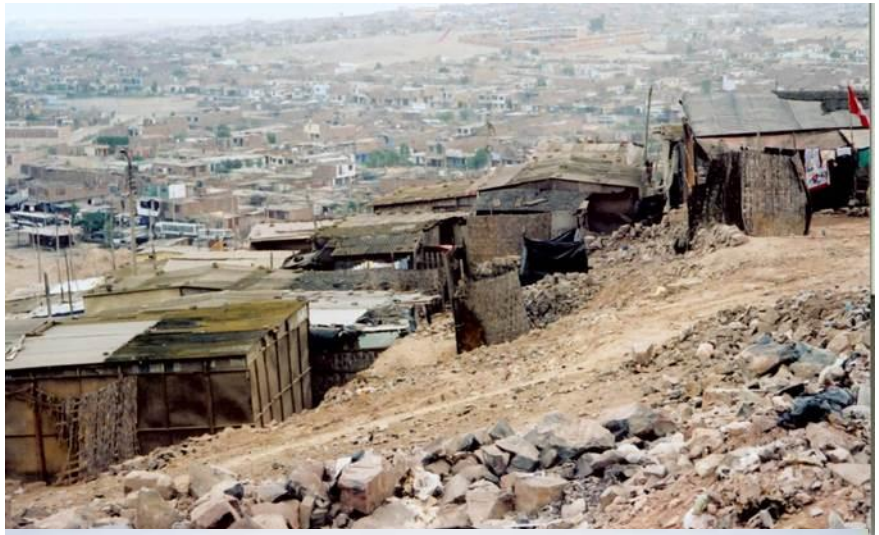
Homelessness in Developing Countries

Taking a housing-focused approach, from two main sources;

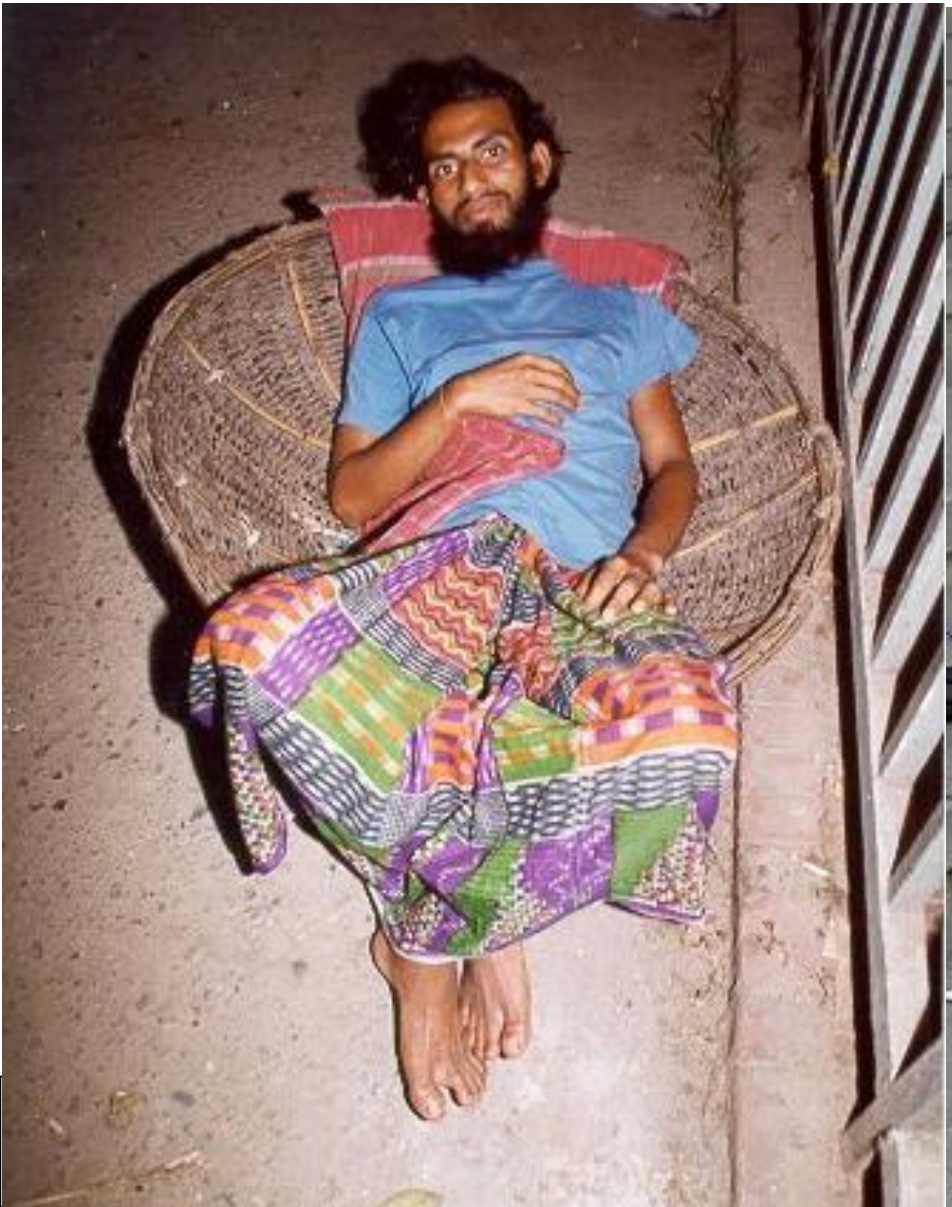
- The Hidden Millions: homelessness in developing countries
- Recent consultancy experience in housing policy in seven African countries in the last five years

What is homelessness



Squatters invaded this hillside in Lima and have built to differing standards. Are any of them so poorly housed as to be homeless?

Are these people homeless?



And these?

Mumbai

PCO

Cairo

Addis Ababa

Monrovia

Malawi

Human rights

- “[States] recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living … including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right.”

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1966): Article 11.1.

Housing adequacy

- Defined by UN-Habitat; measured by;
- tenure security;
- structural stability;
- infrastructure support;
- convenient access to employment and community services;
- occupancy.

So needs to be used carefully in a definition.

The Right to Adequate Housing

Housing rights have been defined by the Grootboom Judgment:

A government has two duties with respect to human rights within its housing policy:

1. to provide for medium- and long-term need through a rational housing delivery system;
2. to provide for at least a substantial proportion of emergency and crisis needs with basic housing and servicing.

- May be more effective to approach homelessness through rights to servicing?

The nature of homelessness

Developed countries

- homelessness is generally a result of personal or household circumstances

Homeless people frequently need

- a range of social support and welfare
- systems to help them access and retain jobs and the available housing and lift them out of homelessness.

Developing countries

- homelessness is generally a result of the lack of housing and a failure of the 'market' housing supply

Homeless people need

- an alternative to market housing
- access to secure land title
- demand-side subsidies
- less than whole dwellings.

Causes of homelessness

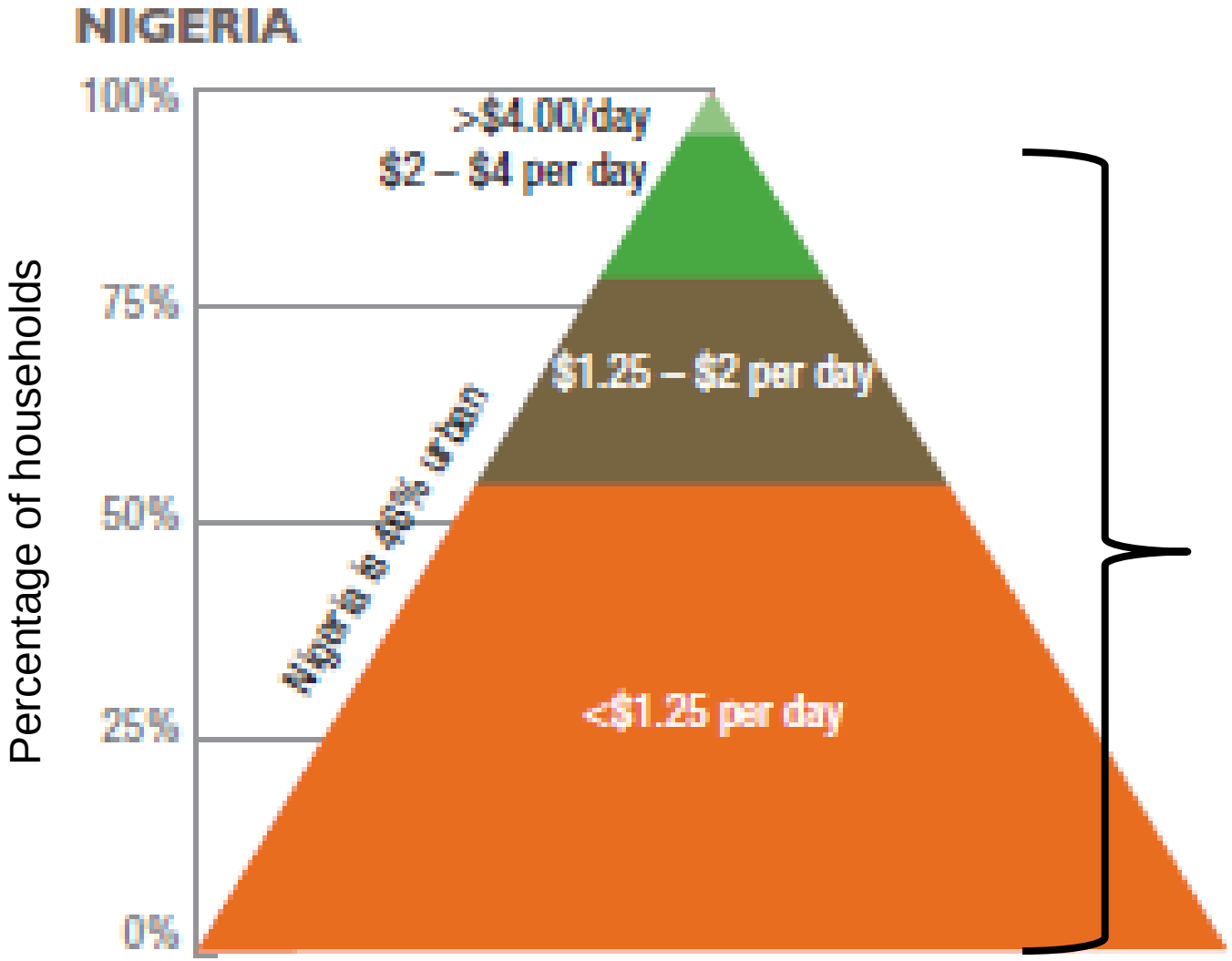
The two fundamental causes of homelessness in developing countries are

- **poverty, especially rural poverty; and**
- **the failure of the housing supply system**

However, poverty and housing shortages alone do not necessarily lead to homelessness. A number of other issues make these things worse.

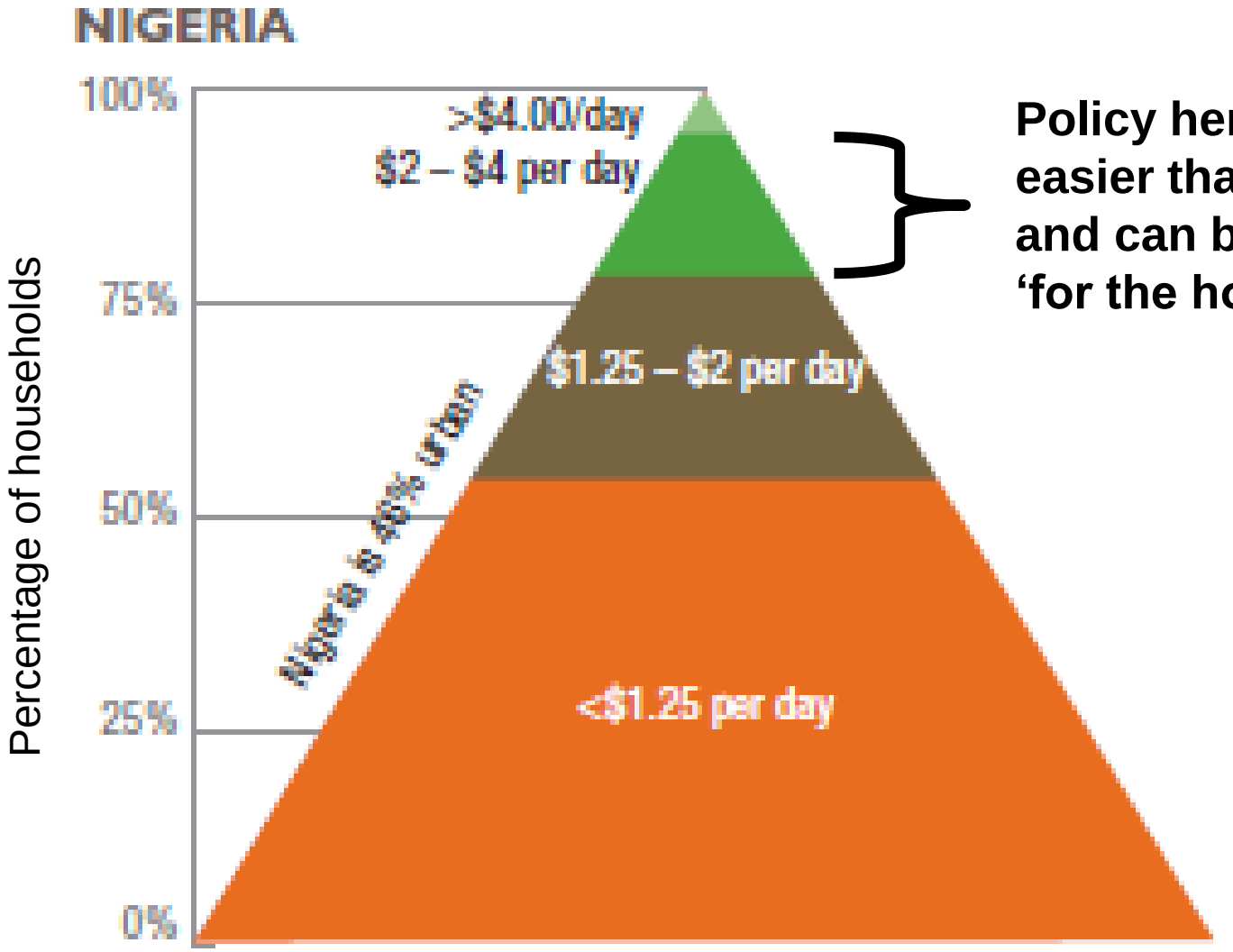
- **Rural to urban migration**
- **Social causes**
- **Political unrest**
- **Eviction**
- **Unhelpful housing policies for a majority**

The unhelpful policy context



No formal supply for this majority group. Sometimes even called 'homeless'

The unhelpful policy context



Policy here is much easier than lower down and can be claimed as 'for the homeless'

Global Shelter Strategy (GSS) and MDGs

Used the enabling approach in which:

- Governments don't build;
- They enable the most appropriate actors;
- By addressing the six inputs to housing:
  - Land
  - Finance
  - Infrastructure
  - Construction industry
  - Building materials
  - Regulatory framework

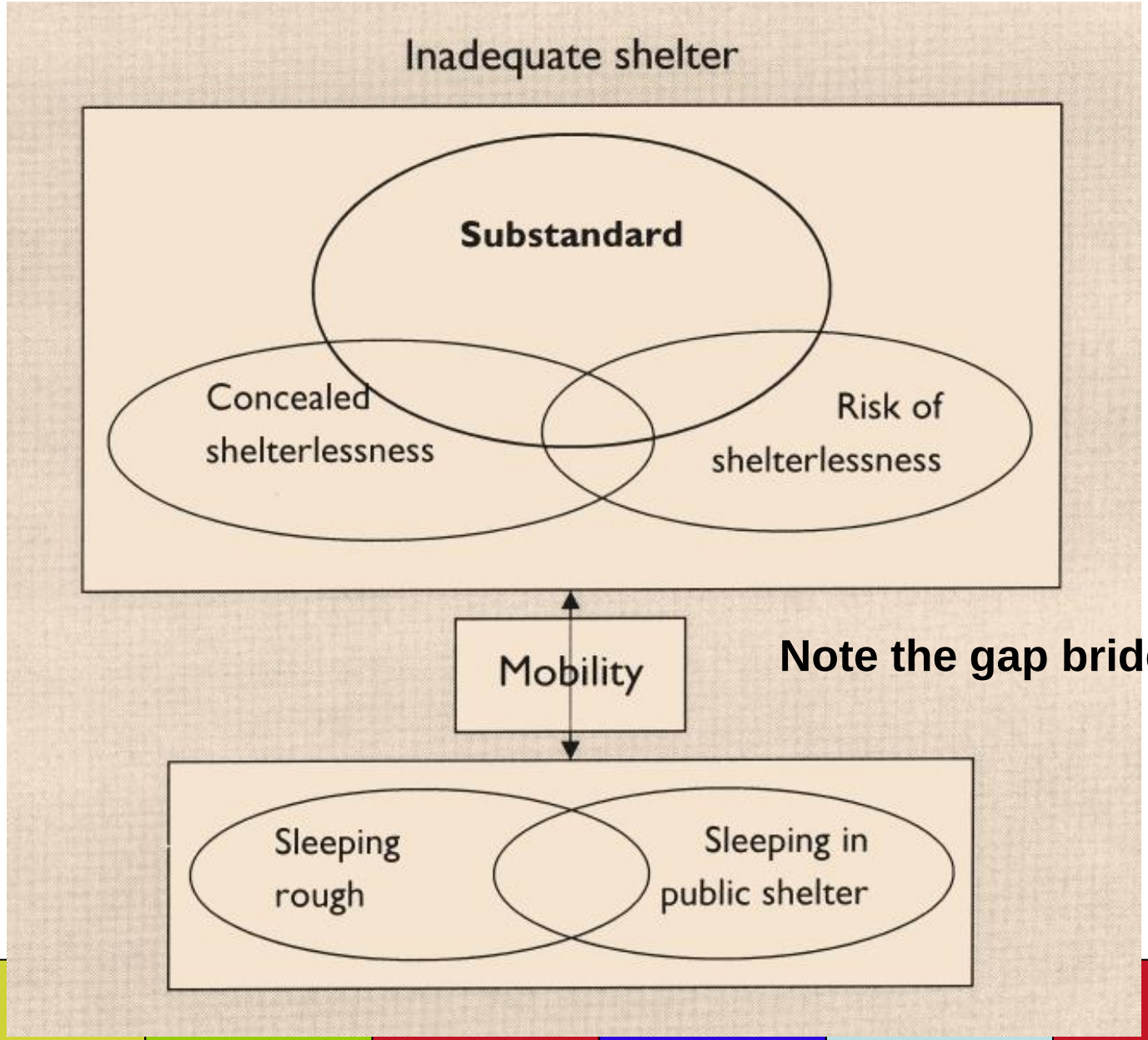
Government's reaction

- So often, have ignored housing;
- Expect markets to do it all;
- Classify too many as low-income;
- So, only richest 20-40% are helped.

GSS being superseded by GHS in 2016
MDGs by SDGs

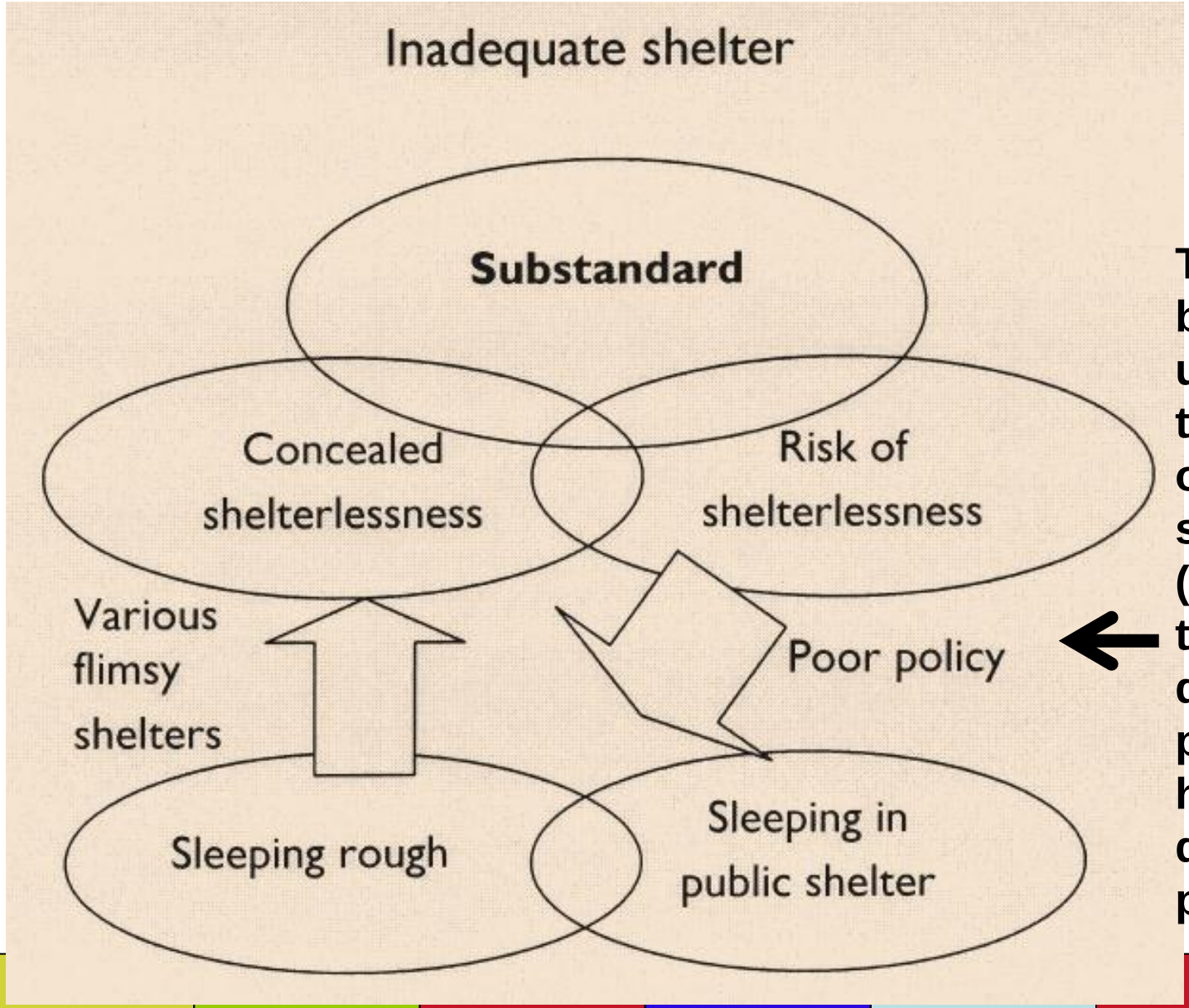
- Opportunity to make an input before and at Habitat III in Ecuador in October 2016
- GSS only addressed housed people;
- Get homeless included in GHS.
- GHS will probably include welfare housing;
- Need accurate targeting.

Springer's categorisation of homelessness



Note the gap bridged by mobility

Modification of Springer for developing countries



The gap is now bridged both upwards, through a series of flimsy shelters (upward trajectory) and downwards, by policy making housing more difficult for the poor

What is needed to help homeless people?

- A culture of care and support, rather than indifference and victim blaming

What is needed? (cont'd)

At the level of rough sleeping

A number of measures to support rough sleepers would include:

- **Legalising street sleeping**
- **an end to abuse by the authorities**
- **Easily accessible and appropriate free shelter (maybe in government-owned buildings, e.g., schools)**
- **Well maintained public water and sanitation points, in locations suitable for street sleepers**
- **Security 'lockers' for their belongings**
- **Safe refuge for abused women and children**
- **Free, accessible health, medical and legal support**

What is needed? (cont'd)

At the level of mass homelessness

- **More housing: especially of a type that the poorest households can afford (shared, rented…).**

Housing should be:

- **cheap,**
- **built in labour intensive technologies to provide lots of work,**
- **situated close to sources of work**
- **serviced to a minimum level to keep costs down**.

What is needed? (cont'd)

- For those with a rudimentary structure, some security of tenure is important in order to allow them the develop their housing further and feel safe.
- This is the upward trajectory that might be a definitional issue.
- Not full security or title but some rights to occupy and access to services.

If you have been, thank you for listening

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