

AMERICAN PAKISTAN FOUNDATION

Building Bridges. Opening Minds. Empowering Communities.

**Statement submitted at the
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Submitted by

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*The poorest of the world are being left behind.
We need to reach out and lift them into our lifeboat.
– UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, 2011*

In accordance to the provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-eighth session of the Commission (E/CN.5/2019/L.1) on affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness, American Pakistan Foundation (APF) and Family Education Services Foundation (FESF) are hopeful as global leaders meet to review relevant UN plans and programmes of action based on systemic barriers that perpetuate existing inequalities and exclusions for vulnerable groups and individuals who live in the margins of society. We believe this meeting can systematically build on the outcomes of the 57th session of the Commission for Social Development.

Homelessness, although a widely acknowledged challenge in the developing world, remains inadequately defined, with lags in disaggregate data resulting in a poor enumeration and intervention discourse. According to international standards, homelessness is based on location (on the street, under bridges, in derelict buildings, etc); insecurity of tenure (lacking a secure title, no fixed place of residence, floating people); and quality of housing, shelter or services (sanitation, water, dangerous or precarious conditions). Addressing homelessness in the developing world is consistent with efforts to achieve Agenda 2030. In the context of Pakistan, many layers of socio-economic and policy challenges shape the conditions of homelessness.

This circumstance warrants a prioritization of more localized metrics and solutions by which to hold conditions of homelessness into account.

We recognize that Pakistan has made progress against its poverty, as indicated by the drop from 55% to 39% in the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), however, the country still struggles to provide social protections for its most disenfranchised populations. According to the International Labor Organization Social Protection Report 2017-2019, Pakistan invests 0.2% of its entire GDP on social protections, a decrease from the 0.4% in 1995, while only 2.3% of citizens above pensionable age receive effective coverage. Today, this lack of effective social protection system is found at the intersection of poverty, inequality and housing in Pakistan. With an outdated National Housing Policy (of 2001), rampant urbanization and regional migration and adverse effects of climate change have resulted in a housing crisis for the most marginalized segments of society. As the process of urbanization is not accompanied by adequate shifts in economic patterns, according to the World Bank data, one in eight urban dwellers reside below the poverty line. In addition, high density spatial growth of non-city administered rural areas, ruralopilises, are home to about 60 percent of the country's urban dwellers which are not officially designated as cities.

We urge member states to address the growing challenges of inefficient urban planning, especially of megacities, which have the potential to become hotbeds of social, political, and economic discontent and unrest rather than of engines of growth and innovation.

We urge member states, especially Pakistan, to review current contextual definitions of homelessness, based on local assessments and a variety of categories, to ensure an understanding of the issue grounded in local realities rather than driven by international metrics.

We emphasize that member states work towards a review, strategy and policy for various homeless dimensions including rough sleeping (under bridges, on the street and in public spaces), pavement dwellings (with the utilization of a pitch as rudimentary shelter of card, cloth or plastic); squatting in derelict buildings on a regular basis (katchi-abadis); living in abject poverty (including residing on boats or floating platforms without adequate security); and living in refugee camps without a foreseeable possibility of returning home.

We urge member states to note that these categories are interrelated, as people flow, or are pushed, from one category to another and back again, and therefore, intersectional policies must understand and address a range of substantive solutions.

We emphasize that all solutions must include local dwellers as stakeholders in discussions with private-public partnership to ensure social protection for all.

We request that member states look closely at drivers of homelessness within their borders as mainly structural rather than a result of an individual's agency. We recommend member states to look beyond the traditional drivers of homelessness, such as unemployment, fractured family

relations, and the diminution of the welfare system, to focus on complex and diverse drivers specific to the developing world.

We request that contextualizing homelessness as a first step towards discussing solutions which regards poverty as the main driver. We stress that migration in itself, not be utilized as a driver of homelessness, but rather be considered as part of the process of becoming homeless.

We recommend that member states review environmental disasters and effects of climate change that result in mass destruction of homes and loss of life which force informal dwellings.

We emphasize that member states review additional drivers such as social and demographic changes; political and institutional regulatory frameworks that fail to enforce human rights, and land and property rights, especially for women and the disabled; failure of housing provisions and affordability, especially in rapidly urbanizing locales; gender; and age (according to UN sources there are 150 million street children).

In efforts to leave no-one behind, **American Pakistan Foundation (APF) and Family Education Services Foundation (FESF) urge** member states to understand and consider sociocultural and economic complexities of individuals and their communities within the context of social protection needs, including the informal workers, rural and urban dwellers and the most vulnerable in society.