

Committee: Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness

Student Officer: Zacharenia Kourkounaki

Position: Deputy President

INTRODUCTION

The issue of homelessness has been soaring for hundreds of years now. As the world undergoes major economic and social changes, so does the rate of homelessness, which has seen a dramatic increase over the past couple of years¹. With poverty, unemployment, hyperinflation, conflicts, and wars being some of its main causes, the phenomenon of homelessness afflicts both Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) and More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs), presenting itself as a major challenge for governments and individuals from all around the globe.

Amid the biggest challenges and conflicts the world has had to face, in an attempt to battle the issues of poverty, homelessness, and unaffordable housing, the role of social protection systems has remained indispensable. With the introduction of welfare schemes, benefits, social housing and more, support has been given to countries for them to be able to respond to the challenges of unaffordable housing. Still, to this day, social protection systems act as a Deus Ex Machina, in times of conflict, by providing humanitarian and financial aid to people in need.

This study guide will analyze the role of social protection systems in modern society and how they can be supported, in an attempt to battle homelessness, as well as covering the question of "How can we achieve affordable housing for all?".

¹ Admin. "Global Homelessness Statistics." *Homeless World Cup*, Homeless World Cup, 3 Nov. 2020, homelessworldcup.org/homelessness-statistics/.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Social protection system

“Social protection is defined as the set of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruptions/loss of income.”²

Homelessness

Homelessness is a term used to describe the state in which a person does not own a house. According to research conducted in 2019, 154 million people are homeless globally.³

Poverty

“Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living.”⁴ Examples of these essentials could be sanitation, nutrition, housing, etc.

Welfare schemes

Welfare schemes are typically funded by taxpayers and allow people to cope with financial stress during rough periods of their lives.⁵ These programs, commonly referred to as assistance programs, provide people with aid in the form of compensation, benefits, food, medical care, etc.

² Social Protection Systems. Asian Development Bank, www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32100/social-protection.pdf.

³ “Homelessness Statistics Are Baffling, but Not beyond Solving.” *New Story*, 22 Oct. 2019, newstorycharity.org/2019/09/homelessness-statistics/.

⁴ Chen, James. “Poverty.” Investopedia, Investopedia, 19 May 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/p/poverty.asp.

⁵ Hayes, Adam. “Welfare Definition.” Investopedia, Investopedia, 19 May 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/w/welfare.asp.

Vacancy Rates

“The number of private or business properties that are available in a particular area for sale or rent, usually expressed as a percentage of the total.”⁶ For example, if a city has a 10% vacancy rate, then that means that 10% of its rental housing is uninhabited.

Social Housing

Social housing is housing that is funded by the government and provided to people lacking all sorts of financial resources or to people who are subject to any social issue causing them to be unable to afford housing.⁷ It is also commonly referred to as public housing.

Revenue

“Revenue is the income that a government or company receives regularly.”⁸ If the government’s revenue drops, then consequently it does not have the ability to support sectors such as businesses, banks, social protection systems, individuals and therefore the country is more prone to fall into an economic recession.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a term used to describe housing prices that can be met by the minimum income standard. This definition may vary from country to country, depending on the country’s GDP. For example, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development states that, “affordable housing is generally

⁶ “Vacancy Rate.” Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vacancy-rate.

⁷ “Social Housing.” Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20housing.

⁸ “Revenue.” Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/revenue.

defined as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.”⁹

Taxation

Taxation occurs when a government or other authority requires that a fee be paid by citizens and corporations to that authority.¹⁰

Government expenditure

Government expenditure refers to the amount of money spent by the government on the purchase of goods and services, including public consumption and public investment.¹¹

Interest rates

The amount of money a bank or any lender charges you, in exchange for receiving a loan; interest rates tend to vary from nation to nation and are also heavily influenced by central banks.¹²

Loan

A loan is when money is given to an individual in exchange for future repayment of the loan principal amount, plus interest.¹³ The process of applying for

⁹ “HUD Archives: Glossary of Terms to Affordable Housing.” HUD, archives.hud.gov/local/nv/goodstories/2006-04-06glos.cfm.

¹⁰ Kagan, Julia. “Taxation.” *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 10 June 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/t/taxation.asp.

¹¹ Dollarhide, Maya. “What Are Government Purchases?” *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 13 Aug. 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/g/governmentpurchases.asp.

¹² Banton, Caroline. “Interest Rate.” *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 28 July 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/i/interestrates.asp.

¹³ Kagan, Julia. “Loan.” *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 19 May 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/l/loan.asp.

a loan may include certain requirements, in an attempt to prove one's reliability and to ensure the future repayment of the loan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Causes of unaffordable housing

Government

In times of economic decline, limited domestic revenue discourages governments from taking housing initiatives in the form of investments in social housing or vacant buildings. However, with poverty, unemployment, and inequality in the distribution of wealth constantly increasing, demand for affordable housing has been higher than ever. With the government's inability to purchase housing and provide the necessary aid to people, supply has failed to keep up with demand, leading to many people being left homeless. Furthermore, prior to building a house, a contractor has to abide by the government policies that are designed to improve quality and ensure the safety of the houses built. With these regulations, the cost of construction increases and that consequently is reflected in the cost of the house as a whole. Since housing prices have a tendency to skyrocket, the possibility of being able to afford a house is reduced.

Banks

When in search of economic aid prior to purchasing a house, people apply for loans from banks. However, this process is more complicated than it may seem, seeing that in order to qualify for a loan, you need to fulfill certain requirements. The bank needs to determine if you are a trustworthy, punctual, capable individual who will be able to pay back the money when it is due. These requirements may comprise: the purpose of your loan, your personal information, your financial statements, a personal guarantee that you will be able to pay the money, etc.¹⁴ On multiple occasions, people who are struggling economically have bad credit scores and lack sufficient assets to be able to take out a loan. As a response to that, banks do not perceive these individuals as credible, since in case of an inability to meet

¹⁴ Fora Financial. "10 Bank Loan Requirements You Must Be Prepared For." *Fora Financial*, Fora Financial, 6 Apr. 2021, www.forafinancial.com/blog/working-capital/8-bank-loan-requirements/.

the loan repayments, the bank cannot confiscate assets such as houses, properties, or any other object in possession.

Furthermore, another issue concerning the banks, which leads to high rates of homelessness, is interest rates. Over the past few decades, many western country banks have decreased their interest rates by a significant amount. This means that people can borrow more money and pay less interest back to the bank. This may seem like good news; however, in the real estate world, more money available for housing means that offers go up and so does the original price of the house. As a result, the phenomenon of unaffordable housing has taken over the western world.

Economic and social barriers

Apart from the government, there are many causes that may lead to an individual's inability to purchase a house. The main trigger of homelessness, namely poverty, exists in all countries, both LEDCs and MEDCs, to varying degrees. This multifaceted phenomenon itself is created by multiple factors. First and foremost, unemployment due to limited job opportunities or the inability to meet the job criteria leads to no income for the individual. With no income, and limited help from the government, the chances of being able to pay rent or to purchase a new house become inconceivable. In many countries, especially in LEDCs, people are also facing many human violation issues, which again cause a multiplicity of impediments. Some examples of these violations could stem from racism, xenophobia, forced labor or human trafficking. As a result of these violations, people do not have access to job opportunities and thus cannot earn a living in order to finance their housing. Another effect of poverty which leads to homelessness is the limitations that it creates. Poverty creates a barrier between people and their education, their rights, and their freedom. This again could raise many issues relating to displacement, substance abuse, involvement in crime, etc., which could limit a person's potential to invest in a property.

The circular flow of income

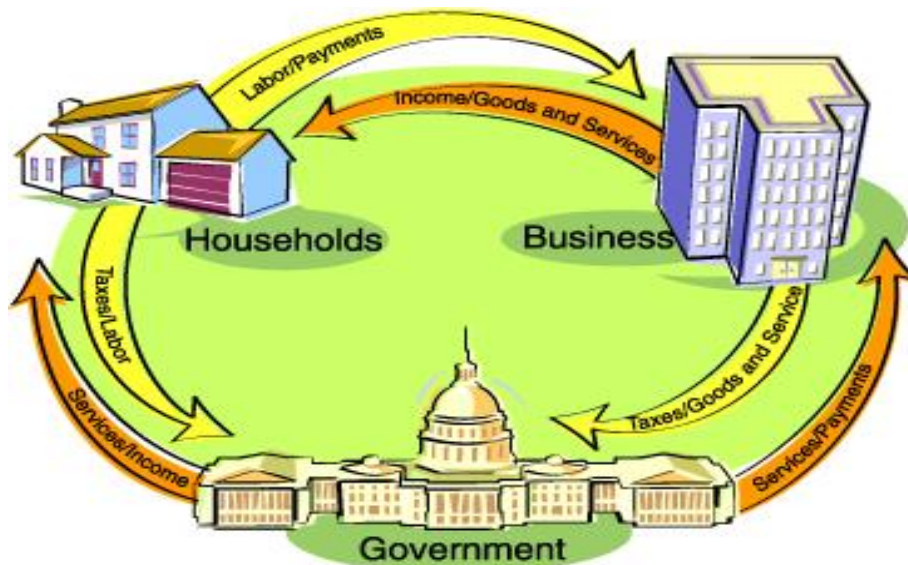


Figure 1: Cartoon of the circular flow concept in economics¹⁵

The circular flow of the income model demonstrates how money moves throughout a society and economy. Economic problems in a country occur from a lack of equilibrium (balance) in this model. From the foreshown, there is clearly a three-way link between the government, firms (businesses) and, of course, the consumer - the average citizen. An example of how this model can be manifested in the issue at hand would be the following. If from a theoretical standpoint, there are extremely limited government expenditures in a country in terms of infrastructure, this will lead to instability in the business sector, which can result in 2 main outcomes: one for the government and one for households. If unemployment rises, due to the sheer lack of infrastructure, people will not have an income, which may prevent them from paying their rent or purchasing new property. On the other hand, increased unemployment will lead to less government revenue since unemployed people will pay less tax. This in turn will lead to the government being unable to support social protection systems and to take housing initiatives.

¹⁵ *The Circular Flow of Income*. en.citizendium.org/wiki/File:Economics_circular_flow_cartoon.jpg.

The Function of social protection systems

The role of social protection systems could be split into 3 main sections: Social Insurance, Labor Market and Social Assistance.

Social Insurance refers to the contributory benefits provided by social protection, for the purpose of prevention, protection, and provision of instant economic relief from financial fluctuations, like unemployment or sickness. Examples of social insurance could be in the form of unemployment benefits, pensions, health insurance, family benefits, etc.

Labor markets include all the government policies and interventions that are proposed by the systems to increase employment, help companies stay open and protect jobs, etc. It is aimed to provide aid to the workforce and to its proprietors. Some examples of labor market programs include employment incentives such as wage increases and worker benefits.

Social assistance includes all non-contributory benefits which could be sectioned into 3 components, namely cash transfers, social care services, and in-kind transfers. Cash transfers are direct transfers of money, from the government to people who can meet certain requirements.¹⁶ Social care services refer to multiple acts of assistance that can vary from child support to therapy for mental illnesses. Lastly, in-kind transfers are a similar concept to cash transfers; however, they are correlated with the transfer of assets and investments, rather than actual money. Housing aid in the form of housing allowance, public works, social housing, and homeless shelters are included in the social assistance components. It is important here to note down, that most of the funding for the aforementioned purposes, given to homeless individuals, shelters, etc., comes through one of the few forms of government revenue, taxation.

Since the part of social protection which deals with housing initiatives has already been mentioned and analyzed, it is important to address additional ways of how social protection systems can be financed. As mentioned before, supply could come from taxation. Additionally, social protection systems could function through grants, government revenue, and loans. Therefore, when bearing in mind how the financing of social protection systems can be increased, what should be considered is how to increase financing in these aforementioned ways.

¹⁶ "Cash Transfers." *Innovations for Poverty Action*, www.poverty-action.org/topics/cash-transfers.

Issues and challenges of social protection

The 4 main challenges that social protection systems are called upon to combat concern the adequacy, comprehensiveness, coverage, and inequality of social protection systems.

Adequacy

The term "adequacy" refers to the extent of financial protection given to people in need, through means such as benefits. Why don't social protection systems have adequate resources? In times of conflict, the economy is in a recession. Consequently, the government does not have enough revenue to finance social protection systems and ultimately, an exceedingly small, single-digit percentage of the GDP is given to these systems. Hence, initiatives need to be taken to find alternative financing sources, even in times of economic decline.

Comprehensiveness

"Comprehensiveness" entails the number of services provided by the social protection system. During the COVID 19 pandemic, the need to expand the number of services provided to people has been stressed more than ever. Specifically, with the digitalization of the workspace due to quarantine conditions, many new forms of employment have been devised. These new forms of non-traditional employment bear new impediments for social protection systems and workers alike. They are characterized by less income security and less-monitored workplace conditions, when set side by side to normal forms of employment.¹⁷ Having said this, it is of the utmost importance that social protection systems broaden their comprehensiveness to be able to provide the necessary aid and services to employers, even in the digital world.

Coverage

Lastly and most importantly, the term "coverage" relates to the broadness of the system's scope; simply put, it refers to how many people it reaches. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), in 2017 only 45% of people had access to at least one

¹⁷ ILO. "Innovative Approaches for Ensuring Universal Social Protection for the Future of Work." *Ilo Future of Work Research Paper Series*, www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_629864.pdf.

type of social protection benefit.¹⁸ Of the remaining 55% that remain without cover, a major proportion of those people live in LEDCs. The reason for this is that the government usually cannot afford to support social protection and with the lack of other organizations and international help, LEDCs are left with no supply to aid their citizens in need.¹⁹ This raises the following questions: "How can social protection expand their branches to reach a larger number of people?", "How can social protection be implemented in the entirety of the collective whole, even in LEDCs?". Apart from economic inequality, there is a need to address the gender gap in the social protection system's response. For decades now, the role of women in society has been filled with impediments, scarcity of opportunities, and neglect. Therefore, social protection systems must be called upon to give their attention to women around the world by providing them with the necessary aid.²⁰

Inequality

Overall, an issue that includes every one of the aforementioned aspects, is that social protection systems are usually fragmented, meaning that they do not give adequate protection in order to shelter all sectors of the population from all the risks. For example, pension benefits are usually distributed to wealthier individuals, neglecting completely the impoverished community. The opposite also occurs as many social assistance programs such as cash transfers, cash for emergencies and housing allowances, are given to poorer people. In times like these, social protection ought to be distributed equally to all, by providing the same services and benefits to people from all social and economic backgrounds. The question of universalizing social protection is one that will be considered in depth.

¹⁸ "4 Billion People Worldwide Are Left without Social Protection." *ILO*, 29 Nov. 2017, www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_601903/lang--en/index.htm.

¹⁹ Entwicklungspolitik, Deutsches Institut für. "Social Protection in LEDCs." *Deutsches Institut Für Entwicklungspolitik*, www.die-gdi.de/en/the-current-column/article/even-poor-countries-can-afford-basic-social-protection-schemes-from-which-their-economic-development-will-benefit-as-well/.

²⁰ "Current Challenges and Debates on Social Protection in the Global South." *DAWN*, 19 Mar. 2020, dawnnet.org/2020/03/social-protection-in-the-global-south/.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America (USA)

The American Dream of owning a house seems like a distant one when taking a nightly stroll on the busy streets of the US. Even though behind the US lies a wealthy background, the United States has managed to deem itself as one of the nations with the largest percentage of homelessness. Even after the Great Depression, the American Revolution, 2 World Wars, the USA has still not managed to tackle the issue of homelessness tormenting its society. The reasons behind this: insufficient construction, inadequate government policies, and lastly too much demand in comparison to supply. Another phenomenon that is noticeable in the US is the discrimination gap. When taking a look at the USA's homelessness statistics, it is evident that more than 1/3 of this percentage consists of people from an indigenous background.²¹ This is something predictable since the indigenous suffer daily from limited opportunities of employment and higher risks of living in poverty. It is notable to say that in the past, the US government made tremendous attempts to provide social protection to people. A significant example is the introduction of Roosevelt's New Deal during the 1930s which itself included many agencies and policies such as the Homeowner's Loan Act of 1933, which provided aid and relief to people stricken by the Great Recession. Nowadays, the US has implemented new ways of helping the homeless with actions such as the Section 8 Housing Voucher²², which provides benefits to people stricken by rent burden or homelessness.

United Kingdom (UK)

It is evident that the UK is also facing issues relating to affordable housing. With the UK's considerable population, the demand for more housing has skyrocketed; however, the supply still remains stagnant, with land scarcity being an unceasing problem for the UK. In addition to that, the UK government's housing policies remain strict, making the task of building a new house extremely challenging and costly. Another aspect that should be

²¹ "Racial Inequalities in Homelessness, by the Numbers." *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, 16 Oct. 2020, endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers/.

²² "Housing Choice Voucher Program Section 8: HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)." *Housing Choice Voucher Program Section 8 | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)*, www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8.

considered is the high-income inequality rates in the UK. When seeing the trends in the income inequality in the UK, it is easy to identify that two of the main causes of this increasing inequality are: changes in government tax and benefit policies as well as changes in employment patterns.²³ With more women entering the workforce, making two working parent families more popular, more families are left with no working parents, creating a gap between the two poles, leading to higher income inequality. As a result, homelessness has affected more than 400,000 people while 1.4 million people resort to living in substandard housing. Alternative housing conditions such as homeless shelters, sofa-surfing and temporary housing accommodate millions of people in the UK.²⁴

India

India has been facing a lot of issues regarding affordable housing. It comes to no surprise that problems relating to space, scarcity of land, and its ever-growing population act as protagonists in India's affordable housing gap. The impact of the economic crisis has also taken a toll on India's housing, since lack of loans, mortgages, and benefits have led to high rates of homelessness, and slim chances of finding affordable housing. Consequently, 65 million people are living in temporary accommodation, namely slums.²⁵ Concerning India's social protection systems, it is evident that India has a broad variety of services provided to its people in need. However, this is not enough seeing that the Indian government dedicates only 1.5% of its expenditure to social protection systems, a significantly low percentage in comparison to most middle-income countries.²⁶

²³ *Income Inequality in the UK*. Institute of Fiscal Studies, www.ifs.org.uk/docs/ER_JC_2013.pdf.

²⁴ "Housing Crisis Affects Estimated 8.4 Million in England - Research." *BBC News*, BBC, 22 Sept. 2019, www.bbc.com/news/uk-49787913.

²⁵ Rashmi, Richa. "India's Housing Conundrum." *NITI Aayog*, niti.gov.in/indias-housing-conundrum.

²⁶ Tue, Submitted by Amiya Sharmaon, et al. "Social Protection in India: The Present and the Future (Part 1 of 2)." *Socialprotection.org*, socialprotection.org/discover/blog/social-protection-india-present-and-future-part-1-2.



Figure 2: The effects of unaffordable housing and lack of social protection are evident in India's most populated cities.²⁷

Finland

Named the European country with the smallest homelessness rates, Finland has managed to eradicate “rough sleeping” by following a different recovery approach, namely “Housing First”. The Housing First approach means that people who need a house no longer have to wait to fill out the necessary requirements. On the contrary, people are given immediate permanent housing and the necessary support in the form of social aid, employment opportunities and mental health aid, etc. This is followed by cultural integration and the gradual withdrawal of support when it is no longer needed. The success of social protection systems in Finland is pronounced since welfare schemes are implemented in every sector: health, migration, and housing. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Finland's social protection systems were one of the strongest in the 1980s, creating a solid foundation for the following years.

²⁷ Kadri, Rahul. “The Vision of Slum-Free Indian Cities Needs to Be Viewed through the Lens of Inclusive Development.” *Scroll.in*, Scroll.in, 19 Sept. 2020, scroll.in/article/972781/the-vision-of-slum-free-indian-cities-needs-to-be-viewed-through-the-lens-of-inclusive-development.

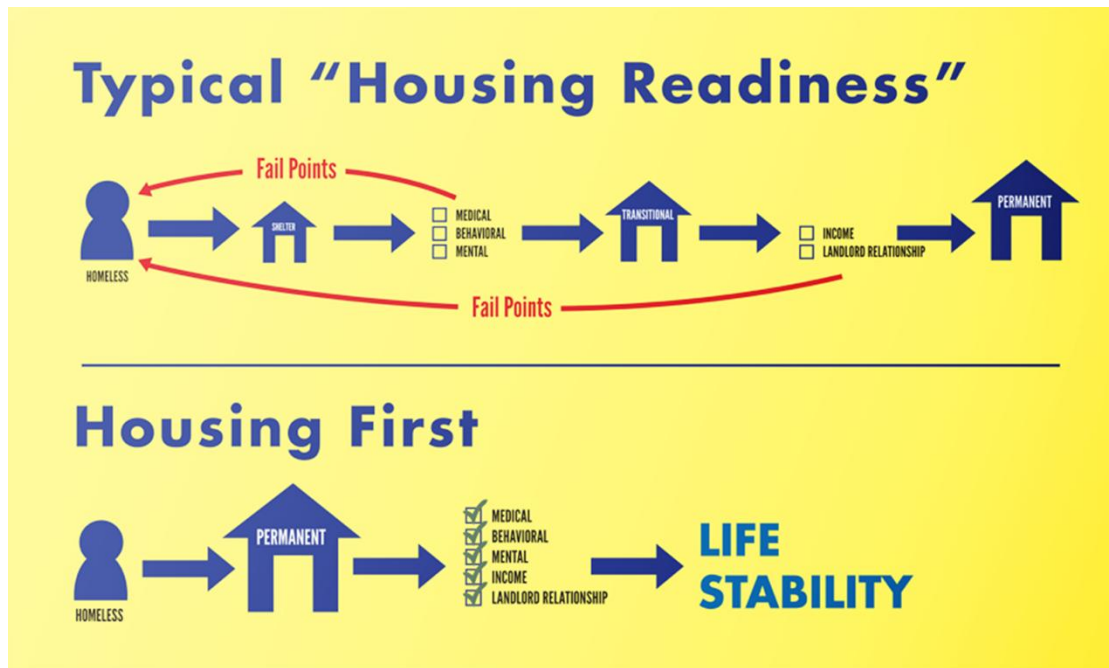


Figure 3: The Housing First Approach²⁸

China

China is another country which has been heavily afflicted by the issue of homelessness. Whereas in most countries, the issue of homelessness roots in economic factors, China has seen a drastic increase in homelessness as a result of its frequent natural disasters. Several natural disasters, including its infamous 2000²⁹ and 2008³⁰ earthquakes, have resulted in displacement and lack of shelter for many people. Furthermore, from the

²⁸ "The Housing First Approach." *Getaway Housing First*, gatewayhousingfirst.org/the-housing-first-approach/.

²⁹ "ACT Alert China - No 2/2000: Yunnan Province Earthquake - China." *ReliefWeb*, reliefweb.int/report/china/act-alert-china-no-22000-yunnan-province-earthquake.

³⁰ "Sichuan Earthquake of 2008." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/event/Sichuan-earthquake-of-2008.

mid-1900s, China has introduced the "Hukou system"³¹, which is a registration program monitored by the government. This system categorizes citizens into agricultural and non-agricultural. Following this, people's opportunities and benefits are predetermined according to their place of registration. For example, migrant workers are paid the minimum wage in comparison to urban residents. This consequently leads to complications and differentiation in social protection and welfare resources, including housing benefits, since people who do not have an urban background receive limited aid. Discrimination and inequality in social protection and housing aid, as stated in the Hukou system, is an acute problem in China, which stands in need of change and modernization.

European Union

Several European countries have been struggling to make ends meet when it comes to their housing needs. Research has shown that even prior to the pandemic "one in ten Europeans were spending more than 40% of their income on housing."³² As a response, the European Union has launched several projects and informative reports such as the European Union's Social Investment Package to tackle the issue of unaffordable housing. Regarding the increasing homelessness rates in Europe, the European Parliament has kept an unwavering stance when it comes to urging its member states to provide for their people. The Parliament urges all its members to provide medical aid, employment, emergency shelters, etc., to its displaced population.³³

³¹ Boquen, Author Antoine. "China's Hukou System [What Is the Hukou & How It Works]." *New Horizons Global Partners*, 28 June 2021, nhglobalpartners.com/the-chinese-hukou-system-explained/.

³² Sparrentak, Kim van. "Why the EU Has a Big Role to Play in Tackling the Housing Crisis." [Www.euractiv.com](https://www.euractiv.com), EURACTIV.com, 22 Jan. 2021, www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/opinion/why-the-eu-has-a-big-role-to-play-in-tackling-the-housing-crisis/.

³³ Parliament resolution on tackling homelessness rates in the EU. "How Parliament Wants to End Homelessness in the EU: News: European Parliament." *How Parliament Wants to End Homelessness in the EU | News | European Parliament*, 24 Nov. 2020, www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20201119STO92006/how-parliament-wants-to-end-homelessness-in-the-eu.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

When combating an issue like homelessness, apart from the practical methods that need to be implemented, it is also vital to monitor progress to observe any gaps in the newly implemented methods. The OECD has achieved that by introducing the OECD Affordable Housing Database, which monitors efforts to achieve affordable housing. This has helped countries develop their policies through evaluation processes by looking at the housing market, housing conditions and affordability, and public policies towards affordable housing.³⁴

International Labor Organization (ILO)

The International Labor Organization has played a crucial role in supporting the function of international social protection systems and in expanding the provision of benefits and social security around the globe. In cooperation with the World Bank, the ILO launched the 2016 Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection³⁵ to achieve the sustainable development goals, in an attempt to introduce and enhance social protection systems in developing countries. Apart from that, it has launched projects, resolutions, and policies, in order to accomplish universal social protection. Complimentary to that, the ILO publishes annual reports, and it provides policy recommendations for governments all around the world.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1861-1865	During the American Civil War, the term “hoboes” was first used, sparking the phenomenon of “hobohemia”. The issue of homelessness first became a national matter.
1933	Great Depression in the US leaves 2 million people homeless

³⁴ “Affordable Housing Database.” *OECD*, www.oecd.org/housing/data/affordable-housing-database/.

³⁵ “Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection.” *usp2030.Org*, www.usp2030.org/.

1934-1940	Roosevelt's New deal policies provide emergency relief to homeless people
1942	WW2 leaves 11 million people homeless and displaced
1992	The American Housing First approach was introduced for the first time in New York
2007	The Finnish Housing First approach was developed
2008	The 2008 economic recession affected global rates of homelessness
2019-	The COVID-19 pandemic has left social protection faced with various challenges. Homelessness rates have sparked upwards.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

UN-Habitat

The UN-Habitat has recognized the need to eliminate the problem of homelessness and unaffordable housing, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, on October 31st, 2020, the Executive Director of the UN-Habitat proposed some solutions to this issue, by establishing a framework which every country can easily adopt. The UN-Habitat underlines the need to fund more social housing programs through means such as purchasing and renovating abandoned buildings. Apart from social housing, the UN-Habitat has focused on putting vacant places on the market by offering financial aid to owners through loans, grants, etc. In this way, all vacant units, which make up 22.8 percent of the total number of housing units, will be able to accommodate people struggling with homelessness. Lastly, they have focused on increasing land availability for housing, while at the same time protecting the environment and establishing sustainable housing. All these attempts are part of the 2030 housing initiative in cooperation with the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, which aims to achieve affordable and sustainable housing for all.³⁶

³⁶ "Addressing the Housing Affordability Challenge: A Shared Responsibility: UN-Habitat." *UN*, unhabitat.org/addressing-the-housing-affordability-challenge-a-shared-responsibility.

Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness: resolution / adopted by the Economic and Social Council, E/RES/2020/7, 23rd June 2020

The affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness resolution³⁷ stresses the importance of dealing with the issue of homelessness, which as mentioned, is a violation of human dignity. This resolution urges members to take initiatives by following previous frameworks or adopting new ones. These frameworks support the poverty-stricken population, by providing it with sufficient aid. The resolution also provides solutions to unaffordable housing through housing policies, schemes, private and public investments, etc. Overall, the resolution touches upon the multifaceted issue of homelessness and proposes a dependable “blueprint” for member states to follow and adapt to their own national policies.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

European Union’s Social Investment Package

The European Union has undeniably helped in the battle against high homelessness rates. Through the implementation of new policies, EU member states are able to follow a specific framework which entails future development. Within this framework, namely the EU’s Social Investment Package, members are encouraged to introduce long-term, housing-led, integrated homelessness strategies at the national, regional, and local level, as well as to impose policies aiming at preventing evictions. Member states are also encouraged to approach the issue of homelessness through prevention and early intervention, quality homelessness service delivery, rapid rehousing, systemic data collection, monitoring and shared definitions. The EU has succeeded in supporting its members through funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).³⁸

³⁷ “Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness:” *United Nations*, United Nations, digitallibrary.un.org/record/3869551.

³⁸ “Homelessness.” *Homelessness - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission*, ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1061&langId=en.

The ILO's Social Protection Floors Recommendation 2012, no.202

The International Labor Organization's Social Protection Floors Recommendation of 2012³⁹ is a recommendation composed of various objectives, scopes and principles that are targeted to guide countries in their battle to ensure accessible social protection. This recommendation highlights the need for implementing all forms of benefits, aid, guarantees and schemes to ensure collective welfare. Member states are encouraged to establish and enhance their own national social protection floors which will be built upon these aforementioned principles. Lastly, the ILO gives draws attention to the monitoring of these attempts by collecting the necessary social security data.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Tax measures

By implementing the necessary tax policies, the issue of rent burden and homelessness can be aided. The government could impose higher taxation on rising land values in an attempt to stop landowners from increasing prices for housing production. This measure, combined with lower tax rates for construction, would encourage landowners to develop that own expensive land. Through this measure, the problem of land scarcity could be eliminated while simultaneously increasing housing production. However, it should be noted that this would not be an effective measure in locations such as large urban areas, which have already been developed to their fullest capacities. It would only burden landowners.

Another recent tax policy that has been introduced in the world of real estate and financing is the Low-Income Housing Tax credit. This policy entails that if a landlord meets certain criteria set by the government for affordable housing, then they can apply for a tax credit. These criteria could range from keeping a controlled and affordable rent, to allocating housing to lower-income individuals.⁴⁰ A tax credit could act as a percentage

³⁹ "R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)." *Recommendation R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)*, 2012, www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB%3A12100%3A0%3A%3ANO%3A12100%3AP12100_INSTRUMENT_ID%3A3065524%3ANO.

⁴⁰ Cambridge University, director. *YouTube*, YouTube, 4 Feb. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlaQoxEBdQM.

deduction from the developers' overall monthly income taxes. These tax credits are tradeable and can then be sold to private investors such as banks in an exchange for cash which could then be used to take more future housing initiatives.

Housing assistance

Housing subsidies in the form of housing vouchers have already been implemented in some countries; however, the need to apply this in all nations has increased due to a drastic rise in homelessness rates. Housing vouchers are an exemplary form of aid being given to low-income people who are struggling financially and cannot afford a house. These vouchers provide people with partially paid rent. Consequently, if, for example, in a country affordable housing is housing that takes no more than 30% of an individual's income, then the vouchers cover the amount that surpasses that 30%. By reaching more people through housing vouchers, the issues of housing unaffordability, rent burden and overall homelessness could steadily be eliminated.

Bank initiatives

Banks could also take the initiative to help relieve the high rates of homelessness. This can be done in 2 ways by lowering interest rates and demanding fewer requirements when it comes to receiving a loan. By introducing interest cuts, it would make taking out loans easier, since the individual does not have to pay a large amount of money back to the bank. As already mentioned, strict bank requirements for loans have prevented many poverty-stricken individuals from getting a loan, so by altering this eligibility process, people will be able to get more loans to finance their houses. However, there needs to be a limit to this measure. If we were to abolish all requirements, unpaid loans could start building up which may lead to a bank becoming insolvent.

Investment in infrastructure

One of the main causes of homelessness is the insufficient investment in infrastructure. Investments in infrastructure could be made by either the government or the private sector. The government could urge big businesses and magnates to launch housing initiatives by either investing in new social housing or renovating old buildings. In order to **give rise to this motivation**, governments could propose replacing taxation with these housing initiatives. To be more concise, investors and big businesses usually pay a larger amount of tax than the normal citizen. By replacing their monthly tax with housing initiatives, more money could be given to abolishing global rough sleeping.

Additionally, the government itself could also invest in more infrastructure through its revenue. The government could focus on mainly two types of infrastructure: social housing and business infrastructure. The construction of more social housing would enable the temporary housing of a majority of homeless people. Infrastructures for firms would also increase employment, giving opportunities to poverty-stricken individuals to earn an income and thus to finance their housing.

Expansionary fiscal policy

For the government to be able to support social protection systems and to be able to allocate resources to more people, there needs to be a boost in the economy. A government expansionary fiscal policy entails the lowering of tax rates to increase demand in the economy. In simple terms, by lowering taxation, people will be willing to spend more money, which will inevitably boost the cycle of the economy. With higher demand, there is a need for more workers, which would be crucial in an attempt to battle homelessness. Alas, this policy does not guarantee success. In times of an economic recession, people try to increase their savings as much as possible to prevent such worries in a future conflict. Therefore, some people would not be willing to re-invest this money in the economy. Furthermore, an expansionary fiscal policy could also potentially lead to inflation, which would be detrimental to society overall. With higher wages and increased demand for products, the economy could see an increase in product prices. However, this would lead to the value of the currency decreasing, leading to an economic recession, and a possible state of stagflation.

From National to Universal Social Protection

Each member state could create its framework to observe and regulate any gaps in its social protection systems. These gaps may concern the Adequacy, Comprehensiveness and/or the Coverage of the systems. After investigating these deficiencies, members should seek to resolve these, whilst abiding by their own national policies.

Concurrently, there needs to be monitoring of these efforts. To do this, member states could collect data that will follow the aforementioned actions implemented. It is essential that prior to taking these measures, a legal framework is to be set in place, to protect individuals' personal data.

To reach and ensure universal social protection, it would be advisable that member states share this information and data, in an attempt to collectively help and finance countries that are evidently not able to support their own systems.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“2000 Yunnan Earthquake.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 21 July 2021, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2000_Yunnan_earthquake.

“2008 Sichuan Earthquake.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 Aug. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Sichuan_earthquake.

“4 Billion People Worldwide Are Left without Social Protection.” *ILO*, 29 Nov. 2017, [www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_601903/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_601903/lang-en/index.htm).

“Addressing the Housing Affordability Challenge: A Shared Responsibility: UN-Habitat.” UN, unhabitat.org/addressing-the-housing-affordability-challenge-a-shared-responsibility.

Admin. “Global Homelessness Statistics.” *Homeless World Cup*, Homeless World Cup, 3 Nov. 2020, homelessworldcup.org/homelessness-statistics/.

“Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness:” *United Nations*, United Nations, digitallibrary.un.org/record/3869551.

“Affordable Housing Database.” OECD, www.oecd.org/housing/data/affordable-housing-database/.

Banton, Caroline. “Interest Rate.” *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 28 July 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/i/interestrates.asp.

Boquen, Author Antoine. “China's Hukou System [What Is the Hukou & How It Works].” *New Horizons Global Partners*, 28 June 2021, nhglobalpartners.com/the-chinese-hukou-system-explained/.

Cambridge University, director. *YouTube*, YouTube, 4 Feb. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlaQoxEBdQM.

Cambridge University, director. *YouTube*, YouTube, 4 Feb. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlaQoxEBdQM.

"Current Challenges and Debates on Social Protection in the Global South." DAWN, 19 Mar. 2020, dawnnet.org/2020/03/social-protection-in-the-global-south/.

Chen, James. "Poverty." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 19 May 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/p/poverty.asp.

Dollarhide, Maya. "What Are Government Purchases?" *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 13 Aug. 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/g/governmentpurchases.asp.

Entwicklungspolitik, Deutsches Institut für. "Social Protection in LEDCs." Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, www.die-gdi.de/en/the-current-column/article/even-poor-countries-can-afford-basic-social-protection-schemes-from-which-their-economic-development-will-benefit-as-well/.

Fora Financial. "10 Bank Loan Requirements You Must Be Prepared For." Fora Financial, Fora Financial, 6 Apr. 2021, www.forafinancial.com/blog/working-capital/8-bank-loan-requirements/.

"Foreclosure." *Cambridge Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/foreclosure.

"Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection." *usp2030.Org*, www.usp2030.org/.

Hayes, Adam. "Welfare Definition." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 19 May 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/w/welfare.asp.

"Homelessness." Homelessness - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission, ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1061&langId=en.

"Homelessness Statistics Are Baffling, but Not beyond Solving." *New Story*, 22 Oct. 2019, newstorycharity.org/2019/09/homelessness-statistics/.

"Housing Choice Voucher Program Section 8: HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)." *Housing Choice Voucher Program Section 8 | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)*, www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8.

"Housing Crisis Affects Estimated 8.4 Million in England - Research." BBC News, BBC, 22 Sept. 2019, www.bbc.com/news/uk-49787913.

ILO. "Innovative Approaches for Ensuring Universal Social Protection for the Future of Work." *Ilo Future of Work Research Paper Series*,

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_629864.pdf.

Income Inequality in the UK. Institute of Fiscal Studies, www.ifs.org.uk/docs/ER_JC_2013.pdf.

Kagan, Julia. "Taxation." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 10 June 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/t/taxation.asp.

"Lex Access to European Union Law." *EUR*, eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Aem0011.

Parliament resolution on tackling homelessness rates in the EU. "How Parliament Wants to End Homelessness in the EU: News: European Parliament." *How Parliament Wants to End Homelessness in the EU | News | European Parliament*, 24 Nov. 2020, www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20201119STO92006/how-parliament-wants-to-end-homelessness-in-the-eu.

The Circular Flow of Income.

en.citizendium.org/wiki/File:Economics_circular_flow_cartoon.jpg.

"The Housing First Approach." Getaway Housing First, gatewayhousingfirst.org/the-housing-first-approach/.

The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), 12 Aug. 2012, www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/legal-advice/WCMS_205341/lang--en/index.htm.

"R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)." *Recommendation R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)*, 2012, www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB%3A12100%3A0%3A%3ANO%3A12100%3AP12100_INSTRUMENT_ID%3A3065524%3ANO.

"Racial Inequalities in Homelessness, by the Numbers." *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, 16 Oct. 2020, endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers/.

Rashmi, Richa. "India's Housing Conundrum." *NITI Aayog*, niti.gov.in/indias-housing-conundrum.

"Revenue." Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/revenue.

Schuetz, Jenny. "To Improve Housing Affordability, We Need Better Alignment of Zoning, Taxes, and Subsidies." *Brookings*, Brookings, 16 Mar. 2020,

www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/to-improve-housing-affordability-we-need-better-alignment-of-zoning-taxes-and-subsidies/.

Siddiqui, Danish Siddiquish. "A Slum Rehabilitation Project in Mumbai's Dharavi." *Scroll.in*, scroll.in/article/972781/the-vision-of-slum-free-indian-cities-needs-to-be-viewed-through-the-lens-of-inclusive-development.

"Social Housing." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster,

www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20housing.

"Social Security." *Cambridge Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/social-security.

Social Protection Systems. Asian Development Bank,

www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32100/social-protection.pdf.

Sparrentak, Kim van. "Why the EU Has a Big Role to Play in Tackling the Housing Crisis."

www.euractiv.com, EURACTIV.com, 22 Jan. 2021, www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/opinion/why-the-eu-has-a-big-role-to-play-in-tackling-the-housing-crisis/.

Tue, Submitted by Amiya Sharmaon, et al. "Social Protection in India: The Present and the Future (Part 1 of 2)." *Socialprotection.org*, socialprotection.org/discover/blog/social-protection-india-present-and-future-part-1-2.

"Vacancy Rate." *Cambridge Dictionary*,

dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vacancy-rate.