

Forum:	Human Rights Committee
Issue:	Safeguarding the rights of homeless youth in metropolitan areas
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Introduction

Adequate and secure housing are acknowledged as a part of the standard human rights under the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Currently, the issue of homelessness is mostly seen in youth aged between 13 and 26 (FEANTSA). It can be further argued that the homelessness of the youth population also affects the welfare of the states since the declining health resources of the homeless youth establishes rather increasing health problems within the communities and the safety of the living environments are threatened. It is evident that the attention should be given to the homeless youth population to dispute the problems that have been going on along with prohibiting further incrementation of the homeless population to provide a balanced perception of welfare among citizens. This is a direct consequence of the violence within the social circle such individuals highly prefer to escape from to maintain their and/or someone's safety, with a special emphasis on the violence applied due to cultural reasons. It is also crucial to mention that the lack of government support eventually leads to further deteriorates the situation of the homeless youth, since no proper education nor healthcare is given to them the situation they are in establishes a cycle which the homeless people are rarely able to adjust or improve, let alone children and teenagers. Thus, with the ever changing world and the wheel of history turning at a fast pace, governments taking accountability upon the homeless youth population and providing the necessary aid plays a key role in resolving this matter.

Definition of Key Terms

Homelessness: The situation of an individual who doesn't have a permanent, reliable, and sufficient place to reside.

Less Economically Developed Countries(LEDCs): Low-income nations that have significant structural barriers to sustainable development. They have low levels of human assets and are extremely susceptible to environmental and economic shocks.

Welfare: The condition of being prosperous, especially with regard to fortune, happiness, well-being, or

wealth.

Metropolitan: A location in a large, developed area that mostly serves as a part of the central area.

Adequate housing: A secure tenure being free from the threat of eviction or having lands taken away.

General Overview

Adequate housing has been a major problem which increased rapidly due to the population growth in the metropolitan areas. With the overwhelming demand on housing, the number of people who had to live under insufficient circumstances have increased tremendously. It is estimated that approximately 150 million citizens are currently homeless with the majority of them being ages between 13 and 26. The problem of homeless youth has been going on for many centuries with no proper solutions applied. Countries such as Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Haiti, and India have been suffering such issues for many years due to the governments not being able to accommodate their citizens with adequate housing since their metropolitan areas are under major migrations which the governments cannot follow the growth in the necessary pace. However, it is crucial to mention that the homeless population increments are not only seen in less economically developed countries, countries with large metropolitan areas and strong economies such as the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Germany, China and the United States of America also face major homelessness in their youth population (World Population Review).

Generally, the youth who become homeless tend to escape from the community they were born into. In other words, it can be said that they are trying to change their fate and improve their welfare states. Most of the youth population go homeless due to domestic violence, poverty, family breakdowns, mental issues, and lack of care (Centrepoint). Domestic violence is the leading cause of youth homelessness in metropolitan areas, specifically within the female population. The abuse imposed on the teens in their living environments often end with the person not being able to handle the physical and the mental damage, thus leaving their habitats to be homeless rather being abused constantly. Moving further, poverty also causes the increase of the homeless youth population since the rising estate prices in metropolitan areas and the insufficient housing assistance from the government aggravates the situation of the homeless youth. It cannot be overlooked that for all of these causes of homelessness, the lack of care is the key problem which establishes the unbearable environment the youth are in. The parents or legal guardians not giving the necessary attention to the adolescents eventually lead to miscarriage of the adolescents and in order to find the necessary care or fulfill the seek of attention, they tend to swerve to other directions such as using illegal substances or leaving their living habitat and being homeless.

The importance of the government should also be taken into consideration within this matter. Homelessness infringes on a variety of other human rights in addition to showing that the governments have failed to

ensure that everyone has access to safe, affordable, and appropriate housing (OHCHR). For instance, experiencing homelessness seriously harms a person's health, compromising their right to healthcare. Every year, thousands of premature and avoidable deaths are caused by homelessness, a failure of states to appropriately protect human life. The stigma attached to homelessness is sometimes combated by punishment, violence, and forceful regulations that violate rather than protect the rights of those affected. Furthermore, people who are homeless frequently face discrimination based on their living situation or because they lack a legal address, which affects their access to political, economic, and social rights like the right to vote, the ability to work, and the right to receive certain social benefits. Also it is vital to mention that only a few nations enacted laws that go beyond restrictions on admission to shared emergency shelters and allow those experiencing homelessness to demand access to housing that is adequate, inexpensive, and preserves privacy which shows the insufficient attention given by the governments. During a session of the Youth World Conference in 1998, former Secretary General of the United Nations General Assembly Kofi Annan has said, "*A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death.*" (United Nations) with the aim of seeking the attention of the nations towards the homeless youth. This action had a significant impact on tackling this issue, yet the homeless youth population is still increasing and facing many challenges.

Consequences of a homeless youth is also another major aspect of the issue, perhaps the most challenging and vital one. Some of the most important factors of the outcomes of youth homelessness include mental health problems, substance abuse, criminal activity, risky sexual practices and barriers to education and employment. Unaccompanied youth must deal with the crippling impacts of mental health issues that are brought on by or exacerbated by homelessness. Mental health issues, with different forms, which are risk factors for long-term homelessness, are reported by 50% of unaccompanied young people. Homeless youth have been found to have at least three times the rates of self harm anxiety, serious depression and post-traumatic stress disorder as the general youth population. Adversely, many of the unaccompanied minors have little to no access to mental health services. Consequently, many unaccompanied kids use drugs or alcohol to cope with the anxiety and despair brought on by uncertain housing situations. According to studies, between 30 and 40 percent of unaccompanied kids report having problems with alcohol and 40 to 50 percent report having difficulties with drugs throughout their lifetime. Compared to the overall juvenile population, homeless youth use drugs such as marijuana and cocaine and other dangerous substances at considerably higher rates.

Additionally, unaccompanied youth who are homeless are in a difficult circumstance, which prompts some of them to engage in criminal activities. Many unaccompanied kids turn to criminal behavior as a means of surviving. One-fifth of kids who are unsupervised report stealing. More than 10% of homeless youth have broken into a house violently. More than half of homeless teenagers have taken part in gang activity. Nonetheless, "analysis demonstrates that homeless youth are more likely to be the victims of crime than the

offenders," despite the fact that they frequently engage in illegal activities. Unaccompanied youth have trauma and rape rates that are two to three times greater than those of other young people. Young people who are alone are frequently the targets of robbery, sexual assault, and physical violence. On top of all that, many homeless teens are prevented from completing their high school degrees or post-secondary education because of access impediments to schooling. These obstacles may prevent young people from enrolling, which frequently causes them to skip school for protracted periods of time. Because of this, homelessness might impede the development of normal socialization and educational processes in young people. Those who experience these issues and don't have a higher education degree find it severely challenging to support themselves both emotionally and financially. Unaccompanied youth who lack a formal education or degree often end up being unemployed, while most people who can find workplaces to be a part of don't make enough money to live on. The additional toll of an uneducated and unemployed youth is also eventually felt by the society.

It is important to mention that the COVID-19 pandemic has also intensified the severity of homeless youth's situation, aggravating the problems that they already face, both financially and emotionally, while adding up new problems on top of that pile. While being at an additional risk of contacting COVID-19, homeless youth, worldwide, had nearly no access to healthcare services during the pandemic. The financial problems they have been facing has also escalated, as the world has gone through a severe economic and financial crisis. It has been reported that many had also additional problems in accessing basic necessities such as clean water, food and sanitation. Besides, many other teens, in addition to the ones that were already homeless have found themselves unemployed and financially suffering, eventually leading to a rapidly increasing rate of youth homelessness throughout the pandemic. While the pandemic has now come to an end, the intensified challenges that the homeless youth face still remains in a fashion that is now exacerbated more than ever, while most of the governments are still having trouble in effectively acting out.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States of America

The United States of America has been under the radar due to the municipality's policies regarding the homeless youth. There are approximately 4.2 million adolescents who are having a homelessness issue with 700,000 of them being minors (Covenant House). The Department of Health and Human Services has reported that a crucial step has been taken toward preventing and ending homelessness is the coordination of services for those who are experiencing homelessness, both within the Department and with our Federal

partners who offer housing and supplementary assistance programs (HHS). Even though there is an effort spent by the Federal government, the States are criticized publicly for their lacking efforts regarding homeless youth. For instance, in California it is known that there are specific areas which are designated by the state where homeless people are located in which are done to have proper living environments for their residing citizens while not taking care of the homeless population. Also, due to the fact that the healthcare in the USA is not free, the homeless youth population are not able to get the necessary healthcare, which is against the 25th article of the UDHR. Though, it is also important to mention that recently a nonprofit organization called The Youth Emergency Services House had launched The Youth Homeless Demonstration Project in order to give young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 a place to stay while they explore for other housing options in the neighborhood or enroll in college which is a major improvement for the American homeless youth population.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is going through the biggest housing crisis in the nation's history. With Liz Truss's policies sinking the UK economy and Rishi Sunak trying to save, the citizens protested the current situation as well as criticized the government in the media. In such situations, the housing issue of the youth population becomes even more severe for their safety. Due to the current situation, homelessness is on the rise in the UK, along with poverty. Over 120,000 children and teenagers are reported to be homeless as of 2022, which is likely not even close to the present number. Family breakdowns are the major reason for the homeless youth population in the UK. The reports show that eight out of ten of the adolescents served by Action for Children's "Nightstop" youth homelessness project left home in 2021 as a result of a family connection failing (Action For Children). Until the current day, the biggest step taken towards this issue was the joint protocol created by Children's Safeguarding and Social Work and Homeless Services which was implemented in November 2018 (CAMDEN). This protocol outlines how CSSW (Camden's Children's Safeguarding and Social Work) will collaborate with Homeless Services and Housing providers to safeguard and advance the welfare of 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of becoming so as part of the implementation of Camden's larger plan to reduce rough sleeping and homelessness. There are many charities that have been going on throughout the country as well in order to provide the necessary aid for the winter cold and the weather conditions to homeless people, youths specifically. The government and the Royal family also seeked attention towards the homeless population to emphasize on the importance of the issue.

India

Similar to other countries, India is seeing significant urban growth, particularly in the form of expanding slums and small settlements, which is contributing to an increase in the number of street and working children. India has the second highest population in the world, many of whom unfortunately live in poverty.

Families frequently struggle to survive on their own and have little more than enough money for rent and food, with the adults working menial jobs for a minimal daily pay. Children are frequently forced to live on the streets and also work because of hunger and desperation if something happens to disrupt this vulnerable source of income. Children who are in terrible situations frequently think that living on the streets is a better option. As a result of the generational cycles of neglect, abuse, and poverty that so many families are caught in, children frequently flee their homes. Due to these circumstances, there are major sanitation and health problems within these children as well as no proper education is given to these children. Indian government is aware of the serious problem that the nation has with homeless children and have put numerous strategies in place to address it. The children are covered by the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2015, and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) particularly accommodates to their needs. Among other things, it includes policies to offer shelter, food, healthcare, counseling, guidance, and referral services, as well as specific education programs and vocational training.

Nigeria

Nigeria currently has the highest number of homeless youth population. According to numbers released by the statistics office, 40% of Nigerians are living in poverty, underlining the low levels of income in the continent's largest economy (Al Jazeera). With the recession in 2016 and the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria couldn't maintain a stable economy. The instabilities within the country's economy led to major housing problems in the whole country, specifically in the metropolitan areas. Besides the economical issues, in order to address security issues, the Lagos State Governor announced in 2016 that all structures in informal settlements along waterfronts and waterways will be demolished. This pronouncement was followed by a number of these evictions which led to at least 300,000 individuals requiring housing residence (Amnesty International). The evictions not only increased the homeless population, but also the crime rates rose rapidly. The housing problem is becoming even more severe in Nigeria since the government lacks the necessary funds needed for the housing.

Timeline of Events

10 December 1948	UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Right) was adopted by the UN General Assembly.
1966	153 States have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which is one

	of the most significant UN documents that establishes the right to housing.
1976	The first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development was held in Canada.
1977	The United Nations Human Settlements Programme was established in Kenya for habitation and sustainable urban growth.
10 August 1998	The Youth World Conference took place which sought global attention towards homeless youth.
26-28 August 2019	The 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference took place which mostly focused on the issues regarding homeless youth.
19 February 2020	First UN resolution focused on the homeless population has passed during the 58th session of the UN Commission for Social Development.
June 2021	UNECE(United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) established the Toronto Centre of Excellence on Youth Homelessness Prevention at York University.

UN Involvement

World Program of Action for Youth

WPAY (World Program of Action for Youth), which was established by the General Assembly in 1995, offers a policy framework for national initiatives and global assistance to improve the lives of young people all around the globe. The WPAY includes recommendations for action in each of the fifteen youth priority areas

it covers which are education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, substance abuse, juvenile justice, leisure-time activities, girls and young women and the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making, globalization, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, and intergenerational issues (United Nations). This program has also worked to tackle the homeless youth issue actively specifically around 2015. They work collaboratively with the World Programme for Human Rights, a youth specific program.

UN Working Group to End Homelessness

The Vincentian Family and some UN NGOs collaborated to form the WGEH (Working Group to End Homelessness) , which became official in November 2017. It was established with the goal of representing vulnerable individuals at the UN, seeking the human right to appropriate housing for all, and putting an end to homelessness so that everyone can fulfill their full human rights and potential and thrive. The working group collaborates on this advocacy activity with numerous member states, UN entities, NGOs, committees, and groups (WGEH). WGEH's goal is to create a world where everyone experiences the pleasure of having a safe, livable, affordable, and secure home. To do this, they advocate for social protection at the UN, uphold human rights, and implement supportive, sensitive policies and initiatives to prevent homelessness.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) is the leading organization under the UN which advocates and preserves human rights. It collaborates with governments and helps them achieve their commitments under the human rights treaties, speaks out strongly against human rights abuses around the world, gives a platform for recognizing, highlighting, and finding solutions to the difficulties facing human rights today, serves as the primary engine for human rights advocacy, education, research, and outreach initiatives. It collaborates with a variety of partners to increase support for human rights around the world (OHCHR). Also, OHCHR is the main organization which focuses on the homeless youth issue and negotiates with nations in order to resolve this issue.

Relevant UN Documents

- Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing- Report of the Special Rapporteur- (26 December 2019, A/HRC/43/43)
- Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living- Report of the Special Rapporteur- (3 March 2005, E/CN.4/2005/48)
- Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living- Resolution adopted by Human Rights Council- (14 April 2014, A/HRC/RES/25/17)
- Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and The Right to Non-discrimination in This Context- Resolution adopted by Human Rights Council- (13 April

2022, A/HRC/RES/49/17)

- Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and The Right to Non-discrimination in This Context- Resolution adopted by Human Rights Council- (9 April 2018, A/HRC/RES/37/4)

Treaties and Events

The most prominent event regarding this issue is the adoption of UDHR by the UN in 1948. With 192 signatories from member states, it is evident that this declaration has been widely accepted in all countries. Article 25 of the UDHR, which states that all citizens have the right to a standard of living that is sufficient for the person's health and well-being, including the right to food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and vital social services.

Another crucial event which occurred was the FEANTSA (European Federation of Organizations Working on Homelessness) publishing the European Framework for Defining Youth Homelessness in 2020. With no specific definitions of youth homelessness, currently this framework is one of the most crucial documents to clarify that. For organizations aiming to end youth homelessness, this framework offers a definition of youth homelessness as well as an insight to the homelessness situation in Europe.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Many countries had held national conferences upon the homelessness youth issue within their borders. There have been significant improvements in the homeless youth's housing in member states which had continuously studied and worked upon solving the housing problem of homeless youth, such as National Alliance to End Homelessness in the USA and FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) in the European Union. With the efforts of such organizations and governments throughout the world, there are significant improvements within some member states in the situation of homelessness.

Launching the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness in June 2021, European institutions and bodies, EU governments, and civil society made a commitment to cooperate to reduce homelessness rates in the EU. The introduction of the Homelessness Platform builds upon earlier policy initiatives in the area of homelessness, such as the Social Investment Package, which encourages Member States to adopt long-term, housing-led, integrated homelessness strategies at the national, regional, and local level; introduce effective policies to prevent evictions, a collection of policies such as social inclusion, regional development, migration, financial regulation, health, and human rights policies. For a rather recent launch, the European

Platform on Combatting Homelessness has a major significance on the recognition of the rights of the homeless people, as well as fighting against the increased rates of homelessness and reducing them in a permanent and effective way.

In most member states, one of the solutions governments take is to implement shelters and place homeless people temporarily to these shelters until the housing issue has been resolved. However, due to the poor conditions and the inhumane events which took place in such shelters in the past, many people tend to distance themselves from the idea of being placed in a shelter, and even refuse them if they are given a choice. In research done with a part of the homeless population in the US, it is acknowledged that approximately 1% of homeless people accept being placed in shelters (CBS). It is evident that the shelters which were used for homeless populations should either go out of use, or go through a grand reform to identify and solve the problems which have created the distrust in homeless populations.

Possible Solutions

There is a major hole within legal support for the homeless youth population. It is vital for delegates to consider creating comprehensive frameworks in order to fulfill this hole. The delegates also shouldn't forget that it is highly discouraged to interfere with Member States' internal affairs which means that the framework should be established with respect to the sovereignty of states. The insights of the frameworks are up to delegates, however mentioning the homeless youth population's rights as well as the further measures which will be taken is recommended.

One of the major problems within this issue is the lack of infrastructure for housing. Budgetary issues, leaving the homeless youth problem in the background, not planning properly, and the insufficient space are all further escalating the infrastructure issue. The delegates are encouraged to resolve the housing matter in their resolution. Collaborating with UN affiliated organizations as well as NGOs is a proper step which delegates can take. Resolving the budgetary problems or giving assistance upon housing is other solutions which delegates can apply.

Notes from the Chair

Being Hispanic or Black, parenting while single, or LGBTQ, with LGBTQ youth having a higher risk of homelessness than their cisgender or heterosexual peers, are some of the demographic risk factors for homelessness. The Congressional Research Service cited pregnancy, substance use, school issues, family conflict and family dynamics, a teen's sexual orientation, sexual activity, and school challenges as the main risk factors for teenage homelessness. The congressional research also revealed that, among white, black, and Hispanic adolescents, black youth have the highest rates of running away, with around half of youth running away before the age of 14 (NCSL). It is important for delegates to consider the statistics regarding

the race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious beliefs of the homeless youth population while researching the issue and writing their resolutions.

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