TSHWANE HOMELESS SUMMIT

25-26 May 2015  Ditsong Museum

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TSHWANE

HOMELESSNESS

FORUM

CITY OF
TSHWANE
IGNITING EXCELLENCE
“We did not choose to be homeless”: voices of homeless women in the City of Tshwane
Drs RS Mogale & SS Phiri
Tshwane Homeless Summit
Ditsong Homeless Museum, Tshwane
25-26 May 2015
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Women who participated in the study
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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Setting the case
- Participants’ Profile
- Procedures
- Voices of Women
- Storylines from the Voices
- Limitations and Delimitations
- Concluding Remarks
INTRODUCTION

United Nations view homelessness as:

• Social
• Psychological
• Emotional construct that revolve around the idea of home.
• It can be ‘absolute’ homeless, the ‘concealed’ homeless and ‘at risk’ of homelessness”.
SETTING THE CASE

- Homelessness affects men and women differently.

- In case of women, homelessness is more complex.

- Women bear the major responsibility for child rearing and family care especially in traditional nuclear families.
PARTICIPANTS’ PROFILE

The participants were women from:

- Different age groups
- Different backgrounds (education, ethnic, etc)
- They recently became homeless. (Less than a year)
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What led to your homelessness?
- How did you come to stay there?
- What is your main motivation to continue to live under the given circumstances?
- How best can homeless people be assisted?
PROCEDURES

- The information leaflet was read with the participants.
- Those willing to participate signed the informed consent.
- Focus group discussions and individual interviews were conducted.
- From the focus group discussions and individual interviews narratives were captured.
- Narratives were analysed for storylines.
VOICES OF WOMEN
What led to your homelessness?

“Late last year around December I discovered that I am pregnant, then we went to the clinic to do the test and everything, that is when he[my boyfriend] started changing. He actually gave me two options he said either I do abortion or I move out”.

“ ‘In my mother’s home it was not always good for my child. We would have peace for a couple of days and conflict would always occur. And this was not good for my child’.”
Voices of Women
What led to your homelessness?

“I was promised employment but I did not work so I end up in the street”.

“Homeless people did not choose to be homeless some of us run away from siblings because of inheritance dispute”.

“Not every has been rejected by family ... I come outside South Africa I am the only girl and I was denied my right of staying in my father and my life was in danger”.
VOICES OF WOMEN

How did you know about the place?

“I was referred by the Social Worker”
“I was referred by friend”
“I was sent here by the court”
“I was referred by my daughter”
“I was referred by my pastor”
“I was passing by and someone referred me”
VOICES OF WOMEN

What is your main motivation to continue to live under the given circumstances?

“My child, my child I know that I am the only one she has, though she has her grandmother, my mother I know but I am only one who can really take care of her. Thus what keeps me going”.

“Prayer and the love of my kids”.

“Yearning for Employment”.

“God is hope and I pray a lot, we get free food, hot water and don’t pay anything”.
Voices of Women

How best can homeless people be assisted?

“If government can build flats because they occupy small area and able to accommodate more people”

“Flats to be made more acceptable pricewise because even a one bedroom flat you pay a lot of money and jobs these days pay much less than even to afford”

“I think homeless people need to be employed first, because even if you can build flats how are they going to pay”. We need to be taught skills to get work and things like that”

“I think employment should be first on the list”.

“I think everything is based on education because educating people is better giving them money”
Voices of Women
How best can homeless people be assisted?

“We are all different and we come from somewhere. We all have families it would be better if government could help homeless people to find their families, their roots where they come from and tried to reconnect that relationship…”

“If we can have people who can speak on our behalf to our families they will understand and accept us back because not all of us are rejected by our families. Some of us we cannot go back home because of self-esteem”.
VOICES OF WOMEN

How best can homeless people be assisted?

“They are helping me to reconnect with my family ...and the community and also helping with legal aid”.

“But we should not be judged because of being homeless”.

“Hence we do not want to go home because of shame”.
STORYLINES FROM THE NARRATIVES

- “Compelled to flee from”
- “Hope as a matter of survival”
- “A shelter is not a home”
- “Low-income social housing”
- “Arrogance and judgmental attitudes of general public towards the homeless people”
STORYLINE: COMPELLED TO FLEE FROM

- Circumstances usually compel women to **flee** for safety and become homelessness. This is not the case of men-who usually **walk out of** circumstances.

- Women are usually compelled to flee from various kinds of harm such as repetitive violence, extreme political circumstances, neglect and/or deprivation.
STORYLINE: HOPE AS A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

- When people hope, they are able to keep going regardless of what life offers.

- Hope is defined as the ability to envision a future in which one is willing to participate.

- With hope, individuals can find meaning, begin to see a future and cope with losses and other life challenges.
STORYLINE: A SHELTER IS NOT A HOME

- A shelter provides many of the amenities of basic living including to food, bed and safety access to washrooms, showers, laundry machines and even sanitary napkins but it is not a home.

- Shelters are over-regulated for restrictive and protective purposes.

- Residents are advised always to watch their steps while staying in shelters.
Affordable housing is defined as the housing market segment for households earning between R3500 and R10,000 per month, which is usually referred to as ‘the gap market’ (Thellane 2008).

Different accommodation options

“Short term Stay” for those working and unable to afford paying rent.

“Sleep and Go”: Unable to go home due to transport and financial issues.

Mentally challenged to have different accommodation options.
STORYLINE: ARROGANCE AND JUDGEMENTAL ATTITUDES

- Homelessness can affect anybody, anytime and anywhere.

- Awareness campaigns on what homelessness is and what it is like need to be considered.

- Information on homelessness can help to change public understanding of homelessness.
LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

- These are the experience of women who are residing at the shelters.

- Few # of participants but this an on-going process.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Pathways to homelessness in women are around:
  - Women usually fleeing from various kinds of harm such as extreme political circumstances, neglect and/or deprivation.
  - Some women are promised jobs which were not available or sustainable.
  - Women are kicked out of co-habitation relationships.
  - Homelessness can affect anybody, anytime and anywhere.
  - Shelters are transitional measures to solve homelessness but improvement of people’s economic status is the permanent solution.
REFERENCES

THANK YOU