Executive Summary

Homelessness is one of the world's largest overlooked challenges, with more than 300 million people experiencing homelessness globally. As climate change intensifies, protecting people experiencing homelessness and preventing others from losing their homes must become an integral part of climate action.

Climate change is both increasing the risk of homelessness and worsening conditions for those already experiencing it. Floods, storms and fires destroy homes, while disrupted livelihoods, rising temperatures and sea levels threaten people's ability to remain safely housed. These impacts are particularly severe for people already facing poverty, insecure housing and social exclusion. People experiencing homelessness are also disproportionately exposed to climate-related health risks, including extreme heat, heavy rainfall, air pollution and severe weather events, often without access to safe shelter or adequate support. Preventing and responding to homelessness must therefore be a priority for climate policymakers.

A glaring blind spot

This report examines how homelessness is currently addressed in national climate commitments, specifically Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). It finds an alarming blind spot:

- **Only two countries' (1.2%) NDCs mention homelessness.**
- **Homelessness appears in only eleven countries' NAPs (13.9%), with just six of them recognising the heightened climate vulnerability of people experiencing it (7.6%).**

Although governments increasingly recognise the risks that climate change poses to housing, livelihoods and displacement, they rarely translate this recognition into targeted commitments to prevent and respond to homelessness. Even where homelessness is explicitly mentioned, references rarely lead to concrete measures to protect people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Homelessness services are also largely overlooked in climate planning, despite facing growing demands as extreme weather events become more frequent and severe.

The blind spot is therefore twofold: a failure to adequately protect people experiencing homelessness and a failure to equip the services supporting them to respond to climate-related risks.

Climate-related drivers of homelessness: Four potential synergies

The report argues existing climate priorities provide opportunities to address this. Although most national climate plans don't explicitly address homelessness, they recognise some critical drivers of homelessness as part of their climate priorities. These four themes offer potential opportunities for making homelessness prevention part of climate action.

01. **Prevent home loss and make disaster recovery a route to secure housing.** Both NDCs and NAPs recognise that the destruction of homes by extreme weather is a central problem but often describe damage without setting out concrete responses. Preparedness, safer construction and recovery programmes should protect housing security. Assistance must reach people at-risk, including those in informal or insecure housing, and connect initial temporary accommodation responses with lasting adequate housing solutions.

02. **Link livelihood protection and displacement responses to homelessness prevention.** Climate impacts on food security and livelihoods can deepen poverty cycles and force people to move. NDCs address these pressures through food security, social protection and resilience; NAPs often describe the risks, with fewer housing-specific responses. Income support and relocation measures should connect people to opportunities, affordable accommodation, secure rehousing, services and employment, including in receiving communities.

03. **Deliver energy-efficient homes while addressing affordability.** Insulation, better heating and cooling, and other improvements can make homes more habitable and reduce energy costs. NDCs mainly frame these measures as emissions reductions, while NAPs emphasise coping with climate impacts. Yet plans rarely explain how more housing-insecure households will benefit. Programmes should prioritise those under greatest pressure and guard against eviction or unaffordable cost increases which further drive homelessness.

04. **Address the gradual impacts of climate change on people's ability to remain safely housed.** Extreme heat, water shortages, rising sea levels and coastal erosion can gradually make homes and communities unliveable, even where buildings are not physically destroyed. While national climate plans increasingly recognise these risks and propose measures to improve housing and infrastructure, they often overlook the particular needs of people experiencing homelessness or living in insecure housing. Climate adaptation must therefore go beyond protecting buildings to ensure people can remain safely housed, with access to essential services, community support and appropriate protections against displacement.

Turn recognition into action

If climate action intends to leave no one behind, homelessness must be explicitly recognised and addressed in national climate planning.



Clients in a Depaul UK project. Credit: Depaul

Local and national governments should explicitly include homelessness in climate plans, with dedicated budgets, responsible agencies, measurable commitments and accessible emergency protection. **Global climate institutions** should connect homelessness prevention to adaptation, health, displacement and climate finance. **The homelessness sector** should use existing commitments to advocate for housing support, adapt services to the changing climate and build alliances across sectors. People with lived experience must help shape priorities and hold decision-makers accountable. Funding must reach people and services on the frontlines of climate impacts. Success should be measured by whether these programmes help people move to or keep a safe and secure home.