

INFORMATION

Document

Safeguarding Policies

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Together with our partner organisations, we at Misereor work worldwide to ensure that the rights of all people are protected and that their dignity is respected. This also includes directing special attention to safeguarding.

Safeguarding refers to all measures taken by an organisation/institution to protect vulnerable persons from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. This includes both protection from harm that can be inflicted on vulnerable persons by an organisation/institution's employees and protection of the employees themselves. Safeguarding in the context of Misereor therefore relates both to internal processes and to trusting cooperation with partner organisations and individuals who work on behalf of and in the context of Misereor.

This concern of Misereor is in line with the guidelines of the Catholic Church at national and international level. In 2020, the German Catholic Bishops' Conference adopted "Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexualised Violence in Development Agencies of the Universal Church", which are also binding for Misereor and its partner organisations. These are based on Vatican pronouncements on the fight against sexual abuse, such as the 2019 *motu proprio Vos estis lux mundi*.

In future, all partner organisations must therefore submit a safeguarding policy to Misereor and prove that they are sensitised to the topic and have put protection mechanisms in place. Partner organisations must establish measures and mechanisms which ensure that they deal appropriately with cases of violence against vulnerable people in the environment of their organisation or project. Vulnerable persons can include children and young people, older people, women, people with disabilities or people from the LGBTQIA+ community. They can be project beneficiaries, but also employees of an institution, regardless of whether they have an employment contract or work on a voluntary basis.

This guide is intended to be a resource for mutual understanding of the objectives and contents of a safeguarding policy and provides further material that can be helpful both in drawing up a policy and in establishing an organisational culture that fosters behaviours such as attentiveness in the sense of safeguarding. In most cases, the linked material is available in different languages and sometimes for different regional contexts.

If an organisation/institution does not yet have a policy, this does not mean that this organisation/institution does not implement effective protection measures. Often, many measures are already taken thanks to technical expertise, but this only becomes apparent when a protection and risk analysis is carried out. This means that, as a rule, nobody starts from scratch, but a structured and written analysis of all risks and protection mechanisms helps to uncover gaps and create transparency, both internally and externally.

Global standards for protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

In 2018 and 2019, the members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) decided that both their own work and that of their partner organisations should be based on the standards of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and/or the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).

The IASC standards include [six core principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse](#), as well as the minimum standards “[Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse by own personnel](#)”. The CHS provides a common approach to delivering humanitarian aid to communities affected by crises. Its approaches to implementing prevention and intervention measures help to create safer organisations/institutions.

Depending on the organisation/institution, the [International Child Safeguarding Standards](#) by Keeping Children Safe (KCS) can also be helpful. The Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub provides a [summary brief](#) of the international standards as well as an [information document](#) on how to apply the standards in your own organisation/institution. Both documents are available for download in various languages. Also worth mentioning is the [UN glossary on sexual exploitation and abuse](#).

Creation and contents of a safeguarding policy

Effective safeguarding in an organisation or institution consists of various measures and processes that contribute to protection against violence and a safe working environment and focus in particular on the protection and empowerment of vulnerable groups. Safeguarding as we understand it is based on the three pillars of *prevent*, *recognise* and *react*, the basis of which is a protection and risk analysis. All further measures and processes can be derived or developed from the results of this analysis.

Organisations/institutions can take *preventive* action by implementing standards in personnel selection and development, target group-oriented training, education and training programmes, developing communication guidelines and [designing safe programmes](#) and prevention projects. A code of conduct, which contains a general section as well as criteria specific to the organisation/institution and compliance with which is binding for all those working in and for the organisation/institution, is also one of the preventive measures. You can find help with drawing up a code of conduct [here](#). A detailed toolkit from the CHS Alliance can be found at [this link](#).

Potential risks can be *recognised* and identified promptly by documenting personal measures and setting up clear complaint and reporting mechanisms and appointing contact persons.

Well thought-out and transparent case management and a defined procedure for cases of suspicion or complaints enable us to *react*, as does a strategy for processing and evaluating cases and reports.

All measures and processes taken by an organisation/institution as part of safeguarding, as well as further organisational or country-specific framework conditions, form the content of the safeguarding policy, which represents both a guide that gives reassurance and a component in the implementation of an organisational culture of attentiveness.

The key aspects of effective guidelines are:

- 1 ownership at the top;
- 2 ensuring the participation of affected people;
- 3 introducing standardised procedures;
- 4 defining responsibilities;
- 5 defining a training concept for implementation;
- 6 making guidelines easily accessible;
- 7 passing on guidelines to partner organisations;
- 8 developing a concept for monitoring the implementation;
- 9 considering guidelines in the recruitment process;
- 10 cultivating an open feedback culture.

The following aspects should be part of a safeguarding policy. The wording can vary depending on the organisational context. The requirements for the legal framework, for example, which should be specified, also change depending on the country and organisational context.

1. Name of the policy	Organisation/Institution X Safeguarding Policy
2. Statement on the implementation of the policy	When has the management put the policy into effect? What is its period of validity?
3. Purpose of the policy	What is the policy's aim? What is the range of its validity?
4. Scope of the policy	To whom does the policy apply (e.g. staff members, volunteers, visitors, partners)? Does the policy apply to all groups of persons associated with the organisation/institution, or are there other policies with other subject areas and target groups?
5. Availability/accessibility of the policy	How can the policy be accessed? Where and how is it communicated and published?
6. Definitions	Please define the terms "children" and "vulnerable adults" in your context.
7. Local legal framework conditions	Please mention legal framework conditions applicable in your country or the framework conditions of canon law if you are subject to it.

8. International laws and regulations	Your organisation/institution undertakes to respect the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
9. Recruitment procedures Human resources development	Which measures are taken to check the background of new employees? Is a procedure for dealing with employees under investigation in place (e.g. suspension)? You can find tips and recommendations on safer recruitment here .
10. Training and education	How soon after employment and how often are employees trained on and sensitised to safeguarding?
11. Code of conduct	The code of conduct can either be attached to the policy as an annex or you can refer to it, indicating where it can be found.
12. Complaints and reporting mechanisms	Include in your policy that all employees are obliged to report suspected cases of endangerment of a child's welfare or of vulnerable adults. Describe your organisation's/institution's reporting channels and transparently explain the procedure taken in case of a report.
13. Context	Is the policy adapted to your specific context (language, cultural framework, requirements specific to your organisation/institution)? Are there other policies (e.g. from your congregation, your international organisational structure, your country's Bishop's Conference) to which you can refer?
14. Evaluation and monitoring	Who is responsible for implementing the measures described in the policy (name and position within the organisation/institution)? In which intervals will the policy be evaluated with regard to its effectiveness and potential needs for adaptation?

The Resource and Support Hub, among others, offers a step-by-step [guide to developing a safeguarding policy](#) in different languages. The procedure of developing or reviewing the policy is just as important as the actual existence of the policy. Involving different groups of persons and functions in the process can positively influence the organisation-/institution-wide understanding for safeguarding measures. In addition, (potentially) affected persons should also have the opportunity to actively contribute to the process of developing the organisation's/institution's safeguarding policy ("safeguarding process"). It therefore makes sense to determine beforehand who is charged with developing the policy and in how far other persons will be involved (for specific topics). It might also be helpful to enlist external support to add an external expert perspective, for example to the protection and risk analysis or the review of an existing policy. If you do not know local safeguarding experts yet, you might for instance use [ECPAT](#) to search for experts in your country or you can contact the local offices of UNICEF or Save the Children. Networking with other CSOs, the Bishop's Conference of your country and other institutions might also prove beneficial.

Protection and risk analysis

Protection and risk analyses are the basis for effective safeguarding. Both in developing measures and policies and in reviewing them it makes sense to get an overview of what risks exist for the welfare of vulnerable persons in the specific context of the organisation/institution, what appropriate safeguards are already in place and what gaps still need to be closed. Risks can arise in all organisational/institutional areas and are as dynamic as the organisation/institution itself. Therefore, risk analyses should be regularly repeated to enable early identification and prevention of hazardous situations.

How the analysis is conducted depends on the organisation's/institution's needs and the preferences of those involved. There are different method and instruments that can be used. The analysis might, for example, start with a [self-assessment](#) by means of a template. Subsequently, risks can be categorised and measures to address them identified. A brief overview can be found [here](#).

Another option is to use renown instruments like the SWOT analysis to identify your organisation's/institution's strengths and weaknesses relating to safeguarding. A detailed guide is available [here](#).

Independent of the analysis tool an organisation/institution selects, a protection and risk analysis seeks to answer two key questions:

1. What **conditions** can perpetrators use in the organisation/institution to prepare and exercise sexualised violence?
2. What **measures** and **resources** already exist to protect minors and vulnerable adults?

Hence, organisations/institutions conducting a protection and risk analysis not only search for problems and weaknesses, but will also find that often there are already measures and resources in place to protect the people entrusted to them.

The protection and risk analysis ideally includes all areas of an organisation/institution where both favourable conditions for perpetrators and preventive resources and safeguards might exist:

1. **Target group of the organisation/institution**→ Age structure, needs for support/care, handling of closeness and distance, etc.
2. **Spatial conditions**→ How are indoor and outdoor areas designed; are they observable for others? Are there retreat areas? Are there remote non-observable rooms? Who can access the premises when and under what conditions?
3. **Staff**→ Is safeguarding raised in recruitment interviews? Are there mandatory trainings? Do employees have to sign a code of conduct? Are there regular staff appraisals? Are responsibilities clearly assigned? Are there informal structures? Does the organisation/institution enable feedback and learning (“feedback and error culture”)? Are regular team meetings or other exchange formats implemented?
4. **Complaints mechanisms and participation formats for all**→ How are groups associated with the organisation/institution involved in the safeguarding process? Are there target group-specific, culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive and anonymous complaints mechanisms and does everyone know about them? Is there an external contact person and support systems?
5. **Other risks specific to the organisation/institution**→ Are there other risks arising from the specific circumstances of the organisation/institution and how are they addressed? In which (social) context is the organisation/institution active and does this impact safeguarding?

You can design the analysis in a participatory manner according to your specific organisational/institutional context. Its results form a solid basis for developing the safeguarding policy and will help you to progress significantly.

Protection and risk analyses show that all of us work in learning organisations and that safeguarding can never be a completed process. Our work and the requirements we face are dynamic; as are safeguarding needs. Therefore, it is important to us at Misereor to have trusting and transparent dialogues with our partners, and to jointly create environments where people feel safe and at ease. We appreciate open communication on the topic and regularly review our guidelines and our organisation’s safeguarding culture ourselves. Our policy and further information on safeguarding at Misereor can be found [here](#) (German only). You will find the contact details of our ombudsperson as well as the link to our whistleblowing system [here](#).