

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC MOVEMENT FOR INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MOUVEMENT INTERNATIONAL DES INTELLECTUELS CATHOLIQUES

ICMICA – MIIC PAX ROMANA



Policy for the prevention and addressing the cases of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment against minors or vulnerable populations

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1. Introduction

The International Catholic Movement for Intellectuals and Cultural Affairs (ICMIICA-Pax Romana) is a Catholic lay movement, composed of professionals and intellectuals with a spirituality of action at the service of human dignity and the common good in human society. Its members, as professionals and intellectuals, seek to bear witness to the Kingdom of God through their lives and their commitment to the various contexts in which they are present, to spread the Gospel in the environments in which they are engaged, and to contribute to the edification and renewal of the Church at the local and universal level.¹

The MIIC-ICMICA-Pax Romana is a global network of continental federations of Catholic professionals with a presence in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Oceania, committed to evangelization in the professional and intellectual sphere. MIIC-ICMICA- Pax Romana is recognized by the Holy See and actively participates in international civil society networks. It has a consultative relationship with the United Nations.

The aims of MIIC (ICMICA- Pax Romana)² are:

- a) to support the deepening of the faith and the coherence of life of its members.

- b) to support the process of the ongoing formation of its members, spiritually, in commitment, professionally, and intellectually, through the exchange of experiences, shared study, openness to the Word of God, celebration, and participation in the life of the ecclesial community, in communion with each local Church in which it is present, and with the universal Church.

¹ Art. 3 of the Statutes as amended at the 29th Plenary Assembly, Poland, July 2004. Plenary Assembly, Poland, July 2004.

² Ibid. Art. 5

- c) to serve as a witness to the Gospel in the various communities and environments in which he is involved and to maintain a proactive dialogue between the Christian faith and cultures and between faith and reason.
- d) to act in defense of human dignity and human rights, for the building of authentic peace on earth, for the eradication of all forms of poverty and injustice, and for sustainable development in harmony with nature.
- e) to carry out all its tasks in society in the light of the Social Teachings of the Church, especially through the professional and intellectual contribution of its members.
- f) to contribute to the ecumenical journey by seeking the growth of communion among all the Churches and Christian communities and by striving for dialogue, peace, and understanding among religions.

In coherence with its identity and purposes, ICMICA-Pax Romana considers it indispensable to welcome the call to action made by Pope Francis to some victims of sexual abuse by clergy. On that occasion, he said: *"I ask for your help in ensuring that we have the best policies and procedures in place in the Universal Church for the protection of minors and for the training of Church personnel in the implementation of those policies and procedures. We must do everything possible to ensure that such sins do not happen again in the Church."* ³

It is also necessary to consider the statement of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, *"(...) considers it very important that the protection of minors and vulnerable adults be seen as an integral part of the mission of the church, which is firmly rooted in our belief that each individual has a unique value created in the image and likeness of God (...)"*. ⁴

³ Homily of Pope Francis, July 7, 2014.

⁴ Guideline for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Person 26 March 2019

At the same time, as Catholic professionals, we affirm the preferential option for the poor in our commitments, and, recalling Pope Francis, we firmly believe that "*The Church is called to be a place of mercy and compassion, especially for those who have suffered. For all of us, the Catholic Church remains a field hospital that accompanies us on our spiritual journey. It is the place where we can sit with others, listen to them, and share with them our struggles and our faith in the good news of Jesus Christ*".⁵

2. The normative frame of reference: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and national legislation.

Most of the countries in which ICMICA - MIIC Pax Romana is present are signatories of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the main international normative instrument that establishes the framework for the protection of children. Consequently, we are committed to considering the best interests of the child in all our activities and decisions.⁶

We are also committed to being part of a joint effort on the part of States, the Church, and lay professionals to ensure a safe environment for children and vulnerable populations, protecting them "from all forms of violence, injury, physical or mental harm or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. To this effect, MIIC - ICMICA Pax Romana *assumes the duty to put in place effective procedures for the prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and further observation of the above-described cases of child maltreatment and, if appropriate, judicial intervention.*"⁷ In elucidating each case, the provisions of applicable international standards and legislation of the country in which the abuse is committed shall be considered.

⁵ Address of the Holy Father Francis to the members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, September 21, 2017.

⁶ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3.

⁷ Ibid Art. 19

3. Conceptual clarifications

3.1 Minors and populations in situations of vulnerability

For the purposes of this Policy, a minor is any person under eighteen years of age. Likewise, vulnerable populations are those who⁸, at a specific time and condition, do not have sufficient power to defend their integrity, before or on the part of others, because of a wide range of factors (pregnancy, age, illness, psychological pressure, physical, spiritual, and mental challenges).

3.2 Sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual harassment ⁹

Sexual exploitation is the abuse or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability or a relationship of power or trust for sexual purposes.

Sexual abuse is physical contact or attempted physical contact of a sexual nature, whether imposed by force or under conditions of inequality or coercion.

Sexual harassment is any inappropriate sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, physical, verbal, or gestural conduct of a sexual nature, as well as any other behavior of a sexual nature that is expected or perceived to cause offense or humiliation to another person, when such conduct interferes with work, is a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

3.3 Manifestations of abuse ¹⁰

- Gender-based: generalized sexist statements and behaviors that convey insulting or demeaning attitudes about individuals. Examples include insulting comments, offensive graffiti, obscene jokes, or humor based on the victim's sex.

⁸ Given the similarity of fields of action, the concepts adopted by MIEC JECI are used. Document: IMCS Pax Romana's Protocol on the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable People. Adopted at the World Assembly of the movement. 07th August 2019.

⁹ Concepts adopted by UNICEF are used. Document: UNICEF Position on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment. <https://www.unicef.org/en/unicef-stance-on-exploitation-sexual-abuse-and-harassment>

¹⁰ Given the similarity of fields of action, the concepts adopted by MIEC JECI are used. Document: IMCS Pax Romana's Protocol on the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable People. Adopted at the World Assembly of the movement. 07th August 2019.

- Seductive behavior: unwanted, inappropriate, and offensive sexual advances. Examples include repeated unwanted sexual invitations, insistent requests for dinner, drinks, or dates, persistent letters, phone calls, and other invitations.
- Sexual bribery: solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-related behavior by the promise of reward; the proposition may be overt or subtle.
- Sexual coercion: coercion of sexual activity or other sex-related behavior by the threat of punishment; examples include negative performance evaluations, withholding promotions, and the threat of termination.
- Sexual imposition: cross-sexual imposition (such as forced touching, feelings, grabbing) or sexual assault.

3.4 Risk factors ¹¹

Possible risk factors for being a victim, in the relationship with minors or populations in situations of vulnerability

- Low knowledge regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviors of an adult towards a minor or vulnerable population in the sexual sphere.
- A continuous search for attention and affection
- Low self-esteem
- Passive, obedient, need to please others
- Low decision-making capacity or problem-solving skills
- No respect for personal boundaries of self or others
- Cognitive disturbances or personality disorders
- Experiences of neglect or maltreatment prior to sexual abuse

¹¹ [Manual promoviendo ambientes sanos y seguros Arzobispado de Santiago Chile.pdf](#)

4. Commitment to act in cases of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment against minors or vulnerable populations

The MIIC assumes the firm commitment to restore or affirm the truth in any situation of abuse, committing itself to take actions that preserve the dignity of the victims of any form of exploitation, abuse, or sexual harassment against minors or populations in a situation of vulnerability.

To this effect, ICMICA-Pax Romana commits itself to the following:

- Develop information and training days directed to its members, on topics such as signs of sexual abuse or violence, damage caused to victims and impact on their lives and family group, and responsibilities arising from acts of abuse in civil, criminal, and canon law.
- Respond to each case against or perpetrated by a member of the organization in accordance with the procedures set forth in this document.
- To provide appropriate support to the victims.
- Submit to the competent authorities any information or documentation indicating that a crime has been committed against a minor or vulnerable population by any member of our organization, or that he/she is a victim.

These provisions apply to all Catholic organizations that are part of MIIC - ICMICA - Pax Romana. In this sense, the MIIC considers that to guarantee that the purposes of the organization are realized in safe environments, free of exploitation, abuse, or sexual harassment against minors or populations in vulnerable situations, it must develop preventive actions, as well as act against suspected cases of abuse. The following actions are foreseen for this purpose:

4.1 Preventive actions.

Every member of the MIIC - ICMICA - Pax Romana will be informed of the Policy that governs the prevention and attention of cases of exploitation, abuse, or sexual harassment against minors or populations in situations of vulnerability. In addition, it must participate in the

information sessions on this matter, as well as the statutory and criminal consequences arising from such misconduct.

4.2 Actions in situations of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment.

Every member of ICMICA – MIIC Pax Romana will act diligently if he/she notices the behaviors mentioned above and if they are directed to minors or populations in situations of vulnerability, with risk factors.

The diligent behavior supposes¹²:

4.2.1 Informing the local management team or the World Board of actions that may constitute abuse against minors or vulnerable populations to facilitate the appropriate inquiry and investigation.

The local management team, in coordination (or not) with the World Board, will assign a companion for the victim, whenever the victim wishes, to offer support in a fraternal and welcoming spirit. The support person will be someone with a good understanding of the effects of child abuse and the vulnerability of individuals at the time of making a disclosure.

Pending investigations and a pronouncement by the World Council, the member of ICMICA -MIIC Pax Romana who is found to be the aggressor, according to the complaint, will be suspended from such status, for all purposes and will not be allowed to have contact with the alleged victim.

4.2.2 Report the case to the competent authority in the locality for investigation and punishment. To this effect, he/she shall offer the greatest collaboration to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities or instances of the corresponding Episcopal Conference.

¹² Being a concept fully developed by MIEC JECI, it is considered to adopt it, too. Document: IMCS Pax Romana's Protocol on the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable People. Adopted at the World Assembly of the movement. 07th August 2019

5. Supervision and Accountability

ICMICA - MIIC Pax Romana reaffirms its commitment to the truth and adopts every action that favors a safe and trusting environment among its members and with those with whom activities are carried out, with special attention to minors and populations in vulnerable situations.

For this purpose, the World Council of the ICMICA - MIIC Pax Romana, periodically requests the continental federations to report preventive actions against cases of exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment developed during the year.

Likewise, if such cases have occurred, they will be reported to the General Assembly, unless the victim demands confidentiality, as well as the procedures and the corresponding sanctions against the aggressor.

6. Approval and dissemination

This policy has been discussed and agreed upon by the members of the International Council of ICMICA-MIIC Pax Romana, discussed in regional assemblies and communities by the members of the movement, and will be published in the movement's media.

Miami, 14th September 2022

Ana Maria Bidegain

International President

ICMICA-MIIC PAX ROMANA