

The Conditions of Homeless Incapable Individuals in Iran

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About Institute

1. The Charitable Institute for Social Victims is an independent, non-political, nongovernmental and non-profit organization with the registration number 10947, and has been active since 1998. The Institute is in special consultative status to ECOSOC and has also received the SGS standard.

2. The objective of the Institute is to tend to the problems of the deprived, eradication of poverty and provision of social justice for victims, groups that receive services from this Institute are: homeless men and women that are incapable and live in cardboard boxes, chronic mental patients, addicts and those with infectious diseases. This Institute is a professional care centre (services include: psychology, treatment, social services, psychiatry, and counselling and drugs rehab), which has developed on society's needs basis. We always have faith in God, respect human dignity, quality of services, honesty, answerable and attract people participation.

3. All the Institute's services to those that need them are free of charge. Several social projects have been conducted to-date which include: Ehsan Home (shelter for the homeless, chronic mental patients, and those that live in cardboard boxes), Hotel Arin (support centre for women in need), Reyhaneh House (runaway girls), Healthy Family Project (low literate women's family law and planning education project). The Institute also conducted a research in 2005 on the economic and social conditions of homeless men and women and those that sleep in cardboard boxes in Ehsan Home in Tehran. The Institute takes pride in claiming to have found shelter for 14,000 needy people.

4. The Institute publishes report of its activities quarterly. The Ranj Journal publication also includes useful social, educational materials and up-to-date news regarding social pathology. The Institute also has information brochures and a website for the general public, so that people can express their opinions about the Institute and for the Institute to benefit people's recommendations and suggestions.

The Institute's motto is a verse from the famous Iranian poet, Saadi that says:

The sons of Adam are limbs of each other
Having been created of one essence.
When the calamity of time afflicts one limb
The other limbs cannot remain at rest.

Abstract

5. "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person". (Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948).

6. The term homeless is given to someone that does not have a suitable and permanent place to spend the night in. This phenomenon is visible in the form of vagrancy, sleeping on the streets, or marginalization. Homelessness occurs as a result of mental-personality disorders, poverty, addiction, meaningless jobs, corruption and prostitution, contractual diseases, migration, natural disasters, political, social upheavals, war, old age and inflation. To investigate the conditions of the homeless, following their initial recognition and needs, a plan and strategy can be adopted for them to help their predicament.

7. Ehsan Home is one of the sub-divisions of the Institute. This centre is responsible for collecting, sheltering, providing individual's basic hygiene, treatment of physical

and mental illnesses in a friendly and amicable environment. A number of those that seek help go back to normal lives following receiving the aforementioned services, forming families, and start work in society. These examples give us hope and encouragement to continue our work. Since its founding, the Institute has spent 70 billion rials (\$7,049,340 US approx.) to this aim.

8. In the winter of 2005, the Institute conducted a study on 400 cardboard box homeless men and women residents of the assistance centre for the homeless (Ehsan Home) in Tehran. The aim of this study was to review the socio-economic conditions of the group under study. The spread of the homelessness phenomenon is evident in the 31 to 40 age group. In Iran, Tehran in particular, individuals that are more susceptible to homelessness include, men, single individuals, poorly educated, migrants, the poor/beggars, low income individuals or temporary work, disabled, mental and emotional disorders and addicts.

9. The government has implemented several projects for the welfare, social and family support conditions. Some of these measures include, national insurance, Mehr Housing Project, Mehr Support Fund, marriage loans, municipal welfare projects, family general practitioner (MD) etc. We hope that in the long run the implementation of these projects will help improve the homelessness conditions and reduce the numbers.

Terminologies

10. Homelessness: individuals who do not have proper and permanent places of residence. Homelessness in this study means individuals that are kept in Ehsan Home. Economic conditions: in this study economic conditions means the employment of the individual before and after being homeless and his/her income or wages levels.

11. Social conditions: in this study social conditions means interaction methods, individuals' dependency and communication with other individuals of society.

12. Shelter: is a place that permanently or temporarily (mostly to spend the night) provides shelter for the homeless, which has been set up by the government or NGOs. In this study the shelter is Ehsan Home.

The issue

13. According to the UN, individuals on the streets, public places or anywhere else which are not defined as the residence of humanity or centres that welfare and support organizations have considered, are homeless or cardboard box sleepers. This phenomenon is evident in the form of vagrancy on the sidewalks, sleeping on sidewalks, parks, under bridges, derelict buildings and or marginalisation.

14. 1 – Homelessness is one of the main problems of mankind across the world (including poor, developing and developed countries) and this phenomenon may bring about other problems such as corruption, prostitution, trafficking, beggary, transmission of diseases (HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis...)

15. 2 – A homeless person is a person that does not have a proper, permanent and regular place to spend the night in. Problems while seeking work, low income, lack of job security, lack homes with suitable rents, lack of assistance, non-existence of free health services, chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis..., mental emotional disorders, and migration are all causes that bring about homelessness.

16. 3 – Unfortunately, individuals with mental disorders, experience homelessness more, and are further deprived, have limited access to education or training, lesser public health and medical care. They do not have access to the situations that other

citizens benefit from. A homeless individual is a potential for the spread of diseases which occurs due to way of life.

17. 4 – Since the Iranian laws deem vagrancy and beggary as criminal offences, the investigation jurisdiction is that of the Judiciary, and it deals with the offenders in accordance with Iranian laws. A group is situated here which is not an offender and has become homeless due to socio-economic problems. The study and sheltering of these individuals requires temporary shelters and legal guardianship. In 1995 Iran faced with the spread of homelessness and the failure of legal protection for these individuals. For this reason through 2 meetings (one in 1995 and one in 1999) of the Administrative Supreme Council, the government at the time obliged all relevant public and government system to coordinate with each other regarding organization. As a result the first centre for the homeless called Kahrizak Camp was set up. As part of the privatisation process and the empowerment of NGOs in 1999 through an agreement with Tehran Province Governorship this Institute was given the task of running the centre and its name changed to Ehsan House.

18. 5 – Over the last few years, a budget has been allocated to the Interior Ministry and provincial governments to shelter the homeless and beggars. With the cooperation of nongovernmental organizations (such as our Institute), a number of governmental support organizations, provide basic services and housing for the aforementioned groups. And of course we have a long way to go to reach these goals. Presently the Welfare Organization is legally responsible for sheltering these individuals, and Tehran Municipality has also started working in this regard.

19. 6 – With regards to homelessness, in 2005 the Institute conducted a study. The outcome of the study showed that the homelessness occurs among the 31 to 40 age groups and they are mostly made up of men, single people, poorly educated, migrants and people with low incomes or temporary work, poor people, specific sicknesses, broken families, people with mental and personality disorders, and addicts.

Methodology

20. Study was conducted on 400 homeless men and women resident in Ehsan Home to review their social and economic conditions. The method of the study was measuring method by way of completed questionnaires and also sample taking. To further give credit to the contents, library, documents, descriptive, eyewitness, individual interview, comparison with studies in other countries, media archives, past Institute experiences, were all used. The age, education, addiction, length of homelessness variables were reviewed.

Study conclusions

21. Out of the 400 individuals that the study was conducted on: with 27.7%, the 31-40 age group made up the most percentage. 48.8% of the individuals were single which is approximately half the study population. Perhaps it can be said that marriage is one prevention factor from homelessness. 69.5% of the homeless individuals had below high school diploma education. It can perhaps be said that the literacy factor may increase people's awareness and in turn these people may face lesser social problems. And also with further education and literacy job opportunities appear and social and personal problems lessen. More than half of the respondents that are fathers were illiterate. The education levels of the mothers was also the same, with 59.6% of them being illiterate. The conclusion can be reached that the major parts of problems that come about for the individuals under study is due to poor literacy levels, and parents' awareness. The type of work the parents (of the homeless) puts them in lower social

and economic positions. As families the individuals under study had very low social and economic status, and due to lack of economic and moral support they were faced with various problems and criminal activities. Existing data shows that approximately half of the respondents did not have stable families. 46.4% of the individuals under study have grown up in single parent families (either the father or mother), and only 14.3% of them have both parents. In studying the type of work before and after they leave home shows that they have unsteady jobs and their incomes when leaving home (homelessness) is lower than the poverty line. 77.5% of the cases had mental illness. 42.3% of the youths aged between 11 and 20 smoked cigarettes. 31.7% of the cases were addicted to narcotics. Provision of shelter for the homeless is a very costly, time consuming and also reverse effect. In view of the findings of this study, being sensitive in the protection of the family, literacy education and training of skills and professions, unemployment, drugs addiction and physical and mental disorders prevention, will be very effective, we are worried that if attention is not paid to this phenomenon, we shall see a rise in the number of the homeless in society. We accept that the complete eradication of this phenomenon, be it in Iran or the world is an impossible task, and the government cannot be successful without the help of the people and international organizations. We try to find more effective solutions for the provision of shelter to the homeless.

Recommendations

22. 1 – Support for the family through home visits (mental and physical disorder patients, senior citizens and children), and follow up on their treatment by the Ministry of Health and other social institutions is recommended. The setting up of psychiatric clinics in various parts of the city with the backing of the private sector and charities is imperative. To this aim, this Institute has a number of suitable projects under the title of the sheltering of chronic mental patients and the disabled and senior citizens, for the implementation of which the government and international organizations' support and backing is required.

23. 2 – Establishment of centres by the private sector, charities and with the support of the government and various Tehran districts municipalities that have facilities (bathroom, toilet, temporary resting place, dining-room, prayer room, library, TV, etc.)

24. 3 – More efforts in fighting against drugs which requires national and international financial support, efforts for improving the conditions of migrants and refugees which is the duty of governments.

25. 4 – Payment of a pension to people over the age of 50 on a permanent basis for a hope to living (recommendation to the government).

Conclusion

26. One of the reasons in people falling into the homelessness trap is lack of awareness and wrong information about living methods, and lack of information about protection organizations and even their own rights. The drawing up of correct education programmes on mental health, addiction prevention, correct living methods education, correct interaction with others for the vulnerable sector of society in initial prevention, i.e. before the problem occurs can be effective.

27. With all the efforts that this Institute makes in finding suitable shelter for the homeless, we still see a few fall back into their previous homeless conditions. This means that the help to correct social problems must be continuous and with a national and international will and determination.

Sources

28. 1 – 2003 Human Development Report of the Ibn Sina Cultural Institute with the cooperation of the Social Affairs Department of the Management and Planning Organization and UNDP in 2003.

29. 2 – Tehran Municipality website.

30. 3 – 2004 economic report and the monitoring of the 5-year performance of the Third Development Programme.

31. 4 – Research – policy-setting bulletin/ No. 39, March 2004, Australian Urban Studies Institute (Ranj Periodical, No. 19, 2008) Homelessness Cycle.