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RESEARCH PROJECT

# Family Homelessness and Trauma



Family Homelessness is a growing social problem affecting families around the world. It is understood and manifests itself in diverse economic, social, cultural and even linguistic context globally. This Research Project will explore the issue through a holistic approach bringing forward the experience of Women and Children, Thematic Challenges, Good Practices and Policy Recommendations.

## Why it is Important

Family Homelessness is unfortunately a growing phenomenon around the world. While no global definition has been agreed upon, it affects individuals and families no matter their social, economic or environmental context. Homelessness is often considered embarrassing, a taboo subject, and governments tend to underestimate the problem. We believe what is now called for is global action towards a paradigm shift in how we perceive the problems of Homelessness and Poverty. We urgently need to shift away from the many abusive attitudes and beliefs that circulate around homelessness and start a dialogue that views and treats Homelessness as what it is: a Human and Civil Rights issue.

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“When you're going through homelessness, you're putting your hand out....it's all one hurdle after another ...it's constant ticking boxes, it's mental torture” - Sarah, 29

## Working Definition

In the context of this project, Family Homelessness has been defined by the working definition: *Families who do not have consistent residency or the support needed to maintain a residency of their own who live episodically, temporarily or chronically in temporary housing, including shelters and locations not intended for human habitat or settlement.*

## Rationale and Methodology

The Research Project seeks to adopt a holistic approach in researching the structural causes and factors associated with Family Homelessness, as well as the frequently associated compound Trauma experienced by the affected adults and children. Through this multifaceted approach it will also explore Family Homelessness and Trauma caused by displacement affecting migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, taking into account the distinct legal framework upon which those groups are governed. The research will include quantitative data by providing statistical data from governments and civil society, taking into account the absence of a definition and the subsequent discrepancies and peripheral nature of the data. It will also include qualitative research as this style of research is best suited to documenting the human experience of families and address the emergent phenomenon from a Human Rights perspective. Initially the research will be conducted through sample size population across five geographic regions North America, Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa.

## A Paradigm Shift & Outcomes

By studying the root causes, the experiences and the outcomes through a range of different perspectives, this research has the potential to provide detailed and informative outcomes appropriate at the regional and international

level. Exploring the challenges, good practices and wider issues surrounding Family Homelessness, this research could play an important role in documenting the trauma faced by families who experience homelessness. Such outcomes could inform service providers and policy makers such as National Government Departments to set good standards. It also has the potential to provide the resources for creating trauma informed models of support and effective services for homeless families. It is hoped that these outcomes will contribute to a paradigm shift in how we perceive the issues of Homelessness and Poverty that is so badly needed, and promote a dialogue where Homelessness is finally viewed as a Human Rights issue.

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“You want to voice the truth, what's actually going on with everything but you're sometimes afraid and your voice is gone” - Amanda, 18

## United Nations Documentation

Despite recognition in existing UN Documentation that *Adequate Housing* and *Shelter* are essential to individuals and families enjoying their rights and fully participating in society, the theme of Homelessness is not adequately addressed. Among the notable Documents that highlight *Adequate Housing* are:

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948)
- **The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (1966)
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989)
- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** (2015)
- **Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements** (1996)

Currently the most notable mention of Homelessness is in **The New Urban Agenda** (2016) which states: “*We will take positive measures to improve the living conditions of homeless people with a view of facilitating their full participation in society and prevent and eliminate homelessness*”

The importance of the Family is reflected in many National Public Policies, these policies play an important role in national efforts to achieve **The Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), and **The 2030 Agenda** (2015). Homelessness is a cross-cutting issue that underpins, but can also hinder the success, progress and achievement of various goals and their indicators. Specifically, the eradication of Homelessness weighs heavily on the progress of Goals 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”, 1 “End poverty in all its forms everywhere” and 16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels”. It is our desire that homelessness not only be addressed through the existing SDGs but to have a specific indicator focused on addressing Homelessness.