Global Empowerment Movement (GEM) USA
Hosts

The 58th Session of The Commission for Social Development Event

VENUE: CR 12, United Nations Building, United Nations Headquarters, New York
February 14, 2020   Time: 10:00 am – 11:15 am

Global Empowerment Movement CSocD58 Side Event Theme:

Holistic Approach to Ending Homelessness: Dignifying the Needy

Homelessness is a Global phenomenon affecting many communities including American society. Homelessness is a societal problem that could be described as a state of social imbalance that renders people vulnerable to taking refuge on the street. Homelessness is not stratified, it could affect both the lowly and the rich depending on the psychological, social and psycho-social state people found themselves. *Experience shows that many people that are found on the street are products of mental or depressional disorders that are chronic and serious or children from broken and irreparable homes, illegal immigrants and others at risk of being removed by the authorities, drug abuse, etc.*

"Homelessness is a condition where a person or household not only lacks habitable space with security of tenure, but rights and ability to enjoy social relations, including safety. Homelessness is a manifestation of extreme poverty and a failure of multiple systems and human rights"

Homelessness is not a choice but part of societal problems that are fueled by *lack of structural supports for those experiencing poverty, job loss, and inadequate discharge planning for those leaving hospitals, correctional facilities, and mental health facilities are few of the reasons people experience homelessness*

Affordable housing and social protection can have a tremendous impact in addressing homelessness. Often, the government interventions approach to ending homelessness mainly centers on quick-fix solutions of moving people experiencing homelessness into independent short-term shelters were built. However, although long-term homeless people are moved to permanent housing shelters, despite **government efforts, homelessness is skyrocketing and** *it is clear homelessness is still on the rise and that this system is not working because the homeless, even those given shelters may still face the vicious circle issues of feeling trapped, and not being able to find jobs without a housing address, or even to apply for social benefits*

Homelessness can lead to lack of education and malnutrition for children, human trafficking, etc.

To effectively address Homelessness, there is the need to identify the following ***complexities*** that are interwoven with homelessness:

- Poverty
- Broken Homes
- Racial and Gender Discrimination
- Unemployment
- Human Trafficking
- Public Health

- Housing Affordability
- Domestic Violence
- Mental Illness
- Substance Misuse
- Urbanization

*To truly help to put an end to the homelessness issues, we need a radical change that includes homes for all. We must provide permanent housing for all and **address all the identified complexities together, as one strategy does not apply for every community.***

Objectives

The Side Event will

- *Review the interconnectedness between homelessness and poverty and health and well-being of homeless individuals or people at risk of it as well as explore options for reducing youth that are at risk of human trafficking, drug abuse, or broken homes.*
- *Share more light on the complexity of Homelessness beyond the issue of housing unavailability and without the immediate prospect means and the ability to acquire appropriate housing.*
- *Highlight the critical importance on the preventative frameworks* that have to do with stopping homelessness before it begins by targeting it at all levels through preventative initiatives aimed to create structural change, to stop it if there is a high risk, and to prevent who have previously experienced homelessness from experiencing it again. Prevention is said to be better than cure.
- Emphasize individual or corporate responsibility in affordable housing and social protection in the Sustainable Development Agenda to leave no one behind
- Elaborate on the importance of focusing on the various ways to contribute to ending homelessness, with a focus on individual roles because every contribution to supporting the cause counts.
- Raise awareness on the specific vulnerabilities of single mothers in relation to homelessness
- Present current situation in selected State, New Jersey, share challenges that put families at-risk (poverty; lack of affordable housing, domestic violence, migration, mental illness, Discrimination Unemployment, etc.)

Lastly, the Side Event will make a clarion call to dignify the needy and to be a blessing to others by taking participating in the ways to address, ease, and end homelessness on an individual level which includes the following:

- Donating money or resources to local organizations that assist those experiencing homelessness,
- Volunteering with these organizations, or
- Becoming an advocate. Advocacy work can include supporting a mandatory minimum income, or a preventative strategy on homelessness.

- Donation of winter clothing to many homeless individuals
- Providing support in terms of outreach services to warming centers or call local outreach services to check on those who are outside in the cold.

Expected Outcome: A renewed motivation and involvement of All and Sundry to get involved because All Hands are needed on deck to easing and ending Homelessness; with emphasis on individual and corporate responsibility in affordable housing and social protection in the Sustainable Development Agenda to leave no one behind

Outcomes Submitted to be use for a Report on CSocD58

The outcomes   or recommendations of the discussions will be reflected in the GEM Executive President's summary to be submitted to the Commission for Social Development to the ECOSOC, to be used in a report on CSocD58 in the 2020 High-Level Forum.

For More Information, Please Visit
>   *https://www.globalempowermentmovement.org/united-nations-events/*

8. **Time: 10:00am – 11:15am; Total Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes**

The time allocation for the discussion is as follows:

Speaker	Speaking Time
Introduction/Opening Remarks/Context-Setting & Introduction of Moderator by the GEM Executive President	4 minutes
Welcome Remarks by the Chair	5 minutes
Keynote Speaker	15 minutes
Special Guest	8 minutes
Interactive Panel Discussion: 5 Panelists @ 8 minutes each. Holistic Approach to Ending Homelessness: Dignify the Needy from Various Perspectives - Religious, UN/NGO, Government, Physician, Individual	40 minutes
Closing remarks By Host/Facilitator	3 minutes

Host/Facilitator
DR. QUEEN BLESSING ITUA

GEM Executive President & Global Ambassador/UN Representative
Producer of "Empowered," Blessings of Africa
Author, "We Are the Blessings of Africa, Reshaping Our Greatness Together"

FORMAT, PANELISTS, AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

- **Host:** Welcome and context setting for the side event

- **Chair:** Highlight the critical importance of the theme & declare the forum open

- **Keynote Speaker from Indian – Bhupendra Rathore:** Highlight the Holistic strategies to ending homeless which includes
    - The complexity of Homelessness is beyond the issue of housing unavailability, review the interconnectedness between homelessness and poverty and health and well-being of homeless individuals and at-risk persons to human trafficking, drug abuse, or broken homes;
    - Prevention is said to be better than cure. Highlight a few critical preventative initiatives and structural change that must be established to prevent and to end homelessness.
    - Expatiate on the role of "Dignifying the Needy" at ending homelessness

- **Guest Speaker: New Jersey State Mayor Anesh**: Present current situation in your community in New Jersey, share challenges that put families at-risk (poverty; lack of affordable housing, domestic violence, migration, mental illness, Discrimination, Unemployment, etc.). What is the government doing to end homelessness, and how can NGOs like GEM partner with the City/State help to mobilize various societal actors to prevent/address homelessness?

- **Jeff Edwards**: What is the specific role of NGOs, private sectors, and investors to ensure access to affordable housing? How does the partnership between your NGO, Believers Today and GEM plan to tackle Homelessness with *affordable housing* in developing communities in America and Africa?

- **Newark Councilwoman Mciver LaMonica:** What government policies and measures have proven to be effective in addressing challenges faced by homeless people at the local, regional and national levels and how can we promote public-private partnership and different stakeholders including local communities, NGOs, investors, and other relevant actors to exchange good practices to combat homelessness?

- **Rajiv Jadhav**: What is the role of technology/media and coaching/mentoring and empowerment of at-risk youths and families in ending homelessness? Highlight your work with At-risk youths and how can NGO like GEM partner with you to do more?

- **Councilman Derryck White:** Present examples of good practices to prevent homelessness, and how realistic is turning homeless people into tenants, a compelling experience that worked in Finland, and leaving no one behind in homelessness?

- **William Harris:** Broken homes, single families are particularly vulnerable to poverty and homelessness, a situation that can have dire consequences on their children, how do we support single parents' families to address and to prevent homelessness, with a focus on at-risk youths?

- **Closing Remarks**: Call to Action - Individual role in Dignifying the Needy and Ending Homelessness

GEM Action and Implementation Goal: Dignifying the Needy

Advocacy is good, but we must learn to move beyond just talking to real action and implementation. We must first reeducate ourselves, so that we can help to educate others, especially the homeless on financial issues.

GEM looks to galvanize similar support in the quest to Dignifying the Needy and providing housing for people in need. by partnering with other partners including relief organizations, NGOs, churches, etc. to bringing holistic interventions to ending the homelessness.

GEM's goal of holding this side event is to champion the advocacy of individual responsibility at restoring the dignity after homelessness as well as to provide support to Dignifying the Needy with love and respect as well as to provide social support and basic necessities of life,, including food, shelter, education to become self-sufficient in life and to prevent people from being homeless, and for the individuals after homelessness.

One Compelling example of implementation is to emulate what Finland did to cause a decline in the number of homeless people.

Finland empowered the Homeless People by turning them into Tenants

According to the article by Von Kathrin Glösel (https://scoop.me/housing-first-finland-homelessness/), Finland is the only EU-country where the number of homeless people is declining because they reversed the way that the Homeless are viewed and helped. In Finland, "Housing First" initiative **reverses the path** by helping the Homeless people to get a flat – *__without any preconditions__*. Social workers help them with applications for social benefits and are available for counselling in general. In such a new, secure situation, it is easier for those affected to find a job and take care of their physical and mental health.

The result is impressive: 4 out of 5 homeless people will be able to keep their flat for a long time with "Housing First" and lead a more stable life. In the last 10 years, the "Housing First" program provided 4,600 homes in Finland. In 2017 there were still about 1,900 people living on the streets – but there were enough places for them in emergency shelters so that they at least didn't have to sleep outside anymore.

The Finland "Housing First" has a compelling point that although creating housing for people costs money, providing people with apartments is cheaper than leaving them on the street because when people are in emergency situations, emergencies are more frequent: Assaults, injuries, breakdowns. The police, health care and justice systems are more often called upon to step in – and this also costs money. In comparison, "Housing First" is cheaper than accepting homelessness.

The Ways the Finland NGO Receives Financial Support

- Discounted loans from the state to buy housing.
- Social workers caring for the homeless and future tenants are paid by the state
- Lottery supports the NGO when it buys apartments on the private housing market.
- The NGO uses the rental income to repay the loans