



ECHOEES

"Be a light to the world"



International Session on Safeguarding
17 – 26 June 2025
Martillac, France

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Day 1

The International Session on Safeguarding Policy Training (17 – 26 June 2025), began in Martillac, France. It was organized by the International Team. 18 Link Sisters representing all Units and the Vicariate came to participate in this important gathering.

Over the past six months, the participants had become familiar with one another through a Zoom

training program focused on studying the ***Safeguarding Policy of the Holy Family of Bordeaux*** at Institute level. This program was led by Tina Campbell, the newly appointed UISG Safeguarding Advisor. **Despite this virtual connection, there was even greater joy in meeting face-to-face on the native soil of our Founder - who always loved, listened to, and sought out those neglected by society.**

Welcoming

Maria Crowley warmly welcomed the participants to this special gathering. Each participant was then invited to introduce herself to the assembly by sharing her name, Unit, and a flower from their country that they particularly like.



Objectives



The objective of this session:

- ☞ To launch International Holy Family Safeguarding Policy.
- ☞ To provide a clear explanation and training of the policy to the participants.
- ☞ To equip the participants with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes on their responsibility in Safeguarding.
- ☞ To create an action plan for training and transmission in their Units.

Opening Address :

Ana María ALCALDE, SUPERIOR GENERAL, via video conference

Dear Sisters, Welcome to Martillac for this important session, which has been prepared through online training meetings, with the competent guidance of Independent Consultant Tina CAMPBELL.

Many thanks to the International Safeguarding Team whose members with great commitment and hard work, have drafted the "Safeguarding Policy" for the Holy Family of

Bordeaux.

You are gathered here to learn more about this policy and to help all the Sisters of the Institute, the members of the P.B. Noailles Family and those who work directly or indirectly with us, to put it into practice.

This meeting will continue to be a space for awareness-raising and training to provide the knowledge and skills needed to act effectively and sensitively in the prevention of abuse within



the Institute and in the places where we exercise our apostolates.

It is a shared commitment to move effectively towards a radical change of mentality. Admittedly, in the recent past, we did not have the awareness or the training needed to realize the importance of 'pastoral care'.

With this in mind, I echo the words of Pope Francis, who insists that "Protecting means guiding one's own heart, one's own gaze and one's own work in favour of the smallest and most defenceless. Protection means this. It is a process that requires inner, communitarian renewal, in justice and in truth... to share ecclesial passion and expertise with the commitment to forming the greatest possible number of pastoral workers. In this way, a genuine cultural change is promoted, placing at the centre the smallest and most vulnerable in the Church and in society. This ecclesial action of yours can foster the growth of attention in society as a whole." (Ref. Address of Pope Francis to participants in the meeting promoted by the Italian Episcopal Conference for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons - 18.11.2023).

It is a matter of protecting, guarding, preserving, monitoring... creating safe spaces. It is a true pastoral service, a service of evangelisation, because it is a service of attention and listening that must gradually enter into the life and practice of our communities and institutions, showing that we are committed to serving better.

Not all our Units are at the same level of awareness of the seriousness of this situation, and we are even less capable of addressing it with 'courage, wisdom and competence' (ref. Doc. Safeguarding p. 4). Hence the importance of thoroughly understanding these guidelines, which are mandatory for all members of the Institute and for all those who collaborate with us in the mission.

When we adopt a 'safeguarding' policy to ensure that people feel safe, we must be aware that this task is not as simple as it seems, because it depends on what we mean by 'feeling safe'. Safeguarding has a 'defensive' aspect aimed at protecting people from possible harm to their integrity and dignity, and a 'security' aspect understood as protection that allows people to feel free and to participate responsibly in their community, institutional, ecclesial, etc. environment. Both aspects must be taken into account.

All human beings need security, even if certain groups of people seem to be more exposed due to particular situations and are considered 'vulnerable groups or individuals'.

This common need for security is expressed differently depending on cultural contexts. It is therefore difficult to identify a single concept of safeguarding that is valid for everyone everywhere. Hence the need, in our specific case, to reach an intercultural understanding among all of us about what is meant by safety and safeguarding and how to achieve it in the differ-

ent cultural contexts in which we find ourselves. This is why it is necessary to engage in dialogue, consultation and networking with other social actors present around us.

Even if we have a defined 'policy' as a Holy Family, we must not think that the work is finished, but rather we must consider a process that must go through several stages: knowing the document, adopting it, implementing it, revising it periodically and adapting it whenever necessary, because legislation and society are constantly evolving.

Who is responsible for implementing this process? All those with leadership responsibilities at all levels; the Safeguarding Teams in each Unit and the Sister designated as 'Safeguarding Coordinator' who will work full-time as the point of contact for the entire Institute on this issue.

The fact that these individuals have a particular responsibility does not exempt us from the responsibility we all bear as members of the Institute. This responsibility must be assumed out of conviction and not by imposition and must be supported by a personal attitude marked by sensitivity to the needs of others, giving priority to those who are most at risk. It is also essential to involve the people to be protected so that they can be active participants in their own environment.

Safeguarding as an evangelising and prophetic task for us, and for the Church, is complex.

It will only succeed if it is understood as a responsibility shared by all those who live and work together in various social structures. The best way to achieve the objectives is to inform and communicate with each other on such matters, (transparency), to coordinate and get involved (commitment) and to be able to hold each

other accountable for what is being done (responsibility). If all safeguarding interventions are oriented towards these three principles, then safeguarding itself will convey the concepts of transparency, commitment and accountability as effectively as possible. (Hans Zollner - Peter Beer) In the context of the Jubilee

Year, we have before us a special call to give reasons for hope to the most vulnerable. This is possible if we do all in our power to change the culture of protection and safeguarding from wishful thinking to actual practice.

Thank you for your attention.

At the end of the day, each participant was given a candle as a symbol and invited to reflect and write a personal response to bring to the next day's

prayer: **"Lord, what light do You ask me to bring to the Mission of Safeguarding?"**

Day 2,3

Opening Prayer

The day began with an opening prayer centered on the theme: **"Be a Light to the World."** Jesus and our Founder, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, were presented as models - both being lights in their mission to serve the vulnerable and fragile members of society. More than 200 years ago, we were blessed with this light through our Founder, and today, that same light continues to shine through us.

We are called and committed to be a light for our

brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable. As we begin this International training on safeguarding, we were invited to reflect: **What can I contribute from all that I have received? What light do I bring to this important ministry?**

The Paschal candle was carried and placed at the centre of the prayer space. Each member was then invited to share the light they feel called to carry in the ministry of safeguarding.



Some echoes of the members:

- ⇒ Carrying the light
- ⇒ Bringing hope to the broken-hearted
- ⇒ Sensitivity in serving others
- ⇒ Deepening knowledge in the field of safeguarding
- ⇒ Understanding the call to mission
- ⇒ Caring for the vulnerable
- ⇒ Transparency
- ⇒ Passion for love and seeing with the eyes of compassion
- ⇒ Commitment to the safeguarding ministry
- ⇒ Understanding the value of human dignity



The purpose of Safeguarding Policy in our Institute



Georgine Mufogoto presented a detailed account of the International Safeguarding Team, established within the Holy Family Institute in response to Pope Francis's invitation to Church reform, emphasizing protection for minors and vulnerable adults. This initiative aligns with the broader Church movement, particularly the creation of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, requiring all religious congregations to adopt and commit to their own safeguarding policies.

The Team's mission is to promote a culture of protection, respect for human dignity, and accountability within the Institute and its ministries. Their work includes raising awareness, providing training, and developing a practical safeguarding policy that addresses all forms of abuse - spiritual, psychological, economic, and sexual. Adhering to this policy is mandatory for all members and collaborators; it will be reviewed every three years. This will ensure that it is updated and remains aligned with evolving best practice and legal standards.

The team is made up of **five Sisters from various international backgrounds**, along with a **General Councillor**, offering a global and pastoral perspective. The team members were chosen not only for their commitment but also for their

capacity to understand and train others.

The process of developing an International Safeguarding Policy was given priority. **Tina Campbell**, a consultant to the UISG has played a key role in guiding the team in developing this policy document. She has also offered five online basic trainings in Safeguarding to the Link Sisters and team members. This training will be completed by means of the current in-person training in Martillac.

The mandate of this International Safeguarding Team is to ensure that safeguarding is taken seriously in each Unit. They will also support the Link Sisters and Safeguarding Teams who will have responsibility in passing on safeguarding knowledge and training in their Units.

Safeguarding in the Light of the Holy Family Charism

Maria Crowley presented the topic "**Safeguarding in the Light of the Holy Family Charism.**" Her sharing emphasized how our Charism - our spiritual gift - inspires action, fosters communion, and calls for a deep commitment to protecting the dignity of every person.

Understanding Charism

A **charism** is a **divine gift**, a "**favour freely given**" (*chárisma* in Greek) - a spiritual fire that awakens passion, love, and commitment within a community. It is dynamic, not fixed in time, and must be rediscovered and re-expressed in response to each era's unique realities.

The Holy Family Charism

☞ Rooted in the spiritual legacy of **Pierre-**

Bienvenu Noailles, shaped during post-Revolution France.

- ☞ Inspired by the life of the **Holy Family** (Jesus, Mary, and Joseph), especially their dedication to seeking *God Alone* in all things.
- ☞ Focused on building **communion**, particularly among the vulnerable and marginalized.



Charism in Practice: The Mission of Safeguarding

☞ Safeguarding is seen as both a **spiritual and moral responsibility**, grounded in communion and compassion.

☞ Pope Francis reminds us: *Safeguarding means facing the darkness, seeking renewed hope, and committing to transformation.*

- ☞ It calls for a **Culture of Safeguarding** - in our personal lives, communities, ministries, and the wider world.

Core Values Supporting Charism and Safeguarding

These values guide our mission, spirituality, and ethical practice:

- ☞ **Humility:** Openness to others, learning, and building respectful relationships.
- ☞ **Simplicity:** Focusing on what truly matters, transparency, and de-cluttering our lives.
- ☞ **Gentleness:** Promoting unity and healing through love and kindness.
- ☞ **Availability:** Readiness and inner freedom to serve and listen.
- ☞ **Compassion:** Deep empathy and active care for the suffering of others.
- ☞ **Hospitality:** Welcoming others with grace, especially those who are different or vulnerable.
- ☞ **Interdependence:** Acknowledging our mutual connection within the Earth community.

Mystical Experience

This is described as encountering God's transformative presence in life, compelling believers to act with justice and compassion. Some of the influences that stop us from being free and whole.

- ☞ **Misuse of power-controlling others**
- ☞ **Intimidation**
- ☞ **Inequality**
- ☞ **Negativity**
- ☞ **Gossip - speaking about others in their absence**

- ☞ **Individualism**
- ☞ **Misuse of social media**

Creating a Culture of Safeguarding

The Holy Family Charism provides a powerful spiritual foundation for safeguarding. At its core are **love, compassion, and communion** - principles essential to engaging with others, especially the vulnerable.

The community is called to:

- ☞ Bear witness to God's love through **protection and advocacy**.
- ☞ Live out their Charism authentically in **all areas of life**.
- ☞ Embrace the values of **humility, gentleness, and hospitality**.

A **Culture of Safeguarding** is not merely a policy or procedure - it is a way of being, deeply rooted in faith, reflective living, and meaningful relationships. Let us respond with **joy, compassion, and love**, as our **Charism of Communion** calls us to do.

Personal Reflection

- ☞ **How am I experiencing the flame of our Charism?**
- ☞ **How is the flame of our Charism of Communion - God's gift to us - burning within me at this moment?**
- ☞ **What values important to PBN and to us today are essential in the safeguarding ministry?**
- ☞ **What do I need to change to live this Charism more fully?**

Members are encouraged to write down thoughts, images, or words that inspire or challenge them during this time of reflection.



Responding to Low-Level Concerns



Sebojiny Sebastiampillai presented on the theme of **“Responding to Low-Level Concerns”** which refers to understanding and addressing safeguarding concerns that may not meet the threshold for formal allegations

but are still important for maintaining a safe and respectful environment.

Key Terms and Concepts

Definition

Low Level Concern is a worried or nervous feeling about something. It refers to any concern -no matter how minor, that an adult working with children or vulnerable adults may have acted in a way inconsistent with the code of conduct or professional standards or safeguarding expectations. While this behaviour may not meet the threshold for a formal allegation of harm or abuse, they should still be taken seriously.

☞ Low-Level Concerns

These are minor, inappropriate behaviour that do not meet the threshold for serious action but may still raise concern. Such concerns should be documented and monitored, as recurring incidents may lead to serious issues and consequences.

☞ An Allegation

Is an accusation that someone has done something illegal or wrong, typically made without proof. Allegations meet the threshold of harm and require formal investigation. Until they can be proved, allegations remain merely assertions.

☞ Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct outlines expected behaviour, promoting respect, integrity, and professionalism in any institute. It is essential for ensuring a safe and ethical environment, particularly for vulnerable individuals.

☞ Red Flags

They are warning signs or indicators of potentially dangerous, harmful, inappropriate, or risky behaviour.

☞ Boundary Violations

It is an action that penetrates the physical, emotional, and/ or behavioural boundaries of another person. They occur when someone crosses personal or professional limits, especially in trust or power-based relationships.

☞ Reasons for boundary violations

- ✓ Static issues
- ✓ Fluid variables
- ✓ Situational/contextual reasons

The participants were helped to understand the low level concerns in a parish, community and educational context through various case studies.

In our ministries, we ensure the following:

- ☞ We follow the guidelines and policies set out in the church and other intuitions where we are involved in ministry.
- ☞ Raise awareness at all levels
- ☞ Emphasize ongoing and human formation for all

Questions for Personal and Group Sharing

- ☞ Share your understanding of low-level concerns and your personal experiences within your context.
- ☞ Identify examples of low-level concerns or red flags.
- ☞ What are the risk factors that contribute to sexual boundary violations among clergy and religious?
- ☞ What low-level concerns exist within your religious communities regarding safeguarding vulnerable adults?

Explanation was given on the behaviour associated with grooming and “slippery slope”. Participants shared their reflections in a plenary session through case studies and personal experiences. This allowed others to better understand the nature and significance of low-level concerns.



GROUP SHARING

Day 4

Spiritual Abuse



Geneviève Bessières presented the topic on Spiritual Abuse. Spiritual abuse is an abuse of authority that is further aggravated by the use of divine authority to dominate a person or persons.

Spiritual abuse is defined as the **psychological and spiritual manipulation or domination** of individuals, often by those in positions of religious or spiritual authority. It results in victims becoming **emotionally dependent**, weakened, and spiritually broken. The abuser may exploit personal trust, conscience, or vulnerability under the guise of spiritual guidance.

Spiritual abuse typically unfolds in three phases:

- ✓ **One - Control Over Conscience:** Abusers claim authority over a person's moral or spiritual discernment, violating the **inviolable sanctuary of conscience**, which should remain free and God-oriented.
- ✓ **Two - The need for total self-surrender:** Abusers demand **complete self-surrender** from the victim, stripping them of personal

dignity and identity. Shared spiritual experiences are used manipulatively to reshape or dominate the individual.

- ✓ **Three – Disfiguring image of God :** When abuse is tied to divine authority, it distorts the victim's image of God. Victims may lose the ability to pray or trust in God, perceiving Him as a source of pain rather than love.

Effects and Consequences

Victims may feel violated, lost, or annihilated: **"I no longer know who I am."** Abuse can destroy not only psychological stability but also faith itself. This leads to **spiritual trauma**, where the representation of God becomes perverse - one of domination, humiliation, and control.

Session Two: Personality types

- ✓ **The Overprotector/Rescue:** assuming the other is incapable and needs to be controlled for their own good.
- ✓ **The Egocentric:** Seeks personal validation and attention through control, using others for their own glory:
- ✓ **The Narcissistic Pervert:** The most dangerous type, showing malicious, calculated manipulation. Such individuals destroy others through psychological violence masked in spiritual language.

Consequences of the Victims:

Psychological and Emotional Effects:

- ✓ Confusion, self-doubt, anxiety, emotional shock, and psychosomatic illnesses.
- ✓ Victims may feel isolated, dirty, and guilty, losing self-worth and the ability to trust.
- ✓ They often submit more, trying harder to please, which strengthens the abuser's control.

Spiritual Effects:

- ⇒ Collapse of the inner world: *"I no longer know who I am."*
- ⇒ Breaks the person's connection to God, prayer, and faith.
- ⇒ Some develop aversion to religion, seeing God through the lens of their abuser.

Question for personal and group reflection

How the spiritual abuse affects the religious

life in our communities?

The participants shared their group reflection in the plenary session. Some of the echoes are as follows:

- ☞ **Need for Safeguarding and Accountability**
 - ✓ Formation, leadership, and accompaniment must be aligned with **safeguarding principles**.
 - ✓ Leaders are called to choose accompaniers carefully.
- ☞ **Call to re-examine our religious life**
 - ✓ True formation includes space for psychological, spiritual, and emotional development. Treating all as mature adults and not children.
 - ✓ Commitment to mission must be rooted in authentic spiritual freedom and inner growth.



Micheline Kenda focused the session on **"Abuse in the Bible"**. The Bible includes stories where people experience abuse and sexual harm. It's important to talk about these stories so we don't use them in harmful ways or ignore real suffering.

The Abuses in the Bible

Sometimes, churches have made things worse for people who are hurt. They may protect those who do wrong, tell survivors to stay quiet, or say their pain doesn't matter because **"Jesus suffered more."** This can make abuse seem acceptable or even holy, which is very damaging.

One example is **Tamar's story (2 Samuel 13)**. This passage from the bible was read and time given for reflection. Time was given for the participants to speak in small groups and during the plenary session

These are some of the concerns

raised from the story.

Tamar was raped by her own brother, Amnon. When she asked for help, people told her to be quiet. Her father, King David, didn't do anything to help her. This story shows that abuse often happens in trusted places, like homes and families, and victims are often silenced. The story highlights that Amnon was powerful so he abused Tamar

Church leaders need to look at these stories in new ways- ways that help people heal and make sure abuse is not ignored or excused.



Vows for Mission – A Call to Awareness and Change

Micheline Kenda and Georgine Mufogoto shared the **session on Vows for Mission**. Micheline spoke about “**KUIBUKA**” this program helps Religious Sisters in Africa become strong voices against

abuse. It encourages reflection on the three religious vows - obedience, celibacy, and poverty - and how these can be lived in healthy, just ways rather than in ways that harm others.

Obedience and Authority

Old View:

- ✓ Obedience meant full submission to superiors.
- ✓ Authority was seen as coming directly from God.
- ✓ Power was concentrated at the “top” often leading to abuse and silencing others.
- ✓ This made sisters feel like children, unable to take responsibility or speak up.

New Understanding:

- ✓ Obedience involves shared decision-making and respectful dialogue.
- ✓ Leaders need be accountable and not use their role to dominate.
- ✓ Power to be used to build up the community, not to control.
- ✓ Abuse of authority can be found in all areas of life - families, communities, nations - and must be challenged.

Celibacy

Old View:

- ☞ Sexuality and feelings were repressed or seen as shameful.
- ☞ Talking about sex was considered taboo.
- ☞ Sisters often overworked to avoid dealing with emotional needs.
- ☞ Deep relationships were avoided out of fear or shame.

New Understanding:

- ☞ Celibacy is about using that energy in loving, respectful ways.
- ☞ It frees women from being seen only as wives or mothers and allows them to grow personally and spiritually.
- ☞ Sisters can form healthy, mature relationships with clear boundaries.
- ☞ Celibacy helps promote justice and fight issues like sexual abuse and human trafficking.

Poverty

Old View:

- ⇒ Poverty promoted dependence and childlike behaviour especially in financial matters.
- ⇒ Some were denied education, limiting their growth.
- ⇒ Poverty was seen more as giving charity than working for real justice.

New Understanding:

- ⇒ True poverty means living simply and sharing fairly - not controlling others.
- ⇒ Sisters need access to education so they can bring about change.
- ⇒ Transparency and responsible use of resources are key.
- ⇒ Poverty is about living humbly and serving without exploiting others.

The vows of **obedience, celibacy, and poverty** are to be lived in a way that supports human dignity, justice, and spiritual growth. They are the heart of our consecrated life. Abuse of these vows happens when power, silence, or control take over. The call today is to **awaken, reflect, and act** so these vows empower rather than disempower.

Reflection Questions:

- ◎ Starting from the concrete experiences of our religious life, find the forms of abuse related to the vow of obedience, Celibacy and Poverty
- ◎ To what are we called today?

Day 5

This day was dedicated to visiting **Our Lady of Lourdes**. The participants attended Holy Mass in the Basilica, offering prayers for the PBN Family and for victims of abuse around the world. After the Mass, everyone had free time for personal prayer and to explore the many significant and beautiful places in the city. It was a deeply meaningful and enjoyable day for all.

Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes



Day 6

Launch of the International Holy Family Safeguarding Policy

The participants had a free morning and attended the Solemn Mass of Corpus Christi. In the afternoon, Maria Crowley warmly welcomed Tina Campbell, an international safeguarding consultant who had previously led virtual training sessions from January to May 2025. The participants expressed joy at finally meeting Tina in person.

The session began with a prayer centered on the theme ***“Be a light to the world.”*** A letter from Ana Maria Alcalde, the Superior General, was highlight-

ed, referencing the Vatican's directive that all religious congregations must establish a safeguarding policy. In response to this directive, the International Safeguarding Team worked collaboratively over three years - supported by safeguarding consultant Tina Campbell - to draft the policy document. This draft was reviewed and refined with feedback from the Enlarged General Council. It was finally approved by the UISG and the GLT.

Policy Launch:

The newly developed **International Safeguarding Policy** was officially launched. Tina Campbell handed the first copy to Georgine Mufogoto the General Councillor, followed by distribution to all participants. The policy reflects the Institute's commitment to transparency and protection of children and vulnerable adults. Emphasis was placed on each Sister's responsibility to understand, embrace, and implement the policy in all communities.



Reflections on the Online Training (January – May 2025)

Participants shared their experiences:

- Transformative and growth-oriented.
- Deepened their understanding of safeguarding.
- A source of self-reflection, gratitude, and heightened awareness of all forms of abuse.
- Assignments and challenges enhanced practical knowledge.
- Highlighted the need for a culture of safety and honesty.
- Emphasized safeguarding as a collective responsibility.
- Some initial confusion with terminology was resolved over time.
- Overall, it was a meaningful and enlightening journey.

Tina clarified two key concepts:

Bystander: Someone who witnesses harm but does not act.

Upstander: Someone who acts to prevent or respond to harm.

Personal Exercise:

Participants were asked to bring a photo or representation of a child important to them. They shared why the child was meaningful, reinforcing personal motivation to uphold safeguarding principles.



Day 7

The day began with a prayer, followed by a session led by Tina, focusing on two key topics: **The Role of the Safeguarding Lead Sister and understanding the Code of Conduct.**

1. The Role of the Safeguarding Lead Sister:

This role is outlined on page 11 of the policy document but to help the participants to clarify it for themselves, Tina asked the Sisters to work in language groups reflecting on the following questions:

What do you understand to be your Role as Safeguarding Lead Sister?

- ⊙ To be a support and resource person
- ⊙ Be a team player
- ⊙ Aware that we don't have all the answers
- ⊙ Ongoing training
- ⊙ Ongoing support for safeguarding work
- ⊙ Collaborating with Leadership and keeping them informed
- ⊙ Networking with existing agencies

- ⊙ Develop a culture of safeguarding in our convents and ministries.
- ⊙ Keeping records and evaluation
- ⊙ Connect to Charism

Identify the challenges and what are your strengths and resources

- ⊙ Taking the first step following the training.
- ⊙ Networking with JPIC, diocesan teams,
- ⊙ Support from NGO's and other religious orders
- ⊙ Make most of platforms already in existence.
- ⊙ Holy Family Sisters

Purpose: To lead safeguarding efforts in the Unit and promote a culture of protection, under the guidance of the Superior General and Unit Leader.

- ⇒ **Key Responsibilities:** Include collaboration with the safeguarding team, ensuring legal compliance, supporting victims, conducting reviews and training, and leading audits.
- ⇒ **Training & Development:** Maintain records, stay updated on global practices, and commit to ongoing professional growth.
- ⇒ **Teamwork & Support:** Work within a multidisciplinary team to ensure accountability, transparency, and develop action plans.

2. Understanding the Code of Conduct:

Definition: It is a set of rules and standards of behaviour agreed by a community of people. A shared agreement on behaviour and values within a community.

- ☞ **The code of conduct must be based on positive actions, it must be practical and realistic.** It needs to be developed not only from the policy but also from our Charism

- ☞ **It is to be written and revised collectively and regularly and in the context of prayer**
- ☞ Inappropriate behaviour has been tolerated because of our inability to have difficult conversations.
- ☞ **What it is not:** Not a disciplinary tool, a one-time formality, or a restrictive list of “do’s and don’ts”
- ☞ **What it is:** A living positive document that guides community life, reflects cultural and contextual relevance, and supports safeguarding commitment. It is regularly reviewed.
- ☞ **Importance:** Promotes awareness, care, accountability, and clear behavioural expectations to protect everyone, especially the vulnerable.

Group Work: The participants were invited to write a Code of Conduct tailored to their specific context, incorporating cultural, legal, and community dimensions.

Day 8

Case Studies

The session centered on real-life case studies, helping participants differentiate and identify key safeguarding terms through practical examples:

Concern: In the safeguarding context is inappropriate behaviour not in keeping with the code of conduct. A general feeling of unease or discomfort, that something is not right. A sense of unease with what I’m seeing and what I am hearing. If we ignore concerns they can escalate to allegations.

Allegation: A specific claim of abuse or misconduct (e.g., report of inappropriate touching).

Red Flag: A warning sign that may indicate a deeper issue (e.g., sudden change in behaviour).

The discussions deepened participants’ understanding of how to observe, interpret, and respond appropriately within safeguarding frameworks.



Day 9

Safeguarding Standards

The entire morning was dedicated to group work. Each group explored specific safeguarding standards from the policy document and presented their insights during the plenary session. Each group prepared a PowerPoint presentation on

their Standard. It was a very good training experience. There was feedback from Tina following the presentations and an opportunity for clarification and questions.

The five standards presented are:

1. What is safeguarding?
2. Creating a culture of safety, protection, and prevention
3. Responding to concerns and allegations
4. Responding to and caring for victim-survivors
5. Management and support for the accused

These presentations aimed to build a deeper collective understanding and practical application of safeguarding principles across various roles and contexts.

Day 10

Final Day

On the final day of the Safeguarding Session, participants engaged in a series of activities to consolidate their learning and develop a clear action plan for implementation from July to December 2025. The day included planning, reflection, sharing of experiences, and a closing ceremony.

Action Plan: July – December 2025

- **Familiarisation:** Deep understanding of the Safeguarding Policy is essential for effective implementation.
- **Leadership Engagement:** Meet with Provincial or Unit Leaders to ensure support and alignment.
- **Team Formation:** Begin establishing a Safeguarding Team to oversee the process.
- **Contextualisation:** Adapt and adopt the Safeguarding Policy to fit local cultural and community contexts.
- **Training:** Ensure all relevant individuals are trained in safeguarding principles and procedures.
- **Planning:** Identify immediate priorities and develop a timeline for actions.
- **Goal-Setting:** Define specific, measurable goals for improving safeguarding in the community.

Code of Conduct for the Holy Family Community

The participants of each group presented the code of conduct for the Holy Family communities which is reaffirmed values for safe, respectful community living rooted in our charism of communion and multicultural inclusivity. Key principles include:

- ⇒ **Respect, dignity, empathy** towards all individuals.
- ⇒ **Fostering inclusive, family-like community life.**

- ⇒ **Positive communication** and healthy relationships.
- ⇒ **Commitment to safeguarding** and accountability.
- ⇒ **Humble and co-responsible leadership.**
- ⇒ **Spiritual and moral integrity.**
- ⇒ **Transparent decision-making.**
- ⇒ **Constructive conflict resolution.**
- ⇒ **Hospitality and outreach** to the marginalized.
- ⇒ **Ongoing learning and formation.**

Understanding Safeguarding: Narrow vs. Wider Lens

- ☞ The **narrow view** limits safeguarding to child sexual abuse, often avoids addressing complex or institutional issues, and may lead to denial, minimisation, or inaction.
- ☞ In contrast, the **wider view** recognises all forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect. It includes not only children but also young people and vulnerable adults. This broader perspective calls for honest, courageous, and proactive responses, and it acknowledges that abuse can occur even within trusted settings, such as the Church.

Handling Abuse Allegations: Challenges and Dynamics

Key challenges and necessary actions were discussed under the following areas:

- ☞ **Responsibilities:** Understand who must report, how, and when. Clear role definition is crucial.
- ☞ **Response Guidance:** Appropriate support and procedures must be followed for:
 - ✓ Victims
 - ✓ Accused individuals
 - ✓ Safeguarding teams
 - ✓ Church leaders
 - ✓ Families and communities
 - ✓ Civil authorities
 - ✓ Media
- ☞ **Record Keeping:** Accurate documentation is essential for accountability and justice.
- ☞ **Barriers to Response:** Fear, denial, shame, cultural silence, and emotional difficulty when supporting both victims and the accused.

Cognitive Distortions and Abuse

Definition:

Irrational thought patterns used by perpetrators to justify abuse.

- ☞ **Use by Abusers:**
 - ✓ Convince themselves and others that abusive behaviour is acceptable.
 - ✓ Manipulate victims to believe the abuse is normal.
 - ✓ In some cases, misuse religion to validate actions (e.g., "God wants this").

☞ **Impact:**

Victims may internalise distortions, leading to deep psychological and spiritual harm.

The Deep and Lasting Impact of Abuse

Abuse often results in long-term consequences across various dimensions:

- **Emotional/Psychological:** Shame, guilt, self-loathing, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts.
- **Relational:** Issues with trust, intimacy, and healthy attachments.
- **Spiritual:** Loss of faith, anger toward God, and spiritual confusion.
- **Physical:** Psychosomatic symptoms and neglect of physical health.

Why Victims Stay Silent

Victims often do not disclose abuse due to:

- ✓ Grooming and manipulation
- ✓ Emotional bonds with the perpetrator
- ✓ Inability to describe the abuse
- ✓ Cultural taboos around sex
- ✓ Perpetrator's social or religious status
- ✓ Shame, guilt, fear of blame
- ✓ Previous failed disclosures
- ✓ Fear of not being believed
- ✓ Loyalty to religious institutions

Final Key Messages

- ✓ **You are not the judge:** Your role is to report, not decide outcomes.
- ✓ **Do not promise confidentiality:** Mandatory reporting takes precedence.
- ✓ **Act responsibly:** Inaction enables abuse.
- ✓ **Be an UPSTANDER:** Take courageous steps to protect the vulnerable.
- ✓ **Support healing:** Victims need help to rebuild trust, dignity, and spiritual wellbeing.

Conclusion

Tina invited the participants to share memories or challenges they had experienced from January to June. Everyone was happy to express their feelings and shared their satisfaction with the safeguarding session. These are some of the echoes:



- ◎ Some struggled with the language
- ◎ Positive code of conduct was helpful.
- ◎ Safeguarding is no longer something to be feared
- ◎ Safeguarding is in me
- ◎ A lot of learning from group sharing
- ◎ A request to network
- ◎ It's a big responsibility

Closing Prayer



The participants gathered on the Island for the closing prayer. They thanked God for His guidance and marvellous deeds throughout their journey. Each person brought a symbolic item representing what they had received from the experience and the commitment to the future work of safeguarding. This was presented to the group.



Certificate Distribution

Tina Campbell, the International Safeguarding Consultant, distributed certificates to all participants who attended the session, both in person and online.

