

NOURISH SCOTLAND MAGAZINE

SPRING 2015

£3.50 • ISSUE 4

**“ When I give
food to the poor,
they call me a saint.
When I ask why the
poor have no food,
they call me a
communist. ”**

ARCHBISHOP DOM HÉLDER CÂMARA OF BRASIL (1909-1999)

Our right to
food in Scotland



**Changing what we eat • Changing how we farm and grow food
Changing local food economies • Changing public policies**

About Nourish...

Nourish works alongside others for a Scotland where:

- We eat more of what we produce and produce more of what we eat.
- You can find healthy, local, seasonal, organic food all across the country.
- There is a stronger food culture, which is bringing people closer together.
- Everyone can afford to feed themselves and their family well.
- There is a diversity of thriving small food businesses.

Nourish exists to establish a sustainable food system in Scotland based on ecological farming and short supply chains. Changing our food culture and public policies are key to achieving this. Nourish facilitates this change through engaging with organisations, community initiatives, politicians and officials. We work to influence policies from local to EU level. For the local food community Nourish provides a platform for networking and sharing best practice.

Nourish makes sure that food is brought to the fore in public

debates of various kinds, making the link between a localised food system and its positive outcomes for economic development, job creation, skill development, health, environmental stewardship and justice.

Nourish's work also directly contributes to growing the local food economy, e.g. through training programmes, such as the New Farmer Programme (teaching food production, processing, marketing and business skills) or linking local food producers with community food initiatives.

Join Nourish...

Would you like Nourish to represent your views and those of the wider local food movement in Scotland to government and industry? Would you like to be part of a movement for a just and sustainable food system in Scotland and beyond? Then join us!

Nourish membership includes a subscription to our tri-annual magazine, discounts to Nourish events, and an opportunity to vote and stand for positions on the board of directors. Membership is currently available in three categories: individual, business, and food groups.

To join us please see our website <http://www.nourishscotland.org/> or contact us at the details below.

If you would like to connect with like-minded people with similar interests and find out what is happening, both locally and nationally join the online community on www.nourishscotland.org.uk.



Nourish Scotland, 54 Manor Place, Edinburgh, EH3 7EH
Tel: 0131 226 1497 • Email: info@nourishscotland.org.uk
www.nourishscotland.org

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From Food Charity to the Right to Food

One of the most striking images from last year's Referendum debate was the carpet of food donations in George Square. The aspiration to become a better country was a rich seam running through the argument.



Pete Ritchie
DIRECTOR OF
NOURISH SCOTLAND

However they voted, the people who left the food bags and organised the donations wanted to help. They wanted to make a difference – and all the food bank organisers and volunteers still do. But most people feel a conflict of emotions – they have to do something to help, but it isn't right that this should be happening.

So where do we go from here? One thing's clear: if the experience of Canada is any guide then if we do nothing food banks will become institutionalised, a new sub-system of our increasingly contested social security system.

Features of this new bolt-on can be seen in the recent All Party Parliamentary Group report 'Feeding Britain' (<http://foodpovertyinquiry.org/>). While the report calls for an increase in the minimum wage, free school meals in the holidays and a better deal for low income households from the big 6 energy companies, its headline recommendation is a UK organisation supporting bigger and better food banks and up-scaling the diversion of excess supermarket food to poor people.

Nourish rejects this recommendation entirely. The 'national organisation' has echoes of wartime emergency, as if a central committee is needed to ration scarce resources – when in reality here, as in the rest of the world, hunger is about poverty, not a shortage of food.

Food banks taking on extra advice functions makes no sense – when there is already a network of citizens advice bureaux, welfare rights services and specialist services for people with particular needs – but would help to cement food banks into the welfare fabric.

We also reject the idea that the food industry's problem of disposing of surplus food should be solved by hungry individuals, by children's homes, or by

prisons. People who are at risk of being marginalised and disrespected should not be expected to eat the food no-one else wants.

The institutionalisation of food banks has a deeper consequence. Once they become part of the social fabric (as has happened in Canada) it is impossible not to support them – with fundraisers and sponsored runs and raffles. It gets harder and harder to ask why we have them in a wealthy modern country with an oversupply of food.

So Nourish is calling for a new approach. We start with the simple belief that nutrition is a public good and one for which the government has a core responsibility. This is already accepted in many ways – the Food Standards Agency is there to make sure that our food is not adulterated and we provide free school meals and healthy start vouchers for young families. We just want to broaden this responsibility a little. We want the Scottish Government to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food.

This is hardly a revolutionary idea. The Callaghan government signed up to the UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1976. We want to see this convention brought into Scots law.



Mass donations to an impromptu food bank, George Square, Glasgow, 21 September 2014.

There is some symbolism here – it's a proper response to the George Square food donations.

It's no panacea: legislating on the right to food won't mean the end of food banks tomorrow. We don't yet know the right combinations of social security, food subsidies, farming policies and community level actions that will see us progressively realise the right to food in Scotland.

But it will change the conversation to being about rights, not charity. It will underline the importance of public nutrition in every area of public policy. Our aspiration is for a Scotland where all of us can eat well without messing up the planet.

For Nourish, this is not about simply ensuring adequate calories. Programmes to promote public nutrition should also promote other public policy objectives by supporting community empowerment and co-operation, sustainable farming and fair supply chains.

Nourish Scotland wants to work with many others to secure this right, including organisations working on issues of poverty and rights, churches and faith groups, community food and health projects, and childrens' organisations.

This aspiration is, we believe, shared by the hundreds of communities helping out at food banks, the thousands of people relying on food banks, and the tens of thousands of people who don't go to food banks but who struggle every week to feed their family.

For this magazine we asked Professor Elizabeth Dowler (UK) and Professor Graham Riches (Canada) to comment on the 'Feeding Britain' report. They explain why private charity is not a solution to food poverty. The Scottish Human Rights Commission then outlines various ways to implement the right to food in domestic law, followed by Mary Anne Macleod from The Poverty Alliance giving a voice to food aid providers and users in Scotland. Why it is important to have a good measuring index for food insecurity is explained in an article from the Food and Agricultural Organisation. The magazine closes with two articles highlighting initiatives tackling the roots of food poverty in Scotland. 🌱

Image © Kathrine Stokes

What's on at Nourish?

Since the last magazine we ran a very successful international conference 'Our Common Wealth of Food'. We learned how climate change was making life dangerously unpredictable for small farmers in Malawi while GM crops were causing untold misery in India; and how small farmers in the Caribbean had taken food sovereignty to heart by producing food for their own communities rather than sugar for export. One of our own small farmers told a powerful story of her farm where three generations improvised and adapted tirelessly, first to live with the supermarkets and now to live without them.

Our first group of 20 New Farmers finished the programme in December – half a dozen new food enterprises under way, and more in the making. Our talented business manager Clare Fennell caught the bug and is becoming a new farmer herself. We are also saying goodbye to our policy officer Barbara Stütz who is taking her focus and commitment to a new field of endeavour.

We are working to secure funds for the New Farmers Programme in 2016, and have over 90 expressions of interest already. We are also running our first Food Leadership programme this summer – designed to help people from different parts of the food system but with a common interest in change to become more confident and effective in their efforts.

Change is a major theme in the 'Good Food Nation' policy from Scottish Government and the new Food Commission could have an important role in guiding the conversation about where we are going and how to get there. There's plenty of flux to work with – the Community Empowerment Act will move food growing up the local agenda and encourage more community ownership and management of land in urban as well as rural areas. Coming behind that, the Land Reform debate raises profound questions about the relationship between land, food and people.

We've been working with colleagues in Glasgow and Edinburgh to build citywide food policy initiatives and hope to see other cities and local authorities develop similar ways of bringing all the food issues and stakeholders together. A good food nation is composed of good food cities, towns, and communities.

What will we work on in 2015?

We will be focusing on three main areas:

1. Growing the community food economy – we are involved with partners in early stages of innovative projects and are looking at how the new Scottish Rural Development Programme can support short supply chains strategically.
2. Developing shared thinking with civil society partners in Scottish Environment LINK and more widely on how we transition to a fairer, healthier and more environmentally friendly food system, drawing on the useful example of last summer's 'Square Meal' report, which was written by a collaboration of 10 UK organisations.
3. Working with partners on a 'right to food' campaign, which this magazine issue calls for. We know there is already widespread support for this in principle but there's much work to be done thinking through the idea, the values behind it and the strategies for fulfilling this right when some key powers are still reserved.

Using food waste to feed hungry people is not effective, nor sustainable or fair

Professor Elizabeth Dowler, UK food policy expert, comments on the 'Feeding Britain' report acknowledging its strength and weaknesses.

I am delighted to see the publication of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry Report and Evidence Review on Hunger and food poverty in the UK. The Review adds a considerable weight of authoritative evidence on the experience and drivers of hunger and food poverty in the UK today. The material provided from visits, submissions, hearings, witness statements and a wide reading of published literature offers a strong evidence base from which society in general, and specific sectors and agencies, can proceed.

In particular, I welcome the clear, useful and practical solutions proposed to some of the current failings in Social Security. It is excellent that these failings have been recognised. Such acknowledgement is long overdue, and the remedies proposed are urgently needed. There are also a number of important proposals for local authorities, utility companies and the financial sector, to improve the structure and management of elements in their systems which currently have profound negative impacts on poorer households' income and management strategies.

The deep disappointments come in the primary proposals which head the Report. The main thrust will be to enshrine an unaccountable charitable system as the instrument to address issues symptomatically that can only properly be dealt with by the state tackling the fundamental structural causes. The creation of a new institution ('Feeding Britain Network') whose task is 'tackling hunger' through giving people 'food waste' is deeply questionable, on efficacy, democratic and social justice grounds. The proposal essentially uses one of society's food problems (a food system which relies on surplus production – aka 'waste') to address another (people cannot afford to buy enough food because of inadequate or uncertain pay and/or social security benefits). Why should 'food waste' be the first and, indeed, main solution to 'food poverty', through a system which corporatises food charity by co-opting the always-willing food industry, charitable/voluntary sectors and the churches? There is no evidence from any country that has systemised using food waste to feed hungry people that it is effective, sustainable or fair.

It is widely recognised that giving out food simply cannot meet the fundamental failures of our welfare system nor address the reasons why people live in poverty. To bolt on a franchised, volunteer advice network (which presumably duplicates existing structures such as Citizens' Advice Bureaus – unacknowledged here) and where no mechanism for accountability in terms of appropriateness or accuracy of advice is mentioned, is also disappointing.

I respect the generous hard work and good will currently expended in offering such help, and salute the social solidarity it demonstrates. Nevertheless, expanding voluntary food distribution and advice networks will not solve the problem of food poverty, which appears to be growing through its manifestations of 'hunger' (harder to define systematically). The strong evidence cited by the report of stigma, distress and shame among those having to ask for food and other help, and the equally important needs of those with disabilities, special dietary needs or other conditions, are also ignored in the proposed response.

The final indignity is to locate responsibility in local authorities, many of which are currently stretched financially to breaking point for reasons similar to those affecting food poor families – too little income (in this instance from central government), excessively high costs and too many competing demands.

Sadly, the report makes little mention of the growing networks of grassroots and community initiatives around food which encompass growing, sharing, cooking, local enterprise and community owned retail. These activities, some quite longstanding, have changed many people's lives and





It is widely recognised that giving out food simply cannot meet the fundamental failures of our welfare system nor address the reasons why people live in poverty.

demonstrably empowered households to find better ways of eating and to develop strategies of resilience to times of deep stress. Food banks and churches do not need to start initiatives to promote community and better eating practices – they are already going on, but not under the umbrella of ‘charitable gifts’.

People should be treated with dignity, as citizens, not labeled as deserving (or otherwise) recipients of offerings from church members, neighbours or food corporates. The Bishop of Truro, in his introduction to the report, calls for widespread review of the fundamental values which underpin the welfare state: ‘that we show our values [as a society] by the way in which we behave and, especially, to those most in need’. Such a conversation and practical response is urgently needed **but we must not lose sight of justice: ‘food waste’ cannot and must not be seen as the solution to ‘food poverty’.** 🌱

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Dowler is Professor of Food & Social Policy, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, as well as a member of the Food Ethics Council, the Iona Community, and the Church of England. In 2013 she was one of the researchers commissioned by Defra to do a Rapid Evidence Assessment of UK Food aid. See: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/press_briefing_following/. She has also contributed a chapter in the book ‘First World Hunger Revisited’, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

BOOK REVIEW:

‘First World Hunger Revisited’

‘First World Hunger Revisited: Food Charity or the Right to Food?’ edited by Graham Riches and Tiina Silvasti, 2014, Palgrave MacMillan



First World Hunger Revisited is an update of a book first written in 1997. The fact that the editors considered a second edition to be required 17 years later is a worrying indicator of the impact of political and economic decisions in the name of neoliberalism on some of the richest countries in the world. Whilst one might have thought that Beveridge’s “five giant evils” had been banished with the advent of the post-war welfare state, significant hunger and malnourishment have now returned. It is also no coincidence that this book is being reviewed in the week that Oxfam have reported that 1% of the population holds almost 50% of global wealth and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has presented evidence that nearly 4 out of 10 UK households – 8.1million people – lack the required minimum income level to participate fully in society.

In the book, twelve national case studies highlight the nature and extent of food insecurity in advanced industrial societies albeit at different stages of development. The countries comprise the original welfare states, including the UK, together with examples from Europe, Africa, South America, the Middle East and Asia. Each of the case studies follows a similar analytic framework which considers five issues as they pertain in the different countries. In this way, the book provides a cross-cultural overview on the prevalence and causes of food poverty and the extent to which charitable responses have become a frontline response (both institutionalised and corporatised); the role played by food philanthropy and its corporate backers in the way that hunger is viewed; the extent to which food charity has made it easy for national governments to ignore their obligations under international law; the potential of Right to Food approaches to offer an alternative basis for policy; and what the alternative roles for key stakeholders might look like.

With the exception of Brazil, each of the case studies point to a political mindset which is in denial about the prevalence of hunger in developed countries. Further, they also highlight the extent of denial of the responsibilities that fall on Governments that comes with signing up to two human rights instruments – the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (not ratified by the USA!) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which provide the basis for legal human rights claims to adequate food. Although Brazil does have foodbanks, these are often publicly run and form but one plank in a comprehensive set of policies aimed at achieving ‘Zero Hunger.’

There is no doubt that the book is timely and that it makes a strong and persuasive case that public policy needs to be focused on joining up all the elements which comprise food security for the whole population – tackling poverty and inequality and addressing the supply and distribution of food in a way that is fair, healthy and sustainable. It is also easy to read and for people who already have an awareness of the issues that it covers, it provides a wealth of information. The book does conclude quite pessimistically, noting the pervasiveness of both neoliberal policy-making and the fostering of an attitude to food poverty (and others forms of poverty) which blames the poor. There are however a range of campaigns and actions across the developed world which are aimed at raising awareness of and constructing alternative models based on the Right to Food. To have summarised where these have come from and to consider critically their strengths and weaknesses would have leavened the pessimistic tone and affirmed those actions.

Sue Laughlin, Nourish Board Member



Food banks don't solve food poverty – the UK must not institutionalise them

Leading Canadian researcher, *Professor Graham Riches*, argues strongly against seeing food banks as any solution to dealing with food and poverty. Governments should face up to their responsibilities and revisit the right to food.

My Canadian hopes for the UK's All-Party Parliamentary report, 'Feeding Britain', quickly faded on reading that charitable food banks and the church, along with supermarkets and food manufacturers, are proposed as core agencies in a new national network to abolish national hunger. Yes, there's government representation – but there's no mention of the right to food contained within the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was ratified in 1976 by Jim Callaghan's Labour government, and placed the primary obligation on the state to ensure food access for all.

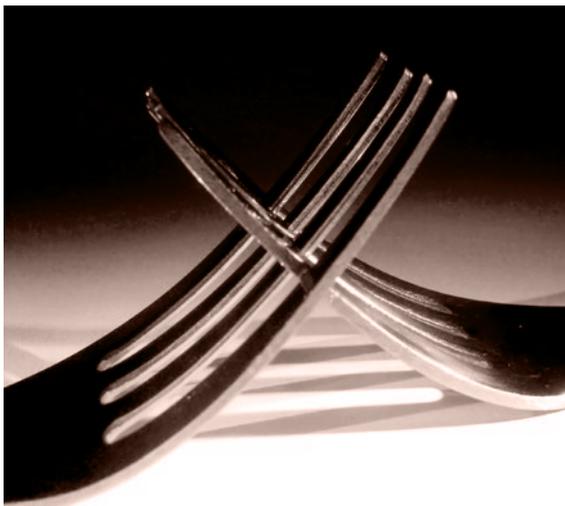
Given the "urgent issue" of food poverty, this is a glaring omission; a missed opportunity to change the public and political conversation from food charity to the right to food, informed by internationally recognised human rights principles and framework legislation. This would require a new ruling that entrenched the covenant language into domestic law, while creating a national, joined-up, food policy action plan based on measurable indicators of food insecurity, benchmarks, targets and timelines.

The all-party inquiry has no desire to see food banks take the place of statutory welfare, nor to simply call upon the government to deal with the issue. Whose heads are in the sand? Food banks already create a

second tier of the benefits system (we also see this in Canada) and wealthy nations always have the power and resources to combat poverty, so why not make the call? Under-resourced food charity and the private sector will never achieve a "zero hunger" Britain – there are too many conflicting interests at stake. Moreover, the UK does not have any national food insecurity indicators, so how would it ever be measured?

The sad fact is that in Canada, with its 30-year track record of increasingly corporatised food charity, recent national data shows that one in eight households or 3.9 million individuals (11.6% of the population) are still experiencing food insecurity.

Feeding Britain rightly supports Prof Elizabeth Dowler's long-held advocacy of the need for the poor, like anyone else, "to have enough money, and to be able to reach the kind of shops which stock the foods needed for health at affordable prices". It makes a series of constructive income and social security recommendations based on an analysis that food poverty is primarily caused by rising prices, a devalued national minimum wage, income poverty and a flawed benefits system rife with complex policies, programmes and eligibility criteria. It recommends a living wage, but astonishingly does not directly discuss the adequacy of state benefits.



States have the obligation to “respect, protect and fulfil” the right to food

Given that adequate food is a human right, states have the obligation to “respect, protect and fulfil”; that is, first, the state must not itself deprive anyone of access to adequate food; second, it must protect everyone from being deprived of such access in any other way; and third, when anyone is in fact without adequate food the state must proactively create an enabling environment where people become self-reliant for food or, where people are unable to do so, must ensure that it is provided. Every individual is a rights-holder, fully entitled to demand that the state performs these duties.

Source: FAO (2006). The Right to Food in Practice. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ah189e/ah189e.pdf>

The report then muddies the waters by arguing that food poverty is a food supply issue and, worryingly, recommends a vanguard role for the charitable food industry and food waste in the battle against structurally caused food poverty. This can only lead to the long-term institutionalisation of food banking and diminish political appetite for progressive reform.

In Canada, the long-term entrenchment of the food charity industry has fostered the de-politicisation of hunger and its social construction as a matter primarily for community and corporate charity, and not a human rights question demanding the urgent attention of the state. Today, Canadian public perception of food charity is that it should take care of domestic hunger. Governments can look the other way. Ergo, public policy neglect, an increasingly broken social safety net fed by punitive welfare reforms, the continuing neoliberal mantra of lower taxes and the minimalist state.

As leading US food policy expert Janet Poppendieck argues, food charity’s primary function is one of “symbolic value” . . . “relieving us of guilt and discomfort about hunger”, while serving as a moral safety valve as hunger marches on. Food banks are part of the problem, not the solution to food poverty. Tellingly, Canada’s nationally institutionalised food bank network lacks empirical evidence that food charity is an effective response to systemic food insecurity. Food banks consistently run out of food, distribution is tightly rationed, pressures mount to source food, eligibility criteria are vague, volunteer fatigue grows, and the stigma of food aid keeps many away. And as Prof Valerie Tarasuk’s data shows, food bank usage significantly underestimates the prevalence of national food insecurity. And surely, channelling ever-increasing tonnes of corporate food waste to feed vulnerable people is ethically unacceptable, to say nothing of the long-term economic and social implications of creating secondary food markets.

So what’s to be done? Scotland, which now has direct control of £9 billion of income tax and welfare benefits, is in a prime position to progressively incorporate the right to food into its public policy. Actions could include proclaiming a Zero Hunger strategy; the entrenchment of the language of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights into Scottish social welfare and public health legislation so as to ensure the justiciability of the right to food – a right is not a right unless it can be claimed; adopting framework legislation to guide ‘joined-up’ food policy and a Scottish action plan for food security inclusive of the income needs of the poor; implementing coordinated planning to include the collection of national food insecurity indicators (relying on food bank usage data will underestimate the scope of the issue), setting of targets, timelines, benchmarks and monitoring mechanisms (e.g., Scottish Human Rights Commission); and public education regarding the five year UN Periodic Review process which oversees member States compliance with their right to food obligations under international law (e.g. ICESCR, CRC). This will require concerted joint action of food, public health and social policy interests across civil society, academia and government plus a very strong dose of political will!

In the words of Louise Arbour, former Canadian supreme court justice and UN high commissioner for human rights: “There will always be a place for charity, but charitable responses are not an effective, principled or sustainable substitute for enforceable human rights guarantees.” 🍷

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emeritus professor Graham Riches, former director, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia

An earlier version of this article appeared in The Guardian on the 8th of december 2014.

Incorporating the right to food into domestic law

The Scottish Human Rights Commission says there are various options for incorporating the right to food into Scottish law such as through a written constitution, an Act of Parliament, or devolved structures.

The human right to food is established in international human rights law. The right to food is recognised in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, and is enshrined in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) along with a number of other treaties.¹

The implementation of the right to food is monitored through the UN Human Rights Council and its Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food as well as a number of Treaty Bodies, particularly the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. While the UK is legally bound by the UN Treaties that it has ratified, they are not incorporated into domestic law.

The Scottish Human Rights Commission believes that ICESCR and all other international human rights obligations should be incorporated into Scotland's domestic law. This would bring human rights closer to everyday life for everyone, making them more tangible, accessible and understandable. It would help to build a better human rights culture. For example, the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights through the Human Rights Act has required bodies which deliver public services to take action to put rights into practice. Incorporation would also enhance access to justice. People would have a direct remedy through the courts, and ultimately access to justice, to ensure that human rights are respected in practice. There are several options for incorporation.



THROUGH A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION

Internationally, there is a clear trend towards enshrining internationally recognised human rights in written constitutions. Almost all states now have a written constitution, setting out, among other things, people's rights, the state's duties and the roles and responsibilities of Parliament, Government and the courts.

Some older constitutions incorporated general principles which have since been used to uphold economic and social rights like the right to food. For example, in Germany, the fundamental principle of human dignity is recognised in its constitution and has been used to challenge breaches of rights relating to the treatment of people seeking asylum. In Ireland, a range of economic, social and cultural rights are included in its constitution as "directive principles", although these are not legally binding.

THROUGH AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT

Some countries have passed specific statutes to directly incorporate international human rights laws into domestic law. This can take place as well as, or instead of, using written constitutions. For example, in Norway, the Human Rights Act of 1999 incorporated the ICESCR, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights. In 2003 this was extended to include the Convention on the Rights of the Child.²

THROUGH DEVOLVED OR FEDERAL STRUCTURES

A number of federated countries have pursued incorporation of human rights at the devolved or state level through Bills of Rights, Charters or other laws. For example, in Australia, the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities of 2006 incorporates a range of civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights. It requires public authorities to act compatibly with those rights and to take them into account in developing laws and policies, making decisions and delivering services.³

The Commission and other partners in Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights are committed to exploring further the benefits and models of incorporating ICESCR and other international human rights. For more information, keep an eye on our website or follow us on Twitter @scothumanrights. 🌱

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emma Hutton, Communications and Outreach Manager, Scottish Human Rights Commission

1 See for example: the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (Articles 24(2)(c) and 27(3)), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979 (Articles 12(2)), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007 (Articles 25(f) and 28(1)).

2 UNICEF UK, *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: a study of legal implementation in 12 countries*, 2012, p 59.

3 See Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission, *Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*,

Emergency food aid in Scotland: hearing the voices of providers and recipients

The Poverty Alliance this month published *'Making the Connections: a study of emergency food aid in Scotland'*. The report presents findings from Scottish Government commissioned research into the support being delivered by emergency food aid providers, which aimed to identify better ways for them to connect clients to mainstream support services. The Scotland-wide study involved a survey of groups and organisations providing emergency food aid, as well as focus groups and interviews with those working in, and those accessing, such services.

The landscape of emergency food aid provision in Scotland is very diverse and has expanded rapidly in recent years. The study identified 167 providers – including food banks, 'soup kitchens' and community projects offering free food. While the Trussell Trust is the best known provider in Scotland, only 35 per cent of the 81 survey respondents were Trussell Trust members, with faith groups, community projects, housing associations and advice services among the range of organisation types now involved in providing emergency food aid of some kind.

The research report has provided valuable insights into the views and experiences of both providers and recipients of emergency food aid in Scotland. It highlights strong feelings of ambivalence, frustration, and often outrage at the very existence of such services and what this means for the future of state welfare. Many providers identified challenges in operating referrals of clients from and to mainstream services. Such challenges appear to be symptomatic of the dilemmas many agencies now face in negotiating the on-going changes in social security provisions, and the increasing role of faith and voluntary groups in supporting the most vulnerable. Participants were deeply concerned at what they see as government passing responsibility for this support onto the goodwill of volunteers

and public donations – well intentioned, yet unreliable and unsustainable resources. As the manager of a project in the North East stated: *"Food banks in themselves we do not see as a good thing. They erode dignity, create dependency, and bolster welfare reform. They just maintain the status quo, they dinnae lead to any change."*

Those interviewed who were accessing food banks did so as a last resort and often expressed feelings of desperation and shame at their situations. One interviewee was a man in his mid-30s who had been sanctioned and sent to a food bank by his local Job Centre. A sanction means the Job Centre reduces or stops a person's benefits for a certain period of time if they are considered to have not met certain requirements, such as missing an appointment. He summed up how he felt about this experience: *"It's no like me, I like providing for myself, I like doing the shopping myself. So coming in here and begging was a bit embarrassing you know. But at the end of the day you've got to dae it, if you want to eat you've got to dae it."*

Another interviewee powerfully reflected on the sense that the state is allowing people to fall through the social safety net, a concern reiterated by the emergency food aid providers involved in the study: *"They're only human beings that are trying to help you. I don't get how, it's all churches in Scotland and that, it's strange how the government don't have anything to do with it, it's strange how the government can sanction you and then you need to go, and these places are reliant on donations you know, and people. You see it round about the supermarkets, at the weekends you see folk with their leaflets asking for food for the food bank. But why's the government not, they can sanction you and punish you but when it comes to feeding you they're not interested..."* (food bank and soup kitchen client, East Ayrshire).



The study identified that partnership working between emergency food aid providers offers the potential for collective advocacy and campaigning on such issues, and could also help connect these groups and organisations with wider anti-poverty work and campaigns. Looking to build on the research findings and recommendations, the Poverty Alliance will be running a series of regional workshops with providers of emergency food aid throughout the year, focused on providing opportunities for groups to network and explore the key issues of food poverty, its drivers and impacts. Continuing these critical conversations, with the voices of those at the front line of emergency food aid provision is crucial if we are to challenge the causes of food poverty and identify more sustainable, socially just solutions.

If you would like more information on this work please contact maryanne.macleod@povertyalliance.org. In addition, a web-based resource has been developed – www.foodaidscotland.org – where the research report is available for download. The site also includes links to key national support and advice agencies, information about relevant campaigns, research, case studies, and good practice guidance. 🌱

Image © Trussell Trust England

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Anne MacLeod is a Research Officer at the Poverty Alliance and is also studying for a PhD at Glasgow University, focusing on the rise of emergency food aid in Scotland.

Mild food insecurity

Severe food insecurity

Uncertainty regarding ability to obtain food

Compromising on food quality and variety

Reducing food quantities, skipping meals

Experiencing hunger

A global standard for measuring food insecurity in the era of sustainable development goals

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has developed a measure for food insecurity that can be used to improve the understanding of its causes and thus the effectiveness of employing meaningful responses.

New sustainable development goals are currently being defined by the UN member nations for the coming decade, which may include *achievement of food security and improved nutrition* as part of the goal to end hunger. There has been an evolution in thinking that has led to more broadly addressing food insecurity rather than hunger in the narrow sense. The term food insecurity goes beyond the physical sensation of hunger to include deficits in food production and availability as well as limited access to food as violations of the human right to adequate food. The underlying causes of food insecurity and its extreme consequence, hunger, are social injustice, inequalities and the lack of guarantees of the economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights of the population. The experience of food insecurity, even in the absence

of observable negative effects on nutritional status, is a serious problem in itself, indicating a violation of the human right to adequate food.

THE VOICES OF THE HUNGRY PROJECT

In 2013, FAO launched the Voices of the Hungry project (VoH) to develop a global measure of food insecurity called the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES). This tool provides information about the adequacy of food access experienced by people and households.

The FIES survey module is composed of eight questions with dichotomous yes/no responses. Respondents are asked if they have worried about their ability to obtain enough food or have compromised the quality or quantity of the food they ate, or if their household has run out of food due to lack of money or other resources. The severity of food insecurity of each respondent is measured by their responses to the eight questions, which form the basis of population level estimates of food insecurity. The FIES provides a direct measure of the experience of food insecurity, and can be used to improve understanding of causes related to food production, livelihood strategies, and socioeconomic policies, and potential consequences, such as excess weight, child underweight, and psychosocial well-being.

Food Security Definition

Food security can be defined as *'the physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet people's dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, and the confidence that access can be assured in the immediate and long-term future', alongside the freedom not to have to make trade-offs between immediate poor nutritional status and long-term livelihood sustainability'*.

Elizabeth Dowler, *The Future of Household Food Security*, 2012.

With funding from the Department for International Development of the UK Government (DFID) and from the Belgium International Cooperation for Development, FAO included the FIES survey module in the Gallup® World Poll (GWP) in over 140 countries in 2014, including the UK, and will continue the annual surveys for the next four years. Global and national results regarding prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity from the 2014 cycle will be made publicly available in the second quarter of 2015. Through the development of a global standard¹, the information derived from the FIES is comparable across different geographic areas and cultures, making national, regional and global monitoring of food insecurity possible.

APPLYING THE VOH METHODOLOGY IN COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

In addition to global monitoring through the GWP, FAO is working with countries to apply the FIES and its analytic methodology in national and sub-national household budget and nutrition surveys in order to improve comprehension of food insecurity, and more importantly, policies and interventions to address it. Compared to other ways of measuring food security, the FIES stands out because of its ease of administration, global validity and timeliness of reporting. Moreover, the FIES comes closer than other measures to framing the experience of hunger from the perspective of those whose human right to adequate food is being violated.

For the UK, the VoH data from the GWP is collected from a representative sample of the population rather than its constituent countries. It is therefore not possible to estimate the prevalence of food insecurity for Scotland alone. In order to have more detailed data on the Scottish population to inform effective policies and programmes, the FIES could easily be included in population surveys, such as those related to household expenditures or health and nutrition, in order to understand the magnitude of the problem in Scotland and also to investigate its causes and consequences. 

1 The FIES global standard scale is a set of item parameters based on data from all countries in the survey. By adjusting each country's scale to the global standard, the respondent severity parameters are aligned to a common metric, producing a comparable measure of severity for respondents in all countries and comparable national prevalence rates at specified thresholds of severity for all countries.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Terri Ballard, Voices of the Hungry Project, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Submit your evidence! Looking at food and poverty from a food system perspective

In late 2014, the non-party, independent Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty was set up to look at the relations between food and poverty from a food system perspective.

While the rise of the 'food bank' has grabbed the headlines in recent months, as more and more people are struggling to put food on the table in the UK, recent research has shown that emergency food use is just the tip of the iceberg. Many more people do not have access to the levels of nutritious, sustainable food that most people would deem socially acceptable.

Indeed, the reality in the UK is that growing numbers of people are malnourished. Not only do people experience hunger but many suffer from malnutrition arising from overconsumption or poor diets.

'To change this situation, we need to look across our food systems and the different drivers that lead to the current outcomes', the chair of the Commission, Geoff Tansey, said.

The Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty is bringing together experts as well as those experiencing poverty, to look at the roles of government, civil society and the food industry in increasing the availability and accessibility of sustainable, nutritious food.

The Commission is conducting evidence hearings on five major issues facing the food provisioning system: money and affordability; context and access; health; the environment; and the supply chain and society. Commissioners are also keen to hear proposals and comments that either cut across or do not fit in with the hearing titles.

The Commission invites all individuals and organisations with an interest in food and poverty, especially those experiencing or who have experienced food poverty, to submit evidence.

To submit your evidence and follow the work of the Fabian Commission visit: <http://foodandpoverty.org.uk>





Alternative responses to food poverty

Many people realise that relying on an industrialised and globalised food system makes us all poorer: it has resulted in the loss of meaningful employment and skills, physical and mental health, social relationships, sense of community, soil fertility and overall integrity of our natural environment.

In Scotland as well as elsewhere, a lot of initiatives have emerged that seek to tackle poverty at its roots through fostering community, supporting the local economy and making available the resources that people need in order to participate meaningfully in society. Two of these initiatives are highlighted below.

Forward Coupar Angus' response to food poverty

Rachel Butterworth works for the charity Forward Coupar Angus, whose Food Focus project aims to empower people to make better food choices to reduce food poverty and the carbon footprint of the town.

The biggest challenge we have found is identifying which people are living in food poverty. There is currently a misconception that people in food crisis are unemployed or 'on benefits'. In fact it is largely working people who are struggling. This is due to low wages, the cost of living rising and lack of financial security. When you are living from payday to payday and facing high bills, you use your weekly food budget as a financial buffer. The BBC Food Programme recently highlighted this, explaining that thousands of families across the UK are one unexpected bill away from a financial crisis.

When this happens, you have to resort to going to a food bank. Food banks have sadly had to take on the responsibility of feeding people most in need in the UK. Isn't it shameful that a Western, developed nation has to have food banks?

We mustn't allow food banks to become an accepted part of the status quo, as they have done in other countries such as Canada and the USA. As long as food banks continue to look after people who are struggling, then the government doesn't need to do anything to raise people out of food poverty.

At Forward Coupar Angus, we are taking a more positive route to combatting food poverty and food (un)awareness. We've started cooking workshops for adults and cooking clubs for children and teenagers. We have a monthly food market and have planted a community garden. From this spring, we are offering free growing space to residents – particularly people on low incomes – and will be providing training in growing food. We are also giving away raised beds and compost to people who

want to grow in their own gardens. We believe that by developing growing and cooking skills, more food choices open up to people.

Since October we have been piloting an honesty box fruit and veg stall, run out of an office in town. The produce is grown by local smallholders and in the community garden, and sold on at 'rough prices'. This allows people to take a couple of carrots and some tatties, and just pay what they can afford. Local residents also donate surplus from their gardens, so it is not wasted. So far donations have ranged from cooking apples to quails' eggs!

The stall has made a steady profit over the last few months, so we now want to expand into a full-blown community shop. We are currently developing a concept for such a

North Lanarkshire Food Aid

Ian Shankland works for Lanarkshire Community Food and Health (LCFHP), a community based organisation that has been promoting and supporting healthy eating initiatives across Lanarkshire since 1990.

LCFHP supports 29 community run food co-ops, 28 fruit and vegetable initiatives, the "High Five for Fruit" project operating in all 129 North Lanarkshire nurseries and has a social enterprise "Fruits and Roots" that holds a number of supply contracts across Central Scotland.

In 2013 LCFHP set up the innovative North Lanarkshire Food Aid (NLFA). NLFA is funded by the Lottery's "Support and Connect" initiative and is designed to offer a more connected and holistic response to the increase in extreme food poverty than the existing food banks in the area currently provide.

Based around our food co-op network NLFA starts via a referral process with key partners in the local Citizens Advice Bureau, Scottish Welfare Fund, NLC Social Work Department, etc. where clients can start with advice on the key issues for their problem rather than just obtain a few days free food. Once a referral to NLFA is made the client can either collect the food at the local food co-op or can have this delivered to their home.

The difference to a conventional food bank is that our food packs contain three balanced meals for five days per person with the contents purchased by us rather than coming from donations. In that way we can provide a nutritionally balanced range of groceries

and fruit and vegetables. The veg packs for soup and baked potatoes are sourced locally when seasonally available.

Included in the food pack are a number of vouchers that clients can spend at the co-ops to either top-up the emergency food packs or use for additional groceries at a later time. 2,500 emergency food packs have been supplied in the first 14 months of the introduction of the programme.

It is hoped that by directly linking the Food Aid programme to the existing food co-ops, long term support will help both to extend the length of time people can access subsidised food but also to promote the benefits of a local food network which supplies fresh, healthy, often directly purchased, locally grown produce within local communities. We firmly believe that by developing and

strengthening local food economies, with very short supply chains, we are maximising employment opportunities and providing access to fresh seasonal produce locally at affordable prices.

To further promote the benefits of local seasonal produce NLFA also employs a qualified nutritionist who offers free healthy cooking, food waste reduction and safe food storage sessions within the co-op set-up. So far since November 2013 NLFA has held 71 classes with over 1600 people attending these sessions. Whilst clients are being targeted and signposted to these sessions they are open to all members of the local community.

Image © Lanarkshire Community Food and Health

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian Shankland, Manager of Lanarkshire Community Food and Health



shop. It should be an outlet for the produce from local smallholders, gardens and the community garden as well as locally made crafts. Furthermore, like Social Solidarity shops (there are two in the UK, one in south London and another one in Yorkshire), we would like to sell produce that has been rejected by supermarkets due to packaging malfunctions. Not only would this give

customers access to produce at a fraction of the original price, but it would also save produce from going to landfill.

An important issue we need to resolve is that Social Solidarity shops can only be used by people who receive government benefits. We want to avoid any stigmatisation and divisiveness in the community and want our

shop to be accessible to everyone. Our shop should be a means of bridging the social and economic divides in our community. 🍷

Images © Rachel Butterworth

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Butterworth, Food Development Officer Forward Coupar Angus



Food Leadership Programme 2015

Are you a grower, farmer, retailer, cook, community organiser, activist, policymaker, artist, procurement officer, journalist, nutritionist, educator, researcher...?

Do you want to help transform the food system from being centred on producing commodities to caring for people and planet, and connect with others who share this vision?

Rising food poverty is one of the many failings of our current food system. Nourish is glad to be able to announce our first Food Leadership Programme, taking place this summer. This programme will be a cornerstone in building a Scotland-wide movement for a just and sustainable food system, and will lay the foundation for a more comprehensive programme to be held in 2016.

From the 13th to the 17th of July, we're inviting up to thirty aspiring change-makers from across Scotland to immerse in a collective learning process at Comrie Croft in Perthshire, untangling the food system in all its complexity and developing the skills to make a real difference, individually and collectively, in Scotland and beyond.

Contact foodleaders@nourishscotland.org.uk for questions. Details on how to take part are posted on our website under 'Projects'.