

Right to Housing: Homelessness and Forced Evictions

1. Executive Summary

Following the Habitat III (H3) Conference in October 2016, the UN MGCY H3 Working Group is running a series of webinars on topics surrounding sustainable urban development, youth action and the New Urban Agenda. In the fourth webinar of this series, speakers representing the UN, government, civil society and youth will share their views on global issues of housing and experiences and challenges of accessing the right to housing with a focus on forced evictions and homelessness.

2. Background

International law mandates adequate housing as a human right. The right to the city, a concept increasingly integrated into national and international policy is based on the idea of equitable use of cities, according to the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice. Within this paradigm, the right to adequate housing is outlined as fundamental. However, the changing nature of urbanisation has turned adequate housing into a luxury, accessible to only a few. This has been attributed to the financialisation of housing, where housing has shifted from being a human right to being a commodity tradeable in the real estate market. Coupled with this is a global under provisioning of adequate housing which leads people to develop their own housing solutions. The nature of this self-developed housing varies across the globe and is widely referred to as either slums, squatter settlements or favelas. These solutions are viewed by the state as 'informal', largely owing to their nature of tenure, land ownership and structure - hence the term "informal settlements" is used to describe them ubiquitously.

While such settlements are often located in urban peripheries - along coasts, marshes, pipelines - many are located on prime land. Often the state and other private agencies find lucrative uses for the same land once it has been made habitable. This is a leading cause for forced evictions. Forced evictions occur for other reasons as well - conflicts over land ownership, exclusionary urban plans, environmental concerns and as a part of efforts to sanitise cities. Forced evictions are a violation of the human right to life. International laws on forced evictions are stringent, yet the non-binding nature of these laws fail to contain them. Forced evictions render millions homeless each year – the worst affected being women and young people, who form the largest percentage of those living in such settlements.

Homelessness too is an outcome of the lack of housing. However, the global nature of homelessness is quickly changing. Its causes are not an absolute lack of shelter but rather an intersection of factors that create barriers to accessing adequate housing - thereby exacerbating poverty and limiting opportunities.

Forced evictions and homelessness are human rights violations experienced in cities across the world. They are hindrances to realising 'inclusive cities' that were agreed upon by Member States in the New Urban Agenda. This webinar will explore the right to the city through discussions on homelessness and forced evictions, its global nature and youth action on the same.

3. Organisers

a. UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY)

The UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) is the official space for children and youth to contribute to certain intergovernmental and policy processes at the United Nations. It is a mandated space by Agenda 21 and a number of UN General Assembly Resolutions, as well as ad hoc agreements with UN bodies and conferences. The UN MGCY is an open constituency, space and a platform for collaboration among youth-led organizations, youth-serving organizations, child focused agencies, and individual young people. It is a self-organized space with a democratic structure, where all members elect facilitators and coordinators and everyone can contribute. The UN MGCY HIII Working Group is the official space for the participation of children and youth in the Habitat III process. This participation includes, but is not limited to, regional and thematic meetings, Urban Thinkers Campuses, official inputs to reports, and interventions and statements during formal meetings and informal negotiations, like relevant GA committees, preparatory committees, and the final global summit itself. The UN MGCY is also the chair of the Children and Youth Partner Constituent Group (CYPCG) of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP), the primary mechanism for stakeholder engagement in Habitat III.

b. Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA)

YUVA is a voluntary development organisation committed to enabling vulnerable groups to access their rights. Founded in 1984, YUVA is a national organization in India. YUVA encourages the formation of people's collectives that engage in the discourse on development, thereby ensuring self-determined and sustained collective action in communities. This work is complemented with advocacy and policy recommendations at different levels. YUVA has consultative status with UN ECOSOC

4. Webinar

a. Details

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| Date | Sunday 27th August, 2017 |
| Time | 14.00 - 15.30 GMT |

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| RSVP | tinyurl.com/MGCYWebinar3RSVP |
| GTM Link | bit.ly/H3Calls |

b. Content

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| Title | Right to Housing: Homelessness and Forced Evictions |
| Objectives | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. To raise awareness amongst youth and other groups about contemporary urban challenges on housing – especially the global nature of forced evictions and homelessness II. To showcase some examples of youth leadership in providing solutions to cases of forced evictions and homelessness III. To provide an open space for discussion regarding how youth can take action to advocate for the right to housing and provide critical support to their communities. |
| Outcomes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Understand the right to the city as a fundamental to preventing homelessness and forced evictions across the globe II. Foster a spirit of co learning from youth across the globe with regard to collective action and innovative solutions |

5. Programme

| Time | Programme | PIC/Speaker |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14.00 | Introduction + Buffer Time | Moderator - Marina Joseph - YUVA/UNMGCY |
| 14.10 | Homelessness and forced evictions as a fallout of the right to adequate housing | Lorena Zarate - President, Habitat International Coalition |
| 14.20 | Case of forced evictions: Youth activism and Otodo Gbame (Nigeria) | Edukpo Tina Olorunwa & Kunnu Rende Paul - Nigerian Informal Settlement Federation / Justice and Empowerment Initiatives |
| 14.35 | Case of homelessness: Youth involvement in homelessness in Mumbai (India) | Pooja Yadav - YUVA (India) |
| 14.45 | Panel Discussion | Moderator |
| 15.05 | Q&A | Audience |

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| 15.25 | Summary + Closing Remarks | Moderator |
| 15.30 | End of Event | |

6. Speakers

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|  | <p>Lorena Zarate <i>President, Habitat International Coalition</i></p> <p>Lorena is currently the President of Habitat International Coalition (HIC). During the past 15 years, she has been involved in the elaboration and dissemination of the World Charter on the Right to the City (2001-2005) and the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City (2008-2010).</p> <p>At international level, since 2002 she has been in close collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing as well as with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for the elaboration of thematic reports and recommendations for national and local governments on how to improve security of tenure, land and housing rights and the right to the city worldwide.</p> <p>She has co-edited and published books and articles in Latin America, North America and Europe on issues related to housing rights, social production and management of habitat and the right to the city. She has participated as a speaker in numerous workshops, seminars and conferences in more than 20 countries, in particular within the framework of the World Urban Forum and the World Social Forum.</p> <p>Since 2014, Lorena is co-coordinator of an international project to promote a Global Platform for the Right to the City, which is actively participating at the Habitat III process and the discussion of the so-called New Urban Agenda.</p> |
|  | <p>Edukpo Tina Olorunwa <i>Nigerian Informal Settlement Federation Justice and Empowerment Initiative, Nigeria</i></p> <p>Tina is an active member and volunteer of the Nigerian Slum / Informal Settlement Federation, a movement of the urban poor that works closely with the Justice & Empowerment Initiative (JEI). Tina grew up in the Otodo Gbame community where over 30,000 people were forcibly evicted between November 2016 and April 2017. She has experienced forced eviction and homelessness first hand and has also been active in supporting their community's struggle for justice before / during / since this period.</p> |

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|  | <p>Kunnu Rende Paul <i>Profiling Facilitator, Nigerian Informal Settlement Federation Justice and Empowerment Initiative, Nigeria</i></p> <p>Paul is an active member and volunteer of the Nigerian Slum / Informal Settlement Federation, a movement of the urban poor that works closely with the Justice & Empowerment Initiative (JEI). Paul also grew up in the Otodo Gbame community where over 30,000 people were forcibly evicted between November 2016 and April 2017. He has experienced forced eviction and homelessness first hand and has also been active in supporting their community's struggle for justice before / during / since this period. Additionally, Paul is a JEI-trained community paralegal who renders free legal education and assistance to his and other urban poor communities with JEI support / supervision</p> |
|  | <p>Pooja Yadav <i>Homeless Collective, Mumbai Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action, India</i></p> <p>Pooja Yadav works with Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), a non-profit in India on issues of urbanization, urban poverty and the right to the city. She is member of campaigns and people's collectives that advocate for rights of the homeless. She works on issues of children and youth in informal settlements and street situations. She is an active member of negotiating for legal rights of the homeless in Mumbai.</p> |
|  | <p>Marina Joseph (moderator) <i>Regional Focal Point (South and Central Asia), UN MGCY Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action, India</i></p> <p>Marina Joseph works with Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), a non-profit in India on issues of urbanization, urban poverty and the right to the city. She is member of campaigns that advocate for people's rights in urban spaces, focusing on people's participation and inclusion of the informal in urban planning and governance. She also works on projects to develop safe and sustainable habitats for children and youth living in informal settlements. She has published articles and reports on urban and equity issues in India. Within the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY), Marina is the South and Central Asia Regional Focal Point for the follow up and review of the New Urban Agenda.</p> |

7. Contact

| Name | Position | Organisation | Email |
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