



Social Issues

Homelessness



Definition:

Someone who is homeless is without a fixed home.

Homeless people may live on the streets, or may move from shelter to shelter, or may be required to live in temporary accommodation

Examples:

- People who have either been forced to leave home for fear or danger, or who have chosen to leave home and cannot support themselves
- Street children
- Refugees and internally displaced people.
- People who may have a job, but no fixed abode, and so sleep at friend's houses, shelters, squats, or on the streets at night.

Why the situation occurs?

Young people may leave home because they are threatened, mistreated, mentally and/or physically abused. Some young people leave home following a disagreement, which they feel can not be resolved. Others may be forced to leave home by their families if they have done something that their parents and family cannot accept and cope with, for example, underage pregnancy, drug addiction, and abusive behaviour.

They may have little or no means to support themselves and will have to rely on their own survival skills as well as assistance from government and charitable organisations. They may not know what assistance is available and may end up living rough on the streets and facing other dangers every day.

Children in some parts of the world may be rejected by their parents who can not afford to support them. They may be left to wander the streets and survive by themselves, the whole family may be homeless and live on the streets.

Refugees and internally displaced people flee their homes due to danger or fear, and automatically become homeless. They then have to rely on aid from governments, charities and the goodwill of others.

Some people may fall on hard times and not be able to make rent payments or pay bills. They may still have a job, but may not be able to continue living in their homes. They then have to rely on social support, charities, the assistance of their friends or families, or even live on the streets.

How you can make a difference:

Tackle the issue - learn about the issue and how to identify with the situation. Why do people become homeless and what difficulties do they face. What support can they receive? What attitudes need to be changed and how can you help this?

Use the materials and tools provided to follow the process of:

1. Identifying the problem
2. Developing Awareness and Empathy
3. Taking action
4. Measuring the change

Resources and Links:

Information on the World Organizations of the Scout Movement's Strategic Priority 4: Reaching Out

<http://www.scout.org/strat/sp4en.shtml> (English)

<http://worldnet.scout.org/stratcd/frsp4/> (French)

"Shelter" is a Christian Charity Organisation in the United Kingdom working to improve homelessness and bad housing. This English language site provides interesting information on the subject of homelessness: <http://www.shelter.org.uk>

Homeless International is a UK based charity that supports community-led housing and infrastructure related development in partnership with local partner organisations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Their site includes useful English language information on the subject:

<http://www.homeless-international.org>

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit Christian housing organisation dedicated to eliminating poverty housing: <http://www.habitat.org>

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all: <http://www.unhabitat.org>