

**[DSWD DEPARTMENT ORDER NO. 13, s. 2000,
September 21, 2000]**

GUIDELINES ON STREET CHILDREN PROGRAM

I

Rationale

Children in the streets are continually growing in number. Studies show that they comprise about three percent of the child and youth population of a city. Accordingly, more than 50% are in Metro Manila. A majority (75%) go home to their families, others (20%) have minimal contacts with their families and only 5% are abandoned and with no families at all. In a recent study conducted in 1999 by De La Salle University, a total of 22,556 street children in 22 selected cities nationwide were identified.

The street children phenomenon started to be felt in the '70s. Thousands of families troop to the cities for economic survival due to result of widespread poverty and the presence of insurgents in rural areas. In the cities, these families live with relatives and friends in slum and squatter areas. With inadequate skills or often no skills at all, they land the lowest paying jobs. Forced by necessity, these migrants send their children to the streets to help the family eke out a living.

Responding to the plight of street children, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the National Council on Social Development Foundation of the Philippines, Inc. (NCSDF), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched in 1986 the National Project on Street Children. The project covers 27 cities and five urban municipalities with an interagency body made up of government agencies and non-government organizations. By the end of December 1997, approximately 70,000 street children and youth had been reached over a 10-year period.

In October 1998, Ahon Bata sa Lansangan project was launched prioritizing the 17 cities and municipalities of the National Capital Region by strengthening the capabilities of LGUs to address the problem. It is component of the Estrada Administration's pro-poor agenda which seeks to intensify and accelerate past and present attempts to address the plight of street children by mobilizing various sectors as a whole and not be left to the government alone. The front liners of this undertaking are the local government units who have taken the lead in coordinating the efforts of other government agencies and non-government organizations and other stakeholders with an end goal of getting children off the streets.

In recognition of the growing demand to expand the services with high-density sites of street children, these guidelines on street children program are hereby formulated. The guidelines also serve as the guiding principles for policies and program interventions that promote and safeguard the rights of Filipino street

children using the framework on the Philippine National Developmental Plan for Children or better known as Child 21. The government adopted the implementation of the Child 21 goals where street children is considered as one of the main priorities of its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

LEGAL BASES:

The formulation of these guidelines is anchored on the following laws:

1. 1987 Constitution "Article XV, Section III. The State shall defend "the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty , exploitation, and other conditions prejudicial to their environment."
2. 1991 Local Government Code. Chapter 2. Under the Decentralization Process. The Code in cognizance of the primary role of Local Government Units (LGUs) in the development and growth of communities, vested in the latter the exercise of service delivery functions, among them the delivery of health and welfare services and the implementation of programs and projects for street children, primary healthcare, maternal and child care, etc.
3. Republic Act 7610, also known as the "Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discriminatory Act" Article 1, Section 2 — It states that a comprehensive program shall be formulated to protect children against any form of abuse which endanger child survival and normal development.
4. PD 603 or the Child and Youth Welfare Code. Under its general principles, it stipulates that the Child is one of the most important asset of the nation. Every effort should be exerted to promote his welfare and enhance his opportunities for a useful and happy life.

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Project Description

The project on street children is a comprehensive and integrated program addressing the plight of street children by taking them away from the streets to prevent further exposure to harm, exploitation, abuse and other hazards. It is a multi-sectoral initiative to enable government both in the national and local levels, non-government agencies, business sectors, socio-civic-religious group and communities to assume collective responsibility in protecting children.

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Objectives

The program seeks to take away children from the streets, provide the children and their families with adequate social services and to protect their rights towards their physical, social, spiritual and emotional development as persons, thus preparing them to become productive members of the community where they belong.

Specific Objectives:

- a. To rescue street children from the streets to protect them from

further exposure to hazards, risks, abuse and exploitation.

b. To access and provide children basic social services thru the following:

b.1 education — provision of scholarship or educational assistance for children who will attend formal schooling and vocational/technological skills training for older children and those who would not want to go back to school;

b.2 life skills activities for them to adopt a more healthy and appropriate behavior and values to live decently, responsively and productively;

b.3 an alternative home and family for emotional and physical security and safety;

c. To effect changes among families of street children in terms of family values and prevent family disintegration through conduct of parenting enrichment sessions and increasing family income through livelihood assistance program and;

d. To mobilize and strengthen partnership among community, national government agencies, non-government organizations, church groups, business sectors and other people's/community -based organizations in assuming collective responsibility in protecting children.

V

Target Clientele and Areas

Street children are persons below eighteen years of age who spend a significant amount of time on the streets, markets, parks, premises of malls, ports and airports and other similar areas. They can be seen pushing garbage carts, shining shoes, scavenging for scrap, watching parked cars and peddling cigarettes, plastic bags, newspapers, sampaguita garlands for a living and others. They also roam in the streets and knock at cars in order to beg. They adopt the streets as their homes, as a source of livelihood, or both. Whether they maintain ties with their families or not, they are inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults. Generally left on their own, they fall prey to the vices of the streets as they work to keep themselves alive to help their families to survive.

The program will be implemented in key cities and urban areas nationwide with high incidence of street children.

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Components

A. Rescue Operation

Rescue operation is an activity where street children are taken away from the streets. The LGU social workers, street educators, barangay officials, law enforcement authorities, among others shall be needed as part of the rescue team

whenever this activity is implemented. At an appropriate time, the team shall rescue street children specifically to protect them from exploitation, syndicates and other forms of abuse. The operation is also a reaching out process where the children know that there is an assistance available to them. Its ultimate purpose is to enable these children to come to a decision toward a better option and a clear direction in life.

B. Social Mobilization and Networking

This involves formation of core groups and/or strengthening of Task Forces or Clusters in the City level composed of local government units, national government agencies, non-government organizations, other stakeholders, community leaders and volunteers including the committees under the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children as well as the street children and their families.

C. Basic Services Delivery

Community-based, center-based and street-based are the three modes/approaches of delivery of basic services for street children in order to reach them in the places where they are. Said mode of service delivery is based on needs and readiness of the street children.

» *Street-based*

The street-based approach reaches out to children on the streets or in places where they are outside of their homes. Street educators serves as the street children's link to resources within the community through counseling and dialogues to build trust and establish a friendly relationship.

The goal is to enable these children make a decision whether to return to their families or be referred to centers for residential care services.

» *Center-based*

Center-based approach or residential care is the provision of physical and emotional environment as well as structured experiences. This is a temporary placement that enables children to prepare themselves for their reintegration to their families and into the mainstream of society. Center-based services can be provided thru the following:

- Drop-in center — which provide a 24-hour service to accommodate day or night shelter needs of street children as a respite to street life where they can rest, play, eat, sleep, maintaining personal hygiene, socialize with peers, attend alternative form of education and receive counselling. While in the drop-in center, the children are given the families or seek the safety and security of residential centers.
- Temporary Shelters or Residential Centers — which provide 24-hour residential group care on a temporary basis specifically designed for street children who are in need of a therapeutic environment. It approximates family life under the guidance of a staff especially trained

for this purpose. Services include provision of food, clothing, health conditions, skills training, counselling, preparation for foster care and possibly, adoption.

» *Community-Based*

The community-based approach is preventive in nature which addresses the problem at its point of origin-- the family and community of the street child. It aims to enhance the capacities of families and communities in taking care of their children. It also mobilizes the support system for the families. The community-based services include the following:

Services Directed to:

1. *Street Children*

- Educational Assistance Program (EAP)

It aims to assist children to go back to school either in primary or secondary level including vocational training. The objective of this program is to enable children to remain in school and reduce their working time on streets. The educational assistance include regular meetings of parents to sustain the child and family's motivation to remain in school.

- Skills Training

It aims to provide and or enhance the skills of older street children for gainful employment. This can be conducted by appropriate agency in the community or by referral to skills training centers. Available marketable skills should be planned and identified according to the needs and skills of the child.

- Life Skills Development

To lead a successful and productive life, child also needs the ability to relate to and respect others and oneself, the ability to know and carry out their responsibility and the ability to be more aware and perceptive about their environment. This can be done through the conduct or value formation, playing games, workshops and other activities that give them an opportunity to experience teamwork and cooperation, planning and decision-making, testing out their ideas as well as discovering their weaknesses and strengths. These are necessary in helping them to develop into emotionally, physically and socially healthy children.

- Peer Support Group

It aims to build the capability of the children to become partners in the delivery of services related to their development. Selected street children who have the interest, willingness and capability to serve as peer counselors, educators and advocates for positive lifestyles, children's right etc. shall be trained to assist other children in times of need. The peer support group seeks to guide other children towards achieving self-reliance and participation in