



CONGREGATION OF  
OUR LADY OF CHARITY  
OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD



# Safeguarding Annual Report 2025

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

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This annual report consolidates Province-level safeguarding self-assessment data and identifies priorities for continued strengthening of safeguarding governance across the Congregation.

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# 1. Introduction and Purpose

This report provides a consolidated analysis of safeguarding practice across the Congregation for the 2025 reporting year. It draws on Province-level submissions gathered through a multilingual self-assessment process and is intended to support governance oversight, strategic planning, and the work of the Congregational Safeguarding Working Party.

The 2025 report marks an important transition. The Congregation is no longer at the initial stage of establishing safeguarding structures. Rather, it is moving into a phase of consolidation, where the focus shifts from implementation to consistency, proportionality, and governance assurance across all Provinces.

## 2. Methodology

Data for this report was collected through an online reporting tool available in English, Spanish, and French. A total of 28 Province-level submissions were received. The survey captured both quantitative indicators aligned with the Congregational Safeguarding Policy and qualitative commentary reflecting local experience.

While the transition to an online format has improved consistency and comparability, limitations remain. Participation across circles is uneven, and the data relies on self-reporting, which reflects differing levels of safeguarding maturity. Nonetheless, the dataset provides a credible and valuable overview of global safeguarding practice and a basis for further data gathering and information enhancements.

## 3. Governance Developments in 2025

Significant progress has been made in strengthening safeguarding governance at the Congregational level.

These developments are grounded in three guiding principles affirmed at the Congregational Safeguarding Conference in February 2026: solidarity, subsidiarity, and synodality.



### Solidarity

Solidarity as an expression of the Congregation's mission calls for a shared commitment to the protection of all, particularly the most vulnerable, and recognizes that safeguarding is a collective moral responsibility across the global community.



## Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity ensures that this responsibility is exercised at the appropriate local level, enabling Provinces to respond to safeguarding risks within their own context and capacity.



## Synodality

Synodality supports this by fostering listening, dialogue, and shared discernment across regions, allowing experience and learning to be held in common.

Together, these principles provide a coherent framework for strengthening safeguarding governance while respecting the diversity and unity of the Congregation.

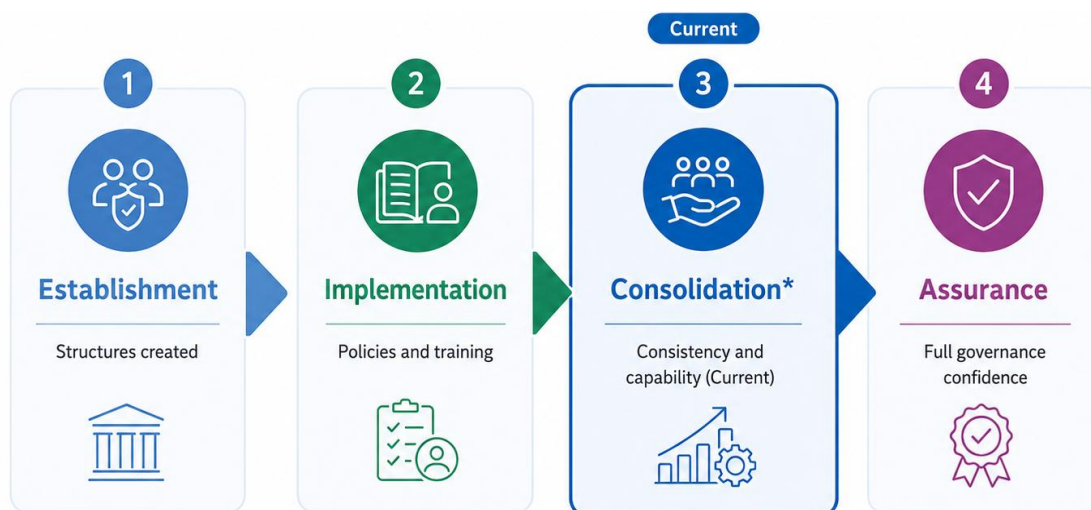
Three developments are particularly noteworthy:

- The establishment of a **Safeguarding Reference Group** has strengthened strategic oversight and broadened representation across the Congregation. Members of the group are drawn from regional delegates nominated to participate in the annual safeguarding conference. From this body, six representatives, one from each Circle, are appointed to form the International Safeguarding Working Party.
- The formation of an **International Safeguarding Working Party**, designed as a smaller operational body to support implementation and coordination.
- The development of a **Community of Practice** for Province Safeguarding Focal Persons, fostering shared learning, peer support, and practical problem-solving.

Together, these initiatives reflect a deliberate move toward collective accountability at regional and local levels, ensuring that safeguarding is both locally grounded and globally aligned.

In parallel, the Congregation has commenced a global safeguarding mapping exercise. This work is intended to provide a more detailed understanding of safeguarding structures, risks, and needs at ministry level across different contexts. It will inform future planning by identifying areas of strength, gaps in provision, and priorities for support.

**Figure 1: Safeguarding Maturity Model**



*\*Based on the 2025 self-assessment data, the Congregation is assessed overall at Level 3 (Consolidation). This represents an indicative global position; safeguarding maturity varies across Provinces, regions, and ministries, and should be interpreted within local context.*

## 4. Reporting Overview

A total of 28 submissions were received across three of the four language streams of the Congregation. Participation was strongest in English-speaking Provinces, followed by Spanish-speaking regions, with more limited participation from French-speaking areas.

While this represents substantial engagement, the uneven distribution of responses highlights the need for continued follow-up to ensure full Congregation-wide coverage. Reporting completeness remains a key indicator of governance maturity.

**Figure 2: Global Overview**



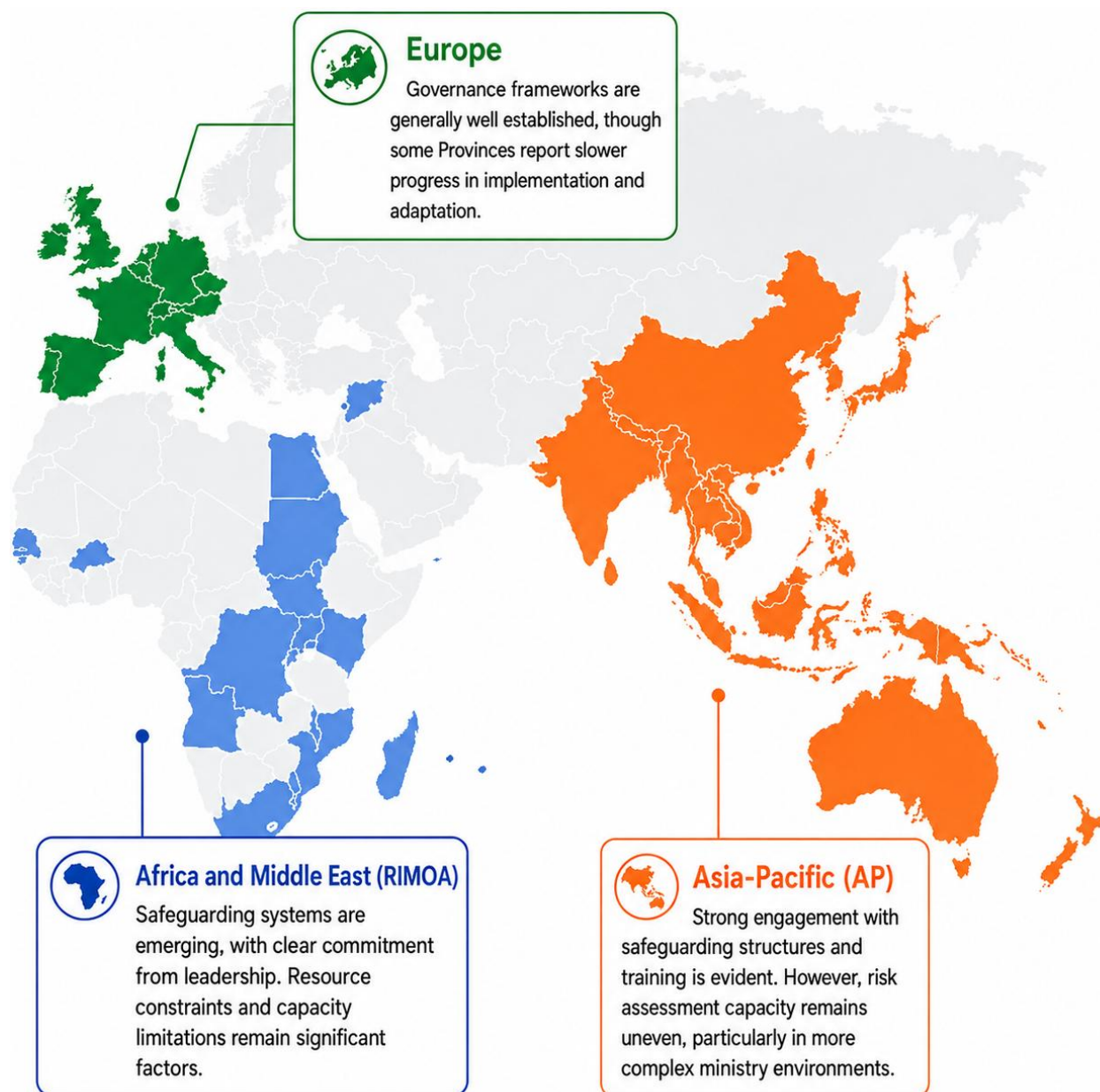
# 5. Circle-Level Observations

Analysis of the data suggests distinct patterns across the five Circles:



Figure 3: Circle-Level Maturity Assessment





| Circle       | Governance            | Training              | Risk Assessment         | Reporting Discipline  |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Asia-Pacific | Strong<br>● ● ● ●     | Strong<br>● ● ● ●     | Developing<br>● ● ● ● ● | Mixed<br>● ● ● ● ●    |
| Europe       | Strong<br>● ● ● ●     | Moderate<br>● ● ● ● ● | Developing<br>● ● ● ● ● | Moderate<br>● ● ● ● ● |
| RIMO         | Emerging<br>● ● ● ● ● | Moderate<br>● ● ● ● ● | Limited<br>● ● ● ● ●    | Emerging<br>● ● ● ● ● |

## 6. Province-Level Safeguarding Governance Structures

Safeguarding committees or designated roles are now widely established across the Congregation. This represents a significant achievement compared to earlier stages of development.

The next phase requires a shift in focus from **presence to effectiveness**. In particular:

- clarity of roles and responsibilities
- regularity and quality of meetings
- documentation and record-keeping
- integration with leadership structures

The challenge is no longer whether structures exist, but whether they function consistently and effectively.

## 7. Policy Implementation and Visibility

The Congregational Safeguarding Policy has been widely disseminated and is generally well understood. Most Provinces report that the policy has been shared internally with sisters and co-workers.

However, **local adaptation and contextualization remain uneven**. In some cases, Provinces continue to rely primarily on the central policy rather than developing locally tailored versions.

The next phase will require greater attention to ensuring that policies are not only known but **operationalized within local contexts**.

## 8. Code of Conduct Implementation

The Code of Conduct is well embedded among sisters, with most Provinces reporting high levels of compliance.

Implementation among co-workers is less consistent. This reflects a broader challenge in extending safeguarding culture beyond the Congregation itself into ministries and partnerships.

Strengthening engagement with co-workers represents a key step in deepening safeguarding practice across all settings.

## 9. Risk Assessment and Safe Environments

Risk assessment remains the most technically challenging area of safeguarding practice across the Congregation. While some Provinces report comprehensive risk assessments, many indicate that this work is:

- still in progress
- only partially completed
- or requiring further support

This highlights a clear need for:

- practical tools and templates
- targeted training
- ongoing accompaniment

Developing risk assessment capability will be critical to strengthening safeguarding practice in the coming years.

**Figure 4: Global Risk Assessment Status**



## 10. Volunteer Risk and Safe Recruitment (Standard 2)

The role of volunteers within Congregational ministries has emerged more clearly in the 2025 reporting cycle as a distinct safeguarding risk requiring further attention.

While many Provinces have begun to implement elements of safe recruitment, such as identity verification, reference checks, and Code of Conduct processes, the application of these measures remains uneven.

In some contexts, volunteer engagement has developed informally, without consistent safeguarding controls. This highlights the need to strengthen volunteer safeguarding practices across the Congregation, in line with the Congregational Safeguarding Policy.

Further work is required to ensure that all volunteer roles are clearly defined, appropriately screened, and supported through training and supervision, with proportionate safeguards applied according to the level of risk.

Particular attention is required in higher-risk countries where ministries attract international volunteers. In certain contexts, these settings coincide with known risks linked to sex tourism and human trafficking. This reinforces the need for stringent recruitment practices, enhanced supervision, and clearly defined safeguarding boundaries.

## 11. Complaints, Allegations, and Response (Standard 2)

A number of Provinces reported receiving safeguarding concerns during the reporting period. This indicates that reporting mechanisms are functioning and that safeguarding awareness is increasing. However, patterns of reporting vary significantly across regions. Differences are evident in:

- categorization of concerns
- thresholds for reporting
- understanding of safeguarding versus HR matters

These variations suggest differing levels of confidence and clarity in responding to allegations.

## 12. Reporting and Escalation Practices

The most significant governance issue identified in the 2025 data is the **inconsistent reporting of allegations to the Congregational Safeguarding Office**.

While some Provinces report all concerns, others report only selected cases. This inconsistency creates:

- gaps in oversight
- potential risk to individuals
- challenges for governance assurance

Clear and consistent reporting protocols are essential. This will require:

- strengthened guidance
- leadership reinforcement
- continued formation and accompaniment at local level.

Figure 5: Global Reporting Practice



This figure illustrates the central governance issue identified in the 2025 reporting cycle.

## 13. Safeguarding in Aging and Retiring Communities

An increasing number of Congregational communities are transitioning into retirement or are already in retirement. This raises important questions regarding the **appropriate calibration of safeguarding expectations**.

While safeguarding obligations remain universal, **a risk-based and proportionate approach** is required. Communities with limited or no active ministry should not be subject to the same compliance expectations as active ministry settings. Key considerations include:

- distinguishing between residential and ministry contexts
- applying safeguards proportionately
- supporting leaders to assess risk realistically

This represents an important development in safeguarding maturity: aligning expectations with context and capacity.

In this context, it is critical that local Congregational leadership does not engage with diocesan safeguarding processes in a way that suggests sisters are more actively engaged in public ministry than they are, triggering inappropriate levels of local audit and review.

## 14. Donor Relations and Information Sharing

Engagement with donor bodies has strengthened during 2025, including ongoing cooperation with GSIF, Misesan Cara, and other partners. There is increasing recognition of the need to balance and fully appreciate:

- transparency and accountability
- confidentiality and data protection
- civil legal obligations across jurisdictions

Progress has been made in clarifying the **scope and nature of information shared with donors**, particularly through high-level reporting and structured engagement.

Future work will focus on:

- refining information-sharing protocols
- ensuring compliance with international standards and local legal requirements on donors.
- strengthening trust through clear, consistent, and routine communication

## 15. Future Development: Donor Risk Assessment and MOUs

The next phase of development will involve closer collaboration with donors in assessing safeguarding risks within funded projects. This may include:

- joint risk assessment frameworks
- realistic framing of the Congregation's ability to provide safeguarding certainty to the level expected of donors.
- development of regional Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)
- clarification of roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in funded projects.

These developments will strengthen safeguarding assurance while respecting the autonomy of Provinces.

**Figure 6: Evolving Donor Engagement Model**



## 16. Global Comment Analysis

Qualitative responses within the safeguarding self-assessment highlight several recurring themes:

- strong commitment to safeguarding
- need for practical training and support
- challenges in risk assessment
- cultural factors affecting reporting
- resource limitations

Across all regions, there is a clear preference for **accompaniment rather than strict compliance measures**, and for practical guidance rather than additional monitoring.

## 17. Comparative Insights (2024–2025)

The 2025 data demonstrates clear progress from the 2024 baseline. Key developments include:

- broader establishment of governance structures
- increased training activity
- improved policy awareness

At the same time, core challenges remain:

- consistency of implementation
- risk assessment capability
- reporting discipline

The Congregation is moving from **implementation toward structured development** but has not yet reached full assurance.

## 18. Strategic Priorities (2026–2030)

Five priorities emerge clearly from the data:

- Strengthening reporting and response under Standard 2
- Building risk assessment capability
- Consolidating governance structures
- Developing proportionate approaches for aging communities
- Strengthening donor engagement and safeguarding assurance

## 19. Conclusion

The 2025 report reflects a Congregation that has made substantial progress in safeguarding implementation. The task ahead is not just expansion, but **consolidation**.

The focus must now be on ensuring that safeguarding practices are applied consistently, proportionately, and with integrity across all Provinces and contexts.

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Prepared by:

**Sr Niluka Perea**

Congregational Safeguarding Delegate

**Mr. Michael Elphick**

Congregational Safeguarding Officer (Governance)

