A Comparative Analysis of Homelessness: A Case of New York City and the City of Chicago

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Abstract

The concept of homelessness is evolving with time and so are its definitions. Sentimental definitions of homelessness have also led to definitional inconsistencies and these limitations have the ability to obscure how countries and cities respond to homelessness. With rapid urbanization and regular country-driven conflicts which exacerbate migration, it is without a doubt going to be difficult for cities to eradicate homelessness in the near future. Many cities of the world are not only struggling to have a common understanding of a homeless person, but also have difficulties in developing and implementing strategies to deal with homelessness. It is for this reason that this study focused on the comparative analysis of how New York City and the City of Chicago, which have been hailed as the most successful cities in reducing homelessness, have dealt with this phenomenon. The study used qualitative and comparative analysis to determine the cross-cutting themes between the two cities. The study has evidently emphasized and demonstrated, among other things, the significance of the legislation to provide exclusively for homeless people and also the formulation of Strategies by cities to deal with homelessness. Recommendations were made based on what cities could learn from both New York City and the City of Chicago respectively.

Keywords: *Homelessness; Homeless People; Shelters; Housing First Concept; Health and Social Services; Skills Development; Partnerships*

Introduction

Homelessness is a global phenomenon and knows no boundaries. Big and small cities are continuously experiencing homelessness though at varying scales. Although rapid urbanization

contributes to escalation of homelessness, migration especially from least developed countries has resulted into spikes of numbers in recent years. Quite a number of migrants especially from underdeveloped and conflict-ridden African countries end up migrating to secondary and major cities of the world and thus become homeless.

The definition of a homeless person has been evolving similarly to the circumstances within which homeless people find themselves. Many people define homeless people as those who live in the streets or shelters. There is also a category of people who do not have a home and may be living with friends or relatives and in some countries, they are defined as homeless. The point is that if governments are unable to define homelessness appropriately and accurately, chances are, it will be difficult for them to understand homelessness and deal with it decisively. It is for this reason that Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992) argue that it becomes difficult to urge governments to meet the needs of homeless people if the parameters of the homeless population are unclear.

Polarization of the definition of homelessness has also been exacerbated by the two contrasting and divergent views by government agencies and non-governmental organizations dealing with homelessness. Definitions produced by government agencies with responsibility for addressing homelessness tend to minimize the population and concentrate only on those who are publicly visible whereas non-governmental service providers regard definition as the link between the problem of homelessness and agency responsibility (Minery and Greenhalgh, 2007). It is argued further by Widdowfield (1999) that non-governmental agencies, in the quest for funding, tend to favour broad definitions of homelessness often by conflation of people at risk of homelessness. There is generally lack of standard international definition of homelessness and this inherently inhibits the manner in which governments can generally deal with homelessness. There is therefore a need for a carefully constructed international and most accommodative definition of homelessness.

For a comprehensive understanding of homelessness, there is a need to establish the causes of homelessness for this can also help in providing solutions to homelessness. There has always been a traditional belief that linked homelessness with mental illness and drug addiction, but recent studies suggest that homelessness is also linked to poverty, unemployment, hunger, domestic violence, etc. Lack of family support structure or system has also been identified as a causal factor.

The advent of technology has seen the involvement of statistics to measure homelessness and profile homeless people. Kate, et. al., (2020) highly recommend the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) as the most prominent definition and classification of homelessness. It proposes how the homeless population should be identified and divides the population into discrete sub-groups. The ETHOS approach has been advocated as providing an appropriate basis for measuring homelessness in Europe (Edgar, et. al. 2007) and is widely accepted and frequently quoted in almost all European countries (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). Profiling of homeless people can also help establish if there are homeless people with criminal records or convictions.

This paper is therefore structured in two parts. The first part provides theoretical overview of homelessness which includes definition of homelessness, causes of homelessness, data management and homelessness, health care and social services provided to homeless people, provision of housing, necessary partnerships, skills development and job creation and strategies to deal with homelessness. The second part is a comparative analysis of two cities (New York and Chicago) on how they dealt with homelessness. Six cross-cutting themes came out of the analysis, and they defined how the two cities respond to homelessness in their respective jurisdictions. Recommendations were also made based on the cross-cutting themes so that other cities can see the benefit of being structurally and institutionally ready to deal with homelessness. Recommendations are not exhaustive but provide a good lever for cities to start the process of eradicating homelessness.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to do a comparative analysis on how cities of New York and Chicago dealt with homelessness. The objectives of the study were to:

- Review literature and studies about homelessness.
- Analyze and compare how New York City and Chicago City dealt with homelessness.
- Make recommendations based on cross-cutting strategies to deal with homelessness between New York City and Chicago City.

Literature Review

Definition of Homelessness

The general definition of a homeless person is that it is someone who lives in the streets or shelter and does not have a permanent home or residence. Whilst this definition is generic, it should be pointed out that definitions of homelessness are highly perceptive and country specific, dependent on how governments of specific countries perceive it. In Europe, for example, national definitions of homelessness are very country specific and poignant to the European Union interpretation and views on homelessness.

Table 1: National Definitions of Homelessness (Adapted from Benjaminsen, et. al., 2008)

Country	National Definition of Homelessness
France	Anyone found stranded the night before the survey, in an inhabitable or those supported by organizations providing free or subsidized hosting or accommodation.
Czech Republic	People sleeping rough or roofless people who are unable to possess a dwelling and live in accommodation for homeless people; those living in insecure accommodation; those dwelling in conditions below the minimum standards of living; people who basically do not have a home to live and those who live from the streets.
Germany	People who are without accommodation or shelter provided by any public bodies. People who are provided with temporary accommodation or shelter by local authorities or non-governmental organizations, etc.
Hungary	According to the Hungarian Social Law of 1993, homeless persons are those families or independent individuals without a registered place of residency or those whose registered address of living is in a homeless situation.
Poland	People who do not have a habitable place or declare no fixed dwelling place. Primary homelessness involves people who live in the streets, public spaces without any accommodating shelter. Secondary homelessness reflects the living conditions of people without stable living place and those who regularly change from one form of accommodation to the other.
Portugal	An individual whom irrespective of nationality, age, sex, socio-economic status, physical and mental health; is roofless and dwells in a public space, insecure apartment, emergency shelter, etc.
UK	Homelessness is viewed as lack of housing suitable for habitation not just the absence of housing. Households facing risk of gender-oriented violence or harassment were logically referred to as homeless people.
Finland	People sleeping rough or in overnight shelters; people in dormitories or hostels; people temporarily living with friends or relatives, etc.

A critical evaluation of these definitions of homelessness suggests serious variations and flaws. For example, some countries look at homeless only from "housing exclusion" point of view, whilst others exclusively look at it from "living in the streets" point of view. None of these definitions are comprehensive or inclusive of all aspects of homelessness. It is also important to link the definition of homelessness with the question "Who are homeless?". Traditional stereotypes regard homeless people as single, largely black, involved in drugs and as a result mentally ill or retarded. Modern homeless people are younger, mixed gender and ethnically diverse. Many underdeveloped or developing countries have also experienced a spike in the number of children under the age of 18 being homeless. There is a dwindling number of those who are elderly (above the age of 60). Alcohol and substance (drug) abuse are still prevalent amongst homeless people.

Causes of Homelessness

Lee, et. al., (2010) argue that at the macro level, the big-picture narratives attribute homelessness to lack of affordable housing, economic conditions (e.g. restructuring, joblessness, poverty) and demographic trends (urbanization). Several researchers have also asked homeless people directly why they are homeless. Individuals regularly cite manifestations of structural dislocation such as increased housing costs or lack of work as reasons (Burt, et. al., 2001, Snow & Anderson, 1993).

Lack of housing and inability to afford low-cost houses is also a determinant factor to homelessness. Whilst there are a few countries like South Africa that provide free housing to destitute and poor families, there is no direct free housing policy provision for homeless people to be allocated free houses. Many countries do not necessarily provide free houses but subsidize the costs so that poor people can afford but homeless people still cannot afford because they do not have any kind of income.

Natural disasters like floods, mudslides, earthquakes, etc do also displace many people resulting to some of those who cannot get emergent help resorting to the streets and thus become homeless. Mental health, alcohol and drug abuse do also contribute towards homelessness. These causes are often linked to broken families where there is a lot of abuse and domestic violence.

Data Management and Homelessness

Modern cities are beginning to use modern approaches which include data as part of a multi-pronged approach to deal with homelessness. It is important for city governments to understand when to intervene in terms of data collection. The recommended ideal time is when families show signs of vulnerability, for example, when the family falls behind in terms of paying their utility bills. The other point of data collection is from courts after evictions of people because once evicted those people are likely to resort to the streets. Several governance and implementation issues concerning data collection are discussed at length in several recent European publications (Edgar, et. al., 2007; Edgar, 2009; Frazer and Marlier, 2009) and these emphasize the importance of:

- Political commitment at national level.
- Clarification of responsibilities among government departments.
- Involvement and cooperation of all key stakeholders including NGOs.
- Clarification of data protection issues and prevention of double counting.

There is also correlation between data collection and the cost of homelessness. It is common knowledge that local governments across the world are fiscally constrained and therefore need to justify increased costs in particular that of homelessness. There are financial indicators (traits) that can be used to benchmark the costs of homelessness, and these include demographics of the homeless which include their gender, age, etc; criminal justice system records that establish whether homeless people have criminal records or not; the medical diagnosis which includes any health and emergency care experience and mental health care, and any other social care or services. This information becomes very crucial in

connecting homeless people in need of health and intensive care. It is always important and advisable for cities to embark on preventative measures to combat homelessness even before it starts because that will eventually save costs.

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) has become a very popular information management system for the homeless people. This system provides for the collection of information not only from the homeless people but also from their families. The system also stipulates those who have been served or exited the system, for example, those who have been allocated temporal or permanent housing.

Health Care and Social Services

There is a correlation between homelessness and health problems which are largely caused by the social behaviour of homeless people and ignoring the social side of the homeless people may be detrimental to finding a solution to homelessness. The Homelessness Task Force Report (2018) recommends the following approaches in the provision of health care and social services to homeless people:

- **Whole Person Care (WPC):** The WPC model is an integrated and coordinated approach between health, behavioural and social services agencies to provide efficient and effective resources to medical recipients who are frequent users of the health care system. The model addresses the full spectrum of a homeless person's needs, such as health, behavioural and socioeconomic challenges.
- **Safe Havens:** This is kind of a facility that gives care through private or semi-private organizations to the homeless people who have severe mental illnesses.
- **Homeless Outreach Teams:** These teams provide outreach to engage with the homeless population to connect them with services all focused on getting them housed and then have access to health and social services.

Provision of Housing

Many scholars argue that lack of affordable housing is the main cause of homelessness, off-course, there could be other reasons that lead to homelessness such as drugs and or alcohol abuse; broken homes, etc. It is a known fact that many governments would struggle to increase the number of housing units to accommodate homeless people. There are other factors that impede government from providing such housing and these include non-availability of land to build houses, spatial planning issues where plans to build low-cost houses are rejected by local neighbours, lack of policy provision for homeless people. The other difficulty is that some mentally ill and drugs abusing homeless people need an array of professional support services to come with the housing provision and most governments struggle to provide such packages. Different countries use different models of housing provisions to homeless people however according to the Homelessness Task Force Report (2018) the three most successful approaches are:

- **Rapid Rehousing:** This approach provides temporary housing assistance to homeless individuals. The model entails prioritizing the quick relocation of homeless populations into temporary housing and then providing other support such as mental and social services.
- **Continuum of Care (CoC):** CoCs are designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. They provide funding for efforts by non-profit providers and state and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness.

- **Tiny homes:** Tiny homes have gained in popularity as a lower-cost alternative to traditional single-family housing construction. They have also served as transitional housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. Tiny homes are sustainable and less expensive to build and do not require extensive expertise, allowing volunteers of many backgrounds and skill levels to help with construction.

Necessary Partnerships

Many governments find it very difficult to have enough budget to provide for one need, out of many, of the homeless people which is housing, and this is a clear indication that government will never deal with homelessness alone. Whilst it is widely accepted globally that governments and cities will never completely eradicate homelessness but manage or reduce it by providing at least the essential and basic needs, the test is on whether the cities do have strategies and plans to deal with homelessness. When it comes to homelessness no single entity is fully responsible and accountable for ending homelessness amongst communities. Every agency (government or non-governmental agencies or private sector) holds a small piece of the solution but there must be one eye to see to it that all those pieces can complete the puzzle.

Skills Development and Job-Creation

There is empirical evidence that provision of skills which lead to employment of homeless people can reduce homelessness significantly. There are a few cities such as the City of Durban in South Africa that have ensured that they set aside a skills development budget for homeless people. It is firstly important to have a deliberate skills development programme with the necessary job creation exit whether it makes homeless people employable or start their own small businesses. Secondly it is important to identify and collaborate with the other stakeholders to ensure that other inherent social challenges faced by homeless people are attended to.

When the City of Durban started developing the homeless people as a pilot, it gathered 20 homeless people to do a 12-month Skills Programme in Bricklaying. Before they could start the Programme, they needed to be "detoxed" from all the social and health problems and all of them were abusing drugs and involved in alcohol abuse. The city identified a shelter where the 20 homeless people were housed and provided food and paid for their accommodation. It worked together with social workers and health officials for a period of 3 months to "detox" them and to ensure that they do not regress to drugs and resort back to the streets. The City then started the 12 months skills programme where they spent 6 months in the classroom and another 6 months in housing construction sites. The City constructs at least 5000 houses per year for the needy and poor communities so it was easy for it to place these homeless learners in the housing projects for experiential learning.

What then became a bonus for the 19 homeless learners was that each one of them was able to get employed by the construction companies where they were placed for work experience. The 20th homeless learner saved the money and went to the university to study Civil Engineering and now he has a very successful engineering company that builds houses, and he ensures that he employs some homeless people whenever he gets a housing construction project. The City still continues with its approach to reduce homelessness although this comes with its own challenges, however it is proven to be a game changer and one of the proven strategies to reduce or eradicate homelessness.

Strategies to Deal with Homelessness

The European Union has always noted that to be able to effectively contend with homelessness, prevention, early prevention, effective service delivery, quick rehousing, systematic data collection and monitoring, among other things, are to be prioritized. In essence this is what will inform the strategy to

deal with homelessness. The European Pillar of Social Rights issued Article 19 which promotes the rights of homeless persons to housing and support. This Article stipulates that:

- The needy shall be granted access to social or high-quality housing assistance.
- The rights of the vulnerable people must be appropriately protected against forced eviction, and they must be entitled to the necessary assistance due to them.
- The homeless people shall be provided with enough shelter and services to enhance their inclusion in the society (FEANTSA, 2008).

According to OECD (2016) many countries and their cities have adopted strategies to deal with homelessness. The Czech Republic adopted the National Strategy on Prevention and Fight against Homelessness in 2013. The Strategy was developed by the Department of Labour and Social Affairs together with Experts Tackling Homelessness. Some municipalities such as the City of Prague have their own strategies on tackling homelessness. Finland has implemented the "Housing First" principle which includes the conversion of former institutional shelters into supported housing with permanent tenancies. Municipalities are given operational responsibilities. France has also developed a national strategy for homeless and poorly housed (2009-2012). Municipalities implement Action Plans for Housing of Deprived Persons. In 2006-2014 the Netherlands had a national plan on homelessness including the national government and the four biggest cities which have half of the homeless population in Netherlands. The national plan was extended to 43 municipalities and their respective regions in 2011. At the beginning of 2015 there were more delegated tasks to the local governments.

In Poland the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy implemented the Programme supporting development of homelessness solutions which supports NGOs providing services in the field of homelessness. There are local strategies at municipal level for solving social problems including homelessness implemented by Social Assistance Centres and financed by local governments. In Poland there was a National Strategy developed and implemented from 2009-2015 which aimed at integrating the homeless prevention and intervention. There are Homelessness Local Planning and Intervention Centres (NPISA) that have been established at the local level in the framework of the National Strategy. All countries in the United Kingdom (UK) adopted different laws and strategies tackling homelessness. In England legislation such as Housing Act of 1996 and the Homelessness Act of 2002 have been enacted to deal with homelessness. England local authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for "statutory homeless" i.e. unintentionally homeless households who fall into a "priority need" category. The Scottish government strived in 10 years to increase the supply of social housing and came up with housing options that increase ability of local authorities to offer support to maintain current tenancies, focusing on prevention of homelessness. Northern Ireland has a homelessness strategy for 2012-2017 and Wales in 2014 adopted a Legislation that focuses on prevention activities by local authorities.

At the city level it has been demonstrated by other cities that a city needs to have a strategic plan which is deliberate and focused on dealing and eventually eradicating homelessness. The Plan enables the officials of the city to take decisions about the resources and how they will measure progress and success on the implementation of the plan. It is advisable that the plan be multi-year and include the stakeholders including those that are outside the city but play an important role to support the homeless people such as social workers, health care workers, etc. Edgar, et. al., (2007) emphasize that homelessness strategies should have several different aims setting concrete targets in the action areas such as:

- Prevention of homelessness.
- Tackling the causes of homelessness.
- Reducing the level of homelessness.
- Reducing the negative effects on homeless people and their families.
- Ensuring that formerly homeless people can sustain permanent independent housing.

Whilst plans can vary from one city to the other, the following are the general questions to be asked when developing the plan (Homeless Task Force Report, 2018):

- Will strategies and plans be set annually or will they span over years? How often will the jurisdiction review progress?
- Is the strategy or plan specific to the jurisdiction or are there efforts included that impact the region?
- Does the strategy or plan include government agency actions only or does it include actions of other community partners?
- Is there a need to create a new department, agency or community organizations to coordinate and oversee efforts?
- What resources is the agency already using for this effort? Can additional resources be added?
- Is there a specific targeted population?
- Are the plans outcomes (or impact) based?
- What is the purpose of the plan? What is the organisation trying to achieve?
- How will success be determined?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the role of the other stakeholders such as law-enforcement agencies?
- How will the plans be shared with the public?
- What other plans exist that have linkages with this plan?

Research Methodology

The study was a framework and comparative analysis of how New York City and the City of Chicago successfully dealt with homelessness for these are the 2 world-renowned cities that have successfully dealt with homelessness. The qualitative analysis was used to compare and contrast the 2 cities' strategies to solve homelessness, and this also resulted into the presentation of cross-cutting themes between the 2 cities. A framework analysis is appropriate when the desire is to systematically analyze a set of similar kinds of data (i.e. with the same themes or topics so that it can be consistently categorized) (Gale, et.al., 2013). According to Birks, et. al., (2008) framework analysis can facilitate the identification of key themes using a matrix approach to compare data and extensive memoing and discussion among research team members to identify linkages between themes and key messages of interest.

Research Findings

This section provides a comparative analysis of only key contextual features of the two case cities (New York City and the City of Chicago). Findings are then presented based on the strength of evidence gathered and thereafter cross-cutting themes are presented.

Comparing Two Cities

New York City

One distinct advantage that New York City has, is that the problem of homelessness is tackled from the top. Policymakers have attacked the problem with varying degrees of success, unlike other jurisdictions, residents have a legal right to shelter.

The other strategy that has worked very well for New York City is that the state utilizes federal stimulus money to create Emergency Rental Assistance Programme which has distributed more than $2 billion in aid to renters. This was strengthened by a temporary eviction moratorium that was imposed

during Covid-19. In addition to the emergency aid, the City has housing voucher programmes for people experiencing homelessness.

In an attempt to cut the red tape, the New York City Mayor, Eric Adams, recently eased rules that prevented homeless people outside of the City's shelter system from accessing aid. This basically means even if the homeless are literally in the streets they still get aid. Additionally, the Mayor has committed to a host of other initiatives to ease homelessness, from accelerating the delivery of 15000 units of supportive housing to reforming zoning laws and preserving existing financial support to below the market rate units.

New York City, like any other city faced with rapid urbanization, has seen a spike in the housing rentals and this has exacerbated the housing crisis further making it worse for the homeless people. To counter this and also with the homeless and people who cannot afford houses in mind, New York City introduced a Bill that would give non-profit organizations and community land trusts first priority on developing publicly owned land. This bold policy initiative is meant to foster housing development that prioritizes affordability and limits profits and speculation.

New York City used outcomes-based approach to encourage homeless people to use shelters (although shelters are not necessarily favoured as the best solution to eradicate homelessness). This performance-based approach includes shelter providers being graded on the number of housing placements, length of client stays and return-to-shelter rates. Shelter providers also get points for client benefit programmes.

The Housing First concept has also been adopted by New York City for they strongly believe that providing permanent housing is the most cost-effective approach to addressing homelessness. A housing programme called Housing and Supportive Services (HSS) has been introduced and designed to prevent homelessness, provide shelter for the homeless, construct supportive housing for the homeless and offer essential services to stabilize housing situations and increase levels of self-sufficiency.

New York City has successfully roped in the private sector and non-profit organizations into the fore in the quest to deal with homelessness. It has launched a Homeless Assistance Fund, a collective public-private partnership to provide general services and mental health care to the people experiencing homelessness. The business community has demonstrated support to helping city government deal with homelessness where 60 private sector companies contributed more than $8m to the launch of the Fund. The Fund is also used to train city officials to understand and deal with homelessness better.

The New York City Council passed the Homeless Bill of Rights into law in May 2023. The law gives homeless people a right to sleep outdoors but only in public spaces. It also gives them the right to complain about shelter accommodations without repercussion and includes safeguards to prevent a person from being assigned to spaces that do not correspond to their gender identity. It also gives homeless people the right to apply for a rental assistance and are given priority. The law also affirms that the homeless people have a right to shelter.

The City commemorates the Homelessness Rights Month and this is marked by advocacy and the launch of the Report by the Committee to End Homelessness by 2026. The Report amongst other things encourages the City to build affordable houses for homeless people rather than to provide shelters because it is proven that it is more expensive to provide for and maintain them in shelters than to build a permanent house. The Report proposes increasing funding for the "HomeBase prevention programme" which offers supportive services for people at risk of homelessness.

Chicago City

Chicago City has introduced the Rental Assistance Programme (RAP) to try and prevent homelessness as much as possible. Prevention services include short-term financial assistance for rent,

utilities, arrears and any other costs that would help them retain their houses. The Chicago Coordinated Entry System is designed to help all people who are experiencing housing crisis have a fair and equal access to the services. This system allows them to access services anywhere in the City.

The City has developed Plan 2.0, with 7 strategic priorities that represent the most cutting edge thinking on preventing and ending homelessness. The strategic priorities and goals are:

- **The Crisis Response System:** This is an effective crisis response system that prevents homelessness whenever possible and rapidly returns people who experience homelessness to stable housing.
- **Access to Stable and Affordable Housing:** It creates and maintains stable and affordable housing for households who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness.
- **Youth Homelessness:** It creates a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate menu of services for youth who experience homelessness to prevent homeless youth from becoming the next generation of homeless adults.
- **Employment:** It increases meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness.
- **Advocacy and Civic Engagement:** It engages all Chicago people in a robust plan that creates a path to securing a home for everyone in the community.
- **Cross-Systems Integration:** It works across public and private systems of care to ensure ending homelessness is a shared priority.
- **Capacity Building:** It ensures a strong homeless assistance system capable of implementing Plan 2.0 goals.

Chicago City's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) is responsible for funding a network of community-based shelters that support people who are in crisis and the chronically homeless. The City has a 24/7 response to non, life-threatening requests for residents experiencing homelessness crisis. This also ensures that such people have access to services to address behavioural health challenges, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc.

The City also has a Point in Time (PIT) Count system which is like Census and counts sheltered and unsheltered homeless people annually. Every year this data is collected and analyzed, and it helps informs the areas of need, the allocation of resources like houses and provision of services like health care. The City also has the Rapid-Rehousing (RRH) programme which aims at rapidly transitioning individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness to permanent housing thus preventing subsequent shelter entrance.

Cross-Cutting Themes

The six cross-cutting themes presented in Table 2 below were derived based on the full framework analysis process. These themes are noticeably interconnected although each city does not necessarily implement them the same way. For each theme there is description according to each city and how it is implemented.

Table 2: Cross-cutting Themes

Cross-cutting theme	City	Theme description
1. Legislation	New York Chicago	The City has passed the Homeless Bill of Rights into law which provides certain rights and protection to the homeless people. The City does not necessarily have a law that is exclusively passed for homeless people, however the Department of Family and Support (DFSS) is responsible for sheltering and taking care of homeless people.
2. Advocacy	New York Chicago	The City has established a Committee to End Homelessness which has launched a Report that deals with homelessness. The City commemorates the Homelessness Rights Month every year in May. The City has very strong advocacy and civic engagement movement where all Chicago people engage on robust plans for securing homes for everyone.
3. Capacity Building and Incentives	New York Chicago	The City builds capacity and provides incentives to shelter providers which are graded according to services they provide. City officials are also intensively trained on taking care of homeless people. The City has a menu of services of developing homeless youth and also develops homeless people in general connecting them with employment opportunities.
4. Housing First	New York Chicago	The City believes that provision of adequate housing to homeless people is the only permanent solution to eradicate homelessness. It has used the federal stimulus to create Emergency Rental Assistance Programme and has also introduced a housing voucher programme. The City has established a Stable and Affordable Housing Scheme which creates and maintains stable and affordable housing for households who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness.
5. Shelters	New York Chicago	The City has outcomes-based approach to encourage homeless people to use shelters however the City has established that it is actually more expensive to maintain shelters than to build houses for homeless people. The City has through the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) funded shelters and ensures that homeless people have access to all services.
6. Partnerships	New York Chicago	The City has launched a Homeless Assistance Fund wherein (during the launch) 60 private sector companies contributed $8m. The City's collaborative and partnership efforts are more on the civic society and ordinary people of Chicago's involvement in eradicating homelessness.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the cross-cutting themes:

- Cities need to pass comprehensive legislation that is exclusively dedicated to homelessness. This legislation needs to state the rights and protection of homeless people and make it easy for them to access services.
- Cities need to encourage civic organizations, communities and other stakeholders to rally on advocacy that will ensure that every citizen is aware of the challenge and is willing to contribute to eradicate homelessness.
- Cities need to develop the skills of the homeless people, but these skills development programmes should be linked to job opportunities. Everyone else who is involved in the reduction of homelessness should have their capacity developed and this includes the shelter providers, city officials dealing with homelessness, etc. Some of these capacity development programmes should be coupled with incentives to encourage participation.
- The concept of Housing First is proven to be the solution towards the eradication of homelessness. What this means is that Cities need to prioritize provision of housing to homeless people because it is proven that shelters are more expensive to maintain than to build houses. The Housing First Movement has therefore been advocated and embraced across the world as the best solution to solve homelessness.
- Cities should understand that they will never be able to solve the homelessness problem alone, they need to collaborate with a variety of stakeholders and partners. Depending on cities' environments, the business sector and non-governmental organizations have proven to be the willing partners towards providing solutions to the challenge of homelessness. The business sector is willing to participate by investing money in the solutions towards eradication of homelessness.

Conclusion

This paper was structured in two parts. The first part provided theoretical overview of homelessness which includes definition of homelessness, causes of homelessness, data management and homelessness, health care and services provided to homeless people, provision of housing, necessary partnerships, skills development and job creation and strategies to deal with homelessness. The second part was a comparative analysis of two cities (New York City and City of Chicago) on how they dealt with homelessness. Six cross-cutting themes came out of the analysis, and they defined how the two cities respond to homelessness in their respective jurisdictions. Recommendations were also made based on these cross-cutting themes so that other cities can see the benefit of being structurally and institutionally ready to deal with homelessness.

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