

Summer Newsletter – June 2019

A Reflection

My Dear Friends,

I am taking this opportunity when life is a little quieter in the office—if only for ten minutes—to sit down and write to all of you in our UNANIMA International Family. I am writing at a time when there are so many challenges in our world too numerous to mention, but most especially I want to highlight the plight of our homeless women and children and all those displaced.

In *Almost Everything*, Anne Lamott writes: “love has bridged the high-rises of despair we were about to fall between. Love has been a penlight in the blackest, bleakest nights. Love has been a wild animal, a poultice, a dinghy, a coat, Love is why we have HOPE’God is Love’ we Christians like to remind ourselves, and every act of love highlights God in our world, because love is not just another idea. Love is something alive, living, personal and true, the creating and nourishing power within life. (pp2, 154)

This love, I believe, is the gift that UNANIMA International can offer our world at the moment, especially to members of our global family who find themselves homeless or displaced.

News from the Office

Homelessness and Displacement

As you already know Homelessness is coming to the forefront of the United Nations, thanks in part to the contribution of UNANIMA International who have been advocating for this issue to be addressed significantly at the United Nations. On February 22nd, UNANIMA International and our partners achieved a great victory when the United Nations Commission for Social Development announced that “Affordable Housing and Social Protection for all to Address Homelessness” will be the priority theme at its meeting in 2020. UNANIMA International will be playing a unique role with our data and research project. A large part of our advocacy work with the United Nations moving forward will be building political will to address family homeless with Adequate Housing and Support for our most vulnerable families.

I recently had the privilege of moderating an open Dialogue Session on behalf of the NGO Working Group to end Homelessness. Among the participants, were NGOs, Member States, and Daniela Bas, director of Inclusive Social Development at the United Nations. She said homelessness is a complex phenomenon and addressing it is about ensuring the dignity and

wellness of all so that their rights are protected. She pointed out that homelessness affects many groups, such as elderly persons, youth, indigenous populations, women and families. She asserted that homelessness requires inclusiveness, social protection, peace, security and policies that ensure that the human right to Adequate Housing is protected.

According to Craig Mokhiber from the New York office of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, “Homelessness is not mere misfortune but a violation of human rights” He went on to point out various international legal obligations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which supports the Right to Adequate Housing. According to Mohkiber, a decision must be made as to whether we accept a vision of housing for the 100 million who are without it, and the 1.6 billion with inadequate shelter, or whether we view housing as a commodity. As trillions of dollars are spent on real estate, the commodification of housing must be addressed if homelessness is to be resolved. Another significant speaker at this session was Iris Bailey, who spoke eloquently and with wisdom on her experience of homelessness. She reminded all of us “don’t talk about us without us”.

Homelessness has never appeared in any United Nations’ document in its almost 75 years of history.. It is the hope of UNANIMA International that the UN adopts a definition of homelessness that includes Adequate Housing with support. In the long term, the objective is to include homelessness in the new UN Agenda, expected to be agreed to by 2028.

Nairobi May 2019

I was invited by the United Nations to be part of the Expert Group Meeting on Adequate Housing and Social Protection to Address Homelessness as part of the preparation for next year’s 58th session of the UN Commission for Social Development. The meeting took place at the UN in Nairobi, Kenya. The objective of the meeting was to review the major drivers of homelessness, identify existing gaps and priority areas for interventions, and make specific policy recommendations on effective housing and social protection policies to address homelessness in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The meeting will produce a document for the Secretary General, Antonio Gutteres, which will be used at the Commission Next Year.

Presentations made at the Expert Group Meeting on Homelessness in Nairobi included:

- *Leaving no one behind: Addressing homelessness in the context of the 2030 Agenda* (Mr. Jesus Salcedo, UN-Habitat)
- *State of Homelessness in developed countries* (Ms Dame Louise Casey, Institute of Global Homelessness, UK)
- *State of homelessness in developing countries* (Suzanne Speak, Newcastle University, UK)
- *How the human rights legal framework can help counter drivers of homelessness* (Ms. Marcella Favretto, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kenya)
- *The impacts of structural changes, un- and under-employment, stagnant or falling wages, and less secure jobs on homelessness* (Mr. Ken Chamuva Shawa, ILO Regional Office for Africa)

- *The impacts of rapid urbanization and rural to urban migration on affordable housing and homelessness: Drawing lessons from Ethiopia's experience* (Mr. Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia)
- *Eviction: Intersection of poverty, inequality and housing* (Ms. Ashley Gromis, Eviction Lab, Princeton University, USA)
- *The impact of personal and family circumstances on homelessness* (Sr. Jean Quinn, UNANIMA International, USA)
- *Socio-economic factors related to homelessness in Brazil* (Ms. Roberta Pelella Melega Cortizo)
- *The impacts of the financialisation of housing on affordable housing and homelessness* (Ms Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Canada)
- *Challenges faced by the public sector: the control of public spaces and homelessness* (Ms Cecilia Andersson, UN-Habitat, Kenya)
- *How the private sector can help governments meet the critical need for affordable housing in Africa* (Mr. Thierno Habib Hann, International Finance Corporation, Eastern Africa Regional Office, Kenya)
- *Building an effective housing ecosystem to increase affordable low-income housing: challenges and gaps* (Ms. Debra Erb)
- *Inclusive urban development policies, including slum upgrading* (Ms. Kerstin Sommer, UN-Habitat, Kenya)
- *Policies to promote affordable housing policies in OECD countries: gaps, challenges and lessons learned* (Ms. Marissa Plouin)
- *Policies to promote affordable housing policies in Pakistan: challenges and lessons learned* (Ms. Fariha Tariq)
- *Social protection systems for all to prevent homelessness* (Ms. Valerie Schmitt and Ms. Christina Behrendt, Social Protection Department, ILO)
- *"Housing First" policy: drafting and implementation with homeless people* (Ms. Taina Meriluoto, Tampere University, Finland)
- *Addressing homelessness through public works programmes in South Africa* (Mr Emeka E. Obioha, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa)
- *Policies to assist homeless, orphaned and other vulnerable children and youth* (Mr. David Ayuku, Moi University, Kenya)
- *Policies to reduce homelessness among older persons and persons with disabilities* (Ms. Roseline Kihumba, HelpAge International, Africa Regional Office, Kenya)
- *Human Mobility in the context of climate change, natural disasters and conflict* (Mr. Saidou Hamani, United Nations Environment, Kenya)
- *Policies to reduce homelessness among women and female-headed households* (Ms. Ifeyinwa Ofong, Women in Development and Environment; Habitat International Coalition, Nigeria)

Grass –Roots Survey

UNANIMA International at the United Nations, as part of the Grass-Roots Committee, in collaboration with various NGOs, is currently assessing how grassroots people view inequalities in their particular country or area. This assessment is being undertaken to help determine how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations at the 2015 General Assembly, with the target that they be achieved by the year 2030. This committee is in



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the process of conducting a world-wide survey of Grass-Roots people or individuals working directly with Grass-Roots populations to determine progress (or lack thereof) towards the inequalities that were identified 2015. We distributed the survey in six languages in order to provide more comprehensive results. We are currently analysing the responses and I will send the results to our members at a later date. I want to thank the members who filled in the survey as it does support our advocacy work at the UN.

The High Level Political Forum at the UN

UNANIMA International will be participating at this Forum from the 9-16th July, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We have co-sponsored many events including the Grass-Roots Committee Side Event on the above survey. A report on the results of the World-Wide Survey will be discussed and reviewed.

We will also focus on Family Homelessness at this event. It is our intention to hand out our Research Document to all the Member States so that they take up the issue of family homelessness in the next few months.

A BIG call out for our members to support our Project on Family Homelessness!

What can you do?

We are looking for the voices of women and children who will tell their stories on their experience of homelessness on video, so that we can have their voices heard at the UN

We would like University Students, Schools, Teachers, Families, Singers, Dancers, Musicians, Politicians, Royalty, Churches, Religious, the list is endless, to send us a clip on what Homelessness means to them. What if UNANIMA International were to raise a Million Voices next year during the Commission on Social Development? Please, we need your help and support in this significant project

And let me leave you with a word of Hope for our world right now.



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Celebrating Global Wisdom

To have hope

Is to believe that history

Continues open

To the dream of Wisdom and

To human creativity.

To have hope

Is to continue affirming

That it is possible to dream a different world,

Without hunger, without injustice,

Without discrimination.

To have hope,

Is to be a courier of Wisdom and,

A courier of people of good will,

Tearing down walls,

Destroying borders,

Building bridges.

To have hope,

Is to believe in the

Revolutionary potential of faith,

To leave the door open so that

The spirit can enter and make all things anew.

To have hope

Is to believe that life wins over death.

To have hope

Is to believe that hope is not

The last thing that dies.

To have hope

Is to believe that hope cannot die,

That hope no longer dies.

To have hope is to live.

- Honduras

On behalf of Molly and myself, I want to thank you for your continued support and prayers as we continue to work on your behalf with the United Nations.

Jean Quinn, DW

Executive Director

UNANIMA International

New York