

Forward to **The Hidden Faces of Homelessness**,
Jean Quinn, Co-founder, Working Group to End Homelessness.
UNANIMA International, February 2025



UNANIMA International is a coalition of 25 communities of Women Religious and friends who advocate on behalf of women and girls at the

United Nations. A vital part of our mission is to ensure that the voices and the journeys of those who have experienced homelessness are heard, valued, and better understood. To date, our research on homelessness, displacement, and trauma has enabled us to present the lived experiences of people—especially women, children, and girls—directly to decision-makers, and to give them a place at the table.

Housing insecurity continues to be a global concern, with estimates that 150 million people worldwide are experiencing homelessness. The United Nations has documented around 1.6 billion people living in poor housing worldwide, with about 15 million being forcibly evicted each year. These statistics continue to be a grave concern for us that cannot be overlooked. The numbers are stark and continue to rise, painting a picture that demands not just our attention, but our action.

UNANIMA International's grassroots members have seen firsthand the faces behind the statistics, each one with their own unique stories, experiences of trauma, hopes, and dreams. Let us remember that behind every statistic is a face, a name. They are women, children, and girls with stories

that matter. Having accompanied families experiencing homelessness on their journeys for many years, I know personally how extraordinary those stories are.

Women, children, and girls constitute society's most disadvantaged and at-risk populations around the world, and are therefore disproportionately vulnerable to the growing problem of homelessness globally. Homelessness, once viewed as episodic and situational, has become chronic and cyclical.

While adequate housing is essential to ending homelessness, it is not enough on its own. Homelessness is a social issue, and families need more than decent housing to thrive and end the cycle of extreme poverty. They need social protection "floors" and access to food, education, healthcare, trauma-informed support, and childcare to successfully transition out of homelessness for the long term.

It has now been four years since UNANIMA International's publications on family homelessness were published. Since then, we have seen great success in our mission to advance the issue of homelessness as an agenda item at the UN. For the first time in the history of the UN, homelessness was discussed as part of the 58th Commission for Social Development priority theme "Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for all to Address Homelessness." This led to the historic passing of the first ECOSOC resolution on homelessness in February 2020. In 2021, we at UNANIMA International collaborated again with Member States on a second resolution on

homelessness, titled “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness, including in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).” This was passed by the Third Committee in November and was approved by the General Assembly in December 2021. The resolution urged member states to eliminate all forms of discrimination against those experiencing homelessness, and recognized the growing issue of homelessness during the global pandemic.

Despite the progress that has been made in recent years, there is still a long road ahead in the pursuit of a world where all people can realize their full human rights and potential. Article 25 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights states that housing is a human right, but this is a right that continues to be widely violated and misunderstood. We believe in viewing and treating homelessness as what it is: a human rights violation. We continue to call for a paradigm shift around homelessness. We continue to believe that it is time to give voice to those who are the furthest left behind.

We at UNANIMA International revisited our publications on family homelessness from 2020 and sought to update them to reflect the realities of today, leading to the creation of our third publication on “The Hidden Faces of Homelessness.” This newest publication has a broadened scope to explore how homelessness is experienced by a range of marginalized groups, to highlight how homelessness intersects with other global issues like climate change, and to showcase solutions and best practices our partners are implementing at every level. We feel this information can help policymakers and other stakeholders develop pathways forward and set better standards for people experiencing homelessness. It can also

provide the resources for creating trauma-informed models of support and effective services for those experiencing homelessness around the world.

We hope that this updated research will continue to contribute to a necessary paradigm shift in how we perceive the issue of homelessness and poverty, and promote a dialogue where homelessness is viewed as a human rights issue and structural failure.

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