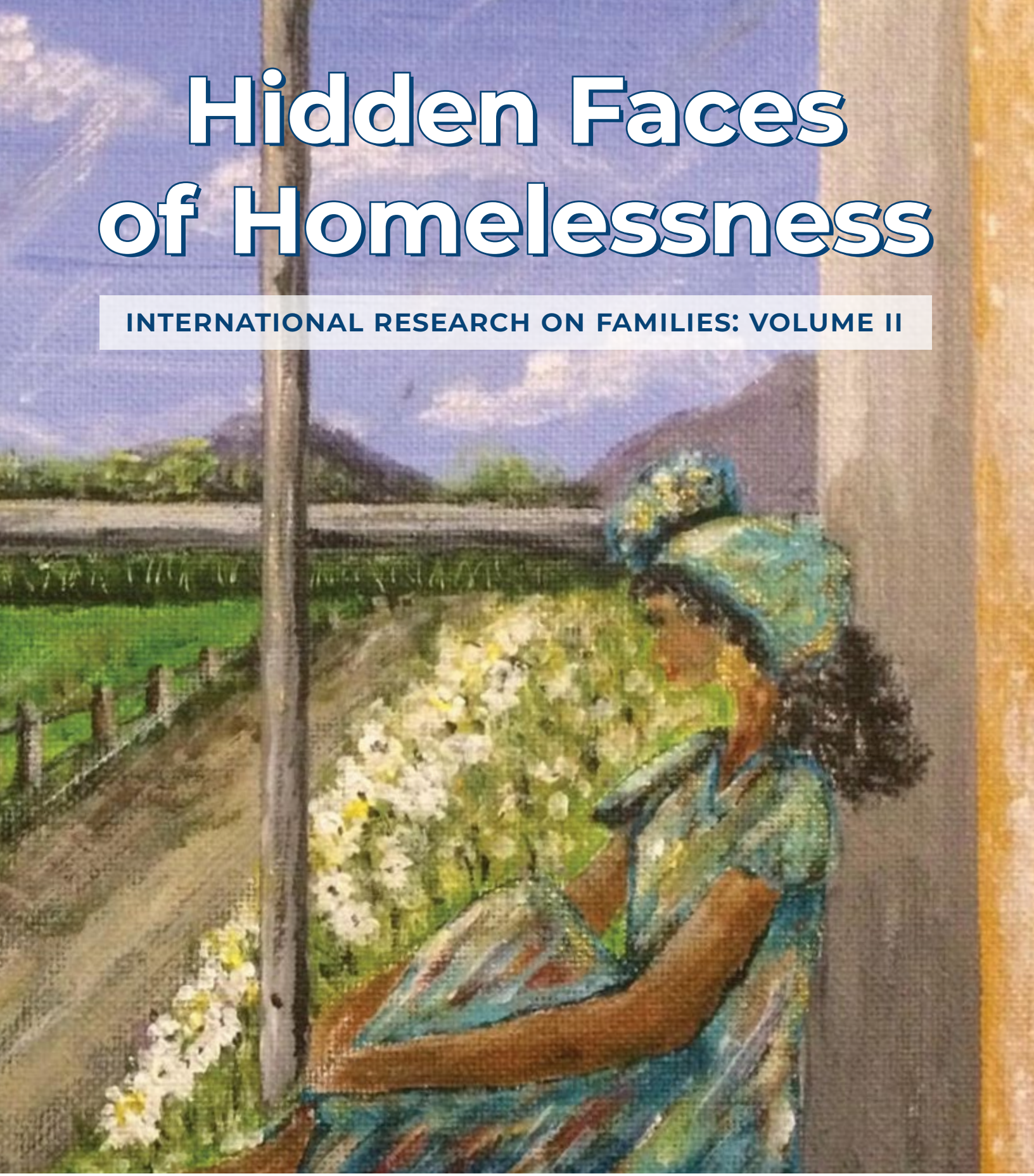
# Hidden Faces of Homelessness

## INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON FAMILIES: VOLUME II



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# Foreword

UNANIMA International is a Coalition of 23 Communities of Women Religious and Friends, in 85 Countries with 25,000 Members. We have been advocating on behalf of Women and Children/ Girls for over 18 years at the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Our mission is to ensure that the voice and the journey of those who have experienced homelessness continues to be heard in places of power. For the past two years our research on Family Homelessness, Displacement and Trauma has enabled us to bring the lived experiences of people—especially women and children who have no home— and give them a place at the table, to be heard directly by decision makers.

In its 75 years of existence, the United Nations had not addressed the issue of homelessness as a priority theme until the 58th Commission on Social Development (CSOCD58) held in February 2020. Producing a landmark resolution on "Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for all to Address Homelessness", was an achievement for Member States, the United Nations, and Civil Society alike. It was set in the context of declarations and agendas such as the 25th anniversary of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Program of Action; the General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (2015); the 2030 Agenda for Social Development; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

As well as its first 10-year implementation plan, and the New Urban Agenda, the Priority Theme's Resolution resulted from a consideration of homelessness within a human rights framework and an examination of its relationship with social protection systems and floors. The Resolution firmly situates homelessness as a cause and a consequence of poverty, requiring urgent multisector action by

Member States who are responsible for alleviating homelessness as we enter this accelerated period towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Here we are now in 2020 collectively enduring and witnessing a time of great upheaval as we experience the COVID-19 pandemic, where those most vulnerable, as always, have suffered the most. United by our shared belief in social justice, we will emerge from this time even more unified and devoted to the task of eliminating homelessness. We, as a global community have a duty of care to all people. Adequate housing is a human right and according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha, "Housing has become the front-line defence against the coronavirus."[1] The provision of adequate housing, and accompanying actions for prevention and in response to Family Homelessness, are essential to the realization of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and other social, economic, and cultural rights, and international laws.

The Purpose of UNANIMA International's second volume of Country Cases on Family Homelessness is to highlight the issues in Australia, the Philippines, Canada and Greece, giving an insight into the issue globally. Again, UNANIMA International is calling on our world leaders to see Family Homelessness, especially in the face of COVID-19, through eyes of compassion. For as German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer said "Compassion is the basis of Morality."

Sincerely,

Jean Quinn

Jean Quinn, Daughter of Wisdom
Executive Director UNANIMA International

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| AHURI | Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute |
| CPH | Census of Population and Housing |
| COAG | Council of Australian Governments |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus pandemic 2019 |
| CSocD | Commission for Social Development |
| DSWD | Department of Social Welfare and Development |
| ELSTAT | Hellenic Statistical Authority |
| FEANTSA | European Network of National Organizations Working with the Homeless |
| HPFPI | Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, Inc. |
| IACVAWC | Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and Their Children |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced Persons |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| MCCT-HSF | Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families |
| MCW | Magna Carta of Women |
| NHA | National Housing Authority |
| NDHS | National Demographic and Health Survey |
| PCW | Philippine Commission on Women |
| PSA | Philippines Statistics Authority |
| Kadamay | Alipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap |
| SDGs | (United Nations) Sustainable Development Goals |
| SHARP | Supporters of Social Housing Acceleration and Renovation Program |
| SHS | Specialist Homelessness Services |
| TASSC | Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNODC | The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| UPDF | Urban Poor Development Fund |

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# Introduction

**Kirin R. Taylor**
UNANIMA International
Research Fellow

> *There's no doubt that homelessness rates are increasing very significantly in many countries around the world. It's an issue that does not get the attention that it deserves.*
>
> - Philip Alston, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

In our first volume of *Hidden Homelessness: International Research on Families* we presented the definition of homelessness suggested by the Experts from the UN Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya prior to the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development. We are pleased and proud to report that the work and advocacy of UNANIMA International and other members of civil society at the UN resulted in an unprecedented focus on homelessness. Dame Louise Casey, Board Chair for the Institute of Global Homelessness, shared the following statement with UNANIMA International,

> "Women and families face unique challenges when seeking housing and homeless services. The United Nations' 58th Commission on Social Development (CSocD58) specifically noted in their resolution on 'Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness' that family homelessness must be addressed through gender-sensitive policies and appropriate support services. The resolution further noted that national and multilateral responses are necessary in order to bring an end to homelessness. It is critically important that local service providers and local, national, and international governments collaborate to make sure that definitions, data, and effective programs are put into place...It is clear that we must act together if we wish to achieve the 2030 goals and end homelessness, ensuring that 'no one is left behind' in the United Nations goals."

Until this resolution is seriously adhered to, translating into needed services, programs, policies, laws or amendments within their local contexts—something that should not be put on hold because of the COVID-19 crisis—we must keep a multilateral focus on Family Homelessness (including displacement and trauma) to encourage all political actors' engagement with the issue. It is worth reiterating a statement from Jean Quinn, DW's paper *The Impact of Personal and Family Circumstances on Homelessness,* that "definitions vary across countries because homelessness is culturally defined based on concepts such as adequate housing and security of tenure."[2] Interpretations will remain culturally distinct because of politics: the struggle for the authoritative allocation of resources,[3] which both affects and reflects the social, economic and cultural realities in jurisdictions.

Our political struggle for attention and subsequent actions (in particular in regard to the allocation of financial and public housing resources, and also research) to address and end Family Homelessness has just begun. Former UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, participated in a UNANIMA International side event at the 58th Commission for Social Development (CSocD58), and stated, "There's no doubt that homelessness rates are increasing very significantly in many countries around the world. It's an issue that does not get the attention that it deserves. But this panel really is focused on an exceptionally important dimension of that broader problem, which is indeed largely ignored [Family Homelessness]."[4]

UNANIMA International's focus on Family Homelessness has been unperturbed since our research mandate began in 2018, in response to our 85,000 members' inputs and direction regarding concerns for the needs and vulnerabilities of Women, Children/Girls, Migrants and Refugees'

Photo by Dylan Nolte

internationally. With knowledge that Family Homelessness presents human rights concerns and violations, bringing focus to the reality of this issue within Member States is essential for encouraging fulfillment of international legal obligations of states, and implications for sustainable development. Development of the world we want, and are now envisioning in a "post COVID-19" framework relies heavily upon global leadership.[5] The World Economic Forum in June 2020 published that, "humanity has no shortage of creativity, imagination and problem-solving ability.…What we need more of is responsible leadership that inspires collaboration, sympathy and vision on local and global levels for humanity to land new and safe heights."[6] The UNHCR and Center for Economic and Social Rights shared in their publication, *Who Will Be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda,* "international accountability systems generally have a supervisory or oversight rather than enforcement function."[7] As such, we see the need for agentic leadership, where leaders adopt responsibility themselves, moving their countries to accountability for Family Homelessness and its end.

Past global trends in looking up to the Global North (either forcibly, or encouraged through misleading rhetoric and depictions in the media,) are being discouraged through sharing case studies such as UNANIMA International's profiles of Family Homelessness in the USA/Canada/Australia where you see the multilateral issues still exist—many places in full force! In the webinar *Impact of COVID-19 on Child Poverty in Africa and Beyond,* it was asserted that COVID-19 responses, which mirrored other countries, were failing to meet local and contextual needs.[8] This discussion point necessitates, particularly within a comparative political text, acknowledgment that no one solution fits all, and no one experience of homelessness and housing insecurity is quite the same as the other. We are talking about people and their lived experiences! The effects of the COVID-19 crisis, perhaps still little known in the long-term, reinforce our mandate and focus. It makes the findings and calls for further research and action within this publication all the more relevant, particularly as we move towards the 59th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD59) priority theme: "Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all."[9]

## Methodology

Though our methodology in principle remains the same (see volume one),[10] some changes in practical application arose from the limitations of the COVID-19 crisis. Many more inputs were made through online means, including connections with scholars and NGOs. Some testimonies of lived experience of Family Homelessness and Housing insecurity were shared with UNANIMA International prior to the global health crisis, and some have been shared through our research partners or members rather than through focus groups and interviews directly. Once safe for the people and organizations involved in our research and ourselves, in-person partnerships and activities will resume. Another notable limitation in research

was an inability UNANIMA International continues to use unique lenses for analysis; a combination of constructivist, social justice, and gender lenses have been applied. UNANIMA International continues to use the definition of homelessness put forth by the Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, May of 2019: "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."[11] Limitations to this research included not being able to use sources solely published in Greek, Tagalog, and French, as well as for the most part, only accessing sources published online.

## Family Homelessness Internationally

Family Homelessness internationally is strongly related to the quality and reach of governance. Federal control over the right to adequate housing, social protection, and programs and services for people experiencing homelessness have proven in many cases uninformed or unfocused on Family Homelessness and its drivers. Trauma-informed care services and permanent, supported housing are essential to addressing and preventing Family Homelessness in the long-term. Welfare programs in many countries have proven to be sexist—presently or in the past which can openly or covertly deter decision-makers from addressing drivers ranging from trauma to insecurity of tenure, present in most cultural contexts. In February, in a recording for UNANIMA International's CSocD58 Side Event *Hidden Faces of Homelessness,* former UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, stated:

"women have been systematically excluded or poorly treated in the context of social protection issues, going back even historically to the change in British Policy under the Poor Law Act of 1834 that was preceded by a major, very lengthy royal commission report which focused at great length on the ways in which women essentially got themselves pregnant, according to commissioners, just to take advantage of money available from the Parish of from the state. And so the recommendations, of course, were essentially punitive, to discourage women from becoming pregnant. To discourage them from being homeless and needing support. That sort of misogynistic set of assumptions still informs a lot of welfare policy today."[12]

In both the USA and Australia experts including Sequoia Ayala of SisterLove, Inc. and Kedy Kristal of Women's Council Australia, report instances of income being too low to support women and their families' housing needs, and governmental programs being poorly designed so that engagement in the labor market may be discouraged.

Hunger remains a huge concern for housing insecure and homeless populations. Many peoples' daily schedules revolve around short-term goals, such as meeting this basic need. This became more clear with testimonies and news reporting during the COVID-19 crisis. A lack of sufficient food and nutrition due to income or issues of physical inaccessibility, constitute a violation of human rights.[13] The cost of transportation is increasing in many places, affecting people experiencing poverty's access to food and employment. Moreover, a lack of reliable access can lead to social exclusion.[14] The nonprofit organization Invisible People state, "lack of transport can make thriving in any capacity next to impossible,"[15] and also point towards a 2015 Harvard study which, "includes findings about the factor most likely to influence economic success: access to transportation."[16] Published by Homeless Hub Canada, in the country, "women are severely impacted by failures in the transportation system," and moreover, "insufficient transportation also perpetuates violence against women, specifically Indigenous women...British Columbia's Highway of Tears, appropriately named for all of the women, mostly Indigenous, who were murdered or have gone missing on Highway 16, is an alarming

example of the link between poor transportation and women's safety."[17] Efforts to address the Highway of Tears through making transportation more accessible have been successfully implemented in the last few years.[18]

UNANIMA International interviews and research on the Philippines have revealed difficulty in accessing transportation as a reason why some mothers with children choose to live on the streets, rather than in government provided housing in the suburbs. Food insecurity and transportation issues occurring simultaneously reflect a fundamental problem in the design of our living situations, that expands beyond individual circumstances, and into communal realms (such as impoverished neighborhoods of New York City which can be classified as food deserts).[19] In seeking to address these issues, consideration of how green economic responses can be incorporated is essential.

Considering the theme of climate, which has been given increased focus by UN Secretary General Antonio Gutteres in 2020,[20] we must consider the timeliness of looking towards sustainability in housing practices and services, for both people and planet. It was reported in July 2020, *Monsoon Rains Pummel South Asia, Displacing Millions*.[21] A recent projection states, "more than three billion people will be living in places with "near un-liveable" temperatures by 2070."[22] From this and other signs of climate change it is clear unsheltered and inadequately sheltered families need the international community's concern—especially when we consider the prospect of extreme heat simultaneously with the need and right for safe and adequate water and sanitation. Julieta Perucca, Deputy Director of The Shift and former Aide to the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, began broaching the two topics of "Housing Rights and Climate Change," in Fall of 2019 to show how interconnected these issues are internationally.[23]

In an interview with UNANIMA International in July, 2020, Julieta Perucca elaborated, "At the moment around 40% of the world's carbon emissions are related to the real estate and construction industry and a big chunk of that is residential real estate. And it's all concentrated in Europe and North America. But it doesn't make sense that there is continuous building of units, and yet so many people are still finding themselves living in homelessness, and rates of homelessness continue to increase. So we need to have a model whereby obviously we cannot accrue as much profits as we currently do from an asset like housing. The commodification of housing not only violates people's human rights, but also contributes so much to climate change." Situations of inadequate, insecure, destroyed, and irresponsibly relocated housing are also drivers of Family Homelessness, and much of this is related to the consequences of the climate crisis, and/or conflict. Notably, drivers of conflict internationally often do include factors of resource deficits, some of which are climate-related.

In urban areas, homeless families have been moved together, or even separated by city governments in preparation for celebrity visits or large-scale events as UNANIMA International has heard direct

reports of in Kenya, India, and the Philippines. In the Philippines: "The Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) acknowledged that DSWD had taken street families to a resort in Batangas Province for the entire six nights of Pope's visit. She justified these actions by stating that this operation sought to protect street people from syndicates and to let them attend training programs (Samson-Esporitu and Hume 2015)."[24]

The paradigm shift called for by UNANIMA International to recognize homelessness as a human and civil rights violation, must be reiterated here as an international imperative, unfortunately necessary because of the inhumane treatment of people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity around the globe. Families and communities are becoming traumatized, with intergenerational effects such as declining mental health in citizens. Sr. Margaret O'Dwyer, NGO Representative of the Company of the Daughters of Charity NGO at the UN related global partnerships to end homelessness to the "it takes a village analogy." She stated in an interview with UNANIMA International, "now that we can see the whole globe, it stirs our compassion and causes us to try to think of global solutions. What we do in one place impacts people everywhere, both when we exercise compassion and generosity or when we choose not to at all. So, here's our chance to make some permanent changes that will help ensure that all have a home."

## Complex Humanitarian Emergencies and Family Homelessness

Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki
*NGO Representative at the UN, International Presentation Association*

Complex humanitarian emergencies are typically characterized by widespread damage to the societies and economies and extensive human suffering, violence and loss of life. Natural and human-made disasters, like floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and armed conflicts, as well as epidemics and other major humanitarian crises, extensively result in displacement of populations and ultimately in very large numbers of homeless people and families within the country and across international borders. Affected persons may face multiple challenges during and in the aftermath of a humanitarian crisis. Family disruption, loss and destruction of housing, forced resettlement or relocation, unsafe return, lack of access to property and land are among the main driving factors that lead to homelessness during emergencies.

In particular, from 1990 to 1999, more than 186 million people lost their homes due to a natural disaster or an armed conflict.[25] In later years, the catastrophic impact of disasters on individuals was also illustrated by the death toll (220,000 people) and homelessness (1.5 million) from the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004 and the Pakistan earthquake of October 2005, which killed 86,000 people and left millions homeless.[26] The affected populations who are forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence due to any natural or human-made disaster, as a result, become displaced persons. Globally, forced displacement emanating from conflicts or other disasters has grown substantially, from 43.3 million forcibly displaced people in 2009 to 70.8 million in 2018.[27] Most of this increase was driven mainly by the Syrian conflict, as well as conflicts in other areas, such as Iraq, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan. Figures reached 79.5 million in 2019, with almost 10 million people fleeing in the past year alone.[28]

Regardless of the type of the humanitarian setting, those left behind are usually in urgent need of life-saving assistance such as shelter, food, water and health care. Women and children/girls are among the vulnerable groups most affected by these humanitarian situations, especially in poorer countries. While experiencing homelessness by such events, they are further discriminated inter alia by unequal access to humanitarian assistance and aid provision, sexual exploitation, abuse and gender-based violence, involuntary return or relocation, and/or coerced family separation. Losing a home through natural disaster or conflict or forcibly leaving home may be extremely stressful for women and children/girls who, in this regard, experience extreme trauma and depression.[29] These situations further exacerbate the pre-existing vulnerabilities. Moreover, losses during natural and human-made hazards deepen existing social and economic inequalities, thus creating a vicious cycle of loss, vulnerability and inequality.

Complex emergencies are mainly related to the provision of humanitarian assistance. In this particular context, further attention needs to be focused on the need for human rights protection for the affected individuals and families. The longer situations of homelessness last, the greater the risk of human rights violations. A Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) provides the necessary framework for humanitarian assistance activities.[30] The vast number of people forcibly made homeless by natural or human-made disasters around the world has greatly increased the need for efficient and effective humanitarian interventions. If humanitarian assistance activities are based on human rights standards, then they can be efficient and effective to the highest possible extent. Housing and shelter related humanitarian assistance could be provided immediately after a disaster's outset, or in anticipation of one. It can also be provided during the recovery phase, in an effort to address the livelihood needs of the affected persons by reconstruction, rehabilitation or the maintenance of relevant facilities.

Housing and shelter related humanitarian assistance should be safely accessible and adequate for all the affected population, based on their distinguished needs. When women and children/girls are provided with basic services (sufficient food, clean water) and appropriate housing in a secure and dignified environment, without any exclusion or discrimination, then they will be less exposed to physical and mental abuse and violence, sexual or labor exploitation. The shelters provided should be also culturally acceptable, to the extent possible, in particular regarding privacy for women and children/girls.[31] Humanitarian interventions should go beyond simply delivering humanitarian goods or distributing shelter materials, such as tarps, rope and tents, for the homeless.

Regina Augustino, a mother of four whose husband was killed in the conflict, inside a makeshift tent at a camp for families who fled violence in South Sudan. (Published by Edwin Kuria, World Concern Kenya's communications officer, on July 12, 2017)

Effective and lasting recovery from natural and human-induced disasters involves a continuous process - not simply isolated actions - going from initial sheltering to permanent dwelling, towards more sustainable outcomes.

Housing, shelter and settlements are key components of re-establishing economic well-being and providing safe and durable livelihoods for the affected persons and families in the post-disaster environment. Humanitarian responses should address people's housing needs in a holistic approach, including both basic and significant support services like access to education, health care employment and social protection that go beyond the provision of a simple house with four walls.

The effectiveness of measures taken to prevent or mitigate the risks faced by homeless people and families in complex emergencies is largely shaped by the successful coordination of all actors involved. The right to affordable housing should be fulfilled and respected by all national and international stakeholders, at all phases of a disaster's response. If the national authorities are somehow incapable, or even unwilling, to fulfill their responsibilities, the international community can play an essential role in complementing the efforts of the government. The complexity of disasters calls for the active involvement of the UN and its agencies, of civil society organizations, of the private sector, along with many humanitarian actors, committed to respond to such crises. Furthermore, all affected persons, especially women of all ages, should participate in the decision-making and the implementation of transitional shelter and permanent dwellings projects. Housing and shelter related humanitarian interventions can never be isolated from the social, cultural, economic, environmental and political contexts in which they are taking place. They should always address the differentiated needs and vulnerabilities of women and children/girls becoming homeless. Whenever relevant, gender-based violence mitigation measures and programming should be also integrated in every aspect of these interventions.[32] Women and child-friendly procedures build more resilient societies, making it easier to recover and rebuild from a complex emergency situation.

> *"When disaster strikes at home, we count on aid workers to provide shelter, food, and clean water. Food, clean water, even the ability to close the front door to my home are all things I take for granted. Can you imagine living with no walls, no door – not even a bathroom to use in private?"*[33]
>
> - Meghan Gallagher

# Testimony: “Presence Among Migrants”

**Sister Maria Rita Gaspari, DW and the Daughters of Wisdom Community of Ventimiglia, Italy**

In the Italian province, Ventimiglia, for years we have been involved in the suburbs of our cities, which are often places where dignity, respect and human warmth are lacking. In the Southern territories of Catania and Enna, we work with the most disadvantaged sections of the poor and migrants who have many needs, especially human warmth. Other sisters work, always on behalf of immigrants, in some parishes in the center and north, collaborating with diocesan bodies such as Caritas, Migrantes and the Community of Sant’Egidio in the cities mainly of Rome and Turin. In this multicultural context, we believed that an intercultural community gave visible and credible testimony of peaceful and constructive coexistence, beyond ethnic, cultural, linguistic and national differences, showing that differences are a richness and an added value.

We want to expand our tent to offer places for meeting, dialogue and sharing, making ourselves present in a border area, where welcoming immigrants is more complex and difficult. To this end we have turned our attention to the reality of Ventimiglia, defined as the Lampedusa of the north, due to the large flow of migrants. Arriving in Italy, they are divided and welcomed in the first reception centers. Once the documents have been obtained, through civil bodies and charitable organizations, they try to find them a job, a house, giving them the possibility of a dignified life. But the number of asylum seekers is very high, the steps are continuous and the bands of poverty are getting wider and wider. The refugee emergency for the Italian nation is a dramatic priority. Migrants are increasingly in continuous transit waiting to reach other European countries.

In these times of pandemic, reception is increasingly difficult, but migrants do not give up; they sleep under bridges and along the road, and they receive a minimal amount of food and essentials for survival.

Associations, NGOs, movements, and various groups arranged at strategic points (border, city center, seafront, train station, Caritas, etc.) offer a minimum of refreshment that helps migrants survive - but there are no projects that can offer autonomy and dignity to people as required by the Sustainable Development Goals.

Here in Ventimiglia, the border area with France, we are included in the journey of Caritas Intemelia, we collaborate with the “School of Peace” Association, we remain open to movements, to various groups committed to justice and peace. As a community of Daughters of Wisdom, we try to be a “presence” among migrants, promoting inclusion, emphasizing the centrality of people and the beauty of their cultures, acknowledging the pain of their history and the richness of diversity, and weaving around them a solidarity and integration network.

Photo by Marcus Wallis

Family Homelessness in

# AUSTRALIA

## COUNTRY PROFILE

Commonwealth of Australia (Australia)

## LOCATION

Australia is an Oceanic country; Australia has no bordering countries, although surrounding countries include New Zealand, Vanuatu, Indonesia, The Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, New Caledonia, Singapore; The country is between the South Pacific and Indian Oceans.

## POPULATION

As of September 2019, Australia's population was 25,464,116 people.[34]

## POLITICAL SYSTEM

Federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy.

## Last Censuses (General & Homelessness)

Australia's last census was in 2016, and they are conducted every 5 years. The census measures living and housing arrangements, but it does not count homelessness. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) notes that the census is, "a vital tool for a myriad of investment decisions made by businesses across all sectors of the economy, and is used by community groups to inform support for some of the most vulnerable people in Australia."[35] There is an entire section devoted to "how Census data is used to inform community services," which is a unique and replicable way to organize national findings.[36]

Homelessness "is not a characteristic that is directly collected in the Census of Population and Housing," meaning that instead of counting people experiencing homelessness through the census, data analysis is used to create the government's estimates. What they report is, "those likely to be homeless," and "estimates are also provided for people whose living arrangements are close to the statistical boundary of homelessness, but who are not classified as homeless."[37] It is not clear how many family units experience homelessness. UNANIMA International's representative, Molly Gerke, an Australian native, explained that for these reasons, "in the 2021 census there is a big push to ensure all homeless people are included, and that currently there is significant research going into ensuring this."

## Country Definition of Homelessness & Usage

Under the ABS definition, "a person is homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement: is in a dwelling that is inadequate; has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations."[38] The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is comprehensive in its description of homelessness and even notes its drivers. This country (among UNANIMA International's 8 country case focuses) has stood out as the one most willing to define homelessness in a manner that will help lead to its solution. The ABS states, "prevalence estimates (of how many people experienced homelessness at a particular point-in-time) allow society to judge the scale of homelessness, and can be used to report trends and to target services to prevent or ameliorate the circumstances of homelessness through knowing both the locations of the homeless and their characteristics."[39] Also worth mentioning is the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) collection, "the national dataset about specialist support provided to Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness."[40] It classifies a person as homeless if they are, "living in non–conventional accommodation (such as living on the street), or short–term or emergency accommodation (such as living temporarily with friends and relatives)."[41]

## Context of Homelessness

According to ABS, "on Census night in 2016, more than 116,000 people were estimated to be homeless in Australia—58% were male, 21% were aged 25–34 and 20% identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (ABS 2018). Around 51,000 (44%) were living in severely crowded dwell-

ings. Over 21,000 (18%) were living in supported accommodation for the homeless, and 8,200 (7%) were rough sleepers."[42] According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, "Australians known to be at particular risk of homelessness include those who have experienced family and domestic violence, young people, children on care and protection orders, Indigenous Australians, people leaving health or social care arrangements, and Australians aged 55 or older."[43] Main themes within the country for rising Family Homelessness are the rising youth and aging populations' homelessness, and domestic violence and gender inequality as a driver. The ABS significantly acknowledges the varied drivers of homelessness additionally pointing towards "a shortage of affordable housing, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown and drug and alcohol abuse," and that "Homelessness is one of the most potent examples of disadvantage in the community, and one of the most important markers of social exclusion."[44] It is clear that some populations experience higher than average homelessness and housing insecurity, including the Indigenous population where in 2016, "the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were homeless was 361 persons for every 10,000 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population."[45]

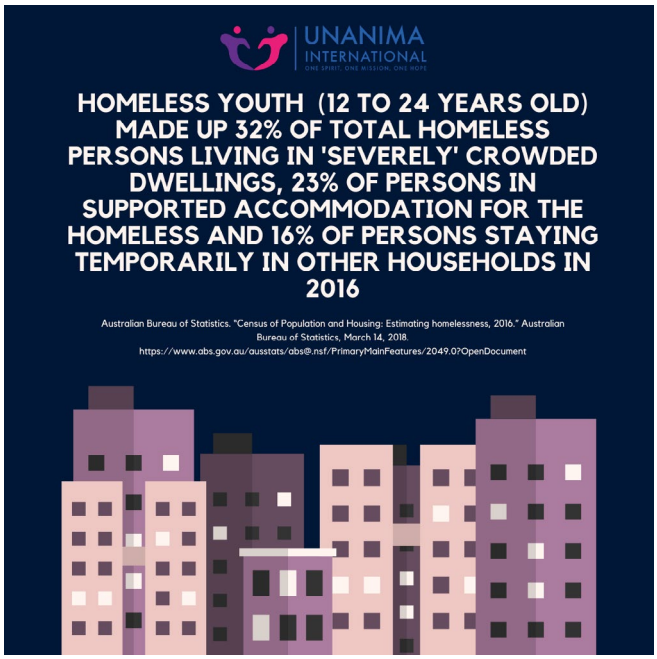
Despite the government's strong comments condemning homelessness and acknowledging that it is a damaging social issue, homelessness rates in the country have still increased. Climatic and natural disasters such as bushfires, drought, floods and cyclones, are certainly factors that contribute to homelessness. The Big Issue reported in early 2020 that, "fire has destroyed 8.4 million hectares of land in southern and eastern Australia, an area bigger than Scotland. And despite heroic efforts by thousands of firefighters and volunteers the relentless, unpredictable and fast-changing blazes have killed at least 26 people, more than a billion animals, and destroyed over 2,000 homes."[46] Tragically, ABC South East NSW News also reported in June 2020 that after the previous seasons' bushfires, "across Australia, more than 300 firefighters and brigade volunteers lost or sustained damage to their own

homes in the fires, which also claimed the lives of six firefighters."[47]

The Big Issue specifically reported on the danger fires provoke for the homeless population, as well as responses from the government in the short-term to provide relief. Unavoidable long-term effects on livelihoods and the environment, paired with uncertainty of what preventative measures are possible cause great concern. In Australia there is a clear lack of affordable housing which has been influenced by companies like Airbnb, and attempts to increase tourism for market gains. According to the ABS at least one-third of Australian households rent.[48] The scholarly article *'Pop-up' tourism or 'invasion'? Airbnb in coastal Australia*, asserts that some communities benefit from 'pop-up' accommodation, while others consider tourism an 'invasion'.[49] Nationally, more families are forced into renting since property prices and costs of living have risen. However, the availability of long-term rentals is insufficient. This reality has caused a shift in the groups who are renting: "young adults once dominated the rental market. It's fast becoming a more permanent solution for families and even for older Australians."[50] Young adults and older Australians are two demographics that are very susceptible to homelessness, and insecurity of tenure is a definite factor. Gary Barker wrote for Forbes about *The*

*Airbnb Effect On Housing And Rent*, stating, "the influence of the so-called 'Airbnb effect' on local housing markets has grown into a significant cause for concern, particularly when looking at its impacts on housing stock, prices and communities."[51] Barker goes on to refer to an analysis from the Economic Policy Institute that found, "the economic costs of Airbnb likely outweigh the benefits."[52]

An informal conversation with a policy lobbyist of Airbnb, gave insight into the company's reaction to affordable housing crises increasing as their operations expand: above all, Airbnb is a business, seeking to survive. It is generally true that housing crises existed or were already increasing before the company's peak success and profits. Also the problems it creates may be more specific to urban areas, where wealth divisions and economic opportunity can become siloed: "the worse effects are for areas already faced with shortages and stresses from high rural to urban migration rates, of which families are a part."[53] Specifically in the Australian context, Myfan Jordan wrote for The Conversation that, "if investors shift from short-term letting to long-term rentals in search of greater security, this would benefit the growing numbers of Australians in rental housing."[54] Elsewhere in the world, Airbnb has responded to the housing crisis by pledging money to communities.[55] For example, the Los Angeles Times reported, "home rental company Airbnb says it will invest $25 million toward affordable housing and other community needs, the latest plan by tech firms to ease a housing crisis their rapid growth has helped exacerbate."[56] As many advocates for ending homelessness suggest, business partnerships are essential. However, they must work to prevent social issues—not just react to them.



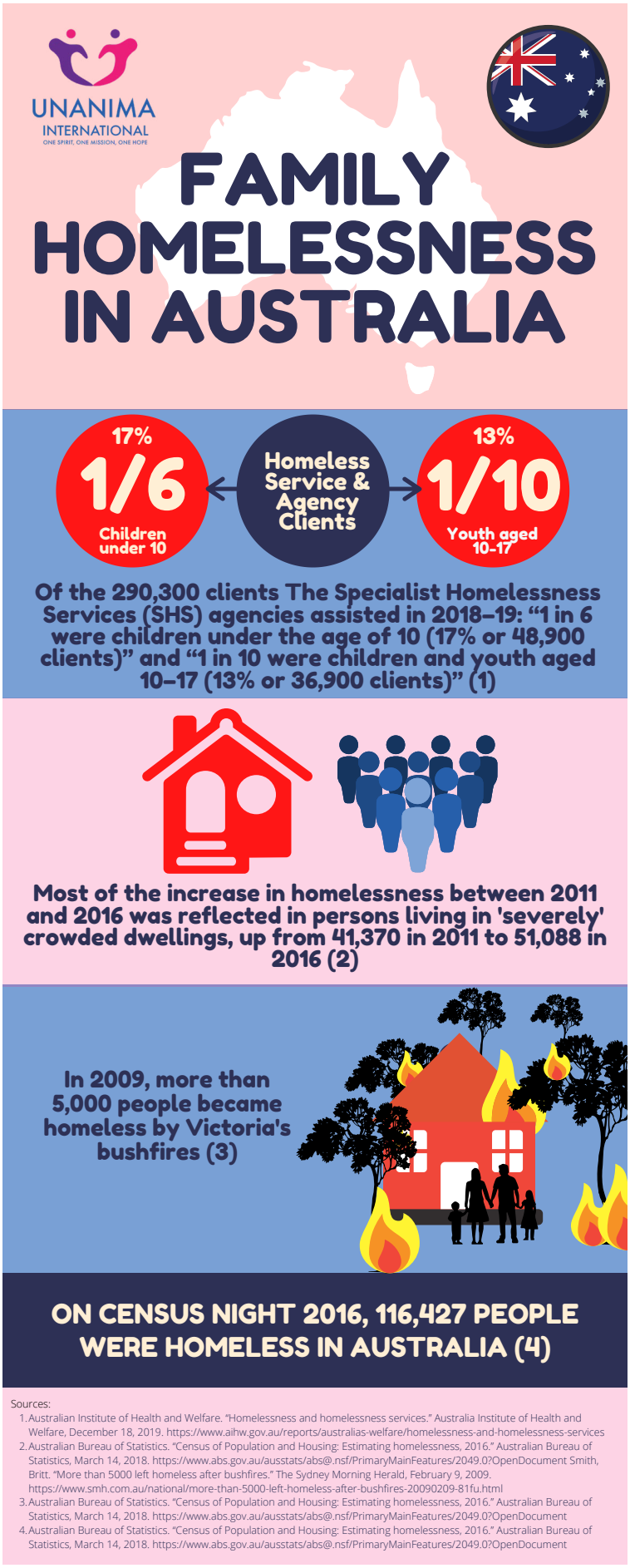

Tasmania, where the ABS official estimates in 2016 suggested a much lower rate of homelessness than the mainland, has seen an increase in homelessness observed and researched by UNANIMA International staff. In a focus group Erica Larcombe, a service provider at Mara House (an NGO in Tasmania's capital city of Hobart), stated, "I think they haven't realized how big of an issue homelessness is in Hobart until recently, because it's that hidden or secondary homelessness—people couch surfing and in cars and just in that really unstable short-term accommodation, as opposed to being on the streets." The Tenants Union of Tasmania have noted that, "there has been an influx of properties at the high end of the market (previously rented as tourist accommodation). These are fully-furnished and priced accordingly, so do not deliver affordable homes for people on low and moderate incomes."[57] Elsewhere in Australia, actions are being taken to create more social housing. Nationally, Mission Australia, a Christian charity, works to "help people find safe and affordable housing," and "support disadvantaged children and families."[58] A 2018 report by the Catholic charity, Mission Australia, highlighted Ivanhoe Estate, a project that is part of the New South Wales Government's Communities Plus program, that "will create more than 3,000 much needed new dwellings and provide residents with easy access to transport, services, jobs, quality amenities and open green spaces to support a vibrant and sustainable community."[59]

Photo by Lee Culkin

It is important to note that there is a Federal Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community service,[60] and various state and federal policies that respond to homelessness. Molly Gerke commented, "Australia has quite good social protections around housing, but for the most part waiting lists are long. If families have other benefits but are still without access to social housing, these often aren't enough to cover the cost of private rentals. In relation to COVID-19, national and state level programs and policies were put in place to prevent evictions if COVID-19 affected people became unable to pay rent." The Tenants Union of Tasmania nonetheless puts forth concern that the measures in response to COVID-19 are temporary and state, "since the COVID-19 crisis, many Tasmanians have experienced failures of financial and housing security. Rates of homelessness are directly linked to the availability of affordable housing and appropriate support. Everyone benefits from a robust housing safety net."[61] NGO, Shelter Tas,has promoted the solution, "to build on these short term measures and deliver housing security for all Tasmanians. Shelter Tas calls for social housing to be 10% of the dwelling stock in Tasmania."[62]

Like in many developed countries, the immigration process in Australia can take many years. Conflict and climate change elsewhere are driving immigration, and there is a demand for migrant workers. The Australian Women Against Violence Alliance published the *Path to Nowhere Report: Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence and their Children,* "draws from data collected by an online survey which was developed for service providers to submit data on women they worked with or who sought assistance from them during the month of August 2018."[63] The report found at least 387 women on temporary visas (who were accessing support services in the country) were facing violence. Around a quarter were in crisis accommodation and 11% were living in temporary accommodation. One in ten were at home with a partner. Collectively, "these women had more than 351 children or dependents," and significantly, "crisis and long-term housing was the service most needed by clients that organisations were unable to provide, followed by financial assistance."[64] Here the lack of affordable housing units available in the nation, paired with stigma and other barriers against immigrants, contribute to housing insecurity manifested in violence.

While generally a global concern, domestic violence was one huge driver of homelessness among the Australian population, as well as people in the country on visas, and Indigenous people. According to Women's Council Australia resource *COVID-19 and Domestic and Family Violence*, the expectation that "domestic and family violence incidents will increase as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic," was put forth, continuing, "we know this through research and evidence that it becomes more frequent and severe during periods of emergency. Times of stress and hardship are never an excuse for violence."[65] They added something of global resonance: "the person perpetrating family violence is responsible for their abusive and violent behaviour. You or your children are never responsible."[66] While there have been advances in this area, such as Kedy Kristal's positive note, "they elected for the first time a minister for the prevention of domestic violence," preventative and responsive work, such as the provision of affordable, adequate housing is needed.

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## Testimony

In January 2020, UNANIMA International's United Nations representative Molly Gerke conducted a focus group at Mara House in Hobart, Tasmania. Below you can find an excerpt which shares testimonies from two 16 year old youths (*Elena and *Gabrielle), and one of the service providers, Erica Larcombe.

**Elena:** Homelessness is stressful. My father was really abusive. I came back down to Tasmania to not so great a situation with my mother, and came back in through shelters. A long journey on the way. Learned a lot about myself, being in and out of shelters, couch surfing, being on the street and all that. Just the environment is really good compared to some places I've been. Workers here are really good, understanding, supportive, weird, and can get annoying at times - but you know, that's their job. Homelessness is driven by a lot of abuse. I know that personally, and from many people I've met in shelters.

**Gabrielle:** Homelessness is long. Time seems to stretch out longer when you can't really settle down. Not having anywhere else to go is a big driver of homelessness. I have not much family down here that I can reach out to and be like "yo, I need somewhere to stay." I think not accepting people is a big problem driving homelessness in people our age. We live in an era where people are very diverse. There are different sexualities, different gender identities, all that sort of stuff. I know that a lot of excuses from parents or family members or other people in our lives, they just think "oh it's a phase," or "oh it's not real, you'll get over that." They will say, "it's not right." I think that's a big driver: feeling like no one accepts you and that you don't really have anywhere to go. Being in a toxic environment where you feel like you can't be you, drives it a lot, too.

**Erica Larcombe:** Homelessness means Instability, uncertainty, and patience. I wanted to chuck a positive one in there as well. I think it's great people find our shelters welcoming and accepting, but outside of that in a lot of homelessness it's just uncertain what's going to happen next, for how long this is going to be and what the options are in the first place.

> *"There's been a very strong issue around homelessness here in the city of Perth in recent years...because the focus has been rough sleepers. So much that homelessness is hidden. Women and children, you don't see them - not many are on the streets, some are, but not many...It will be a struggle to get people to understand that invisible homelessness is women with their children. There aren't many services... For refugees, if they had a housing stock, we'd have much better outcomes than we do now. So many women feel they have to go back to their partner because that's a better option in terms of the children being housed, rather than staying in a refugee camp for a really long time because they're not funded for ongoing support. People need time to get back on their feet. And often the refuge becomes their family for that period of time, but aren't able to continue giving support."*
>
> - Kedy Kristal, Policy Officer at Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services, Australia

* Name change

## History of Homelessness

Like in other large and geographically diverse nations, Australia has different drivers and realities of homelessness across different regions. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) published the report *What is Driving Homelessness in Australia*, which concluded, "effective policy responses and interventions need to address the distinctive geography of homelessness in Australia."[67] Victoria and the Northern Territory are identified as having higher rates of homelessness, even after "adjusting for other factors (including demographic profiles)."[68] In Victoria these rates were high in urban and rural areas alike, which is not always the case.[69] Forty-two percent of people experiencing homelessness could be found in just 33 of 328 local regions in 2011, however these spatial concentrations are decreasing: "it is declining in areas where it has been relatively high (regional and remote Australia), and increasing where it has been relatively low (coastal fringe and urban mainland capital cities)."[70] The same report suggested that some demographic groups are more at risk to homelessness and disproportionately comprise the homeless population. It points to historical reasons, including marginalization, and a lack of targeted supports and related legislation. The ABS admits, "for some groups of people, Census variables provide limited opportunity to estimate those likely to be homeless. Three key groups are: homeless youth; homeless people displaced due to domestic and family violence; and homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."[71] Unfortunately these are three key demographics of Family Homelessness in Australia. Many of the regions with higher rates of homelessness have a large youth population.

Modern slavery has been identified as a pervasive and prevalent issue in the Asia Pacific-Region for decades. After years of advocacy from human rights organizations and NGOs, including The Salvation Army, the Australian Modern Slavery Act was passed in 2018. Notably, the connection between housing insecurity, Family Homelessness, and modern slavery was not acknowledged within the legislation.[72] The act was mainly established, "to require some entities to report on the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains and actions to address those risks...".[73] The Salvation Army explains some of the benefits of the national legislation, asserting it would discourage exploitation in Australian supply chains, as well as guide businesses in shaping their responses to human trafficking at its intersections with the Australian economy.[74] Ultimately this legislation will help decrease hidden forms of homelessness within the country and region, including human trafficking.

A long-standing issue in Australia has been the limited engagement of local governments in addressing homelessness, and in fulfilling protections for Women and Children/Girls. Local Homeless services do not necessarily decrease homelessness rates, as the drivers are systemic.[75] The issue of local government involvement in the issue is not specific to provision of services, but rather to creation and implementation of locally-informed policies and creating political will to end homelessness within jurisdictions. The 2012 academic publication *Local Government and Homelessness in Australia: Understanding the big picture* asserts the importance of local government in preventing and addressing homelessness, classifying the issues as a "very public phenomenon."[76] Academics from the Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Adelaide claim, "local government hasn't been seen to be important in dealing with homelessness, and even the policy initiatives announced by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) from 2007 onwards allocated only a small role to local Governments."[77] However, in discussions about sustainable development and how to effectively address homelessness, the role of the local government is often emphasized as important. The lack of formal homelessness policies in many local governments across the nation present a problem, as federal policies do not always reach the whole nation. The aforementioned research identified uncertainty about division of responsibility as an impediment to ending homelessness at local levels. A survey revealed "57 per cent of respondents reported that there is a demand for affordable housing options in their area however, only 28 per cent of

respondents had affordable housing targets articulated in a 'Development Plan'."[78]

The government of Australia has never been obligated to protect its citizens against homelessness by national law. The Australian Human Rights Commission states, "the right to adequate housing is not protected as a human right in Australia. This means that federal politicians and public servants don't have to consider the rights of people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless when developing and implementing new laws and policies on issues like public housing, health and social security."[79] There are other human rights legislation from Australia which intersect with issues driving homelessness or facing people experiencing homelessness,[80] but a commitment to fulfill the right to adequate housing for all is needed.

The Australian Government's 2013 Homelessness Bill does acknowledge "Australia's international human rights obligations."[81] It states in **Section 13:** "the Commonwealth has acted to protect the rights of all of its citizens, including persons who are, or are at risk of, experiencing homelessness, by recognising international standards for the protection of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms," going on to mention the country's ratification of CEDAW, UNCRC, ICESCR, UNDRIP, and others. It goes on to conclude that "accordingly, the Commonwealth recognises that reducing the number of persons who are, or are at risk of, experiencing homelessness is part of meeting Australia's international human rights obligations."[82] However, in **Section 14** it is specified that the "act does not create or give rise to rights or obligations" in the Australian national context. Moreover, in **Section 15** it is added that the act is, "not intended to exclude similar State or Territory laws," and, "this Act is not intended to apply to the exclusion of any law of a State or Territory that provides for the recognition of persons who are, or are at risk of, experiencing homelessness."[83] This last section continues to demonstrate that local governments will play a huge part in addressing and preventing Family Homelessness and must be supported in this by all political actors more so than in the past.

The House of Representatives' former committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth did propose new legislation on homelessness, which was met with opposition from local jurisdictions who claimed the right to design their own policies and programs.[84] The first recommendation of the committee was for "new homelessness legislation to explicitly state that its objectives are to: achieve an overall reduction in homelessness by allowing access to adequate and sustainable housing; and achieve social inclusion for people experiencing homelessness or at increased risk of homelessness."[85] Progress in these areas are important for Australia, but explicit federal legislation adopting the right to adequate housing as a right for all citizens is essential, given the country's history of homelessness and current challenges, and the non-binding nature of international law.

## Good Practices: Leading Organization, Colony 47

Colony 47 is an organization in Tasmania, founded in the early 1970s. They address barriers to housing, and barriers to education and employment which may affect housing access. They provide housing with supports as well as work in advocacy, and target programming for youth and families among other vulnerable groups at risk of homelessness. Some of

their services intervene before people reach homelessness such as the Residential Rent Relief Grant.[86] The organization is committed to "ensuring that nobody is left behind and that young people are supported to achieve their goals in life."[87] Collaboration with other organizations is noted to be essential in achieving the range of support needs for holistic well-being. They describe themselves as, "community owned and operated and our services are independent of faith and belief systems and are open and accessible to everyone." Additionally, the organization states, "we know from experience and research that whilst the roots of disadvantage run deep in our community our role is to support individuals and families to take opportunities that lead to better lives."[88] While providing important services, the organization also employs over 120 individuals and contributes to the Tasmanian economy.[89]

A notable operation of Colony 47 is Mara House, a supported transitional housing for female youth. The accommodation is always open to residents, and mainly serves women 16-20 years old who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Mara House is, "focused on supporting young women on work towards independent living options."[90] In 2018-19 42 women were housed, with the majority seeking assistance as a result of relationship and family breakdown. The majority of women also faced mental health issues.[91] Sometimes the young women engaged with Mara house reunite with their families, and other times they move on to independent living. Linking the women to external services they need is an essential component of the service, as people's needs are complex. Mara House also tries to get the voices of those they serve heard, allowing politicians to come to the NGO as well as giving talks in parliament.

## Impactful Service: Supports for Families

Given the lack of affordable social housing in Australia and elsewhere internationally, it is essential that families are supported in maintaining safe, adequate housing, including through establishing financial independence and accessing supports. These supports should be available to young families and people at risk of experiencing homelessness, in order to prevent traumas from affecting their family livelihood and interrupting child development. In Australia, Wombat Housing and Support Services provides a good model for impactful services. They have several family-oriented programs. The Family Support Program, provides case management to families who are housing insecure and aims to "assist families to secure stable long term housing with links to ongoing support in their local communities."[92] Another program called Support to Families at Risk, "provides intensive early intervention support to families," which assists families in keeping their housing before they reach the point of homelessness.[93] Importantly, the program supports all family members, including offering services for children. It not only works with families in public housing and community housing, but also extends their services to families in private rentals.[94]

## Innovative Idea: National Proposal for Housing Based Stimulus

In 2020 several social service providers and other organizations across Australia called for the country's increased investment in housing. Shelter Tas, a Tas-

manian NGO stated this is "tremendously needed as the nation faces a shortage, particularly in affordable housing."[95] Supporters of Social Housing Acceleration and Renovation Program (SHARP) note that this would not only house vulnerable families, but also create jobs, and help people to be located closer to their jobs, mitigating concerns around transportation impeding employment.[96] The proposal considers the social and economic elements of providing more social housing to be intimately connected, and beneficial to government, businesses, and people in need alike.

The program has framed its proposal and objectives in the context of COVID-19. On May 5th they stated in a media release that, "today, national housing and homelessness leaders have called for an immediate employment-boosting investment to expand Australia's social housing by 30,000 homes as the country experiences a wave of job losses due to Covid-19."[97] The program's strategy is detailed in "waves" for which short-term and long-term development opportunities will be identified. The first wave would be "social housing maintenance and upgrading." However, the urgency of the COVID-19 crisis, as it has manifested in Australia, is heavily considered in the proposal. Chair of Homelessness Australia, Jenny Smith, stated that "the pandemic has also created an economic crisis that is making many more Australians vulnerable to homelessness. New social housing is urgently needed to respond to both existing homelessness, and to Australians now experiencing homelessness for the first time."[98] In terms of the necessary budget, SHARP "calls for total government investment of $7.7 billion; $7.2 billion for new build/acquisition and $500 million for renovation of existing homes." Moreover, they state that, "commonwealth contributions should be complemented by state/territory governments in the form of land and/or capital and local governments may also make a valuable contribution."[99] Apart from economic contributions, several organizations, institutes, networks and councils within the country have expressed their support, not limited to the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Centre for Urban Transitions at Swinburne University, the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness, and individual academics.

Image source: https://www.communityhousing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SHARP-Program.pdf

Photo by Alessia Francischiello

## Advocacy Recommendations:

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

- Encouraging local governments to adopt policies to address homelessness relevant to their distinct geography and local issues
- Implementing education for gender equality in all public schools, including curricula on alternatives to violence
- Supporting movements to de-commodify housing
- Focusing on children's rights in campaigns to fulfill the right to adequate housing for families, acknowledging the long-term positive effects of safe, supported housing on livelihood
- Promoting further research on Family Homelessness, including for the aging population, and minorities deemed at high risk of homelessness

## 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:**

- Federal legislation that explicitly states a national right to safe, adequate housing
- Policies and programs with preventative focuses for youth at risk of homelessness, including educational initiatives that decrease stigma towards minority groups
- Allocate funding towards child safety, including family counselling and resolution services
- Ensure all homeless people are included in the 2021 census; collect disaggregated data, including specifically on families at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness
- Align national policies with international law and agendas, including the United Nations 2030 Agenda, for which "greater gains will be made by addressing all SDGs together"[100]

Family Homelessness in the

# PHILIPPINES

## COUNTRY PROFILE
Republic of the Philippines (Philippines) / Filipino: Republika ng Pilipinas

## LOCATION
The Philippines is a Southeast Asian country; No land borders are shared with other countries, but maritime borders are shared with: China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Palau, Taiwan, and Vietnam; The Philippines is an Archipelago, meaning the country is made of a series of islands, which in this case border the Pacific Ocean and seas including: Philippine Sea, Celebes Sea, South China Sea, and the Sulu Sea.

## POPULATION
The current population is estimated to be around 110 million people. As of the 2015 census, the population had passed 100 million people for the first time.[101]

## POLITICAL SYSTEM
Presidential Republic

## Last Censuses (General & Homelessness)

The Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) is responsible for conducting the census which takes place every five years. The PSA defines a family unit as, "a group of persons usually living together and composed of the head and other persons related to the head by blood, marriage or adoption. It includes both the nuclear and extended family."[102] The PSA does not offer any statistics specifically on women and children as a family unit, and there is no separate count of the homeless population. The most recent census was in 2015; the 2020 Census of Population and Housing (CPH) will begin in September 2020. The Cebu Daily News reported that preparations are being enacted due to COVID-19 including, "the training of more than 100,000 enumerators who will be following safety precautions...the wearing of face-masks, physical distancing and adhering to the health protocols of the government."[103] Undoubtedly these measures will be harder to maintain within slum settings, possibly risking the accuracy of the count.

## Country Definition of Homelessness & Usage

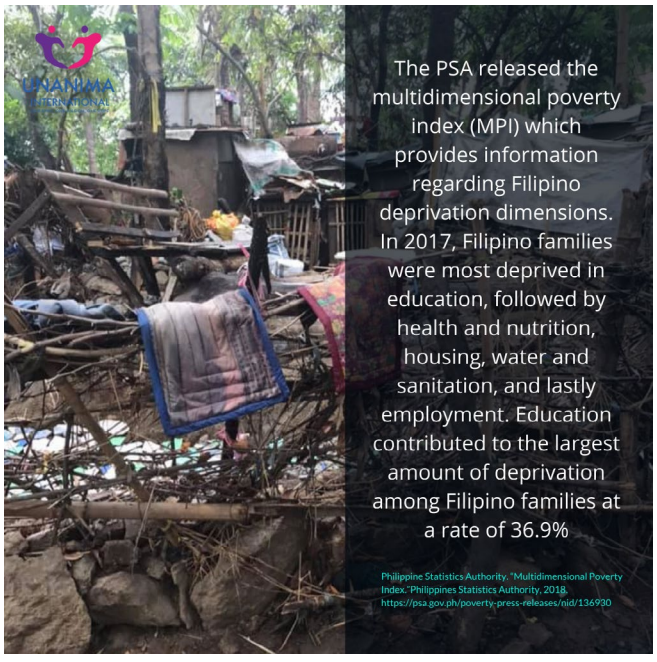
Homelessness in the Philippines is defined by the National Statistics Office as, "living in parks, along sidewalks, and all those without any form of shelter."[104] Homelessness is also defined in terms by the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) and the social welfare programs, who refer to their homeless beneficiaries as citizens comprised of:

> "Individuals or families residing in urban and urbanizable areas whose income or combined household income falls within the poverty threshold as defined by the National Economic and Development Authority and who do not own housing facilities. This shall include those who live in makeshift dwelling units and do not enjoy security of tenure."[105] (Republic of the Philippines, 1992, Section 3)

The UDHA definition of homelessness does not differentiate between citizens living in slums and street dwellers. Although there is no distinction in definition, the livelihoods of families living in slums can look vastly different as compared to individuals living on the street. Families living in the street under temporary shelters may be capable of earning a livelihood while being homeless, as opposed to those who the government considers to be "squatters, transients or mendicants." Under the UDHA definition, homeless families living on the streets of the Philippines include those in temporary shelters, vacant or public places, or under makeshift spaces made from various materials.[106]

## Context of Homelessness

In the capital of the Philippines alone, Metro Manila, there are around three million homeless people.[107] According to the Homeless World Cup, it is the city with the most homelessness in the world.10[8] Family homelessness in the Philippines can be a result of many factors. The Philippines has been focused on extensively in literature around human trafficking, displaying the intersections between this and Family Homelessness. Poverty related to the job market is a driver of human trafficking and other issues within the country and



region. In April 2019, the unemployment rate was 5.1%.[109] While the unemployment rate is relatively low, 21.6% of the population earned wages that kept them below the national poverty line.[110] In a 2019 video *Challenging Employment Discrimination in the Philippines* Maroz Ramos of the NGO GALANG Philippines describes Quezon City's unequal distribution of salary and jobs between men and women, which is occurring even if their employees' qualifications are the same. Other forms of discrimination she mentions as specific barriers are pregnancy discrimination, tendency for employers to not hire women, and a challenge of people not knowing their rights (particularly LGBTQ+ minorities).[111] She implies that cities will choose policies that allow discrimination.

One ethnographic study in the Philippines from January 2014 to April 2015 concluded, "drawing upon Paul Farmer's concept of structural violence, instead of blaming homeless people for their conditions, this ethnography argues that high unemployment in the Philippines is the primary cause of homelessness. The other two major factors are family problems and lack of access to cheap housing in squatter areas."[112] This study was not specific to homeless families, but did refer to them. Notably, the unemployment issue is complimented by a large proportion of women's unpaid labor, and informal work and forced labor, including sex trafficking. Gender inequality is therefore a central issue. For families who make their livelihoods on the street, many sleep in their roadside stores, made of temporary materials, or on tarps and are at risk of traffic accidents. These families tend to lack physical security for themselves and their possessions, and have their wellness and businesses affected significantly by the weather. Families on the street also lack regular access to water and sanitation, often using the cities' sewers in place of toilets and showers; there are reported problems for impoverished families to meet their right to water and sanitation in rural areas, and slums, too. There are a multitude of YouTube videos which document these realities and show content creators interacting with and interviewing families on the streets.[113]

Women and children are particularly susceptible to becoming victims of battery, domestic abuse, trafficking or exploitation. According to UN Women in 2013, nearly one in five women in the Philippines will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.[114] A 2016 UNODC Report concludes, "one out of every three girls and women are victims of violence."[115] A woman who wants to escape their abusive partner may not only be losing her primary source of income and security, but she will be defying cultural norms as well, something that is also an international finding. Many shelters for women and children survivors of abuse are reported to have long waiting lists.[116] While homeless populations are especially vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking, survivors of human trafficking who are attempting to reintegrate into Filippino society are also vulnerable to becoming homeless regardless of their housing status prior to their abduction. It is estimated that there are at least 100,000 new victims abducted into human trafficking schemes in the Philippines each year.[117] Many victims of sex trafficking in the Philippines come from the country's most rural and impoverished provinces, and report that they found themselves involved in the illegal industry after recruiters exploited their economic desperation by deceiving them with promises of jobs as domestic helpers or restaurant workers.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) produced its 2018 World Drug Report with the theme "Women, Young people and Older People." The report highlighted how women and drug use related to vulnerability in the Philippines, and the lack of community-based drug recovery programmes that are available.[118] Professor Regina Hechanova from Ateneo University makes note that there are no such programmes available for special groups, including women or children.[119] The lack of resources is due in part to the social and cultural norm around drug use for women in the Philippines. The stigma follows the notion that women are not only putting themselves at risk, but the children they care for as well. While this may limit the amount of access women have to drugs, it also means that healthcare resources are not available to women who wish to recover from drug addiction. The UNODC reported that in the Philippines, sexual abuse and violence were a stronger risk factor to the use of drugs than its addictive qualities.[120] 55%-95% of women in drug treatment facilities were sexually abused as children.[121] There is also a lack of gender responsive services available to women who are in prison for low-level drug crimes, even though there are a higher percentage of women in prison for drug offenses than men. This disparity is due to the fact that low-level crimes are more easily prosecuted.[122] Such statistics reflect the region as well. "According to data reported to UNODC during the period 2012–2016, the largest numbers of women brought into contact with the criminal justice system for drug trafficking offences were reported in East and South-East Asia and Western and Central and Eastern Europe."[123]

The 'war on drugs' has been deemed, by many human rights advocate individuals and organizations, to be in violation of human rights and lacking focus on the roots of the problems, while disproportionately hurting the livelihoods of families and the poor. International attention to the human rights abuses taking place within the country has also become relevant to United Nations Proceedings. The International NGO Franciscans International recently,

> "renewed its call on the Human Rights Council to establish a Commission of Inquiry on the Philippines, after the High Commissioner for Human Rights presented a report which confirmed that serious violations have been committed during the country's ongoing 'war on drugs'...Human rights organizations monitoring the situation on the ground estimate that over 27,000 people have been killed by security forces and vigilantes since 2016, in a campaign that has disproportionately targeted poor communities. These extra-judicial killings have been encouraged by President Rodrigo Duterte, who publicly stated that 'if you know of any addicts, go ahead and kill them yourself.'"[124]

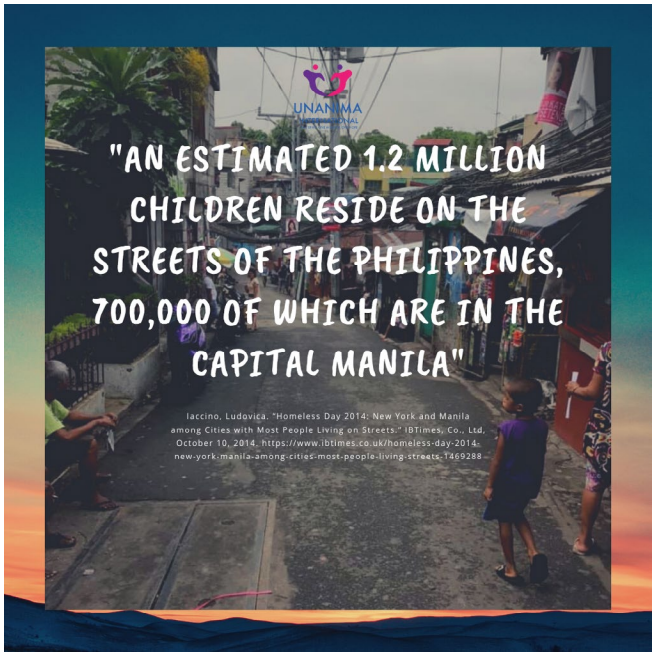
This information is significant, because it shows a great need for the country to work towards SDG 16 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions.

Among other issues, "the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has documented at least 248 cases where human rights defenders, legal professionals, journalists and trade unionists have been killed in relation to their work."[125] As movements such as The Shift, along with the paradigm shift called for by UNANIMA International frame homelessness as a human rights issue, the risks relat-

ed to creating political will towards ending homelessness for the grassroots in the Philippines is clear. A Philippines native who asked to remain anonymous told UNANIMA International their concern about how the government has hurt freedom of speech and how they react to program and policy failures, and stated, "if a program is not working very well they will blame it on the people." There are active responses to the Human Rights violations faced within the country, including the right to adequate housing. Rhodina Cabrera of the Philippine Star in January of 2019 reported, "500 Kadamay members stormed the National Housing Authority."[126] Alipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay) is, "the largest alliance of urban poor organizations in the Philippines, carrying out a long-term struggle for the eradication of poverty and for a just, free, and prosperous society."[127] There were previous occupations of Housing Units in protest by the same group in response to threats for eviction and inadequate housing situations, however, "almost two years after occupying these housing projects, Kadamay members are still waiting for approval from the NHA [National Housing Authority] for titles to their units and the direct supply of electricity and water."[128]

Criminalization of the poor in the Philippines became even more apparent during COVID-19 responses from the government, but there is a long-standing connection between poverty and law enforcement in the country. During COVID-19 more than 70,000 people nationwide have been apprehended for violating quarantine regulations,[129] many of whom did not have adequate housing or savings to allow them to comply. Prior to COVID-19, there were reports of police violence towards prostitutes. In June of 2018, President Rodrigo Duterte (who is still currently President) announced in a speech that he would begin a campaign to crackdown on loitering in the city, in which he stated that, "people hanging out in the streets should be ordered home, and if they refused, he would personally tie their hands and drop them into a river."[130] This approach has had a negative impact on homeless families and children. Police have been patrolling the neighborhoods of Manila, searching for individuals who are deemed to be loitering. In the first month of the initiative, nearly 60,000 people were apprehended, including children and families.[131] Other concerns for children have arisen in recent years, for example when a bill lowering the age of criminal liability was proposed. Kurt Dela Peña in January 2019 reported, "Unicef Philippines says it is deeply concerned about the bill, describing it as 'an act of violence against children.'"[132] The bill was passed, amending the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 so that the criminal age of liability went from 15 to 9. Concern for impoverished and housing insecure children is heightened in this legal context.[133]

The 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) provides information on the characteristics of households in the Philippines. Many families live in overcrowded homes, with two in five



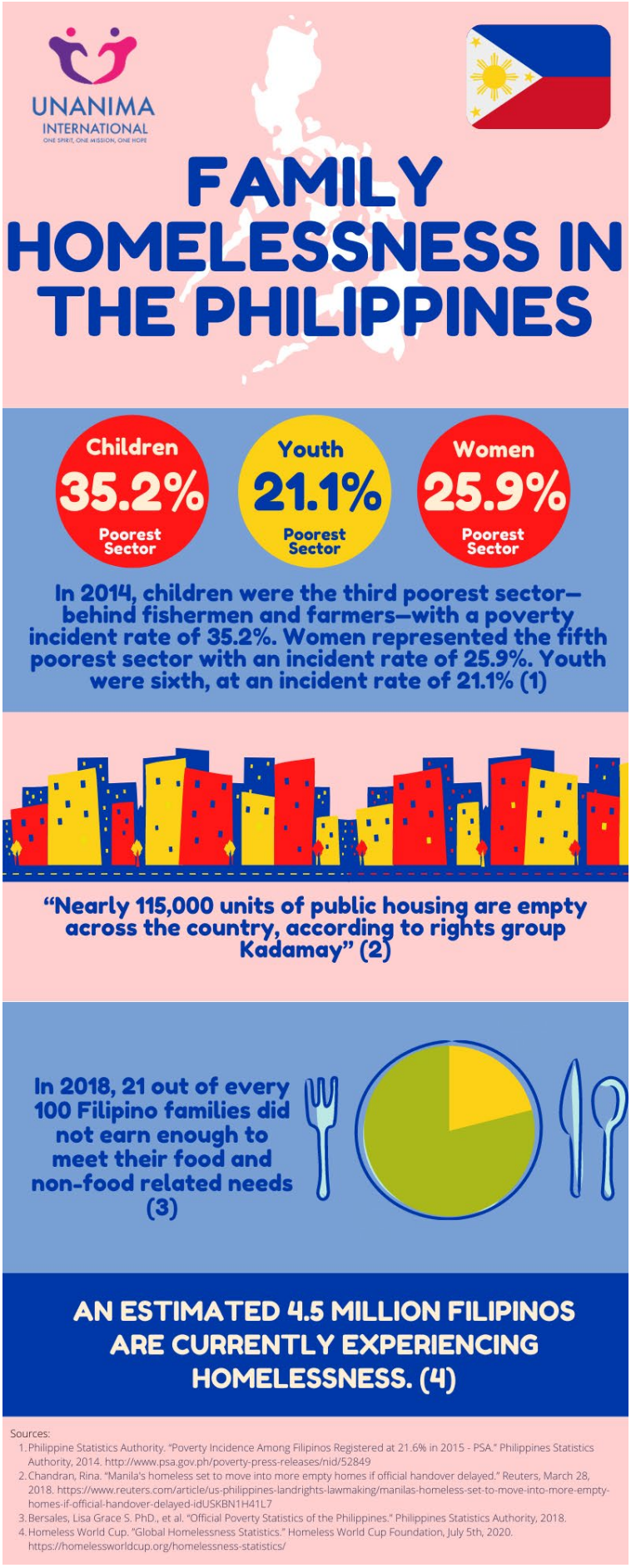

households using one room for sleeping for the entire family unit. A term UNANIMA International learned from a visit to the Mukuru Slum in Kenya, "self-confused rooms," is what people living in slums called their house when in one room people used the bathroom, slept, cooked, and had sex, often in the company of others. In the Philippines this same living situation exists, and is termed "one room affair." Traumas both emotional and physical can be consequences of "doubling up." Slum housing is not uncommon in the Philippines. In search of economic opportunity, many Filipinos living in rural areas have moved to the capital, making Manila one of the most densely populated cities, with 800,000 people per square kilometer.[134] While Manila is considered to be a rapidly growing city, the backdrop of the evolving skyline is lined with neighborhoods that are better defined as slums. As of 2018, the slums spanned 536 communities in Manila alone, and 10% of all slum dwellers in the Philippines reside in Manila.[135] These slums exist on both private and public lands, along garbage dumps, railroad tracks, and polluted rivers (which is true in other country contexts as well). Half of the individuals residing in slums are employed in the formal sector, while 36% are employed informally, such as domestic help, transportation and self-employment.[136] According to UN Habitat, due to a lack of proper resources, slum dwellers may be forced to live in places that are not fit for human habitation; for the Philippines, this is most commonly on top of garbage dump sites.[137]

The Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families (MCCT-HSF) is the government's most recent policy response to solving the crisis of poverty. The MCCT-HSF defines homelessness in terms of who can qualify as a beneficiary of their services. They recognize four types of Family Homelessness: families on the street, families of the street, homeless street families, and community-based street families.[138] In the 2017 publication, A unique sustainable livelihoods strategy: How resilient homeless families survive on the streets of Metro Manila, Philippines, "the chapter questions the effectiveness of the MCCT-HSF given the absence of a dedicated policy on homelessness in the Philippines."[139] In line with what we see in many other countries, a lack of cohesive policy responses proves problematic, as programs often do not have the capacity to meet the needs of all who qualify for them, and may not address the root causes of the problem. Authors of the previously mentioned chapter, Nicolas and Gray write, "For the most part, existing policies support the provision of housing services to the homeless but they apply mainly to the relocation of slum dwellers. In the absence of a policy directly relating to the homeless, interventions remain remedial. The promise of the MCCT-HSF is it might possibly lead to targeted legislation in the future."[140]

When tackling the issue of inadequate housing, it is seen as an urban development problem to be solved, while welfare programs offer support to individual families. Filipino policy prefers methods of creating low-cost housing and resettlement laws for homeless families over cash-granting social welfare programs.[141] The Filipino government has several programs in place to help homeless families in the Philippines, primarily under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). There are two primary programs under the DSWD that benefit homeless families, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P's) and the aforementioned Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families (MCCT-HSF). A 2013 survey showed that 19% of Filipino families were beneficiaries of

the 4Ps or MCCT program.[142] The 4P's program, "is a human development program of the national government that invests in the health and education of poor households, particularly of children aged 0-18 years old."[143] The first objective of 4P's is to improve the health of young children and mothers by promoting preventive health care. Other objectives include increasing school attendance, lowering child labor rates, increasing household food consumption and encouraging families to get involved in community development initiatives. The program operates by offering families one of four cash grant incentives, so long as they comply to the following five conditionalities: (1) "Pregnant women must avail pre- and post-natal care and be attended during childbirth by a trained health professional," (2) "Parents must attend Family Development Sessions," (3) "0-5 year old children must receive regular preventive health check-ups and vaccines," (4) "6-14 years old children must receive deworming pills twice a year," and (5) "All child beneficiaries (0-18 years old) must enroll in school and maintain a class attendance of at least 85% per month.[144]

If all conditions are met, families are eligible for one of four program packages, including health, education, rice, and tax subsidies. A majority of the funding is allocated to education grants, followed by health grants and rice subsidies.[145] In an effort to help those who might not qualify for the 4P's program, the DSWD created the aforementioned MCCT-HSF. In 2018, through the MCCT-HSF the DSWD, "provid[ed] assistance to 4,636 active MCT-HSF beneficiaries nationwide. The forms of assistance include education and health grants, access to social services, and economic opportunities, as well as, rent subsidy for a period of 6 to 12 months or depending on the clientele category of the household beneficiary to improve their living condition."[146] Many citizens are in need of these services, and it is clear that the root issues driving Family Homelessness need more addressal through policy and programs.



# Testimony

**Marvie Misolas, Maryknoll Sister from the Philippines**

Mary Knoll has an ecological center in the Northern Philippines. That's where I did my internship. And I was there when the category five typhoon happened. And that was November, 2013. So that was a sign for me to go back to the Philippines. [I was] looking into the poverty in the Philippines, this was when I started to see that more and more people on the streets, not only kids, not only children, but the whole families, where you can see they sleep around wherever they find themselves. And at first, I didn't really work with homeless people in the Philippines, but I did make an effort. And that was my choice to do, you know like a feeding program at night. Where the sisters live there's a huge intersection: when you cross the street you see the beautiful campus of this elite school. And, if you go further, you'll see the more densely populated, urban poor areas where people have makeshift places. A lot of the increased urban poor population has been caused by destitution around the provinces where these people lived. And then people migrate to the cities. The migration is because mainly a lot of them have families with no land, and number two is that many more people have been displaced by all kinds of natural disasters.

With COVID-19 now, what are we going to focus on first, in terms of development, how we can help people at this time? The issues that we have as a nation, especially those on the Eastern Seaboard of poverty upon poverty... these are the hard issues that need to be discussed. If one family has the kind of land that produces, let's say coconut, and they produce every 45 days, and then you have a typhoon that puts all the coconut plantation down, including the flowers and everything... You have about three to four years to wait until another harvesting time! It's equivalent to poverty, even hunger. You already have the poverty, the inequality, climate change increasing, the impact of the sudden onset in the form of mega typhoons. These are magnifying the poverty. We have the Eastern Seaboard and many of those provinces are the most impoverished areas, and you have now the climate change. You have now dried farms where the farmers had been depending on the rainfall, to start their crops. That means there will be failed crops, or if they were able to plant, then it died. Or, a sudden typhoon came before the harvest, they call it the "failed harvest." So that's a lot of homelessness. What we are not talking actually about here...is the resilience of the people. How could people who had been experiencing poverty, actually rise up from this very difficult situation? Many more people are so resilient. I think we have known our hardship for a long time, but then you look also to the government voice, trying to follow terms of disaster risk reduction, capability for building resilience. We cannot just speak as if we [the people at the United Nations] can do resilience. I think we must speak up about what causes people to be more resilient, from what they already have, as humans, as Filipinos.

I think we have to look into nature. I think a lot of the people that have survived during the onset of the typhoons, very strong typhoons,

are communities that have managed to save some of their natural forest and coastal area; coastal communities, a lot of those who have survived have studied their coastal ecosystem and have helped them save their lives. Many of the communities we are talking about [still] have the mangroves. There are also coastal communities that destroyed their mangroves and other [parts of their] coastal ecosystem. That's where they had felt the most brunt of these natural disasters. So I think resilience and at the same time protecting families from being homeless, from moving into deep poverty [is the solution]. I think there needs to be a shift in terms of development: increasing and investing into natural systems that protect communities. And I think that's where people could really work. They could help that. We can help local people to be strong, to be more resilient.

> *"They are very resilient. They have a beautiful attitude about life. I am fascinated with my friend...she is disabled and homeless, but still brings her clothes into a laundry shop. That is empowerment. That makes me smile. They have dignity; it's innate, it's in every person. We should not forget that each homeless person has dignity."*
>
> - Marietta L. Latonio, RSM, Social Worker in Cebu, Philippines

## History of Homelessness

The Philippines has unique challenges and assets because it is an Archipelago, distinct geographically in many ways from the other cases in this volume and volume one. The collection of islands (more than 7,100), "has been a favourite tourist destination because of its rich biodiversity, beautiful beaches, and multiethnic culture."[147] However, there are huge wealth gaps present on the island. Sister Marvie Misolas shared that inequality of wealth distribution, "has been a long term problem," and that, "a lot of the budget goes into the center and forgets the periphery. If you forget the periphery, if you forget the provinces, people will be coming to the city to try to find livelihood. But then you have a city that does not have enough work for everybody. And so then you have a more destitute people." The country's history of colonization and political corruption helps to explain why its citizens suffer higher rates of deprivation in comparison to some of its Southeast Asian neighbors. New York University (NYU) Graduate and former UNANIMA International Research Intern, Eleanor Ballard, wrote in a capstone report, that "rather than thinking of the Philippines as a country that lacks resources, it is more useful to take into account the fact that the country was once abundant in resources that have been tragically depleted because of its long history of malfunctioning political system and legacy of colonization. As such, the Filippino population began and continues to rely mainly on the service sector for employment, considering that the agricultural sector in the Philippines is on the decline as well. The problem with this dependence is that the service industry is often limited to short hours of work, instability and low earnings, conditions that contribute to poverty."

In *Challenges of the Developing World* Howard Handelman writes, "landholding patterns reflect both historical legacies and contemporary government policies. Spanish colonialism established an agrarian structure in Latin America and the Philippines dominated by *latifundia* (large estates)...It is surely

not coincidental that the Philippines, the only country in East Asia to share Latin America's Spanish colonial heritage, also has the region's most concentrated land and income distribution."[148] Handelman suggests that the rigid class system in the Philippines, among other "developing" countries, is highly related to the unequal distribution of rural land.[149] People with a lot of land have historically held a disproportionate amount of power in the country's politics, as is true internationally; landlords also have a lot of power, specifically in the Asian continent.[150] Handelman states, "reactionary landed elites have also contributed to rural backwardness and poverty."[151] However, redistribution of land has proven to increase economic growth, improve agricultural productivity, and help conserve the environment. The government of the Philippines has in the past redistributed farm land to people in rural areas, with the goal of reducing the likelihood of revolution and unrest above all else.[152] However, such acts must be accompanied by social protections, and be part of an ongoing effort to redistribute wealth and give families access to land, rather than stand alone acts.

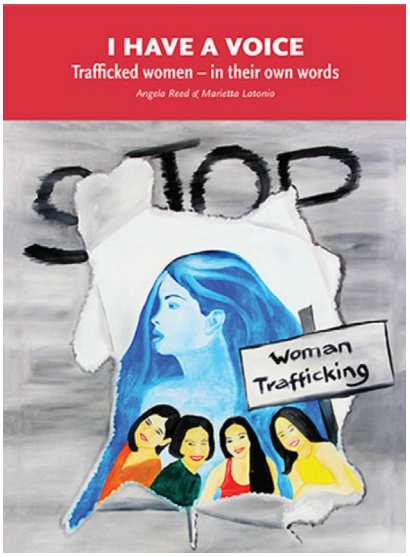
Poverty and vulnerability to natural disasters are linked in the Philippines, as many of the countries poor and homeless families live in rural areas on mountainsides, river banks, and floodplains; areas vulnerable to volcanoes, typhoons, and landslides. Natural disasters also impact urban areas through the destruction of infrastructure, where major cities like Manila have been victims of mass flooding.[153] Notably, natural disasters are cited as one of the largest inhibitors of the Philippines economic growth and development. Between 1970 and 2000, the Philippines paid Php 15 billion (USD $300M) in damages due to natural disasters; typhoons in particular account for 76% of total damages.[154] Moreover, in the Philippines taxes are high, including sales taxes. Families experiencing homelessness are often paying these taxes with decreased access to the benefits that taxes are supposed to provide for citizens. As already mentioned, there is income inequality in the Philippines and discrimination that negatively affects families' abilities to support themselves sustainably. An international Labour Organization (ILO) study proved between the 1970s and the 1980s "the estimated 400,000-500,000 prostitutes in the country approximated the number of its manufacturing workers."[155] The job market can greatly affect realities of Family Homelessness, displacement, and trauma, each of which have intergenerational effects.

The Philippines Constitution mentions homelessness in Section 9 of Urban Land Reform and Housing: "The State shall, by law, and for the common good, undertake, in cooperation with the public sector, a continuing program of urban land reform and housing which will make available at affordable cost decent housing and basic services to underprivileged and homeless citizens in urban centers and resettlement areas. It shall also promote adequate employment opportunities to such citizens." It goes on in section 10 to state that, "Urban or rural poor dwellers shall not be evicted nor their dwellings demolished, except in accordance with law and in a just and humane manner." In reference to women and children, the Constitution mentions in Section 14 that, "There shall be priority for the needs of the underprivileged sick, elderly, disabled, women, and children."[156] In this case, adherence to the law may in itself resolve and prevent Family Homelessness.

## Good Practices: Leading Organization, Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, Inc.

One of the primary NGO organs helping homeless women and children is the Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, Inc. (HPFPI). The HPFPI houses a network of eighty-eight registered urban poor community associations and eighty-eight non-registered savings groups over the entirety of the Philippines. In 2017 it had 8,138 community members that helped to promote the organization's five community driven approaches: (1) securing tenure; (2) upgrading and housing; (3) basic urban services; (4) disaster risk reduction and; (5) post-disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation. According to the organization, "The Federation's work focuses on low-income communities in the high-risk areas, voluntary resettlement and post relocation activities, disaster management and reconstruction processes through community-led initiatives."[157] An initiative that HPFPI has adopted is promoting the accumulation of savings in local communities, both to directly finance community investments and to bring the community together for a common goal. Operated under the HPFPI is the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF), a shelter-related investment mechanism put in place to step in where government financing facilities are unavailable. The UPDF is resourced through community members, the national government, and donor agencies. The five primary uses for the UPDF are (1) Land Purchase (2) Site Development (3) House Construction (4) Livelihood and (5) Community Upgrading.[158] Among other initiatives that pertain to community development, the HPFPI hosts shelter and reconstructive initiatives in the form of temporary and permanent housing, as well as housing repair, the last of which is incredibly important in the Philippines context. This NGO is worth highlighting, because it recognizes gaps in abilities or reach of small and local NGOs, and for that reason combines them together to give a more holistic view of the needs of the country and in particular people who are housing insecure.

## Impactful Service: Research that Shares the Voice of the People




One example of research which is built on the principle "don't talk about us without us" is the publication *'I Have a Voice' Trafficked Women in Their Own Words*. Within this publication, "the women's stories, told in their own words, reveal the sinister and structural oppression of young women on which the sex trade thrives, overturning the popular and sensationalised vision of trafficking as involving kidnapping and chains. Rather than being subject to random acts of victimisation, the women in *I Have a Voice* reveal a slow process of victimisation beginning in early childhood, experiences that made them easy prey to traffickers. They go on to describe their experiences as trafficked women, and their hopes and dreams for a better life."[159] This research took place over seven years, where Dr. Angela Reed, RSM (from Australia) and Marietta Latonio RSM (native to the Philippines), worked alongside 40 Filipino women who were survivors of sexual exploitation in Cebu province.[160] This research gave insight into the connection between housing insecurity, family stability (also connected to housing and economic standing), and experiences of trafficking. Notably, UNANIMA International's publication *The Intersections of Family Homelessness and Human Trafficking* further discusses these connections. It is incredibly important that global decision-makers, local

leaders, and people at the forefront of issues that affect livelihood, listen to the voices of the people; it is also incredibly important that these voices are validated, and given a space at these tables and discussions. Research such as this bridges the gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the lived experience. In the case of this research, relationships were developed in the sharing of stories, and for many of the women this work became important to their healing process.

You can download a free PDF copy of this resource at: https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/files/IHAV-AngelaReed-Web.pdf

## Innovative Idea: The People's Process: From Grassroots to Governance

UN Habitat has a program titled "The People's Process" which is a community-driven initiative focused on self-recovery of infrastructure by promoting technical and institutional capacities.[161] This innovative idea began in the 1980s but began in the Filipino context after Typhoon Yolanda in 2013. UN Habitat reports that in response to the typhoon they implemented 660 core houses, 54 community infrastructure projects, and 354 semi-skilled artisans and foremen were trained.[162] The Peoples Process, though close to four decades old, now functions well in working towards the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda, of which it most contributes to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. The program self-reports that they achieve sustainability, "by combining technology with local knowledge... the approach also ensure human rights through inclusivity and sustainability through a low environmental footprint."[163] In light of the upcoming CSocD59 Priority theme: "Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all,"[164] and the priority focus of the Secretary General on climate change, this good practice is worth considering for replication in more contexts. The fundamental principles reflect the organization's focus on individuals, which is in line with the more recent popular thought in development planning that strategies must be people-focused and address livelihoods directly.[165] The 7 "Mainstreaming Focus Areas" of the People's Process pictured show a clear relationship between the program and addressing homelessness and housing insecurity, that also relate to the economy and land rights.

Image source: http://unhabitat.org.ir/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2_Peoples-Process-1-1.pdf

## Advocacy Recommendations:

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

- Targeting addressing and preventing homelessness as part of South-Asian regional advocacy; encouraging ASEAN to include a member response to homelessness and housing insecurity in their next Socio-cultural Community Blueprint
- Encouraging policymakers and government leaders to acknowledge and act upon the connection between housing security and adequacy and human trafficking
- Promoting attention to the need for climate change prevention, and considerable planning ahead for environment-related displacement and homelessness, including the creation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and damage to housing
- Focusing on ensuring children are not living in the streets, and that communities have access to resources, activities and services that fulfill their livelihood needs
- Continuing advocacy for United Nations Human Rights Council oversight of the human rights violations in the Philippines, ranging from danger to civil society space and the lives of journalists and advocates, to an evaluation of the right to adequate housing

## 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:**

- Pursuing redistribution of land to increase women's access to land and security of housing tenure, while reducing poverty, and positively impacting communities and environmental health
- Ensuring human trafficking laws and subsequent programs address the intersection between housing provision and preventing human trafficking, looking to permanent, supported housing as one good practice which responds to both issues
- Having long-term oriented environmental policies and emergency responses
- Adhering to international human rights standards within national legislation, including bills regarding criminal liability
- Increasing federal allocation of funds to rural areas to decrease rural to urban migration

Family Homelessness in

# CANADA

Photo by Annie Spratt

## COUNTRY PROFILE
Canada / French: Canada

## LOCATION
Canada is the Northernmost country of North America; The only land-bordering country is the United States of America, both to the South and West. It borders the Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic oceans.

## POPULATION
The most recent official government estimate for the total population in 2020 was 37,971,020.[166]

## POLITICAL SYSTEM
Federal parliamentary system, under a constitutional monarchy.

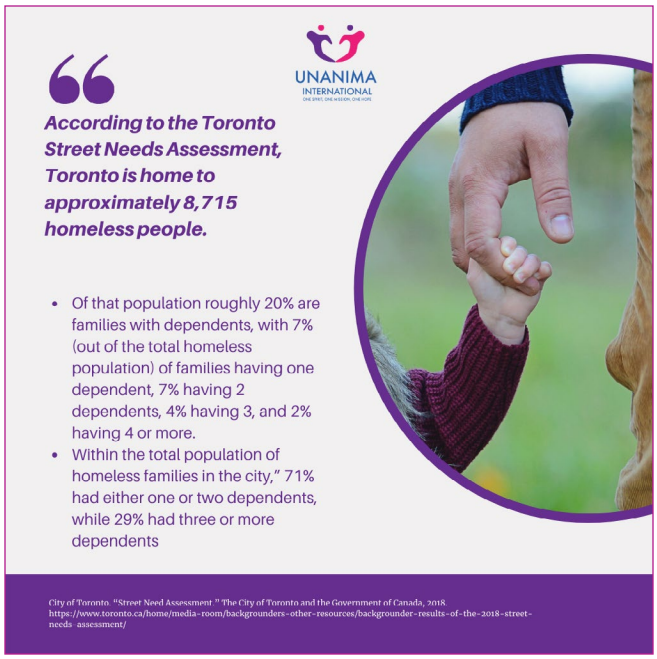
## Last Censuses (General & Homelessness):

The Canadian census is conducted every five years, with the last one being done in 2016.[167] During that last census it was revealed, 235,000 Canadians experienced homelessness that year.[168] The next census will be in 2021, as they occur every five years. The frequency of the census, as well as inclusion of how many people are experiencing homelessness, are helpful to informing more effective services. The census program also has recorded essential information that displays vulnerability to homelessness or hidden homelessness, including the percent of households spending 30% or more of income on shelter costs (24.1%), the percentage of households in unsuitable housing (4.9%), and households living in need of major repairs (6.5%).[169] All of these statistics are derived from the 2016 census.

## Country Definition of Homelessness & Usage:

In 2012 the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH), together with policy experts, academics, government administration, and other contributors, created a new definition of homelessness for the Canadian context:

> "Homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized here in a typology that includes 1) Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation; 2) Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence; 3) Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally, 4) At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/ or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards. It should be noted that for many people homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency."[170]




The COH definition is widely used in Canada by academic, NGO and governmental groups and programs alike.

## Context of Homelessness:

Though domestic abuse is a huge driver of Family Homelessness in Canada, it is problematic to identify domestic abuse as a driver of homelessness without acknowledgement that it is the coupling of the abuse with other factors, such as the lack of affordable housing, which would give an accurate explanation of the causes of homelessness. In *A Framework for Ending Women's and Girls' Homelessness* the topic of "Addressing the Link Between Poverty and Motherhood" is discussed.[171] Notably, "single women caring for children are one of the sub-groups of Canadians most likely to experience poverty. Without a national childcare strategy, women are forced to make decisions about the best care of their children that have detrimental economic impacts. Being unable to engage in the workforce or education system limits opportunities for women to build their long-term financial stability."[172] The links between

poverty and homelessness, including the invisible form of feeling or being forced to remain in a dangerous domestic situation, is huge.

In her chapter *Homelessness 'in their Horizon' a Rights-Based, Feminist Study of Inadequate Housing and Risk of Homelessness among Families in the Toronto's aging Rental High-Rises,* Emily Paradis discusses a program in the city of Toronto that helps to combat Family Homelessness. She explained that approximately 60% of the women that the program is trying to help are in an abusive relationship and looking to leave but don't have the resources needed to survive.[173] In fact, as Fran Klodawsky, Tim Aubry, and Rebecca Nemiroff report, "many adults identified moving into the family shelter as a strategic decision."[174] While domestic abuse is a major factor leading to homelessness in Toronto, the biggest mitigating factor driving families towards shelters and the streets is the overwhelming need for affordable housing. There is currently not enough affordable housing to support these impoverished families and even more concerning is that the average wait time to receive a 2 bedroom Rent Geared to Income Unit from social housing is currently 8.5 years in the city of Toronto. The number of citizens currently on the waiting list is 181,390.[175]

In Canada there is contrast in the experiences of homelessness across provinces, and a contrast in experiences in Rural and Urban areas. Notably, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) published within their Homeless Hub website 61 profiles of communities across Canada, which report on the availability of social housing, provision of social assistance and the rates of homelessness officially recorded.[176] There is still an obvious need for gendered and family-focused research in Canada, despite its wealth of research and knowledge on homelessness relative to many other countries. Of its ten provinces the largest is Ontario with a population of 13.45 million people with the city of Toronto being the highest populated city in Canada with a population of 2.73 million according to the 2016 Census.[177] According to Canada Without Poverty, three-quarters of the people in the Yukon territory live in the city of Whitehorse, where over a period of only six years, the price of housing increased by 80 percent.[178]

In a Homeless Hub blogpost, Alicia Versteegh and Kaitlin Schwan write, "small communities generally have fewer employment opportunities when compared with cities, making it difficult for women without access to a vehicle to seek out employment opportunities for themselves."[179] This barrier is contributory to poverty and rural to urban migration. Urban areas, and even those with experience and considerable planning to deal with homelessness in its many forms, are facing crises that are driving Family Homelessness. For example, in Metro Vancouver, the Housing First model is being used. While this has been proven effective internationally, it is facing challenges due to the high demand for the program and the many people that qualify for it.[180] According to the journal article "Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to housing first in Metro Vancouver," "subsidized housing has a lengthy waitlist, with reports suggesting a minimum of a 2-year wait time, while other available affordable housing is poorly maintained, bug-infested, and run-down."[181] The report has also suggested that social service providers have had to become competitive with each other in that

particular area, because of the lack of affordable housing, and that clients in Housing First programs end up competing with other individuals within the society for housing.[182]

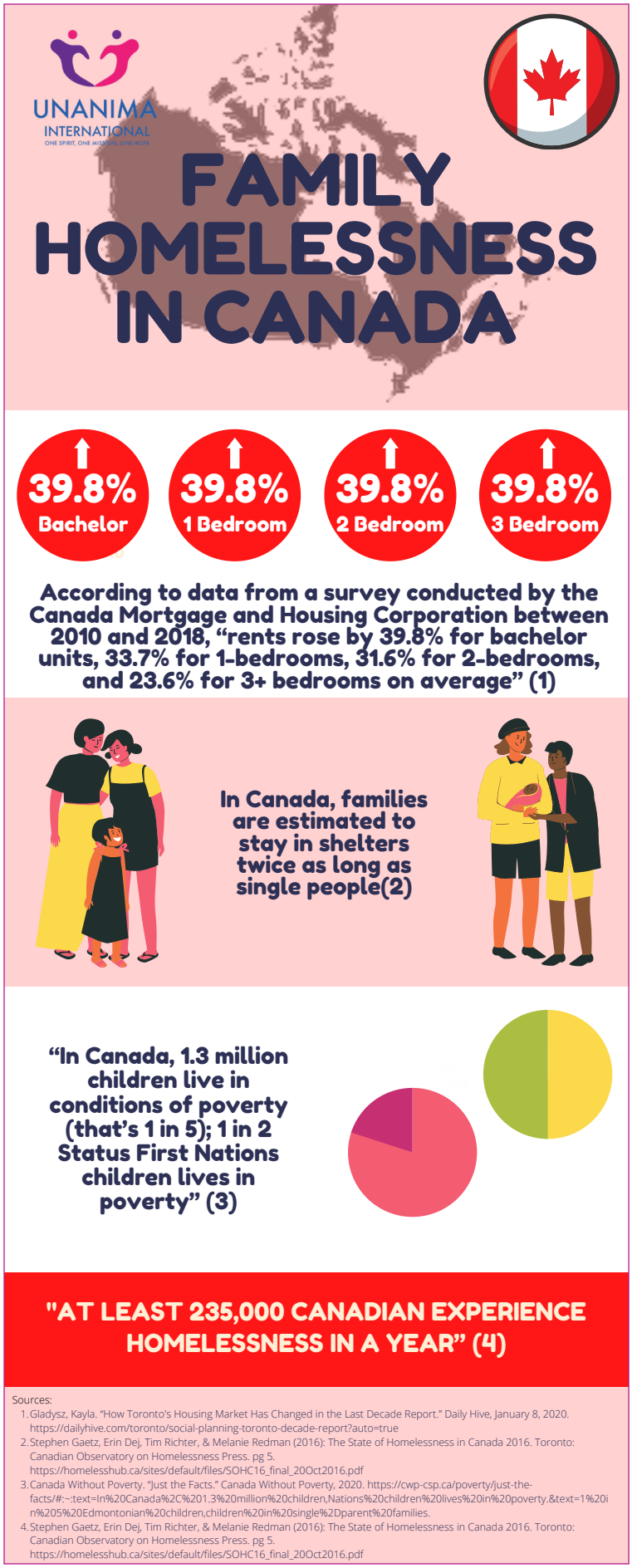
> *"Housing is a provincial aspect. It's like healthcare, even though we technically have universal health care it's divided up and each province and territory runs its own thing. That's the problem with generalizing about Canada...it's quite different wherever you go, both in terms of the prevalence of homelessness, the causes of it. In Toronto, for example, the cost of housing has gone up so much in recent years that people are simply homeless because they can't afford the rent. Whereas in Vancouver, there's a lot of homeless people because they migrated West where it's warmer in the winter time - so it's easier to survive and there's more services. The homeless in Montreal have a huge indigenous population."*
>
> - Paula Braitstein, PhD Associate Professor, University of Toronto, Canada

Lasting racial and social disparities, can be seen across Canada as a whole. They represent an additional barrier to Housing First clients accessing housing in Metro Vancouver,[183] and elsewhere in the country. LGBTQ+, and transgender people specifically, disproportionately experience homelessness. Indigenous peoples disproportionately experience homelessness, and in diverse manners. In the city of Toronto for example, "Indigenous people only constitute 2.5% of the city's entire population they make up 16% of the homeless, similarly, in the city's 2018 survey, "almost two-thirds of all respondents identified as members of racialized groups, with the largest percentage identifying as Black."[184] As the black rights movement has gained momentum in the Spring of 2020 in the United States, and also around the world, homelessness is one sign of inequality for this group well worth bringing to the forefront. Dr. Abe Oudshoorn shared from his work on the topic of homelessness, "definitely we see that [women of color are disproportionately discriminated against] and we're talking about hijab-wearing women in many cases, so multiple intersecting discriminations." Relatedly, in *A Framework for Ending Women's and Girls' Homelessness* a commonality experienced by many women and girls is noted to be "the pervasiveness of experiences of stereotyping and discrimination, and cultural practices being ignored in many responses to homelessness."[185]

Often, non-governmental services target a specific demographic or subgroup of the homeless population, which in turn may lead to some people finding difficulty accessing services when they themselves are not part of that group. Though these last trends described are paralleled in many other countries, their prevalence in Canada is more concerning because of the international view of Canada as particularly progressive. Relatedly, in February of 2020 Jim Robinson wrote for YaleEnvironment360 about how as countries move towards land conservation, "some countries are already moving toward ambitious goals. In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has committed the country to the Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative, which aims to

reach the 30x30 goals. (At the same time, Trudeau has committed the federal government to building the Trans Mountain pipeline to carry Alberta tar sands oil to Pacific ports, a move that has drawn fierce criticism from First Nations leaders and environmentalists.)"[186] It is also worth mentioning that while Canada has been one of the leading countries in welcoming refugees, they are a group at heightened risk for homelessness once there. According to Homeless Hub, "more immigrants and refugees are requiring shelter, drop-in and housing assistance in addition to settlement services."[187]

> *"We've seen trauma-informed care taken up in a huge way in the health system. In terms of addressing refugee health for example, I would say that trauma-informed care was like the centralizing concept in how we adjusted our healthcare services around refugees. I haven't seen that same shift for housing and other services."*
>
> - Abe Oudshoorn



**Melina Laboucan-Massimo, Lubicon Cree from Northern Alberta, Founder of Sacred Earth Solar**188 **and Program Director at Indigenous Climate Action**

"It's no secret, that for Indigenous communities in Canada, we experience the highest rates of most things: highest rates of suicide; highest rates of homelessness; highest rates of poverty...Homelessness and housing insecurity are definitely rampant across the board - in Indigenous communities, including my own - we are still dealing with that. There's still a lack of electricity in some communities, but I would say the biggest issue in terms of housing is running water. My community until around seven years ago, didn't have running water and now we just have septic tank running water, which is still challenging. People are still needing to get water delivered by trucks, and waste removed by trucks. The fact that there wasn't running water in my community just shows the vast discrepancy that exists between Canadian people and Indigenous communities. And that relates to housing and chronic underfunding, especially around water systems, because there's a separation between water in Indigenous communities and water in municipalities.

Led by Chief Billy Joe Laboucan, my dad, the community is building processes to have new housing that deals with the housing crisis that has been prevalent and increasing for decades. There have been many houses built in the last seven years, in areas where people didn't actually have access to adequate housing for the past 40 years...Communities are slowly taking back matters into their own hands and have their own community experts to build culturally and weather appropriate housing. Ideally, communities can build housing from their own sustainable forestry or lumber.

There are a lot of health issues that are generated from poor housing within communities because it's a forced imposition from the government, which is similar to forced diets from the government through the Indian Act, which is a very colonial and antiquated government policy that has existed since the inception of Canada. The Indian act is still perpetuating these disparities between Indigenous communities and other communities in Canada, because within the Indian act, there is again, a forced decision-making system that is imposed on communities. Previously, we had our own traditional governance systems that allowed for better decision making and equity among both women and men.

Through the Indian act, there has been a very patriarchal system that's been imposed on communities, which basically is a top down approach with men making decisions that were no longer based on collective forms of decision making. It might seem like a good idea from the outside because it created an electoral system; but, it was a forced imposition which allowed patriarchy to reign within communities, as well as created a lack of internal accountability mechanisms within communities that used to previously exist. With traditional Indigenous governance systems there was more equitable decision-making and accountability to those decisions. Whereas now, it's an imposed chief and council system, where the Chief is actually more accountable to the government than they are to their own community and this is problematic.

## History of Homelessness:

Homelessness seemingly increased in the 1980s as a result of a large disinvestment in affordable housing from structural shifts in the economy. Canada at that point grew in single men's homelessness, but with time the population started to be more diverse with LGTBQ+ and other marginalized groups, as well as families being the primary population to experience homelessness.[190] Prior to then the government invested heavily in affordable housing, even amending the National Housing Act to ensure that 20,000 housing units were built every year. However, mass homelessness quickly surfaced in the mid 80's when the government started making heavy cuts to social housing and other programs that were geared toward social welfare. According to *Homelessness Handbook* chapter "Homelessness Around the World," these cuts continued into the 90's as the government made substantial cuts in, "social housing, welfare, and income security benefits, even though Canada's economy remained strong."[191] This led to poverty levels rising, real incomes declining, and federal funding being cut by nearly 30 percent. However, during this same period, "the costs of housing, healthcare, public transportation, and daycare for low income families continued to grow."[192] Most importantly there were major changes in the allocation of public resources and the responsibility for providing funding and determining how that funding is spent within the community. This included spending on social welfare and housing, which was shifted from the provinces to the municipalities themselves. This led, and has continued to lead to fiscal limitations for cities and towns and has increased both visible and invisible homelessness.

> *"You cannot retire in Canada unless you are able to own your home and not pay rent."*[189]
>
> - Kate Jacobson, Host of the Alberta Advantage and Union and Labour Organizer

As Canada's neoliberal economy shifts in favor of a more free and privatized market, more companies are moving into urban areas like Toronto to maximize profits. This has led to a major increase in urbanization over several decades and has had a tremendous impact on the housing market in the last decade specifically. As urbanization increases so does the population of Canada's largest city, which has seen an increase of "120% from 2.7 million in 1971 to 5.9 million in 2016."[193] Shifts in high homelessness rates from some rural to urban areas can reflect urbanization, in Canada and elsewhere, but are sometimes mistaken to be a decrease in homelessness generally. As mentioned, Indigenous people face higher rates of homelessness even in urban areas. *State of Women's Housing Need and Homelessness in Canada Literature Review* asserts, "gendered colonization, violence, and structural and systemic racism is woven into the very fabric of Canadian society."[194] The report argues that the racist Indian Act among other historical maltreatment of Indigenous peoples, including the reserve system, and the intergenerational impacts of laws and policies, "have formed the basis for regional, provincial/territorial, and federal public systems that mutually reinforce violence, exclusion, and oppression. They form the basis for homelessness and housing need amongst Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse peoples."[195] This report and many Indigenous activists continue to criticize the

Indian Act as racist and contributory to current issues in housing access.

Personal history of experiences of homelessness, housing insecurity, and poverty, among other adverse experiences, are often found in people currently experiencing adverse experiences such as Family Homelessness or its drivers such as violence. One report, *Violent victimization of women with disabilities* revealed that in Canada, "even when controlling for other factors, a history of homelessness remained associated with an increased risk of violent victimization for women with a disability. The odds of being a victim of violent crime were more than twice as high for women with a disability who had ever been homeless compared to those without a history of homelessness, other factors being equal."[196] The aforementioned report, *State of Women's Housing Need and Homelessness in Canada Literature Review* discusses how youth who were in the child welfare system (which can be a result of Family Homelessness or poverty) are more likely to be victims of trafficking, experience homelessness, be unemployed and more.[197] Such statistics give insight that Family Homelessness can't be addressed as a stand alone issue. It exists among many other societal and systemic issues, often reflected in personal and familial circumstances which lead to it.[198] Therefore, in Canada and beyond we need to increase political will to resolve the drivers of Family Homelessness.

## Good Practices: Leading Organization, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH)

A leading organization in Canada, highlighted by many individuals we've interviewed as a credible source of knowledge that actively works to end homelessness, is the COH. According to their website, "the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness is a non-profit, non-partisan research institute that is committed to conducting and mobilizing research so as to contribute to solutions to homelessness. We work together as a group of researchers, service providers, policy and decision makers, people with lived experience of homelessness as well as graduate and undergraduate students from across Canada with a passion for social justice issues and a desire to solve homelessness in our communities."[199] The COH also developed the Homelessness Learning Hub, also referred to as the Homeless Hub, which makes resources and tools that are available to the public; the resources are free and use accessible language. The Homeless Hub, "offers collections of resources on topics such as systems planning, trauma-informed care, and Housing First."[200] The COH is known to collaborate with a variety of governmental bodies as well as academics, national alliances from Canada and beyond, and regional networks including FEANTSA. COH Members include 28 academics from institutions across Canada, as well as 28 agencies and community organizations, and they are actively expanding. Additionally, "the COH leverages the expertise of its Advisory Council. It is composed of a wide range of experts on homelessness, including academics, policy and decision makers, service providers and people with lived experience of homelessness."[201]

The founder, who remains a director, is Dr. Stephen Gaetz, a professor in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. They have published books about the Housing First

model, as well as a website with a toolkit for Housing First, helping to promote one of the most efficient responses to homelessness which can be classified as an HRBA.[202] As many advocates for ending homelessness have pointed out, the lack of research and data on homelessness is a huge barrier to ending it. This is true for the niched experiences of Family Homelessness as well. Fortunately COH has research addressing these issues as well as the attention of many in the governmental and service fields. Many of their findings can apply internationally, despite the Canadian focus, but also they present a model which can be replicated. Recently, the Homeless Hub presented a "Call for Community Stories."[203] This is an example of how, despite being an institution, the COH attempts to highlight voices of those with lived experience of homelessness.

*COH's Research to Impact Cycle*

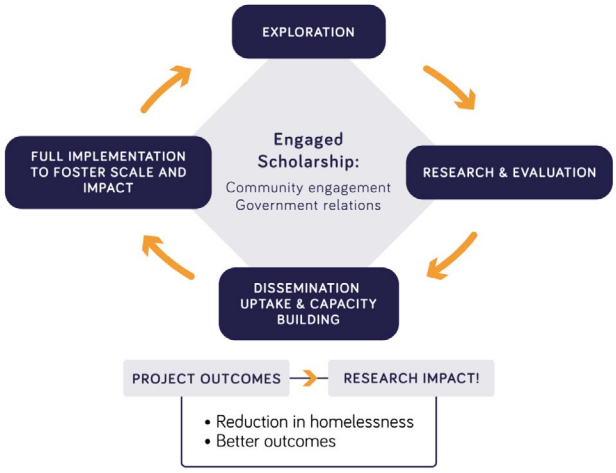



Image source: https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-us/about-the-coh

## Impactful Service: Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH)

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) is a national network. Their values include recognition of the human right to housing, as well as commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and specifically seeking to reconcile with Indigenous peoples. In regard to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples they state their commitment to international law, noting, "We are guided in our work by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the principles of empowerment and self-determination."[204] The network, in order to coordinate, has sub focuses such as Rural/Remote homelessness. Existing within this network, are a variety of organizations and services. Additionally, academics and others working on the issues at hand but without a direct service element, are able to join and share and gain insights for research, education of advocacy.[205] Given the differences in homelessness rates between provinces, the cultivation of a network working in solidarity to paint a clear picture of the issue of homelessness, particularly with regard to the family and gender dimensions, is essential. The network also identifies and highlights best practices among members.

## Innovative Idea: National Women Services Survey

In order to respond to the profoundly gendered dimensions of homelessness, a survey to assess women's perceptions and needs in the service and prevention contexts is ideal. A National Women Services survey was initiated in the Spring of 2020 nationally in Canada. It was designed by Abe Oudshoorn.[206] The survey is expected to demonstrate differences in understanding and applying the gender lens that naturally happens across communities. It could be considered a "self-assessment," which means it asks for the community's own reflection and reveals their judgment. The survey is designed for Canadian communities, but has many questions which could be adapted to other contexts. Notably, it is available in French and English. It has been sent to communities across Canada, including those with high risks of homelessness. Notably, the survey has been sent out primarily using networks which demonstrates the importance of networks in helping researchers to access vital voices that can shape policies, programs, and education on homelessness.

Photo by Ben White

## Advocacy Recommendations:

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

- Encouraging planning to end homelessness at all levels to be participatory
- Promoting adoption of trauma-informed care policies and practices beyond the healthcare system and in all public services; promoting trauma-informed care that is based in respect[207]
- Acknowledging colonialism, discrimination and gender inequality as underlying drivers of Family Homelessness as well as wealth and income inequality
- Destigmatizing immigration
- Focusing on children's human rights and livelihood needs, decreasing chances of future homelessness

## 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:**

- Creating legislation that will ensure evictions will not proceed if they will result in homelessness
- Following the suggestion in the National Framework to end homelessness, which calls for a complete review of Canadian justice system policies, "using a gender lens and trauma-informed model to understand how women's rights can be secured and their access to justice enhanced and how homelessness can be exited and prevented"[208]
- Ensuring federal and provincial governments are working with municipal governments in their measurement, address and prevention of homelessness
- Extending reconciliation goals and policies to be directly related to housing and land-rights policies; reframing services and policies to address the need for Indigenous housing and land security as part of the national government's self-made "reconciliation" efforts[209]
- Allocating funding towards long-term immigrant and refugee supports, including permanent, supported housing

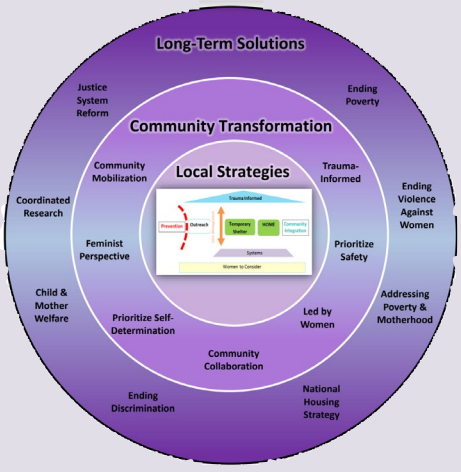



Image source: https://safehousingpartnerships.org/sites/default/files/2017-01/A-Framework-for-Ending-Womens-and-Girls-Homelessness.pdf

Photo by Julie Ricard

Family Homelessness in

# GREECE

## COUNTRY PROFILE

The Hellenic Republic (Greece) /
Greek: Ελληνική Δημοκρατία

## LOCATION

South East Europe; Bordering countries: Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Turkey; Though there are many Greek Islands, the mainland is two peninsulas; It borders several seas, including the Mediterranean, Aegeansea and Ionian.

## POPULATION

As of 2019, the total population was 10.8 million.[210]

## POLITICAL SYSTEM

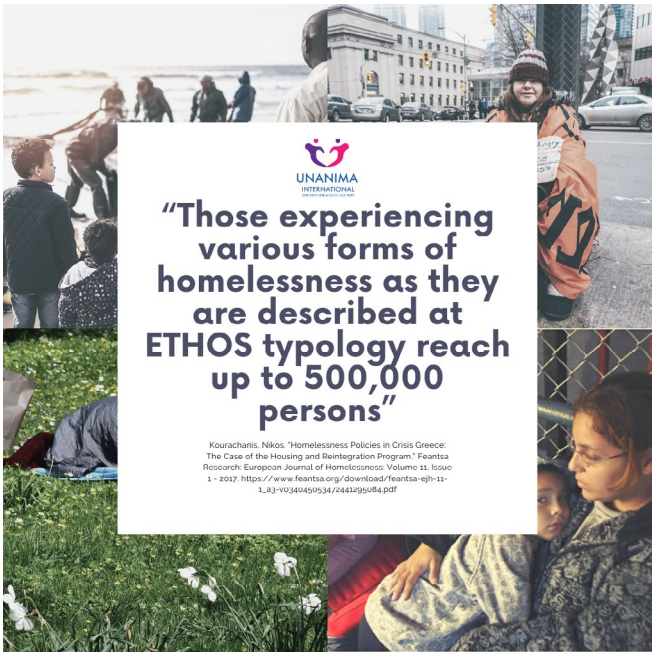
Parliamentary Republic

## Last Censuses (General & Homelessness):

The last census from the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) did not include a count of homelessness. That census in 2011 indicated, "a 25% increase of homeless from 2009 to 2011." But according to the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), "reliability is highly questionable due to methodological limitations. Currently, ELSTAT can only provide rough estimations based on the unemployment and poverty rates and on its surveys of living conditions."[211] The next census will be in 2021; it is noted that this is coinciding with a wider 2021 European Union census.[212] FEANTSA reports that, "there is no official data-collection strategy on homelessness in Greece."[213] The most recent official data on homelessness was issued by Greece in 2009, citing the number of homeless people at 7,720, though this number excluded immigrants and travellers.[214] This data came before the refugee crisis, and did not include the more than 50,000 refugees currently within Greek borders, awaiting the approval of their asylum applications.[215] Contrastingly and more recently, The United Nations Human Rights Council reported 21,216 homeless individuals in Greece.[216] Greek professors and policy experts have tried to estimate an accurate number using qualitative research methods, with some of them suggesting that in 2017 the number was around 514,000 people.[217] The unavailability of official data proves the need for a new strategy for collecting data in order to respond more efficiently to the issue.

## Country Definition of Homelessness & Usage:

The Greek Government does not have its own definition of Homelessness, but as part of FEANTSA, the definition of Family Homelessness can be found though looking at the four "ETHOS" categories.[218] The categories include: Roofless families; houseless families, people living temporarily in housing facilities; insecure, people living in insecure housing conditions and are experiencing housing exclusion or domestic violence; and families living in inadequate housing, conditions such as trailers, institutions, camps and inappropriate buildings.[219]



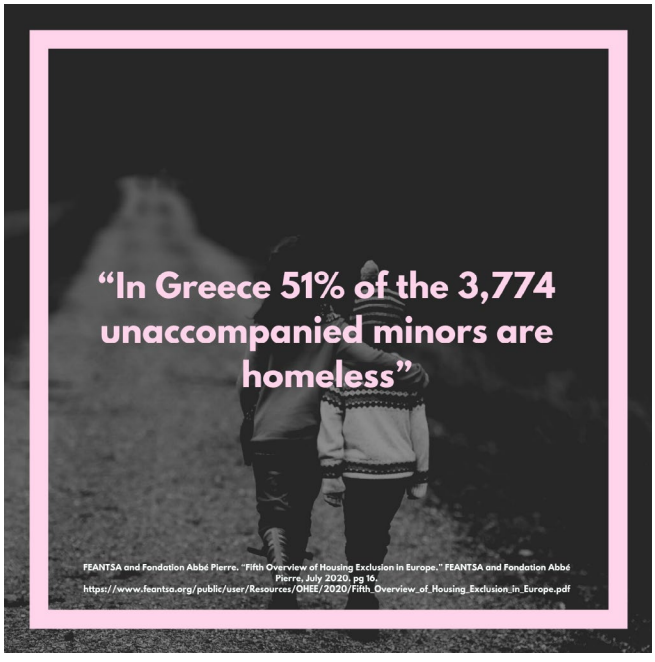

Visible homelessness can be found in the first two categories of ETHOS: roofless and houseless. It concerns people who appear to be homeless by sleeping in public places and people living in temporary housing shelters. Invisible homelessness concerns the last two ETHOS categories of insecure and inadequate housing. Invisible homelessness involves people living in inadequate public institutions such as mental health and childcare institutions, as well as people living in insecure housing circumstances, who escape the streets and shelters through family help, or people who experience insecure living conditions, such as domestic violence. Note that findings by Greek national experts have suggested the existence of both visible and invisible homelessness in Greece in the aftermath of the Eurozone Crisis in 2013, though Family Homelessness in Greece is thought to fall mainly within the last category.[220]

## Context of Homelessness:

Family Homelessness is an emerging crisis in Greece. Families who experience homelessness face the risk of extreme poverty and social exclusion due to the economic collapse of the country. Shelters are more willing to host family units as opposed to lone adults,

therefore families are mostly guaranteed different types of temporary housing.[221] Two types of familial homelessness are most common within Greece: 1. single mothers with two dependent children on social benefits after long-term unemployment, who are widowed or have been divorced, or have experienced domestic abuse; and 2. families composed of both parents and dependent children, who lost their low-income jobs after the economic crisis.[222] Emergency social and housing services are available to families in both situations; however, parents with dependent children who have issues with substance abuse or mental health do not qualify for the same services. Notably, such issues often result from, or are increased by, experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity. This selective support has led to a greater issue of homelessness that is not being fully traced by the government or by social services.

In Greece, as in all countries, family homelessness does have a direct relationship with poverty. Relatedly, it is a consequence of the multiple rounds of austerity measures that have been imposed since 2010 to counter the Greek government-debt crisis.[223] The rapid collapse of the Greek economy after 2010 brought up the inherent shortcomings and inadequacies of the Greek social welfare system. After 10 years the country lacks the ability to combat this challenge due to the longevity of the crisis, rising rates of migration and refugees, and women's inequality. The migration/refugee crisis had a pivotal role in the increase of homeless families in Greece, which can't be fully seen through national statistics. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported on "Pressure growing on the Greek island of Lesvos," in 2015 as the, "refugee and migrant crossings of the Mediterranean top 100,000."[224] Later, it was announced that more than 1.5 million refugees and migrants arrived in Greece between 2014 and 2017.[225] When the refugee crisis began, Greece was considered a transit country, allowing the government to avoid providing long-term services for the social protection of refugees. Following the closing of the Balkan border and the shortcomings of the EU-Turkey deal, the influx of refugees rose in 2017, allowing the development of the Greek Asylum Service to determine which people were qualified for asylum in Greece.[226]




A regional perspective is necessary on this topic. In April 2020 BBC News reported, "EU court rules against three states over refugees," because expectations for refugee relocation weren't met.[227] The article reports, "EU leaders agreed to relocate 160,000 refugees EU-wide in 2015, from overcrowded camps in Italy and Greece….Italy and Greece have long accused other EU member states of a lack of solidarity for taking only relatively small groups of refugees from the temporary camps, which were hastily erected in the migrant crisis of 2015."[228] The treatment of refugees is related to human rights, including women's rights and the rights of children. As recently as 2015 the UNHCR reported, "children seeking asylum who have been separated from their parents say they face poor conditions and threats of violence at a reception centre on the Greek island of Lesvos."[229] In 2020 the UNHCR reported, "UN agencies welcome first relocation of unaccompanied children from Greece," though these relocations made a small dent to the need.[230] The importance of the initiative was noted by Ola Henrikson, IOM Regional Director for the EEA, EU and NATO, to be, "amplified now due to the challenges we are all facing from COVID-19. Relocation of vulnerable children espe-

The camp has reportedly been completely destroyed by the fire. (Photo courtesy of Reuters)

cially at a time of heightened hardship, sends a strong message of European solidarity and we hope to see this expand soon."[231] Refugees, particularly in relation to their housing status and security, are extremely vulnerable to the virus.[232]

Several countries within Europe shut down their asylum offices or had their services drastically slowed due to the global pandemic, the continuance and effects of which we are still seeing; this has included an effect on NGO operations.[233] Reliefweb and Refugees International assert, "nationalist leaders and politicians—from Italy to Spain—have seized upon the outbreak as a false basis for xenophobic, anti-refugee rhetoric and policies."[234] This is another example of why the call for agentic leadership on Family Homelessness/Displacement is essential to addressing and preventing it. The increased flow of refugee families and the lengthy duration of the Asylum process (now delayed further with COVID-19) makes an international and regional issue prevalent in the nation. According to the International Rescue Committee, "Integration is key to ensuring that they build successful lives in what is their new home, a challenging task in any country but exacerbated in Greece because of its ongoing financial difficulties."[235] A large percentage of refugees are stranded on the Greek islands, residing in camps which were built for temporary circumstances. In an interview with UNANIMA International, Sofoulis Tataridis from the Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos emphasized his concern about the difficulty families who have been granted asylum have in finding and buying homes, as housing insecurity is often a barrier for this group even after they are "incorporated" into the country.

One camp in Lesvos, Camp Moria is built on a former military base. An NGO, Kitrinos Healthcare noted, "there are only one toilet and shower per 70-80 people, and care and support services are extremely limited," and this sanitary services ratio has increased.[236] The NGO also shared, "the refugee situation in Greece is fluid and we may be allocated new camps in the future. The team has to be prepared to move around to meet operational needs."[237] UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic in February of 2020, "UNHCR has been appealing to the Greek government to use emergency measures to expedite its plans to transfer a greater number of asylum-seekers to appropriate accommodation on

Migrants have evacuated the camp but have not been allowed to enter the nearby town. (Photo courtesy of Reuters)

the mainland. More than 36,000 asylum seekers are now staying in reception centres across five islands which were originally designed for 5,400 people."[238] However, the number of refugees experiencing homeless is only documented once the asylum application is successful, excluding many undocumented homeless refugees from the count.[239] UNANIMA International were informed of this same issue in measuring and serving people experiencing homelessness in the USA by Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) in a Fall 2019 interview with Executive Director Léonce Byimana, MPH and Advocacy & Outreach Program Manager, Andrea Barron, MA. In September 2020 fire tragically destroyed Camp Moria, and according to BBC news, left approximately 13,000 people without shelter.[240] Lesvosnews.net has reported temporary measures to accommodate the asylum seekers, including tents and ships for sleeping accomodation.[241]

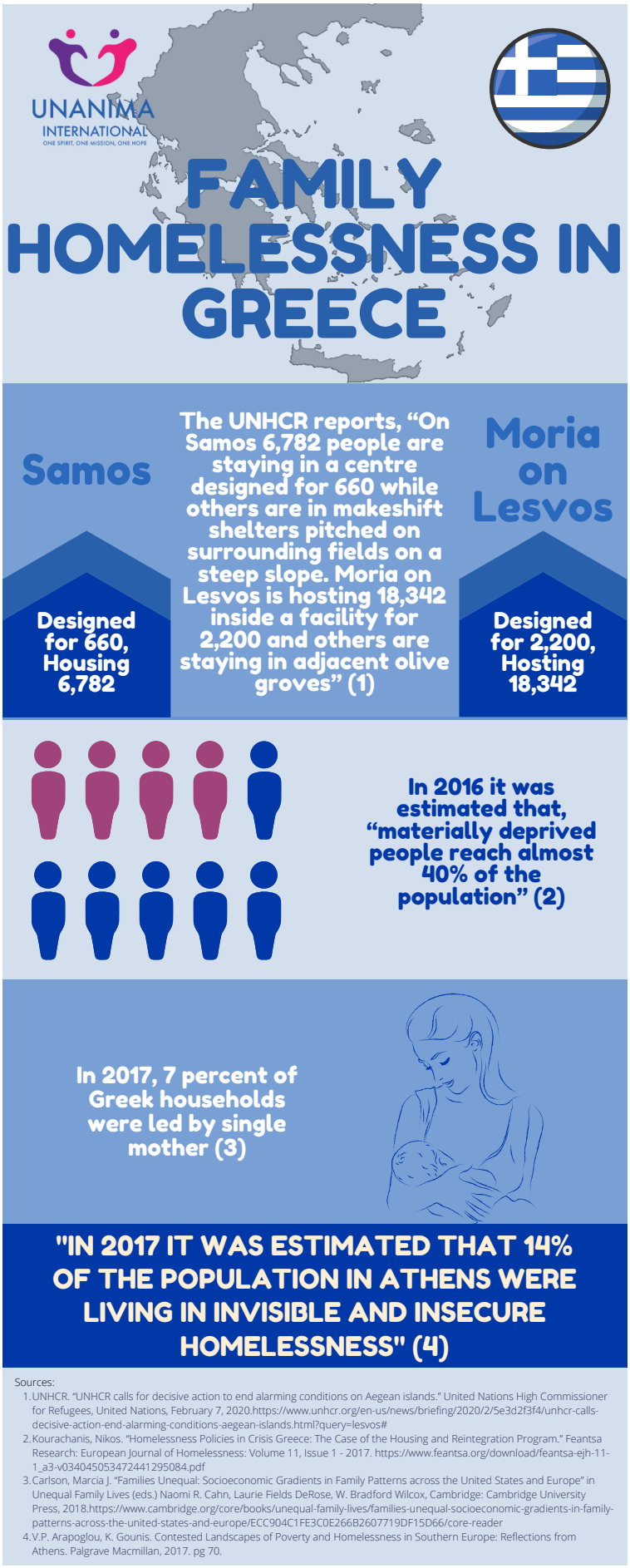
UNANIMA International have been contacted with concern about the situation, particularly for families, lone women and children/girls, and also informed that NGOs' headquarters have been destroyed along with equipment and supplies vital to communal health and needed in the aftermath of the fire. Moreover, the camp experienced its first COVID-19 case the week before the fire, and are now seeing the virus spread.[242] The aforementioned Kitrinos Healthcare is working to rebuild their capacity and fundraise, as well as share information. In response to the current situation, UNANIMA International's Executive Director Jean Quinn, DW, stated, "Greece is really uncertain in recent days. To see families on the streets of Lesvos is devastating, and we know we must keep them in mind through advocacy."

Issues of Family Homelessness are also uniquely manifested for the Romani population who are marginalized and stigmatized within Greek Society, despite the estimation that 265,000 of them live in Greece.[243] The Romani people originate from Northern India and have been around the Balkan region since the 15th century.[244] The Romani communities in Greece face several problems including high rates of child labor and abuse, low school attendance, police discrimination and drug trafficking, many of which are increased through their systemic neglect.[245] The most serious issue is housing, since many Roma still live in tents on properties they do not own, making them subject to eviction.[246] In these circumstances, they lack security of tenure and having other human rights fulfilled is also challenging.

In July 2018, the Greek parliament passed a new bill forwarded by the Ministry of Labor, called the "National Strategic Plan for Homelessness." The aim of this bill was to create a comprehensive strategy to combat homelessness between 2018-2021. The three-year national strategic plan to combat homelessness 2018-2021 includes targeted responses to situations of visible and invisible homelessness, and even included people facing a high cost of living.[247] The objectives are: presenting the phenomenon in a scientific, valid and uniform manner; codifying the existing legislation and elaborating proposals for the improvement of the institutional framework; establishing an inter-ministerial body that will draft the homeless policy, within the Gov-

ernment Social Policy Council under the Vice-Presidency; establishing a permanent digital monitoring mechanism for homelessness operating within the framework of the National Mechanism for Social Inclusion and Cohesion, aiming at the interconnection and co-ordination of all actors working for the homeless; implementing interventions for the social inclusion of the Roma.[248] Notably, inclusion of people with lived experience in the design of these institutions, policies, and provision of services is vital, and seemingly left out of the strategic plan.

Non-Governmental Organizations in Greece are prominent and essential in responding to Family Homelessness. Organizations include PRAKSIS, Programs of Development Social Support & Medical Cooperation; Schedia, improving the living conditions of marginalized social groups and defending children's and women's rights; and the Society of Social Psychiatry & Mental Health. These NGOs provide high quality psychiatric and psychological support services to combat trauma. Many of these institutions are collaborating through The Greek Network for the Right to Housing; a network established by twenty NGOs and civil society organizations to promote and support the right to housing for everyone (regardless of social status, ethnicity or religion).[249] The support of the European Union and external/private funds to create programs has been successful in putting pressure for the drafting of government plans to combat Family Homelessness.



## Testimony

**Darby Winson, Physician Assistant Volunteer in Camp Moria, Lesvos Island, Greece and Creator of Humanitarian Hub**

I worked with Kitrinos Healthcare in Lesvos, a Greek Island fairly close to Turkey. There are more than 10,000 people at a camp built for 3,000. There the UNHCR had given "Isoboxes," basically shipping containers being used for housing. Otherwise there are durable tents used as housing for people. It's challenging to have enough bathrooms. There are also families in the types of tents people use for summer camping, and temporary housing created from various materials. There are all types of living situations. The camp is a detainment center, all have applied for asylum. There's a lot of scabies, viruses, and many people with respiratory issues. A huge portion of kids had upper respiratory infections when I visited in Winter...Everyone has some sort of illness. They'll come in with abscesses, wounds.

One man who worked as a cultural mediator, *Taha, had a wife and four kids. He kept his kids inside, and didn't let them go to the services (like school lessons and the library). He was scared to leave the family to work. It was because of the environment of the camp. There were some gangs of young men - who were violent. Even standing in line to get food, which people did for 3 hours a day, could be violent - there were stabbings...so this family remains to themselves. You can't do that when you first arrive; when families first come there they're in a large tent, and all sleep on the floor, as they go through registering for asylum. It's sad. The process was already so delayed and now because of COVID-19 it is even more.

> *"In 2017 I worked in Lesvos, Greece. We were given security guards. We were unable to access parts of the camp for security reasons. I taught two girls at the time ages 13 and 9, from Syria and Afghanistan. Their stories are so strong. I can't fathom that they escaped because of war and famine, smuggled themselves even without their parents from their home countries to the camp. Being girls at a young age is very dangerous. I carry on that voice for them."*
>
> - Anonymous, Temporary Worker in Lesvos Island

* Name change

## History of Homelessness:

The structural factors increasing family homelessness in Greece are rooted to the inadequacies in familistic welfare capitalism, a concept created in the late 1990s by the Italian academic, Maurizio Ferrera.[250] Familistic welfare capitalism describes the Southern European model of welfare which can be traced in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece: the countries that were devastated by the Eurozone Crisis in 2008. The study of the European welfare systems was developed following the end of the World Wars and the Great Depression. The best known study was Gøsta Esping-Andersen's *Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*.[251] Esping-Andersen famously divided the social welfare systems in Europe into three categories: 1. Liberal/Anglo-Saxon Model; 2. Continental (Bismarckian)/ Corporatist Model; 3. Social-Democratic/Scandinavian Model.[252]

Until the 1990s, these three models were used to describe social welfare systems in Europe. The Southern European and Eastern European countries were placed in the Corporatist Model. This Model has as a main characteristic the preservation of the status and benefits of workers such as pensions and employment.[253] However, the historical weakness of the state framework in Southern Europe led to the study of the fourth model referred to currently by academics as the "Familistic Welfare Capitalism System." This model of national political economy places the family as the key provider of welfare and the main agent in the socio-economic and political reproduction of the country.[254] Familialism is an ideology that emphasizes the family role in meeting individuals' needs (for example, families taking responsibility for their members rather than the government or social programs). The structural deficiencies of this type of social welfare were profound following the debt crisis. The pre-dominant neoliberal rationale of the 21st century, which reduces government spending and increases the role of the private sector in the society and economy,[255] imposed severe constraints on policymakers in Greece who still struggle between anti-poverty policies and providing sustainable solutions for economic growth. The vulnerability to poverty and both visible and invisible homelessness of single-parent families, especially those led by single mothers in the Greek context, can be used as an example to highlight the deficiencies and problems of familistic welfare capitalism.[256]

Field research in Greece indicates that many single mothers with dependent children end up for long periods of time in shelters with the government aid of 40 Euros per month because they can no longer receive economic help from relatives or friends.[257] It reveals the inherent inadequacies of social protection in cases where family support is absent or, due to the economic crisis, the family is no longer sufficiently capable of helping its members. Shelters are insufficiently equipped to provide long-term economic and social support for homeless families, especially without adequate government assistance, in any country. Greece has traditionally experienced less social parity than Northern Europe and the United States. Homogeneity and orthodoxy are maintained because of the dominant Greek culture and the Greek Orthodox religion; each contributes to women's inequality in society. In 2010, the gender pay gap was

at 15 percent.[258] Segregation in education and in the labor market was one of the prominent reasons for this, since payable sectors and occupations were overrepresented by men, whereas lower wages occupations were predominantly carried out by women.[259] After thousands of people lost their jobs in the debt-crisis, many single mothers became unable to house themselves and their children independently.

## Good Practices: Leading Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) runs the EU-Funded ESTIA Accommodation program in cooperation with the Greek Government, municipalities and NGOs.[260] The program is "temporarily managed" by UNHCR and the EU until the Greek government can maintain the funds and allocation of resources for the accommodation of refugees. Since November 2015, 57,583 individuals have benefitted from the accommodation scheme.[261] Around 22,000 people were accommodated as of the end of March 2019, where

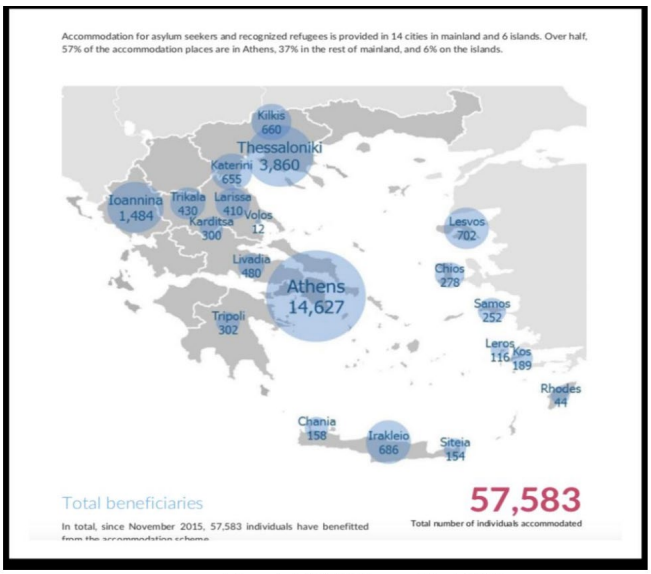


Figure 1: UNHCR Greece, March 2019

more than 6,500 of whom are recognized refugees and 48 percent of which are children.[262] The majority of accommodated people are families, with an average family size of five people. More than one in five residents have at least one child, that makes them eligible for the accommodation scheme. According to the UNHCR, the three most common vulnerabilities are: Serious Medical Conditions (12%), Women at risk (3%), and Single parent (3%).

At the end of March 2019, UNHCR implemented the accommodation initiatives through twenty-three partnerships with thirteen national and international NGOs and ten municipalities. In total, partners managed by UNHCR provided 100 percent of the accommodation places in Greece.[263] The leadership by the UNHCR demonstrates the ever-increasing importance of international institutions in the management of crises with international actors, as well as the need for international attention to, and understanding of Family Homelessness - including within the context of refugee and migration crises. Notably, "The important distinction between refugees and migrants was acknowledged by the UN General Assembly in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants," in 2016, affecting services and policy globally.[264]

Photo by Matt Artz

## Impactful Service: Collaborations in the Field

With the multi-faceted factors driving homelessness and shaping experiences of Family Homelessness in Greece, it is clear that addressing Family Homelessness is incredibly complex. In this country case study in particular, it is difficult to identify any one service that would meet the needs of all, or that is preventative and responsive at the same time. Therefore, we highlight collaborations in the field that are promising and can be learned from. Panagiota Fitsiou, Psychologist MSc and Head of EU Projects from The Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos told UNANIMA International in an interview, "Our organization offers mental health services in the community. We have mental health centers and day centers where we have sessions with people living in the community we work with, adults and children as well. We also have residential houses, supported housing facilities for people with psychiatric problems who are released from the psychiatric hospitals. We work very much with the category of people who are released from big institutions. We also have mobile mental health units for more remote areas which is a quite common practice in Greece because we have too many islands and remote villages so we can't afford to have medical services in every island. That's why we have many mobile mental health units."

Fitsiou also explained, "we don't have literally front line services for homeless people, however we have experience and collaborations in the field of homelessness in different ways: This is because we have recently completed the Erasmus + Project Dignity and Well-being: Exchange for Changing, which concluded with the manual "Practical approaches to working with homeless people with mental health problems."[265] In the frame of this project, the Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos collaborated with other organizations working with people experiencing homelessness, including Praksis,[266] SHEDIA,[267] and STEPS.[268] Fitsiou explained that some organizations don't have the capacity to have experts, so their organization provide psychologists to have a first contact with a person in need, who can then link the person or family to available services. Additionally, "we are a founding member and a member of the Board of the Greek Housing Network. The network has a

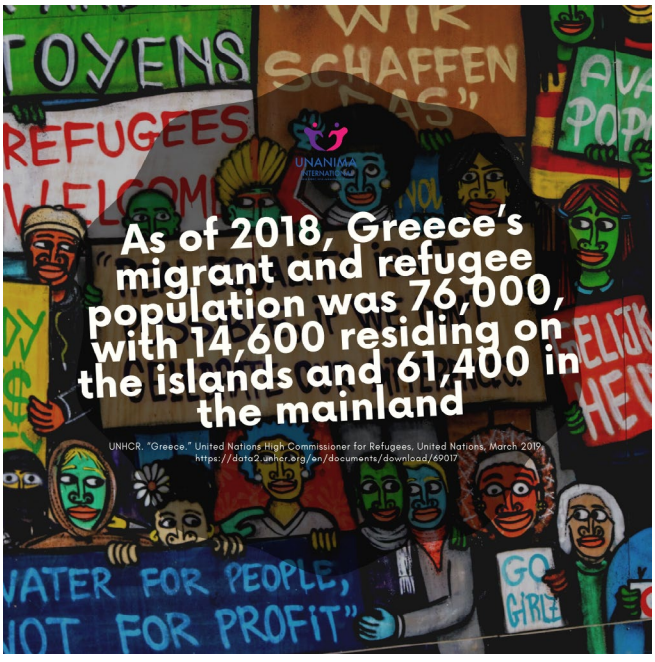


Photo by Angelo Pantazia

scope for lobbying and pressing the government for more inclusive policies. They keep including us in consultation groups. We are also a board member of SMES-Europa, an organization aiming at promoting the rights of persons who are socially excluded and discriminated against." The Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos is very active through these collaborations which lead to better community outcomes and incorporate the aspect of mental health into homeless and housing services, policy, and strategy that impact family livelihoods in the country and for asylum seekers, too.

## Innovative Idea: NGO Refugee Service Cohesion in Lesvos, Greece

After her experience volunteering at Lesvos Island, Darby Winson created a website to address gaps she saw in health service NGOs' communications with each other. The website *Humanitarian Hub* is detailed to be, "an online platform facilitating collaboration and evidence based action amongst Lesvos' healthcare cluster members."[269] The website is intended to be an information tool, always available for reference. It features a resource drive, discussion forums, chat room, a map, calendar, and contact list, and many of these elements are collaborative. This model of coordination is cost efficient and replicable, and could benefit temporary camps and shelters that are more frequently needed around the world due to man-made and natural disasters occurring.

As aforementioned, devastating fire at Camp Moria may have destroyed some of the following NGOs' headquarters and/or services. However, Winson has identified the following organizations as vital to refugee livelihood at the camp though their contributions on Humanitarian Hub: Refugees for Refugees built the isolation unit in preparation for the COVID-19 pandemic with up to 80 beds; Movement on the Ground has restructured the landscape and contributed to infrastructure; Team Humanity operated an emergency shelter and mask-making factory. Specifically medical contributions have included: Kitrinos Healthcare, Rowing Together, and Light Without Borders, among others.

More information can be viewed on the website, where organizations can also become members and editors: https://sites.google.com/view/humhubles-vos/home?authuser=0

Photo by Mark Harpur

## Advocacy Recommendations:

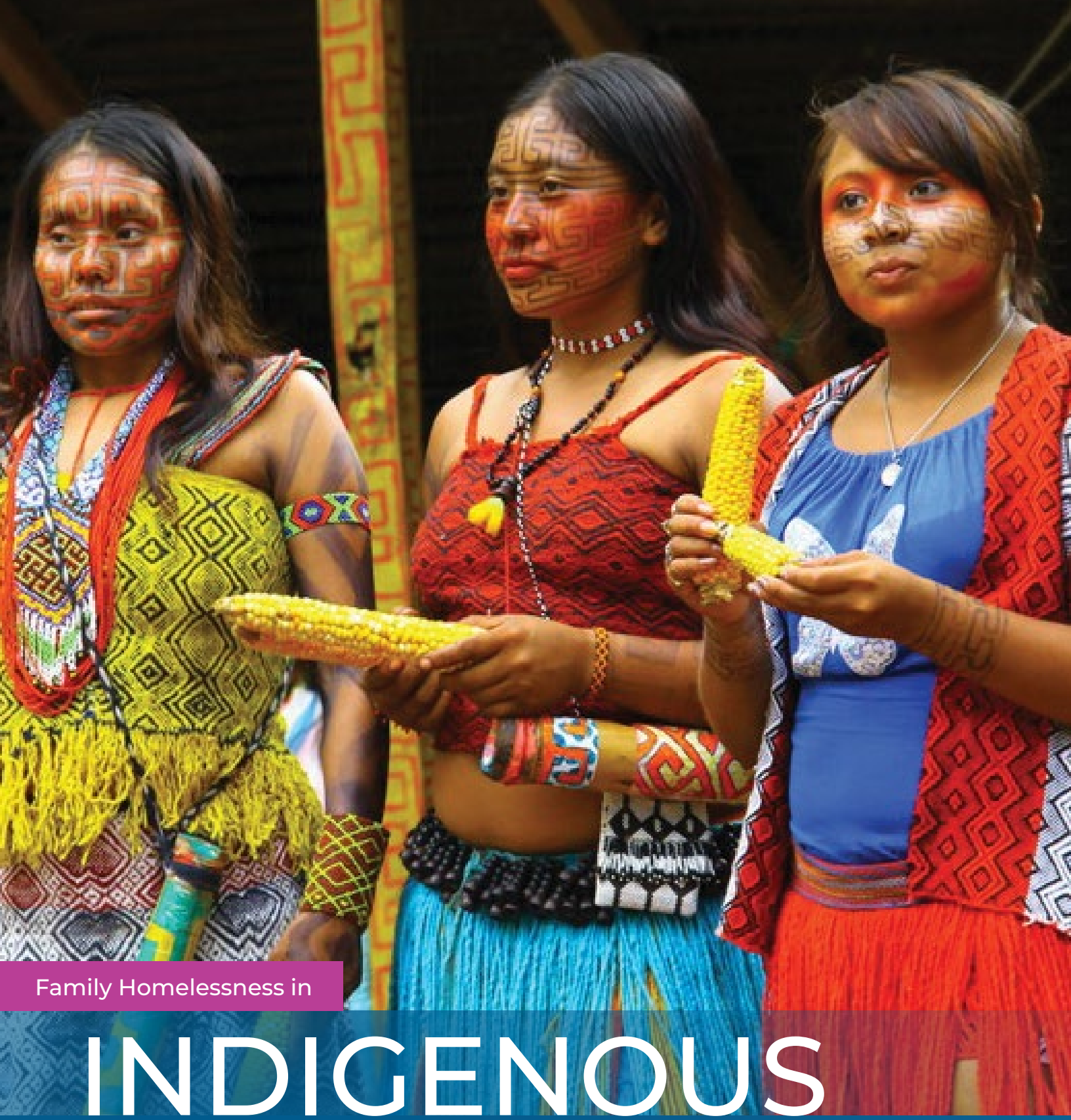
Acknowledging the role civil society, the private sector, and citizens play in influencing national action related to social issues, **we recommend:**

- Encouraging all European Union countries to allocate funding and land to the migration/refugee crisis, and immediate relief for the over-crowded Greek refugee reception centers
- Educating about the gender pay gap, and destigmatizing single motherhood
- Supporting economic reform and a shift from familistic welfare capitalism
- Focusing on children's and families rights and livelihood needs for shaping policies and programs that address Family Homelessness and its drivers
- Promoting diplomacy and conflict resolution in conflict situations, increasing opportunities for stakeholder involvement and input, including from migrants, Women and Children/Girls

## 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 Family Homelessness-specific monitoring and evaluation processes by the European Union, and adoption of an official definition of homelessness by the Greek government
- Implementing policies and programs opening reception places for refugees in places other than the East Aegean Islands in Greece, including elsewhere in Europe, following UNHCR recommendations[270]
- Creating employment programs specifically for women which ensure equal and fair pay, and general increases in federal employment to address social issues and decrease the high unemployment rate
    - Adherence to the European Union recommendations on "Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage," including creating positive environments for children, and preventing and addressing children's poverty and exclusion in society[271]
    - Using a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to future housing, education, health, and other policies



Family Homelessness in

# INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

## Family Homelessness in Indigenous Communities

Internationally, treatment of Indigenous populations has been a cause for concern for human rights, including the right to adequate housing. UNANIMA International states our solidarity with Indigenous peoples' struggles for security, not only on the issue of housing, but more largely on the issues of land rights and sovereignty. A short exploration of Indigenous peoples and Family Homelessness is put forth, reiterating one of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) premises, "recognizing that the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region and from country to country and that the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration."[272] This information should be considered a contribution towards a foundation of research on Family Homelessness within Indigenous contexts.

Former Special Rapporteur for Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha advocates the right to housing of Indigenous peoples as elaborated in her July 2019 report *The Right to Housing of Indigenous Peoples.* Therein it is noted, "Indigenous peoples live in some of the most abhorrent housing conditions across the planet, including in some of the richest countries in the world."[273] These conditions often contrast with those of the general population, as demonstrated in the United States where the Lakota (Teton Sioux) have 17 people in one home on average, in "a home that may only have two to three rooms."[274] Forced evictions and involuntary displacement are disproportionately common to Indigenous populations.[275] It is also necessary to apply a constructivist lens to contextualize the current reality. Farha states, "these violations affecting indigenous peoples are embedded in, and a consequence of, colonization, forced assimilation, past and present dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, and deeply rooted discrimination

Photo by Bernardo Ramonfaur

nurtured over centuries."[276] Moreover, neocolonialism and multi-faceted, pervasive human rights abuses continue.

Many aspects of "Family Homelessness Internationally" listed in this publication, as well as *Hidden Faces of Homelessness: International Research on Families (Volume One)* are also applicable to the experiences of Indigenous peoples, including the trend for urbanization. In discussing the economics behind this problem, it is necessary to observe that generally these populations lack capital and intergenerational wealth. Consequently, "once there [in cities], they all too often have no other option but to live in informal settlements in severely substandard housing, living in precarity without secure tenure."[277] The challenges of transitioning to the general lifestyle and environment of a city, in addition to poverty's unique manifestations within that context, give insight into some of the vulnerabilities that may incite or sustain personal and familial drivers of homelessness. Some cities that have statistics revealing the demographic breakdown of their homeless populations clearly reveal the severity of the problem, though clearly not all cities will have large Indigenous populations.

Photo by Roman Odintsov

Photo by Roman Odintsov

In Vancouver, Canada the data shared from the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' *Homeless Hub* is extremely concerning; it is also commendable, given that this disaggregated data is rare. "Number of respondents in homeless count identifying as Indigenous: 561 (2018)," "Percentage of respondents in homeless count identifying as Indigenous: 40% (2018)."[278] In an interview with UNANIMA International, Canadian scholar Paula Braitstein put forth, "Really, with the pace of life., the strangeness of the surroundings, there's concrete everywhere - it's very alienating for people who don't come from that [city] environment. People who were born and raised in the Far-North for example, and they're culturally different, they're not welcomed, often there is a huge amount of stigma and discrimination because they're indigenous, because they're homeless." In *Understanding Homelessness for Urban Indigenous Families* the authors," identified five distinct themes affecting Indigenous women in the context of family homelessness: jurisdictional separation between sectors; racism; lack of safety; the need for family and limited opportunities to heal from trauma." Additionally they argue, "structural violence is present in systems and policies that impede women's opportunities to exit homelessness and heal from trauma."[279]

The lack of decision-making power and agency displayed in issues of homelessness, housing insecurity and housing access violate many principles of UNDRIP, including: **Article 21** "1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions...2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities." **Article 23** "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes af-

fecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions."[280]

Displacement or "relocation" of Indigenous populations disrupts Indigenous social institutions and programming, as well as the people directly affected. Other reports and advocacy from Farha's directly address indigenous contexts, including *Housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this contex*t. Under **Principle 4:** rights-based participation in adequate housing is specified: "**64.** Participation of indigenous peoples in housing strategies and planning must be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons and the International Labour Organization Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), including the requirement of free, prior and informed consent, as well as in a manner consistent with other national foundational or constitutional agreements between indigenous peoples and their Governments." "**71.** Indigenous peoples' right to culturally appropriate housing has frequently been violated because they have been denied participation and control over the design and production of their own housing. In Chile, for example, even something as simple as ensuring that doors face the sunrise, essential for any Mapuche home, has been neglected in housing built for those communities. New social housing architecture in Chile has incorporated design inspired by the Mapuche "ruka" dwellings, made from tree trunks and branches."[281]

Leilani Farha is not the only United Nations Special Rapporteur to establish a precedent for further attention to the plight of Indigenous Peoples. Philip Alston, the former Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights' 2017 report *Statement on Visit to the USA* touched upon the shortcomings in basic social protection as they affect indigenous peoples. The aforementioned overcrowding of Indigenous households is mirrored across "American" Indigenous groups.[282] Alston states, "in Hawai'i, indigenous populations have almost twice the rate of overcrowding (15 percent) compared with the broader population."[283] Indigenous peoples often account for a disproportionate total of many countries' homeless population. For example, "in Hawai'i, an astonishing 74% of people who are homeless are native Hawaii'an, Pacific Islander, or multi-racial, showing the negative legacy of colonialism in racism and discrimination."[284]

UNICEF has specified the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that specifically address the rights of Indigenous children. These include: Articles 17, 19 and 30.[285] According to UNICEF, "Article 30 protects the rights of children from minority or indigenous groups to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language together with other members of their group."[286] The other two articles concern linguistic needs and education's reflection of culture. Over the years, UNICEF has partnered with other notable international organizations to put forth concern for Indigenous youth. In 2013 the study *Breaking the Silence on Violence Against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women* was published by UNICEF with SRSG VAC, ILO, UN-Women, and UNFPA, from which its recommendations remain unfortunately relevant and timely now. For example, "the study calls for a concerted effort at addressing the structural, underlying causes and risk factors that lead to violence as well as improved availability of and access to culturally appropriate prevention, protection and response services."[287] They also partnered to release a guide, *Know Your Rights! United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for indigenous adolescents.*[288] A UNANIMA International Board member originally from Brazil, Nonata Bezerra, SND, shared in an interview with UNANIMA International that in her home country Indigenous peoples often are unaware of the rights that they have which can exacerbate situations of abuse against them and legal activity occurring in their territory; she references the destructive federal leadership as an element which allows this

to unfold, as well as expresses concern that the Coronavirus has killed many great Indigenous leaders, most equipped to lead their communities through the current dangers facing them, both human and environmental.

The unique and targeted international legal protections specified for Indigenous populations, as previously mentioned, is a result of atrocities directed towards them, often categorized as historical, yet undoubtedly pervasive. Governments must be cognizant of all rights of populations in their attempts to meet the right to adequate housing. Kedy Kristal of Women's Council Australia, put forth in an interview with UNANIMA International, that any housing created by the government must be suitable for families and their needs; she offered the example that Aboriginal families need houses where there is room for extended relatives to stay to address their cultural needs. Again, in the suggestions put forth by Canada's progressive scholars—Braitstein and Oudshoorn—and reiterated to UNANIMA International, the need for solutions to reflect culture is supported in a formal recommendation of, "collective home building with culturally rooted, self-determined, support frameworks." International laws must be honored.

In developing countries, larger-scale land-grabbing, forced evictions and forced relocations have been occurring in the twenty-first century, including presently.[289] Much indigenous land was and is still privatized without permission. Farha's report, under section F, "Forced Evictions and Land-Grabbing," provides insight into the effect of these human rights abuses on indigenous peoples, and their relation to the legal/justice system of a state.[290] She 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.[291]

Notably many discussions on other political issues (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) intersect with discussions of Family Homelessness, as displayed in UNANIMA International's official statement on Family Homelessness and COVID-19. In particular, this is true with concern for the climate crisis and environmental activism, which often confronts extractivism. Some of these altercations display the violence used to maintain presence in, or to take control over, Indigenous territories (including families' homes and communities' land). In

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April of 2020, BBC reported that in Brazil a protected tribe's "land defender," Zezico Guajajara, was "shot dead."[292] This is not a rare occurrence. Fortunately, attention is being brought to these human rights violations creatively. For example, Sony World's award for Photographer of the Year and the Latin America Professional Award went to Pablo Albarenga of Uruguay for his series *Seeds of Resistance,* "a body of work that pairs photographs of landscapes and territories in danger from mining and agribusinesses with portraits of the activists fighting to conserve them."293 The series was motivated because, "In 2017, at least 207 leaders and environmentalists were killed for protecting their communities from mining, agro-business and other projects that are threatening their territories."294

The severe threats to Indigenous peoples defending their land motivates work by several INGOs, including the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative. In their country profile of Brazil, they specify "2017 saw the murder of 57 environmental defenders in Brazil—

the worst year on record for deaths of environmental defenders anywhere in the world, with indigenous people representing a large proportion of the victims."[295] Internationally, it is often difficult for Indigenous peoples to access the state justice system and/or have the justice system meet their needs, whether due to distance, lack of financial resources, lack of education on legal procedures, language barriers, or lingering discrimination and prejudice against them. Specifically, Farha cites the costs and length of legal procedures paired with requirements for proof and evidence as barriers to justice.[296] Amnesty International reports in Kenya, "the case of the Sengwer Indigenous people is another example where the executive has shown a complete disregard for court orders thus denying the victims of human rights violations access to justice and remedy."[297] These are not stand-alone examples.

In Kenya there are large numbers of Indigenous peoples who make up the national population; they consistently struggle over land rights and inclusion within society. *The Indigenous World 2016* asserts, "they all have land and resource tenure insecurity, poor service delivery, poor political representation, discrimination and exclusion. Their situation seems to get worse each year, with increasing competition for resources in their areas."[298] In the Philippines, there are many parallels; "they generally live in geographically isolated areas with a lack of access to basic social services and few opportunities for mainstream economic activities, education or political participation."[299] In that national context there is no accurate answer as to how much of the population is Indigenous, partially due to their isolation, though there are projections. Such isolation has certain benefits such as, "Indigenous peoples in the Philippines have retained much of their traditional, pre-colonial culture, social institutions and livelihood practices."[300] However, some benefits, too, can present challenges when development is aspired to more than sustainability, and with increasing competition for resources. Namely, the natural

resources abundant on Indigenous land in the Philippines makes them, "continuously vulnerable to development aggression and land grabbing."[301] Ironically, avoiding the loss of land in the colonial era is putting them at risk presently.

It is worth reiterating that the threat to Indigenous populations is not in the past. Caritas is one international organization that engages in REPAM, a Catholic Church network promoting the rights and dignity of people living in the Amazon. They share the following estimations that justify their work:[302]

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Image source: https://www.caritas.org/what-we-do/development/repam/

Perhaps surprisingly, challenges to Indigenous land and housing around the world often come in forms of "societal advancement" and "environmental protections" that many people would be on board with, without taking a closer look. For example Arzucan Askin wrote, "around the world, people, often Indigenous, are becoming "conservation refugees" forced to leave their ancestral homelands for the creation of protected areas and wildlife reserves. Through this process of displacement, conservation has created racialised citizens and politicised landscapes."[303]

In many Indigenous populations, women are marginalized further through social and cultural prejudice. For example in Kenya, this contributes to women's "limited access to land, natural resources and credit."[304] In line with other critiques of the Kenyan government's constitution, this book commented on the poor implementation of its provisions for protection of Indigenous women, including in the area of land rights and housing.[305] In the 2015 publication *Best Practice Guideline for Ending Women's and Girl's Homelessness,* significant suggestions for addressing gendered dimensions of homelessness in the Indigenous context (focused within Canada) are made, including: "resolve the lack of matrimonial property protections for Aboriginal women living on reserve and revise property acts so that women can qualify for their own housing."[306]

Indigenous women are disproportionately represented within murder and missing persons statistics. While this may be a reflection of other forms of violence pervasive in the societies, there is another reflection of danger resulting from civic participation and the exercising of rights, such as freedom of speech and assembly. In the report *Women Taking the Lead: Defending Human Rights and the Environment* published by Trócaire it is stated, "of the 137 attacks on women human rights defenders in 2019, almost half were against Indigenous women in rural communities."[307] While these facts are devastating, Indigenous leaders, communities, political groups and movements fight for their protection and their culture's and populations' survival. Indigenous women

are also looked to internationally for their leadership, and many are extremely important in movements to address environmental abuse and unsustainable development. Indigenous women have been referred to as, "frontline protectors of the environment."[308]

Discussion of Family Homelessness in Indigenous contexts too often has too little quantitative support. Therefore, UNANIMA International calls for further community-driven and Indigenous-led research, monitoring and evaluation for Family Homelessness specifically, which should undoubtedly be supported

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and encouraged through Member State allocation of funds. At the heart of looking towards solutions must be: "don't talk about us without us." Every attempt must be made to bring Indigenous voices forward - in academia, in research, in diplomacy, in governmental planning and beyond. What we currently know, though with insufficient understanding of the depth and breadth of the consequences, is that land-grabbing and other displacement greatly affects the families who comprise the affected populations; additionally, overcrowding or "doubling-up" is known to be pervasive in many Indigenous contexts, and specifically in urban areas. Future research into homelessness and Family Homelessness in Indigenous contexts is needed, and must incorporate Indigenous Research Methodologies and should be community-driven in order to be decolonizing.[309] We must not forget how the conditions and actualization of rights within Indigenous contexts' relate to the achievement of the United Nations 2030 Agenda among others. Detailed herein are clear connections between Family Homelessness for Indigenous peoples and "the 5 P's" of the United Nations 2030 Agenda: people, planet, peace, prosperity, and partnership.

## Advocacy Recommendations

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

- Pursuing decolonizing public services, which also necessitates educating on colonization, neo-colonialism and intergenerational trauma
- Considering the Seventh Generation Principle in sustainable development planning and decision making[310]
- Promoting further inclusion of Indigenous people in multilateral diplomatic processes, in particular those concerning the UN 2030 Agenda
- Supporting and electing leaders who adhere to international human rights obligations and recognize and respond to the abuses occurring against Indigenous communities internationally
- Standing with Indigenous communities in protests and movements for their rights

## 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.

- Allocating funds specifically for Indigenous-led homelessness and housing research
- Implementing sustainable housing solutions that support Indigenous culture and respect the environment
- Adhering to international standards for compliance before initiation of any "development" measures in Indigenous territory
- Reforming antiquated legislation which perpetuates patriarchal systems or concentrates Indigenous representation, to promoting community decision-making and political involvement, as well as increasing accountability between political actors
- Creating more spaces for Indigenous peoples' involvement in international political institutions and processes, to avoid siloing voices and inputs

# Conclusion

**Kirin R. Taylor,** UNANIMA International Research Fellow

The harsh realities around the globe, some of which were highlighted in this publication, convey urgency and incite us to be passionate about ending Family Homelessness and to act in whatever capacity and ways we can to pursue the direction, principles and methods that will most effectively and permanently facilitate peace and prosperity for families everywhere. We must move towards a politics of compassion—a political sphere where we react to the needs of the most vulnerable and the clear requests for help, ultimately pursuing equity. A paradigm shift, to consider homelessness a human rights and civil rights issue is a necessary beginning that will lead to policies, programs, and inclusion of all peoples' voices and presence as stakeholders in diplomatic and decision-making processes. In UNANIMA International focus groups and interviews with people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity around the world, we have invited their messages to the United Nations, and now take the opportunity to share a selection:

*"There are some who need those basic needs like mattresses, blankets, pots to cook on. When someone is evicted they lose household items, as they are taken to compensate for the rent. Sometimes they even take your house away or lock the door. Now you have to start fresh and you don't have a job. It is another struggle because you have children."*

*"We need security."*

*"Sometimes you are so stressed and find you are not thinking straight. This is psychological torture."*

*"Besides all of the disadvantages which would be more than the advantage, there is life! We have a purpose for living! There's a sense of sharing and caring, a sense of togetherness!"*

It is clear that the inherent dignity in each person can be overlooked in law, and infringed by human rights violations and experiences which cause trauma, including being or feeling out of home; however, human dignity cannot be thwarted, and it is essential that we all believe healing is possible, so that we work towards that. We have invited women also to share what they do to bring them peace, despite their struggles in homelessness and housing insecurity. Here are some of their responses:

*"We are just living. It's like a condition and we are just living with it."*

*"Going to church."*

*"I will discuss it with some friends, and sometimes I'll feel better."*

*"If I find food, I will cook for my kids."*

*"I have some songs and play them. There's always something to get you down if you look for it."*

We have asked countless service providers: how do you remain hopeful, energetic, motivated to serve, despite the traumatic experiences you yourself are experiencing, hearing, or healing? Their responses mirror my own, and those of UNANIMA International staff and grassroots members. They are inspired, time and again, by women and childrens' resilience and the hope the people they serve maintain for their futures, their children, and their communities. The current reality and future ahead for humanity, especially as a global community, presents great challenges, and if we listen to the voices of women and children in particular, we must heed the call for change. We must keep the hidden faces of homelessness, families internationally, on our minds and take the more difficult path of further research, coordination, strategizing and work for change together—taking a lesson in resilience from the most vulnerable of our world.

# Recommendations

**The address and prevention of Family Homelessness is critically important to UN-ANIMA International. It requires strategic action from UN Member States and their respective government, civil society, and other political actors. We reiterate the recommendations put forth in Volume One. In response to the information presented herein in Volume Two, and the research questions and human rights concerns that remain, we make the following recommendations:**

**We encourage** Agentic federal leadership, and increased opportunity for civil society and local leadership to be heard in decision-making processes

**We encourage** Stopping the privatization and commodification of housing

**We encourage** Re-examination of welfare policies, to make sure they are not based in sexism and that they recognize poverty as a systemic issue, and the underlying inequalities driving Family Homelessness

**We encourage** Family Homelessness prevention and responses to work towards a "green economy" and to be trauma-informed

**We encourage** COVID-19 responses and analyses to consider Family Homelessness, and the need for related short and long-term policies and programs for housing security and other public health needs

**We encourage** Consideration of the provision of adequate housing as a public/population health related matter

**We encourage** United Nations Member States' adherence to international laws and commitments, including the resolution from CSocD58 and the Global Compact on Migration, among others

**We encourage** Increased cross-sectoral collaboration and accountability in addressing Family Homelessness/Displacement drivers and current realities

**We encourage** Adoption of trauma-informed care services and approach, in all public services, including education, healthcare, and within governmental programs and spaces at all levels

**We encourage** Acknowledgment of anti-trafficking work as related to ending Family Homelessness and violence against women and children

**We encourage** Increased formal employment opportunities for people who live within slums and women in general

**We encourage** Fulfillment of children's human rights through housing security and adequacy, and age-appropriate livelihood circumstances, including access to developmental resources and education

**We encourage** Concern for the following groups by all international actors: Indigenous peoples, Migrants and Refugees, family units, Women and Children/Girls, orphans, and single-parent led households

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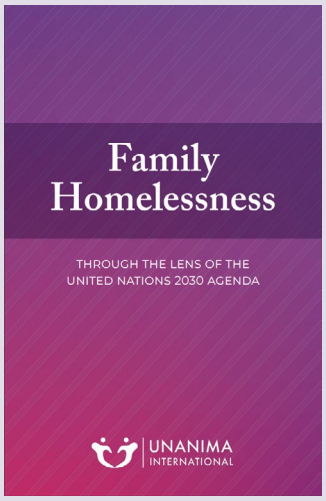


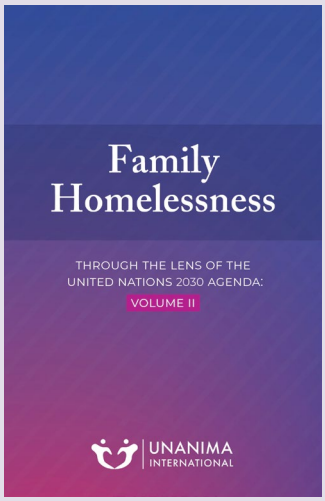


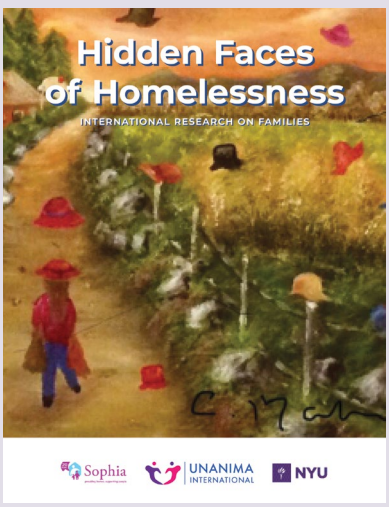

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