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Homelessness as the multidisciplinary problem

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Introduction

We consider as homeless people those who are, from diverse reasons, in the current situation without permanent or temporary accommodation, without the

possibility of obtaining basic health needs and without the possibility of regular nutrition. These are people who are often maladjusted to social norms, people returning from prison, alcoholics, drug addicts, as well as permanently or temporarily unemployed [Striežec, 1996: 27-28].

They are most visible on the streets or in parks in major cities. Many of these people can be seen asking money that is begging, drinking alcohol or sleeping on benches or on the ground. Many people pass them without realizing that these people lose not only the apartment or house where they can every day return from work, but also the family, their children and especially their woman who created them home. Many homeless people are non-conflicting and live in their own world, but there are also those who are vulgar and aggressive. To better understand the issue of homeless people we need to think about the principles of why these people get to the bottom of a society.

Causes of homelessness

The causes of homelessness cannot be generalized to all homeless, mostly for the different combination of subjective and objective reasons in varying proportions. Homeless can become someone, who has not kept his family relationships as well as someone who was falsely expelled from his apartment. Objective reasons are mostly related to social policy. Certainly one of the most common causes is **unemployment**, which bother people not only in Slovakia but throughout the world. In today's society, where machines rule the world, is still less and less work for the man. The unemployment rate in Slovakia reached 12.2% in November. As reported Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, it fell by 0.07 percentage points and year on year by 0.18 percentage points. The number of job seekers, who are able to start to work immediately, reached in November 328,345 people, so in month fell by 1,855 and by 288 people in a year /www.fuu.sk/. **Unfavourable social situation occurs mainly when people lose their jobs - often without any notice from day to day. Problem to deal with this situation have mainly elderly people and people with lower education.** They often lose their jobs that they were doing 20 to 30 years for one company and they look for another job with problems. For these people comes a big break in their life. Those fortunate ones find another job in a few months but those less happy

do not find it at all, and then unfortunately there are many cases when people begin to suffer from depression, that they try to solve with alcohol, theft, prostitution, and often lay their anger and frustration on their loved ones. Finally, before they are able to recover, they find themselves alone, with no family or home, in social isolation and they finally cease to participate in normal daily activities.

The reasons why the homeless cannot find the job:

- Loss of documents - as homeless people are often victims of petty crime, recovery of documents is very time consuming and few of them are able to provide them without outside assistance. - Their common phobia is very often dealing with officials and institutions and is caused by previous rejections and by contempt and arrogance of some officials.
- Employers are interested where the applicant's residence is. And if he declares train station or shelter is not much hope that they employ him.
- A person who is unemployed, and lives long time on the street, over time lose the ability to work [Tvrdon, Kasanová, 2004].

Among other causes of homelessness can be included alcoholism. Alcohol is often called the scourge of mankind. In some decisive situations of life a man often subject to this vice, which is then very difficult to get rid of. Many times people lose because of alcohol the family property and they become homeless people. For homeless is very difficult to get rid of their vices, as they drink mainly to forget and alcohol is often the sole joy in their life and especially in the winter help them to survive cold and harsh winter days. A man who has no home and is dependent on alcohol or other drugs is no longer able to return into normal society. Among other causes that contribute to homelessness we can also include: The lack of affordable housing. Low wages and ever-increasing prices of food and household expenses. Mental or physical illness, divorce, returning from prison, when it is very hard to find a good job when a person has a criminal record ...

Forms of homelessness

Homeless population can be in principle divided into three groups: - Without shelter - without possibility to stay under the roof for all 24 hours - this are people who live on the streets, yards, those seeking accommodation in the asylum houses ...- Without flat - people who are living in miscellaneous settings such

as shelters or public hostels - Living in uncertain and unfavourable conditions - which are for authorities either unknown or only partially known. These people live in precarious conditions flats, often unsafe, makeshift, overcrowded and deprived. They live in homes without water, electricity or heating. Into this group we can also include those who are waiting for the release from a variety of institutions as prisons or orphanages. Most vulnerable are currently homeless people coming from orphanages [Beňová, 2008: 12-14].

It is important that this division distinguishes not only people who actually suffer from the loss of their home, but also those whose homes are in imminent danger. This problem gives room for prevention, which can target high-risk groups threatened by homelessness.

„Living“ conditions of homeless people. The most common place where homeless spend the night is street. It is necessary realize that their night looks very different from ours. There is no question about some sleep and they are exposed to the weather and people's anger. Homeless people are often attacked, robbed and beaten. Therefore, they are trying to spend in shops, public transport, railway stations or parks or in the woods. **They often change places of sleeping due to safety.** Homeless people carry all their belongings with them or hide them somewhere. These people are catching up on sleep deficit during the day on places such as benches or bus stops. Some of them managed to find some “temporary shelter” where they can return every day. This may be cellar, abandoned sewer or abandoned cottage garden. In these shelters we can usually find number of people. The disadvantage is that homeless can be thrown from such makeshift housings by owners so they cannot count on such accommodation for a longer period. And for this reason their stay is still changing. Some homeless people do not intend to risk the night on the streets and therefore seek miscellaneous hostels or dormitories. The difference between them is essential, as hostel to hostel is only for one night and dormitory have to be paid one month in advance.

Help to the homeless

To help homeless people, many organizations have established already mentioned shelters or dormitories, but there are also many different projects such as. NotaBene, or there is also homeless helpline in Bratislava.

The founder of shelter may be:

- States, countries or municipalities / Government level /
- Municipality (funded organization)
- Charity (daily asylum centres, soup kitchens...)
- Humanitarian NGOs, civil associations, foundations...

Forms of shelters for homeless

- Nonstop asylum centres
- Asylum centres with daytime running
- Hospice

According to target group to which is provided help:

- For men, women
- Mixed-shelters
- For mothers with children
- For fathers with children
- For offspring from orphanages
- For socially maladjusted citizens

Personnel in shelters:

- Director, who should have a university degree, majoring in social work
- Economic and technical staff
- Economist
- Social worker
- Security
- Psychologist, special educator, volunteers [Tvrdoň, Kasanová, 2004: 74].

One of the most known organizations is a non-profit organization DePaul Slovakia which operates two facilities in Bratislava. In 2006, when the operation was

launched, started low threshold hospice. It was mainly focused on the winter season to prevent hypothermia deaths among homeless. DePaul-International is the parent company of a group structure, and has offices in the UK, Ireland, Ukraine and USA.

Low threshold dormitory at DePaul Ivanska road is open all year. It was established in a building provided by the City Hall of Bratislava, in agreement with Mayor Andrej Ďurkovský. It was necessary to adjust this place. An interesting fact is that the provision of overnight accommodation is not connected with other requirements. There can sleep homeless without documents, without health insurance funds, sick ones and even those under the influence of alcohol. The reason is mainly that these people are most vulnerable during the winter. The sick can stay up to 3 days. There are available showers for men and for women, heated accommodation and breakfast and dinner can also get some clothing. Reception operate from 18:30 to 22:00 but those who work and bring confirmation of work can come after 22:00. End is at 7:00, those who go to work can remain during the day [<http://www.depaulslovensko.org>].



Shelter of St. Louise de Marillac

This facility was created as the crisis solution to the rescue of dying people in the streets, especially in winter. After a short functioning was found that among homeless people are many who struggle with serious health problems, from which they are not likely to recover on the street and on their own. This shelter is mainly targeted at homeless people discharged from hospitals and who need to recover and also provides all-day care and shelter for homeless.

Characteristics of clients of St. Louise shelter

These are mostly people aged 45-65 years. These people have a good immune system, they live in difficult conditions without regular meals, rest, hygiene, often



under the influence of alcohol or drugs and almost all of them are smokers with chronic cough.

Among the health problems from which suffer homeless people are:

- **Traumatic injuries** - many of them have numerous and old traumatic injuries: recovery from multiple broken bones, bruises, lacerations, cuttings and other various wounds which are likely to change their way of life.

- **Skin diseases** - due to external environmental conditions in the winter they are mainly frostbites and varying degrees of necrosis and gangrene, which often end in amputation of several fingers or of one or both legs.

In the summer come patients with chronic and dirty wounds, which are often "occupied" by worms. Skin diseases are based on polluted and non-washed skin that is easily rushed when mechanically damaged, become septic and also become fertile ground for the survival of parasites. Poor sanitation has also result in lice, fleas or scabies. Furthermore, there occur conjunctivitis, rhinitis or defective teeth.

- **Frequent infections** - **urinary infections that leads to kidney damages.**

- **Indigestion** - caused by poor diet when eating or by substituting meal with alcohol, stomach ulcers are also common disease, also duodenal ulcers and pancreatitis, which can be chronic or acute.
- **Cardio-vascular disease** - manifested by fluctuating or high blood pressure, cardiac decompensation, many are asthmatic, without strength, they are often after stroke, paralysis of half of the body, with speech impediments
- **Neurological diseases** - they suffer from epilepsy, neuropathy and damage of the nerve endings in the lower and upper limbs
- **Psychiatric patients** - states which are manifesting depression, aggression, mood changes, dependency, suicidal tendencies ...
- **Cancer patients** - different cancer diseases of lungs, larynx, stomach, etc..
- **Mobility** - they are often totally or partially disabled.

They are socially isolated and have broken or damaged contacts with the family.

NotaBene

Certainly very good idea how to help the homeless people or to socially weaker ones was the creation of Notabene magazine. This magazine gives a chance and hope to many people. One of the reasons why it is good to buy a magazine Notabene is that people in this business can gain self-esteem and feel that they are doing a good job. System in which the vendors buy the magazine for 70 cents and sell it for the full amount of 1.40 euros forces them to manage money and to think about the next day. When you buy it, from every sold magazine gets 70 cents to operate services for the homeless. Becoming a reseller is not difficult.

Code of the Notabene seller:

1. Vendor must carry a card with his registration number and photograph in visible place
2. Vendor must sell the magazine on the ground that has been assigned to him
3. Vendor should not sell it under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
4. Vendor may not use profanity when selling and have not to harass passers
5. Vendor with dealer's license must not beg

6. Vendor has not to sell magazine to excluded or unregistered dealer
7. Vendor shall not commit criminal activity, vendor may not sell magazine to child under 16 years

These and many other rules must vendors comply to follow the correct codex [Tordová, 2010: 3-5].

Conclusion

Homeless are the permanent part of the life of cities. Fundamental importance to improve the image of homelessness in the public eye should be the reduction of the number of "visible" homeless and extending of help to people at risk of homelessness, i.e. systematic work with homeless people.

There must also be ensured public awareness of these activities. It requires to devote considerable attention to the cultivation of professional and permanent political dialogue with the understanding that the decline of political culture is one of the major sources of growing stress and conflicts has to address current life situation and coordinate with the "New space" which is a magazine that homeless distribute themselves and that often deals with the issue of homelessness. This does not mean that we should sit idly by! The network of health and social services for homeless people cannot be considered optimal and there is still much of what we should try to do before we come to the conclusion that we have tried everything and to do something else is not in our power. In addition, there are undoubtedly homeless using addictive substances, that want to solve their social situation and we need to find ways to help them. Yet in any case we cannot afford to rest on our laurels, we still expect a very long way to go and a lot of work. To homeless people who abuse narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances we are still not able to provide adequate assistance, we have debt to them that should be repaid in the shortest possible timeframe.

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Summary

Authors in this article deal with the issue of people who are, for various reasons, without accommodation. They analyse the causes of their condition, which is absolutely necessary to know, in order to be able to help them. They analyse options that are currently offered in this area. They highlight the issue of their health, which is of course seriously affected by their limited conditions of survival. Their decline of social status as of valid members of our society leads to a serious problem that should be related to all of us if we do not want to allocate them from the society. Homelessness is the urgent medical, nursing, social, psychological, ethical and sociological problem. It is in interest of the public health from the aspect of the spread of infections and of interest of independent foundations and non-profit organizations. Volunteers play an increasingly important role in the care of the homeless community, either as a group or as single individuals.