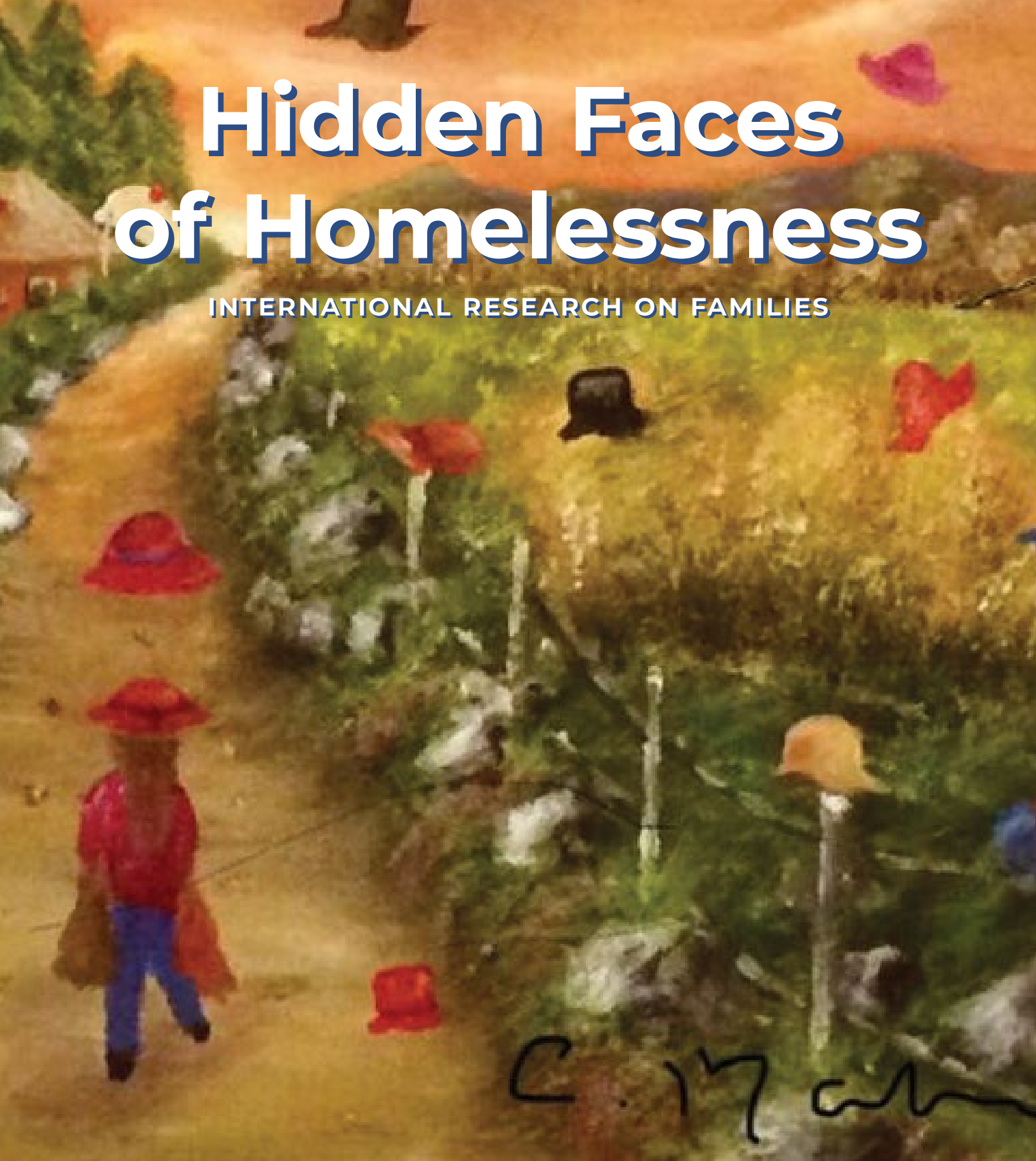


Hidden Faces of Homelessness

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON FAMILIES





Foreword

UNANIMA International is a Coalition of 22 Communities of Women Religious, in 85 Countries with 25,000 members. We have been advocating on behalf of Women and Children/Girls for the past 18 years at the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Founded in 2002 by Sr. Catherine Ferguson, the mission was helping and giving a voice to Women and Children/Girls that were the victims of human trafficking. Today, Women and Children/Girls remain our focus, however it is through the lens of Homelessness and Displacement, that we base our work.

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.” UNANIMA International began to look at how many of these goals (specifically SGD 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 16) relate to Women and Children/Girls, especially to those left furthest behind. We initiated a research project to take an in-depth look at homelessness and housing insecurity globally, with a particular focus on the lived experience of those who find themselves homeless.

For the first time in the United Nations’ 75 year history we are talking about homelessness—especially the “invisible” homeless, who are often women, children and girls. The introduction of this

dialogue around the subject of homelessness, has been achieved through the work of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), including UNANIMA International (UI). Our research and expertise—specifically on family homelessness—has contributed greatly to this issue gaining recognition at the international level.

As part of our commitment to end homelessness, UI and other NGOs committed ourselves to make homelessness our common focus for advocacy work. In 2017 the Working Group to End Homelessness (WGEH) was established. Many UN Agencies and Member States have shown their unique support on the issue, including Brazil, Iceland, Madagascar, the United Kingdom, Slovakia, UNICEF, and UN Habitat. These entities have displayed their interest in bringing homelessness to socio-political forums to try and include the issue in official resolutions.

In 2019 the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD) decided to focus its 58th Session (2020 Commission) on homelessness. This Commission advises Member States and other UN bodies; the Secretary General also presents a report on this issue. UNANIMA International were privileged to be part of the Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2019 in preparation for the Commission in 2020. We were able to bring our unique



expertise on family homelessness to the table, which included the voices of individuals and families with a lived experience.

Family homelessness is a growing phenomenon around the world. Homelessness is often considered embarrassing, a taboo subject, and governments tend to underestimate the problem. UI in its international research is calling for a paradigm shift in how we perceive the problem of poverty and homelessness: it is time for a revolution on this most serious issue. We need a paradigm shift away from the many abusive attitudes and beliefs that circulate around homelessness. We need to start this dialogue by viewing and treating homelessness as what it is: a human rights and civil rights issue. In Article 21 of the Declaration on Human Rights (1948) it explicitly states that everyone has the right to adequate housing. This set of rights were given a new impetus towards implementation within the SDGs in the commitment to implement social protection systems and measures for all, including floors and elaborated in the ILO recommendation 202.

Homelessness is a devastating experience that can significantly impact the health and well-being of the individual and the family, especially Women and Children/Girls. Often families experiencing homelessness have experienced ongoing trauma in

the form of childhood abuse and neglect, domestic violence and community violence, which left unrecognized and unaddressed, can have potentially devastating implications for development across the lifespan. UI is calling for all homeless services globally, to adopt holistic, trauma-informed care as good practice. Services that are competent in trauma-informed care lead to substantially better outcomes for Women and Children/Girls.

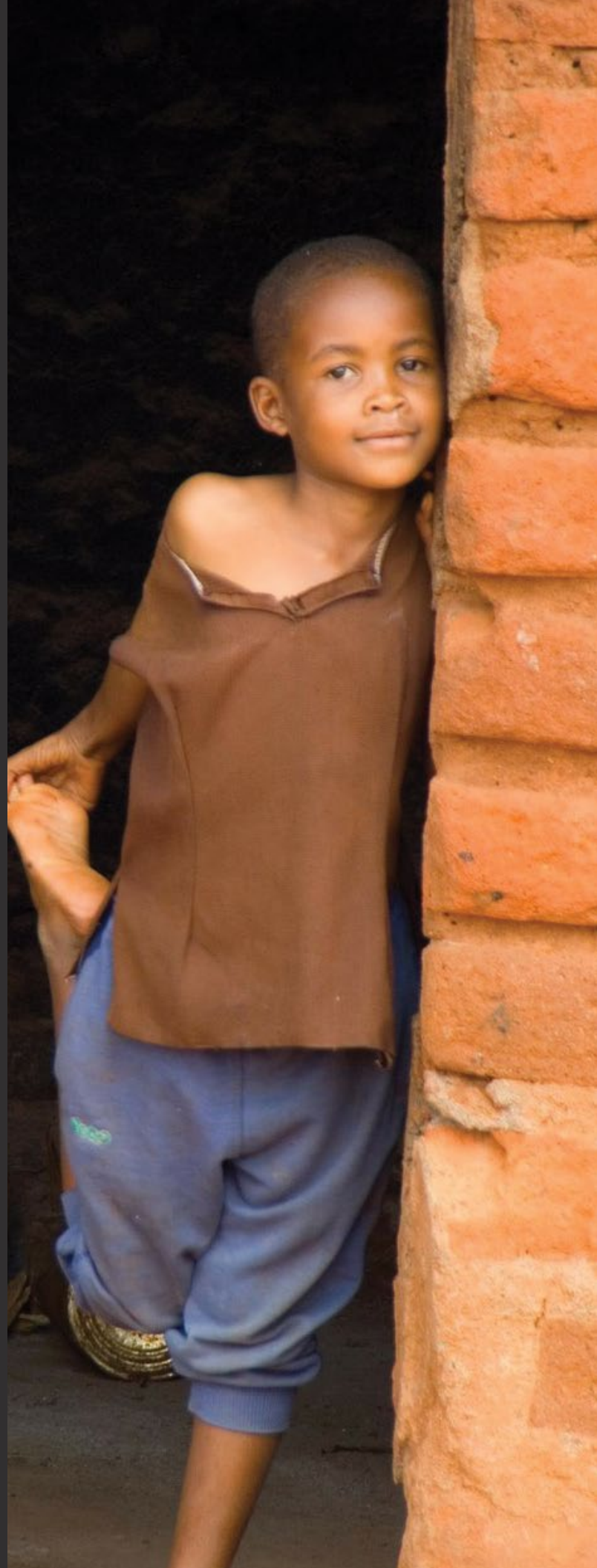
The purpose of this publication on country cases on Family Homelessness is to highlight the issue in various regions globally. UNANIMA International are calling on our world leaders to see family homelessness through eyes of compassion. In the words of Richard Rohr, “a compassionate vision of the world impels all of us to live in ways which our words and behavior towards others embody compassion. For the more we are transformed in compassion, the more we are impelled to act with compassion towards others.”

Sincerely,

Jean Quinn, DW
Executive Director
UNANIMA International

Acronyms

ED	U.S. Department of Education
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSocD	United Nations Commission for Social Development
HF	Housing First
HLRN	The Housing and Land Rights Network
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
ICPH	Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KPSP	Kibera Public Space Project
MLRC	Mercy Law Resource Center
MPC	Mukuru Promotion Center
MSDP	Mukuru Slum Development Project
MSP	My Sister's Place
NUA	New Urban Agenda
NYU	New York University
PHF	Pathways Housing First
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UI	UNANIMA International
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WGEH	NGO Working Group to End Homelessness



Contents

Introduction	2
Methodology	4
Research Rationale	4
What is Family Homelessness?	4
Family Homelessness Internationally	6
Exploring International Solutions: Pathways Housing First	7
Family Homelessness Country Case-Studies	
Kenya	8
India	18
USA	26
Ireland	36
Conclusion	45
Recommendations	46
References	47
Acknowledgements	56

Introduction

Kirin R. Taylor
Research Fellow at
UNANIMA International



“The lack of available data on homeless women and children/girls contributes to their conditions; their invisibility to the state is the most important issue to address to best advocate on their behalf.”

- NYU Students, Summer 2019 UNANIMA International Capstone Project

Family Homelessness is displayed in diverse forms and manners throughout the globe. As such, the need for multilateral discussion of the issue, and a universal adoption of a definition of homelessness is imperative. UNANIMA International’s Executive Director, Jean Quinn, attended the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on “Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness” in May of 2019. At the United Nations Office in Nairobi she presented *The Impact of Personal and Family Circumstances on Homelessness*.¹ The Division for Inclusive Social Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), along with the Housing Unit of UN-Habitat, organized and facilitated the meeting to precede the 58th session of CSocD with “concrete, evidence-based policy recommendations on policies for addressing homelessness, with a particular focus on the roles of affordable housing and social protection for all.”² The experts proposed the following definition of homelessness:

“Homelessness is a condition where a person or household lacks habitable space with security of tenure, rights and ability to enjoy social relations, including safety. Homelessness is a manifestation of extreme poverty and a failure of multiple systems and human rights.”³

This definition serves to simplify contending definitions of homelessness, while simultaneously conveying the complexities of homelessness. It clearly condemns the human rights failures displayed through the phenomenon of homelessness, particularly in its widespread and pervasive nature. The applicability of this definition to much of the world’s informal settlements and slums is significant, as absolute numbers of urban populations residing in slums rises.⁴ In *Sustainable Cities and Communities* UN Habitat discloses, “population growth and

migration meant those living in slums increased from 807 million to 883 million during that time [between 2000 and 2014]. In 2018, conservative estimates place the population in slums at 1 billion.”⁵ In order to monitor conditions of homelessness as extensive as described above, the collection of disaggregated data through a human rights-based approach is a must.

Throughout the publication “good practices” from each country case have been identified. These are Leading organizations, impactful services, and innovative ideas in the national context that can be applied or implemented elsewhere internationally. The good practices are organized as follows:

- Leading Organization - An organization that has approached Family Homelessness and housing holistically, and provided services where they were lacking;
- Impactful Service - A service or program model that can change the livelihoods of beneficiaries;
- Innovative Idea - An idea that within its context is innovative

Andrea Pizano of the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH) put forth that, “what we define as a suitable place for habitation is different in one country than another.” There should be cultural considerations for what an ideal shelter or living accommodation may be, nevertheless all must actualize human rights, as related to housing. Addressing trauma (and preventing trauma) also must be done in every cultural context, and is one of the first responses needed by governments, service providers and the public in relation to the Family Homelessness crisis. For further information on Family Homelessness refer to UNANIMA International’s publication *Family Homelessness through the lens of the United Nations 2030 Agenda* which was also created for the CSocD 2020.

Methodology

UNANIMA International's initial Family Homelessness/Displacement and Trauma research has focused on five diverse geographic regions and case studies within them. The pilot regions and countries included:

- Africa (Kenya)
- Asia (India, Philippines)
- Oceania (Australia)
- Europe (Ireland, Greece)
- North America (USA, Canada)

A mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been used to achieve a holistic overview of the topic and ensure outcomes that are not limited to particular economic and social contexts. UNANIMA International's contributions to this topic will be bolstered by a unique analysis, which combines social justice, constructivist, gender, and human rights lenses.

Moreover, empirical evidence will assist in displaying the wide range of contexts and experiences which comprise Family Homelessness.

For the Commission for Social Development in February 2020, the following cases are given preliminary focus: Kenya, India, the USA, and Ireland. UNANIMA International's methodology for this publication includes initial literature reviews (some of which were conducted collaboratively with New York University (NYU) capstone master's students), in addition to the collection of quantitative data, and the initiation of qualitative data collection within the countries profiled. Qualitative data includes semi-structured interviews with NGOs, service providers, and experts; indispensably, women and families experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity have willingly shared their voices. Testimonies have been derived from interviews and focus groups.

Research Rationale

Our particular interest lies in providing a voice to Women and Children/Girls experiencing Homelessness—presenting not only their experiences, but also their needs going forward, as reflective of their culture and society. On a positive note, the issue of Homelessness is increasingly being given attention, yet Family Homelessness is not adequately discussed at the international level. This research has the capacity to contribute significantly to a new and emerging international dialogue. The majority of studies thus far have focused on homeless individuals rather than on families as a unit; even these studies will provide insight into the reality of homeless/housing insecure families' plights, when this lens is applied.

What is Family Homelessness?

UNANIMA International has used the following working definition of Family Homelessness:

“Families who do not have consistent residency or the support needed to maintain a residency of their own who live episodically, temporarily or chronically in temporary housing, including shelters and locations not intended for human habitat or settlement.”

However, since May of 2019, the UN Expert Group definition has contextualized our definition, making its applicability to many slum dwellers even more evident. Applying an international lens to this issue, it is clear that Family Homelessness is present in different societies, and even within one society, in many forms. Family Homelessness can look like:

- Staying with friends and family
- Living in slums or other inadequate and insecure dwellings
- Living in shelters and transitional housing
- Families living on the street
- Displaced people

Family Homelessness is driven by many issues, including:


- Personal and Family Circumstances
- Urbanization and Financialization of Housing
- Climate Change and Natural Disasters
- Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women
- Addiction
- Inequalities
- Conflict
- Trauma

Homeless families are often headed by single women. Homeless families (namely, Women and Children/Girls) may become separated as a consequence of the root causes of homelessness (such as disaster or disease related deaths, disaster or conflict related migration, or family breakdown), or from homelessness services or the lack thereof.

Voices and testimonies shared in this publication, and underlying it, come from individuals who have experienced family homelessness in different forms. In the last few months we came to know families made sick by floods in their slum; youth who've become homeless due to overcrowding in their home and due to their parents' drug abuse; women who've become homeless from leaving marriages and abuse; grandmothers who have been evicted due to the presence of dependents in their housing; single mothers dwelling in slums with little access to stable income, nutrition and sanitation; and women who have accessed services, or benefited from long-term, supported housing, which has drastically changed their livelihoods.


FAMILY HOMELESSNESS, GLOBALLY

THE CURRENT REALITIES...




The last United Nations global survey of homelessness in 2005 estimated

100 MILLION people were homeless.




1.6 BILLION people lacked adequate housing. 15 years later, in 2020, we do not have a sufficient estimate!

India has the highest number of landless households in the world, standing at...



101 MILLION




The International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix shows, "In 2017, there were

30.6 MILLION new displacements associated with conflict and disasters across 143 countries and territories.

Worldwide there is a minimum of

10 MILLION stateless people, which means they have been denied nationality and its related rights.



Sources:

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UNANIMA International 2020

Family Homelessness Internationally

For Women and Children/Girls homelessness is often invisible. The danger Women and Children/Girls face on the streets largely motivates families to exhaust all other options available within their cultural context.⁶ Family homelessness has Intersections with human trafficking, incarceration, asylum seeking, and eviction, among other multilateral issues such as the subjects of the UN 2030 Agenda's SDGs.⁷ Family Homelessness has sociocultural, economic, and political causes that governments can address. The following Family Homelessness research findings can be generalized internationally, across the four case-studies detailed herein and beyond.

Urbanization is increasing, often rapidly, causing detrimental effects for people, planet, and infrastructure.⁸ Family breakdown is both a cause and effect of Family Homelessness. As an effect, families are split up in shelters, poor children are subject to state and other interventions, and death can also be a consequence of unsafe and/or unsanitary living conditions and declining environmental and population health. There is segregation of the poor and homeless occurring both de facto and de jure (in fact and by law). For example, "not in my backyard" politics prevents affordable housing from being developed in certain areas. Additionally, people migrating from rural to urban areas in developing countries often move directly into slums and housing that is inadequate, lacking alternative opportunities. In slums such as Mukuru in Kenya, communities are separated from many of the benefits of development and infrastructure which supposedly benefit cities.⁹ Slum dwellers' most immediate needs and points of priority are water and sanitation.¹⁰

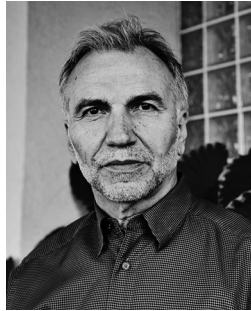
Inadequate definitions and data (or data collection methods) contribute to the invisibility of Family Homelessness. On a national level, governmental research design and execution in addition to modification of censuses can increase the visibility



of this issue. One notable challenge is the difficulty in identifying the environment (or climate and environmental change) as the main cause for migration, partly because of other factors and politics surrounding mass movements of people.¹¹ Internationally we must adopt the UN experts' definition of homelessness to encourage UN Member States' efforts regarding data, and recognition of the many hidden faces of homelessness which include Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Privatization and financialization of housing is occurring globally, spurred by neoliberalism.¹² Relatedly, emergency accommodations overshadow other approaches to housing, in both budget and use. Governments should reevaluate neoliberal policies, while ensuring social protection floors are enacted with immediacy. Internationally, civil society plays a large role in addressing Family Homelessness, through grassroots actions and interventions, and through international diplomatic engagement.

Exploring International Solutions: Pathways Housing First

Analysis by
Sam Tsemberis, PhD
*Founder and Chief Executive
Officer of Pathways Housing
First Institute*



This brief describes the Pathways Housing First (PHF) program, an effective, well-documented and evidence-based program for ending homelessness for individuals, families and youth, founded on the principle that housing is a basic human right.

Need for a Paradigm Shift

Assumptions that homeless people brought this condition upon themselves because of character flaws, moral failings, bad choices or other individual characteristics, including mental illness, addiction, gender, gender identity and race, inform traditional approaches to ending homelessness. One example of this, sometimes called the “Staircase Model,” is a framework which requires individuals or families to first address mental health, addiction and behavioral problems before considering them “housing-ready.” This has proven significantly less effective in ending homelessness than programs that offer housing first, and subsequently provide treatment and/or support.¹³

Housing as a basic Human Right: Housing First

In contrast, the Pathways Housing First (PHF) programs offer immediate access to housing for families and individuals as a right – not something earned or a reward for good behavior or sobriety. HF is based on evidence that homelessness is the result of social and economic problems such as low wages, poorly designed and implemented safety net programs, lack of access to social services and housing, and a housing rental market that is inaccessible for people living in poverty, including low-income families.

Offering housing as a basic human right means making housing available immediately upon admission to the program and enabling those experiencing homelessness to move directly from the streets or emergency shelters into a decent, safe, and affordable place to live. Housing takes the form of social housing units, private apartments, or designated buildings with units set aside for this population. Trained and trauma-informed community-based teams provide support services, an essential part of HF. Tenants receive a weekly or as-needed home visit to assist with their recovery. The HF program operates with a no-discharge policy. Even if participants are evicted, the HF staff will assist them to find a new place to live and restart.¹⁴

Research Evidence on the Effectiveness of Housing First

Empirical evidence from multiple randomized control research trials documents the effectiveness of the Pathways Housing First (PHF) program. When operated properly, the PHF programs achieve housing stability rates of about 80% -- compared to about 40% using the Staircase Models -- for individuals and to a lesser extent for families with histories of homelessness and other challenges.¹⁵ Furthermore, HF programs yield significant cost offsets in shelter, hospital and jail costs.¹⁶

Conclusions and Recommendations

Many nations have introduced HF or PHF programs as a national policy and a few, including Finland and Norway, have nearly ended chronic homelessness.¹⁷ Bringing HF to a national scale requires providing enough affordable housing units to address the needs of the homeless population. However, this is a first step. To completely end homelessness, a substantial investment in prevention is required. Nation’s investments in developing affordable housing will eventually be less than ongoing investment in prevention. Ending homelessness by adopting a human rights-based approach (HRBA) is possible and cost-effective. Homelessness affects us all: none of us is home until we are all home, or to quote Rumi, “we are all just walking each other home.”



FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN

KENYA

COUNTRY PROFILE

Republic of Kenya (Kenya)
Swahili: Jamhuri ya Kenya

LOCATION

Kenya is a Sub-Saharan country, located in Eastern Africa; Bordering countries: Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda; Kenya is not land-locked: it also borders the Indian Ocean.

POPULATION

As of 2019, the total population was 47,564,296¹⁸

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Presidential Republic



Last Censuses (General & Homelessness)

The last national census took place in 2019, ten years after the previous one, and significantly, after Kenya's new provisions to the 2010 constitution. Though a general significant population increase was evidenced: "47.6 Million in 2019 from 37.7 Million in 2009,"¹⁹ "some regions have experienced a decrease in population."²⁰ This is reflective of rapid urbanization and rural to urban migration. Ramifications include the expansion of slums in population (but rarely land), and increased competition between ethnically aligned political parties. Partially in response to the SDGs, the theme of the census was "Counting Our People for Sustainable Development and Devolution of Services."²¹ Homelessness and "houselessness" were not mentioned in the last census.

Country Definition of Homelessness & Usage

The reality of Family Homelessness in Kenya is hard to evaluate due to the lack of adequate data, and the blurred lines of definitions. No national definition of homelessness is listed on the Kenyan government's website or within their census. Using the definition put forward at Expert Group's meeting, much of the urban population whom reside in severely inadequate housing in slums would be considered homeless. One employee of Mukuru Promotion Center (MPC) commented "all of Mukuru Slum would be considered homeless."

Context of Homelessness

In Kenya, in particular, many of the slums have conditions that constitute the families therein as homeless or housing insecure. UN Habitat reports 61% of the urban population resides in slums and those homes are characterized by their small size and overcrowding.²² There is commentary from UN Habitat on how bureaucratic issues and implementation struggles detract from national efforts to

improve housing: "Under the new devolved system of government, housing delivery is the responsibility of the county governments. There is a risk that lack of effective coordination and lack of technical competence at the local level can stifle the provision of housing."²³ The national *Big Four Agenda* and the Urban Regeneration Programs are examples of governmental efforts and policies that look promising but are lacking in effectiveness.²⁴ Lack of adherence to policies that would benefit rural areas results in greater needs in rural and urban areas alike. The International Organization for Migration asserts, "rural-urban migration also has effects on the areas of origin of migrants, particularly by depriving rural areas of the active labour force."²⁵ Habitat for Humanity reports in rural areas approximately 750,000 households are in need of housing.²⁶

Challenges in service delivery for effective prevention and address of Family Homelessness (and homelessness as a whole) are not unique to Kenya or Africa. There is a common theme in interventions on the issue of Homelessness by religious organizations' and NGOs, notably in intersections, such as development in slums, work with "street children," and support of young mothers. Peter Ngau, director of the centre for urban research and innovations at the University of Nairobi, told *The Guardian* in 2014, "in the absence of government action and provision of basic services, the greatest role has been played by civil society groups and community-based organisations,"²⁷ and this trend has continued.

Slums mirror "bad neighborhoods" in the ways they reflect greater communal and societal issues, and because they are contrastable with the dominant image of society often put forth by Nation States in the media. Slums manifest issues ranging from lack of access to safe water and sanitation, to environmental degradation, lack of affordable housing, and high risk of communicable disease.²⁸ One slum of Nairobi, Bondeni, established in 1922, has all of its land privately owned, though the population is estimated to be over 10,000.²⁹ Nonprofit organization Slum Dwellers International ranks land tenure

the third most significant issue for Bondeni, following sanitation sewage and water drainage, truly revealing the range and force of issues affecting informal settlements.³⁰ Forced evictions often take place on a large scale in informal settlements. In Kenya, as land ownership within slums by their inhabitants is rare, and the courts are notoriously slow, attempts to stop this have been met with little success.

Child poverty in slums is unique, multifaceted, and intimately related to family living situations and conditions. In UNICEF and the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics 2017 report, *Child Poverty in Kenya*, it was stated that, “child poverty in informal settlements (slums) in urban areas could not be studied due to the scope of the analysis.”³¹ In the Mukuru slum of Kenya, testimonies from NGOs and their service providers revealed how poor design and infrastructural decisions, paired with overcrowding, lead to the risk of fire. Additionally, electricity in many informal settlements’ homes is “shared,” and thus not properly installed.

Unsafe practices such as cooking on open fires are used. While clearly reflective of inequality and indicative of safety hazards, there are also environmental ramifications related to energy output which will ultimately also contribute to climate-induced migration and displacement: “around 3 billion people cook or heat their homes with open fires or simple stoves using biomass or coal to fuel their fire.” For caretakers, children, and vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, the risk of having livelihoods affected by fire increases.


According to several NGOs in the Mukuru Slum, ethnic conflicts (or perceived threat of such) cause movement between slums. This causes economic instability on the familial level, and leads to displacement of families when landlords foresee economic opportunity. This will likely keep happening in the lead up to the 2022 election. In the past, ethnically-charged political conflicts had resulted in violence and displacement.³³



- “Child poverty rates are higher among children living in families where the household head has no education (73%), and among children with mothers who have had no education (77%)”³⁴
- According to ARAHA, there were approximately 138,000 IDPs in Kenya at the end of 2016; “drought and violence forced 25,000 people to leave their homes during the first half of 2017”³⁵
- According to a petition to halt forced evictions in Kenyan slums *There Is Another Way*, “July, 2018, there were evictions in Kibera that were attributed to the expansion of the Kungu Karumba Missing Link Road. This was by far the largest eviction exercise in recent history. The exercise displaced over 10,000 households aside from impacting on educational institutions, health facilities and other forms of social infrastructure”³⁶
- In the Mukuru slum there are 466 people per acre, compared to 18 in Nairobi city³⁷
- “Assuming no major change in Mukuru’s acreage, population density would rise to a staggering 1,053 persons per acre, or 260,202 persons per square kilometer by the year 2030”³⁸
- 84.5% of Mukuru residents pay for toilet use daily, or per use³⁹


FAMILY HOMELESSNESS, KENYA

THE CURRENT REALITIES...




47,564,296

Is total population of Kenya as per the 2019 census. In Kenya, The population is largely comprised of youth; close to 40% of the total population are 14 or under. [1]




2 MILLION



is the current housing deficit in Kenya. This number continues to grow at a rate of about 200,000 units a year. [15]

138,000



Was the approximate number of Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya at the end of 2016; “drought and violence forced 25,000 people to leave their homes during the first half of 2017.” [3]

150 MILLION


In the global estimate for street children

250 THOUSAND

Is the Kenyan estimate! [16]

Sources:


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IN KENYA

IN MUKURU SLUM THERE ARE 466 PEOPLE PER ACRE, COMPARED TO 18 IN NAIROBI CITY

Corburn, et al. “Situational Analysis of Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Kwa Reuben & Viwandani.” Technical paper. UC Berkeley, University of Nairobi, Muungano Alliance, Strathmore University, and Katiba Institute, Nairobi, 2017. 4. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58d4504db8a79b27eb388c91/t/5a65fbd653450a34f4104e69/1516633087045/Mukuru+SP+A+Situational+Analysis+2017+Phase+2.pdf>



Nairobi City

Mukuru Slum

- ▶ The following information is from testimonies shared in a focus group with mothers whose families were flood victims, in Reuben Village, Mukuru Slum, Kenya. UNANIMA International hosted the focus group with the Reuben Center.

Note: In Nairobi's slums most people speak Kiswahili, and sometimes other dialects, and sometimes English. The majority of focus group responses were given in Kiswahili and translated by the Reuben Center staff.



There is an area in the slum where heavy rains in December 2019 caused floods. It affected families very much – it destroyed the children's school books and uniforms, and their bedding. Many houses are wet up until now (January of 2020). Floods affected the sewer line system in the area – it is now broken. The sewage entered homes and has affected the health of the families. Several focus group participants' children entered the hospital because of this. Others are having diarrhea regularly. Breathing systems are affected, and where water stands, people's feet and legs are affected. In the typical home (about 10x10 feet) children sleep on the floor. Some children breathed in the water before the mothers present were able to help them. In the aftermath, some families had to abandon their homes and possessions (some temporarily, some permanently), and others needed to but could not.



Above left: Akeyo leads UNANIMA International through Reuben; Top right: Akeyo shows the trash she has piled outside of her home; Bottom right: Akeyo's home, where you can see the tires she has creatively used to deflect water from her bed. (Pictures by the Reuben Center, Mukuru Slum, Kenya Photographer: Gregory Barake)

Testimony

Akeyo

Single Mother of Five from
Mukuru Slum, Experiencing
Housing Inadequacy, Kenya



“ I wanted to move, but couldn't afford it. I had no option but to live with the water in my house, waiting for the water to dry up. It is not yet dried up. I have been living in the same place for 15 years now, and each year it is the case that it has flooded. This time I was forced to pour some garbage in front of the door to make a space to pass. I cannot go to the toilet at night because it is far away outside and there is no sight, I can't see [not to step in water]. Despite living 15 years there I am lucky. I am lucky that I have never been contracted with cholera. I stay at the center of where the flood water comes to. For that reason the flood water has actually stayed near my home for close to five years, and it even turns its color. When the rains are over the water turns into some sort of black color - its from the sewage system. ”

History of Homelessness

Dr. Ifeyinwa Ofong shared in her report for the UN Expert Group Meeting, “while homelessness is a global issue, the bulk of homeless persons may be found in Sub-Saharan Africa, given the level of poverty, unemployment, inequalities and challenges to social inclusion existing in the region.”⁴⁰ Living in informally built and often dangerous shelters is the most common form of homelessness, “in the developing world and probably globally.”⁴¹

Kenya’s colonial past has impacted migration trends. The International Organization for Migration’s report *Assessing the Trends: Migration, Environment and Climate Change in Kenya* details three colonial policies that have shaped current realities, including “(a) appropriation of fertile land from natives for the white settlers and of the coast stripe for the Arabs; (b) creation of native reserves along ethnic lines; and (c) declaration of the Northern Frontier District as a closed area.”⁴² People residing in slums often have no ownership of the land, but there is little to no social housing there; this also reflects a colonial legacy, as well as intergenerational and cyclical poverty.

In Kenya, cultural stigmas, such as disapproval of pre-marital pregnancy and single motherhood, lead to more difficult conditions for families comprised of single mothers with a child or children.⁴³ Some may already be considered homeless due to the lack of security of tenure when experiencing this stigma within their families’ homes. Conversely, if they are rejected by their families they may then become homeless or more often end up in living unsuitable spaces, especially for youth (which both the young women and their children would be considered). Given the financialization of housing and shortage of adequate housing that is affordable, the alternatives for families previously detailed are few as they have, “limited access to land and insufficient income.”⁴⁴

Amnesty International has directed resources and attention towards documentation of housing inadequacy in Kenya, and report that, “security of tenure

remains an aspiration and forced evictions in Kenya have continued unabated. Most recently, in July 2018, Kenyan authorities carried out large-scale forced evictions in the Kibera, Jomvu Madukani, City Carton, Kaloleni and Makongeni areas of Nairobi, rendering thousands of women, children [homeless].”⁴⁵ Essentially, the implications of this are that the only option for many—slums—will not offer security of tenure or conditions appropriate to the needs of families. This violates Kenya’s constitution which guarantees all citizens the right to shelter, as well as provisions for adequate services within said shelter (such as sanitation).⁴⁶ Furthermore, international and human rights laws bolster the need to address housing and homelessness as a right, evidenced in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Articles 25.1, and 25.2* “Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.”⁴⁷

Good Practices: Leading Organization, Mukuru Promotion Center

Mukuru Promotion Center (MPC) is unique in the quality and range of services they provide within



the Mukuru slum; the organization’s responsiveness to the needs of the slum community and involvement of stakeholders is essential to providing effective services. MPC began developing in the late 1980s at a time when services including educational and health facilities were either nonexistent or severely lacking. Prior to their first primary school’s creation, no other formal schools existed in the slum. Similarly, they created the first formal healthcare services, including a medical clinic with a HIV/AIDS testing centre, and a hospital, which are complemented by a community-based health care program. The educational facilities include:

four primary schools, a secondary school, a rehabilitation centre for up to 60 street boys (equipped with classrooms, workshops, a library and more), and a skills training centre for over 100 students. The organization also has a sponsorship program to send students to secondary school, as well as other school levels and specialized educational providers. Notably, these educational facilities have led to other opportunities for community members: students in vocational training programs learn both theory and practice and receive stipends when they use their skills, there is a shop for artists' works, and the school employs several past pupils in different capacities. MPC has transferred leadership of several Mukuru initiatives, including the Reuben Center and Mukuru Slums Development Project, to others willing and able to run them. MPC's vision displays the relevancy of stakeholders to their organization and sustained leadership within the community: "In the spirit and charm of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy and in partnership with stakeholders, Mukuru Promotion Centre will: Provide early childhood development and education, secondary education, vocational skills, social rehabilitation and health services to the Mukuru community."⁴⁸

Since 2017 MPC has been able to support a Child Protection department, which investigates abuses of the students. This and another more recent department for legal action allows residents of the Mukuru slum to engage in institutional and judiciary processes. Many of the services MPC provides are empowering and have positively affected the community, however, circumstances including the social, economic and political situations of the country (such as rapid urbanization, rising popula-



Photo by Kounkuey Design Initiative: "Kibera Public Space Project 06" Nairobi, Kenya, 2013 -14

tions in slums, corruption within the government and the presence of children without identification), can't be addressed directly by their services, and it is beyond the scope of their mission and vision. MPC's 2017 annual report *Empowerment Step by Step* states, "considering our locations in the slums of Nairobi, Industrial Area, we are also faced with many environmental issues that jeopardize our efforts, but we keep moving on with hope."⁴⁹ One Kenyan administrative staff member expressed hope for further governmental and general attention to slums other than Kibera, and expressed "we are looking to grow."

Impactful Service, Safe Spaces for Youth

Kibera Public Space Project (KPSP) by Kounkuey Design Initiative is one example of a project which impacts homeless and housing insecure families positively. Their method of development and implementation reflects other good practices highlighted in this publication, including: the inclusion of local residents in the design of the public space, focus on



Innovative Idea, Community-driven Solutions

Mukuru Slum Development Project (MSDP) has a Community Empowerment Program, which consists of community dialogues, and consequent organized advocacy. “My community, my solution” describes MSDP’s the program’s design and purpose.

the sustainability of the project and its impacts, and the fostering of partnerships or in other terms, “participation, integration, and networked change.”⁵⁰

This model could be used in slums other than Kibera. Some of its good practices include the participatory approach, which is invaluable to sustainable development (including peace and social cohesion), and communal stakeholdership. KPSP further demonstrates an important aspect of approaching solutions to social problems: the use of partnerships in achieving goals. They partnered with the Technical University of Kenya, Arup, BuroHappold, and Engineers Without Borders UK, among others.⁵¹ This project also holds much potential for addressing and preventing trauma, because fulfilling its function—providing safe space for youth—answers many needs created by the experience of homelessness or housing insecurity. Notably, “the design of such spaces should be inclusive and accommodate [youth’s] various needs, interests, and activities and can contribute to combating prejudice, division and harassment.”⁵² UN Habitat Kenya bolsters such initiatives, and have their own model called the “One Stop Youth Centre” which began in Nairobi in 2003 as a place for young people to access services, educational training, and more.⁵³ One finding of *Mukuru Settlement: 2017 Situation Analysis* was, “there is a lack of open and accessible public and green space”⁵⁴ which shows the great benefit such services could still have, as well as additional challenges that should be considered in the future, such as how to incorporate environmental concerns and climate action into solutions.

Program model:

- Discuss issues affecting the community and their possible solutions every two weeks
- All there facilitators are from Mukuru slum - one man, one woman, and one youth - and each are chosen by a community election
- Depending on the issues identified, participants initiate change differently. For political issues, they are trained in responses to them (for example how to petition the Department of Education in Nairobi)

An example of success:

In 2016 the primary issue identified was that many children residing in the slum were not attending primary school; consequently, the Ministry of Education was lobbied, and initiatives to raise funds for school fees and materials were carried out. This increased primary school enrollment throughout Mukuru.

About MSDP:

“MSDP exists to provide holistic and integrated services with the view of reducing poverty amongst the inhabitants of informal settlements.” They focus on their holistic wellbeing, as well as empowerment with “skills and capacity to be in charge of their own development.”⁵⁵



Advocacy Recommendations

Acknowledging the role civil society, the private sector, and citizens play in influencing national action related to social issues, we recommend:

- Supporting national laws protecting Women and Children/Girls, including laws against domestic violence
- Encouraging governmental responsiveness to the needs of slum residences and residents; there is a need for sustainable development, particularly related to housing, to mitigate climate risks as well as infrastructural risks, such as those related to the use of open fires
- Educating for the destigmatization of single motherhood
- Directing allocation of resources and supports to rural areas, including investment in climate-smart agriculture
- Promoting governmental adherence to international and human rights laws, and their own progressive constitution

Policy Recommendations

We believe the following policy recommendations are essential to addressing and preventing Family Homelessness, and are applicable at the local, national and international levels. We encourage:

- Adopting the UN Expert Group definition of homelessness, and including homelessness and informal settlement residents in census results (with disclosure of demographics, including family composition of statistics)
- Increasing governmental attention, in terms of resources and research, to slums/informal settlements; the collection of disaggregated data in slums should be informed by an HRBA
- Supporting sustainable development and climate-smart agriculture in rural areas, while planning for rapid urbanization to mitigate communal and environmental health concerns
- Fulfilling of requirements of international agreements such as those laid out in The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including the implementation of laws against domestic violence
- Enacting legal measures to end forced evictions and prioritize providing social housing to those previously affected by these, and otherwise vulnerable groups



FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN

INDIA

COUNTRY PROFILE

Republic of India (India)
Hindi: Bhārat Gaṇarājya

LOCATION

South Asia; Bordering countries: Myanmar, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Bhutan and Nepal; Bordering Ocean: Indian Ocean

POPULATION

India has 1.3 billion people. It is the largest democratic country, and projected to surpass China as the country with the world's largest population around 2024.⁵⁶

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Federal Parliamentary Republic



Last Censuses (General & Homelessness)

The last census was in 2011, and as they take place decennially the next will be in 2021. The Indian census includes both a section on the “houseless population,” evidencing the differences in terminology across cultures, as well as a specific “slum population census.”⁵⁷ The last census estimated the number of “houseless” families, and disclosed the disproportionate amount of houseless women and children. The 2011 census noted 1.77 million homeless nationwide, reporting 938,348 urban homeless and 830,000 rural homeless. There is much debate over the actual numbers of homeless in India.⁵⁸ NGOs working in the field, housing rights activists, and government officials working on the issue have spoken out on the enumeration tactics used in the 2011 census, stating it failed to provide adequate data. The census data contradicts other available data from NGOs and government agencies, and incorrectly shows a decline in homelessness from 1.9 million a decade earlier.⁵⁹ Prior to 2001, the Government of India did not include the homeless in census enumeration.⁶⁰

Country Definition of Homeless & Usage

Homelessness in India is defined and measured according to the census definition, which in 2001 specified “houseless people” as persons who are not living in buildings, or ‘census houses’ which refers to ‘a structure with roof.’⁶¹ The extent of homelessness and eligibility for social welfare programs or services is measured by counting those living ‘in the open’, including roadsides, pavements, hume pipes, under flyovers and staircases, railway platforms, porches and places of worship in their definition.⁶²

Housing insecurity/adequacy is not something measured in the census, which in lieu of the new UN Expert Group definition of homelessness, would exclude many families potentially identified as such, including urban slum dwellers, whose num-

bers are increasing. Moreover, civil society organizations (which have varying operational definitions of homelessness) estimate at least one percent of the population of urban India is homeless, with estimates of anywhere from 2.3 million to over 3 million nationwide. These estimates have been made based on reports that the five largest cities in India have between 580,000-650,000 homeless (Mumbai, 200,000; Delhi, 150,000-200,000; Chennai, 40,000-50,000; Kolkata, 150,000; Bangalore, 40,000-50,000).⁶³

Context of Homelessness

Despite India’s fast growth, culturally and ethnically diverse society, and rising living standards, it faces numerous socio-economic challenges. Intersecting with India’s need to adequately mitigate poverty levels, and its increasing development, homelessness is an issue gaining particular relevance in India today. Homelessness and housing insecurity are dealt with generally at the city and state levels rather than nationally. As the country continues to rapidly modernize and urbanize, those most marginalized and in precarious financial situations are increasingly lacking the ability to find adequate housing, and even more, housing at all. Those marginalized with regard to housing, struggle against multiple forms of discrimination, including: caste, age, gender, religion, marital status, and class and income. Homeless women are also particularly susceptible to increased health hazards, including lack of access to clean water, malnourishment, and lack of healthcare.⁶⁴

The challenges that Women and Children/Girls experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity face become even more difficult to address as the Government of India has struggled to accurately quantify the problem and collect sufficient disaggregated data to understand the multiple levels at which these groups are affected. The Indian Government has made efforts to strategize action on behalf of these groups nationally through policy, for example, the National Plan of Action for

Children, 2016. This must be better adhered to and supervision of implementation is vital to its success. It identifies four key priority areas: survival health and nutrition, education and development, protection and participation.⁶⁵ Though there is no constitutional provision for housing, several constitutional provisions do acknowledge special protections necessary for these groups. For example, **Article 15** prohibits discrimination, specifically against women and children, explicitly stating that “nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provisions for women and children.”⁶⁶ Further, **Article 39(f)** stipulates that “children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.”⁶⁷ However, no specific constitutional provision or national and state laws address homelessness or inadequate housing in the country.⁶⁸

The government has many programs in place that attempt to address poverty, houselessness, and affordable and adequate housing, such as: Housing for All, Scheme of Shelters for Urban Homeless, and Smart Cities Mission. Some put in place specifically for Women and Children/Girls include: Swadar Greh Scheme, Ujjawalla Scheme, and Integrated Child Protection Scheme. However, there is a lack of accountability and enforcement mechanisms. While the schemes and missions are commendable, they should not supplant laws and policies that would effectively regulate, monitor and hold accountable the government and subsequent public and private partners in achieving housing for all. Moreover, barriers to escaping situations of poverty and homelessness must be addressed. For example, India’s homeless are not easily afforded voter identity and ration cards, which are required to open a bank account, vote, access health services, report to the police, or access food and goods from the government’s welfare programs, leaving them nameless to officials and the social security system.⁶⁹ Policies are needed to specifically combat these barriers.

DATA: Qualitative/Voices

Testimony

Sister Reetha Abraham

Carmelite Sisters of Charity-
Vedruna, in Unai, Gujarat, India



“ We are all working in the Tribal Belt...So this issue is looked at differently. They all have at least a roof over their head but many are dilapidated having no finance to rebuild, so they live in fear at any time it might come down.

Homelessness for migrant workers, including our Tribals who move to work in the sugarcane fields, road work, construction and more is a reality. At least for 6 to 8 months every year the only roof over their head is a plastic sheet, be it cold or hot. The whole family (which may be 4 to 5 persons), including breastfeeding babies, stay cuddled under that sheet. Are they homeless? Landless? Or are they only jobless and cashless? Realities which surround us have tentacles of problems all interconnected. ”

- Independent experts and civil society organizations estimate that Delhi has between 150,000 and 200,000 homeless persons⁷⁰
- The homeless population accounts for about one percent of India's urban population⁷¹
- The HLRN comments on the contradiction, "while India faces a national urban shortage of almost 19 million houses, Census 2011 also reported 11.09 million vacant houses in urban areas"⁷²
- It is reported that between 2001 to 2011 families without homes increased 37% in urban areas while decreasing but fell to 26% in rural areas⁷³
- The last census report on the "houseless population" stated that, "India is home to 4.5 lakh houseless families, equalling a total population of 17.73 Lakh living without any support roof cover"⁷⁴
Note: "Lakh" means "a hundred thousand"
- Total 2.7 lakh children with age 0-6 are also houseless in India as per primary census data of 2011⁷⁵
- In the first 6 months of 2019, approximately 2,178,000 new displacements were recorded by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2,171,000 by disasters and 6,800 by conflict⁷⁶

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS, INDIA

THE CURRENT REALITIES...



1.3 BILLION

Is the current population in India. It is the largest democratic country, and is projected to surpass China as the country with the world's largest population around 2024. [1]



20 MILLION



additional housing units will need to be built if India is to meet the national vision of a home for all by 2022 [2].

73 MILLION +



Families in India do not have access to decent shelter according to government data." [3]

The 2011 Census noted 1.77 million homeless nationwide, reporting 938,348 urban homeless and 830,000 rural homeless. [4] There is much debate over the actual numbers of homeless in India.



Sources:
1. NEED SOURCES

IN INDIA

632 MILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY - THAT'S NEARLY HALF THE POPULATION

United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 2014. United Nations Development Programme. New York, USA: United Nations Development Programme, 2014.

History of Homelessness

In India, family homelessness results from rapid population growth, urbanization, and the inherent caste system. People may get displaced due to exclusion from the society for belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; this is a more severe issue in rural areas.⁷⁷ Families placed in the lower ranks of the caste system experience horrific living and housing conditions. Additionally, in many Hindu majority areas, the facilities and opportunities available for religious minorities are low, forcing them to either migrate or live in poor conditions.⁷⁸ Women's and children's homelessness have social roots that transcend into economic, legal, and political areas. Domestic violence is rampant in India; women escaping violent and unstable homes often have few viable alternative living situations and do not have any property or other assets in their names, leaving them destitute. It is estimated that 29% of women between the ages of 15–49 have experienced lifetime physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence as of 2016, and 22% of women have experienced such violence in the last 12 months as of 2017.⁷⁹

Despite changing family dynamics and urbanization, there continues to be cultural resistance to the implementation of alternative care solutions for children without family or care at all. As childcare had previously been administered informally by extended family members, no government intervention was previously required; therefore, many families question why intervention is now necessary for what was previously considered a family matter.⁸⁰ Religious beliefs also play a role in alternative care solutions. Under Hindu law, the dominant religion in India, fostering holds no rights or obligations for children, and therefore holds no religious significance, whereas adoption does. The ideal situation is for foster parents to respect religious beliefs of the birth parents of the foster child in question, which can prove challenging for some families, especially for children of religious minorities.⁸¹ Fortunately,

steps have been taken to promote alternative care solutions. In 2016, the Ministry of Women and Child Development created “Model Guidelines for Foster Care,” identifying more than 70 agencies for in-country adoptions, as well as several for inter-country adoptions.⁸²

India has been well-recognized for their development efforts, and national growth of GDP and living standards. However, these changes have largely been to the detriment of vulnerable groups. Homelessness has increased in urban areas while decreasing in rural areas, according to official government estimates in the last census. Urbanization may explain some statistics which corresponds to a decline in homelessness in rural areas. The same people who were impoverished or explicitly considered houseless in rural areas may have migrated to cities, and faced with little affordable housing, resorted to living in informal settlements.

Many families have lost their land and properties due to compulsory land acquisitions by the government for development projects like the building of dams and roads. Lack of knowledge of legal rights and the inaccessibility of legal processes and courts contributes to this.⁸³ The Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) argues the right to land is intimately tied to the right to adequate housing and policy developments are needed from the government.⁸⁴ The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha, asserts the prevalence of forced evictions and land grabbing in Indigenous communities, and discloses, “34. In India, for example, more than 41 per cent of the forest rights claims made under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected, in many cases reportedly on an arbitrary basis. As a result, an estimated 9 million forest dwellers are threatened with eviction following the order issued by the Supreme Court in February 2019.”⁸⁵ Development-related forced evictions (over 200,000 documented cases), conflict displacement (estimated 600,000), natural disaster relocation (estimated 30 million) and multidimen-

sional discrimination and poverty are further compounding demands for housing, adequate or not, and the state has overwhelmingly left impoverished families and other marginalized groups outside of relocation schemes after displacement.⁸⁶ Though directed to the Kenyan government, the following counsel is applicable to Indian context: “infrastructure should not be done at such a high cost to the poorest in the city as its foreseen and unforeseen ramifications by far outweigh the development value.”⁸⁷

Good Practices: Leading Organization, Housing and Land Rights Network

The Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) based in New Delhi, India contributes greatly to data and advocacy for the homeless and housing insecure of India. The organization, “works for the recognition, defence, promotion, and realisation of the human rights to adequate housing and land, which involves securing a safe and secure place for all individuals and communities, especially marginalized communities, to live in peace and dignity.”⁸⁸ The good practices HLRN emphasizes include housing first and priority housing options for the homeless, as displayed in their campaign on adequate housing.⁸⁹



HLRN’s premise of housing as a human right makes reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing very useful for the organization, and conversely they can more easily contribute ideas and guidance to others willing to see the connection. The foundational belief that housing is a human right directs some of their educational campaigns to the government, aiming to push policies towards fulfillment of international and national commitments.

“ We focus on the needs of people and what their demands are, to make them political constituents in charge of their own lives...we do work with the community and work with the government and try to bridge the gap between them, so we try to help communities access government officials, we also do direct advocacy with the government: monitor the conditions and let them know what people are demanding. ”

- Shivani Chaudhry, Executive Director of Housing and Land Rights Network, India

The organization’s involvement in networks and coalitions is one of their strategic principles.⁹⁰ HLRN was a founding member of a network called “the Urban Rights Forum” in English, which has increased the political influence of those wishing to end homelessness since 2008. Shivani Chaudhry, Executive Director of HLRN puts forth that this is a model which can be replicated. In particular, such a network could assist states in coordinating a response - which is what was done through this network’s presence in Delhi. The HLRN have noted Delhi’s response to homelessness to be one of India’s best, but despite over 200 shelters, the majority of homeless people remain unsheltered, including many women and children.⁹¹ This gives reason for the continued existence of the network. The network serves to connect organizations and allow them to educate each other, coming to more comprehensive and depthful understandings of the pervasive issue.

Impactful Service: Yoga

Yoga originated in India, but has now become popular in many parts of the world. Yoga has great potential for addressing trauma. Some aspects of yoga include:

- Connecting your movement with your breathing, which can help reduce stress and panic, and bring focus;
- Tailoring your practice to what feels good for you. If there are constraints due to disability,



illness, lack of space, simply the breathing practices and techniques can prove useful, but there are also calming poses that require little room and flexibility;

- Yoga is meant to honor the self and the world around you. Statements such as “namaste” (translated from Sanskrit to mean ‘the light in me greets the light in you’) functions on the principle that we are all beings with worth. This sort of acknowledgement helps anyone, and most definitely needs to be heard by someone struggling.

In India, the Yoga Institute offers “yoga for special children,” which caters to special needs children from lower socio-economic groups, “yoga for women,” in which “free yoga camps for women are organized every year to empower them with yoga education and to assist them with health, hygiene, and wellness,” and “yoga for oppressed people,” which serves a political purpose alongside the practical, as it is used “in order to facilitate sustainable social change and reduce disparities.”⁹² Yoga teaching can be tailored to the needs of the population at hand, which is why it has had well-documented success in the U.S.A. within schools, prisons, and with survivors of sexual assault—all groups that overlap with the homeless population (and Family Homlessness, specifically) as pointed out by Pamela Eggleston, Co-Executive Director of Yoga Service Council. Amina Naru, Co-Executive Director of Yoga Service Council explains, “essentially we push the yoga as a healing and self-care

modality.” For this reason, yoga can be used by those serving the homeless population as well, to prevent burn-out and improve their disposition to be able to practice trauma-informed principles.

Innovative Idea, Care for homeless children

Given the stigma surrounding alternative care for children in India and reflected elsewhere in the world, the idea of prioritizing homeless children must be strongly advocated for.

Programs working well despite cultural and other challenges deserve to be highlighted, including:

1. Udayan Care

Udayan Care is an NGO based in Delhi. Udayan Care has created small group homes designed with the vision of “regenerating the rhythm of life of the disadvantaged [children].”⁹³ Through various forms of therapy and in compliance with India and the UN’s stipulations for children’s shelters, Udayan Care specializes in rehabilitating Street Children after trauma, and there are currently 17 homes in four Indian states, as well as 2 aftercare facilities.⁹⁴

For more information on Udayan Care:
<https://www.udayancare.org/>

2. SOS Children’s Villages of India

SOS Children’s Villages is an international organization which aims to provide children with a substitute for a real family in “villages.” There are 32 SOS children’s villages in India, which provide direct care for 25,000 children and indirect care for almost 2,000,000 children.⁹⁵

For more information on
SOS Children’s Villages of India:
<https://www.soschildrensvillages.in/>

Other NGOs specializing in the care of Street Children in India include: Children’s Aid Society, Quality Institutional Care & Alternatives for Children and Prayas Juvenile Aid Center.



Advocacy Recommendations

Acknowledging the role civil society, the private sector, and citizens play in influencing national action related to social issues, we recommend:

- Supporting societal acceptance of homelessness as a challenge specifically for children and the need for corresponding action
- Educating to counter domestic and family violence, ranging from principles of respect for women to women's skills training
- Giving special attention to ending the caste system, through legal and social changes
- Encouraging allocation of national land for affordable housing
- Promoting the increasing and varying services for the homeless within cities, including shelters that meet the needs of specific populations including survivors of violence, children/girls, and the disabled

Policy Recommendations

We believe the following policy recommendations are essential to addressing and preventing Family Homelessness, and are applicable at the local, national and international levels. We encourage:

- State-sanctioned building of long-term, supported housing for families as alternatives to shelters and slums
- The implementation of accountability and enforcement mechanisms for existing services
- More national governmental efforts to collect disaggregated data on homelessness and housing insecurity, combined with regional efforts to network existing services, coordinating the response and better identifying gaps in services and people in need
- Allocation of funding to climate-smart agriculture and other measures to improve conditions in rural area
- Adoption of Human Rights-Based Approaches to development, supported by legislative and other measures for the direction of national and local projects and strategies



FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN THE

UNITED STATES

COUNTRY PROFILE

United States of America (USA)
Spanish: Estados Unidos de América

LOCATION

North America; Bordering countries: Mexico and Canada; Coasts: Pacific and Atlantic Oceans

POPULATION

As of 2018, the USA's population was estimated to be 327,167,434.⁹⁶

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Constitutional federal republic



Last Censuses (General & Homelessness)

The most recent United States census was in 2010, and as they take place every ten years the next will occur in 2020. A total count of the homeless population is not produced or published by the census bureau, which cites the lack of an agreed upon definition of homelessness as a barrier to completing a count for the census.⁹⁷ In 2010 it did produce a policy report focusing on “the 209,000 people enumerated in the 2010 Census at emergency and transitional shelters and their demographic characteristics and geographic distribution.”⁹⁸ This particular report did not discuss families at all. Family Homelessness is not a term used in the census.

Country Definition of Homelessness & Usage:

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) considers any child or youth who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence to be homeless.⁹⁹ In essence, ED’s definition includes types of unstable housing not traditionally understood by the public to be forms of homelessness. These precarious situations include living “doubled up.” Immigrant and refugee children are also considered homeless if living under any of these circumstances. Programs administered by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Justice, and Agriculture all use definitions similar to that of ED. Significantly, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which funds many emergency housing services, uses a much narrower definition than ED and other federal agencies.

For HUD, “literally homeless” means an “Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”¹⁰⁰ While HUD considers families residing in homeless shelters or in places not meant for human habitation to be homeless, its definition of homelessness for families in “doubled up” or in transient situations is limited. HUD’s counting methods based on their definition

contribute to Family Homelessness’ hidden nature. HUD reports a decrease in family homelessness yet specifies, “the overall decline in family homelessness between 2007 and 2019 reflects a substantial decrease in families experiencing homelessness in unsheltered locations.” The ICPH puts forth: “what if a mother were so fearful that her children would be taken from her (authorities sometimes seize the children of adults unable to provide them with shelter) that she purposefully avoids being counted?”¹⁰¹ The differences in definitions among U.S. federal agencies create logistical and bureaucratic challenges in providing services to the most vulnerable children and families.¹⁰²

Context of Homelessness:

The known statistics for homelessness in the United States are already shocking considering the wealth and clout of the nation, however, these do not reflect the pervasive reality of homelessness and housing insecurity for many families, most of whom are marginalized in other ways, as well. The relation of this issue to finances, and in particular capital, is evident. The proportion of income many families spend on housing, which is often going towards rent rather than a mortgage, displays a need for social protection floors to reduce the risk of losing housing due to expected, yet unpredictable financial shocks and stresses (including the breakdown of familial relationships such as marriage). The connection between domestic abuse, violence against women, and homelessness is clear. The National Coalition for the Homeless asserts, “families escaping domestic violence may have poor credit, rental, and/or employment histories,”¹⁰³ showing efforts to protect children by fleeing abuse in the home can result in other challenges and threats to their safety.

Why Neighborhoods Make Us Sick: Restoring Health and Wellness to Our Communities by Veronica Squires and Breanna Lathrop presents commentary on the irony of how families pay so much money for housing that is increasingly being proven unsafe/inadequate, or within a larger environment (i.e. a



In the U.S. there is an abundance of emergency accommodations and treatment for homeless individuals and families, sometimes offering targeted services (such as for transgender youth). However, the misallocation of social spending on short-term solutions has a dual impact:

Firstly, it appears as if the USA has a greater concern for their homeless population than what

neighborhood) that is unsafe and inadequate, which can lead to health and wellbeing issues not necessarily directly attributed to housing.¹⁰⁴ The ethnographic book *Evicted* by Matthew Desmond presents common financial predicaments as the main causes of eviction: the cost of health problems and related medications, unexpected cultural expenses (such as funerals), and costs of resource necessities apart from shelter can make families unable to make rent payments.¹⁰⁵ The cycle of evictions and moving between accommodations is one of the most common forms of Family Homelessness in the USA context. Desmond asserts, “if incarceration had come to define the lives of men from impoverished black neighborhoods, eviction was shaping the lives of women.”¹⁰⁶ In Philip Alston’s 2017 report, he notes under “Shortcomings in basic social protection” that “poor children are also significantly affected by America’s affordable and adequate housing crisis. Around 21% of persons experiencing homelessness are children. While most are reportedly experiencing sheltered homelessness, the lack of financial stability, high eviction rates, and high mobility rates negatively impact education, and physical and mental health.”¹⁰⁷ The rates of youth homelessness are also high, so civil society has attempted to open a dialogue on this topic. Point Source Youth hosted the *First Annual Southern Symposium on Solutions to End Youth Homelessness* in Atlanta, Georgia in September 2019 focused on the prevalence of racial and sexual minorities in the Southern youth homeless population.

is found in many other country-cases. However, when compared to the GDP of the country, the social spending is not proportional.¹⁰⁸ And in the USA the provision of services is largely from the non-profit/NGO sector. Secondly, because the short-term solutions in place don’t address inter-generational poverty and the intersections of issues (such as high healthcare costs to housing instability) the current political atmosphere attributes this reality to the failure of individuals or social supports in general, rather than to the approaches being taken.

The decrease in social-spending which accompanied the USA’s shift from a Keynesian to Neoliberal economic model has proven to be ineffective financially, yet successful politically.¹⁰⁹ In the country’s 116th Congress (2019-2020), the following bill, “to provide a path to end homelessness in the United States, and for other purposes,” had been introduced in March of 2019 but has yet to pass the house or the senate, let alone become law: H.R.1856 - Ending Homelessness Act of 2019.¹¹⁰ The bill’s text notes the lack of appropriate federal governmental and policy response to homelessness.¹¹¹ The National Alliance to End Homelessness comments on the potential impact of the bill, stating, “the Ending Homelessness Act of 2019 (H.R. 1856) would provide substantial additional funding for homelessness programs around the country outside of the regular annual appropriations process.”¹¹²

- 114,000 students in NYC are homeless¹¹³
- According to the most recent HUD report on 2019:¹¹⁴
 - National increase in homelessness by nearly three percent between 2018 and 2019 (14,885 more people)
 - “The unsheltered homeless Children under the age of 18 were 60 percent of people experiencing homelessness in families in 2019”
 - In sheltered homelessness, “about six in 10 people in families were female (women and girls under 18), four in 10 were male, and very small numbers were transgender or gender non-conforming”
- From a 2019 Voices of Youth Count, “Ninety-four of the 215 youth we interviewed had foster care histories. Forty-four percent identified entrance into foster care as the beginning of their housing instability”¹¹⁵
- As of 2017, in New York City one out of every 100 babies were born into sheltered homelessness¹¹⁶
- According to ICPH, “as recently as April 2019, 1,029 families were staying in Domestic Violence Shelters, including over 2,000 children”¹¹⁷

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS, USA

THE CURRENT REALITIES...

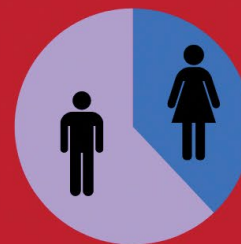


327,167,434

Was the estimated total population of the USA as of 2018. [1]

553,700+

People were homeless (sleeping on the street) on a single night across the US [2]



38% Of total sheltered homeless were female. Furthermore, the female emergency and transitional shelter population under the age of 18 was disproportionately large compared with the male population [3]

63% of all renting families earning below the poverty level spend more than **70%** of their monthly income on housing costs [4]



11/ 10,000

Of all households with children in the United States of America, were experiencing homelessness on a single night in 2018 [5].

Sources:
1. Need Sources

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IN 2016 THERE WERE 2,350,042 EVICTION FILINGS AND 898,479 EVICTIONS. THAT MAKES FOR A FILING RATE OF 6.12 AND AN EVICTION RATE OF 2.34

EviCTION Lab. (2018). "National Estimates: Eviction in America." EviCTION Lab Updates, Princeton University, <https://evictionlab.org/national-estimates/>

- ▶ The following information is from testimonies shared in a focus group with women housed in My Sister's Place Lodge transitional housing in Baltimore, MD, USA in Fall of 2019. The women were all above 50 years old.

Participants communicated the range of reasons why they, and those they knew (including many of their families) experienced homelessness and housing insecurity. They shared that financial stressors and forced evictions were prevalent, and that despite hard work and planning, anyone could find themselves in their situation. However, there were discussions around the prevalence of minorities within these harsh situations. The participants also acknowledged the stereotypes and stigmas around homelessness which they felt contributed to the continuation of the issue. The group displayed mistrust towards the United States government, citing the circumstances that lead to their homelessness and the absence or limited role of government in addressing homelessness. Expression of anger and sadness was accompanied by practical suggestions for what can be done. In both the women's stories and direct suggestions, the need for social protection policies and programs was displayed. The women put forth a common call for the government to take responsibility and accountability on these issues.

Testimony

"Everyone knows we live in a dangerous time. It's bad out here. For a woman, or a woman with her children [to be homeless] – it's uncalled for. It's appalling, it's appalling."

"People work all their lives and the system is just screwed – you can't even get help when you need it. Even if you pay taxes all your life. Homelessness...it's frightening, it's depressing."

"Like people've been saying, we had careers. We were making good money, you know? We weren't addicts or anything like that. We paid our bills and then something happened that was, you know, beyond our control."

"In my experience, the same help I tried to get to keep me from becoming homeless, once I was homeless, I was able to get that help. Before that no one could help me. They couldn't get me resources. But as soon as I became homeless all of these resources opened up. But I feel when it comes to anyone homeless, but especially a mother and her children, some type of program should be implemented to help them keep their home – keep a roof over their head for their children. It shouldn't have to be once you become homeless that these resources open up to you...Something need to be revised, implemented."

"The people who are supposed to be representing us, they are getting richer and richer and the poorer, poorer and poorer. They don't even want us to be middle class, you either got to be rich or poor."

"I think minimum wage definitely needs to be raised, should have been raised a long time ago because the cost of living way exceeds minimum wage and it has been that way for years. It shouldn't take till 2020 for them to raise it to 15 dollars because by then the cost of living has gone up some more. That should have been what, 2001, 1999. For real."



Pictured: Women Participants with Lived Experience of Homelessness

History of Homelessness

Like in Europe, the 2008 financial crisis coincided with a rise in homelessness. Notably the Eviction Lab at Princeton University reports, “at the peak of the financial crisis in 2010, estimates suggest slightly over one million foreclosures were completed nationally.”¹¹⁸ Income inequality in the USA is widening, and additional discouraging factors such as rising unemployment and underemployment worsening housing affordability/access.¹¹⁹ According to UN Habitat in the USA, “even working full time does not guarantee that households can afford to pay for housing.”¹²⁰

There are intersections of Family Homelessness with dominant (though often understated) political problems, including an increase in women’s incarceration, human trafficking, the opioid crisis, and the border crisis. The narrative of homelessness in the U.S. has for a long time, to the benefit of existing systems of injustice, presented homelessness as an issue of personal fault (addiction or mismanagement of opportunities and resources). The racial component of family homelessness in the United States is critical. Although government-sanctioned racial and ethnic discrimination may be a relic of the past, minority groups are still overrepresented in shelters when compared to white families due to prejudice and substantial access barriers to decent employment, education, health care, and housing.¹²¹ Inequality in wealth/capital, more than income inequality, reflect a need for a different approach towards housing. Sequoia Ayala of Sister, love inc. stated, “racism and intergenerational poverty make it an imperative that you have some level of priority system which reflects those peoples’ experiences.”

The USA’s states are known to have differences in their governance and local policies, as well as faces and manifestations of extreme poverty, including homelessness. The Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston’s 2017 *Statement on Visit to the USA* employs comparisons to show inequality across the nation and includes

commentary on the lasting legacy of colonialism in both indigenous communities and in a territory.¹²² Alston’s discussion of the USA’s unincorporated territory Puerto Rico serves to show the relationship between poverty and political rights, but also display the difference in quality of life and governmental responses in a territory versus in a state. He cites the federal government’s poor response to natural disasters in recent years as well as long-standing issues like the island’s debt and political structure, and yet Puerto Rico’s inability to act against U.S. federal policy.¹²³ Unlike in states of the USA, the majority (66%) of homeless families were unsheltered as of 2018.¹²⁴ HUD’s *2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress* data estimates and analyses “excludes Puerto Rico and U.S. territories.”¹²⁵ Further attention to Family Homelessness within United States territories and indigenous communities is necessary.

Good Practices: Leading Organization, My Sister’s Place

My Sister’s Place (MSP) from Catholic Charities has a variety of services and principles which make their organization unique. MSP

is a day shelter and resource center for women and children. They aim to empower those they serve through their services.¹²⁶ Former Director Rebecca Lorick explained, “we really take a holistic approach and look at the whole person not just poverty or not just homelessness. It’s important to see the big picture.” Programming Coordinator Julie Martin reflected, “I definitely think our program is really progressive... in terms of the services that we offer and the way we treat people.” Notably, the programs MSP offers are always accompanied by case-management.

Programs include:

Behavioural Health services





Substance abuse treatment
Psychiatry
Education on finance and budgeting
Eviction Prevention Program
Family Stability Program
Transitional Housing
Human Trafficking Prevention Program

“ We have attorneys come in and talk to ladies who are at risk of being trafficked, which all homeless women, and children are at risk of being trafficked. A lot of people don't understand what human trafficking really is. ”

- Rebecca Lorick, Former Director of My Sister's Place, USA

For more information about My Sister's Place:
<https://www.catholiccharities-md.org/services/my-sisters-place-womens-center/>

Impactful Service: Public Libraries

In the United States, libraries have become a critical resource in the informal education of the homeless, and a tool to help connect the homeless to helpful resources. Public libraries in many states give those without a home somewhere to go for safety, to apply

for jobs, learn important skills, and become integrated into communal environments. The access to information provided through books, as well as other resources and services (for example educational events and publicly accessible computers), can directly impact someone's housing status or livelihood. The New York Public Library annually produces a free publication, *Connections: A Guide for Formerly Incarcerated People of New York City*, addressing an issue which largely intersects with Family Homelessness. It includes resources for those experiencing homelessness, and resources that would help with housing maintenance and sustainability.¹²⁷

Libraries are invaluable public spaces and they hold the potential to be more impactful. Libraries give homeless children an additional opportunity to learn and connect outside of a school environment. Some public libraries in the U.S. are working with social workers to provide trauma-informed care to those who are experiencing adverse life challenges such as homelessness, substance abuse, trauma and mental health crises. A librarian from Maryland, USA expressed an explicit need for resources such as training in trauma-informed care, in order to meet the needs of their clientele each day; this is something that should be considered by the federal government for all public institutions.

Innovative Idea, Relatable Service Providers

In the USA the disparities between the rich and the poor often correspond with other minority statuses. People experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity need better access to services for the range of root causes, as well as the corresponding or resulting traumas. However, the effectiveness of services can often depend at least in part upon the relationship between service providers and those in need. The following voices give insight into the positive impact of services' employment of service providers that are reflective of the life experiences and communities of those being served.

“During the counselling encounter, seeing someone who looks like them and has similar experiences to them or at least can empathize, opens up a lot of intersecting issues that the person is dealing with in their lives. Particularly the women, the name of our organization - SisterLove - in a lot of ways resonates with black women. In a way that they know they're going to find a place of comfort, of folks that they can confide in, and ultimately, in their search to access whatever resources they need...a lot of times in those encounters we find there are women who are homeless.”

- Sequoia Ayala, Director of Policy and Advocacy Program at SisterLove, Inc., USA



Testimony

“I had a social worker - it wasn't just a job for her. She went over and beyond. She wouldn't let me give up on me. If she wasn't there, I would have been in the system. People I met at the group home wasn't there just for a job, they were really there to help...of course there were a few souls that didn't care, didn't answer but the ones that did care mattered. She was black and she was adopted, so it was relatable. Most people can only give you the experience that they have been through. If you don't know, you can only tell me so much. So with her, she lived it so she was able to tell me what to do and what not to do and what she did was amazing. I would really, really, love to see her now. She made an impact, until today she made an impact in my life.”

- Ronika Ward, Author of Something to Make A Bird Sing and Founder of Our Sisters Project Inc.; Formerly Homeless as a Teenager and as a Young Mother, USA



Advocacy Recommendations

Acknowledging the role civil society, the private sector, and citizens play in influencing national action related to social issues, we recommend:

- Encouraging HUD's adoption of the Expert Group Meeting definition of homelessness
- Supporting social protection floor policies accompanied by more accessible, affordable and coordinated social services
- Recognizing the lasting legacy and manifestations of racism and discrimination within society
- Provision of trauma-informed care training and resources across public services, including libraries
- Creating policies and programs to help reduce inequality of income and capital

Policy Recommendations

We believe the following policy recommendations are essential to addressing and preventing Family Homelessness, and are applicable at the local, national and international levels. We encourage:

- Enacting legislation to prevent forced foreclosures and evictions
- Adopting the UN Expert Group Meeting definition of homelessness across all governmental departments
- Including the USA's territories in national discussions of homelessness and federal policy and program design
- Implementing social protection floor policies, and prioritizing social housing for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups
- Ensuring all social, economic and political measures taken to address and prevent Family Homelessness, among other multilateral issues, are decolonizing in principle and effect



FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN

IRELAND

COUNTRY PROFILE

Republic of Ireland (Ireland)
Irish: Éire

LOCATION

Northwestern Europe; Bordering country: United Kingdom (Northern Ireland); Ireland is an island in the Atlantic Ocean

POPULATION

4,761,865 people as of April 2016.¹²⁸

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Parliamentary Republic



Last Censuses (General & Homelessness)

More frequently than in many countries, the Irish censuses take place every 5 years. The last census was in 2016 and the next will be 2021. Homelessness is included in the census. Data on homelessness from the 2016 census shows increases for both homelessness generally and Family Homelessness. The number of homeless individuals totaled 6,906 (compared to 3,791 in 2011), and the number of homeless families was 896 (compared to 296 in 2011).¹²⁹ This coincides with a general population increase. Those living in long-term supported accommodation are included in the 2011 Census data but have been excluded in the 2016 data.

The Census data also entails counts of “rough sleepers.” Demographics are also recorded in the census, showing that non-Irish nationals are overrepresented in the homeless population (“about 25 percent even though they only account for 13% of the overall population”).¹³⁰ The increase in homelessness is rapid enough that non-governmental estimates from 2019 reveal a huge change: 10,378 homeless people in Ireland as of March 2019, with an increase of 243% of homeless families since 2015.¹³¹

Country Definition of Homelessness & Usage

Homelessness is defined by **Section 2** of the Housing Act (1988) states that a person should be considered homeless by a housing authority if:

“(a) there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the authority, he, together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or (b) he is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution, and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to

in paragraph (a), and he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources.”¹³²

In practice, however, not every homeless person has been designated as “homeless,” as subject to “the opinion of the authority,” including many homeless families, Women and Children/Girls. Official homelessness data is produced by local authorities via the Pathway Accommodation and Support System (PASS), enacted nationally in 2013. It captures only the number of “individuals in State-funded emergency accommodation, arrangements that are overseen by local authorities¹³³ meaning the data would not even cover all people in Ireland designated homeless by the country’s fairly narrow definition. The homeless residents in accommodation not considered as emergency accommodation, such as long-term supported accommodation and certain houses and apartments funded by local authorities, are no longer counted as such.

Context of Homelessness

Like many European countries, Ireland has faced difficulties following the 2008 global financial crisis. Despite BBC stating in 2018, that “with the help of an international bailout, Ireland has been recovering once more,”¹³⁴ it is clear from this case-study how the effects of such a crisis (both immediately and enduringly) disproportionately affect marginalized populations. The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children comments on the shift in national homelessness trends, “traditionally the majority of homeless people were single and often living in urban areas, particularly in Dublin, however now the crisis has spread to all parts of the country with a rapid increase in the number of families becoming homeless.”¹³⁵ It is also clear from FEANTSA policy reports that Family Homelessness is growing across the continent, and the crisis is largely hidden. Jean Quinn DW contextualized the change within international affairs, “displacement caused by war and poverty has increased the

number of families seeking asylum in Europe and contributed significantly to this increase.”¹³⁶ Irish policies have not yet provided governmental direction to address these changes. According to the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, the most recent “key legislation relating to homelessness” was the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009.¹³⁷

Gross income inequality is higher in Ireland than any other European Union member state, and the low paid workers are disproportionately minorities, specifically young women, and people with disabilities.¹³⁸ Mercy Law Resource Center (MLRC) also asserts, “it is evident that ethnic minorities face particular barriers to accessing housing and homeless services.”¹³⁹ These are the same groups already vulnerable to homelessness. Within Ireland single or “lone” parents are a particularly vulnerable group: 60% of homeless families are led by a single mother, and “they experience higher levels of discrimination

and difficulty with access to housing.”¹⁴⁰ They are faced with the challenge of providing for themselves and their children while facing these compound difficulties and traumas. This statistic is staggering because families led by single mothers account for only 16% of Ireland’s families.¹⁴¹

The hidden nature of women’s/family homelessness in the Irish context is very clear from the Irish PhD dissertation “Women and Homelessness in Ireland: A Biographical, Longitudinal Perspective” by Sarah Sheridan. She finds that an inability to access services increases the isolation of those experiencing homelessness.¹⁴² Limitations in data collection methodology from state institutions are pointed out.¹⁴³ Gaps in research focused on Ireland identified by UNANIMA International include: identification of how cultural norms may increase women’s and families’ homelessness and exploration of shifts in residency from rural to urban areas.

DATA: Qualitative/Voices

Testimony

Aileen and Alex*

Parents in a Family Experiencing Homelessness, Ireland



*Aileen and Alex were living in rented accommodation in Dublin while working and raising their two children. Both of their children had support needs: their daughter has sickle cell anaemia and their son is autistic. When the apartment they were living in was sold, they could not find affordable housing in Ireland. Rather than having to be in emergency accommodation they decided to emigrate to the United Kingdom. When they arrived in the UK they presented to the local council and with the support of a letter from a consultant explaining the health needs of their daughter, they were given suitable housing. However when they tried to find suitable schools for their children they were told it would take two years to get a placement. They returned to Ireland in order to continue their childrens’ education. When they returned to Ireland they were placed in emergency hotel accommodation which they had to leave each day. The family continued for months like this, before they were placed in a two bedroom apartment which still does not suit the needs of their family. **They had been on the social housing waiting list for 13 years.***

* Name changes | Note: MLRC enabled UNANIMA International's access to this testimony

- 10,448 people were homeless in November of 2019¹⁴⁴
- 25% of Ireland's homeless population is disabled, and travellers account for 9%¹⁴⁵
- 1,698 families were officially recorded as homeless (77% of these live in the Dublin area), around 24% of those are between the ages 18-24¹⁴⁶
- August 2018: 9,527 people in emergency accommodation (5,834 adults and 3,693 children)¹⁴⁷

IN IRELAND

HOUSEHOLD'S CIRCUMSTANCES AT PRESENTATION TO HOMELESS SERVICES REVEALS THAT FOR 47% OF FAMILIES (N=259) THE PRIMARY REASON FOR THEIR HOMELESSNESS RELATED TO A LOSS OF OR INABILITY TO SECURE PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION.

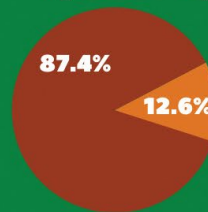
Dublin Region Homeless Executive. "Reported Reasons for Family Homelessness in the Dublin Region: July to December 2019." Dublin City Council, March 2019.
<https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Reported-reasons-for-family-homelessness-in-the-Dublin-Region-July-to-December-2018.pdf>

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS, IRELAND

THE CURRENT REALITIES...



4,761,865



Was the population of Ireland as of April 2016 [1]. In 2017, 12.6% of the population of Ireland people were living in substandard conditions (dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames or floors) [2]

99,555

Households were on social housing waiting lists as of September 2017 [3]



TENANTS MARKET



76% of families were residing in commercial hotels due to capacity limitations in homeless emergency accommodation in March 2017 [5].

Sources:

1. Central Statistics Office. (2017). "Population Change and Historical Perspective." Central Statistics Office, Cork: Ireland. https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/population/2017/Chapter_1_Population_change_and_historical_perspective.pdf

2. Social Justice Ireland. (2019, April). "Housing, the environment and difficulty in making ends meet are key issues in Ireland and across the EU." National Social Monitor, European Edition, Spring 2019 <https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/housing-environment-and-difficulty-making-ends-meet-are-key-issues-ireland-and-across-the-eu>

3. Focus Ireland. "Latest Figures on Homelessness in Ireland." Focus Ireland, 2019. <https://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/latest-figures-homelessness-ireland>

4. UNANIMA International 2020

Testimony

While Mary was working, she was also studying to be a lawyer. She had a partner and a child and a mortgage and a house, marble countertops and everything. Mary's work dried up during the recession. Her partner decided to move to Canada to get work there. Her partner moved and went off with someone else. He left her and the child, and the mortgage, in Ireland. So Mary wound up not being able to pay the mortgage on her own. She gave the keys to the bank. She moved back home to stay with her mother, who was an abusive parent. Mary put her own daughter in care, because she didn't want her to experience the abuse she experienced. She stayed one year with her mom, until she resorted to homelessness. With no other support structures in place, she wasn't going to stay in an abusive relationship. She had a breakdown while homeless in a hostel. Also while living in hostels, she wound up using drugs and got pregnant. Once she had a dependant, she was given transitional housing. Later, she was given permanent, supported housing through Sophia Housing. When speaking about receiving permanent, supported housing, Mary kept repeating: "I deserve this, i'm worth this."*

- Testimony about Mary*, A Single Mother Now
Housed in Sophia Housing, Ireland

* Name change

History of Homelessness

The building of social housing units has been rapidly decreasing since the 1970s.¹⁴⁸ This supports the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing Leilani Farha's claim that the financialization of housing coincides with neoliberalism.¹⁴⁹ Between 2013 and 2016, only 2,072 units were built, accounting for less than 10% of total builds during that time period.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, and problematically, there has been an increase of emergency accommodation though they do not meet the demand nor provide a long-term solution. Jean Quinn has referred to the increase in emergency accommodation beginning in 2014 as "unprecedented," particularly as many children live in these settings.¹⁵¹ Women in emergency accommodation has increased.¹⁵²

Though the Housing First (HF) present in Ireland has displayed successes, the vast number of properties in the private rented sector - which the government has deferred to - make this policy difficult to fulfill.¹⁵³ Private housing (rented with housing vouchers) in Ireland is often used in place of social housing, which challenges accountability and security of tenure. There is housing discrimination against those using state "rent supplements" even though this practice is illegal and attempts to stop this have been attempted through policy.¹⁵⁴

Housing in Ireland: From Crisis to Crisis suggests Ireland's housing situation follows boom to bust cycles, and divides these into three phases: 1993-2006 (the Celtic Tiger years); 2007-2012 (the crash); 2013 onward (unstable, uneven and partial rebalancing).¹⁵⁵ Strikingly, the first phase predated the 2008 economic crisis which currently is often attributed as a primary cause for nations' social welfare failings. During the Celtic Tiger years debt increased, housing was undersupplied, and prices increased, and in Ireland urbanization was already occurring; neoliberalism is suggested as a cause of these symptoms of the housing crisis among other long-term effects detailed in the other phases.¹⁵⁶ The final phase brings us to the present, where

political and economic stances perpetuate the issues which lead to the housing crisis. In debates preceding upcoming elections, housing and homelessness are not being discussed with the attention or time allocation the pervasive issues deserve.

Ireland's situation within the European Union is significant, because the strength of the regional body in economic, social, and political areas implies the (potential) effect of the EU's policies and guidance on the recognition and documentation of Family Homelessness, and the issue's address. In *Falling Through the Cracks: Exposing Inequalities in the EU and Beyond*, it is put forth that: "the EU should ensure that resources, both national and European, are used strategically to end homelessness and are not used merely to finance short-term measures."¹⁵⁷

Good Practices: Leading Organization, Sophia Housing

Sophia Housing is a supported housing NGO based across Ireland, which has successfully been providing support and housing for the most vulnerable in Irish Society for over twenty Years. In 2018, Sophia Housing supported 477 adults and 433 children within tenancies, and 280 total families were supported by Sophia Housing in 2018.¹⁵⁸ Prior to receiving supported housing services at Sophia Housing, residents had been forced or found in the position to live in hotels, family hubs, bed and breakfasts, hostels, family homes, women's refuge shelters, emergency homeless shelters, and untenured private rented spaces, among others.

Most recently Sophia Housing was recognised for its good practices in the manual for European Homeless and Mental Health Service Providers – Dignity and Well-Being: Practical Approaches to

Working with Homeless People with Mental Health Problems. Sophia Housing provides living accommodation as well as services for holistic support to families, couples and individuals. Their innovative projects have been created with the support of other Civil Society organizations and the Irish Government, with the understanding that Women and Children/Girls' needs when emerging from the trauma of homelessness are multiple and complex. Their service model is one of helping people into homes of their own as quickly as possible, as this is believed to be the most satisfactory approach in the short term and the most enduring. Sophia Housing's approach is service efficient and has proven to be cost effective over time. Their evidence-based approaches can contribute immensely to addressing Family Homelessness. Additionally, Sophia Housing's principles and methodology (and most importantly permanent, supported housing) can apply to any cultural context. The programs, resources, and housing itself could look very different.

The residents accepted into Sophia Housing often have unique needs reflective of challenges that a person of any means may have, including needs resulting from disability (physical and/or mental), having a child with disabilities, or having poor mobility. Support services delivered by Sophia Housing include rent management, education, mediation, job training, mental health services, addiction support, child support, social, emotional, practical, home support, legal advice, budgeting and more.

Learn more: Sophia Housing Website
<https://www.sophia.ie/4>





“The most recent figures have shown that the majority of people who are homeless in Ireland today are women and children. In fact over 60% of everyone who is homeless in Ireland today is a member of a homeless family. The supports for a family are different to that of an individual. There is a need to ensure that a history of homelessness ends with this generation. With the creation of a safe, secure and permanent home and wrap around supports, the process for a family to recover from trauma and also the creation of resilient, inclusive communities can begin.”

- Niamh Cullen, National Service Manager at Sophia Housing, Ireland

Impactful Service, Free Legal Advice and Representation

Mercy Law Resource Center (MLRC) are leading experts at the intersections of law, services and homelessness in Ireland. Mercy Law provides free legal advice and representation to people who are

experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity or are at risk for either of these. The services are provided in “accessible” ways, such as service providers setting up practice within hostel accommodations.¹⁵⁹ According to MLRC’s *Report on the Lived Experiences of Homeless Families*, “in 2018, MLRC engaged with 452 families experiencing homelessness. As of November 2019, 52% of MLRC’s current clients are families with minor children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.”¹⁶⁰

There are several unique aspects of MLRC’s approach, including their strategic use of partnerships to expand the services they provide and increase their accessibility. Sophia Housing is one of their partnerships, which provides office space, and ultimately the organizations benefit each other.

Another offering is trainings for professionals and other people involved in preventing and addressing homelessness and housing insecurity.¹⁶¹ This educational service also improves stakeholders’ abilities to respond to issues of homelessness and housing independently. Sophia Housing, Focus Ireland and Citizens Information, among others, are beneficiaries of these training opportunities.¹⁶²

Notably, MLRC brings focus to social welfare law; legal actions can be complicated and hard to navigate, not to mention expensive, which is why such a service is necessary in Ireland and elsewhere internationally. Mercy Law also have “a team of voluntary befrienders who provide clients with emotional support as they go through the difficult process of seeking to assert their rights.”¹⁶³

Learn more: <https://mercylaw.ie>

Innovative Idea, Primary Education on Homelessness

Excerpt from “Primary Education in Ireland and Homelessness”

By Damien Quinn, 6th Class Teacher, Ransboro National School, Sligo, Ireland and Founder of Seomra Ranga (seomraranga.com)

“Recent figures estimate that up to 4,000 children are experiencing homelessness in Ireland.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, it makes perfect sense that we should educate children on an issue that is increasingly affecting their generation in a very tangible way. The Seomra Ranga (meaning “Classroom” in the Irish language) website provides downloadable classroom resources for primary school teachers.

The first Seomra Ranga/UNANIMA resource that we made available to teachers was a short presentation, complete with a Teacher Guide, which aimed to stimulate talk and discussion in the classroom as to what Homelessness is.¹⁶⁵ The causes of Homelessness and what Homelessness looks like were both discussed in the presentation. The presentation also aimed to challenge pupils’ views on Homelessness and to provoke them into changing those views.

Additionally, picture books are an excellent way of introducing pupils of all ages to big ideas, social issues and critical engagement and the notion of making meaning together through thinking and discussion about the content of the book. Critical Thinking and Book Talk is a teaching strategy used in schools to encourage pupils to become critical thinkers through engagement and discussion about

Testimony

“What will really really always stay with me is the approach of the support, and how it had such a long-term successful outcome. I spoke to one of my neighbors yesterday and she’s in University college in Cork...it’s not just me. There’s other “Lizs” who’ve benefited from this support. And my neighbor, she just got married. She entered Sophia Housing in a very bad relationship, and she’s now married to a very nice person. They have a beautiful kid together. And you know, my neighbor whose mentally handicapped... she’s in an empowered state. She’s telling me about her disability and everything she does in her life and she’s got her home. She’s managing a home. So, there’s so many people who have benefited from this type of approach and this type of support, that it’s something that’s working. I’m not a unique case. I know other people like me, you know, so, maybe this is something to look at. And it’s not one size fits all, either. But I think looking, and I definitely think this is so important to push across - the message of long-term, secured housing.”

- Liz, Resident of Sophia Housing, Ireland

the picture book. It was through using this methodology that my pupils began to engage more with the theme of homelessness.

Our collaboration with UNANIMA International in providing child-friendly and age appropriate classroom resources on the issue of homelessness gives pupils the opportunity to engage in a meaningful and tangible way with the issue and, as demonstrated, gives them a voice in the discussion and debate.”

To read the full version please visit:
<https://unanima-international.org/>



Advocacy Recommendations

Acknowledging the role civil society, the private sector, and citizens play in influencing national action related to social issues, we recommend:

- Encouraging a strong regional guidance and response to Family Homelessness
- Supporting permanent, supported housing models, as alternatives to “mother and baby homes” and family hubs
- Educating about homelessness in primary schools
- Increasing accountability of private enterprises to the public and the government
- Directing resource allocation to rural areas, to reduce urbanization

Policy Recommendations

We believe the following policy recommendations are essential to addressing and preventing Family Homelessness, and are applicable at the local, national and international levels. We encourage:

- Implementing policies to support just wages
- Specifying supports for young parents in policies and program/service designs
- Creating social housing that is not contingent on private actors and the private market
- Ensuring that short-term social housing is created, in addition to long-term permanent, and supported housing
- Investing in public and safe spaces to strengthen communities

The purpose of this publication is to be informative, to give feedback to the featured countries that others can learn from, and to motivate responses to Family Homelessness from those with political power. Social issues such as homelessness and housing insecurity are not isolated, but rather intricately tied to both the contexts from which they arise and the local and multilateral issues they intersect with. We recommend that governments and others aiming to prevent and solve Family Homelessness refer to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha, including *Responsibilities of Local and Other Sub-National Governments and Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, among others. In particular, from the latter mentioned report, under **Principle 6** “human rights-based goals and timelines,” the urgency with which UN Member States are encouraged to act is put forth:

“91. Goals and timeliness within housing strategies must be understood as human rights obligations. Failures to meet such goals and timelines have severe consequences for those who are living in unacceptable housing conditions and, unless justified by unforeseen events or circumstances, constitute violations of human rights for which States should be held accountable.”¹⁶⁶

There are many areas for future research on Family Homelessness. UNANIMA International consid-

ers this publication and CSocD 58 at which it was launched, as just the beginning of a long and necessary mandate that can be characterized as action research for social justice. UI will remain committed to exploring and documenting Family Homelessness, and in the future this will necessitate examining other country cases, other intersecting multilateral issues, and delving deeper into the issue’s contextualization with particular groups, such as Indigenous peoples.

We welcome contributions and partnerships for this research into the future and anticipate our expertise becoming more comprehensive, informative and usable for all member states, people with lived experience and service providers alike. We hope this publication will contribute to ending homelessness globally.

This publication is an original source that may be used in the promotion of human rights, to the benefit not only of families suffering already, but also those vulnerable to homelessness and housing insecurity. It provides information and analysis, and guides action towards a multilateral approach to addressing Family Homelessness in all its forms including that of migrants and refugees. This cross-cutting issue will be analysed and reported on in the context of individual member states and regions, contributing significantly to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. In light of this we give the following recommendations...

Recommendations

The address and prevention of Family Homelessness is critically important to UNANIMA International. It requires strategic action from UN Member States and their respective government, civil society, and other political actors. In response to the information presented, and the research questions and human rights concerns that remain, we make the following recommendations:

- **We encourage** All service providers to seek understanding of trauma and trauma-informed care;
- **We encourage** Homelessness and adequate housing policies to have coherence within countries, across all governmental departments, and cross-sectorally;
- **We encourage** governmental allocation of funding to livelihood and housing needs in both rural and urban areas;
- **We encourage** The strengthening of judicial systems and processes to address forced evictions in just and timely manners;
- **We encourage** UN Member States' push for government policies that finance, promote and invest in civil society and private sector partnerships with organisations who are currently servicing the needs of the homeless and housing insecure populations;
- **We encourage** UN Member States to actively collect disaggregated data on Homelessness, specifically in relation to Family homelessness, Women and Children/Girls;
- **We encourage** The private sector to play a larger role in preventing and addressing Family Homelessness, and UN Member States to encourage their innovation and action
- **We encourage** UN Member States to reevaluate neoliberal policies they may have, while ensuring social protection floors are enacted with immediacy;
- **We encourage** Increased international accountability for the treatment of Indigenous populations, contextually also necessitating Member States' responses to generational trauma that has occurred and continues to occur;
- **We encourage** UN Member States to make policy changes to secure flexible funding for implementation of recommendations;
- **We encourage** UN Member States' adherence to international agreements, declarations, covenants, and agendas, with special focus in the coming decade on the UN 2030 Agenda and New Urban Agenda (NUA), acknowledging the relationship between their fulfillment with preventing and addressing of Family Homelessness;
- **We encourage** UN Member States' use of available resources and consideration of good practices, as presented in this publication, UNANIMA International's publication *Family Homelessness Through the Lens of the United Nations 2030 Agenda*, and others emerging from the 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development in 2020.

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