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Department of Social Welfare and Development  
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Administrative Order No. 86  
Series of 2003

SUBJECT: Guidelines in the Implementation of Psychosocial Services for Solo Parents and their Children

I. RATIONALE

Gone are the days that a Filipino family is composed exclusively of a father, mother and their children, each with an assigned role to perform. Even in the previous centuries, there were already solo parents and urbanization only increased their number. The challenges of modernization, and the impact of crime and violence has contributed to the raising phenomenon of solo parenting. Solo parents go through a multitude of stresses, which is a combination of psychological, physical and emotional anxieties. The loss of or separation from a partner is an intensely painful experience and the grieving process cannot be ascertained. The experience is compounded by financial difficulties and the difficult demand of rearing children alone. What makes it even more difficult is that there is not much outside of the family milieu in terms of support and guidance that will enable them to effectively perform their function.

Based on National Statistics Office statistics in CY 2000, there are 2.9 M single parents nationwide classified as widowed and separated. The enactment of the RA 8972 or Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000 is a response to the needs of the solo parents. It promotes the family as the foundation of the nation by ensuring its total development through the provision of comprehensive program that will address the needs of the solo parents. RA 8972 mandates the development and implementation of comprehensive programs and services for solo parents by the Department.

II. PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS

This service shall be guided by the following principles:

a. Non-discrimination

Solo Parents and their children should not be compared with families with complete parents.

b. Solo Parents given the proper support and assistance could effectively deal with demands of parenting.

c. Parents who have the full understanding of their stressors can cope better than those who stay in their feeling level.

### **III. LEGAL BASIS**

#### **1. Republic Act 8972**

The Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000 declares that it is the policy of the State to promote the family as the foundation of the nation, strengthen its solidarity and ensure its total development. The law calls for the development of a comprehensive package of services for solo parents to address their needs.

#### **2. 1986 Philippine Constitution**

Article 64 – Assistance to Widowed and Abandoned Parent

The State shall provide assistance to widowed and abandoned parent or where either spouse is on prolonged absence due to illness, imprisonment, etc. It further provides that such parents should be helped to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills needed for the proper care and maintenance of the family.

Article 66 – That unmarried mothers be given specialized and professional service.

#### **3. Family Code**

Article 212 – In case of absence or death of either parent, the present parent shall continue exercising parental authority over the children, unless the court appoints another person to be the guardian of the person or the property of the children.

### **IV. OBJECTIVES**

#### **General**

To enhance the social functioning of solo parents to be able to fulfill their roles and responsibilities to their families and communities which is focused on individual's resiliency, development and participation through the provision of a comprehensive psychosocial intervention for solo parents and their children.

#### **Specific**

1. To provide opportunities that will help solo parents identify and resolve feelings of loneliness, grief, frustrations and others which affect their role performance.
2. To provide learning opportunities that would enhance and improve the understanding, attitude and skills of solo parent in their responsibility in raising and managing their children while performing their dual/multiple roles at home.
3. To provide skills training and livelihood opportunities to solo parents and their children to enable them cope with the financial demands of solo parenting;

4. To gain access to available resources and other support services that may be necessary for the solo parents and their children; and
5. To organize and mobilize community based support system/growth groups of solo parents that will help strengthen their coping mechanisms towards solo parenting.

## V. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **Solo Parent** – As defined in RA 8972, a solo parent is an individual who falls under any of the following categories:
  - A woman who gives birth as a result of rape or crimes against chastity, even without a final conviction of the offender provided that the mother keeps and raises the child;
  - Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to death of the spouse;
  - Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood while the spouse is detained or serving sentence for a criminal conviction for at least one (1) year;
  - Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to physical and/or mental incapacity of spouse as certified by a public medical practitioner;
  - Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to legal separation or de facto separation from spouse for at least one (1) year; provided that he or she is entrusted with the custody of the children;
  - Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to declaration of nullity or annulment of marriage as decreed by a court or by a church; Provided that he or she is entrusted with the custody of children;
  - Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to abandonment of spouse for at least one (1) year;
  - Unmarried mother/father who has preferred to keep and rear his/her children instead of having others care for them or give them up to a welfare institution;
  - Any other person who solely provides parental care and support to a child or children provided he/she is duly licensed as a foster parent by DSWD or duly appointed legal guardian by the court; and
  - Any family member who assumes the responsibility of head of family as a result of the death, abandonment, disappearance or prolonged absence of the parents or solo parents: Provided, that such abandonment, disappearance, or absence lasts for at least one year.
2. **Family** – shall refer to the solo parent and his/her child/children. It also includes any relative by consanguinity up to the fourth civil degree. These persons shall include, but not be limited to any uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother, niece, nephew or cousin.

3. **Children** – shall refer to those living with and dependent upon the solo parent for support who are unmarried, unemployed and below 18 years of age, or even 18 years and above but are incapable of self-support and/or are mentally and/or physically challenged.
4. **Parental Responsibility** – with respect to their minor children shall refer to the rights and duties of the parents. These includes the following:
  - To keep them in their company, to support educate and instruct them by right precept and good example and to provide for their upbringing in keeping with their means;
  - To give them love and affection, advice and counsel; companionship and understanding;
  - To provide them with moral and spiritual guidance; and
  - To furnish them with good and wholesome educational materials, supervise their activities and others.
5. **Psychosocial Services** – refers to a series of intervention geared towards the enhancement of their coping capability through the resolution of multiple problems/difficulties as a consequence of being a solo parent such as economic pressures, social acceptability performance of parental responsibilities need for resources and support services.

## V. SCOPE and DESCRIPTION of the SERVICE

### A. Description

The Psychosocial Services for Solo Parents is part of the Comprehensive Program for Solo Parents and their Children which refers to a series of interventions geared towards the enhancement of their role performance, through the resolution of multiple problems/difficulties as a consequence of being a solo parent. These includes economic pressure, social acceptability, performance of parental responsibilities, need for resources and support services.

The service is a response to the emerging needs of the increasing population of solo parents particularly those who are at risk and disadvantaged. There are different interventions that address the major problems encountered by solo parents to be able to cope with solo parenting.

### B. Target Beneficiaries

Disadvantaged solo parents who fall in any of the categories as defined in Republic Act 8972 – Solo Parent Welfare Act of 2000.

### C. Target Areas and Project Duration

The project shall be pilot tested for two (2) years in two areas, one rural and one urban community/barangay with high incidence of disadvantaged solo parents. This will be in Region IV for the rural community and in the National Capital Region for the urban community.

## D. Project Interventions

### 1. Community Based Protection and Assistance to Solo Parents at Risk

- a. **Individual Counseling** – involves series of individual sessions with solo parents to enable them to cope with unresolved feelings associated with guilt, anger, shame, bereavement, insecurity and self-pity so that they may be better able to deal with other stresses of being solo parents. Priority will be given to solo parents who have recently assumed single parenthood to help them overcome the crisis.
- b. **Critical Incident Stress Debriefing** – involves conduct of sessions with solo parents to help them overcome a crisis and stressful situations at any given time that need to be addressed immediately. This can be provided by trained LGU social workers/counselors; from the solo parents club; or from organized volunteer support group.
- c. **Peer Support Group** – refers to a series of counselling sessions with a group of solo parents who are in a similar crisis situation where the group is used as a tool to come up with a resolution to address/solve the conflict/feelings.
- d. **Family Casework Service** – refers to the provision of psychological and clinical interventions to solo parents and their families who are faced with problems in relationships aimed at improving the system of communication towards enhanced family functioning.
- e. **Accessing to and Referrals for Support Services** – involves efforts to assist solo parents for other support services that they may need in times of crisis e.g. legal/para-legal assistance, education, housing, employment, medical and/or burial assistance.

### 2. Development of Community-Based Support System

- a. **Solo Parents Club** - a support group for continuous healing and personal growth will be organized from among the members of the peer group.
- b. **Community Volunteer Support Group** - this may compose of barangay officials and key leaders in the community, as well as some relatives of the solo parents which shall also serve as counselors of solo parents and caregivers of solo parents' children in case problems that affect their performance as parents arise.

### 3. Economic Empowerment

- a. **Skills Training** – Solo parents and their grown up children who are 18 years old and above can be trained under the Productivity Skills Capability Building for disadvantaged women or TESDA to enable them to develop skills necessary to undertake entrepreneurial activities.

- b. **Livelihood Assistance** - the strategies and mechanisms of the Self-Employment Assistance Kaunlaran (SEA-K) shall be applied in the provision of livelihood assistance to the solo parents. Solo parents will be organized or integrated into SEA-K Associations and/or groups in order to avail of the seed capital. Likewise, they can also be accessed through available livelihood assistance of other agencies/and NGOs.

#### 4. Linkages to other Support Services

The following support services may be provided to ensure the gains of the project:

- a. **Parent Effectiveness Service** - for solo parents with inadequate parenting knowledge and skills, and those who have 0-6 years old children not served under the Day Care Centers or other child-minding centers to help them cope with their parenting duties and eventually become effective parents.
- b. **Day Care Service** - for children aged 3-6 years of working mothers. They can be accommodated in existing day care centers close to their homes.
- c. **Child Placement Service** - solo parents will always be encouraged to keep their children and their family together. However, if after provision of extensive counseling services and still the solo parent decides to give up his/her children due to not being able to care for and provide them with a good future, the social worker then assists the solo parent to decide on the best alternative family care for his/her child either through foster care, residential care, adoption and/or legal guardianship.
- d. **Comprehensive Program for Solo Parents and their Children** – this include a package of services like livelihood assistance, self employment and skills development, educational services employment-related benefits, health and housing services

## VII. IMPLEMENTING PROCEDURES/DETAILS

### 1. Social Preparation

#### a. Conduct of Baseline Study on Solo Parents

1. A baseline study in selected areas with high number of solo parents through random sampling shall be undertaken by the Social Technology Bureau to get baseline information to establish and understand the plight of solo parents. The study shall generate the socio-demographic data and economic profile of solo parents to properly identify and respond to their needs.
2. For a more in-depth study of solo parents in a particular area, a structured survey in identified barangays can be conducted.

3. In the absence of a study, secondary data available shall be utilized to determine high incidence/profile of solo parents.

#### **b. Coordination with Local Government Units**

The results of the baseline study shall be the guide in identifying the project sites for the study. Initial coordination with the concerned local government units shall be undertaken to: (a) give an orientation on the solo parents programs and activities, (b) identify the specific sites where solo parents abound, (c) check on the accessibility of the sites for purposes of monitoring and supervision, and (d) determine willingness and commitment of barangay officials to implement the project. The Social Technology Bureau in coordination with the identified region will conduct consultation dialogue with the identified LGUs relative to the implementation of the project.

### **2. Capability Building**

Series of capability building activities shall be provided to project implementors and volunteers of the pilot areas including the regional project implementors to equip them with the appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills in the implementation and management of the project. Specifically, social worker implementors shall be trained on how to handle individual and group sessions for solo parents.

A separate training for community volunteers as community-based counselors and caregivers to solo parents and their children at risk shall also be provided.

### **3. Convergence of Services**

Based on the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000, other member agencies namely Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Labor and Employment, TESDA, National Housing Authority and Commission on Higher Education are mandated to give their resources, expertise and skill to respond to the identified needs of the solo parents and their children.

To ensure participation and commitment of member agencies, an inter-agency group at the municipal level shall be organized/convened to monitor compliance to the commitments.

### **4. Project Implementation**

#### **a. Client Identification**

Pursuant to Article IV, Section 8 or RA 8972, solo parents will be identified with the following criteria: a) a resident of the area as certified by the Barangay Captain for the last six (6) months, b) with an income level equal to or below the poverty line, and c) with supporting documents that can establish themselves as a solo parent. In order to avail the service, solo parents are assessed by the MSWDO and issued a Solo Parents Identification Card signed by the municipal mayor and the MSWDO.

For purposes of identifying the target beneficiaries under the project, case records of the solo parents who have been issued an ID will be reviewed by the MSWDO to determine who among them have problems that need immediate intervention.

In case an ID has not yet been issued to a solo parent, the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer (MSWDO) shall conduct proper assessment to determine their eligibility to avail of the programs and services of the project.

**b. Individual/Group Development**

This shall include the provision of individual or group counseling services, organization of support groups and conduct of capability building activities to develop solo parents as peer support to other solo parents.

**5. Documentation, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Documentation of the project shall be undertaken in every stage of the pilot testing both by the Field Offices and the Social Technology Bureau. Periodic report on the status of the project on a quarterly basis shall be prepared and submitted by the Field Offices to the Social Technology Bureau as basis for technical assistance for project enhancement. Reporting of project accomplishments by the local government implementors to the DSWD regional office will be the basis for technical assistance, policy review and formulation, program development and consultations.

Sessions undertaken with the solo parents shall be properly documented by the social workers. The documentation shall be used to evaluate and improve the delivery of the sessions and identify the interventions needed by the solo parents.

Regular monitoring will also be conducted by the Social Technology Bureau to assess the status of the implementation of the services. Conduct of an annual program review shall also be done by the Social Technology Bureau and the Field Offices at the national level and the regional level respectively to determine gains and gaps of project implementation.

**VIII. ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENT**

The project shall be a partnership between and among the DSWD - Social Technology Bureau, the Regional Offices and the Local Government Units where the project will be implemented.

**A. DSWD – CENTRAL OFFICE  
Social Technology Bureau**

1. Conduct baseline study for the development of a new body of knowledge on solo parents, define executive and legislative measures needed to promote and protect the interest of solo parents and their children, and assess the effectiveness of laws/policies and programs designed for solo parents and their children.



2. Conduct capability building/training of program implementors in the pilot sites in coordination with the Social Welfare and Development Institute Bureau and concerned Field Offices.
3. Conduct regular monitoring/evaluation of the project and provide technical assistance in the implementation of the project.
4. Allocate and release funds needed in the operation of the project.
5. Assist the Regional Office and provide technical assistance in the documentation of the project.
6. Enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with concerned agencies for the implementation of a comprehensive program for solo parents.

#### **B. DSWD – REGIONAL OFFICE**

1. Identify and validate target areas/clients and assist the Social Tecnology Bureau in the conduct of the pilot testing.
2. Assist and provide technical assistance to Local Government Unity (LGU) Social Workers in implementing the project.
3. Facilitate technical concerns/requirements relative to the implementation of the project.
4. Coordinate with GOs and NGOs for other support services that may be accessed to by the LGUs relative to the implementation of the project.
5. Conduct regular monitoring and assessment in the implementation of the project and submit regular report to the STB.
6. Assist the LGU in the implementation of the program.
7. Review and recommend policy development to enhance the implementation of the project.
8. Assign a permanent focal person for the project at the regional level to ensure continuity during the pilot testing.


#### **C. LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS**

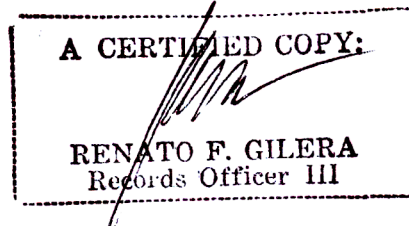
1. Implement the project in the target barangays
2. Identify and assess project beneficiaries
3. Access solo parents to other support services that they may need
4. Provide for other logistical support that may be needed in the course of pilot testing
5. Organize and strengthen inter-agency network to ensure convergence and implementation of services to solo parents.

6. Allocate counterpart funds (e.g. GAD funds) for other logistical support necessary in the operation of the project to ensure sustainability once the pilot testing is completed.
7. Assign a permanent focal person for the project during the pilot testing stage to ensure efficient project operation.
8. Conduct capability building/training at the barangay level.

This Order takes effect immediately and revokes previous issuances inconsistent herewith. Let copies of this Order be given to all units at the Central Office and Field Offices for their guidance.

Issued in Quezon City, this 5<sup>th</sup> day of Dec. 2003.

  
**CORAZON JULIANO-SOLIMAN**  
Secretary  
Department of Social Welfare and Development



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