

Submission on Guidelines for the implementation of the right to adequate housing

18th November 2019

Introduction

The Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH) is a joint initiative of DePaul University and Depaul International, and is the first organization to focus on homelessness as a global phenomenon, with an emphasis on those who are living on the street or in emergency shelter. DePaul University holds ECOSOC special consultative status. IGH envisions a world in which everyone has a place to call home that offers security, safety, autonomy, and opportunity. IGH works towards this vision by building sector leadership and knowledge, and bridging research to practice. IGH exists to draw connections between global efforts to end homelessness, scale proven practices among practitioners, and accelerate progress in reducing and ending homelessness around the world. IGH welcomes the call for comments on the Draft Guidelines for the implementation of the right to adequate housing. The comments below focus on strengthening specific provisions in relation to defining and measuring the scope of homelessness globally. It should not be viewed as an exhaustive list of concerns or suggestions.

Eliminate homelessness in the shortest possible time

IGH welcomes the Special Rapporteur's comment in Paragraph 31 that "states should recognize the diverse experiences of homelessness among different groups." It is essential that in order to recognize this diversity of experience, an inclusive definition of homelessness be adopted. IGH recommends that the text of implementation measure (b) be expanded to include three major categories of homelessness and further subcategories as delineated in the table below¹.

People without accommodation	People living in temporary or crisis accommodation	People living in severely inadequate and insecure accommodation
<p>1A People sleeping in the streets or in other open spaces (such as parks, railway embankments, under bridges, on pavement, on river banks, in forests, etc.)</p> <p>1B People sleeping in public roofed spaces or buildings not intended for human habitation (such as bus and railway stations, taxi ranks, derelict buildings, public buildings, etc.)</p> <p>1C People sleeping in their cars, rickshaws, open fishing boats and other forms of transport</p> <p>1D 'Pavement dwellers' - individuals or households who live on the street in a regular spot, usually with some form of makeshift cover</p>	<p>2A People staying in night shelters (where occupants have to renegotiate their accommodation nightly)</p> <p>2B People living in homeless hostels and other types of temporary accommodation for homeless people (where occupants have a designated bed or room)</p> <p>2C Women and children living in refuges for those fleeing domestic violence</p> <p>2D People living in camps provided for 'internally displaced people' i.e. those who have fled their homes as a result of armed conflict, natural or human-made disasters, human rights violations, development projects, etc. but have not crossed international borders</p> <p>2E People living in camps or reception centres/temporary accommodation for asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants</p>	<p>3A People sharing with friends and relatives on a temporary basis</p> <p>3B People living under threat of violence</p> <p>3C People living in cheap hotels, bed and breakfasts and similar</p> <p>3D People squatting in conventional housing</p> <p>3E People living in conventional housing that is unfit for human habitation</p> <p>3F People living in trailers, caravans and tents</p> <p>3G People living in extremely overcrowded conditions</p> <p>3H People living in non-conventional buildings and temporary structures, including those living in slums/informal settlements</p>

¹ Busch-Geertsema, Volker; Culhane, Dennis; and Fitzpatrick, Suzanne; (July 2016). Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness *Habitat International*, Volume 55, pp. Pages 124-132. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0197397515300023>.

IGH appreciates the Rapporteur's acknowledgement in Paragraph 31(h) that States should regularly collect and publish data on the number of persons living in different situations of homelessness. IGH further recommends that data collection be aligned to the categories listed in the table above.

Ensure effective monitoring and accountability measures

IGH appreciates the Rapporteur's acknowledgement in Paragraph 65 that "effective monitoring should assess progress in relation to capacity and available resources; consider whether the needs and circumstances of those most in need have been met..." IGH again recommends strengthening the text of implementation measure 65(b) by reiterating the categories and subcategories of homelessness outlined in the table above, and aligning measurement and monitoring to those categories.

Undertake international cooperation to ensure the realization of the right to adequate housing

IGH welcomes the Rapporteur's comments in Paragraph 68 that "the...crisis in housing is of a global scale" and that "the global nature...requires urgent international action, through international cooperation and States' membership in international organizations." IGH emphasizes the importance of a globally inclusive definition of homelessness and aligned measurement according to those categories as a key point of coherence in international policy. IGH again recommends that implementation measure 69(b) make mention of this importance and endorse the framework outlined in the table above.