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**Module Title:** Community Engagement LCBB4002

**Assignment Title:** Community Engagement Assessment 1

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### **St. Vincent's Family Project**

The following assessment will analyse the St. Vincent's Family Project through an elaboration of the information gathered from its website page (Svfp, n.d.). St. Vincent's Family Project (SVFP) is a social project realised in Central London, just a few steps from Big Ben. SVFP aims to help families with young children; they believe that "early help to families will reduce or prevent the many potential crisis families and children can face through school and adolescence" (Svfp, n.d.).

Especially in a big city like London, where numerous people come from abroad, it can be difficult for these to cope with everyday issues. Especially single moms could feel easily alone and, without any help, not even from their family because they are living in their home country, it may be difficult for them to afford the bills or manage their time to work. Often parents are young and scared and needed someone to guide them, to advise them and support them during the path of becoming a parent. Here comes the idea of SVFP, aiming to assist and prevent these issues, offerings several programmes: Drop-in Creche, Programmes for Families, One to One Support, Art Therapy.

Drop-in Creche: during the drop session, parents can come and let their children, aged before school, playing with others. The session assists families who may not have money to buy toys for their children, or with children with a mental health issue or with the problem to socialise with others and help in simultaneously their parents to socialise with others. This session creates a sense of community, of a family, where none is discriminating others for their wealth, ethnicity or for being a single mum. This sense of belonging, encourage peoples, make them stronger, believe in themselves and let them understand they are not alone. The creche is for a restricted number of people for the reason it does not require the supervision of the parents as there is a professional staff caring about the children, permitting the parents, who can not afford babysitting services, to go to work. Programmes for Families involves several activities as Dad's Space, Parenting Courses, Healthy Living. Through these programmes, people can improve their skills, acquire new knowledge and have fun simultaneously. During the One to One Support parents received emotional support and advice regarding their fear and behaviour management. It is a space where they can be their self, expressing their worries without any judgement. Art Therapy improves the mental health of the children with a challenging background, as abuses, domestic violence, parental drug addiction, or other experiences that negatively impact on their mental issues. They can find through the art, the dance, and the show, the most accessible avenue to communicate.

The stakeholders that economically supported the programme are several charitable foundations. It is possible to find their name and the Accounts and Annual Report on the SVFP's website. It is essential to maintain a stable relationship with them, to be transparency and clear regarding all the economic transaction. The project has the responsibility to disclose the accountability to who provide the economic resources. Transparency is useful for both parties in a forward-looking approach; a trustworthy project would easily collect money in

the future. (CDC & ATSDR, 2011) It is a part of Principle number 9 of community Engagement, looking beyond the project for a long-term goal. Many stakeholders are involved in the realisation of the project. There are professionals staff, employees and also a volunteering programme that help people like students to achieve skills and knowledge through a real-life experience. The employees are required to fulfil determined skill. They must be: respectful, without bias, must follow moral and ethic standards, and also have self-judgment conscious about what is right and wrong. SVFP does not tolerate an employee with a negative approach to any member of the community. The employee working in the Healthy Living Programme must be trained on health and safety procedures for handling food and on the risk of the allergens and able to transfer their knowledge to the attendant. All the employees, also, must have been trained for the first aid. Others stakeholders are the government, social organisations, and all the people that the project is aiming to assist as families, children and parents.

Different stakeholders usually require different engagement and communication plans. The website is a useful tool to keep everybody informed concerning the project's developing and to engage new potential stakeholder. It provides financial information and real statistics of the impact of the project in the society (essential for the stakeholders that are economically involved but are not actively participating), a general and a detail view of all the activity and services provided for the stakeholders as families and the new potential stakeholders.

Furthermore, through the website, it is possible to enquire for more information or to apply to join the team and the volunteering programme. To engage numerous significant volunteers, SVFP creates a partnership with various volunteer's scheme as "ValeYou". (CDC & ATSDR,

2011) Is the Principle number 5 of Community Engagement: Partnership and integration, working as a group, as a community, collaborating gathering more resources to achieve a common goal for a collectively benefit, encouraging inclusiveness engagement responding to the social needs to promote activities helpful for the community. SVFP is not restricted only to the website. It utilises various social media platform as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. Most of the families who want to be part of the project are coming from an unhealthy background, they may be shy to disclose their problem, and they may prefer anonymity. Also, to avoid this issue, SVFP provides a telephone number and an email to be sure anyone can feel at ease to use the way they prefer to engage the community.

Although the charitable organisation's engagement does not require active participation, families and other stakeholders need to frequent the centre for a successful engagement and to develop their skills, knowledge and pass through their problem. According to principle number 7 of community engagement; SVFP based the community asset on the people. They think about encouraging their capacity, empowered them technically, providing different activity as the Programmes for families. In this way, training is provided to families and experiences to the volunteers. Some families struggling with the English language and coming to the centre help them to practice and socialise with other people. It is about encouraging their capacity without underestimating their potential.

Regarding Principle number 6 of Community Engagement, the project respect, welcome and promote the diversity of the community. They create a particular programme for people affected with a disability to encourage them to participated and do not feel discriminated.

Any type of harassment, as bullsh or sexual, are not abide in the community. All the people are respected equally, without any bias, from economic to ethnicity, religion or race.

(SCDC, 2016) The standard of community engagement guide SVFP to achieve and maintain the highest quality outcome during the entire procedure, are a measurement of quality. Standards are also designed to reflect the principles of inclusion, equality, fairness and participation. In the project, people are treated and respected equally: there are not people considered more than others. For the succeed of the project and to avoid barriers of participation, SVFP do not require particulars technological product as the laptop, or iPad and private transport are not necessary as the location is situated in Central London, with easy access to the public transport. The succeed of the social project is the result of an accurate plan.

According to Standard 3: the project is designed and shaped for the necessity of the stakeholders and the community that it is aiming to help. All the activities and programmes are planned to address specific needs, improving the quality of life, within a specific budget.

Standard number 4 refer to Working Together: the project is working as a result of an emotional connection between the community and is aiming to avoid any behaviour conflict through the leadership of trained staff.

Following Standard number 5, SVFP adopts different methods to be effective on different purposes, E.g. the Dad's Space is dedicated for dads only, is a funny entertainment to share with their children with the purpose to develop their relationship with them. Art Therapy is a programme created with the purpose to help step by step the children with a mental health issue to communicate.

Standard number 6 is Communication: the project is based on sharing experience and knowledge; clear, concrete and regular communication is pivotal for success. Information is shared equally between the community without adopting technical jargon, as the majority of the people in the community are not high-educated.

The last Standard is the Impact: using feedback and information to improve the engagement process in the future through the analysis and the evaluation of the weakness and the straightness of the project. In a nutshell, gaining experience and learning from its error. SVFP provides on its website, the statistics and the percentual of the result of its impact in the community. Here, it is also possible to watch testimonial video of personal experience. In accordance with Principle number 9 of Community Engagement, the positive impact, bring the project in a long-term view. The project adopts a sustainable approach on a long-term basis, bringing real results and achieving collective goals in the community.

For a deeper engagement, SVFP exploits several tools and platform as creative art, workshop and social media. Programmes, as Art Therapy and Dad's Space, have the advantage of the cost-efficient (they do not require a high budget), and to use the creative art as a language to communicate to everybody, bringing the community together. It could be used to share stories through the painting, the dancing or the drama. It is also an avenue to express the community's talent and present different culture, preparing folkloristic shows or painting. It is an inclusiveness tool to engage in promoting collaboration and teaching through amusement.

Programmes, as Drop-in Creche, Parenting Courses and Healthy Living; advocates inclusiveness encouraging work activity in different task and issue. Using the workshop as a tool of engagement is also an avenue to interest and teach activist learning. E.g. during the

Healthy Living, parents are not just following a theoretical course, they practice how to prepare healthy food with a low budget, and later they share the food as a big family.

In conclusion, the strength of the project is keeping the community empowered, encouraged and motivated by each other. People get inspired by each other; It is a collective effort to interact, and the sense of belonging in the community discourages mental issues like depression that impact more easily people isolated. Through other programmes also, improve dealing with other issues, like autism. The project recognises the synergy and develops the flexibility adapting and creating elements for the community; the functionality of the programmes depends on the objective.

The project brings several benefits to the community. E.g. the reduction of domestic violence: the woman, aware of the assistance they can receive from the project and the community, are more encouraged to report the abuses. There is the benefit of decreasing the abortions from mothers scared to not afford the cost of having a baby, or single mothers defeated from the fear to embark alone in a new path. There is the development of social and human capital, empowering the self-efficient and the education of the community. There is the benefit of learning values and preserve them in a community based on value as morality, ethics, and respect.

### References:

- CDC & ATSDR, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (2011), *Principles of Community Engagement*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Washington, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/> [Acceded: 19 November 2020]
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