



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

**COMMISSION for
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

United Nations Headquarters, New York

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS: PREVENTION AND SOLUTIONS

Thursday, 13 FEBRUARY 2020

11:30 am - 12:45 pm

CONFERENCE ROOM 12

United Nations Headquarters, New York

FAMILIES & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Bahira Trask, Professor and Chair of Human Development and Family Sciences, University of Delaware

GOOD PRACTICES AT LOCAL LEVEL: LESSONS FROM SAO PAULO

Luiz Alvaro Salles Aguiar de Menezes, Secretary for International Affairs, Municipality of Sao Paulo, Brazil

HOMELESSNESS IN NYC

Matthew Windrum, Director of Government Affairs, The Doe Fund

THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Molly Gerke, Executive Assistant, UNANIMA International

FAMILY VIOLENCE & HOMELESSNESS

Shanequa Holiday, Senior Director, Safe Horizon

MODERATOR

Daniela Bas, Director, DISD, UN DESA



The Doe Fund



For more information, please contact: Focal Point on Family, DISD/UNDESA (kaczmarska@un.org)



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CONCEPT NOTE

2020 is a landmark anniversary year for the United Nations system. The United Nations celebrate 75 years of existence, while the World Summit for Social Development and Programme of Action (known as Copenhagen Declaration) mark their 25th anniversary.

The purposes of the UN are, inter alia, “to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character (UN Charter, Art.1) World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, reaffirmed this commitment focusing on the importance of solving persisting social problems and putting people at the centre of development. This idea was echoed in the 2030 Development Agenda in its motto of ‘leaving no one behind’. This year the Commission for Social Development, for the first time in its existence, focuses on “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness”.

Family homelessness is a persisting social problem as well as a serious and often hidden developmental challenge in need of greater recognition and attention. Although research is scarce, family homelessness appears to be rising. Its causes range from fractured family relations, fleeing from domestic violence, loss of employment to internal migration and unsustainably rapid urbanization and scarcity of affordable housing. Most vulnerable households to experience both temporary and chronic homelessness include lone-parent families, mostly women with young children. Homeless children in these settings and street children are severely impacted by homelessness. They have poor health and nutrition, are often subject to violence, experience stress, anxiety and behavioural problems. Homeless families with children are those left furthest behind.

Homelessness in general and family homelessness in particular require integrated responses, cutting across fiscal, economic, labour, housing, health, social protection and urban development policies. Governments and other stakeholders must address the causes of family homelessness, including poverty, domestic violence and lack of affordable housing and extend efforts to provide adequate affordable housing with support services for families and invest in accessible and affordable infrastructure, including housing and transportation to benefit families and prevent family homelessness.

The event will reaffirm the commitment made in Copenhagen in 1995 and explore ways to identify gaps where further action is required and make social development policies more sustainable. The following questions will guide the conversation: Should the family be the starting point for strategies to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and homelessness? How can we prevent and solve the challenge of family homelessness? What obstacles must be overcome? What good practices can be replicated? How do we ensure that no family is left behind?

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