Report on the Evaluation of Safeguarding Mechanism Within the Catholic Mission in Sierra Leone

January 2025

Acknowledgements

The completion of this review within the tight time frame given to me, represents a significant achievement and is testimony both to the expertise and commitment of those within the diocese, who already work within safeguarding in the Church. When I accepted the contract in September 2024, it was clear that it would be challenging which can be overcome by the support of various stakeholders within the Catholic Mission in Sierra Leone. I also want to acknowledge the tremendous effort and support of Bishop Edward Tamba Charles Archdiocese of Freetown, Bishop Henry Aruna Archdiocese of Kenema, Bishop Charles Allieu Mathew Campbell Archdiocese of Bo, and Bishop Bob John Hassan Koroma Archdiocese of Makeni. Their hospitality and openness towards the evaluation exercise was very welcoming and impressive. This review could not have been successfully completed without the strong support of the Caritas directors and their staff members in Freetown, Bo and Kenema. I do acknowledge their effort in coordinating various interview sessions within the diocese. The Church owes them a great debt of gratitude, as I do. It was a privilege to share this work with them.

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Background

The Catholic church seeks to provide a trusted, respectful and inclusive environment where parishioners and anyone that have connection with the church feel safe, heard, equipped and empowered to speak up for themselves and others, to take robust and visible action, as appropriate, to eradicate all forms of abuses and sexual harassment within the church community. It was against this background that the Sierra Leone Catholic Bishops, known as Bishops' conference, made a request to Missio to undertake a comprehensive review of safeguarding mechanism and practice within and across all the four dioceses in Sierra Leone. The purpose of the review is to confirm that current safeguarding practice complies with the Standards set down within the Catholic Mission globally, and that all known allegations and concerns had been appropriately dealt with. To achieve this task, an external consultant was hired which was funded by Missio to do an evaluation of safeguarding mechanism and practice in each of the four dioceses, which also includes an examination of current safeguarding policy and related documents, through interviews with key stakeholders within the archdioceses.

The interview questions for this evaluation were designed to measure the quality of practice and compliance against the agreed Safeguarding standards, with the aim of improving safeguarding delivery within the church. A standard approach was also used which positively sets out expectations and provides a consistent framework, against which safeguarding practice was evaluated. This report contains the findings of the Review process within the Catholic church which is in line with the request made by the bishops.

Introduction

The Catholic Church holds a prominent position in Sierra Leone, playing a critical role in the social, educational, and spiritual lives of many citizens. However, the need to ensure the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable individuals within the Church's care is paramount. The Catholic mission also seek to build a culture of shared responsibility for safeguarding and to ensure that policies, practices and codes of behavior work in unison to prevent, detect and respond appropriately to potential or actual incidents of abuses. In this context, a comprehensive evaluation of safeguarding practice within and across the four Catholic dioceses of Sierra Leone was conducted, evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding policy and practice within the Catholic Mission. The study also evaluates the existing safeguarding mechanisms within the Catholic Church, identify potential gaps, and recommend improvements to enhance the protection of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. It also considered wider aspects of culture and governance, which may be relevant and examined how effective the Catholic Church in Sierra Leone is promoting awareness, and ownership of safeguarding as a core part of the life, work and teaching of the Church. The evaluation process undertaken is intended to provide reasonable assurance that safeguarding controls have been designed appropriately and are operating effectively. Accordingly, this report provides a point-in-time assessment of the safeguarding practices implemented by the Catholic Mission in Sierra Leone, and the extent of its compliance with the Catholic Mission global requirements. The review also includes a consultation process that allowed the key stakeholders to share their views on the current structure and safeguarding practices. They were encouraged to share their thoughts, on how these may be improved upon and look at the experiences elsewhere across the Catholic world.

The church policies and procedures on safeguarding are evolving and adapting as they seek to strengthen its approach to prevention and response, so this should also be seen as a stock-take of a system in motion within the church community. Over the years, the intention of the Catholic church in Sierra Leone has been to 'mainstream' safeguarding in the operation of the local church. The review finds that this intention has not been successful as intended. However, implementation of safeguarding policy and procedures, and the management responsibilities and accountabilities on safeguarding are not yet as clear as they need to be to ensure effective mainstreaming. On a day-to-day basis, much of the responsibility for safeguarding has been delegated to the parish pastoral council, through which they themselves did not understand the difference in handling safeguarding issues and that of conflict between parishioners and their families, priest and the religious. Over the years, the church has not seen a noticeable step change in safeguarding approach and engagement, driven by church leadership and clearly strengthening the church pre-existing commitment in eradicating sexual exploitation and all forms of abuse. Furthermore, the absence of a clear safeguarding strategy regarding capacity-building and monitoring of safeguarding focal points, combined with the limited resources for the implementation of safeguarding, also mean that the church ability to assure the capacity of its parishioners and those serving as safeguarding focal points, is limited. With willingness and openness that has been seen by various stakeholders in the dioceses during this evaluation, safeguarding in the Catholic Church of Sierra Leone will be transformed.

Objectives

1. **Assess Current Safeguarding Policies and Procedures:** Review the existing safeguarding policies and procedures within the Catholic Church in Sierra Leone. - Determine the alignment of these policies with international standards and best practices.

2. **Evaluate Implementation and Effectiveness:** Examine the implementation of safeguarding policies at the Diocesan and Parish levels. Assess the effectiveness of training programs for clergy, staff, and volunteers on safeguarding issues.

3. **Identify Gaps and Challenges:** Identify gaps in the current safeguarding mechanisms. - Highlight challenges faced by the Church in implementing and maintaining effective safeguarding measures.

4**. Recommend Improvements:** Propose recommendations for strengthening safeguarding policies and practices. Suggest strategies for overcoming identified challenges and ensuring sustained effectiveness.

Methodology

An Independent Safeguarding Consultant was hired to complete the evaluation. The evaluation was conducted by:

1. **Literature Review:** Conduct a comprehensive review of existing literature on safeguarding within religious institutions, with a focus on the Catholic Church. - Review relevant legal frameworks and guidelines applicable in Sierra Leone and internationally.

2. **Document Analysis:** Analyze the Catholic Church's safeguarding policies, training materials, and incident reports. - Examine Diocesan and Parish-level documents to understand the practical implementation of safeguarding measures.

3. **Interviews and Focus Groups:** Conduct interviews with key stakeholders, including church leaders, safeguarding officers, clergy, religious, staff and volunteers. - Organize focus group discussions with congregants, including vulnerable adults, to gather their perspectives on safeguarding practices.

4. **Surveys:** Develop and distribute surveys to gather quantitative data on the awareness, attitudes, and experiences of church members regarding safeguarding.

Data Source

Data sources included document review, key informant interviews with key stakeholders within each of the diocese and other related personnel, focus group discussions with parishioners and persons of concern at parish level. Data was collected in the four dioceses which include Freetown, Makeni, Bo and Kenema receptively. These locations were identified for participation in the review by the external evaluator. There were some strengths in the qualitative nature of the review, in particular the opportunity it gave to gather first-hand insights from respondents and persons of concern about Catholic Mission's safeguarding policies and procedures on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse within the church community. Interviews and focus group discussions were held with number of parishioners and key stakeholders within the Mission and people of concern, but there was considerable consistency in their insights. The table below shows data source and analysis.

DATA SOURCE	**PARTICIPANT NUMBERS**
Interviews with the Bishops in the four dioceses	4
Interviews with priest across the four dioceses	10
Interviews with catholic religious	7
Interviews with heads of catholic institutions	6
Interviews with Caritas directors and staff members	4
Focus group discussions with parishioners across the four dioceses.	100

Focus group and key informants Interviews.

The hired consultant drafted a range of interview questions and specific interview guide containing mostly open-ended questions for each interview (semi-structured) and used in unstructured interviews where the interviewer begins with a general sense of the topics, to be discussed and creates questions as the interaction proceeds. The interviewers used probes to enable participants to elaborate further

on their comments. Respondents were conveniently selected from all levels, based on their functions in the dioceses/parish, to allow the team to swiftly gather information from those who are known to have information about safeguarding within the Catholic church. The information collected was analyzed, using content analysis methods to identify safeguarding gaps, strength, procedures, and implementation, including adherence to minimum standards. The key findings and recommendations relevant to the review were consolidated from all dioceses, alongside additional supplementary information from key stakeholders to produce the final report.

Key Findings of the Review

The evaluation findings will be analyzed under three sections: (i) Prevention of issues of safeguarding by observing standard operating procedures in the Catholic Mission, this include the overall progress made in popularizing the safeguarding policy, training and awareness raising, (ii) Reporting on safeguarding incidents, by providing a safe and confidential reporting mechanisms, where people can file in their complaint, which can be handled with confidentiality and with no retaliation. This also provides an environment where people feel safe speaking up on safeguarding matters in and outside the church community. (iii) Response including mechanisms that are put in place to respond to safeguarding allegations which include investigation protocols, including survivor-entered approach, and protection of the whistleblower, alleged person and the survivor.

Section 1: Prevention

The Catholic Mission needs to have a standard safeguarding policy and procedures in place. They are a key part of ensuring that people within the church community are clear about what safeguarding is and what should be done, if there is a concern whether a child or vulnerable adult is at risk or has been harmed. It is often a commissioning or funding requirement for faith-based organizations to have appropriate safeguarding policy and procedures in place. There is an absence of safeguarding preventive measures within the four dioceses been one of the key findings. Similarly, safeguarding is a new term and concept within the dioceses, which is not widely understood or considered relevant in the church by some people. There is a huge knowledge gap of safeguarding in the church. For some, safeguarding is understood as child protection and are not aware of the safeguarding policy and practices within the church. Standard operating procedures on safeguarding are not well defined, in terms of what happens when there is a concern about the abuse of children and vulnerable adults. There is also a lack of information sharing, guidance and accountability for action on safeguarding, which needs to be championed by church leaders on best practices and procedures. Awareness raising and capacity building of church personnel, parishioners and key stakeholders on safeguarding have not been undertaken, including the development and strengthening of diocesan safeguarding commission/focal persons networks. Knowledge about safeguarding and its policy document, only revolve around key leadership within the diocese. Furthermore, church leadership seeks to develop and strengthen its approach to prevention and response, this should also be seen as a stock-taking of a system in slow motion.

The safeguarding preventive minimum standard requires that the Church’s safeguarding policy and procedures be successfully communicated to Church personnel and parishioners (including children), which has been a gap over time. Much has not been done in the popularization of the safeguarding policy across the dioceses. The absence of prominent display of the Church safeguarding policy, making children and vulnerable adults aware of their right to speak out and knowing who to speak to,

having the designated person's contact details clearly visible, has not been properly implemented. The new revised safeguarding policy document did not include key legal terms, making it clear how the church is committed to keeping children and/or vulnerable adults safe. Also, the policy document did not have zero-tolerance statement of commitment against sexual exploitation and abuse, by outlining unacceptable behaviors which are not tolerated within the church. However, overall, the safeguarding policy within the Catholic Church do not seem to be considered as "living document," this was mentioned by some parishioners. Key informant interviews and review of the safeguarding policy showed that the stage of policy implementation is unknown, and difficult to determine impact made. A key gap also noted is that no evidence was found of authorities in the church requiring priests, parishioners, church staff and volunteers to commit, in upholding the safeguarding policy. One key informant noted that in some of the dioceses, safeguarding is new and often unfamiliar concept, and talking about sexual exploitation and abuse may not be culturally acceptable within the church community, which is why raising awareness should be considered as a primary point for safeguarding in the church and given due attention by authorities.

Other findings that may have influenced safeguarding practices in the church include the religious nature of some of the church leaders. As explained above, the new safeguarding policy do not fully reflect internationally accepted safeguarding principles and terminology but refer to Christian religious precepts, that may not necessarily be fully aligned with global minimum standards. The intention of church leadership however has been to 'mainstream' safeguarding into the church and its operations. The review finds that this intention has been partially successful. Furthermore, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) management responsibilities and accountabilities are not yet as clear as they need to be to ensure effective mainstreaming. A notable strength of the leadership within the church is their willingness to learn from past mistakes and adapt policies and procedures as a preventive measure accordingly.

Section 2: Reporting

Key informants reported that they are confident that safeguarding incidents would be taken seriously, but many did not readily know how they should report any observed or disclosed incident. Many also did not consider safeguarding to be relevant within the church community, as church leaders should not been seen actively implementing safeguarding as the circular organizations. Parishioners and those associated with the Catholic church have less access to the complaint mechanism if any. During the key informant and focus group interviews across the four dioceses, respondents attest to a culture of silence and fear, lack of trust, and retaliation against those who speak up about harassment and abuse of power within the Catholic church. However, although Bo and Makeni dioceses have worked to promote the available channels for reporting, communication materials on reporting displayed in their parishes visited were primarily not user-friendly and not up to standards. It does not focus on sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, and other forms of abuses by clergy and religious, lay faithful, church staff, volunteers and anyone that has connection with the church. Similarly, other respondents mentioned that they did not see materials about procedures and reporting mechanisms, displayed in their dioceses/parishes in response to a question on display of communication materials on reporting safeguarding incidents. The review also discovered that these factors, combined with an inadequate reporting and responding mechanism, profoundly impacted the way in which children and adult witnesses reported abuse, as well as lack of awareness of the requirement to report serious incidents. In addition, engaging in various interviews, it was not clear if there is a common interpretation of what

‘serious safeguarding incidents’ would consist of, especially across the church community that is culturally diverse where incidents may be defined and interpreted differently.

As reflected by key informants and important to note, while it is likely that incidents of safeguarding are not reported to church authorities, some of them shared that they are not receiving any reports of safeguarding incidents that might have occurred, even if they do it should have been compromised. As correctly understood by most respondents, the lack of reported safeguarding incidents does not mean that there have been any safeguarding violations in the church. Under-reporting may be rooted in a variety of factors. Some respondents shared that parishioners may not be well acquainted with the reporting requirement and therefore, do not report any safeguarding incidents. There is a general perception among the lay faithful that clergy and religious are God’s anointed as stated in **psalm 105:15**. As a result, even if they hear or witness an incident of safeguarding misconduct that is against their calling, the fear of not harming them as God’s anointed will not be reported. Some respondents also reflected on some of the influence of social norms on who to report, this might lead to some subjectivity of what should be reported using the appropriate reporting channel. A standard reporting protocol that ensures mandatory reporting, confidentiality and protection of whistleblowers is not well structured and coordinated. To this end, lack of user-friendly safeguarding incident reporting mechanisms within the dioceses and lack of monitoring data are also indications of limited ‘embedding’ of safeguarding in the church day-to-day activities.

Section 3: Response

Responding and addressing allegations effectively from people is a core component of managing safeguarding risk within the church community. Safeguarding response mechanisms can be an effective tool for early identification, assessment, and investigation of complaints. During the evaluation process, the team find evidence that there is no process that is independent of management, or offers true redress of safeguarding allegation within the dioceses. There is also an absence of a safeguarding response mechanism, and the formal and informal processes for handling other domestic complaints are slow, ineffective, and not trusted as confidential within the parishes. Procedures for responding to safeguarding complaints are less clear and understood by parishioners. There is currently no nationally agreed protocol or process on how safeguarding complaints are handled or monitored. This increases the likelihood of ad hoc and inconsistent practices and could hamper the monitoring of issues arising and learning on how well they are managed. There does not seem to be a consistent, written set of procedures to guide responses, or a common understanding of the effect of abuse and not all procedures seen are up to date.

It was reported that in parishes the parish priest with his parish council including those responsible for handling complaints, (i.e. justice and peace) would resolve the day-to-day concerns or complaints of parishioners and they would refer all safeguarding concerns and complaints if any to the bishop or to the police (if it involves a minor). There are also areas for urgent improvement, particularly regarding the timeliness of responses, clarity on leadership accountability and responsibilities within the church structures, and ensuring consistently compassionate, survivor centred approaches. Furthermore, safeguarding investigation capacity within the dioceses is lacking. The safeguarding focal people are not appropriately trained in investigation and survivor-centred approaches. Mapping support services for survivors (e.g. medical, psychosocial, legal services) in the dioceses have not been undertaking, to refer a survivor to appropriate services if needed. There was no evidence of such a document. With the mapping of service providers, information on the referral pathway will form part of the response

mechanism protocol. Proper case management procedures are not in place for receiving and responding to safeguarding reports. These procedures should be set up before reporting channels are put in place, so that the designated people are ready to respond immediately if a report comes in. Overall, respondents during the key informant and focus group interviews were unable to describe procedures, to address safeguarding cases in their dioceses. However, during one of the interviews it was mentioned that a culture of secrecy and cover-up will continue to allow abuses within the church to be hidden. This was not denied by various representatives, they agreed that the culture of secrecy had been a very significant part of the response of the church to allegations at different levels. Also, if reports are not adequately addressed within the church, survivors may be denied access to justice and support, people who cover-up reports or fail to report abuse might not face sanctions, and perpetrators may remain free to abuse more children and vulnerable adults. This calls for urgent action from the leadership of the four dioceses, to set up strong and workable safeguarding procedures, to mitigate the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse within the church community.

Recommendations

Recommendations were formulated both from the desk review and the views of focus groups and key informants. This evaluation makes recommendations for strengthening safeguarding policy and procedures, which will give a clear framework for the Sierra Leone Catholic Mission safeguarding approach. The evaluation also provides specific suggestions on how to address safeguarding complaints, focusing on survivors centered approach, adhering to the minimum standards and implementation of safeguarding best practices in alignment with global standards. These recommendations are also made in order to ensure that the Catholic Church in Sierra Leone, has consistent and accessible policies and procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues, that involves children and vulnerable adults.

Recommendation 1: To strengthen the effective implementation of safeguarding policy and procedure across the dioceses.

Regarding strengthening safeguarding policy and implementation, it is recommended that minimum standards and expected components of safeguarding policies be further defined and guidance provided for safeguarding implementation, including safeguarding communication and training, effective reporting mechanisms, procedures for handling reported incidents, monitoring and regular policy review and updating. While recognizing the need for strengthening safeguarding policy and procedures across the four dioceses, the team recommend the support of a safeguarding expect for a period of one year or less, to closely work with key stakeholders on how to implement safeguarding in practice and in setting up the required minimum standards, for effective policy implementation, and provide guidance for developing safeguarding required tools. To also enable effective implementation of safeguarding across the four dioceses, there is a need to identify or hire a national safeguarding manager/coordinator, who will be managed by the bishops in overseeing the effective implementation of the safeguarding policy across the dioceses. The manager will directly work with the diocesan safeguarding leads by forming strong and visible networking between the safeguarding leads. It is also recommended that the national safeguarding manager/coordinator form a diocesan safeguarding community of practice (COP), where they can meet on a quarterly basis to share their experiences and discuss safeguarding policy implementation best practices and procedures. He/she will be required to share the national safeguarding quarterly report with the bishops bringing to their attention success made and challenges.

Furthermore, effective Safeguarding implementation within the dioceses would also be strengthened if a safeguarding monitoring and evaluation framework is developed and used, including standard indicators and indicator reference sheets defining each indicator, explaining how the indicator should be interpreted and where to obtain the indicator data. Indicators could also include process measures to better track ongoing safeguarding efforts in each diocese. This report also recommends that safeguarding is overseen by the bishops with support from the national safeguarding manager/coordinator with safeguarding expertise, so that all concerns, disclosures, and proactive steps to prevent harm, are taken through a safeguarding lens.

Recommendation 2: Safeguarding Training and Education

All diocesan safeguarding leads and key leadership within each diocese, should be offered training on safeguarding to maintain high standards and good practice. This training will provide basic knowledge of safeguarding, guidance on spotting concerns in the policy and how to identify safeguarding issues. This recommendation will also facilitate a deeper understanding of complex safeguarding issues, the formulation of effective policies, and the adept management of implementation challenges. The training will go beyond mere compliance, it will foster critical thinking and reflection of safeguarding practices in the church. It will also support the development of more consistent professional standards globally and career progression in diocesan safeguarding leadership roles.

It is also recommended to plan for continuous safeguarding training and refreshers, whereby each training builds on the foundations of earlier sessions, rather than relying on one-off training. This will help the leadership structure to also build on their own safeguarding practice and maintain a culture of safeguarding, including recognizing and reporting any misconduct they themselves witness or experience within the church. In compliance with the safeguarding policy, the leadership within the church and parishioners must be aware of the catholic Mission safeguarding policy, its principles and procedures and must know their responsibilities belonging to their role, in mainstreaming safeguarding within the church community. The knowledge that leadership within the dioceses has received high-quality training on safeguarding will be a great reassurance to members of the Church, members of the public and survivors. By designing preventative, reporting and response mechanisms for handling safeguarding issues in the church, one needs to build the skills of leadership to develop a culture of safeguarding accountability in their dioceses, that encourages people to report and respond to safeguarding concerns appropriately. To ensure high quality and standards in the training of safeguarding leads and leadership, it is also recommended to source out for a safeguarding expert to conduct the training.

Recommendation 3: Communicating and visibility of the Sierra Leone Catholic Mission safeguarding policy at diocesan and parish level.

There should be a clear protocol and procedures in disseminating the safeguarding policy to parishioners, including children. This can be achieved through the prominent display of the Catholic Mission policy, using various social media platforms of church organizations, making parishioners aware about the existence of the safeguarding policy and its important within the church. This can help vulnerable adults and children to know their right to speak out and knowing who to speak to, having the safeguarding designated person's contact details clearly visible in prominent places within the church premises which also include Catholic institutions. It is also recommended to have posters on safeguarding policy commitment, stating zero tolerance of abuse and exploitation within the church.

The posters can also be made visible and accessible to parishioners, which is essential for effective safeguarding in discharging related obligations on the side of church authorities, in adherence to the policy. All Archdiocesan authorities must take responsibility for sharing information about the safeguarding policy, which may be critical to preventing abuse, exploitation, or harm, protecting persons at risk, and satisfying duty of care and statutory obligations within the church community. Copies of the policy must be shared with each parish and institutions within the dioceses, making it mandatory to be popularized within the church.

Recommendation 4: Leadership Commitment towards Implementation of the safeguarding policy.

The enforcement of safeguarding minimum standards depends on the understanding and genuine interest of the church authorities and congregational leaders, their personal commitment and engagement towards safeguarding best practices will create an impact. It is strongly recommended that leadership within the Catholic Mission in Sierra Leone, must demonstrate their commitment to be accountable to vulnerable adults and children against sexual exploitation and abuse, by enforcing safeguarding best practices and integrating approaches in adherence to the safeguarding policy in the church. They should also establish appropriate safeguarding management systems to solicit, hear and act upon the voices of affected adults and children in a coordinated manner. The safeguarding system must be part of the church leadership structure, and should have shared safeguarding principles, standards and practices that can contribute to its effectiveness in keeping people in the church safe from harm. To ensure leadership proactiveness, the Bishop Conference should also consider monitoring safeguarding performance indicators for dioceses and parishes to enhance leadership and accountability of the bishops, priests, and congregational leaders. They should also develop greater consultation and engagement between parishioners to enhance communicating on safeguarding, its implementation, and consequences. Traditional communication patterns by church leadership need to change, the communication skills of the clergy and the religious congregation on safeguarding best practices needs to improve to build trust and transparency.

However, the church authorities need to be more accountable in ensuring safeguarding culture of practice among parishioners, priest and the religious. When the leadership is accountable, people will feel confident to hold them accountable for their decisions, actions, or non-actions towards safeguarding best practices. Equally, other leaders within the church must be able to hold other leaders to account – for example, a bishop must be bold to hold a religious congregation to account or a bishop to hold another bishop accountable for non-compliance of safeguarding best practices. Also, safeguarding should form part of the leadership or management roles at diocesan and at parish level to ensure commitment and accountability.

Recommendation 5: Develop reporting channels to enhance mandatory reporting.

Establishing accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms in the Catholic Church is essential for creating a safe environment, where individuals feel comfortable reporting safeguarding concerns. Reporting mechanisms should be clearly communicated to all parishioners and include multiple channels for reporting, such as hotlines, email, reporting box or in-person consultations. It is crucial to ensure that reporting mechanisms are culturally sensitive and respect the autonomy and confidentiality of individuals who come forward with concerns. Reports should be promptly investigated, and appropriate actions taken to address safeguarding incidents in line with safeguarding policy and

procedures. Reporting safeguarding incidents must be mandatory and should be made clear, using the approved and available reporting channels. Each diocese should develop or update and disseminate written complaint procedures to file in all safeguarding concerns, establish a register to track all reported concerns and design relevant communication strategies, and material to inform parishioners about the reporting channels, alongside the professional conduct standards of church authorities. The church should also expand the reporting channels for reporting complaints to the relevant authorities with relevant languages and images, using other media to make the system more accessible to children, youth, people with disabilities, and those who cannot read. These reporting channels must be made visible and shared on various social media platforms of the church. The church leadership should also improve understanding and capacity of recipients of complaints (or those to whom the complaint is referred) to assess whether the behaviors reported are indicative of patterns of safeguarding issues. This is an important factor in safeguarding preventative interventions. Archdiocesan leadership must also take responsibility for sharing information of safeguarding reporting channels and keep record of all reporting information that has been shared.

Recommendation 6: Establish a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of safeguarding implementation

Monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in assessing the effectiveness of safeguarding measures and identifying areas for improvement within the church. The church should establish a robust monitoring system with indicators to measure the implementation of safeguarding policies, conduct regular audits or reviews, and solicit feedback from parishioners and other stakeholders within the church. Safeguarding monitoring and evaluation efforts should also be integrated into the broader church monitoring and evaluation framework, to ensure alignment with monitoring requirements across the church system. Church authorities and safeguarding focal person should also have a planned approach to ensure and evaluate its compliance with the safeguarding standards. Leadership within each diocese should monitor safeguarding through monthly meetings with the diocesan Safeguarding Leads, by ensuring self-assessments, periodic audits, and regular reports to the national safeguarding coordinator. This will ensure compliance with monitoring requirements across the church community. Bishops and congregational leaders are also required to be informed on an annual basis by the diocesan safeguarding lead of the results of self-assessment or review against the safeguarding set standards.

Recommendation 7: To have standard investigation procedure.

It is essential and recommended that internal procedures must be in place for receiving and responding to safeguarding reports. These procedures should be set up before reporting channels are put in place, so that the dioceses/parish is ready to respond immediately if a report comes in. Confidentiality should be prioritized at every step of the procedure. It is also important that reports handling procedure should always treat the victim/survivor, as a unique individual who is an expert in their situation. All safeguarding leads within the diocese interacting with the victim/survivor and making decisions about the case should be appropriately trained in victim/survivor-centred approaches. It is also recommended to have internal/external trained investigators within the Catholic Mission, who is an expert in handling the investigation of alleged safeguarding incident. This will create a sense of adherence system and hold people accountable for their actions. Having a well-structured and organized investigation procedure within the church serves as a holistic approach, in responding to safeguarding alleged cases. Also, internal complaint and investigation procedures that are context-specific and survivor-centred, that include established functions and mechanisms to handle incidents

and allegations. Adherents should explore independent mechanisms as appropriate, noting that alleged perpetrators also have privacy rights.

Recommendation 8: The Church must set out a theology of safeguarding which is coherent and compelling.

No Catholic may be left in any doubt about the importance of safeguarding within the church. Safeguarding must be at the heart of the Church's administration, its worship, and its theology. This is one of the key recommendations made by key informants during the study, that safeguarding should be a standing item at every meeting of the Bishop's Conference, and at every diocesan executive meeting. Also, guidance should be given to parish priests about the inclusion of safeguarding in the liturgy and preaching of the Church, and the Church should set out a clear and simple theology of safeguarding, which emphasizes the church commitment in upholding the safeguarding policy, making sure that the church becomes a safety place for all vulnerable adults and children. This will serve as a wakeup call for all authorities within the church that protection of vulnerable adults and children is not merely a Christian duty, but a divine privilege. The bishops are responsible for making sure that Parishioners are aware of the importance of Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, promoting good and safe practices, including what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior of their parishioners, Priests, and religious leaders, which also includes church authorities. In this regard, it is also recommended that the bishops should make an open commitment of zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and all forms of abuses within the Catholic Church, during the yearly pilgrimage, bishop day and other religious gatherings that the bishops will be part of. This will give parishioners the opportunity to physically hear the bishop speaking about the safeguarding policy and his responsibility in ensuring the protection of vulnerable adults and children, within the church. It will also create a sense of awareness in the minds of parishioners and create an impact in the implementation of the policy, at diocesan and parish level.

Incorporating safeguarding as mentioned above by the bishops, demonstrates a commitment to ethical conduct, and the protection of vulnerable populations. Their statement of commitment with regards to the policy should also outline the church approach to safeguarding, including zero-tolerance stance towards abuse, exploitation, and other forms of misconduct. It is also essential to provide clear guidance on expected behaviors of clergy and parishioners, reporting procedures, and consequences for violations.

Recommendation 9: Provision of dedicated safeguarding funds.

Many respondents recommended maintaining a dedicated fund for safeguarding support within the Catholic Mission, to enable flexible and need-based support at diocesan and parish level, including safeguarding capacity strengthening activities, support to survivors and the general implementation of safeguarding activities. A dedicated budget encourages church authorities in meeting the support needs of vulnerable adults and children. There is also a need for external donor support in funding effective safeguarding implementation within the church. Without funds, it will create a space for non-compliance and paying "lip service", with regards implementing safeguarding minimum standards and best practice. When the recommendations in this report have been accepted and acted on, without funds the Church will not be able to do much, and to also demonstrate the integration of safeguarding in the local church as expected. There is a need for investing in supporting the effective implementation of safeguarding been a new concept in the Catholic Mission, this will help church

leadership in taking ownership of the safeguarding agenda, which will be seen as good example of the usefulness of such investments. The evaluation team believes that this recommendation gives a good indication of the relevant in providing a standard set of funds for safeguarding implementation, to facilitate decision-making with confidence in strengthening the overall implementation of the policy by church authorities.

For Catholic Mission safeguarding support efforts to be more effective, it is also recommended that they should ensure:

1. Parish Safeguarding Committees are constituted, active and engaged.
2. Policies/procedures for Safeguarding are in place and implemented.
3. Clergy, Parish Safeguarding Committees, and other interest groups have increased awareness of the Church's ministry of Safeguarding.
4. Clergy support and promote the ministry of Safeguarding within their parishes.
5. Communication systems and protocols have been updated.
6. Uptake of Safeguarding Sunday within parishes
7. Linkages between Parish Safeguarding Committees and Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs) established.
8. Annual Parish self-audits are completed across all parishes.
9. The delivery of and participation in effective and regular Safeguarding training.
10. Effective structures for promotion of Safeguarding across the Diocese are in place.
11. Engagement between Diocesan Safeguarding Committee and Parish Safeguarding Committees.
12. PPCs having Safeguarding feature on their agenda on occasion throughout the year, including discussion on the annual parish Safeguarding audit.
13. Clear and transparent internal processes for prevention and response to safeguarding within the church and to role model best practice.
14. Clear mandatory reporting of serious safeguarding incidents and a clear definition of what constitutes a serious incident.
15. Including a safeguarding monitoring and evaluation framework with standard indicators.

Term Definition

Harassment includes any improper and unwelcome conduct that has or that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another. Harassment may be present in the form of words, gestures, or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment to another or that causes an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment refers to any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Whistleblower refers to an individual who reports a concern regarding wrongdoing. Whistleblowers provide information, based on a reasonably held suspicion that a wrongdoing has occurred.

Zero tolerance refers to zero tolerance of church authorities, staff and volunteers, engaging in any form of sexual exploitation or abuse. In practice, this is a commitment to immediate response when a concern is raised and an obligation of church leadership, staff, volunteers, and associated personnel to report concerns as soon as they arise. It includes protection of vulnerable adults and children, and non-retaliation towards whistleblowers or anyone else reporting safeguarding concerns.

Child protection is the measures, structures and systems to prevent the risks of abuse, exploitation, neglect and all forms of violence affecting children; to create an appropriate protective environment to protect children from these risks; and to respond to such cases. Child protection defines the work undertaken by the government in a given country to strengthen laws, policies and systems designed to provide appropriate protection environments to protect children living in their own families and communities, subject to international regulations.

Sexual Exploitation: any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual abuse: the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. This includes sexual activity with anyone who looks to, or benefits from the church, or with anyone under 18 years.

Survivor-centered approach seeks to empower the survivor by prioritizing her/his rights, needs and wishes and ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect. A survivor-centered approach helps to promote a survivor's recovery and to reinforce her/his capacity to make decisions about possible interventions.

Survivor/victim refers to a person who has experienced sexual exploitation or abuse. The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' can be used interchangeably. 'Victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors. Survivor's is the term generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resiliency.

Confidentiality is an ethical principle that restricts access to and dissemination of information. It helps to create an environment in which witnesses/survivors are more willing to come forward and relate their version of events; it builds trust in the church community and organizations. Maintaining confidentiality requires that individuals protect information about allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and agree only to share information on a strict need-to-know-basis, and when sharing information, consideration should be given to the potential for future abuse and harm of all those involved, and in the best interests of the survivor. This means that individuals never discuss details of allegations of exploitation and abuse with family or friends, or with colleagues whose knowledge of the abuse is deemed unnecessary.

Informed Consent: The voluntary agreement of an individual who has the capacity to give consent to pursue a legal procedure or receive services. To provide informed consent, the individual must have the capacity and maturity to know about and understand the implications of the procedures to be followed, the services being offered and can give her/his consent. Parents, caregivers, or other legal guardians are typically responsible for giving consent for their child to be interviewed or take part in an activity.

Informed Assent: The expressed willingness to pursue legal procedures or participate in services. For younger children who are too young to give informed consent, but old enough to understand the implication of the procedures to be followed or to participate in the recommended services, the child's "informed assent" is sought. Informed assent is the expressed willingness of the child to participate in services and undertake the consequences of eventual legal procedures.

A complaint is a concern about the behavior or conduct of individuals in different capacity, in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse. A complaint must be about an action for which the church, or an organization is responsible or is within their sphere of influence.

Complainant is the person making the complaint, including the survivor/victim of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Witness: Any person giving testimony or evidence in the investigation, including but not limited to the survivor/victim, the complainant, a beneficiary, personnel of an organization or church, the subject of the complaint or personnel of another entity.

Survivor: The person who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused. The term "survivor" implies strength, resilience, and the capacity to survive.

Subject of the complaint /alleged perpetrator: The person(s) alleged to have sexually exploited or abused the survivor/victim. This can be a person, group, or institution that directly inflicts or otherwise supports violence or other abuse inflicted on another against his/her will.

Safeguarding covers prevention, mitigation, and response actions to address the full range of personal abuse, violence, and harassment committed or allegedly committed by staff or associates or caused by an organization's operations or programmes.

PSEA Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, the term used by the UN and community of NGOs to refer to the measures taken to protect vulnerable people from sexual exploitation and abuse by their own staff and associated personnel.

In conclusion, this evaluation points out key findings and suggests a forward agenda for accelerated action. These areas for accelerated action include deepening efforts to adapt and integrate safeguarding prevention and response, and accounting for risk of SEAH in all contexts, ensuring sustained and adequate financing and resources to support progress on safeguarding implementation. It also helps in strengthening safeguarding prevention and response agenda, pursuing more coherent efforts across the dioceses to promote safe church both across and within all dioceses. The recommendation also in this report provides a comprehensive framework that can support, guide, intensify, and help the leadership within the church having adhered to the policy in their capacity as leaders to implement more comprehensive, coherent and aligned measures, consistent with applicable international standards and taking into account national laws, to prevent and respond to SEAH. This includes putting survivors and victims' first, supporting church cultural change, building capacity, strengthening accountability, and bolstering the integrity of the church.