

PRO MINORIBUS

PREVENTION | INTERVENTION | EDUCATION

Editorial

This issue of Pro Minoribus arrived late. The reason for this delay is the end of my two mandates in Rome as CIM, and my holidays. Though I will keep the responsibility till June 2023, I am on sabbatical, I have some time to resume this publication. So let say this one is the first of 2022.

Our coming chapter

In May our Society will host its General chapter, it will be a time of assessment and accountability of our common mission for the last six years but also a time to reflect and share about the future. Thus, it will be also a time of planification. For this reason in this issue we are talking about Strategic planification.

Your voices

Therefore I gave the floor in this issue to our confrère Lowrent Kamwaza who is completing a licentiate in Safeguarding at the Gregorian University in Rome. Lowrent shares with us some of the insight and tools he is acquiring, I am sure many safeguarding delegates will find it insightful and helpful for their own planification.

Stéphane Joulain CIM

Some tools for Safeguarding Delegates in Provinces and sectors of the Missionaries of Africa...

Four years ago in the month of July 2018, in the Petit Echo No. 1093, an article was published by our confrere Stephane Joulain entitled “Some Found My



Precautions too Harsh”, and it reads, “Our society is working very hard to make our places of mission as safe as possible for the most vulnerable especially children. Reading over some texts of our Founder, we can discover that this work has its roots in the actions and determination of our founder. In the domain of preventing child sexual abuses, Cardinal Lavigerie was probably ahead of his time...”

Indeed, as we become more aware that the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults is an integral part of our mission today, we also stay attuned to different tools that may help us in our safeguarding mission. In fact, safeguarding delegates of our different provinces and sectors are called to play significant roles in safeguarding activities by harnessing their efforts with confreres of different communities in the protection of minors and vulnerable adults from different forms of abuse especially from sexual abuse. At the imitation of Jesus Christ, this is the commitment of our Missionary of Africa society as stated in our safeguarding policy. They S.ds have to champion the setting up of clear procedures to respond justly when an abuse has occurred.

However, the challenge remains that many of our confreres/ safeguarding delegates need to acquire more skills and

competences in dealing with this complex mission. The two sessions that were conducted in Nairobi 2016 and Ouagadougou 2017 in child protection have been certainly a good introduction but more has to be done in this area. Appointments of confreres from one sector to the other and from one province to the other have happened in between and there is a new generation of confreres who need to benefit from this training.

This edition of **pro-minoribus** aims at suggesting some important tools that may help safeguarding delegates as they shape their road-maps for child and vulnerable adults prevention plans for their sectors and provinces.



In designing a provincial or sector prevention plan, it is good to establish clear objectives. During the 2020-2021 auditing exercise, our Society adopted through the office of the coordinator of the Integrity in ministry, the 7 Standard models of a prevention plan by the Church in Ireland. Here are some steps that can be considered in addressing the problem of sexual abuses of minors in our areas of mission:

STEP 1: Preliminary Work

In this **STEP 1**: A preliminary work of a provincial/sector safeguarding delegate consists in familiarizing oneself with the target groups and the context of the safeguarding work. This means that a safeguarding delegate has to: (*know your sector, confreres, personnel, candidates, culture, etc*)

- Engage the Church leadership namely the provincials, provincial delegates, safeguarding coordinator in a discussion that may deliberate on the actual situation on safeguarding issues in a particular province or sector.
- To be informed on what has worked well so far, what did not work and what they consider important to be implemented
- To be informed on what might be the immediate needs of the sector or province.

Step 2: Implementation of the Safeguarding Prevention Plan

1. Establishing a Prevention System

In this **Step 2**, every safeguarding delegate whether at the provincial or sector level has to ensure in the first place that he establishes a prevention system that works well. This system has to sustain the 7 standards of safeguarding.

i. Creation of safe environments: Identifying new sector and community safeguarding delegates (**SDs**) of our sectors and communities and fill in the gaps wherever necessary. Setting up an advisory safeguarding committee and office structures and working materials such as means of transport, training materials etc. Updating the present child and vulnerable adult safeguarding policy, protocols, guidelines so that they mirror the present day's practices and dynamics of safeguarding work as well as the recent recommendations as reflected in Pope

Francis' May 2019 *Motu Proprio: Vos Estis Lux Mundi*. Identifying other professional players and institutions in child protection so as to enhance networking and assistance to victims.

ii. Child Protection Procedures:

A safeguarding delegate will have to ensure that the members of the communities and those who are ministering with children in our institutions agree to follow effective safeguarding practices and sign the code of conduct. Ensuring safe recruitment and screening of candidates before their recommendation to any next step in their formation has to be done in



collaboration with our formators and vocation animators. Ensuring that there are well written whistle blowing procedures in our communities and institutions to help the members of the society and our personnel raise concern about possible suspicious behavior of abuse.

II. Awareness Raising Scheme

i. **Training and Support:** It is the duty of a safeguarding delegate at the sector and provincial level to conduct trainings and workshops to sensitize confreres and all those working in our institutions about safeguarding issues. A safeguarding delegate therefore will have to offer necessary support to those in charge of child protection in our communities so that they get necessary knowledge on how to create safe environments and respond to allegations that may rise. He should therefore be creative whilst covering a wide range of topics to raise awareness among community members, parish institutions and to promote healthy relationships and boundaries in ministry.

ii. **Communication:** A safeguarding delegate is called to ensure that all the safeguarding related documents, such as policies, protocols, guidelines, helpline telephone numbers etc. are accessible to everyone and more especially to victims. For this a safeguarding delegate needs to ensure a network of collaboration with others like those publishing provincial newsletters such as "Flash", Petit Echo, websites, and other means of communication.

III. Intervention and case management scheme

i. **Care to the Victims:** As safeguarding delegates, there is a need in this step to establish an intervention and case management scheme that ensures that there are procedures and clear guidelines on responding and accompanying victims who report an allegation of an abuse or have been abused. Safeguarding delegates are therefore requested to work in a network with the legal framework of their country of mission and with the Church, civil, authorities in establishing justice for the victims.

ii. **Management of the alleged perpetrators:** safeguarding delegates in our sectors will have to collaborate with the leadership and other institutions to ensure that cases of abuse are being professionally managed, as well as offering pastoral support to the offenders to avoid relapse. SDs will have to engage the leadership to ensure that those who have been falsely

accused are able to return to ministry when the preliminary investigation finds that there is no case to answer or when the allegation is seemingly false or frivolous.

IV Supervision and evaluation scheme

Finally, every safeguarding delegate at the provincial and sector level is called to ensure that these standards mentioned above are properly implemented through:

Quality Assurance and Auditing: Each SD has the duty to conduct annual supervisions at the provincial level in the case of (*PSD*) and at the sector level in the case of a (*SSD*) of all safeguarding activities. An annual report has to be given to the leadership (Provincial or the Society Coordinator for Safeguarding issues in the society *CIM office*). There is a need then of collaboration with the safeguarding delegates of individual communities. This will require conducting an internal auditing exercises every three years and an external audit by experts once every five years depending on the authorization of our leaders. Every safeguarding delegate is in a special way invited to update confreres regularly on the evolution of safeguarding issues in the global Church for example, what have we learned from the CIASE/The French report? ..The Germany report? What is new? What are the new challenges? Insights?

In addition, it is essential that safeguarding delegates become aware of how tiring this commitment can be and of the need to take care of themselves and work in a team in order to avoid burnouts. It is entirely legitimate for every safeguarding delegate to request and receive enough emotional, spiritual, moral, and financial support to implement this critical mission. These can be a few tools that can be of great help to safeguarding delegates, for we know well that “prevention is better than cure”.

Lowrent Kamwaza Thokozani



Lowrent and fellow students at the Gregorian University in Rome 2021-2022