



# Just Fair Report

## Freedom from Hunger: Realising the Right to Food in the UK



Doughty Street Chambers, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2013

# “Freedom from Hunger: Realising the Right to Food in the UK”

Monday 18th February 2013

Doughty Street Chambers, London

**Chair:** Baroness Ruth Lister (Patron of Just Fair and Member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights)

Professor Olivier de Schutter (United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food): **The Right to Food in Times of Crisis**

Chris Mould (Executive Chair of the Trussell Trust): **Foodbanks - Emergency Food for People in Crisis**



# Just Fair: *Justice and Fairness through Human Rights*

**Just Fair** is an NGO working to achieve justice and fairness through human rights. We strive to combat poverty and inequality by campaigning for Economic and Social Rights, including the rights to food, clothing, housing and health, for everyone in the UK.

**Austerity Britain:** As austerity tightens its grip, many people across the UK face a new reality of poverty and social exclusion:

- 13 million people live below the poverty line in the UK, 1 in every 5 people. 1 in 3 children live below the poverty line in the UK (Oxfam);
- 400,000 more children will end up in poverty by 2015, rising to 800,000 by 2020 (Institute of Fiscal Studies);
- Approximately 500,000 people in the UK who receive Disability Living Allowance will no longer be eligible for the replacement Personal Independence Payment (Department for Work and Pensions);
- In 2008-09 Trussell Trust foodbanks fed 26,000 nationwide; in 2009-10: 41,000 were fed; in 2010-11: 61,468; in 2011-12: 128,697. In 2012-13 this number is likely to rise to 250,000 (Trussell Trust);
- 5,678 people slept rough at some point in London during 2011/12, an increase of 43% on the previous year's total of 3,975 (Crisis).

**Economic and Social Rights Consortium:** In the face of the economic crisis, the introduction of 'austerity' measures and deepening public service spending cuts, Just Fair will launch an Economic and Social Rights Consortium in Spring 2013 to monitor and secure these fundamental human rights, which include the rights to food, clothing, housing and health, for everyone in the UK.

The Consortium will focus on the key issues affecting people across England in the austerity era such as, child poverty, food poverty, fuel poverty, homelessness and disability benefit reform. The Consortium will present its monitoring findings to MPs and Peers in Parliament before calling for change at the United Nations in 2015, when the UK's human rights record will be reviewed.

More than 70 national charities and community groups have expressed interest in joining the Consortium including, Age UK, ATD Fourth World, Child Poverty Action Group, Citizens Advice, Crisis, Disability Rights UK, the Law Society, Mencap, Refugee Council, Scope and Unicef UK. As such, the Consortium presents a unique opportunity for England's charities and communities to unite through human rights, in order to challenge regressive austerity measures and unjust cuts to public service spending.



# Executive Summary

## Baroness Ruth Lister: Chair's Remarks

- Media interest in the event, as reported in The Independent and The Guardian, and in food poverty in general, reflects growing evidence of hardship.
- Baroness Lister predicted growing hardship, due in part to measures coming into effect in April 2013, such as welfare benefit cuts, the 'bedroom tax', localisation of council tax benefit, and the phasing in of universal credit. Inevitably, pressures on foodbanks are going to increase.
- Whilst foodbanks have a place in society they should not become a substitute for a welfare state.
- In the face of the economic crisis, the introduction of 'austerity' measures and deepening public service spending cuts, Just Fair will launch an Economic and Social Rights Consortium.

## Professor Olivier de Schutter: The Right to Food in Times of Crisis

- In the UK, available revenues have increased annually by 2.1% on average for the entire population and 2.5% for the richest ten percent. However, revenues available for the bottom decile of the population grew by a mere 0.9%.
- As of today, in the 21st century, we see a resurgence of the 'working poor'. Approximately 62% of the children living in poverty in the UK live in households in which at least one parent is working.
- Foodbanks are a testimony to the failure of public authorities to deliver on the right to food and should be neither a permanent feature nor a substitute for more robust social programs.
- Human rights bodies have expressed concern that austerity programs have not sufficiently taken human rights into account.
- He called for social benefits to be defined in terms of rights which government owe to the people.
- Foodbanks must not be seen as an alternative to social protection, as fashionable as they may seem.

## Chris Mould: Foodbanks - Emergency Food for UK people in Crisis

- In 2008-09 Trussell Trust foodbanks fed 25,899 nationwide; in 2009-10: 40,898 were fed; in 2010-11: 61,468; in 2011-12: 128,697. In 2012-13 this number is set to rise to 250,000.
- While median income went down in 2012, food prices over the last five years have increased by 30-35%.
- One in five mothers is regularly missing out on food to make sure that their children do not go hungry. The vision of the Trust is that there should be a foodbank in every community across the UK for short-term crisis support.

# Chair's Address

*Baroness Ruth Lister (Patron of Just Fair and Member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights)*



Baroness Ruth Lister opened the lecture by highlighting that the recent media interest in the event, as reported in *The Independent* and *The Guardian*,<sup>1</sup> and in food poverty in general reflects growing evidence of hardship. An increasing number of people are turning to foodbanks. Further, the horse meat scare has brought attention to the poor quality of cheaply processed food. Food poverty is not only about the quantity of accessible food, but also about the consumption of poor quality food.

Baroness Lister predicted growing hardship, due in part to measures coming into effect in April 2013, such as welfare benefit cuts, the 'bedroom tax', localisation of council tax benefit, and the phasing in of universal credit. Inevitably, pressures on foodbanks are going to increase.

The focus of the meeting is the right to food, emphasised Baroness Lister. The Right to Food is one strand of the human right to an adequate standard of living enshrined in Article 11 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The right to food entitles everyone to regular and permanent access to adequate food which ensures a fulfilling and dignified life free of fear. It requires, among other things, that people should be able to afford an adequate amount of food without having to compromise other basic needs, such as housing and clothing.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights stated in its Twenty-First Report that the obligation to progressively realise the ICESCR rights should provide the standard against which government progress in poverty reduction is assessed. A rights-based approach can assist government in addressing poverty, and can aid Parliamentary and civil society scrutiny of government.<sup>2</sup>

'Media interest in the event, as reported in *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, and in food poverty in general, reflects growing evidence of hardship'

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<sup>1</sup> *The Independent* (17/02/2013), [UN official alarmed by rise of food banks in UK - Britons' reliance on handouts could represent human rights abuse](#); *The Guardian* (18/02/2013), [Food poverty 'puts UK's international human rights obligations in danger'](#) – Consortium of charities to monitor food poverty in Britain with view to possibility of triggering formal UN investigations; see also *The Huffington Post* (19/02/2013), [Food Poverty: UN Special Rapporteur Finds Austerity, Food Banks And Working In UK 'Extremely Worrying'](#).

<sup>2</sup> Joint Committee on Human Rights (2004), Twenty-First Report, para. 106.

In the face of the economic crisis, the introduction of ‘austerity’ measures and deepening public service spending cuts, Just Fair will launch an Economic and Social Rights Consortium in Spring 2013 to monitor and secure these fundamental human rights, which include the rights to food, clothing, housing and health, for everyone in the UK.

The Consortium will focus on the key issues affecting people across England in the austerity era such as, child poverty, food poverty, fuel poverty, homelessness and disability benefit reform. The

*‘In the face of the economic crisis, the introduction of ‘austerity’ measures and deepening public service spending cuts, Just Fair will launch an Economic and Social Rights Consortium’*

Consortium will present its monitoring findings to MPs and Peers in Parliament before calling for change at the United Nations in 2015, when the UK’s human rights record will be reviewed.

More than 70 national charities and community groups have expressed interest in joining the Consortium including, Age UK, ATD Fourth World, Child Poverty Action Group, Citizens Advice, Crisis, Disability Rights UK, the Law Society, Mencap, Refugee Council, Scope and Unicef UK. As such, the Consortium presents a unique opportunity for England’s charities and communities to unite through human rights, in order to challenge regressive austerity measures and unjust cuts to public service spending.

Baroness Lister concluded her opening remarks by warning that the previous Labour government had ignored the rights based approach to poverty reduction, and in turn the current Coalition government is steadily eroding the remaining rights which still exist under UK law.



# The Right to Food in Times of Crisis

*Professor Olivier de Schutter (United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food)*



Professor Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, spoke on the right to food in developed countries in times of economic crisis, and focused on the extent to which inequalities combined with austerity measures can exacerbate food poverty for the poorest people.

'While economies have grown continuously over the past thirty years (apart from 2008 and 2010), inequalities have increased in a very striking manner.'

## Rising Inequalities

According to Eurostat, average individual consumption in the UK has remained relatively stable despite the financial crisis, particularly in comparison with other European economies.<sup>3</sup> However, behind the shining macroeconomic indicators, one needs to consider the situation of the poorest and most vulnerable.

The findings of many international agencies indicate that while economies have grown continuously over the past thirty years (apart from 2008 and 2010), inequalities have increased in a very striking manner.

Looking at the evolution of household income by income group from the mid-1980s to 2010, the incomes of the bottom decile have increased much slower than that of the top decile. In the UK, available revenues have increased annually by 2.1% on average for the entire population and 2.5% for the richest ten percent. However, revenues available for the bottom decile of the

population grew by a mere 0.9%.

Also, the OECD report *'Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising'*<sup>4</sup> illustrates that inequalities in most OECD countries have increased over the past 25 years. One reason put forward by the OECD is that the protection of workers via wage-defending unions has declined.

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<sup>3</sup>Eurostat (2013), Statistics in focus, Economy and Finance, 2/2013, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2012), *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising*.

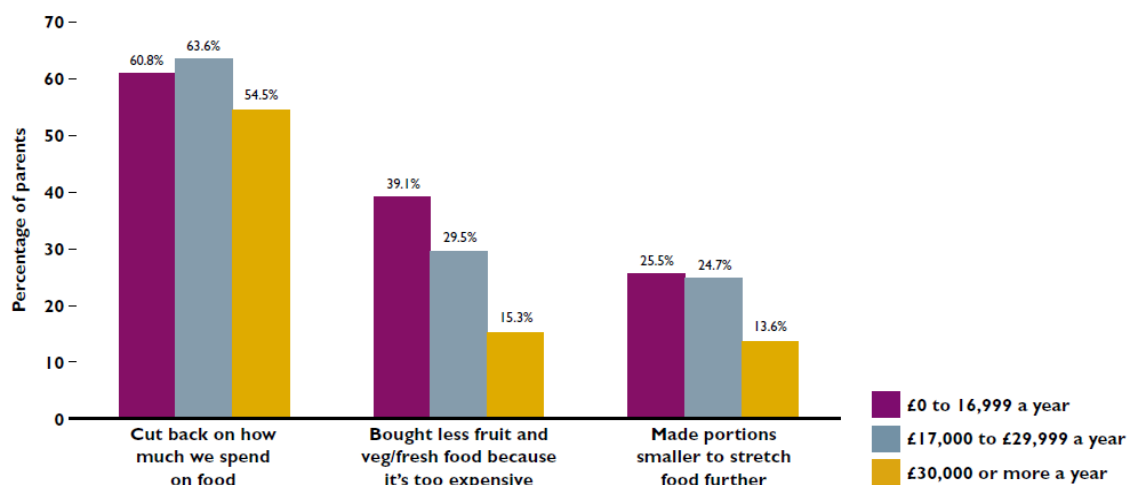
As of today, in the 21st century, we see a resurgence of the ‘working poor’. Many workers, even those who work beyond full-time hours, earn wages that are so low in relation to the cost of living, that they cannot afford decent housing, heating, clothing and food. Conclusively, work does not protect one from social exclusion as a result of the failure of legislation and unionisation. This is further evidenced by the fact that approximately 62% of the children living in poverty in the UK live in households in which at least one parent is working.

## Food Accessibility: Food Poverty in Affluent Countries

Food is one basic necessity that people cannot easily reduce. Throughout the 27 EU Member States, the proportion of the family household budget that is spent on food remained relatively stable at 12-13% during the period of 2001 to 2011. Even during the financial and economic crisis, food expenditure has, in contrast to other types of consumption, reduced relatively marginally by 1.5%. Conclusively, people do not easily renounce food expenses. In the UK, where housing costs are higher than in many other EU countries, the average family spends about 9% of its income on purchasing food.

Professor de Schutter outlined three complementary ways of looking at food poverty. First, as a result of poverty, people cut down on the number of meals and food expenses. Save the Children illustrate in their report *‘Child Poverty in 2012: It shouldn’t happen here’* that almost 61% of poor families in the UK were cutting back on food expenditure, and 39% reduced purchases of fruit and vegetables. As such, people avoid hunger by reducing food expenditure and shifting towards lower quality diets.

**“Percentage of Parents by Household Income Group Indicating They’ve Done the Following in Relation to Their Spending on Food in the Past Year”**



Source: Save the Children, *Child Poverty in 2012: It shouldn’t happen here*

In emergency situations people turn to foodbanks. Foodbanks, however, are a testimony to the failure of public authorities to deliver on the right to food and should be neither a permanent feature nor a substitute for more robust social programs. Food assistance in the form of the right to social security, such as cash transfers, food stamps or vouchers, can be defined in terms of rights, whereas foodbanks are charity-based and depend on donations and good will. There can also be a sense of shame attached to foodbanks.



Second, being poor may also determine the quality of diets. In most rich countries, such as Canada, people in poverty may be underfed, but they are more likely to be badly fed. They turn to diets that are less diverse, poor quality and hence less healthy, leading to diseases such as diabetes, cancer, heart diseases and obesity. There are four main reasons for the consumption of low quality food.

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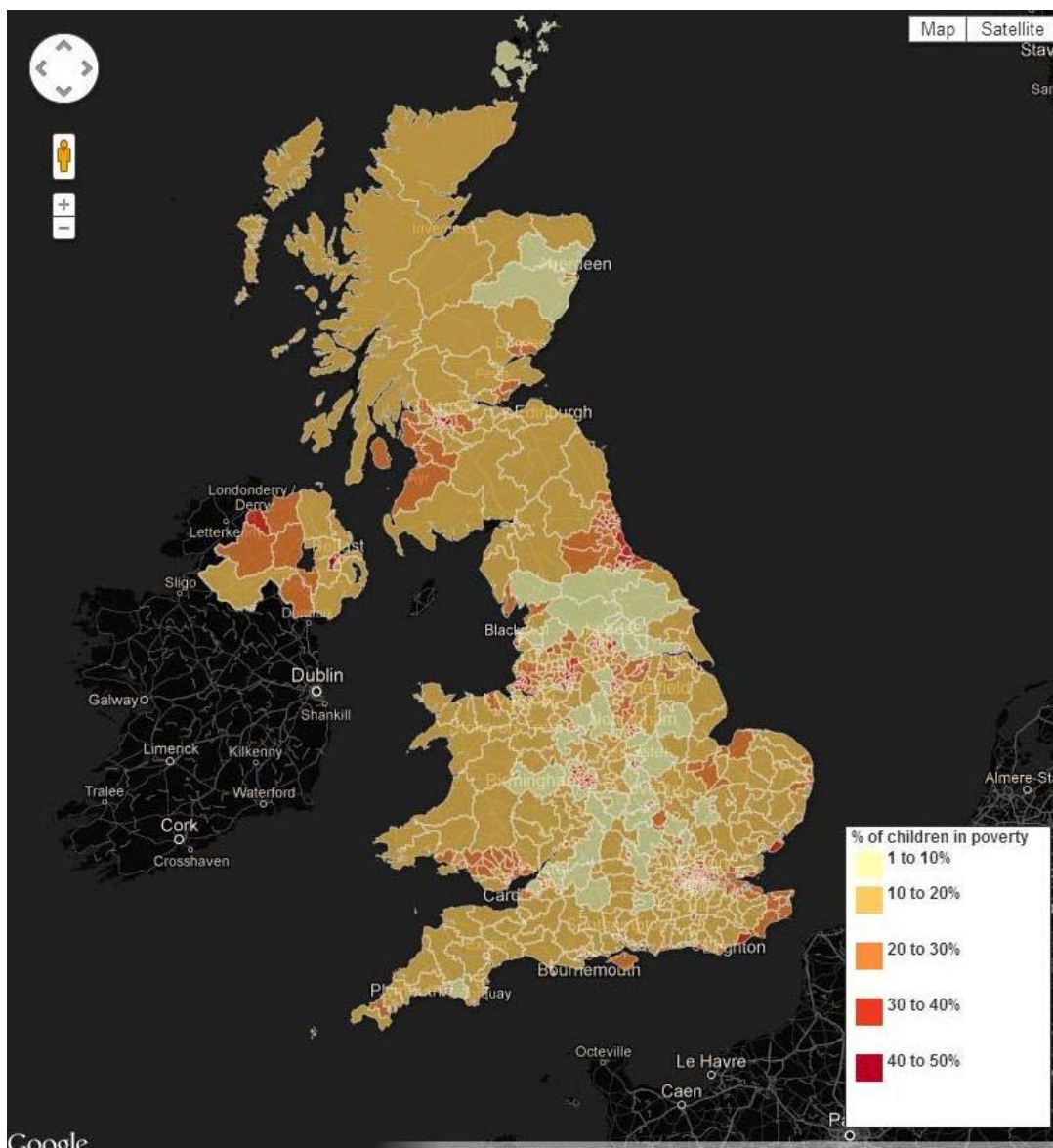
First, food deserts are developing throughout many rich countries. Often poor neighbourhoods are under served by retailers that provide affordable access to fresh food. Second, there is less time to buy and cook food. Therefore there is a greater dependency on (fast) food outlets and pre-cooked meals, which are heavy in sugar, salt and fats. Third, there is a loss of culinary culture. Knowledge of cooking has declined, and the activity of preparing family meals – primarily done by women – is undervalued. Consideration of this gender dimension is vital in order to develop healthy food systems. Fourth and finally, there is often a lack of awareness concerning the impact of unhealthy diets. In the UK 25% of the population are considered to be obese (body mass index above 30). Within 15 to 20 years this will have a

considerable impact on the health care system. Studies have shown that the lowest income groups of the population are particularly affected by obesity. For example, 8.2% of girls in the lowest quintile are obese in contrast with 3.9% in the highest. For boys there is a similar though less

significant trend.

The third way of looking at food poverty in rich countries is to see how it is spread geographically. In the UK there is a concentration of child poverty at local levels. In approximately 100 areas across the UK between 50 and 70% of children are growing up in poor neighbourhoods. Growing up in these 'poverty pockets', with inadequate provision of food, can result in low life expectancies. For instance, a child born in the poorer Calton area of Glasgow has a life expectancy of 54, while those born in the more affluent Lenzie North area of the same city have a life expectancy of 82. In these areas, poverty is carried from generation to generation; children have fewer opportunities, a lack of role models and often face food deserts. Hence, poverty is worse when it is concentrated.

### Child Poverty Map of the UK, 2012



Source: Campaign to End Child Poverty

## Human Rights Requirements in Times of Crisis

Professor de Schutter posed the question of ‘what is needed to address food poverty in rich countries?’ All governments facing the need to reduce public debt have employed long (fiscally orthodox) austerity programs. Many human rights bodies have expressed concern that these austerity programs have not sufficiently taken human rights into account. In this regard, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights sent a letter to State parties to the ICESCR on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012 identifying four requirements which any proposed austerity measures must meet in order to comply with international human rights law.<sup>5</sup> First, the policy is a temporary measure covering only the period of the crisis. Second, the policy is necessary and proportionate, in the sense that the adoption of any other policy, or a failure to act, would be more detrimental to economic, social and cultural rights. Third, the policy is not discriminatory and comprises all possible measures, including tax measures, to support social transfers and mitigate inequalities that can grow in times of crisis and to ensure that the rights of disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups are not disproportionately affected. Fourth, the policy identifies the minimum core content of rights, or a social protection floor, as developed by the International Labor Organization, and ensures the protection of this core content at all times.

Human rights bodies have expressed concern that these austerity programs have not sufficiently taken human rights into account’

Olivier de Schutter concluded with a threefold message. First, the UN Committee which has been established to set new targets for the Millennium Development Goals (present goals are due to expire in 2015), and which is being chaired by David Cameron MP, should target inequality. Equality should be defined as a self-standing goal in the discussions. Second, with inequalities increasing across societies, some parts of populations have been accumulating excessive wealth which can, if speculated on the financial markets, disrupt and contribute to the creation of ‘market bubbles’. In turn, these bubbles can cause financial markets to fall into panic, as happened during the recent financial crisis. Third, combating inequalities is extremely important. The higher the degree of inequality in a given society, the higher the chance a few groups will accumulate power and resist changes that can make a real contribution to the progressive realisation of the right to food.

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<sup>5</sup>Open letter of the Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to States parties to the ICESCR, dated 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012; CESCR/48th/SP/MAB/SW.

# Foodbanks: Emergency Food for UK people in Crisis

Chris Mould (Executive Chair of the Trussell Trust)



Chris Mould, Executive Chair of the Trussell Trust, focused his talk on UK food poverty and the rapid increase of foodbanks across the country.

*“In 2008-09 Trussell Trust foodbanks fed 25,899 nationwide; in 2009-10: 40,898 were fed; in 2010-11: 61,468; in 2011-12: 128,697. In 2012-13 this number is set to rise to 250,000.”*

## Trussell Trust Foodbanks

The Trussell Trust is an independent Christian charity that receives no government funding. The Trussell Trust’s foodbank network partners with churches and communities nationwide to launch foodbanks that provide a minimum of three days emergency food to people in crisis. There are over 300 Trussell Trust foodbanks nationwide, with new foodbanks launching at a rate of three per week.

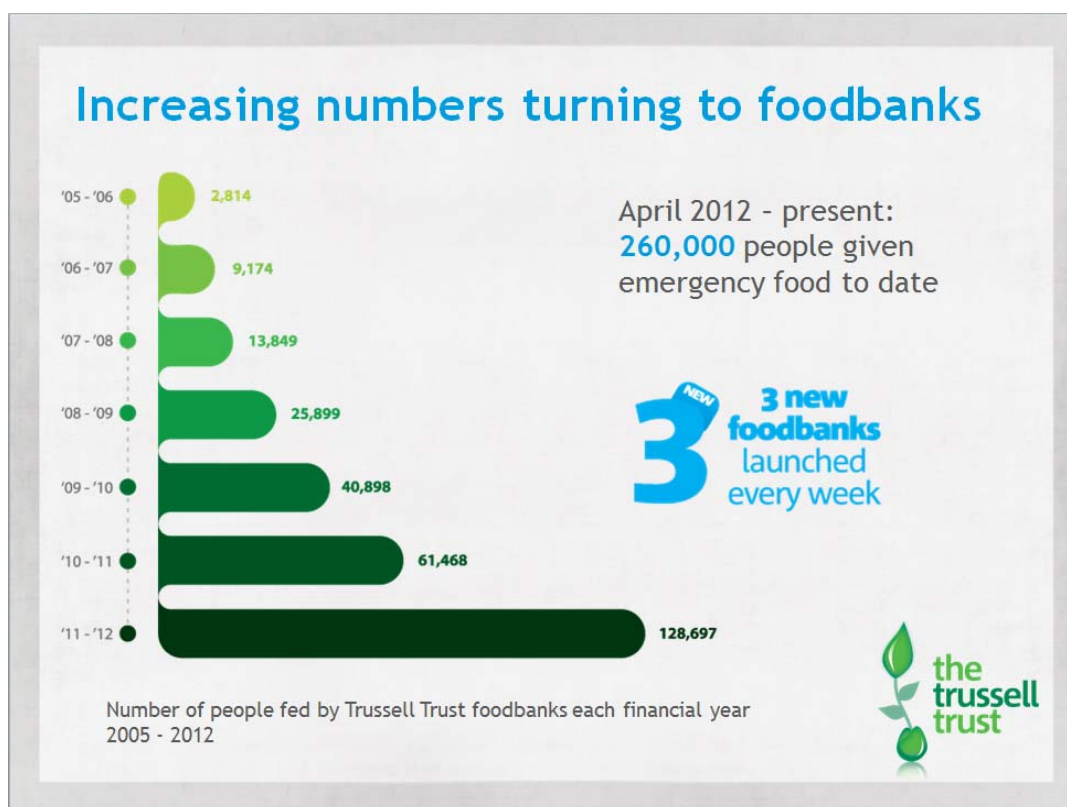
Food is collected from approximately 3700 schools, 3700 churches and supermarkets, and then sorted by trained volunteers. Over 90% of food given out by foodbanks is donated by the public, and foodbank recipients are referred by frontline care professionals such as doctors, social workers, the CAB, Jobcentre Plus or schools liaison officers. More than 10,000 care professionals currently work alongside the Trussell Trust to refer clients in crisis to the foodbank network. The parcels include nutritionally balanced food put

together after a check-list enquiry with the client.

## Increasing numbers turning to foodbanks

Over the last year there has been a substantial increase in the number of people using foodbanks. In 2008-09 Trussell Trust foodbanks fed 25,899 nationwide; in 2009-10: 40,898 were fed; in 2010-11: 61,468; in 2011-12: 128,697. In 2012-13 this number is set to rise to 250,000.

## Foodbank Statistics



Source: The Trussell Trust

Less than 5% of foodbank clients are homeless, many are working families struggling to make ends meet. Most of the people who come to foodbanks struggle because of benefit delay, changes in tax credit and low income. The rest come because of family breakdown, mental health, changes in employment and redundancy. Many foodbank clients are 'working poor'.

## UK Poverty

More than 13 million people in the UK are living in households with an income that is below 60% of the median income. While the median income went down in 2012, food prices over the last five years have increased by 30-35%. Recent statistics indicate that inflation in January 2013 stood at 2.7%, whereas food inflation was approximately 4.8%. Besides the reduction in net incomes and inflation in food prices, there are upwards changes in the cost of housing and utilities (water and heating).

*'While median income went down in 2012, food prices over the last five years have increased by 30-35%'*

Chris Mould added that it is disturbing to see the degree to which food poverty is increasingly prevalent within the foodbank network. More people are coming back more often. It is harder for the Trussell Trust to help people to

move on to more sensible solutions that are long-term and sustainable.

According to a survey on Netmums,<sup>6</sup> an online platform for mothers, one in five mothers is regularly missing out on food to make sure that their children do not go hungry. Of these, one third is reported to have received NHS services for anxiety and depression.

## Trussell Trust vision

The vision of the Trust is that there should be a foodbank in every community across the UK for short-term crisis support. Foodbanks, according to Mr Mould, are essentially a community based initiative. Some of the most generous donations of food are given by people who previously received food from a foodbank themselves. Further, many foodbank volunteers were originally foodbank clients.

'The vision of the Trussell Trust is that there should be a foodbank in every community across the UK for short-term crisis support.'



Chris Mould concluded by emphasising that while foodbanks are not a complete solution in and of themselves, they certainly are an important part of the solution.

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<sup>6</sup>Netmums (2012), *Feeling the Squeeze – Survey Results*

# Questions and Answers

## *Destitute migrants*

Chris Mould responded to a question on the use of foodbanks by destitute migrants, including families with children and pregnant women, who had no access to food at all and may be undocumented. Mr Mould said that part of the Trussell Trust's work is to provide short term support whilst signposting people to other sources of support. This was difficult in the case of destitute migrants who may fall outside the usual support system. He acknowledged that this was an issue and, whilst the Trussell Trust tried to help, they did not have measures or solutions.

## *Foodbanks and the welfare state*

Both speakers responded to a questioner who referred to a recent talk by Labour's Jon Cruddas MP, which seemed to celebrate foodbanks as a virtuous alternative to a culture of entitlement. The questioner asked if this was indicative of a shift in political ground in Britain that may result in a difficult context in which to introduce the idea of rights, and whether this debate was emerging elsewhere.

*'Chris Mould likened the Trussell Trust's vision of a foodbank in every community to the notion of an ambulance station accessible to anyone who has an accident'*

Chris Mould likened the Trussell Trust's vision of a foodbank in every community to the notion of an ambulance station accessible to anyone who has an accident. His concern is that too many people need to use foodbanks too often. He was pleased to see politicians paying attention to food poverty but wanted them to be clear that foodbanks are part of the process for addressing this poverty and do not offer a complete solution. Mr Mould also stressed the voluntary nature of foodbanks. Entering into contracts with governments would weaken their links with communities and they would lose the value-for-money argument.

Professor de Schutter said that in many countries the role of charities was seen as supplementing the failure of governments to protect their populations from economic shocks. He called for social benefits to be defined in terms of rights which government owe to the people. Professor de Schutter cited three advantages which flow from a rights based approach:

Firstly, no one is left out, because people's rights are defined in law; people are informed and can claim their rights through independent bodies when they are unjustifiably excluded. This is not the case for charity-based programmes.

Second, rights secure individual dignity. People may worry about using foodbanks due to feelings



of shame and fears of being judged by others. Professor de Schutter said that poverty was not simply a lack of resources but was also defined by how people were seen by others.

Thirdly, defining social protection as a right ensures that these services will be funded. Governments are obliged to find

the necessary revenue, and this gives security that in times of crisis the number of people in need will not grow rapidly. He reiterated that foodbanks must not be seen as an alternative to social protection, as fashionable as they may seem..

## **Government commitment to equality**

In response to a question on whether governments in the West are as seriously committed to equality as they claim to be, Chris Mould noted that the UK Chancellor's 2012 budget was supported by a Treasury Impact Analysis which showed that the cumulative effect of the planned changes would impact the poorest 40 per cent of the population negatively, and yet the government decided to go ahead with the plans without any adjustments.

The questioner also asked if senior figures from any governments – in particular, David Cameron MP – have ever asked Professor de Schutter to speak with them, and have there been any attempts to seriously address the data. In response, Professor de Schutter questioned whether governments even paid much lip service to equality. He suggested three reasons for why governments fail to show a low level of commitment towards equality:

Firstly, a belief in the Kuznets Curve – a theory which

The UK Chancellor's 2012 budget was supported by a Treasury Impact Analysis which showed that the cumulative effect of the planned changes would impact negatively the poorest 40 per cent of the population and yet the government decided to go ahead with the plans without any adjustments.

suggests that, via the “miracle of market mechanisms”, as an economy develops inequalities will initially increase before the society eventually becomes more equal. Professor de Schutter believed that this theory is belied by evidence of growing inequalities over the last 30 years and needs to be questioned. Secondly, the perception that equality undermines economic growth. He argued that if low income families were supported to consume more this would allow the economy to grow and to overcome crisis. Thirdly, the benefits of equality - such as reduction in crime and improvement in public health – were not taken seriously by governments.

## ***Beyond the baseline of equality***

Chris Mould addressed the topic of inspiring organisations to support a vision of equality which goes beyond the baseline and ensures a rich human life for everyone. He believed that foodbanks could be a place where people rediscovered their humanity. He had observed many clients saying that the foodbank was the first place where they had not felt judged, and contrasted this with the lack of dignity people experienced from some state-run services such as the job centre. He added that foodbanks offered the opportunity for clients to contribute useful skills as volunteers.

*‘Foodbanks could be a place where people rediscovered their humanity’*

A questioner expressed concern about the impact on children of realising that their parents are missing meals in order to feed them. Chris Mould knew of parents in this situation who used excuses, such as trying to lose weight, to cover up the real reason they no longer sat and ate together. He believed that children did notice and their resilient nature could help, but that this situation was distressing.

## ***Optional Protocol to the ICESCR***

On the question of how the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would help secure the right to food, Professor de Schutter confirmed that the Protocol would enter into force on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2013 after the required number of ratifications had been obtained. He expressed his hope that the UK would join this mechanism in the future. He described two expected outcomes:

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would be able to assess individual complaints in the light of the obligations owed by states under the Covenant. Professor de Schutter felt that this would help domestic courts to uphold social rights provisions under domestic legislation, which are often vaguely worded and difficult to enforce.

Second, the Protocol would build up case law enabling domestic monitoring bodies to acknowledge the equal value and justiciability of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This would build on the 1998 Council of Europe Collective Complaints Mechanism<sup>7</sup> but would allow a greater focus on individual cases. Protocol case-law would also further clarify exactly what it means for a government to take steps, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>8</sup>

'The Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ... would help courts to uphold social rights provisions under domestic legislation, which are often vaguely worded and difficult to enforce.'



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<sup>7</sup>Council of Europe (1995), *Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints*, ETS No. 158.

<sup>8</sup>1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Adopted by General Assembly resolution 2200 (XXI) of 16 December 1966, Article 2(1).



## Chair's Closing comments

*Baroness Ruth Lister (Patron of Just Fair and Member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights)*

*'Whilst foodbanks have a place in society they should not become a substitute for a welfare state.'*

Thanking the speakers, Baroness Lister identified some key strands from the talks. She found the emphasis on equality refreshing and was pleased that the gender dimension had been noted. She highlighted the comment made regarding those who were completely destitute and spoke of her deep concern with regards to the levels of destitution uncovered by the Children's Society All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Asylum Support for Children and Young People.<sup>9</sup> Baroness Lister reiterated that whilst foodbanks have a place in society they should not become a substitute for a welfare state. A human rights

approach to social protection would encourage the state to treat people with dignity and respect.

Finally, Baroness Lister encouraged participants to support the Just Fair Economic and Social Rights Consortium as a method of combating the spread of poverty and inequality in the austerity era.

*'Baroness Lister encouraged participants to support the Just Fair Economic and Social Rights Consortium as a method of combating the spread of poverty and inequality in the austerity era'*

<sup>9</sup>The Children's Society (2013), *Report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Asylum Support for Children and Young People*.

# Media Coverage

*Media Coverage of the Just Fair Lecture on “Freedom from Hunger”*



**The Independent (17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013): “UN official alarmed**

**by rise of food banks in UK”** (Britons’ reliance on handouts could represent human rights abuse) Full story: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/un-official-alarmed-by-rise-of-food-banks-in-uk-8498791.html>

**The Guardian (18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013): “Food poverty ‘puts UK’s international human rights obligations in danger”** (Consortium of charities to monitor food poverty in Britain with view to possibility of triggering formal UN investigation) Full story: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2013/feb/18/food-poverty-uk-human-rights-obligations>

**The Huffington Post (19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013): “Food Poverty: UN Special Rapporteur Finds Austerity, Food Banks And Working Poor In UK ‘Extremely Worrying.’”** Full story: [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/02/19/food-poverty-un-special-rapporteur-olivier-de-schutter-banks-austerity\\_n\\_2714969.html?1361275709](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/02/19/food-poverty-un-special-rapporteur-olivier-de-schutter-banks-austerity_n_2714969.html?1361275709)

**The Guardian (24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013): “Food banks surge leads to Defra inquiry”** (Research will study the effectiveness of emergency provision as fears increase over the impact of austerity measures) Full story: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2013/feb/24/food-banks-increase-defra-inquiry>



### Comments

Please direct all comments to Jonathan Butterworth (Director, Just Fair)

Email: [jbutterworth@just-fair.co.uk](mailto:jbutterworth@just-fair.co.uk). Website: [www.just-fair.co.uk](http://www.just-fair.co.uk)

doughty street chambers



The lecture was generously hosted by Doughty Street Chambers



Food Bank Images: Courtesy of the Trussell Trust

Event Photographs: Bill Butterworth (The Design Charity)

Report written by Rosaline Eccles and Larissa Kersten

Edited by Just Fair