



## UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

San Francisco Chapter

### **Annual Multistakeholder Consultation in San Francisco: a Collective Narrative**

*On April 25, 2022, the United Association of the USA, San Francisco Chapter (UNA-SF) hosted an annual Multi-Stakeholder Global Consultation with diverse members of civil society that have a relation to San Francisco. This annual consultation built on the work we accomplished in the last two years in response to the public invitation made by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in 2020.*

*Since then, we decided to host one multi-stakeholder consultation on April 25 every year to commemorate the start of the United Nations Conference on International Organization (UNCIO) held in San Francisco in 1945. The results of these annual consultations are being published in standalone reports (like the collective narrative [here](#)) and will also contribute to the UNA-SF's UN80 Report in 2025 representing the evolution of the discourse over the years.*

*The data from the consultation was processed according to the Collective Narrative Methodology to provide a balanced summary of delegates' perspectives who framed ideas in their own language. This report was written collaboratively by Karin Krisdiva and Agustina Singh. Please contact Agustina, Chair of the UN Global Consultations Committee, at [consultations@una-sf.org](mailto:consultations@una-sf.org) for questions or comments.*

# COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE

## The Constant Rise of Homelessness

Homelessness was discussed at length in our groups - we have seen it become such a big issue in the city of San Francisco, the state of California, and all of the United States. The rate at which the homeless population is growing is very high and we feel strongly that something needs to be done. We agreed that the social or justice reforms pertaining to alleviating homelessness have not been effective and have only made the situation worse, especially in San Francisco.

We see that the cost of rent in the general Bay Area continues to surge through the roof, and that the rate of homelessness has unfortunately grown significantly throughout the pandemic. We talked about and questioned: how can individuals afford housing in the Bay Area *and* be able to achieve the American Dream as we have come to know it? We need to tackle this problem and ensure we can allow for social mobility, for individuals to be able to transfer wealth through generations.

We think the first step should be getting rid of any policy loopholes that are allowing developers to take advantage of profit opportunities and deny low-income people from accessing affordable housing. Much of the conversation revolved around housing development and how leaders and contractors act as catalysts to further development in areas that can contribute to accessible housing in San Francisco. A majority of the participants believe that the government should allocate taxes strategically in order to support the sustainability of the housing market, society, and the environment.

## Climate Change Solutions that Address Various Social Issues

Another potential solution to the housing crisis we discussed was using recycled materials to create affordable housing. Many participants agreed that this could

address the issues of both homelessness and climate change, and that we need to find solutions like this that address various social issues.

In this example, we could address climate change by increasing the recycling rate of recyclable materials like plastics and PET bottles, which was an issue of interest to most of us. We recognize that climate change and environmental degradation has come as a result of increased fossil fuels and waste, so we want to prioritize effective and sustainable recycling.

We think that development attracts other forms of development. In this example, creating housing from recycled materials in an area or country that is spread out would attract business. We think companies will want to go there and set up, then banks and grocery stores, and then you find that the social fabric or environment is built quickly. A small initiative can be used to attract more positive development.

### **Mass Migrations in California**

We also discussed the role of climate change in displacing many vulnerable individuals and communities. So in addition to the supply side of housing, we considered the demand side of people in the Bay Area and, particularly, the international student or migrant population. While many international students and workers come to the Bay Area to pursue higher education or a stable job and quality of life, some might find themselves unable to afford rent and the high cost of living in the Bay Area. As a result, many end up having to take more than one job, accessing social services, and adding to the burgeoning population of homeless people.

Mass migrations are taking place not only in San Francisco, but also in San Diego and other areas in California. The COVID-19 pandemic has also complicated and increased displacement and the number of refugees in San Francisco and the U.S.. This increase, however, has not been accounted for in the workforce, and has caused a large population of migrants and refugees to feel overwhelmed. We think that we need to

focus on this workforce and housing issue, and one solution could be initiating educational reforms that focus on job creators rather than job seekers.

### **Social Challenges Imposed by COVID-19**

Our discussions also went over the social challenges imposed by COVID-19. As the world endured the pandemic for the past couple of years, most people had to adjust their lives to work and live in isolation. Most of us participants felt that remote work could be considered a double-edged sword: while it has its advantages, it has also increased anxiety and depression. It has caused a lot of distress and hardships for us and our families. We agreed that mental health issues are prevalent across all age groups, and that there is now a mental health crisis among youth that should be addressed.

Related to this, we talked about the rise in racism and physical attacks or hate crimes we're seeing in our cities towards people of color. The participants agreed that there needs to be more awareness and resources for the community to increase the safety of vulnerable groups.

This also led us to the conversation about justice reforms and the right to carry guns. We believe that if you use a gun - which is supposed to be a form of protection - in a situation where life is not threatened, then you should get more than one case against you. We think the only time you would have to use lethal or murderous forces is only when life is actually being threatened.

The last concern we discussed with COVID-19 was that it seems to be delaying the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Ukraine and the United Nations**

One of the most important topics we discussed today has to do with the United

Nations (UN) situation around Ukraine. We unfortunately feel that, at the moment, the UN is more like a toothless bulldog. On the global level, the UN and Security Council are not being appreciated.

We agreed that it is a political organization, in the sense that it is being funded by donations and grants from member states. That means, to some extent, maybe decisions are also being influenced. But we agreed that being assigned a position of leadership means they need to use that leadership well. They need to consider what clauses are and aren't there in the Charter or documents, and be active in ensuring the mission of the UN. The UN needs to walk the walk and talk the talk. They should take a position, stand by it, and take action.

We agreed that, in 2022, we should not be seeing what is happening in Ukraine right now. We also talked about other ongoing wars like that of Afghanistan, and the uncertainty of what is going on and how we can reach peace initiatives, move forward, and live our lives thereafter. One example we discussed in this regard was China and Taiwan.

We think that San Francisco is experiencing the UN in many ways today, and we have to keep these conversations going, especially in regards to the Sustainable Development Goals and how to approach these moving forward.

### **Demanding More from our Leaders**

We believe we need to emphasize proper representation in conversations like this to ensure we are building the future we all want. We want to spread awareness, and contribute to a society where we can all do our parts to fill the needs of those around us.

Unfortunately, we see that locally and globally, there is increasing polarization and it is causing a lot of harm to our democracy and society. We feel strongly that the

government and our leaders need to do more. We need to demand more from them, especially to step up and lead in difficult situations.

We think that the benefit of governance is not about taxes and money. It is about the sustainability of the people and environment. It is about the happiness and well-being of its people. So we need to demand more to build the society we want.