



FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

# SOCIAL GUIDANCE CENTERS OPERATION MANUAL



European Union

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This document was born out of the lessons learned of the FD project implemented by Enfants&Développement in collaboration with the University of Labor and Social Affairs (campus HCMC) and the HCMC Open University.

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## Abbreviations

HV	Home visit
FD	Family development
FH	Follow up at Home
LA	Local authorities
LF	Local Facilitator
PO	Phase Out
SGC	Social guidance centers
SW	Social worker



**Dear Colleagues and Friends,**

Enfants&Développement (E&D) has been working to improve the situation of children and families in Vietnam for over 20 years. Since 2010, E&D has been implementing an innovative Family Development Project in district 8 of Ho Chi Minh City. The project aims to alleviate poverty, improve the living conditions and resilience of vulnerable families, promote more inclusive services and ensure best practices in social work.

On March 25th 2010, the Vietnamese Prime Minister issued Decision No. 32/2010 ratifying the Project on Development of Professional Social Work in Vietnam from 2010 to 2020. In this important legal document, the Vietnamese government lays out its strategy to build and train a network of professional social workers and to mainstream social work best practices throughout Vietnam within the next decade.

The Family Development project uses an innovative social work methodology, the Family Development (FD) approach, designed in the 1980's in Brazil for urban contexts. E&D does/has implemented similar FD projects in Cambodia, The Philippines, Nepal and Burkina Faso and as such, has become a recognized expert in this area. The attractiveness of the FD approach is due to its simplicity, effectiveness, pragmatism, and sustainability.

The project has been set up in partnership with two universities: the University of Labor and Social Affairs – Campus Ho Chi Minh City and the Ho Chi Minh City Open University. It is the result of strong collaboration with local authorities within the district of intervention.

During the three year course of the project, E&D social workers visited the homes of more than 700 families with an additional 500 persons visiting the project's two

social guidance centers (SGC) to receive information and/or to get referrals in 5 areas: health, education, administrative matters, economic and psycho-social issues. The social guidance centers provided support and referrals to the local community, especially the most vulnerable families, helping them to access available social services existing in the district and in the city and building their problem-solving skills, confidence and resilience.

This resource, the Social Guidance Centers Operation Manual, was born out of the experience of running two SGCs in District 8. It provides guidelines on how to manage SGCs in urban poor environments, to enable replication of the project and to share lessons learned.

This document is part of a series and is not meant to be exhaustive. It can be used independently but preferably together with the Home Visits Operation Manual and the Network and Referrals Operation Manual.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the kind support of several donors and partners who have made our work possible over the last four years, particularly the European Union, the French Agency for Development and the Vietnam People's Aid Coordinating Committee. We would like to thank the People's Committee of District 8 who played an important role in organizing and facilitating the fieldwork and to all the families who trusted the social worker teams and agreed to take part in this pilot project.

We hope this document will help all those interested in social work to apply innovative solutions to address some of the most burning issues related to basic human needs in developing urban environments today.

*E&D staff in Vietnam*



## I. OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL GUIDANCE CENTERS

Social guidance centers are an important part of the Family Development Project. The centers are welcoming environments encouraging people and families in the community to meet, exchange experiences, and learn from each other when they face difficulties in their lives. The social guidance center assists people with taking action and moving forward through access to:

- Counselling services
- Information/referrals
- Guidance on administrative procedures and other services
- Awareness and group discussion sessions designed for people to share experiences and learn from each other

Each center is open to all families no matter their level of poverty or socio-economic background. All services provided by the centers are free of charge.

### 1. OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL GUIDANCE CENTERS

General objective: To assist vulnerable families in the intervention area to gain autonomy and become greater integrated into the social and economic fabric of the community.

#### Specific objectives:

- Anchor a Family Development Project in one area
- Provide information, counseling and support to any family in need, in the areas of health, education, administrative matters, economic matters and psychosocial issues
- Provide a place that assures confidentiality, empathy, unbiased understanding and ensured psycho-social support
- Encourage the families to move forward and become able to seek assistance by themselves
- Offer a place for the families in the community to meet up, discuss and share difficulties faced during the follow up or referral process and learn from each other's experiences to settle their own issues
- Prioritize access to existing external services for the most vulnerable families, enabling maximum use of existing services for the most service-deprived members of the population while improving the type and quality of services available
- Identify the most vulnerable families eligible for home-based follow up

## 2. LOCATION OF SOCIAL GUIDANCE CENTERS

The FD methodology is more suitable and effective for poverty reduction in an urban context where many social and family issues are prevalent and many types of social services exist.

SGC must be located in low socio-economic development areas such as poor urban neighbourhoods, slums, labour areas, temporary lodging areas, places where migrants are gathered, etc.

Each SGC should be located in the community at an easy-to-access (easy-to-find) location and should be equipped with simple, welcoming furniture so that people don't feel unfamiliar or fearful when they enter.

## 3. BENEFICIARIES

Each SGC is open to all inhabitants of the intervention area – no matter the person's income or social status – who are seeking concrete solutions to specific difficulties or who simply need psycho-social support and to be listened to.

Nevertheless, two types of families form the bulk of Guidance Center "clients":

- (1) Families in need of information and limited guidance, awareness raising, and are active enough to take action once properly informed. These families can be invited to the SGC for counseling sessions and group discussions (home visits are not needed).
- (2) Families requiring home visits, who need support in order to identify their own difficulties and needs to make use of existing services, and who do not dare to come to the center. However, after a while, these families are encouraged to come to the SGC. Indeed, social guidance centers are a very efficient tool to measure the dynamism and motivation of FH families, and to encourage and motivate families to experience a new environment which they might not know, giving them new opportunities to meet other families and possibly other social workers, all within the reassuring, confidential and safe space of the SGC.

## 4. STAFF OF SOCIAL GUIDANCE CENTERS

### 4.1 Center staff

#### 4.1.1 Number

1 SGC manager and 2 to 6 social workers

#### 4.1.2 Social guidance center manager

The social guidance center manager should be a social worker with extensive experience in social work and relationship-building with the local authorities.

#### Responsibilities:

- Ensure that the SGC facility has been approved for use (eg. agreement in place, safe, etc.) by the LA or designated authority
- Exercise overall management responsibility for the SGC and ensure that all required functions are carried out
- Set objectives and plan activities for the SGC and ensure that all tasks for each objective are accomplished
- Ensure all equipment is well maintained and in working order; ensure family files and information material is kept up-to-date, appropriately organized and available; ensure compliance with advertised opening hours; ensure premises are tidy and clean, etc.
- Chair weekly meetings at SGC
- Closely coordinate and work with the LA; report and update activities

#### 4.1.3 Social workers

The social workers can be graduates of social work programs or experienced para-professional social workers. Key skills required are:

- Good listener
- Non-judgmental, unbiased and open-minded
- Empathetic; sensitive, considerate

The social workers will be particularly monitored on:

- Interpersonal and communication skills
- Capacity to create and maintain professional supportive relationships

- Capacity to set boundaries and accept the limit of what can be accomplished during a specific period of time
- Openness to consider and respect the beneficiaries' needs and capacities
- Ability to coordinate communication and action among multiple parties (vital part of the referral process)
- Ability to evaluate one's own performance and work toward improving it

The social workers have the following duties:

- Conduct counselling sessions at the SGC
- Conduct home visits (if necessary)
- Build trusting relationships with the families
- Encourage and develop these families' existing dynamism and abilities to look for appropriate help and to improve their situation
- Refer families to the adequate services (if necessary), accompany them (if necessary) and follow up on referrals.
- Conduct awareness sessions and group discussions within the SGC
- Provide weekly and monthly activity reports to the SGC manager

#### 4.1.4 Support Staff

A supportive environment is key to optional functioning of the SGC's.

A support staff may be recruited (even if only part-time).

- Technical support officer: Ensure project compliance with FD methodology, ensure tools are correctly used and provide relevant technical support to the social workers (to participate in case conferences, triangle exercises, supervision activities, training, etc.), assess the social worker's performance: strengths, difficulties, need for individual support and/or complementary training
- Network officer: In charge of the local network of basic service providers (public and private) in the city as a whole; exchange information with the SW's; coordinate the referral process; update all information related to network and referral activities quality (see Network/Referral Operation Manual).

#### 4.2 Independent experts/consultants

Along with the social worker staff mentioned above, external experts (psychologists, lawyers, etc.) can be recruited to assist with analyzing and settling the most difficult issues encountered by SGC clients. These experts and consultants should be on duty at least two half days per week to ensure regularity of services.

#### 4.3 Volunteers

The volunteers are local helpers to the social workers. They can be introduced by the local authorities (in this case they are called "local facilitators"). They should be preferably committed people with a deep knowledge of the local context and area. The volunteers perform tasks congruent to their competencies, and they sign an agreement with the SGC. They may be completely volunteers or may receive a little allowance for their time.

### 5. OPENING HOURS OF SOCIAL GUIDANCE CENTERS

Opening hours should be adapted to the local clients' habits and should accommodate those who may be working.

A minimum of two social workers should be present during open hours at each SGC.

### 6. FACILITIES

SGC premises are chosen and arranged so as to ensure:

- Privacy and confidentiality: a separate space for counseling sessions (between the families and the social workers), and a waiting area for other visitors
- Comfortable working environment: clean, airy, well-lit, no disturbances and noise, etc.
- Efficient information exchange: charts, books, leaflets, posters, etc.
- Efficient recording and storing of clients' information: filing cabinets, desks, computers, printer, photocopier, etc.



## II. ACTIVITIES AT SOCIAL GUIDANCE CENTERS

### 1. PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

- 1.1 Mapping and identification of available resources in the project area**
- Coordinate with local authorities to verify information related to the situation of the population and problems encountered in the community; study research reports, maps, and other data provided by local authorities and other local organizations
  - Conduct initial house-to-house visits together with a local facilitator (if any)
  - Be well prepared for referrals of clients to external service providers (create or update partner information cards together with the network officer and maintain a database of quality social services)
- 1.2 Promotion**
- Hang signboards and distribute leaflets providing basic information about SGC: a short description of the FDP program, the SGC's objectives, services and activities; the free-of-charge nature of all services; and the location and opening hours of the center
  - Coordinate with local authorities to introduce project activities through the use of loudspeakers, household group meetings, etc.
  - Provide verbal information about the SGC when undertaking field activities or conducting home visits
  - Distribute flyers at awareness meetings or other relevant activities conducted by the FDP staff for household group leaders, ward and subward leaders, partners, leaders of other social organizations, etc.

Note: It is required to conduct promotion activities regularly: at least every month.

## 2. DIFFERENTIATED APPROACHES AND FOLLOW-UP FOR SPECIFIC FAMILY SITUATIONS

### 2.1. FH Families: are those who benefit from a 6-month home based follow-up and/or at the SGC (see HV Operation Manual)

#### Approach:

- Build rapport and establish trusting relationships
- Develop an action plan
- Provide information, raise awareness and develop new skills
- Restore the client's confidence in his/her own abilities and skills
- Implement the action plan in which the role and responsibilities of stakeholders are identified clearly
- Conduct basic service referrals (if necessary)

### 2.2. PO Families: are ex-FH families still in need of short-term (wave-based) support at the SGC (no further need for home visits).

#### Approach:

- Provide information, counselling and guidance
- If necessary, introduce families to other basic service providers

### 2.3. Families who don't need a Follow-up and who mainly need information and limited guidance

#### Approach:

- Provide information on the FD project
- Provide counselling services and introduce basic services if necessary
- Propose and implement an action plan if necessary

## 3. SERVICES PROVIDED AT SOCIAL GUIDANCE CENTERS

### 3.1. FAMILY COUNSELLING

#### 3.1.1. Steps for an initial counselling session

- Welcome and receive the client(s)
- Introduce the FD project (objectives and services offered)
- Introduce principles of counselling sessions
- Record initial information (address, telephone number, etc.)
- Discuss the purpose of the visit and evaluate the client's needs
- Provide information
- Make an action plan (if necessary)
- Introduce or refer to basic services (if necessary)
- Schedule an appointment for the next time (if necessary)

#### 3.1.2. Steps for subsequent counseling sessions

- Welcome and receive the client(s)
- Obtain and record feedback, if possible, on the fulfillment of objectives
- Collect information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of referrals (if any)
- Follow the implementation of the action plan
- Investigate further if the SW identifies other more serious issues relating to the family
- Reexamine objectives (if necessary)
- Introduce or refer to basic services (if necessary)
- Schedule an appointment for the next time (if necessary)

#### After the visit:

- Prepare report: update family information into the "Reception logbook" and into the family file; Referral report (if any), etc.

#### 3.1.3. Follow-up after the counselling session

After the initial meeting at the SGC, the family will be invited to come back for feedback and further updates. If the family does not come back, the social worker should try to obtain information and updates before the discontinuation of service provision.

### 3.2. REFERRALS AND INTRODUCTIONS

See Network and Referrals Operation Manual

### 3.3. AWARENESS SESSIONS AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS



	AWARENESS SESSIONS	GROUP DISCUSSIONS
General objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To improve each family's knowledge and awareness of health, education, administrative matters, family welfare issues...</li> <li>To create experience-sharing synergies between inhabitants of the area</li> </ul>	
Specific objectives	Evaluate the level of awareness and knowledge among participants on a specific theme and provide concrete information in order to encourage participants to adopt enlightened behaviours when faced with these situations	This space allows participants to show themselves in an open spirit without fear of judgement. Activities encourage exchange and open expression of feelings including suffering and deep emotions linked with the topic of discussion. The support group develops solidarity between participants thereby lessening psychological isolation.
Frequency	Twice a month	
Topics/Themes	SW's need to encourage families to participate in the selection of subjects for awareness sessions or group discussions. These subjects need to be identified on the basis of demand or interests to families.	
Target beneficiaries	In principle, target beneficiaries are all inhabitants in the intervention area, however, maintaining the possibility to target other specific groups, depending on the theme of the awareness session. For example, if the theme is school enrollment, preference will be given to families with children out of school.	A small number of participants are carefully selected on the basis of their willingness to share a specific difficulty and a common predicament. FDP staff will select and invite participants, most often drawing from FH families.
Venue	Group discussions and awareness sessions are generally held in the SGC though other venues can be identified if required, preferably inside of, or within close proximity to, the intervention area.	
Number of participants	From 20 to 25 participants (depending on space available at the SGC – if too many people pledge to attend, try to arrange at another location in the intervention area)	Maximum 10 persons, in order to allow everybody to speak, participate and get to know each other
Duration	1.5 hours maximum (concentration and effectiveness tend to fade after that)	2 hours maximum

	AWARENESS SESSIONS	GROUP DISCUSSIONS
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each theme is chosen carefully by SGC staff in coordination with the local facilitator</li> <li>Activities are to be adapted to the level and capacities of participants. Prepare visual tools: If most participants are illiterate, do not use written visual aids, but rather images and audio</li> <li>Follow-up families and other inhabitants of the area should be systematically informed about the schedule and topics of activities</li> <li>A list of participants should be prepared prior to each awareness session /group discussion. State clearly name, age, gender, type of follow up (FH, PO or families of the community), participating for the first time or more frequently, address, etc.</li> </ul>	
Facilitation	<p>Group discussions are facilitated by SW's – always two working in tandem: one facilitates the discussion and the other takes notes, observes participants, and manages visual aids.</p> <p>In some cases, an external facilitator can be invited. He/she must be well prepared by the SWs in advance.</p> <p>Participants are to be encouraged to give feedbacks/comments on the awareness session/group discussion in order to evaluate efficiency as well as improve quality of activities.</p>	
Number of participants	Facilitation must encourage debate and interaction, promoting discussion with participants through question raising and reflective thinking. Limit "preaching" and closed questions that inhibit discussion. Visual tools should be used in a flexible manner.	<p>When returning to previous topics (even if organized within different sessions), the original SW should remain the facilitator in order to create an atmosphere of comfort and continuity for participants, and to help that facilitator monitor the progress of the group.</p> <p>The role of the facilitator is to help participants structure the discussion, to summarize ideas, etc.</p> <p>The supporting SW helps ensure respect of rules, taking the floor, records and reports.</p>
Reporting	<p>On a monthly basis, the SGC will report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics of every awareness session/group discussion conducted in the area</li> <li>Dates / Attendance/Feedbacks/ Comments and evaluation from participants/Minutes</li> </ul>	

### III. REPORTS, MONITORING AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

#### 1. Reporting

The social workers provide monthly narrative and statistical analysis to the SGC manager

- The SGC manager synthesizes these reports and provides a quarterly report to local authorities

The SGC manager chairs the weekly meeting:

The social workers should keep a weekly record of their activities and provide the following information to the manager during the meeting:

- Number and description of planned activities
- Number and description of activities actually implemented
- Analysis of the results and of the difficulties encountered
- Proposed solutions
- Planned activities for the next week

Monthly report: The monthly report is a narrative and statistical analysis collaborating data and the most relevant information of the month

A monthly report should contain at least the following information:

- The number of families visiting the SGC
- The number of Initial Visits (see HV Operation Manual for further explanation)
- The number of Pending Visits (see HV Operation Manual for further explanation)
- The number of FH families
- The number of PO families
- The number and nature of referrals and introductions
- The number and topics of awareness sessions/group discussions
- The main activities, results and difficulties

Minutes of the weekly team meeting: The minutes record all the information of the meeting. They are taken by one SW.

Minutes of the awareness sessions/group discussions and list of the participants: record the topic, the discussions, the date, the list of participants, feedbacks, remarks and the evaluation of participants

#### 2. SGC teamwork

- The SGC manager chairs the weekly team meeting (the team is made of all the SW's at the SGC).
- In case of difficulties, meetings with the technical support officer are organized: Briefing, debriefing, triangle exercises, case conferences, team supervision, etc.

#### 3. Cooperation mechanisms with partners

- Attend meetings with partners
- Build and maintain constructive working relationships with local authorities and project partners

#### 4. Other activities

- Supervise social work student interns (if any)
- Special event organization for the children in the community

### ANNEXES

#### 1. Reception Logbook (template)

#### 2. Glossary

