ENDING STREET HOMELESSNESS IN VANGUARD CITIES OVERARCHING EVALUATION PROJECT, FUNDED BY OAK FOUNDATION

Emerging Findings

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OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Introduction
- Research aims, methods and progress to date
- Emerging findings on 'what works', challenges and barriers
- The added value of IGH
- The impact of COVID-19
- Conclusions

PROJECT AIMS

- To monitor progress towards the achievement of goals set by Vanguard Cities to end or reduce street homelessness by 31st December 2020, and to evaluate *how* these goals are achieved.

- What works to end street homelessness – and in particular what are the core components of success that may be transferable to other cities/contexts?

- What has the added value been of IGH – and how can this be maximized in the future?

- What lessons can we learn from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

METHODS

▶ Standardised research instruments developed to maximise comparability (tailored as necessary for context)

▶ Local research teams commissioned to conduct two waves of fieldwork: key informant interviews + focus group(s) with frontline workers (in 2020; in early 2021)

▶ Analysis of all transcripts; quantitative data; local research reports/strategies

▶ Extract overarching findings/lessons

PROGRESS

- **Quantitative progress**: some cities making progress in right direction (Sydney, Manchester, Chicago), at least post-COVID (Glasgow, Adelaide); endpoint data will also be available for three others (Bengaluru, Edmonton, Little Rock), but not for remaining five cities

- **Qualitative progress**: disrupted by COVID-19 but at least some Wave 1 data available and analysed for nine cities (Bengaluru, Tshwane, Adelaide, Sydney, Rijeka, Little Rock, Manchester, Montevideo, Chicago); just arrived for three (Edmonton, Glasgow, Brussels); none as yet for one (Santiago)

'WHAT WORKS'

- **Raising ambition/shifting narrative to reduction** - not just managing
- **Segmentation of population -** more specialized responses
- **Individual case management** - coordinated entry/'By-name-lists'
- **Assertive, effective outreach -** including at nighttime
- **A decent accommodation 'offer'** - safe, well-managed and dignified; smaller or more 'individualized' where possible
- **Substance misuse and other specialist support -** without high conditionality barriers
- **Family reconciliation -** the main source of sustainable support in some contexts

PURSUING WHAT WORKS

"…they're normally self-contained flats, properties from local landlords that people can ultimately rent themselves. So they're not living amongst other chaotic people, they're living amongst other social housing tenants, and they're fully furnished." (Manchester)

"The one place that we've seen a significant decrease in street homelessness has been with our veterans, and that's really directly related to the influx of dedicated resources for veterans. When we had the resources, we've proved that we can significantly reduce homelessness." (Chicago)

"…we really need Coordinated Entry in this city. We need names and identifying information and then we need to prioritise them…. we don't have the outreach that we need in order to do those connections…. Their first priority is not housing. They are trying to serve people meals." (Little Rock)

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS COMMON ACROSS CITIES

- **Lack of prevention** – in almost all cities there is very little emphasis on halting the inflow onto the streets, even from highly predictable pathways like prisons; mental health institutions also key in some places (e.g Montevideo)

- **Difficulties in accessing suitable, affordable housing** – barrier in rich as well as poor cities, albeit for different reasons

- **Reliance on shelters as main/significant response** – often large, mixed, dormitory-style with little privacy and no security; sometimes poorly managed, dangerous environments, split families up; COVID-19 has highlighted public health implications

- **Documentation/legal status** – a key barrier for migrants everywhere (but more variable for citizens, e.g. less of an issue in UK)

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AS A COMMON CHALLENGE

"There's a huge systems failure between the mental health system and other systems… People are going into public hospitals with chronic and complex mental health… it's not the right environment. They're often maybe treated very briefly and then released." (Adelaide)

"We cannot do anything [until] the situation escalates and they are hospitalized at the psychiatric ward." (Rijeka)

"In recent years the new mental health act was passed. Its goal is closing mental hospitals and stopping sending people to psychiatric centres, putting an end to total institutions for people with mental health problems and looking for alternatives for these people such as community supports and outpatient treatments. The issue is that this act is not regulated and no alternatives have been implemented. The institutionalization of people with mental health problems, which was in some way negative, was reduced but no alternatives were offered. So, there are homeless people without follow-up alternatives in their treatments." (Montevideo)

RESOURCE RICH v RESOURCE POOR

"We have hundreds of thousands of homeless people with no money, literally no money. So, the disparity …you cannot enter into a conversation if north America talks about federal funding, assisted housing programmes… how do we reconcile those things?." (Tshwane)

"…we're an under-resourced community and an under-resourced state…. we have a huge problem on our hands. We can't just collaborate our way out of it without some extra money. I want the city to spend some money on it, but the board members have been like, no, there's no money in the budget." (Little Rock)

"…there are significant interventions and deployment resources across partnerships…I think there is a lot of activity and a lot of resources, but sometimes I wonder whether it could be coordinated a little bit better and be seen as one system, in terms of what everyone's putting in and whether all that is a bit more systems thinking… I think there's a lot of waste in there." (Manchester)

OTHER VARIABLE BARRIERS/CHALLENGES

- **Lead/coordinating agency –** present in some (Glasgow, Manchester, Chicago, Edmonton, Adelaide); absent in many others (Tshwane, Little Rock, Brussels, Rijeka, Bengaluru)
- **Political commitment** – mayors and governors key (Sydney, Manchester, Chicago); but how sustainable (Montevideo, Little Rock, Tshwane)?
- **Enforcement** – can be harsh, especially on encampments; but positive developments in some places (e.g. police training on human rights in Tshwane; changed approach in Chicago)
- **Reliance on committed individuals, charities and faith groups** – vital but need harnessed and supported

HALTING WHAT DOESN'T WORK

"we are not a Housing First city. We're a programme-first [city]…We look at housing last after you're sober; after your soul's been saved - you've been washed in the blood; and all this bullshit. We do all this to people when really their presenting reason for homelessness is poverty… providers would have to switch their mindset from programming to housing." (Little Rock)

"Churches give food, especially suburban churches…They…do some evangelical outreach and pray for people, they give out food. All they do is they come in our neighbourhoods, they litter the place and then they move out and they think they did good. It's a lot of the charity thing and it's the idea of 'not in my back yard'. We will rather address homelessness in the inner city, as long as the people are not in our neighbourhood…Churches quickly, when you speak to them and ask can they participate in addressing homelessness, the first thing they do is open up a soup kitchen." (Tshwane)

"There were instances where belongings were thrown away…without warning, or without notice, and that's not what anyone wants to see happen, and that's not acceptable…. all the agencies really took that to heart when we came together in the inter-agency taskforce…Everybody in each department really needs to understand, a) what people's rights are, and b) what the law is, and c) what is our philosophy here ?" (Chicago)

ROLE OF IGH – POSITIVE IMPACT

- **Shifting the narrative from managing to reducing/ending**
- **Increase profile/momentum around the issue locally** – e.g. tackling homelessness being accepted as an important task for the municipality (Rijeka) or a pressing priority (Greater Manchester)
- **International endorsement/scrutiny** – motivating /holding to account
- **Kickstart cooperation/conversations between different local players**
- **Access to good ideas/good practice from elsewhere** – e.g. coordinated entry systems, more individualized accommodation, "Housing First" (in different variations)
- **Leverage access to additional resources** – e.g. in Tshwane

THE ROLE OF IGH – POSITIVE IMPACT

"The most useful was to think about our practices from other perspectives (..); know other experiences and generate networks." (Montevideo)

"It just really matters when outside bodies say, 'Look, there's a collection of cities here around the world that really deserve a bit of focus and a bit of notice for what they're doing,' and that's what Vanguard City status gave us." (Greater Manchester)

"Having outside people for accountability is very helpful" (Little Rock)

"…it leveraged support, of course…from Comic Relief and IGH was very instrumental in helping and backing support for that …that's a clear benefit that came out of the collaboration with IGH and the Place Called Home initiative." (Tshwane)

ROLE OF IGH – SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Clearer criteria about the targets and the ways to achieve them** – linked to a theory of change on *how* improvements are going to happen and how progress can be measured
- **More clarity on what IGH can offer and what it cannot help with** – managing of expectations
- **Better offer for Global South** – resources badly needed, e.g. in Tshwane, Bengaluru
- **Help with leverage of resources in service poor cities** – also in the North, e.g. in Little Rock
- **Better offer for State institutions as well as NGOs**– e.g. in Montevideo
- **Keeping language issues in mind** – e.g. translation into Spanish

THE ROLE OF IGH – SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT

"The process of cooperation with IGH should be closer. Otherwise, there is a process of goal acceptance which runs the risk of being extremely formal. In our case, the reduction of 25% was something that was not really expected to be achieved but it was finally accepted in order to agree and sign with IGH." (Montevideo)

"It would have been helpful to have… more clear-cut expectations… about what IGH, what role they would play in formulating the goals and objectives… Then how they were going to come alongside and offer support… It was unclear… what are they going to do for us? … what was really unclear, was whether or not they would be providing funding streams or at least not that they would give us money, but they would help us to find funding streams that were out there in the world that maybe we didn't know about. That would be really helpful." (Little Rock)

"Technically supporting an NGO is different from supporting a State. It would be necessary to think about formats that work with States; in other countries States were not involved"(Montevideo)

IMPACT OF COVID-19 – POSITIVE IMPACT

- **Change of narrative in several cities/countries (but not in all)** – more sympathetic, some national Governments took responsibility

- **Significant use of hotels or more self-contained accommodation across wide range of contexts** – demonstrating positive influence of private, dignified spaces in contrast to congregate large shelters

- **More shelters opened 24 hours**

- **Moratoriums on evictions and some increase of benefits**

- **More inclusive and less conditional approaches** – including to migrants

- **Brought about local coordination on a scale not seen before** – e.g. in Tshwane, Bengaluru

THE ROLE OF COVID-19 – POSITIVE IMPACT

"What it shows with some of our clients is that if you gave someone a safe place to sleep; a nice environment; a respectful environment how much that was reflected in their own self-care and behavior and, etc., because it gave people an opportunity to have a good surrounding" (Adelaide)

"*MIDES (Ministry of Social Affairs) made agreements with hotels, it prioritised people over 65 years of age, it created new 24-hours responses and answers for those who are suspected to be infected*" (Montevideo)

"…we were able in the last two weeks [mid-lockdown] to regroup and we actually, as a homelessness sector spoke with one voice the whole time to the City. I think that made quite a difference. I'm quite convinced that [this] oneness… will continue with homelessness issues after the crisis of COVID is over [and] is vital in terms of how also keep the City accountable and how we develop something collaboratively." (Tshwane)

IMPACT OF COVID-19 – NEGATIVE IMPACT AND CONCERNS

- **Can improvements be sustained?**
- **No alternatives provided to large-scale congregate shelters in some of the cities, and concentration on sheltered people (not unsheltered) in others**
- **Need for support for rough sleepers brought "inside"**
- **Face-to-face support was restricted by change of distribution of crisis food services and by closing low-threshold services**
- **Economic impacts will increase homelessness –** especially for those in the informal economy (e.g. in Tshwane, Bengaluru, Montevideo, Rijeka)

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 – NEGATIVE IMPACT AND CONCERNS

"Within the COVID-19 response… it was determined that congregate shelters would be the focus. There was a significant lag on testing unsheltered people… sheltered people were moved into a shielding hotel. People in the shielding hotel became the priority to house. Just like naturally, unsheltered people got left out" (Chicago)

The Pandemic *"will have a serious impact on the number of street homeless people. There are data of an economic crisis that seriously influences informal workers because they stopped having incomes."*(Montevideo)

"Corona situation has caused many young persons who were employed in tourism to find themselves in limbo, essentially nowhere. There is this one girl who has been coming here recently…she is riddled with uncertainty, waiting to hear if this hotel would open or not." (Rijeka)

"Well, there's a few favours that this crisis did for us. It showed up all our weaknesses and it also forced us to create certain things that were gaps. Now the question is how do we institutionalise this going forward?" (Tshwane)

NEXT STEPS

- Qualitative: we will continue to build up and complete the picture as we receive and analyse the Wave 1 data from all the cities over next month or so; we will plan and commence the Wave 2 fieldwork from early next year (exploring further the ongoing COVID-19 impacts in particular)

- Quantitative: we will be able to report on the progress made towards the targets in eight of the cities by end of this year/early next year

- Future/local webinars as findings continue to emerge?

- Project finished end June 2021; main report and other outputs published later in summer 2021; feed into future IGH programme