 2025 reporting period reflects our continued progress in strengthening the organization's safeguarding and anti-corruption framework, with a focus on prevention, accountability, transparency, and effective response. During the year, we further strengthened governance through policy updates, clearer roles and responsibilities, and enhanced accountability, supporting the consistent application of safeguarding standards and ethical conduct across the organization.

Key progress areas include:

- **Integrity, Reporting and Response:** Strengthened reporting channels and response procedures to ensure that concerns are raised safely, managed consistently, and addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.
- **Whistleblowing and Case Management:** Reinforced confidential reporting mechanisms and structured case handling processes to ensure fairness, protection of reporters, and effective follow-up of all cases.
- **Crisis Response:** Maintained and strengthened organizational readiness to respond to safeguarding-related crises through coordinated procedures, escalation pathways, and risk mitigation measures.
- **Prevention, Awareness and Capacity Building:** Expanded training, awareness-raising, and capability-building initiatives to strengthen a proactive safeguarding culture and reduce risk exposure.
- **People Practices:** continuous integration of safeguarding principles into people practices and conduct standards to reinforce ethical behaviour and prevent harm at entry points.

Looking ahead, priorities for 2026 and beyond include strengthening prevention systems, enhancing data quality and oversight, and further embedding safeguarding and anti-corruption measures across all functions. A key strategic direction is alignment with the evolving Safeguarding, Integrity, Legal & Risk Management framework, ensuring greater integration, efficiency, and organizational resilience.

Organizational Safeguarding Framework

Safeguarding and anti-corruption are core commitments of our Federation. This commitment is reflected in the Strategy Refresh approved by our General Assembly in June 2025. Goal 3: **Commitment to Safeguarding** seeks to strengthen safeguarding, anti-corruption, prevention, monitoring, and accountability systems across all Member Associations and operational contexts.

Safeguarding is positioned as a strategic priority, recognizing that sustained commitment is essential to ensure high-quality services, strengthen organizational accountability, and prevent harm. Our new safeguarding approach is therefore structured around three interconnected strategic objectives: values-based leadership, safe programming, and accountability to people affected by misconduct.

The first objective of Goal 3 is **values-based leadership** for safeguarding. This requires strengthening safeguarding, integrity, and ethical leadership across all levels of the Federation through enhanced accountability, organizational culture, transparency, and responsible decision-making. This objective aims to strengthen governance, improve the consistency of implementation and reinforce trust across diverse operational contexts. As a result, children, young people, families, and communities will benefit from organizational environments where safeguarding and integrity are visibly prioritized, concerns are addressed appropriately, and individuals feel respected, protected, and heard. It is worth noting that values-based leadership extends beyond safeguarding. This report specifically focuses on its safeguarding dimension.

The second objective of Goal 3 is **safe programming**, ensuring that safeguarding and risk prevention are systematically integrated into programme design, implementation, partnerships, operational processes, and service delivery. Through this objective, Member Associations will continue to strengthen programme quality, enhance safeguarding risk management, and increase their capacity to identify and mitigate risks before harm occurs. At the Federation level, this will contribute to more consistent safeguarding standards and systematic integration of safeguarding across all functions. Children, young people, and communities will benefit from safer, more inclusive and higher-quality services delivered in environments that uphold their dignity, wellbeing, and rights.

The third objective of Goal 3 is **accountability to people affected by misconduct**, focusing on strengthening survivor-centred, transparent, and consistent reporting, response, and organizational learning systems across the Federation. This objective guides Member Associations and operational entities in improving case management practices, strengthening response mechanisms, and increasing confidence in safeguarding processes. It will also enhance federation-wide accountability, oversight, and learning from incidents and complaints. Children, young people, families, staff, and communities will benefit from accessible reporting channels, timely and fair responses to concerns, and greater confidence that misconduct will be addressed responsibly, consistently, and with respect for those affected.

Integrity, Reporting and Response

Corruption undermines not only SOS Children's Villages as an organization, but also the children and young people who rely on our support. When funds and resources for our programmes are diverted because of corruption, children and young people may not get the support they need and are at risk of being left without protection. SOS Children's Villages continuously works to prevent corruption at every level of the organization. We do not tolerate it in any form. By integrating anti-corruption in all our activities, SOS Children's Villages are contributing to a culture of integrity, trust, transparency and accountability at all levels of the organization. Through the systematic integration of anti-corruption and integrity measures across the Federation, we aspire to reinforce confidence in the organization and restore trust in the work we deliver for children, young people, and communities.

Over time, we expect a stronger and more resilient organization with safe programmes, more effective systems supported by a stronger safeguarding culture, enhanced partnerships, and an increased confidence among children, young people, families, donors, and other stakeholders invested in the mission and work of SOS Children's Villages.

In 2023, following the findings of the Independent Special Commission and a report by the consulting firm, Deloitte, SOS Children's Villages International incorporated a specialized unit and a dedicated team for anti-corruption within its newly established Integrated Safeguarding Department. The mandate of this team was to develop federation-wide standards, establish global leadership, and put in place a global, federation-wide strategy to combat corruption. Today, the Safeguarding Framework, operational since 2024, includes the newly approved Anti-Corruption Regulation. In 2025 practical implementation began, with key areas of focus namely the development of various training and capacity-building approaches, a corruption risk management framework, and a strong focus on sanctions compliance, anti-money laundering, and counter-terrorist financing. To better support implementation within Member Associations, a global anti-corruption network was also established. Complementing the Child and Youth Safeguarding Networks,, this new network brings together representatives from Member Associations to promote the exchange of experience and to embed the binding provisions of the Anti-Corruption Policy within individual national contexts.

Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Statistics

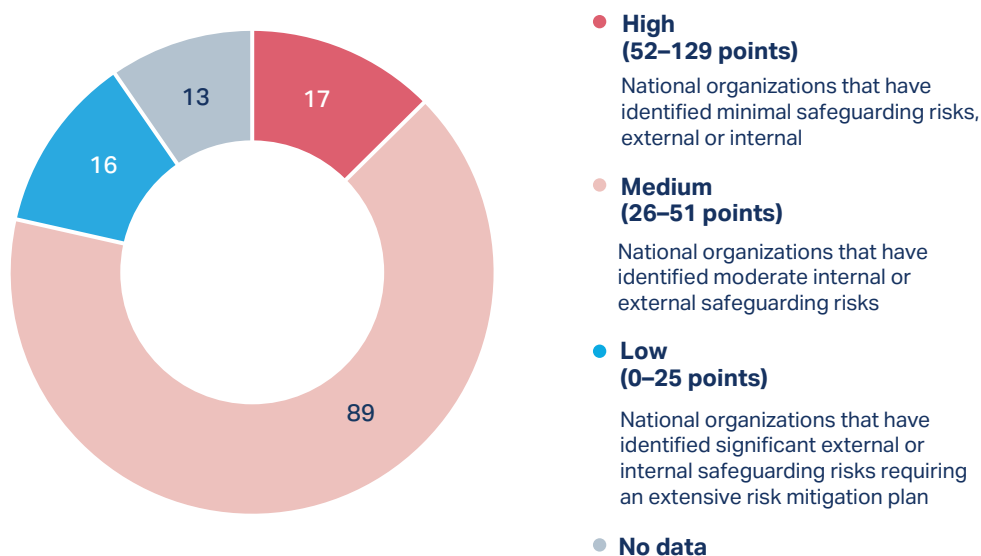
Risk Profiler

The risk profiler included in the annual safeguarding survey enables national organizations to assess safeguarding risks across four main areas: programming, staffing, external risks, and partnership arrangements, as well as any other factors considered as significant for assessing safeguarding risk levels.

The risk profiler is not intended to assess the quality of a national organization's work, and a high-risk rating does not necessarily mean there is a high likelihood of children and young people being harmed through contact with SOS Children's Villages. Instead, the risk level reflects external and internal factors that require proactive management and adapted operational approach. For example, working with partner organizations or experiencing high staff turnover may require additional risk mitigation measures and planning.

122 of 136 national organizations reported their risk profiler data (figure 1).

Figure 1. Distribution of national organizations by safeguarding risk level



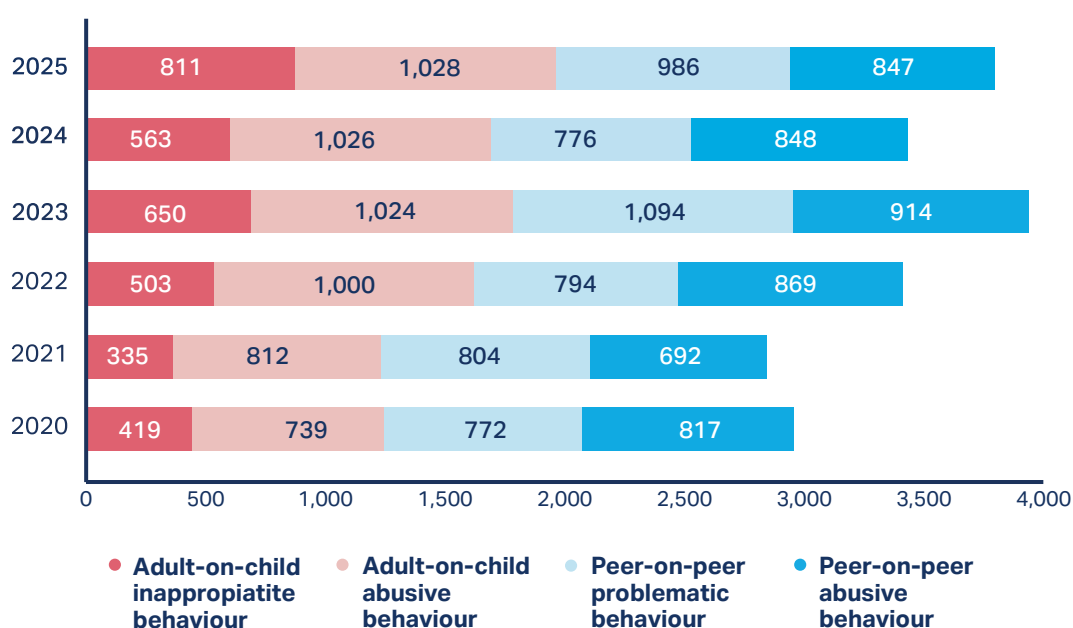
Source: Safeguarding Risk Profiler Survey 2025 (N= 122)

Child and youth safeguarding concerns reported in 2025

National organizations reported their data on child and youth safeguarding concerns via the annual safeguarding survey. We separately record data on incidents said to have occurred the same year as they were reported and allegations of past abuse. In 2024, SOS Children's Villages programmes worldwide reached over 7.7 million children, young people and adults. This includes 65,300 children and young people for whom we provide alternative care (SOS Annual Statistics, 2024).

From 2020 to 2025, the number of child and youth safeguarding concerns reported generally increased across all categories, indicating growing levels of concern and reporting activity. Adult-on-child abusive behaviour remained the most frequently reported category throughout the period, rising steadily from 739 cases in 2020 to 1,028 cases in 2025. A total of 3,672 child and youth safeguarding concerns were reported in 2025, representing a 14.4% increase compared with 2024 (3,209) and returning to levels comparable with the 2023 peak (3,682). The increase was driven primarily by a rise in adult-on-child inappropriate behaviour (811 cases, up 44% from 2024) and peer-on-peer problematic behaviour (986 cases, up 27%). Reports of adult-on-child abusive behaviour remained relatively stable over the six-year period, accounting for around 1,000 cases annually between 2022 and 2025, while peer-on-peer abusive behaviour continued to represent approximately one-quarter of all reported concerns.

Figure 2. Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns reported in 2020-2025

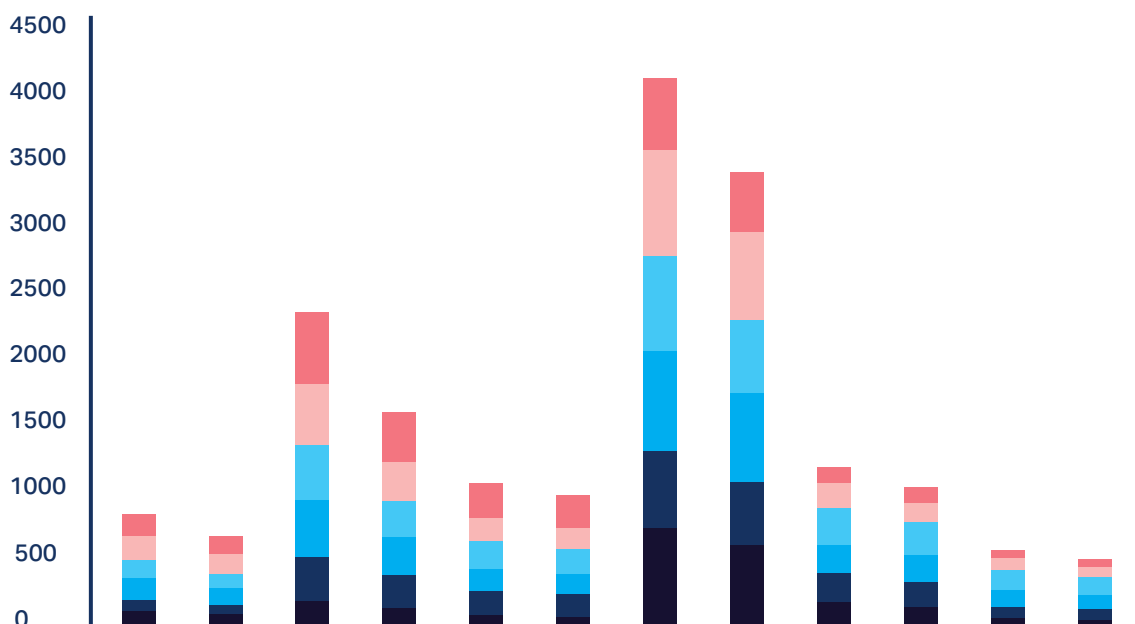


Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

The regional distribution of reported and confirmed child and youth safeguarding concerns shows that Latin America and the Caribbean (LAAM) consistently recorded the highest number of concerns across the six-year period, reflecting both the scale of programmes in the region and sustained reporting mechanisms. In 2025, LAAM reported 547 concerns, of which 449 (82%) were confirmed. Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East (EUCM) recorded the second-highest number of reported concerns (548), with 376 (69%) confirmed, while Asia reported 262 concerns, 244 (93%) of which were confirmed—the highest confirmation rate among all regions. Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAF) continued to report the fewest concerns (67 reported; 58

confirmed). Across all regions, the number of reported concerns generally increased between 2020 and 2025, with confirmed cases consistently representing a substantial proportion of reports.

Figure 3. Reported vs confirmed Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns per region in 2020-2025

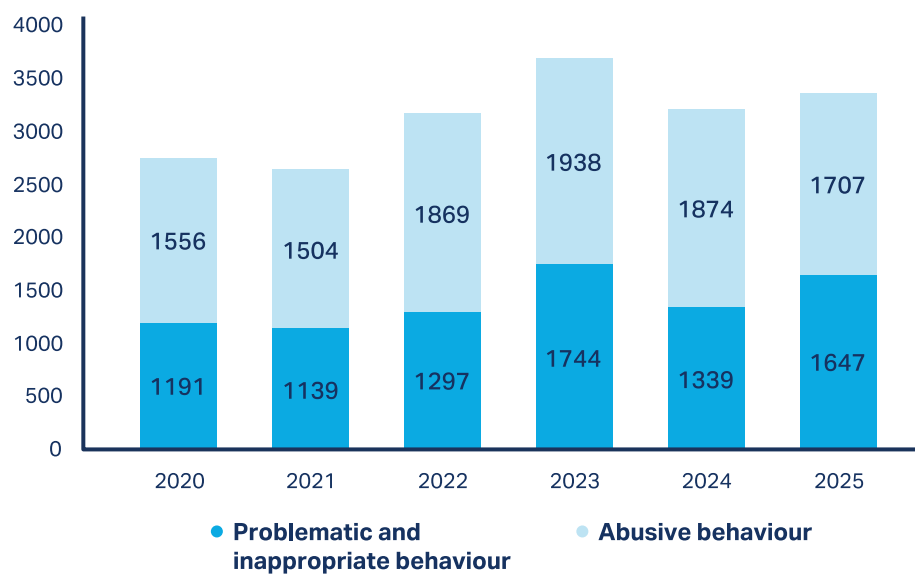


	Reported	Confirmed	Reported	Confirmed	Reported	Confirmed	Reported	Confirmed	Reported	Confirmed	Reported	Confirmed
	EUNA		EUCM		ASIA		LAAM		WCNA		ESAF	
● 2025	159	131	548	376	262	244	547	449	124	115	67	58
● 2024	188	157	452	295	169	160	797	655	177	149	91	73
● 2023	141	100	418	271	218	193	726	577	281	253	154	142
● 2022	154	130	430	300	166	154	776	664	221	199	122	111
● 2021	99	70	335	242	186	169	575	484	222	196	87	69
● 2020	139	126	227	172	110	104	779	652	210	171	91	83

Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

Global reporting of child and youth safeguarding concerns remained consistently high between 2020 and 2025, with the total number of concerns rising from 2,747 in 2020 to 3,354 in 2025, despite a temporary decline in 2024. The highest number of reports was recorded in 2023 (3,682 concerns), followed by a decrease in 2024 (3,213) and a subsequent recovery in 2025. Across all six years, abusive behaviour accounted for the larger share of reported concerns, representing approximately 55–58% of all reports annually, while problematic and inappropriate behaviour accounted for the remaining 42–45%. In 2025, 1,707 reports (51%) related to abusive behaviour and 1,647 reports (49%) related to problematic or inappropriate behaviour, indicating a more balanced distribution than in previous years. The sustained volume of reports, together with the increased reporting of lower-level inappropriate and problematic behaviours, suggests continued strengthening of safeguarding awareness and reporting mechanisms.

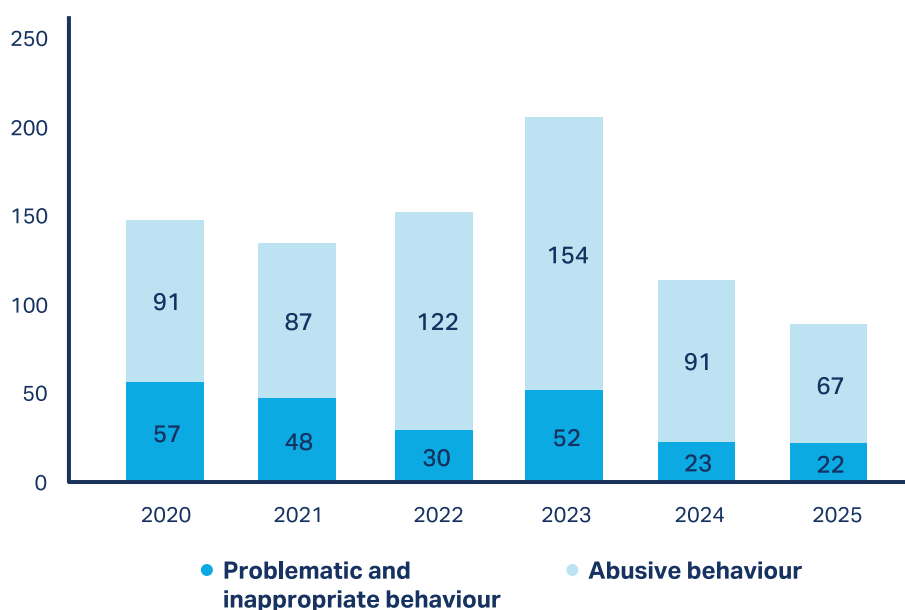
Figure 4. Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns reported globally



Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

The number of safeguarding concerns reported in ESAF region increased between 2020 (148 cases) and 2023 (206 cases), before declining to 114 cases in 2024 and 89 cases in 2025. Throughout this period, abusive behaviour accounted for the majority of investigated cases, representing between 61% and 80% of the total each year. In 2025, 67 cases related to abusive behaviour and 22 cases to problematic or inappropriate behaviour, compared with 154 and 52 respectively at the 2023 peak.

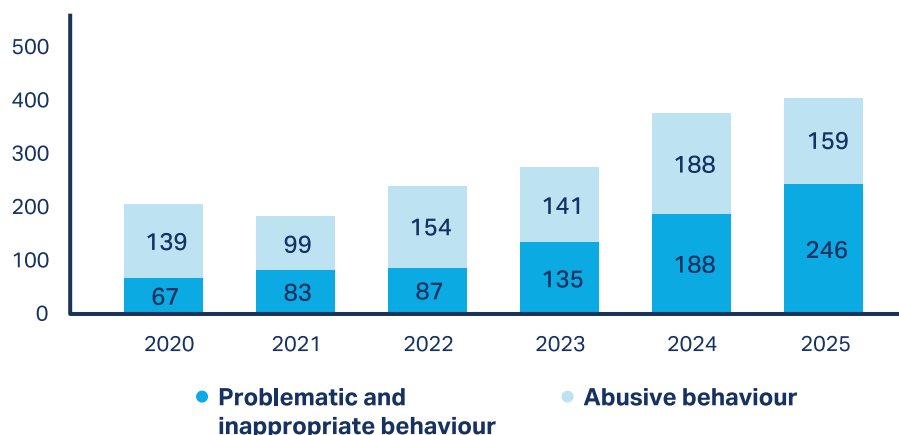
Figure 5. Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns reported in ESAF



Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

Safeguarding concerns reported in the EUNA region increased the six-year period, rising from 206 cases in 2020 to 405 cases in 2025, almost doubling overall. While abusive behaviour accounted for the majority of concerns in the earlier years, peaking at 154 cases in 2022, reports of problematic and inappropriate behaviour increased markedly from 87 cases in 2022 to 246 cases in 2025, becoming the predominant category from 2024 onwards. In contrast, reports of abusive behaviour declined from 188 cases in 2024 to 159 cases in 2025.

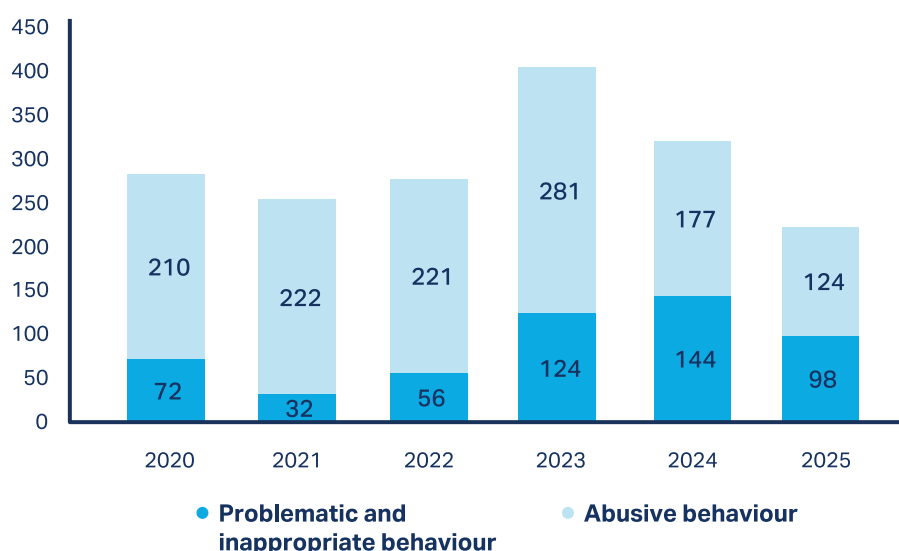
Figure 6. Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns reported in EUNA



Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

Safeguarding concerns reported in the WCNA region fluctuated over the six-year period, peaking at 405 cases in 2023 before declining to 320 in 2024 and 222 in 2025. Throughout the period, abusive behaviour consistently accounted for the majority of reported concerns, although the number of abuse-related reports fell substantially from 281 cases in 2023 to 124 cases in 2025. In contrast, reports of problematic and inappropriate behaviour increased from 56 cases in 2022 to 144 cases in 2024, before decreasing to 98 cases in 2025.

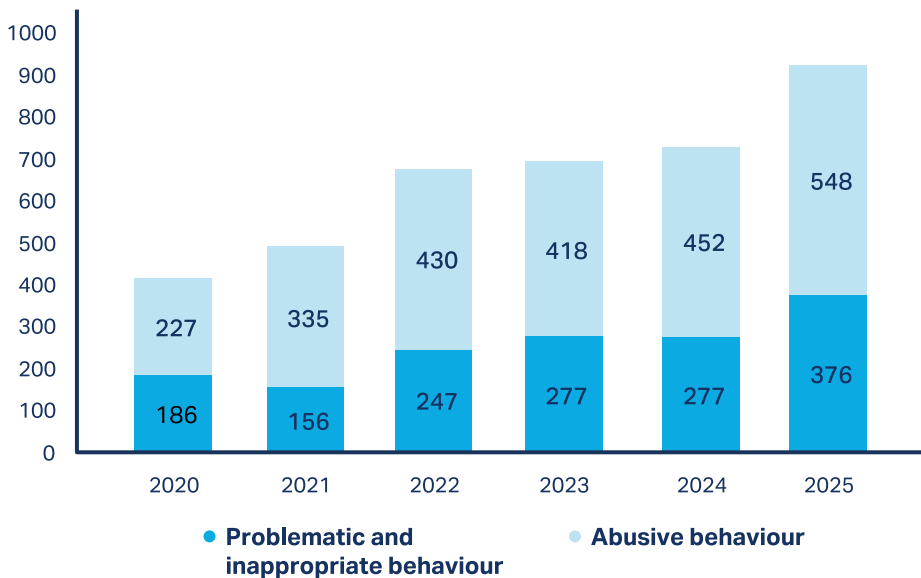
Figure 7. Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns reported in WCNA



Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

EUCM reported continued increase in Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns over the six-year period, rising from 413 concerns in 2020 to 924 in 2025. Both categories contributed to this upward trend. Reports of abusive behaviour increased steadily from 227 cases in 2020 to 548 in 2025, while reports of problematic and inappropriate behaviour more than doubled, rising from 186 to 376 cases over the same period. Compared with 2024, the total number of reported concerns increased by 27% (from 729 to 924), driven by increases in both abusive behaviour (452 to 548 cases) and problematic and inappropriate behaviour (277 to 376 cases).

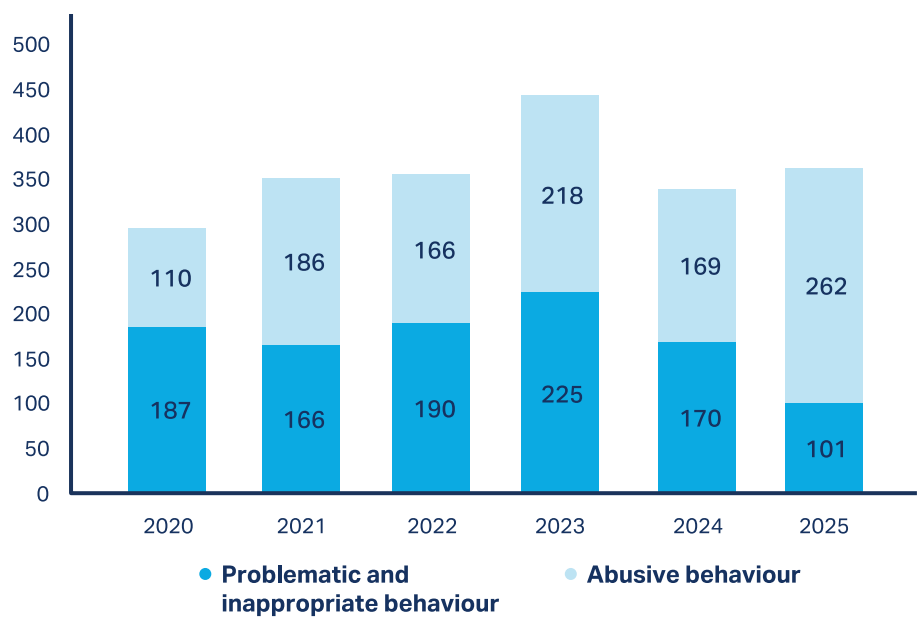
Figure 8. Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns reported in EUCM



Source: *Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025*

Asia reported fluctuating but overall increasing Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns over the six-year period, rising from 297 concerns in 2020 to 363 in 2025. Trends differed across the two categories. Reports of abusive behaviour increased substantially, more than doubling from 110 cases in 2020 to 262 in 2025, becoming the predominant category by the end of the reporting period. In contrast, reports of problematic and inappropriate behaviour varied over time, peaking at 225 cases in 2023 before declining to 101 cases in 2025. Compared with 2024, the total number of reported concerns increased by 7% (from 339 to 363). This increase was driven entirely by a sharp rise in reports of abusive behaviour (from 169 to 262 cases, a 55% increase), while reports of problematic and inappropriate behaviour decreased substantially (from 170 to 101 cases, a 41% decrease).

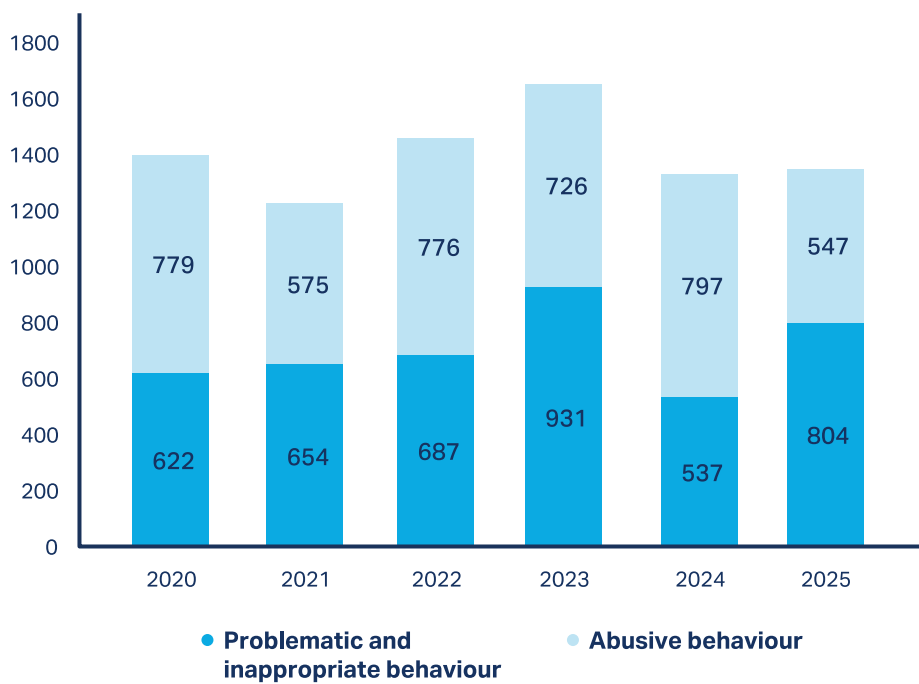
Figure 9. Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns reported in ASIA



Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

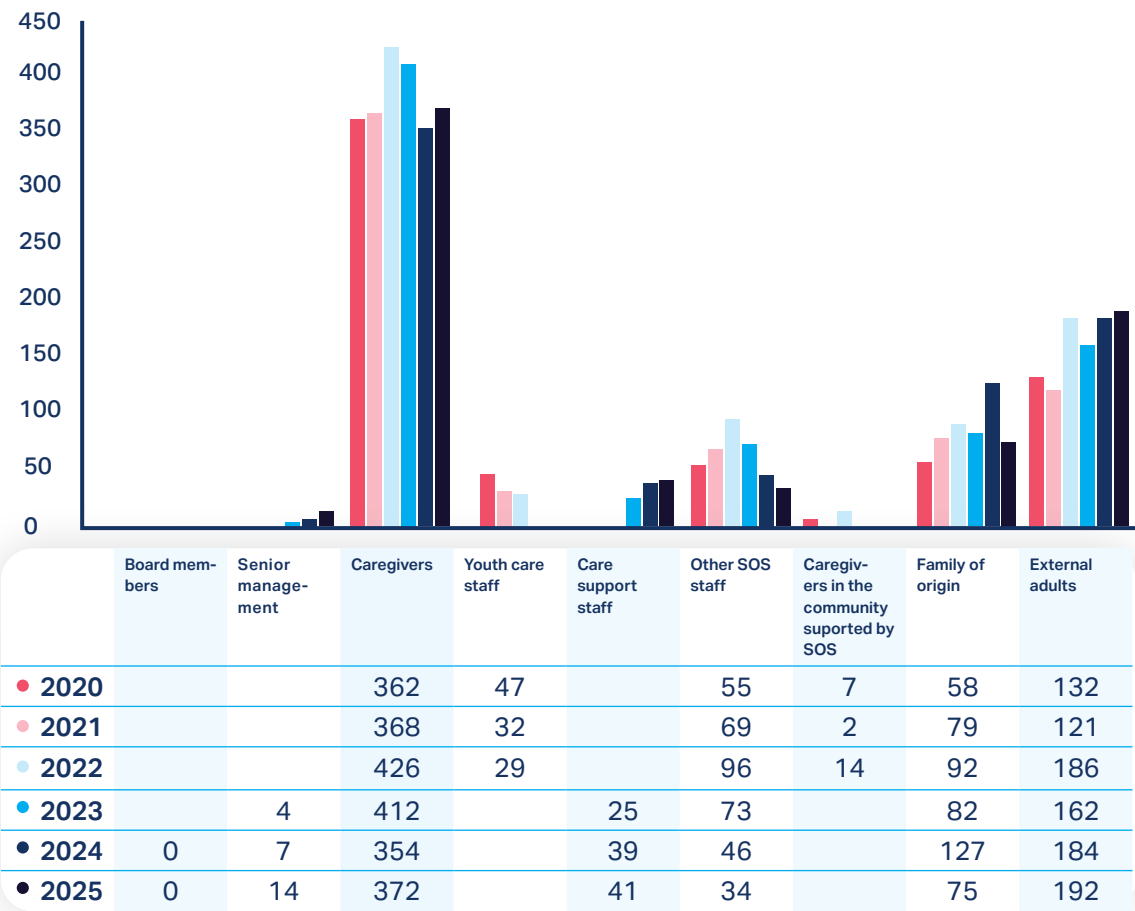
LAAM reported fluctuating but overall stable levels of Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns over the six-year period, ranging from 1,229 concerns in 2021 to a peak of 1,657 concerns in 2023, before declining and stabilizing at 1,351 concerns in 2025. Both categories contributed to these fluctuations. Reports of problematic and inappropriate behaviour increased from 622 cases in 2020 to 804 in 2025, despite notable variation over the period. Reports of abusive behaviour fluctuated considerably, peaking at 797 cases in 2024 before declining to 547 cases in 2025, the lowest level recorded since 2021. Compared with 2024, the total number of reported concerns increased slightly by 1% (from 1,334 to 1,351). This marginal increase was driven by a substantial rise in reports of problematic and inappropriate behaviour (from 537 to 804 cases, a 50% increase), which was largely offset by a decrease in reports of abusive behaviour (from 797 to 547 cases, a 31% decrease).

Figure 10. Child and Youth Safeguarding concerns reported in LAAM



Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

Figure 11. Numbers of adult perpetrators in confirmed incidents of abusive behaviour

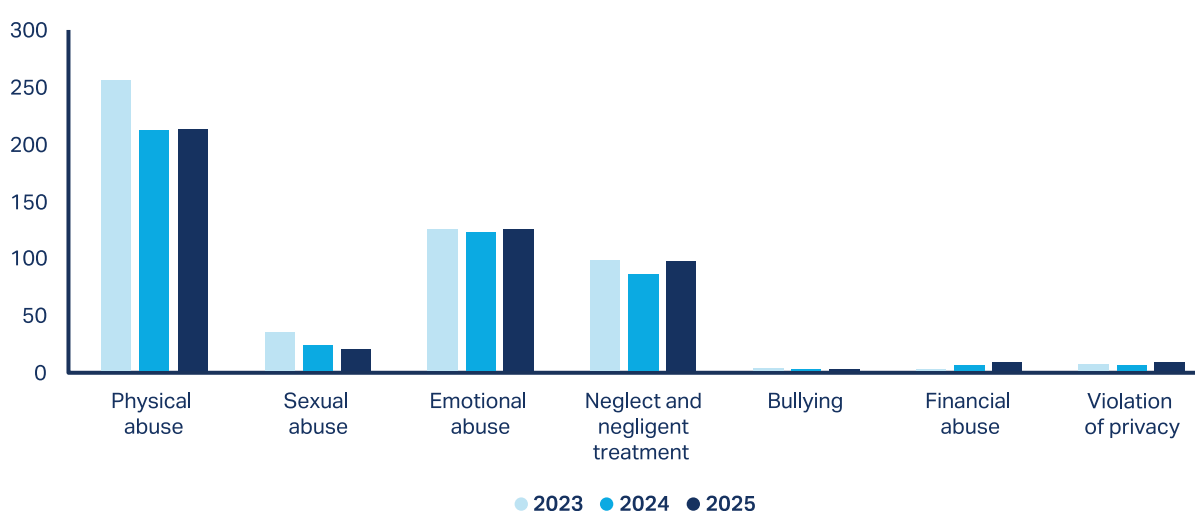


Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

Caregivers accounted for the largest proportion of confirmed abusive behaviour incidents in 2025, reflecting their direct contact with children and young people. The most common forms of abuse perpetrated by caregivers were physical abuse (170 cases), emotional abuse (104 cases), and neglect and negligent treatment (81 cases), while violations of privacy (7 cases), sexual abuse (6 cases), financial abuse (3 cases), bullying (1 case) were comparatively infrequent. Other SOS staff represented the second-largest group of perpetrators, with 36 cases of physical abuse, 22 cases of sexual abuse, 10 cases of emotional abuse, and 4 cases each of neglect and financial abuse. Support staff accounted for smaller numbers across all abuse types, including 26 cases of physical abuse, 12 of sexual abuse, 3 of emotional abuse, and 4 of neglect, while incidents involving senior management, board members, and other personnel categories were rare. Across all staff groups, physical abuse remained the most common form of confirmed abusive behaviour.

Physical abuse remained the most prevalent form of confirmed abusive behaviour perpetrated by SOS staff in 2025, with approximately 210 confirmed incidents. This represents a marked decrease from 2023 (around 250 cases) and is consistent with 2024 levels. Emotional abuse remained the second most common category, with about 120 confirmed cases, showing little variation over the three-year period. Neglect and negligent treatment increased slightly in 2025 compared with 2024 (from approximately 85 to 95 cases), although it remained below 2023 levels. Sexual abuse continued its downward trend, declining to around 18 confirmed cases in 2025. Other forms of abusive behaviour, including bullying, financial abuse, and violations of privacy, were reported infrequently, with only a small number of confirmed incidents.

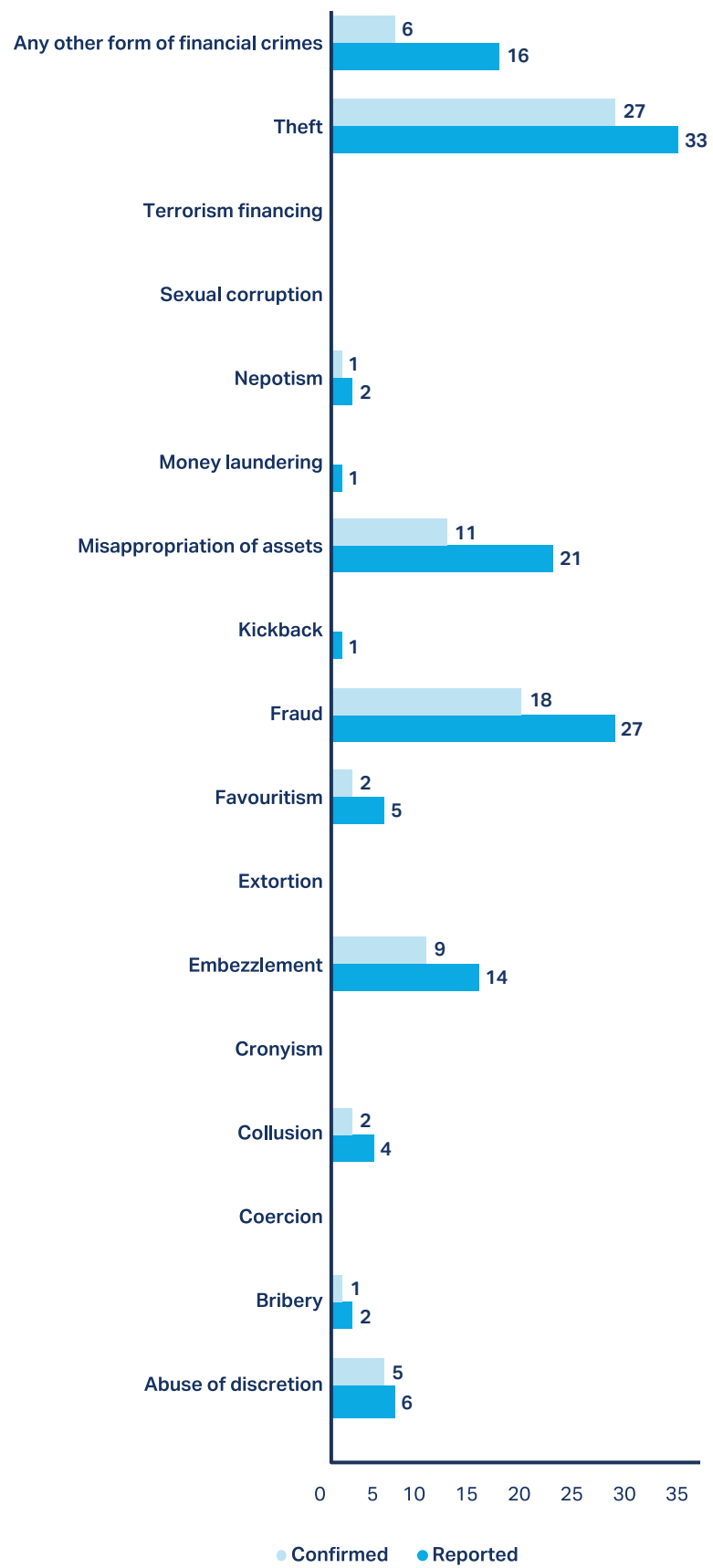
Figure 12. SOS staff as perpetrators in confirmed incidents of abusive behaviour



Source: *Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025*

In 2025, there were 132 reported and 82 confirmed corruption cases across all categories, reflecting the rigorous investigation and verification process applied before cases are substantiated (Figure 13). Theft accounted for the highest number of both reported (33) and confirmed (27) cases, followed by fraud (27 reported; 18 confirmed) and misappropriation of assets (21 reported; 11 confirmed). Embezzlement also remained a significant concern, with 14 reported cases, of which 9 were confirmed. Other categories, including abuse of discretion, collusion, favouritism, and other financial crimes, were reported less frequently and had lower confirmation rates, while isolated reports of bribery, kickbacks, money laundering, and nepotism were recorded. No cases of coercion, cronyism, extortion, sexual corruption, or terrorism financing were reported during the year.

Figure 13. Reported vs confirmed corruption cases in 2025



Source: Safeguarding Incident Statistics 2025

Whistleblowing and Case Management

To uphold its Zero Tolerance approach to abuse, neglect, exploitation, corruption, and misconduct, SOS CVI has reinforced its whistleblowing and case management framework through the implementation of the “SpeakUp” whistleblowing platform. The platform provides a secure, confidential, and accessible channel for reporting safeguarding concerns, workplace misconduct, corruption, data protection breaches, Code of Conduct violations, feedback and complaints, and other compliance-related issues.

Changes in the regulatory landscape, including the EU Whistleblower Directive and ISO 37002 guidance, together with the new operating model of SOS Children’s Villages, highlighted the need for a more flexible, scalable, and future-ready solution.

Following a comprehensive assessment, SOS CVI selected the “SpeakUp” platform as its new centralized whistleblowing and case management solution to support the organization’s evolving safeguarding and compliance needs. The rollout followed a phased approach. A pilot focusing on corruption related concerns was launched in March 2025, followed by the rollout at the Federation Secretariat in the different functional areas in December 2025. SOS CVI will continue expanding the use of SpeakUp across additional functions and Member Associations. Planned developments include workflows for federation-wide impact reporting, integration of SOS CVI-run operations as well potentially conflict of interest disclosures. At SOS Children’s Villages International, effective safeguarding depends not only on policies and procedures, but also on ensuring that every individual feels safe to speak up and confident that concerns will be addressed responsibly. The continued implementation of SpeakUp represents an important step in bolstering accountability, transparency, and trust across the Federation.

An important factor in the successful implementation has been the collaborative relationship established between SOS CVI and SpeakUp. Beyond a standard vendor-client engagement, the cooperation has focused on jointly developing workflows and solutions. SOS CVI is member of the SpeakUp Insights Board and actively contributes to further platform development. We were recognized at the annual SpeakUp Next Customer Summit in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The event brought together ethics, compliance, HR, and legal professionals from across Europe to exchange experiences and discuss innovation in whistleblowing and case management.

For more information please [SpeakUp Next: strengthening trust by making it safer to speak up](#)

Crisis Response

Historic misconduct allegations connected to organization's founder, Hermann Gmeiner

As part of its ongoing review of historical misconduct, SOS Children's Villages Austria identified eight documented cases of alleged abuse connected to the organization's founder, Hermann Gmeiner, dating from the 1950s to the 1980s. All eight survivors participated in the organization's victim support procedure between 2013 and 2023 and received recognition payments and therapeutic support. The cases were publicly acknowledged by the organization in October 2025 as part of a broader process of historical reckoning intended to strengthen transparency, accountability, and the safety and dignity of children.

SOS Children's Villages International recognizes the courage of those who came forward and acknowledges the lasting impact that such experiences have had on the individuals affected. The organization has stated that the harm caused resulted in lasting suffering and violated the very values on which SOS Children's Villages was founded. It has further affirmed that no individual is above accountability, irrespective of their historical or symbolic significance. The findings underscore the importance of addressing historical wrongdoings openly and transparently and of ensuring that the organization's actions remain aligned with its core values and commitment to child safeguarding.

In response to the findings, SOS Children's Villages Austria continued to advance a range of measures aimed at strengthening transparency, accountability, and safeguarding. These included a comprehensive reappraisal of historical cases, the establishment of an independent Reform Commission to review cases, the appointment of a Special Commissioner for Historical Review to lead internal investigations, and the implementation of an externally supported organizational development process to strengthen safeguarding standards, governance structures, and organizational culture through 2026. At the international level, the organization also encouraged Member Associations to engage in independent historical reviews and take further measures to ensure that institutional structures, culture, and decision-making reflect its safeguarding obligations. In May 2026, the International Board also formulated a position on the use of individuals' names in organizational references and designations.

Tracing of children forcibly separated from their families by the security authorities during Assad regime

In 2025, SOS Children's Villages continued its efforts to address cases involving children who had been forcibly separated from their families by the security authorities and placed in our programmes in Syria during the Assad regime. During the reporting period, significant progress was made in tracing affected children and responding to requests for information from families. According to SOS Children's Villages Syria, 124 out of 140 children forcibly separated have been traced back to their families.

Follow-up findings confirmed that all traced children are safe and are currently living with their families, marking one of the most significant humanitarian achievements in this effort.

Tracing efforts to locate the remaining 16 children, in cooperation with institutions, communities, and intergovernmental and humanitarian organizations remain a priority. The specialized team continues to work intensively to review and verify data, as well as coordinate with relevant stakeholders, to achieve comprehensive and accurate results.

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

Awareness, Capacity Building & Prevention

In 2025, SOS Children's Villages International continued to strengthen safeguarding prevention and awareness across the Federation, despite a year marked by significant organizational transformation, staff changes and financial constraints. Throughout the year, the focus remained on building the knowledge, skills and confidence of staff, leaders and safeguarding practitioners to identify, prevent and respond effectively to safeguarding risks, while strengthening the systems and culture needed to support safe environments across the organization.

A broad range of learning and capacity-building initiatives was delivered globally and regionally and helped Member Associations strengthen preventative approaches and embed safeguarding considerations more systematically into their work. Bringing together safeguarding focal points, incident management teams, programme staff, senior leaders and board representatives, these initiatives focused on key areas such as safeguarding risk management, incident management, investigations, trauma-informed approaches, safeguarding in emergencies, governance responsibilities and accountability mechanisms.

Regional safeguarding networks continued to play an important role in facilitating peer learning, sharing practical experiences and strengthening collaboration across Member Associations. Through these efforts, the Federation continued to build the commitment and competence of staff, leadership and governance bodies to identify, assess and mitigate safeguarding risks in their daily operations, contributing to a stronger and more consistent safeguarding culture across the Federation.

The Federation also continued to expand access to safeguarding learning through its e-learning courses. By the end of 2025, more than 8,000 individuals had completed the Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy course, alongside dedicated learning pathways for board members, care practitioners and line managers. These learning opportunities strengthened safeguarding awareness and reinforced individual and collective responsibility for creating safe environments for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

A significant development during 2025 was the progression towards a broader child, youth and adult safeguarding approach. Building on sector developments and emerging organizational needs, awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts supported Member Associations in understanding the implications of extending safeguarding protections to vulnerable adults and strengthening alignment with international safeguarding standards, including Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH). This transition represents an important step towards a more comprehensive safeguarding framework that responds to the evolving risks and needs of all individuals participating in or affected by SOS Children's Villages programmes and services.

Alongside learning initiatives, the Federation invested in strengthening the systems that support prevention, accountability and continuous improvement. New guidance and practical tools were introduced to support safeguarding investigations, incident management and quality assurance processes, while communication and implementation efforts supported the transition to the new SpeakUp reporting platform. These measures contributed to greater consistency in safeguarding practice and improved accessibility of reporting mechanisms across the Federation.

Overall, the safeguarding awareness, prevention and capacity-building efforts undertaken in 2025 strengthened safeguarding capacity at all levels of the organization, enhanced collaboration and learning across regions, and further embedded a culture of prevention, accountability and continuous improvement. Together with ongoing peer learning and professional exchange, these efforts reinforced organizational learning and supported the implementation of the Safeguarding Strategy 2030 priorities, including value-based leadership, safe programming and accountability to individuals affected by abuse.

Data Protection

SOS Children's Villages is committed to safeguarding the personal data it collects and processes. Risk-based and context-sensitive measures are implemented by SOS Children's Villages International and the Member organizations, including but not limited to implementation of the relevant internal procedures, staff awareness and training activities, access management practices, secure data handling measures, and ongoing efforts to strengthen data protection and privacy practices.

•

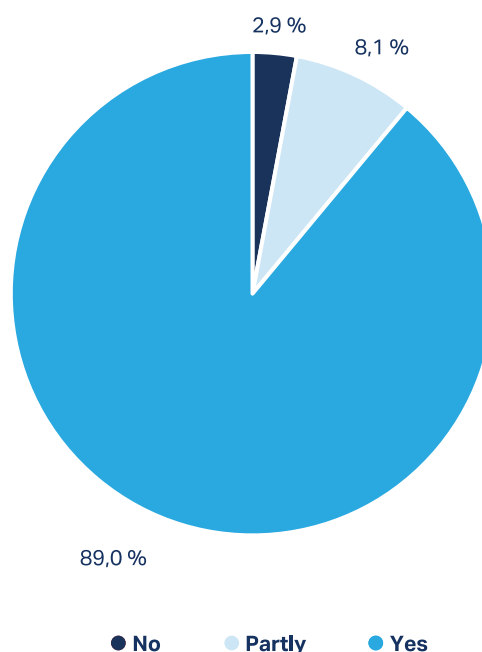
People and Culture Practices

At SOS Children's Villages, safeguarding is intrinsically linked to our people, culture, and leadership practices. Creating safe environments for children, young people, programme participants, and colleagues requires more than policies and procedures alone; it depends on a values-driven organizational culture in which our organizational values and the best interests of children are embedded in everyday decision-making. Strong recruitment and vetting processes, effective people management, leadership commitment, staff wellbeing initiatives, and mechanisms that encourage speaking up all contribute to preventing misconduct and reducing safeguarding risks. For this reason, safeguarding efforts are closely coordinated with the People and Culture Department, recognizing that a safe and values-based organizational culture is a critical foundation for delivering on our mission and ensuring that everyone who works for or on behalf of SOS Children's Villages or engages with the Federation is treated with dignity, respect, and care.

The findings in this section are based on responses from 136 member organizations participating in the 2025 Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey. The survey is addressed to national/member organizations across the Federation and is intended to assess compliance with safeguarding, anti-corruption, and related human resources requirements.

Code of Conduct

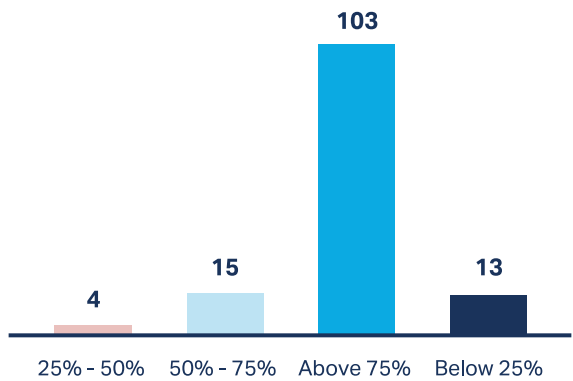
Figure 14. Legal enforceability of Code of Conduct by the Member Organizations



Source: Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey 2025

These findings indicate that the Code of Conduct is broadly embedded across the Federation and is legally enforceable for the vast majority of individuals working for or representing SOS Children's Villages. As the results show a very strong level of compliance, with 89.0% of Member Associations responding "Yes", 8.1% "Partly", and 2.9% "No". This provides an important foundation for promoting ethical behaviour, accountability, and safeguarding standards throughout the organization.

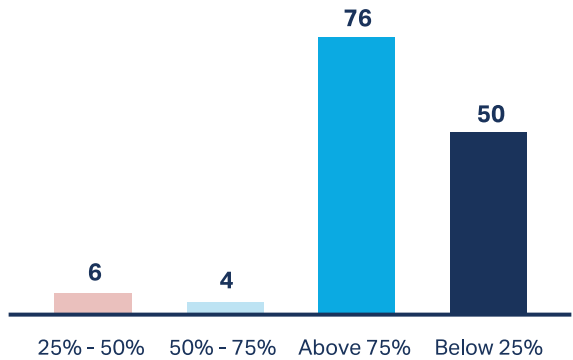
Figure 15. Staff percentage (including Senior Management) who have received initial orientation on the Code of Conduct (as of 31 December 2025)



Source: Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey 2025

This chart shows 103 staff in the **Above 75% category**, 15 in the **50%–75% category**, 14 in the **Below 25% category**, and 4 in the **25%–50% category**, which can be interpreted as a strong overall level of initial orientation coverage, although a small number of respondents still report low or moderate completion that may need follow-up.

Figure 16. Percentage of Board Members who have received initial training on the Code of Conduct (as of 31 December 2025)

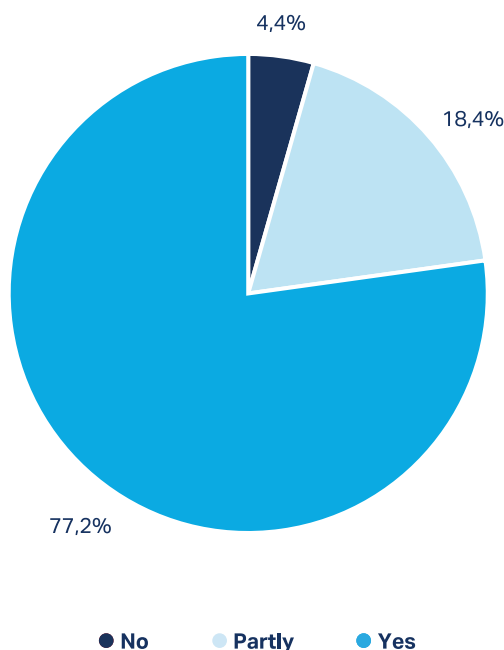


Source: Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey 2025

The chart shows 76 in the **Above 75% category**, 50 in the **Below 25% category**, 6 in the **25%–50% category**, and 4 in the **50%–75% category**, which can be interpreted as a mixed result: many board members appear to have received a high level of orientation, but there is also a substantial group with very low coverage, suggesting inconsistent board-level training completion.

Taken together, these results indicate that initial orientation on the Code of Conduct is more consistently implemented among staff than among board members. While the majority of Member Associations report that over 75% of staff have completed the orientation, board-level results are considerably more uneven, with a substantial number of Member Associations reporting coverage below 25%. This suggests that, although awareness of the Code of Conduct is generally well-established across the workforce, greater attention may be needed to ensure that board members receive the same level of induction and understanding of their responsibilities. Strengthening orientation efforts at governance level would support a more consistent culture of ethics, accountability, and safeguarding throughout SOS Children's Villages.

Figure 17. Safeguarding rules and the Code of Conduct for programme visitors in 2025



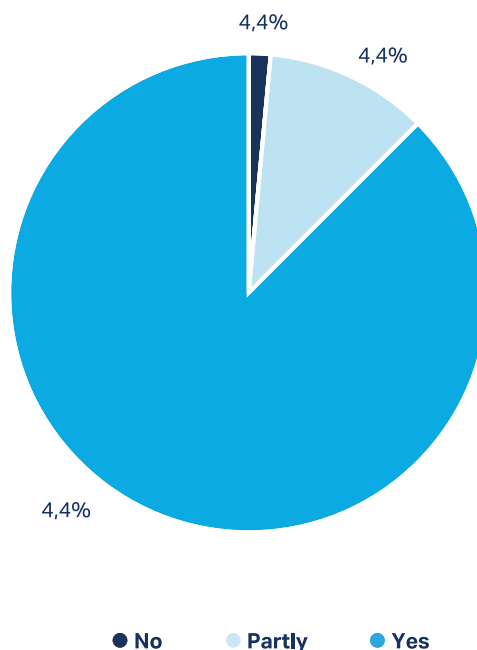
Source: Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey 2025

The chart above responds to the question, "Have programme visitors (e.g., donors, partners, sponsors, journalists, foreign visitors) in 2025 received orientation on the safeguarding rules and the Code of Conduct they needed to follow before their visit, and was this orientation documented?" The chart shows **77.2% responded Yes**, **18.4% Partly**, and **4.4% No**, which can be interpreted as a strong practice of visitor safeguarding orientation, but with a notable share of partial implementation that suggests consistency still needs improvement.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Code of Conduct is well-established across SOS Children's Villages, supported by strong legal enforceability, dedicated funding for implementation, and high levels of orientation among staff. These results reflect a solid organizational commitment to promoting ethical behaviour, accountability, and safeguarding standards throughout the Federation. At the same time, the survey highlights opportunities for further strengthening implementation, particularly through more consistent board-level orientation, improved contractual integration of safeguarding requirements for third parties, and more systematic orientation and documentation for programme visitors. Addressing these areas will help ensure that the principles of the Code of Conduct are applied consistently across all levels of governance and all individuals engaging with SOS Children's Villages.

Safe Recruitment

Figure 18. Implementation of the Safe Recruitment Guideline



Source: Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey 2025

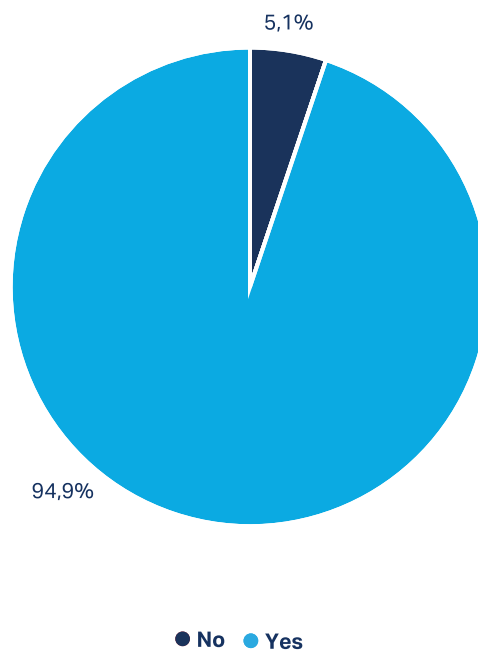
The chart shows 87.5% responded Yes, 11.0% Partly, and 1.5% No, indicating a very strong level of implementation across the Federation. At the same time, the combined 12.5% of partial and non-implementation responses represents an opportunity to further strengthen and standardise safe recruitment practices not only prior to any contract of employment or engagement across all Member Associations. Continued focus on awareness-raising and implementation could help reduce this percentage in the coming year and ensure that safe recruitment measures are applied consistently throughout SOS Children's Villages.

Taken together, these findings indicate that safe recruitment procedures are consistently being applied before the engagement of staff, volunteers, and third parties, as reflected in the 100% compliance rate. The slightly lower implementation rate for the Safe Recruitment Guideline suggests that the remaining gap relates primarily to elements of the guideline that extend beyond pre-engagement checks, including post-recruitment measures and ongoing safeguarding considerations. Strengthening implementation of these broader requirements would help ensure a more comprehensive and consistent application of safe recruitment practices throughout the employee and volunteer lifecycle.

Other people practices reinforcing safeguarding

Living Our Values is SOS Children's Villages' approach to fostering a values-based organizational culture by promoting behaviours that reflect the organization's core values, strengthening accountability, encouraging respectful and ethical conduct, and creating safe environments for children, young people, colleagues, and all those who engage with the organization.

Figure 19. Integration of the “Living our Values” values-based competencies in the recruitment, performance management, and learning and development processes.

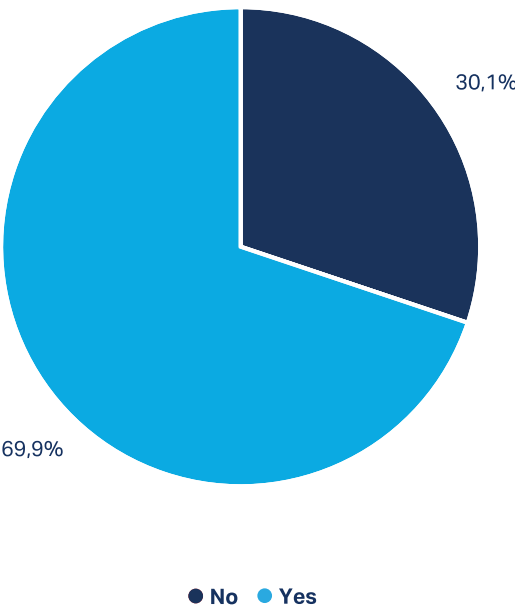


Source: Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey 2025

The chart above responds to the question, “Does the member organization embed the ‘Living our Values’ competences in the recruitment, performance management, and learning and development processes?” The chart shows **94.9% responded Yes** and **5.1% No**, which can be interpreted as a very strong integration of values-based competencies into core HR processes, with only a small minority indicating otherwise.

Living wages are highly relevant to both SOS Children’s Villages’ mission and its safeguarding objectives because they contribute to a safe and respectful working environment for employees and co-workers. Ensuring that staff receive fair compensation helps reduce financial stress and vulnerability, supports staff wellbeing and retention, and strengthens the organization’s ability to attract and maintain a qualified and motivated workforce. From a safeguarding perspective, a workforce that feels valued, and treated fairly is better positioned to uphold ethical standards, exercise sound judgement, and contribute to a positive organizational culture where concerns can be raised and addressed appropriately. As such, living wages are an important element of creating the conditions that help prevent misconduct and promote the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, and all those who engage with SOS Children’s Villages.

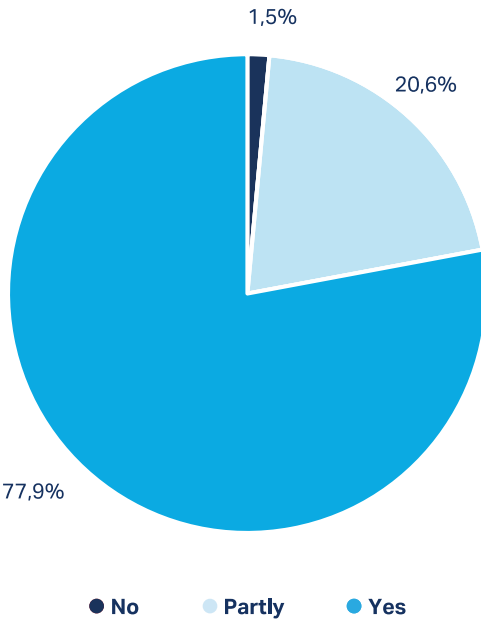
Figure 20. All wages paid in accordance with the Living Wage Regulation



Source: Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey 2025

The chart above responds to the question, “Does the member organization pay all wages in accordance with the Living Wage Regulation?” The chart shows **69.9% responded Yes and 30.1% No**, which can be interpreted as a positive result overall, but with a sizeable gap that indicates living wage compliance is not yet universal and remains an important area for improvement.

Figure 21. Job descriptions of all staff, contracts and agreements with those working for or on behalf of the Federation specify their individual safeguarding responsibilities.



Source: Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption Survey 2025

The chart above responds to the question, “Do the job descriptions of all staff, as well as contracts and agreements with those working for or on behalf of the member organization (including board members, volunteers, and third parties), specify their individual safeguarding responsibilities?” The chart shows **77.9% responded Yes**, **20.6% Partly**, and **1.5% No**, which can be interpreted as a strong overall inclusion of safeguarding responsibilities in role documents and agreements, although the relatively high “Partly” response suggests that this is not yet applied consistently across all categories of personnel.

In summary, the results reflect a strong safeguarding and compliance framework overall, with particularly high scores in legal enforceability, funding for implementation, safe recruitment procedures, and values-based HR processes. At the same time, the partial responses in some areas, such as contract coverage, board orientation, visitor documentation, safeguarding responsibilities in role descriptions, and living wage compliance, indicate opportunities to strengthen consistency and ensure that these standards are fully embedded across all levels of the organization.

Ombuds Office

In 2025, the Ombuds Office progressed towards becoming a federation-wide safe programming asset. The SOS Children's Villages Ombuds Office is a pioneering model as it provides children and young people with an independent, child-friendly mechanism to raise concerns outside traditional management structures. It strengthens safeguarding by combining accountability, participation, and protection, ensuring that children's voices are heard and acted upon. As one of the first global ombuds systems for children operating across multiple countries, it demonstrates how independent accountability mechanisms can strengthen safeguarding and promote a stronger speak-up culture (Jean-Louis & Pontalti, 2025)¹

To strengthen the confidential and structured handling of Ombuds inquiries, the Ombuds Office initiated the introduction of the Inquiry Management System (IMS). The implementation and training of the new Ombuds IT system began in late 2025, with pilot testing planned for the first half of 2026 and full rollout scheduled to commence in August 2026. The system is expected to support independent case management while maintaining strict confidentiality.

Independent, child-centred access moved swiftly from a limited pilot footprint to a practical accountability mechanism across the Federation. From three countries effectively operational in 2024 to around thirty Member Associations implementing National Ombuds Offices by the end of 2025., this represents almost tenfold growth within a single year, extending an independent reporting and support route to many more children, young people, and care leavers.

226
distinct inquiries

80.5%
from current/
former
participants

52.2%
safeguarding-
related

50
care-leaver
inquiries

Inquiry support converted concerns into action

84.1% of inquiries progressed through referral or supported self-resolution. Ombuds support did more than route cases: it helped inquirers - especially CYP - understand options, give informed consent, articulate concerns and navigate complex formal systems. Safeguarding and programme actors acted on concerns brought forward through Ombuds facilitation; supported self-resolution enabled CYP to act with greater agency. Individual redress also generated structural change, from safer care and education outcomes to stronger safeguards, professional practice and reporting routes.

¹ Jean-Louis, M. & Pontalti, K. (2025). *Strengthening safeguarding and accountability through an international aid ombuds for children*. In S. Reeves & M. Erooga (Eds.), *When vulnerability meets power* (Chapter 13, pp. 167-178). Policy Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781041057925-15>

Safeguarding concerns translated into concrete positive change

Bodily integrity & consent A 16-year-old's concern about intimate medical procedures led to clearer explanation and consent requirements, trusted accompaniment and stronger privacy safeguards.	Fair discipline & care culture A proposed collective allowance deduction was stopped; a group concern about blaming and discouraging caregiver conduct triggered Code of Conduct refreshers and wider practice work.
Education & emotional well-being Listening uncovered fear, shame and bullying behind apparent non-compliance. One 13-year-old returned to school, completed Grade 8 and rebuilt confidence.	Safe transitions & aftercare Ombuds support prevented an abrupt, unsafe exit from care and restored a more flexible transition plan shaped by the young person's autonomy, education and vocational goals.

Recurring concerns included corporal punishment, emotional abuse, peer intimidation and bullying, delayed follow-up, minimization, adult-centered decisions and transition vulnerabilities.	85% aware 58% felt safe 42% felt protected from retaliation
--	---

CYP participation moved from consultation to shared ownership (Participation figures are reported contacts and may include repeat participation. ESAF access assessment covered six Member Associations. Safeguarding-related inquiries are not necessarily substantiated incidents.

Children and young people now shape who represents them and how the service works.	All Ombuds recruited through CYP-led selection recruited through CYP-led selection	All active locations now have CYP representatives	6,320+ CYP contacts 375 activities 2,498 staff contacts across 209 activities
--	---	---	--

“ No child’s voice is too small to be heard, and no concern is too minor to be addressed.” Young advocate, West and Central Africa	“ As a child, the Ombuds has helped build our confidence and trust to voice our opinions in a safe way.” Young person, West and Central Africa
---	---

Focus areas for 2026 & beyond

Building on the progress made in 2025, the Federation's safeguarding efforts in 2026 will focus on strengthening the implementation and long-term sustainability of safeguarding systems across Member Associations with monitoring progress with the Federation Essential Requirements and a Safeguarding Accreditation Framework underway.

A key priority will be the implementation of the Safeguarding Strategy 2030 through the consistent application of safeguarding standards and preventive approaches across operations, programmes and partnerships. Particular emphasis will be placed on promoting an integrated approach that brings together child, youth and adult safeguarding, anti-corruption, and organizational integrity.

The Federation will continue investing in safeguarding awareness and learning for staff, leaders and governance bodies. Existing programmes will be strengthened through targeted, locally adapted initiatives that promote leadership accountability, value-based decision-making and role-specific safeguarding competencies. Regional and global learning exchanges will continue to facilitate peer learning, the sharing of good practices and the dissemination of emerging knowledge.

A major priority for 2026 will be introducing a Safe Programming Approach across the Federation. This will support Member Associations in integrating safeguarding into programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, while strengthening the participation of children, young people and vulnerable adults in identifying and mitigating safeguarding risks. The approach will also promote closer integration of safeguarding across key organizational functions, including human resources, programme development, partnerships, communications and monitoring.

Strengthening safeguarding risk management will remain a priority. The Federation will support Member Associations with adopting more systematic approaches to identifying, assessing and mitigating safeguarding risks across programmes, operations and partnerships. Guidance, tools and capacity-building will strengthen risk awareness, mitigation measures and proactive prevention.

In parallel, efforts will continue to strengthen monitoring, learning and accountability through federation-wide safeguarding indicators, improved reporting and greater use of safeguarding data to inform decision-making. Lessons learned from incidents, audits and reviews will be systematically translated into practical improvements that enhance prevention and organizational effectiveness. As well as by supporting safeguarding networks and communities of practice that facilitate collaboration across Member Associations and organizational functions. By promoting knowledge sharing and continuous learning, these networks fostering greater consistency in safeguarding implementation across the Federation.

Through a continued focus on awareness, capacity building, system integration and organizational learning, the Federation aims to further advance the implementation of the Safeguarding Strategy 2030 and create safer environments for children, young people and vulnerable adults in all areas of its work.

Strengthening the Federation's whistleblowing and case management framework will be a key priority in 2026. SOS Children's Villages will advance the development of a Federation-

wide Whistleblowing and Case Management Regulation, establishing consistent standards for reporting concerns, managing cases, conducting investigations where required, and strengthening governance, accountability, and whistleblower protection. Developed through extensive consultation across the Federation, the regulation will provide a more integrated and consistent approach to safeguarding, integrity, and compliance.

In 2026, the Federation Secretariat further improved the process through which Member Associations inform relevant stakeholders about high severity corruption and safeguarding incidents with federation-wide impact. The High-Severity Incident Reporting process will use a dedicated reporting portal for Member Associations to submit reports securely and efficiently.

Lastly, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly integrated into all areas of work, presenting both new opportunities and emerging risks for safeguarding. We will continue to assess the responsible and ethical use of AI, ensuring that its application supports safeguarding objectives while aligning with data protection requirements, safeguarding principles, and organizational standards.

Appendices

Terminology

Problematic behaviours that create a risk of harm for the child or young person involved or for their peers but do not involve a power imbalance. Examples include self-harm or physical fights among peers.

Inappropriate behaviours refer to isolated incidents where actions by a care practitioner or another adult do not meet expected standards but do not amount to abuse, for example when an adult responds to a child's behaviour inappropriately.

Useful Resources

Visit the Safeguarding Hub for policies and guidance, explore SOS Virtual for training opportunities, review Country Profiles for safeguarding information by Member Association and access previous annual reports to learn about safeguarding progress and priorities across the Federation.

Safeguarding Country Profiles

Country profiles provide an overview of safeguarding activities, compliance status, priorities, and planned actions by Member Association.

Previous Safeguarding Annual Reports

Annual reports provide information on safeguarding developments, compliance, reported concerns, risk profiles, and organizational learning.

The safeguarding policy framework, regulations, guidance documents, and implementation tools are available in the [SOS Children's Villages Library](#)

Please also explore multiple Safeguarding, Anti-Corruption, and People & Culture training opportunities through SOS Virtual.

Reporting channels and contact points

To report concerns linked to misconduct that require escalation to FSC/IDS please use <https://soscv.speakup.report/en-GB/reportconcern/home>.

Please visit the Safeguarding Info Hub on our international website for more information on our safeguarding work, including previous child and youth safeguarding reports.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at integrity@sos-kd.org.



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**

Reporting channels and contact points

To report concerns linked to misconduct that require escalation to FSC/IDS please use **<https://soscvi.speakup.report/en-GB/reportconcern/home>**.

Please visit the Safeguarding Info Hub on our international website for more information on our safeguarding work, including previous child and youth safeguarding reports.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at **integrity@sos-kd.org**.