MEASURES TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS – INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

Tina Kipshidze

THE ROLE OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

Housing policy and housing rights have historically been the most retarded areas of the social security system (Torgersen, 1987). Since the 1990s, this situation has slowly changed. Homelessness has been recognized as a major global problem and the structural aspects such as dramatic changes in the labour market and weak social policies have been identified as the main underlying causes (Hopper, Susser & Conover, 1985; Burt, 1997; Loopstra, 2015). In countries with a well-developed welfare system, social policies based on the concepts of equal access to housing and 'Housing First' approach, have been gradually strengthened. Housing, as a fundamental human right, should be guaranteed to citizens by legislative acts whereas it should be realized through state political documents - strategy and action plans.

By studying successful strategy examples of different countries, the present brief seeks to review the measures against homelessness as well as their planning and implementation principles. We believe that only the analysis of established social security systems and their underpinnings can give an in-depth insight into these issues. It is widely believed that the scale and causes of homelessness are closely related to the type of the social system established in the country. In particular, the poorer the social security systems and services and the weaker the state›s involvement in promoting welfare are, the higher is the rate of homelessness. In conditions of an underdeveloped welfare system, homelessness is mainly driven by structural factors (lack of housing and labour market regulation, poorly developed social security services) that put the broader population at threat of homelessness, irreversibly magnifying the scales of the problem and complicating its settlement (Stephen & Fitzpatrick, 2007).

For different types of social security systems, various factors are considered to be main guarantors of citizen welfare. Based on the relationship between the state, the market and the family, as well as the state›s

For years, homelessness has been a largely neglected problem in Georgia. The research carried out by the Open Society Foundation has revealed that in the absence of a consistent vision on combating homelessness, municipal housing services remain to be weak and fragmented. In May 2019, the Open Society Foundation requested information on housing services and citizen application from 6 municipalities of Georgia. It served as the basis for policy briefs addressing the issues of homelessness and housing.

responsibility to ensure the well-being of its citizens, to take care of poverty eradication and overall inequality reduction (Esping-Andersen, 2007), three main social security systems can be singled out - liberal, continental and social-democratic [1].

In a liberal system, state intervention in addressing the social needs of citizens is minimal. It is believed that citizens, through the labour market, should solve household welfare issues, ensure life risks, avoid income loss and poverty, get education or provide for health care on their own. The state only intervenes when citizens› attempts to secure their own income from the labour market bear no results. The given system mostly includes targeted social services that are responsive in nature. The main drawback of the liberal system lies in the rise of inequality. There is a big shift in the

workforce, the risk of unemployment, vulnerability to poverty and inequality is high (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 2002; Esping-Andersen, & Myles, 2007) [2]. Within the liberal model, the problem of homelessness and lack of proper housing stands acute. Due to high rates of poverty and inequality, social exclusion of substantial part of the population and structural causes (economic crisis, weakness of the social system, etc.), countries with such a system are not much effective at coping with the problem of homelessness. The countries with a liberal system include the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Canada, Switzerland and New Zealand.

In the continental system, welfare services are based on social insurance funds [3], which are mandatory for all employed people. Insurance funds provide employees with basic social services - health, retirement, sickness insurance, unemployment assistance, or assistance for workplace injuries. Due to the peculiarities [4] formed at the stage of historical development, social vulnerability of women stands high in countries of such system. The problems include unpaid domestic labour, neglect for women›s specific needs, lack of services to combine motherhood and employment [5]. In the continental model, the scale of social assistance and services depends on the type of employment and the income amount [6]. As a result, unemployed people and citizens with unstable or low-paid jobs constitute a high risk group for poverty and homelessness (von Mahs, 2001). The countries with the continental system include Germany, Austria, Belgium, France and Italy.

A Social-democratic system is characterized by a universalist approach and a wide range of social rights for citizens. The stated purpose of such a social policy is to ensure equal social protection for all citizens. The uniqueness [7] of the model lies in the shift of the welfare responsibility that has traditionally been in the realm of the family, to the state. In countries with such a system, the state commits itself to taking care of children, the elderly, the sick and needy family members and directs the bulk of budgetary spending on relevant social services to fulfil this goal. Social policy planning follows the labour market development; staff hiring, dismissal and payroll policy issues are tightly regulated; intensive care is taken of employee qualification and sustainable professional development (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 2002; Esping-Andersen, & Myles, 2007). Due to low level of inequality and poverty, countries with such a system are characterized by low homelessness rates (McFate et.al., 1995; Jantti & Danziger, 2000; Smeeding, 2005; Jacques & Noël, 2018). People are protected against the negative stmpact of radical social and economic changes by robust social security system, with homelessness being an issue for just minorities (FEANTSA, 2007a; Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007). The social-democratic system operates in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Finland.

A strong social welfare system is a guarantee for a long-term and sustainable solution to the problem of homelessness, obliging the state to enhance peoples› living conditions and to define effective, needs-oriented housing services that in the long run, will serve as a solid basis for eliminating inequality and homelessness.

1. THE STRATEGY TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS

Planning and development of a strategy to combat homelessness is an essential part of the country›s social policy. Beyond the ideological and political declarations of the state, homelessness policy and the types of integrated services are related to the recognition and protection of human rights standards. It is no longer a matter of debate among social science researchers that the impact of poverty and inequality can be tackled by incorporating effective, human rights-based services into strategy documents and providing for their implementation.

Most of the countries currently base their homelessness elimination strategies on a 'Housing First' approach, which envisages providing beneficiaries with immediate and unconditional housing based on their individual needs. Coping with various types of addiction, starting a job and meeting other conditions no longer represent preconditions for housing. By this principle, a beneficiary should be provided with housing regardless of addiction, social or other needs (Aubry, Bernad & Greenwood 2018), on the condition of settling these problems immediately upon accommodation.

In the strategy development process, it is of utmost importance to consider multidimensional nature of homelessness and the diversity of homeless groups (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007; FEANTSA, 2010a, 2010b). Homelessness elimination strategy should be built upon a clear definition of the homelessness concept and an in-depth analysis of its drivers.

1.1 Definition of a homeless person

For purposes of homelessness elimination strategy and action plan, it is crucial to define homelessness, since it is the clearly defined concept that allows the state to determine what types of homeless needs the appropriate services should be based upon. Currently, there is no universal definition of homelessness that would be shared by different countries. As the definition changes, so does the range of groups considered as homeless by the state. The notion of homelessness in Germany is based on the lack of access to legal dimension of housing (Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick, 2008). In UK, a person who does not have access to legal, physical or social dimensions of housing (Housing Act 1996, Section VII) is considered

homeless; People at high risk of losing their asylum are also considered homeless. The definition of a homeless person also bears a broad sense in Finland. In addition to recognizing legal, social and physical dimensions of homelessness, the Finnish model also incorporates its covert forms. For example, by the Finnish model, a person or family, living with a relative or friend or having no guaranteed housing is considered homeless. The rate of homelessness in Finland dropped by 35% from 2008 to 2015 (World Economic Forum; "How Finland is Tackling Homelessness" Apr, 2019), which was driven right by the fact of having strategy-defined services based on multiple forms of homelessness (Pleace, 2017; Pleace & Knutagård, 2016).

1.2 Study and Data Collection on the Causes of Homelessness

Study of the causes behind the problem of homelessness is another important topic that needs to be considered in the course of the strategy planning. As the Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) points out, settlement of the homelessness problem requires a comprehensive research to identify its underlying causes. As the experience demonstrates, dramatic changes in the labour market, mass unemployment, poverty, inequality, and lack of welfare policies are the main structural reasons which, in some cases, lead to homelessness among certain groups due to their high vulnerability (poor health, lack of education and qualifications, social and housing problems) to such circumstances (FEANTSA, 2010a) [9]. In addition, the risk of homelessness may be related to the inability to pay for rent, family conflicts, living in poor conditions, inability to satisfy material and non-material needs, etc. (FEANTSA, 2010a). Accordingly, such data should be collected each year in the context of specific countries, as it will allow to identify risk groups and to analyze the causes of homelessness instead of assessing it as an individual and deviant problem (O›Sullivan, 2008; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2010).

2. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION SERVICES

Homelessness is a multifaceted problem. There is no one particular service that would eliminate the threat of homelessness. Consequently, after having identified the causes of homelessness, it is necessary to develop a variety of preventive services, tailored to the needs of homeless people (Culhane, Metraux, & Byrne, 2011). Modern approach to elimination of homelessness focuses on its prevention (FEANTSA, 2010a, 2010b). The prevention-centred social model entails identification of homelessness risks and development of community-based services. Accordingly, the purpose of this model is to maintain and stabilize existing living space and to ensure proper re-socialization of a person that is yet at risk of homelessness (Culhane, Metraux, & Byrne,

2011). Prevention-centred intervention not only covers the services aimed at preventing homelessness, but also largely entails the active involvement of already existing social services in the homelessness strategy. Often, homelessness prevention services are part of the social protection system against poverty or domestic violence. This is particularly important to prevent exclusion of homeless people from available social services. For example, the main function of the Child Welfare Agency in Germany is to provide for proper physical, social and emotional development of the adolescent and to provide the necessary family space. In the event when the family itself is unable to provide proper environment for adolescent development due to lack of financial resources, the Agency will step in to provide appropriate financial aid to the family, to promote stable employment of the family member and to prevent potential juvenile homelessness (Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick 2007).

Best practices for homelessness prevention include four types of interventions: primary intervention, early intervention, crisis intervention and long-term support systems to prevent recurrent homelessness (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007; Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick 2007; Busch-Geertsema et al. 2010). Experts also identify three tiers of prevention: primary, secondary and post-crisis (tertiary) (Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick 2007; Culhane, Metraux, & Byrne, 2011)

Primary prevention – it includes primary intervention measures and policies aimed at reducing the general risk of homelessness in the population. At this level, the main goal is insurance against life risks, including labour market regulation, development of effective welfare systems, housing policy planning and more. Successful primary prevention implies existence of a broad welfare system that effectively protects citizens from unforeseen life events. Such welfare system ensures that the beneficiary›s social and living conditions are maintained for the period necessary to stabilize the economic or health situation.

Secondary prevention includes early intervention measures specifically targeting the ones at high risk of homelessness, such as low-income workers, people leaving institutions, or being in a crisis situation (potential eviction, divorce, loss of employment) that may lead to their homelessness in the future. Targeted prevention services are mostly used at this stage and are provided to the relevant target groups;

Tertiary/post-crisis prevention includes crisis intervention and long-term support measures for people left homeless. In this sense, it may be regarded as being more reactive rather than preventive. In some countries, such as Germany and England, such measures are referred to as "accommodation". At this stage, prevention is aimed at ending homelessness and

preventing its recurrence. Just as with the secondary prevention, targeted homelessness services may be applied at this level as well to address recurrent homelessness risk.

In addition to developing people's capacity to live independently, to take care of home and themselves, homelessness prevention services include appropriate social and economic support systems to protect people from homelessness caused by the inability to meet material or mental needs. Targeted preventive services also include addressing the needs of groups that will be soon leaving various institutions (psychiatric institutions, prisons, youth social systems) (Pleace & Knutagård, 2016). At the example of Finland, Britain and Germany, the following are the most common homelessness prevention services (Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick, 2008; Pleace & Knutagård, 2016; Pleace, 2017):

Intensive housing counselling – it implies selection of an appropriate service (including housing service) out of existing ones by the municipal employee - housing adviser and offering it to the person facing the need; it also embraces all types of consultations to ensure that the lessee has full information about his/her rights and responsibilities and knows which agency to apply to for assistance in case of danger to lose the housing;

Rent payment schemes – the service is aimed at increasing access to private housing, developing a flexible schedule and structure of rent payment between the homeowner and tenant with the involvement of a municipal representative; in case of failure on the part of the tenant and the homeowner to reach an agreement, assisting with collection of funds required for renting the apartment, or providing such funds from the municipal budget.

Family dispute mediation - these programs are designed to prevent juvenile homelessness by regulating parent-child relations. The program aims to prevent eviction of young people from their homes and to enhance youth access to family resources. Such services are run by the appropriate social agency. In the event of tension between family members, the agency designates a qualified social worker for mediation, whose function is to properly discuss disputable issues with the involvement of all family members and to make the right decision in the best interests for all. The mediation seeks to ensure that an underage or juvenile family member, who cannot afford to live on his/her own yet, does not lose access to home. Meanwhile, the agency controls proper access to material and housing resources and maintenance of a safe living environment for junior members;

Family dispute mediation – assistance to victims of domestic violence - covers a wide range of interventions. For the most part, these are security measures that allow the victim to stay in the current living place as a result of restraining the abusive partner. In cases where this cannot be done, the victim of domestic violence may request temporary housing from the local authority until the situation rectifies. The given service also aims to support victims of domestic violence in finding long-term and new accommodation. The service is often administered within the framework of state programs for women's assistance, counselling and support;

Leasing support - means assisting a vulnerable tenant to maintain the current lease relationship. The measures covered by this service vary by extent of the beneficiary's needs and may include informing citizens about the way to apply for financial assistance and social services to ensure proper implementation of bureaucratic procedures; analyzing revenues, expenses and expected social aid to maintain citizens stable financial position; if necessary, arranging a living place with furniture, rendering healthcare and other services. The services are run by the relevant local authority and specifically assigned officer [10].

Other special measures against homelessness - targeted individual interventions in the form of health care, vocational training programs and social activities for integration. While the above-listed services are administered by local municipalities, in many cases they enjoy financial support of the central government. (Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick 2007, Pleace & Knutagård, 2016; Pleace, 2017).

All of the above-listed services are mostly provided at the secondary prevention level and are aimed at avoiding homelessness. However, intensive housing counselling, rent deposit payment, leasehold support or other special measures are also actively used to prevent recurrent homelessness for the groups that have already experienced such problem.

Primary prevention services are no less crucial to preventing homelessness. The existence of a social welfare-oriented social security system, regulation of the labour market in a way allowing employed citizens to lead a decent life and increased access to housing are critical measures to effective prevention of homelessness and eradication of poverty in general. (Stephens & Fitzpatrick, 2007).

3. HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SERVICES

Modern strategies and services for responding to homelessness are based on recognition of citizen's right to adequate housing and the concept of guaranteeing stable housing. In addition, response services should be implemented through the assistance systems that ensure stable accommodation (FEANTSA, 2010a, 2019).

Provision of a shelter to beneficiaries is the most common type of homelessness response services. Shelter is the earliest service to combat homelessness (Anderson, 1923) [11]. However, modern systems do not regard it as an effective tool for addressing the problem given the high risk of institutionalization it involves (Sahlin, 2005). Big shelters and temporary collective housing facilities trigger particular criticism, though the need for such shelters used to be explained by having large numbers of people deprived of the roof over their heads (FEANTSA, 2007). By the modern approach to housing policy, shelters should be replaced by small-size temporary housing facilities and comfortable, isolated private living spaces (Busch-Geertsema & Sahlin, 2017). Nevertheless, temporary housing facilities, shelters and similar response services are still available in most developed countries. Along with the transition to the 'Housing First' approach, modern strategies are aimed at accommodating homeless people in temporary shelters for minimum length of time and replacing temporary accommodation with regular residential housing (Edgar, 2009).

The following are the most common response services (Edgar, 2009):

Emergency facilities - shelters specifically designed to meet urgent needs of a person deprived of a dwelling place. Such shelters may also offer outpatient services. The shelters may be run by local authorities or other organizations hired by the latter;

Temporary housing - temporary hostels, transitional housing - before providing regular housing. The given facility may accommodate homeless victims of domestic violence, provide first aid services before moving to a regular dwelling place;

Non-residential services for homeless or for people with prior experience of homelessness - includes day centres where homeless people or people with similar experiences can access information and food. They are often run and funded by religious and charitable institutions.

Social housing - a long-term housing with the rent payment being below the market prices. It is often administered by the relevant local government council;

Housing vouchers - low income families/people can receive and use the voucher to pay for their rent. It is up to the family to search for an appropriate house. The service is run by the Municipal Public Housing Agency (Housing.gov; Benefits Vouchers Program).

Regular housing – providing a homeless person or family with regular, isolated housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY PLANNING

To ensure effective planning and implementation of appropriate homelessness services:

- It is necessary to develop a state vision - strategy and action plan to combat homelessness;

- The strategy and action plan should be built upon a clear definition of homelessness, in compliance with the international standards, and an in-depth study and analysis of its driving causes. The definition should embrace all possible forms of homelessness.

- In-depth research and analysis of the homelessness causes should be conducted on a regular basis.

- Both central and local authorities should be involved in the process of planning and implementing the homelessness strategy and related services; The homelessness strategy should incorporate homelessness prevention measures;

- The homelessness prevention services should be planned in light of existing international practices and systems of homelessness prevention, tailored to specific needs of homeless people;

- The homelessness strategy should incorporate homelessness response services. Response services should be based on the right to adequate housing and should comply with the 'Housing First' approach;

- Homeless support services should continue until their full reintegration.

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1. The opinion of an influential welfare researcher Esping-Andersen (1990,2007); The existing typology, of course does not exclude the existence of distinctive systems beyond the European counties. Especially, considering that the majority of countries exercise mixed social security systems. Despite this, while discussing the social security system at the level of principles, considering such typology allows a better analysis.

2. For example, according to the World Bank data, the classic representative of this system, the United States has the highest inequality rate compared with the North American and European developed countries (Gini-41.5, 2016). Similarly, according to the recent OECD data, the highest rate of poverty is registered in two main representatives of liberal systems among the developed countries of Western Europe and America – USA and UK.

3. In this system different job (profession) insurance funds operate, where the employer and the employee both contribute. The payment for the employee is done by the state.

4. As historically before the second half of the 20th century female employment was minimal, such services were available for women only in case they had a spouse. Accordingly, such systems are based on the logic of a male-maintainer, when the family welfare and the availability of services for other members were provided by an employed male.

5. Single mothers are particularly vulnerable in such systems, as the services ensuring additional employment are not sufficiently developed (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 2002, Esping-Adnersen, & Myles, 2007).

6. For instance, in Germany, which is the classic representative of this system, conventionally, public servants have especially high social benefits – the state has historically been generous towards them (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

7. Defamiliarization policy – the state to share the responsibilities for the welfare of the family member.

8. FEANTSA explains the purposefulness of data collection in the following manner:

a) determine the number of homeless – the purpose is to identify the scale of urgent needs;

b) create the demographic profile for the homeless – in order to plan the relevant services, since the needs of different groups are not similar;

c) estimate annual number of expected homelessness – in order to estimate the number of the beneficiaries of transitional and supportive services, in advance;

d) produce complex information database for homelessness prevention – in order to prevent homelessness by identifying the risk-groups and evaluating the information about them.

9. Finland started collecting and analyzing the data since 1987 and the strategy initiated in 2008 was based on this information.

10. In UK the specially designated staff is working on these issues – Tenancy Sustainment Officers

11. The asylum has been in existence since the 19th century.

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