URBAN HEALTH TRANSDISCIPLINARY FORUM
HS GESUNDHEIT BOCHUM, GERMANY

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF HOMELESSNESS AND URBAN HEALTH: A STUDY OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN LAHORE, PAKISTAN

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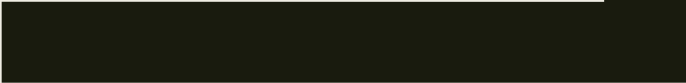
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Background

- Housing policies dilemma in Pakistan

  - *Low cost housing for whom?*

  - *Missing participatory inclusive planning character*

  - *No consideration for the marginalized group of homeless people*

  - *Recently established shelter homes in urban areas*

- Housing policies not in line with the targets set under Sustainable Development Goals, 2030

- Higher Education Commission NRPU Project (9709/Punjab/NRPU/R&D/HEC/ 2017):

  - *"Multilocational householding: A study of homeless people in Lahore"*

Introduction

- Ineffective and exclusive housing policies in Pakistan

- Rapid Urbanization

- Migration as livelihood strategy

- Housing shortage

- Inadequate access to amenities and services

- Homelessness in urban areas?

- SDG 11 calls for promoting access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing for **all** (United Nations, 2015)

- Homelessness; a range of definitions from minimalist to maximalist perspectives

- However, have not been adequately linked up with migration theory, thus a missing perspective of 'multilocality'

Causes of Homelessness

Four main triggering factors

Inadequate Income due to:
  - Loss of Job
  - High cost of living

Social Issues

Domestic Violence

Health issues

Source: http://www.homelesshouston.org/homelessness-101/

Causes of Homelessness: Empirical Evidence

■ In Germany, the two most dominant causes of homelessness have been reported as low-income and medical/health issues (Busch-Geertsema et. al., 2020).

■ In Pakistan, 91% of homeless people in Lahore have been found to be economic migrants (low-income driven initiative) (Aslam et al., 2021: unpublished; n=100)

■ 18% of all homeless people in Shelter homes of Lahore reported medical issues for their homelessness (Hameed et al., 2022: unpublished; n=55)

Some statistics of developed world's homelessness

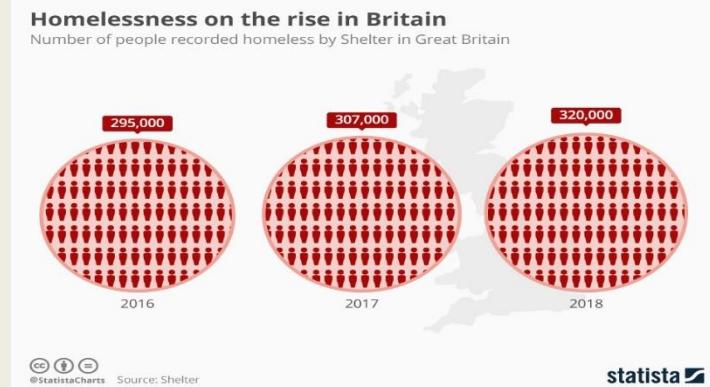### The U.S. Cities With The Most Homeless People

CoCs with the largest number of people experiencing homelessness in 2018*

City		
New York City	NY	78,676
Los Angeles City & County	CA	49,955
Seattle/King County	WA	12,112
San Diego City and County	CA	8,576
San Jose/Santa Clara City & County	CA	7,254
District of Columbia CoC	DC	6,904
San Francisco	CA	6,857
Phoenix, Mesa/Maricopa County	AZ	6,298
Boston CoC	MA	6,188
Las Vegas/Clark County CoC	NV	6,083

Total Number Of Homeless Americans In January 2018

552,830

* CoC-Continuums of Care are local planning bodies who coordinate homelessness services in certain areas

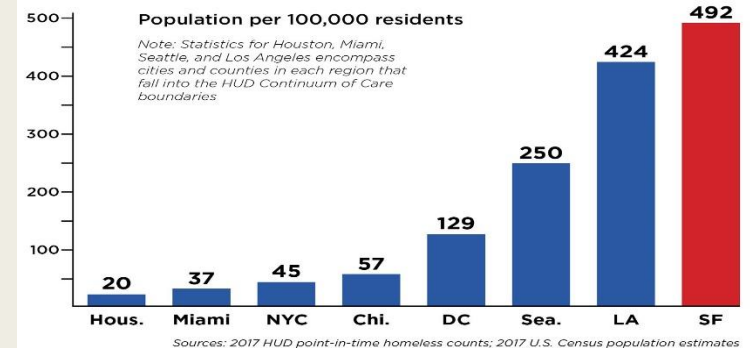@StatistaCharts Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

statista

Seattle is third in U.S. for homeless population

Seattle-King County has the third-largest homeless population in the U.S. in 2017, as it has for several years. Seattle, like other booming West Coast cities, saw a rise in homeless people sleeping outside.

TOP 7 CITIES WITH MOST HOMELESS POPULATION

Seattle
Homeless population: 11,643
Unsheltered homeless: 47.1%

New York City
76,501
5.1%

San Francisco
Homeless population: 6,858
Unsheltered homeless: 63.5%

San Jose/Santa Clara
Homeless population: 7,394
Unsheltered homeless: 73.7%

District of Columbia
7,394
12%

Los Angeles
Homeless population: 55,188
Unsheltered homeless: 74.7%

San Diego
Homeless population: 9,160
Unsheltered homeless: 61.4%

Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Homelessness on the rise in Britain
Number of people recorded homeless by Shelter in Great Britain

2016	2017	2018
295,000	307,000	320,000

@StatistaCharts Source: Shelter

statista

Source: Homelessness on the rise in Britain by Martin Armstrong, Nov 22, 2018

EXHIBIT 1.7: States with the Highest and Lowest Rates of Unsheltered People Experiencing Homelessness
2018

Highest Rates

CALIFORNIA	OREGON	NEVADA	HAWAII	WASHINGTON
68.9%	61.7%	56.2%	53.2%	47.6%
129,972 Homeless 89,543 Unsheltered	14,476 Homeless 8,925 Unsheltered	7,544 Homeless 4,239 Unsheltered	6,530 Homeless 3,475 Unsheltered	22,304 Homeless 10,621 Unsheltered

Lowest Rates

MAINE	RHODE ISLAND	NEW YORK	MASSACHUSETTS	NEBRASKA
3.9%	4.6%	4.7%	4.9%	5.9%
2,516 Homeless 98 Unsheltered	1,101 Homeless 51 Unsheltered	91,897 Homeless 4,294 Unsheltered	20,068 Homeless 985 Unsheltered	2,421 Homeless 144 Unsheltered

Source: The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress: Part 1.

Rates of Street Homelessness

Population per 100,000 residents

Note: Statistics for Houston, Miami, Seattle, and Los Angeles encompass cities and counties in each region that fall into the HUD Continuum of Care boundaries

Hous.	Miami	NYC	Chi.	DC	Sea.	LA	SF
20	37	45	57	129	250	424	492

Sources: 2017 HUD point-in-time homeless counts; 2017 U.S. Census population estimates

Homelessness and Urban Health: The Vicious Circle

- The dominant associated factors with the health of urban people are:
  - *physical environment,*
  - *Social structures,*
  - *Access to social and health services (Galea & Vlahov, 2005)*
- Many urban homeless people are found to:
  - *live in unhygienic conditions,*
  - *Have a disconnected social life,*
  - *Have denied access to social and medical services due to not having valid identity documents.*

Homelessness and Urban Health: The Vicious Circle

- The situation puts a toll on the physical and mental health of homeless people.

- Thus, it forms a vicious circle, where health issues act both as a cause and a consequence of homelessness, and if un-attended, the situation keeps on manifesting and exacerbating.

Results of the Study

- Mixed-methods research approach (n=100)
  - *Random and convenience sampling*
  - *Face-to-face interviews of the homeless people in Lahore, Pakistan*
- 94% of the respondents were found living in unhygienic conditions along roadsides/medians and parks/open spaces.
  - *Susceptible to harsh weather conditions*
  - *Vulnerable to epidemics and diseases such as COVID-19 and Dengue*
- 90% of the respondents were found socially disconnected from their family members, living outside of Lahore (multi-locality character).
  - *A toll on their mental health*

Results of the Study

■ Around one-third of homeless people were found not to have valid identity documents.

 – *Denied access to the government-established Shelter Homes (locally known as Panah Gahs) and other medical and social services.*

■ A clue for endangered health of urban homeless people.

Public Sector Support Program

- Panah Gah (Shelter Homes) initiative by the Government of Punjab in 2017

- Initially, 9 Panah Gahs were established in Lahore, 3 more have been added recently.
  - *Decent temporary living place with basic facilities such as beds, washrooms, clean water, food, and medical service.*
  - *However, having a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) (or at least a copy of it) is a must to avail the facility.*
  - *On average, 500 homeless people stay in these Panah Gahs daily.*

- A Panah Gah at all district headquarter cities across Punjab Province is planned to be established.

Location of initial 9 Pannah Gahs in Lahore
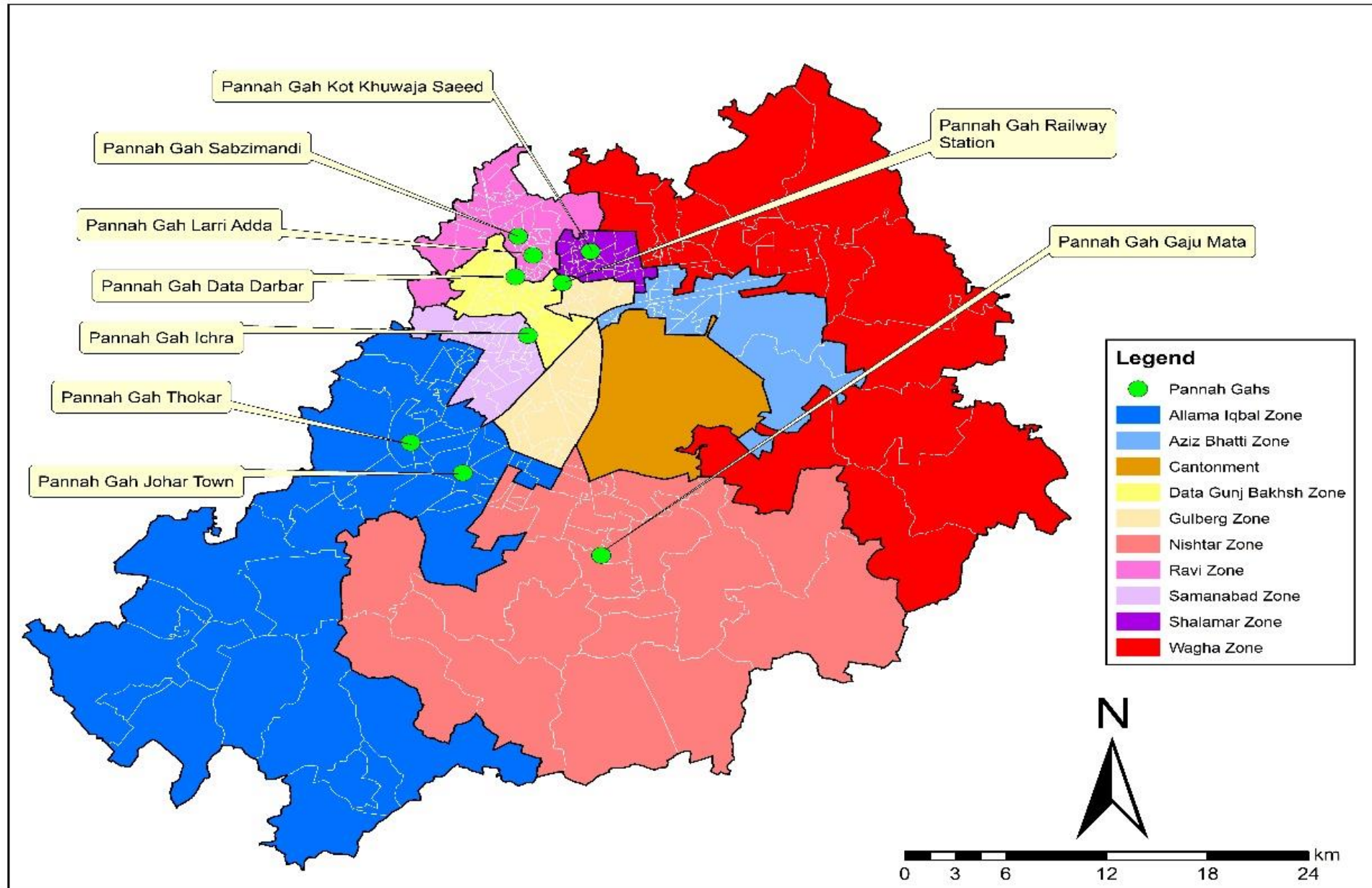
Public Sector Support Program

- The Punjab Panah Gah Authority Act, 2021
    - *Panah Gah is defined as a place for temporary shelter for shelterless*
    - *Shelterless means a musafir (traveler), a laborer or a destitute entitled to an overnight stay, or for an extended period determined by the Authority*

- Hence, a limited scope only.

- However, no bar is set yet on the number of times an eligible person may use the facility or switch in between.

- Government quest to collaborate with NGOs and philanthropist organizations for financial assistance, particularly the food (served twice a day)

Private and NGO Sector Support Program

■ Officials from following shelter homes run by NGOs and the private sector in Lahore were also interviewed:

Interviewed Shelter Homes				
Women Shelter Home	Edhi Homes	Roshni Home Trust	Agosh Orphan Care Center	Fraternity Old Age Home Pakistan
Pakistan Red Crescent	Edhi Center	SoS Children Village	Pakistan Street Home	baH Memorial Trust

Private and NGO Sector Support Program

■ The admission criteria of these shelter homes do not generally meet the situation of homeless people found in Lahore:

- *The dominant majority of the occupants are females, children, and elderly people*

- *Temporary sheltering space*

Implications for Policy and Practice

- Updating the National Housing Policy for bringing inclusivity

- Homeless or economic migrants? Support to UN-HABITAT's (2014) assertion of homelessness as a phenomenon for households, rather than individuals

- Establishing job centers or linking with already established vocational training centers

- Increasing the scope and outreach of the public sector initiative of Panah Gah through proper centralized documentation

- Collaboration with NGO's based and private sector-run shelter homes for better coverage of homeless people

Implications for Policy and Practice

■ Being homeless is a planned way forward to a significant proportion of homeless people (29%) for having minimal living costs

- *Any rehabilitation plan involving financial contributions from such homeless people may backfire.*

■ Billbeds instead of billboards

- *Private sector may be given public spaces along the roadside (may be under elevated mass transit lines) where the advertisement billboards may be converted into billbeds during night (a model already practiced by Master Moltyfoam in Pakistan)*

■ Law enforcement agencies' role

- *Should be supportive instead of harsh towards such homeless people*

Implications for Policy and Practice

- Broader definition of household needed
  - *Pakistan Bureau of Statistics still uses the narrow definition of a group of people living together at a geographic place*
- Time-series data needed for deeper analysis of the dynamics of homeless people's life

Transferable Implications for Ruhr Region-Germany

- Differentiation between homeless households and individual economic migrants

  – *In the wake of increasing natural and man-made crises across the globe (such as the Turkey & Syria earthquake, the Russo-Ukrainian War, Syrian crisis), the importance of this distinction is at an all-time high.*

- Linking up of homeless asylum seeker households with the job centers for their fast rehabilitation?

- NGOs-based and private sector-run "Heims"?

  – *Collaboration for better coverage of homeless households*

- Research on the "multi-locality" character of homeless people

Thank You