



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 November 2019

English only

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-eighth session

10–19 February 2020

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority Theme: Affordable housing and social protection
systems for all to address homelessness**

Statement submitted by Universal Peace and Violence Amelioration Centre, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

INTRODUCTION

Affordable housing is a housing which is deemed affordable to those with a median household income or below as rated by relevant agencies. Housing (shelter) is one of the basic needs of individuals including food and clothing.

Social protection consists of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to manage economic and social risks, such as unemployment, exclusion, sickness, disability and old age. Social protection systems that are well-designed and implemented can powerfully shape countries, enhance human capital and productivity, reduce inequalities, build resilience and end the inter-generational cycle of poverty.

Homelessness is defined as living in housing that is below the minimum standard or lacks secure tenure. People therefore classified homeless are: living on the streets (primary homelessness); moving between temporary shelters, including houses of friends, family and emergency accommodation (secondary homelessness); living in private boarding houses without a private bathroom and/or security of tenure (tertiary homelessness).

SCOPE

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in providing affordable housing to address homelessness for all, a need for social protection systems needs to be established at all levels.

Adequate standard of living and housing is asserted in:

Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), Target 11.1, which states:

By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, which states:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Homeless people (women, disabled persons, older persons and youth) should have the right to an adequate standard of living, including access to safe, decent and affordable housing. Homelessness is a rising issue globally due to certain factors as poverty, education, unemployment, and acts of terrorism leading to forced displacement. The homeless people usually experience higher rates of adverse physical, mental and health challenges which make them vulnerable to violence, mental illnesses and health conditions associated with chronic and communicable diseases.

Policies to address affordable housing and social protection should therefore be encouraged and implemented by States; housing that will be reasonably affordable enough, adequate in standard, safe and accessible for all, and will enable a household to meet other basic needs on a sustainable basis of living.

POLICIES

Policies aimed at ensuring affordable housing and social protection in addressing homelessness globally, should be geared towards preventing and ending the issue of homelessness for all, including women, older persons, disabled persons and youth among others.

For example, the:

National Housing Policy of Nigeria has some basic objectives as assisting all people, and in particular the houseless, the inadequately housed and the vulnerable sections and to secure for themselves affordable shelter through access to developed land, building materials, finance and technology; and to create an enabling environment for housing activity by various sections by eliminating constraints, and by developing an efficient and equitable system for the delivery of housing inputs. Also, to promote a more equal distribution of land and houses in urban and rural areas; and to further undertake within the overall context of policies for poverty alleviation and employment steps for improving the housing situation of the poorest sections and vulnerable groups by direct initiative and financial support of the State.

National Social Protection Policy of Nigeria also states that there should be “decent and affordable housing for the homeless, the monetary poor, and families living in the overcrowded and unhealthy conditions.”

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Some of the problems associated with housing policies are usually implementation, inadequate research, inadequate funding, and lack of monitoring and evaluation and execution of existing housing policies. Other problems associated with homelessness further includes poverty, lack of education, unemployment or lack of income security, corruption, lack of workable mortgage system, acts of terrorism leading to internal displacement, lack of housing and land ownership.

SUGGESTIONS

A Housing Information Management System formulated by Governments, to be implemented in rural and urban areas should be created and encouraged to enable a comprehensive housing census that will also distinguish between the shelter needs of those who can afford to acquire a built-up house, those in possession of a plot, with a desire to construct a house; those without a decent house, in need of maintenance, renovation and upgrading; and those without shelter totally. This will give a comprehensive result of how to tackle the issue of homelessness and make affordable housing and social protection inclusive for all.

The following are further suggested solutions to homelessness:

Enhancing the workability of new and existing policies,

Creating effective social and economic empowerment policies to reduce poverty and allow for social inclusion of all,

Implementing and enforcing new policies to ensure equal property rights and affordable housing for the homeless,

Promoting and providing decent low-housing schemes in both rural and urban areas for low income earners,

The United Nations and its specialized agencies, international governmental organizations and other governmental agencies should focus on inclusive affordable accommodation for all regardless of social or economic status,

Governments should ensure that every homeless person have access to effective complaint and appeal mechanisms to seek redress for practices that deny their right to affordable housing and social protection,

Civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and private sectors should carry out advocacy to governments to ensure that State parties take effective measures to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of affordable housing and social protection for all in addressing homelessness,

Policies aimed at reducing homelessness, promoting effective construction technologies, and upgrading all non-serviceable houses in rural and urban areas to improve housing conditions for the homeless and inadequately housed should be adopted and embraced by all State parties,

Monitoring and evaluation of policy resolutions adopted on homelessness should be done regularly for checks and balances of the policy system.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Special considerations should be put in place with respect to affordable housing and social protection for addressing homelessness for all, such as:

A contributory own-a-house scheme should be encouraged and practiced at all levels and private sectors,

A provision of housing finance or monetary assistance to people with an inadequate or no income should be practiced,

Local building materials should be encouraged to encourage the low- and middle-income earners,

Land and landed property ownership acts should be reviewed in order to encourage low- and middle-income earners the opportunity to own a land or landed property,

National housing policies should be reviewed periodically to make it more functional, available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable.
