



## **Input for Just Transition report by Prof. Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur for Extreme Poverty**

Many Human Rights are interconnected, and violations to one would jeopardize or hinder achievement of others. We see this particularly with the Human Right to adequate housing, which when denied, leads to health risks, difficulty or danger in accessing water and sanitation, personal and communal security risks, de-emphasis of education and fulfilling activities that can contribute to livelihood, and more. If we believe that human rights can't be isolated, then looking at the desired "greener" path to the economy becomes more manageable within UNANIMA International's focus on homelessness and housing insecurity. This is because long-term projected, and holistic effects of our current economic system can't be ignored situationally; this logic contributes to the necessary paradigm shift of viewing homelessness as a personal fault, to understanding it as a human rights and civil rights violation.

As we know that poverty is a huge driver of homelessness (both visible and invisible), displacement, forced migration, as well as other factors which may lead to these, such as family breakdown, under or unemployment, mental or physical health issues and others detailed within Jean Quinn, DW's paper [\*The Impact of Personal and Family Circumstances on Homelessness\*](#), we propose permanent, supported housing as the most immediate, economical, and even "green" way to reduce homelessness, while simultaneously addressing many of the detriments caused by poverty - including not being able to meet human rights of water and sanitation, health and wellbeing, protection for mothers and children. We point towards the [\*Sophia Housing Ireland\*](#) model, which has worked successfully in combating the risks of poverty to their residents' wellbeing and security of tenure. This solution can be green because it allows residents the tenure necessary to begin gardens, for example, and settle in their communities in order to move away from unsustainable personal practices.

Much fault has been attributed to people experiencing poverty and homelessness for causing pollution within communities; they have in certain circumstances become scapegoats. The reality is that when one's human right to housing is met, waste management becomes much more possible. Experiences of trauma and holistic wellbeing are relevant here, because as these groups struggle to meet basic needs and for their own and their families' survival, consideration of the natural environment through one's actions or lifestyle can consequently be de-emphasized. We must look at this, then, as a result of systemic failures that create poverty and conditions of inadequate housing, rather than the fault of the individuals.

In UNANIMA International's analysis of Family Homelessness and SDG 13: Climate Action, published in February of 2020 as part of a longer publication [\*Family Homelessness\*](#)



[\*Through the Lens of the 2030 Agenda \(Volume One\)\*](#), several of our included recommendations address Family Homelessness at its intersection with poverty, and promote economically viable “green” Human Rights-based solutions. For example, we recommend:

- “Support for climate-smart agriculture, particularly in rural areas to reduce rural-urban migration and increase the sustainability of practices;”
- “National transitions to sustainable energy sources; more widespread communal usages of innovative low-cost and sustainable practices, such as the toilet pictured below that uses compost instead of plumbing;”
- “Implementation of reforestation and forest maintenance to reduce CO2 emissions;”
- “The creation of special committees for environmental sustainability and ecological wellness at all governmental levels,” with “The inclusion of vulnerable and affected populations in the policy and planning surrounding disaster management, mitigation, adaption and impact reduction.”

The point on reforestation is worth reiterating in its relation to addressing poverty, particularly in the long-term, as many people rely on forests for their income and livelihoods - and with the Human Rights lens, their proven positive effects on preserving biodiversity and improving mental health through access to nature and local sustainable resources, cannot be ignored. Overuse and misuse of forest resources creates poverty and homelessness directly and indirectly.

Also highlighted within our SDG 13 analysis was a relatively easy, yet sustainable solution related to the Human Right to sanitation, and specifically the need for access to toilets (a need prevalent in many impoverished contexts including slums and informal settlements): creating toilets which use compost rather than plumbing. These can be effective in temporary situations, such as refugee camps - but also are something more societies could move towards using.

In the context of COVID-19, we see some essential responses to the effect on Family Homelessness that intersect with prospects for a greener economy. We highlight, from UNANIMA International’s [official statement on COVID-19 and Family Homelessness](#):

- “We recommend immediate government-initiated increases in opportunities to further women’s education that fit employment needs and demands.”
- “We reiterate the suggestions of Indigenous activists for halting development projects on and near Indigenous land to reduce the risk of the virus’ spread in their communities, and for continued cross-sectoral efforts to combat climate change.”



Women are underemployed in the renewable energies sector, and creating more jobs there can promote a greener economy, reduce poverty, and address gender inequality simultaneously (also necessary to act upon because of the proven gendered effects of climate change). In regard to Indigenous communities, at risk of displacement and poverty, already overrepresented especially in urban poverty and homelessness statistics often, the halting of non-community led development projects on their territory is necessary in the COVID-19 context immediately, yet also beyond. Preserving the biodiversity lands that they manage will necessitate economic planning that will deter extractivism and invasion of lands and resources not owned by national actors. Most relevantly, this meets Human Rights specified specifically to Indigenous Peoples in UNDRIP, yet general ones from UDHR and gendered ones from CEDAW.

Poverty is manifested through homelessness and housing insecurity, which creates and contributes to many other challenges to human rights that are context specific. However, globally UNANIMA International identifies the need for Human Rights-based solutions to Family Homelessness, displacement and trauma. In our future research we will be analysing Family Homelessness and SDG 14: Life Below Water, Family Homelessness and SDG 15: Life on Land, and community gardens as a tool for trauma reduction, among other topics. We encourage your continued following of UNANIMA International's research and advocacy, for further insight into how addressing homelessness and housing insecurity intersects with global efforts to move towards a greener economy.