



Guidelines for Formation in the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

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Premise

The aim of this document is to illustrate **the general characteristics** that should be present in **Formation** for the **Safeguarding** of Children¹ and Vulnerable Adults² (SCVA) in the Focolare Movement (F.M.).

It is a work that has been taken ahead with the direct collaboration of 40 specialists and people involved in this field from all continents.

It is not a legal or pedagogical document. It aims solely to provide the elements needed so that in each country where the F.M. operates, an **adequate formation strategy** can be developed, to **prevent** and **eradicate all types of abuse, both within the Movement and in the environments where its members are active** (*work, neighbourhood, school*).

The underlying idea of this strategy is based on the values of trust, integral care of the person at every stage of his or her life, reciprocity and subsidiarity. **Respect and appreciation for all the different cultures** is emphasised. Diversity will contribute to an **enrichment** of the perspectives with which the subject of safeguarding is dealt with today. We therefore speak of "**Guidelines**", which leave ample room for inculturation and specific implementation in each particular context, and do not speak of "protocols" or "instructions" that would presuppose a more detailed application.

These Guidelines are principally **addressed** to the members of the F.M. and the people who collaborate with them, wherever they work to implement this formation strategy, to the people who are responsible at the various levels and to all those who are involved in the topics outlined here.

¹ Here «children» is understood as any person younger than eighteen or the age stipulated by law. (cf. Vos estis lux mundi, art. 1, § 2, a).

² The term 'vulnerable adults' is used because it better defines the transitory nature that this condition may have. But in order to make the Guidelines easier to read, the term 'vulnerable adult' has been used in formulating them. A vulnerable adult or a person in a situation of vulnerability is considered to be 'any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental impairment, or in a situation of deprivation of personal liberty which actually, even occasionally, limits his or her capacity to understand or desire or in any case to resist the offence'. (cfr. Vos estis lux mundi, art. 1, § 2, b). https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20190507_vos-estis-lux-mundi.html

Introduction

The F.M. aims to **respect** each person in his or her particular and distinct situation and dignity, according to the Gospel vision and according to the fundamental values that uphold human rights. In its formation activities, the F.M. draws inspiration from the pedagogy of communion that puts the presence of Jesus at the centre of every relationship (cf. Mt 18:20), seeking to develop the human-spiritual skills of each person and promoting the holistic growth and development of the positive potential present in everyone.

It is because of this respect that there is a **commitment to the safeguarding and wellbeing of people**. This is an **essential dimension** of our work, which aims to build, together with many others, a society renewed by the Gospel-based love that generates fraternity, well aware that we are and will always be on a journey.

In a community experience, such as that of the F.M., it is **everyone's responsibility** to ensure the promotion of **safe environments** for all. Our lifestyle must be an expression of **care for the person**, which is a very significant element in all we do³. And it is the duty of governance structures, both **central and local**, to develop and implement procedures that ensure this safeguarding.

Adequate formation is necessary to achieve these objectives. In this document, as mentioned at the beginning, we are particularly concerned with safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. So why is it **important to have a formation** in these topics?

Because this formation ...

- imparts the knowledge and importance of the **fundamental rights**⁴ of children, the points concerning the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, and the fundamental and universal elements concerning the dignity of the human person;
- enables everyone to **recognise and respond appropriately** to situations where children and vulnerable people may be at risk, helping them to **take action in order to prevent abuse**;
- fosters an **open experience** in which each person has the opportunity to grow by offering their skills, and supports them in the **development of healthy and respectful relationships** in the F.M. communities;
- promotes a culture in which safeguarding children and vulnerable people becomes a **collective responsibility**.
- helps to achieve adequate levels of preparation in a changing world, as part of the **integral formation** of F.M. members.

Aims of the Formation Strategy

To be able to offer, in a systematic, continuous and accessible way, the formation and tools necessary to observe both personally and collectively the F.M. Guidelines⁵ on Safeguarding to all those who belong to the

³ <https://www.unitedworldproject.org/daretocare/>

⁴ Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>

⁵ This expression covers all the different categories of people mentioned in the General Statutes of the Movement in art. 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21 e 22.

F.M. and those who collaborate with them in the various activities, the formation and tools necessary to observe both personally and collectively the F.M. Guidelines on Safeguarding.

When many people are formed and made aware of the issues, there is a greater likelihood that children and the most vulnerable will be protected in society, and clear prevention choices will be implemented.

Target audience

The Formation for the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults is intended for **all members** of the Movement and those who **participate** in the various activities, **both in-person and online**.

Depending on the service/role a person performs within the Movement, there is an appropriate level of formation.

There are **five different levels of formation**

1. For **everyone belonging to the F.M. who does not fall into the following categories and for employees working in F.M. facilities**. This formation will be offered and recommended for **parents, not belonging to the FM, whose underage children participate in Focolare activities**.
2. For people who **collaborate occasionally** (less than ten days per year) as support staff (e.g., an expert to animate a workshop, a cook...) in meetings with children or vulnerable persons. **Young people and adults** staying in the **little towns** for a duration of more than two weeks.
3. For people who **accompany** children or vulnerable people **on a continuous basis** (Gen assistants, catechists, tutors, etc.).
4. For members of the **Independent National Commissions**, National **Safeguarding Referrers, Referrers and teams dedicated to safeguarding formation** and **Nature and Physical Life Councilors of the zones⁶** and **international centres**.
5. For people with **responsibilities for the F.M. in the zones** (Zone Delegates, those in charge of Regions or Territories, those responsible for the Movement before the State or legal representatives, and those in charge of social activities or schools of the F.M.), **members of the General Council and collaborators in the International Centres**.

For the **children** who take part in the life of the F.M., the Gen 3 and Gen 4 International Centres are preparing specific formation to help them to protect themselves. The educational method promoted in the F.M. focuses on the integral wellbeing of the child, meaning the maximum fulfilment of the person in the human, social and spiritual level⁷ and his or her being a protagonist in their own formation and development.

⁶Zone means a regional organisational area of the F.M. A zone may include a part or all of one country or several countries. *Regions* and territories are a further organisational and geographical subdivision of the F.M.

⁷ Of particular significance are the formation projects of Up2Me <https://up2me.afnonlus.org/> EduxEdu <https://eduxedu.focolare.org/es/> and Format <https://format.focolare.org/login/index.php>

A chart specifying the **minimum requirements of formation for each of these levels** can be found in [Appendix 1](#). Indications are given on the topics that must be covered, the duration, by whom it is given and how the formation itself is documented.

Formation is **mandatory** for all F.M. members and employees working in F.M. facilities. In the case of people accompanying children or vulnerable adults on a continuous basis, it must be carried out within six months from the beginning of the appointment.

There can be various **types** of formation: face-to-face, online or combined, and the **frequency** with which it is offered and carried out is decided locally.

Who is responsible for formation?

Formation in safeguarding is the responsibility of the governance of the Focolare Movement and this responsibility covers both national/zonal and international levels.

The zonal councillors for 'Physical Life and Nature' work with the F.M. zone delegates in implementing these guidelines. But their development and implementation are entrusted to the international and zonal/national teams, who are organised as a network (see below).

At the level of the International Centre:

An **International Commission** is established whose role is:

- **To be at the service of the zones for** the process of implementing the global formation strategy of the F.M.:
 - o Responding to questions expressed by the zones or nations.
 - o Facilitating the circulation of materials, experiences or good practices from other zones.
 - o Facilitating the production of formation materials if requested by any zone or nation (putting them in contact with experts, resources, etc.).
 - o Ensuring regular meetings with country/area contacts.
- Prepare an **annual summary of the formation activity** carried out by the F.M. based on statistical data, zonal reports received, and experience gained. This report will be sent for evaluation to the Supervisory Board and published together with the F.M. Annual Report on Safeguarding.
- Liaise with the *Central Commission for Investigation* for the possible development of formation programmes that take into account the **specific identifiable risks** related to child abuse and abuse of authority through the cases dealt with in the context of our everyday life and commitments.
- Support the International Centres in the preparation of **possible safeguarding formation sessions**, with in-person or online meetings convened by each respective centre.

The **International Commission** will be composed of five members who are experts in safeguarding formation, from different geographical areas and who are able to collaborate and are prepared to work as part of a network, and who have at least two of the most commonly used languages in the context of the F.M.⁸ These

⁸ Italian, Portuguese, English, Spanish, French, German

members will be appointed by the Focolare President. The term of office will be three years, renewable for a single period of three more. This service will be of a voluntary nature and will entail no financial compensation, except for the reimbursement of any expenses. The planned working method is the "agile work model", remotely with collaborative software. Their point of contact is the General Councillors for Nature and Physical Life. The contact e-mail address of this committee is formazione.tutela@focolare.org

At the level of the Zone/Nation:

To coordinate the project and implementation of formation at the Zonal/National level, each Zone can choose the model that best suits its needs, defining roles, responsibilities and ways of working. Therefore, it will differ from Zone to Zone.

In these Guidelines these zonal or national structures are called in a generic way **Local Teams**. These *teams are in charge of planning and implementing the formation strategy for their country or Zone*.

It will also be necessary to identify a **Zonal Contact Person**⁹ for safeguarding formation. His or her main role is to maintain contact with the **local teams** (zonal, national, territorial, depending on the organisational model) and the **international commission** in order to:

- Facilitate the **exchange of training materials** through the Indy platform.
- Draw up an **annual report** on the formation activity on safeguarding.
- Compile the safeguarding training [data collection form](#) annually.

For both the contact person and the members of the zonal/national formation team, the appointment will be for a period of three years, renewable for only two further periods of three. The carrying out of this service will be voluntary and will have no financial compensation other than the reimbursement of any expenses. Their point of contact will be their respective Zonal Nature and Physical Life Councillors.

Networking:

The structure that supports this activity for safeguarding formation is a [collaborative network](#) based on the principles of trust, subsidiarity, flexibility and sustainability.

The *International Commission* works closely with the *Zonal Contacts*, who in turn keep in touch with the different formation realities in their Zone. There are also links and sharing of materials between the different Zones or countries and with the different International Centres or Secretariats.

⁹ The role of this person cannot coincide with the person who has the role of zonal Councillor for "Nature and Physical Life" so that the Councillors will be free to take ahead the other tasks which are relevant to their position.

Zonal Formation Strategy:

Each Zone will study how to achieve the aims that have been proposed for the different formation levels. So it will plan an appropriate strategy based on its own cultural characteristics, the location of the local communities and the availability of training resources and tools.

The sessions and methods of formation will be organised in the Zones, following the approach that is considered most suitable for the participants and encourages them to be involved as much as possible.

With regard to content, the material prepared should be supplemented¹⁰ with in-depth studies of the relevant legal and ecclesiastical regulations in the particular place. It will also be very helpful to count on the availability of local or international agencies that offer formation.

The fact remains that each Zone is fully able to handle this responsibility in the best possible way.

Resources

Our way of life in the Movement, focused on **unity**, allows us to take advantage of an exceptional resource: **the sharing of materials, projects, courses, translations and good practices in this field.**

To facilitate this, these tools are available:

A platform for exchanging formation resources: through the Indy platform, which is opening up a space dedicated to formation in safeguarding, the zonal contact persons and members of the national teams and the councillors for Nature and Physical Life of the zones and centres will be able to share and make use of formation materials (whether produced by them or not), arranged by language. In this way, each country wishing to do so will be able to make its own material available, as well as search for and use what others have made available.

Shared agenda: all contact persons will be informed on a monthly basis of the online formation meetings that will be held in the different countries and that will be open to other countries.

Online meetings between members of the formation commissions: with the aim of sharing experiences, materials, and to explore subjects in greater depth. On an annual basis.

Possible in-person conferences (national / zonal / international) for the same purpose.

Tracking of Formation Activity

It is important that there is a system that records how, when, where and to whom the F.M. has provided safeguarding formation.

There will be a way of assessing the level of implementation of the formation activity in each Zone, and make it possible - for example, in the event of a need related to some ongoing legal proceedings or communication requirements - to document that the F.M. has fulfilled its obligation to train members of the Movement.

¹⁰ Cfr. Basic Course and further information on INDY

Each Zone will have to set up its own system of tracking safeguarding formation, adapted to its own circumstances and regulations in each specific country.

It is also the responsibility of the Movement in the Zone to ensure the proper archiving and storage of data.

It will be necessary to keep the documentation related to formation, including lists of course participants and countersigned Certificates of Formation. Archiving can be either digital (on disks, memories, cloud services) or on paper. In the absence of specific legislation in the country, all such documentation must be retained indefinitely.

Evaluation of Formation

The International Commission will meet at least once a year with the various zonal contact persons, to evaluate together the quality of the content, the methodologies, the formation strategies, the results obtained, the difficulties encountered.

Approval and Duration

These Guidelines were approved on 10th November 2023 by President Margaret Karram and Co-President Jesús Morán, having been presented to the General Council of the Work of Mary on 21 October 2023.

They will be published on the international website of the Focolare Movement.

They will come into force on 1 January 2024. An evaluation of their suitability will be made in September 2025 after they have been in force for twenty months, and they will be supplemented or modified if necessary.

Appendix 1: Levels and characteristics of Formation

Level	Content	Minimum time allocated	Person doing Formation	How Formation is Officially Recognized
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of abuse, category and their consequences • The F.M.'s principles for safeguarding and the procedure to follow if abuse is reported • Good practice to create safe environments 	2 hours	A fully trained person ¹¹ (not necessarily an expert) or using pre-recorded material.	List including name, surname, date and address. Attendance Certificates can be given.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of abuse, category and consequences • The F.M.'s principles for safeguarding and the procedure to follow if abuse is reported • Checklist for the evaluation of the event and safety of the environment • Code of conduct for the adult-child relationship 	3 hours	A fully trained person (not necessarily an expert) <i>with experience in events of the F.M.</i> or using pre-recorded material.	Certificate of Formation, signed by the person giving formation and the one who received it.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course for Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults • Practical Handbook of the F.M. for Safeguarding with work sheet (with examples) • Questions and answers concerning actual situations 	6 hours	Experts in Education, Health, Psychology or Pastoral Accompaniment and <i>people with experience in meetings of the F.M.</i> , especially for practical examples and dialogue.	Certificate of Formation, signed by the person giving formation and the one who received it.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course for Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults • Procedure of the F.M. for investigation, reparation, communication, and formation in safeguarding • For the members of the investigative commission or reference persons: definition and management of "secondary trauma" • Practical examples 	10 hours	Experts of the International Commission for Formation or other experts whom they delegate/ Members of the Central Independent Commission.	Certificate of Formation, signed by the person giving formation and the one who received it.

¹¹ In all levels of formation the facilitator must act in accordance with the local diocese, the local legislation and be formed according to the Guidelines for Safeguarding of the F.M.

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course for Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults • Procedure of the F.M. for investigation, reparation, communication, and formation in safeguarding • Abuse of power • Responsibility deriving from one's specific role 	10 hours	Experts of the Zonal Commission for Safeguarding or people with similar formation.	Certificate of Formation, signed by the person giving formation and the one who received it.
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Appendix 2: Annual data on Safeguarding Formation

<p><i>This questionnaire provides the collection of data with the aim of improving training activities for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in the Focolare Movement (F.M.). The data will also be used for the preparation of the annual report on this subject. In addition to the data requested, we invite those who fill in the form to present any difficulties they encounter in implementing the formation, as well as any good practices observed, so as to facilitate mutual help.</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your helpful collaboration</i></p>				
Name and surname:				
Country:				
Date:				
e-mail address:				
Number of Participants in each course:				
Number of members of the F.M. who <i>completed</i> a course of formation.				
<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Level 4</i>	<i>Level 5</i>
Number of members of the F.M. who have <i>begun</i> formation.				
<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Level 4</i>	<i>Level 5</i>
<i>Percentage</i> of members of the F.M. who have completed a course of formation.				
<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Level 4</i>	<i>Level 5</i>
For all levels of formation:				
Were the participants satisfied? : Evaluate the satisfaction of the participants concerning the quality and usefulness of the formation. <i>Average level of satisfaction.</i>				
Knowledge acquired : Evaluation of before and after the formation course to assess the increase of knowledge about safeguarding of children. <i>Percentage of improvement in the evaluation before and after the formation course.</i>				
Frequency of Updating : <i>Frequency</i> with which the formation is updated or improved to guarantee its continuous relevance and impact.				
Participation in Updating Sessions : <i>How many</i> people <i>have participated in periodical updates</i> after the initial formation.				

Incident Reduction: How many incidents linked to safeguarding of children have taken place before and after the formation. <i>Percentage drop in incidents after the implementation of formation.</i>							
List of courses carried out in the zone:							
Date	City	Addressee	Numeber of Participants	Length	In person or on line or both	List of contents	Teachers
Comments on the formation process: challenges, how you solved them, good practices, suggestions for changes...							

Appendix 3: Collaborative network scheme

