The Pearce Institute, Govan, Glasgow

Date: 10 December 2014

ALAN MILLER: Could I ask you to take your seats, please. These two elderly gentlemen at the back please take your seats.   
Thank you very much.

My name is Alan Miller and I am Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission. Despite the weather outside, I would like to issue a very warm welcome to the Govan Pearce Institute. When you come on a December day to Glasgow, you know to bring scarves and gloves. The day will warm up as it goes on.

Mike is filming this; if anybody has a problem regarding being filmed, and would not like to give your consent, please indicate to Mike and he will make sure nobody is filmed.

You are told when somebody is filming you should remember your back drop… I will leave this to Mike's discretion.

A warm welcome to all of you. This is Human Rights day; International Human Rights Day, and it's celebrated in all kinds of climates and places around the world. Why? Because 66 years ago the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was founded and it enshrines the rights of every human being around the world to have a life of human dignity.

Over those 66 years, I think probably one figure above anybody else has been identified with the one person involved in Human Rights, who died over one year ago, and that is Nelson Mandela.

I think it's worth to begin one of the quotes from Mandela; we could go home straight afterwards because it sums up what we are trying to achieve today.

What Mandela said: "Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it's an act of justice; like slavery, like apartheid, poverty is not natural, it's man-made and it can be overcome and it can be eradicated by the actions of human beings".

So that says it all. That really is the context in which we have invited all of you to come today to work out how this group put into action within a Scottish context.

I found myself just a few weeks ago in Johannesburg, and I had been asked by the South African Human Rights Commission to Chair a meeting which seemed a bit surreal when you stand like this in front of black South Africans. I felt they had their eye brows raised; they were very friendly but it was like, "What are you doing here chairing this meeting?" To break the ice I said, “You wonder why this white Scotsman is in your country chairing a meeting about Human Rights, but I am not the slightest bit embarrassed because I come from the first city in the world to offer freedom of the city to Nelson Mandela when he was still in prison”. They all knew that Glasgow has this history, this association with Human Rights, and it was a very welcome connection and relationship that was then established for the rest of that time.

We know that Glasgow being Glasgow didn't just award the freedom of the city to Mandela but it went a little bit beyond the edge, that only Glasgow would do; it changed the name of the Square, where we now know to be Nelson Mandela Place.

I think Glasgow has become VERY warmly thought of in South Africa, and many, many other places and that was the stance it took at that time.

During the past year it has been very much the year of Glasgow, hosting the best ever Commonwealth Games, full of friendship, diversity and probably the highest degree of engagement in the referendum over the months leading up to September. But it's also been a year, like many cities across the country, of food-banks. The city, like many other cities, has seen systemic inequality.

I remember a meeting not that long ago seeing a graph, and some will know this, but when you take a train from north-west of Glasgow to the Bearsden area, and you are taking it towards Shettleston, on each stop on the line, you lose two years of your life expectancy.   
So, I think it's fitting when we come to celebrate the first anniversary of Scotland’s first national action plan for Human Rights, two things: it is in Glasgow that we mark this first anniversary, and secondly the theme of marking that first anniversary, and on International Human Rights Day, is to use Human Rights to see how it tackles poverty, that tackles not just us, but all.

What is SNAP? We have all done action points at one point in our lives so I would say it's worth you engaging in SNAP going forward. If you look around Europe and the rest of the world to see whether there are different action plans at different stages of Europe, SNAP is the only one that is neither a Government top down, tick list, "This what we are prepared to do" kind of plan, nor an unrealistic wish list of things that some people would like to see happen overnight. It's neither of those. It's a collaborative process to bring about in a transformative way sustainable culture changes the country’s short- medium and long-term goals but the outcomes and culture in which everybody can live and lead a life of human dignity. It is very pragmatic and practical but very ambitious but done in a collaborative way which is not top-down, nor an unrealistic wish list.

What is different about it with regard to poverty? Poverty has been with us as long as we can remember. It's not going to be eradicated overnight; there is a lot to learn from great initiatives and efforts made by a whole host. Many of you and others try to tackle poverty.

What does SNAP add to what is already being done? I think one of the things it does is if you take the term "Social justice", which has been around now for some time, but with new Government it's very much the hall-mark of what we are told they will look to: social injustice, tackling poverty etc. But to come back to Mandela's quote when he says, "Tackling poverty is not about acts of charity", I would say not acts of policy from this Government, and this and that political party but, "It's an act of justice".

SNAP underpins the justice in social justice because it's saying this is actually what people are entitled to do and to enjoy because of their rights as human beings.

These rights are internationally recognised. There is a legal obligation on the UK and Scottish authorities to ensure that these rights are met.

What are these rights? It's the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to the highest obtainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to adequate housing and social securities; those that have not been dreamed-up by academics but international rights treaties that have been held in countries, and they have been held account to that.

There have been tremendous efforts around the country, and the world, and it's a duty of those that are decision-making to fulfil the rights; it can't be this or that party or this and that Government that come and go, but to the people that their rights remain.

The third thing: what is different about SNAP? It starts and ends with the voices and experience of those whose rights are not being fully met. So, in terms of the three main stages of putting together SNAP, the evidence is to see where the gaps, and what are the problems? That was very much fed into by those who have direct experience of their rights not being fully met, and knowing best therefore what the problem is and what the gaps are.

Second, in shaping what are the agreed actions that should be addressed and what should be done, and it's again those rights that are not fulfilled that has shaped the rights and contents, and what has been agreed as the outcomes of SNAP.

Thirdly, holding that to account and monitoring independently what progress is made or not made. Again, those with experience of rights not being fulfilled are very much part of that process of holding it all to account.

These are some of the differences, and why I think SNAP has something to say, to bring some value to the table.

I hope today can be a way of all of us engaging in giving it further momentum.

By way of today's programme, as I said, it starts and ends with the voices and experiences of those that have direct experience of poverty. They will not only start today's events by laying it the reality, but at the end they will be the voices that are last heard because they will become members of a Reference Group that will work with this process, shaping the actions that need to be taken but also monitoring and holding to account the degree of progress that is subsequently made.

In between the beginning and ending of the day there will be other experts who will be sharing with us initiatives, experience from beyond Scotland.

Diana Skeleton will talk about a global experience and addressing poverty from a rights point of view. Then we will have different experiences from the likes of Belfast, where a housing community has empowered itself by using this international Human Rights to improve the quality of their lives, particularly the housing conditions, and a lot of lessons for us here in Scotland.

We will hear from James Harrison and Mary Anne Stevenson about women in particular in Coventry and the impact on women from austerity and what impact that is having and what needs to be done to ensure these measures, that should never be put into place without a proper understanding of what the impact will be, and ensuring it does not have a disproportionate impact on those that are least resistant in the community.

We will hear from Professor Aoife Nolan who will talk about the benefits and experiences about Human Rights into the up-stream where macro decisions are made by budgetary priorities to ensure that Human Rights are there at the beginning of the process, and we are not picking up the pieces at the end and looking at the decisions that were flawed in the first place.

It will be action-orientated throughout; not a talking shop but from the point of view of steps that need to be taken, and what is a realistic time line for that, and how should the whole thing be held to account?

Housekeeping: if it is a fire alarm, it's for real. How many times have you heard that?

Toilets: at the entrance to the Institute.   
If the talking gets a bit too much at any time for any of you there is a quiet space, and that may be a cool space too, if you want to literally chill out for a few minutes near the back.

We are being filmed and the point of view is to capture the good stuff today and promote that at different events in different ways around the country, but if anybody has a problem with that please let Mike know and we’ll make sure you are not part of what goes out.

There is also some recording at the tables of some of the conversations after lunch. Again, that is to capture the ideas and make sure they are not lost, but if anybody has a problem with that, again let us know and we'll fix that for you.

I will introduce Graham to you and he will explain exactly what he is about and it is probably one of the best things that will happen today.

Graham: no pressure then! Good morning everybody, good morning!   
I am Graham. I have a very unusual job. I am an artist. What I am here to do is to capture the big ideas, the big themes and big talking points that come from your tables as a series of picture; I have just begun to do it over on the back wall there. Throughout the day I will be listening to what is happening today and build up a story-board around these walls of your ideas. We will use this as your feedback tool because you will see dotted around the room there are a lot of sticky thumbs. We will encourage you to look around the Gallery and anything you think resonates, any picture resonates, simply stick on the thumbs; that is all. It has no colour code, but if you think it's an important message, stick on a thumb and we'll be able to see really quickly what you feel is most important coming out from your own conversations. Is that as clear as mud? Please don't mind if I come and join your tables; I am listening to your ideas I promise. I promise not to do caricatures!

So, just relax. Have a great day and I will chat to you later.

ALAN MILLER: Best to stay on the right side of Graham!

That is the intro. A warm welcome. I want to pass over to my colleague Dee who will pass on to the next session.

DEE: Hello everybody. Over the next hour and a half we will hear from a range of speakers and a range of testimonies, and I hope by the break we'll have a better idea of what poverty means in Scotland today.

I will start off with a video, sorry if there are technical hitches. This is from the Glasgow Disability Alliance, and this is about the impact of welfare reform for people with disabilities.

[DVD]

DEE: (APPLAUSE) Thanks very much to Tressa and Sandra from Glasgow Disability Alliance for sorting that out for us. I would like to -- can people hear me at the back? -- okay I would like to invite some of the commissioners Caroline, Jean, Sadie and Aisha are you able to come up and give us your collective testimony thank you. Oh and Patrick is here as well, thanks Patrick.

We came together because we thought something should be done about the stigmatisation of poverty, treated badly on account of the negative label that tend to hides who you are as a person.

The stigma of poverty is often less recognised than the stigma that my ... ethnicity or mental illness for example. We think that much of the media and many people in power in our society perpetuate this. Some of us are commissioners because we have experienced poverty, and some because of our professional background. We met several times as a group, got to know each other and grappled with the issues that poverty raises up. We all have experience of stigma, we put this down to the way our society is, which is a competitive one, which encourages our attitude of superiority and disdains vulnerability of any kind.

Human rights legislation has not removed labelling, and negative actions against those who live in certain areas who happen to be on benefits, those with disabilities who are lone parents or carers.

We carry stories of stigma from the wider commission, here are the stories, whose stories are they?

NEW SPEAKER: When I moved into the flat I needed to be refurnished, my living room has 5 windows all different sizes. I applied for a community grant for 3 sets of curtains. I didn't want to ask for too much. When he passed the door he said: “Welfare funds!” So the whole Close could hear.

He walked in the door and said, you have got a lovely home. Why shouldn't I have a lovely home?

NEW SPEAKER: Growing up in Glasgow's East End, the police targeted not just me, but youths from a young age through constant harassment. It majorly affects me as an adult, I am always aware of my appearance when they drive by, they look with profiling eyes. I have had, 500 times or more, stop and search warrant checks in a 15 year period.

NEW SPEAKER: After my mum died, my dad got worried about money. Thinking about being really careful with money was my dad's reaction to the sudden change in our circumstances. My Nan used to knit us school jumpers. I had NHS specs and a bowl haircut. As a teenager, I felt I was both differently because of the black hole of the loss of my mum, and outwardly because of my appearance, for which I was bullied.

NEW SPEAKER: I come from Paisley and was blissfully ignorant of the reputation until I was older. As a young social worker, I recall being in a meeting with housing officials and DSS staff. The chap from the DSS offered the opinion, no point in trying to helping people from Ferguslie as they were all scum, using a more polite word, that is what he meant.

NEW SPEAKER: I went to the visit with the housing department, the service was entirely different. Why did he treat Jim differently, what was the difference about me? People look at you like you are not important.

NEW SPEAKER: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE).

NEW SPEAKER: We are not finished.

I worked with the Scottish Refugee Council on a play, it was mostly about asylum. I wrote a short piece about homelessness and addiction. It was a painful process just worrying about other people’s opinions. But I found real strength in other people’s reactions on the day and also the weeks after with people’s support and understanding. I could find closure.

NEW SPEAKER: I am in a mixed race marriage, in other places, India, South Africa, we have experienced prejudice, racism and stigma. However, I have only ever experienced curiosity and interest in Scotland. People are interested to hear how we reconcile culture, religion and habits, and seem generally appreciative of our stories and differences, enabling our children to be positive about both their heritages.

NEW SPEAKER: It took me a long time to get out of the house after I left my vile ex-husband, I found a place to do some voluntary work. I learned how to be confident, gained self-esteem and made friends. The best thing was that no one made an issue about me being divorced or being a single parent. I was accepted as I am. My child was accepted as she was. It helped me to become the person I am today.

NEW SPEAKER: I went to ... the commission to talk about poverty and why I had to use Foodbanks. I was really surprised at how well people responded to this. Some of them came up to me and says they were shocked and that I had changed the way they thought about things.

NEW SPEAKER: People of all walks of life experience stigma. I think we sometimes forget that people coming from all walks of life will have their own experiences and sometimes make assumptions that all is well in the other camp.

NEW SPEAKER: You don't actually have to live it to care about it. I think we all need bridges to and from others experiences and a background. It is finding the stuff we have in common that is important.

NEW SPEAKER: Hearing people’s stories directly is a privilege and the kind that stick to you. I carry with me the story that is people in the Poverty Truth Commission has shared and it has changed the way I approach my work.

NEW SPEAKER: We use the stories today, and in the future, to help everyone here today to challenge the stigma of poverty and the other labels that people experience in their lives.

NEW SPEAKER: Thank you this time (APPLAUSE).

DEE: Thanks so much to the Poverty Truth Commission there. Can I invite (INAUDIBLE) ... Poverty Leadership Panel, so she will be here in this capacity.

SHAMAILA MASOUD: Good morning everyone. My name is Shamaila Masoud. I am a single mother and when I was in my own country I was always reading and listening about the human rights. When I was younger I remembered I read about the Scottish Red Cross and British Red Cross in our country they were having a flag and they were showing some kind of they are helping people if there is a disaster if they are having trouble. They are always there to help. Then I grow up and start my own life. I got married when I was 19 years old and the man I married to he was taking drugs and abusing me a lot and I became pregnant within 2 months. I was very scared, he was always keeping me down. I was not able to tell my own members of family because in our culture in our religion, the men have no right you know, I don't know it is like my own experience. I think like we don't have any right to say anything to your husband or your brother or your dad, they are the people they are taking decisions on your behalf. As a single woman or mother you have nowhere to go, within 10 months everything finished. He divorced me, I was 8 months, 19 days pregnant. I found myself on the road, I don't know where to go and how to cope with the situation. I called my mum and dad from neighbour’s house, they came and picked me up. I was so you know, I was in a state, I don't know, I need to be happy or sad because I left the man he was abusing me every single day and traumatised me. Another way I was so shocked, how this happened and how I'm going be delivering that child without the father’s name? How my parents are going respond on this divorce and you know, being pregnant. Married for ten months and the neighbours and the people around us, even the whole family members they were just saying, oh, I don't know why this happened? Always the woman is going be blamed; not the man.

But my case, my mum and dad they were with me, especially my dad. He took me home, he looked after me. I delivered my daughter and then I decided because, my dad, he asked me what you want? Decided now, after that maybe too long to decide, I said to my dad, I am too scared. I don't want to go back, maybe take me back, then throw me out. If the man he can throw me out of the house when I am pregnant with his child, what can he do after that? I was so scared because I was out on that atmosphere, I decided very strongly, I am not going back to him because in a pregnancy if you are pregnant the divorce is not valid in Islam. This was the reason I need to wait for 3 months after the baby, I need to decide if I want to go back or not. But I decided I have enough. This time it was on me, I was telling everyone it is okay, but now I need to live for my daughter and as a daughter I know if I go back, maybe they are saying you didn't deliver the son, you know, there are so many issues as a mother of a baby girl as well.

So, as I decided, I am not going back to him. He started chasing us up, threatening calls, trying to snatch my daughter, not giving the divorce papers and not returning the stuff my parents gave me as a dowry.

We are in a situation, hiding my daughter and me, I was not allowed to go outside, my brothers, my dad, everybody got threatening calls from him. But we are very scared, we were not even able to go the police because he was taking drugs and selling drugs so he had connections and you know, everybody knows the corruption in our own countries. Me and my daughter we just feel like we are in a prison and every day somebody is coming in. “Your daughter is not your blood”, “give it back to him”, “you are so young”. My parents took so many bad things and my aunts, my uncles, even my own brothers, everybody was just against us.

Nearly 3 and a half years I was in Pakistan, because my dad he took the decision in that time they were asking do you want to go marry? No I don't want to go marry again in my life even. I just want to think about my daughter. I started my graduation and I was just broken altogether. I passed my graduation with my daughter only 3 months old. Then I started my masters and my teachers they used to come at home. We were not allowed to go outside, I studied privately at home.

Then when my daughter, nearly 3 and a half years-old, time to go nursery. These people were still threatening us, I was not able to take my daughter to nursery school or that age, children are playing outside with other children, it was a hard time for me. Then I decided, okay I am going to admit her into a nursery nearby my home. My daughter started nursery and the second day he attacked us and tried to snatch her from me. I was terrified. Just ... me and my dad and daughter we were just saved by the attack, then we came back home. My dad, he decided it was not safe to live in this country. So my uncles and other family members, in London, sponsored me, okay come here and see if you can achieve something. I came here as a visitor but my uncle within one month, he was fed up with us. My daughter was feeling like, we are far away from the family, though I was with my parents and brothers and sisters they are always looking after me. My father never said I was a burden on him, my uncles and my cousins, your son and your daughter, you are the burden of my brother and you need to think about it what you are doing. We can't keep you, I said I know that, I am just here to visit. See if I can maybe get some help from here, but they were not happy to keep me. So they returned us back, Pakistan, it was like Ramadan and we were worried how to cope with all these things again.

They got to know from somewhere, in Britain, return back, then again started creating problems for us. Within a month life was terrible, I decided to my dad, I said to him, “I can't live this way anymore. I am fed up.” My brothers they all are very young,, still involved in arguments and -- all these things going on in front of my daughter, she was 3 and a half years-old in that time. I decided to come back here and claimed asylum at Heathrow airport. My dad decided to send me here. It was not my decision, my mum and brother were against it. I came here, I claimed asylum at Heathrow airport. To be honest I was thinking always, oh this country is just amazing, the women have their own right to say things. Children have a freedom, there is like human rights everybody gets their own right. In my own country, if somebody kills you, they don't do anything about it.

I left my country, I flee for this country to save my life and my daughter’s life but it was a beginning of another fight. I left behind my loved ones because we were not safe here. As soon as we are in asylum process it was like you are in hell again. My daughter was very young. In Heathrow we spent 2 nights. It was like detention and in that time, I don't know what they are doing, I don't even know the meaning of asylum in that time. I said I want to save me and my daughter’s life. That’s it. They brought us into the procedure.

Then we were in London, temporary accommodation for a month. Then they moved us to Kent for a month. Totally different experience, the weather was terrible, my English was okay but not very good. You were in a queue to get some food and food is not according to what you had in your own country, people are different. You feel like you done a crime, you know? You are always in front of the Home Office or a person who is asking you different questions and you are avoiding these questions and you have to face an asylum process, again and again and again.

Five and a half years we were in the asylum process. In October 2007 they dispersed us into Glasgow. We were again into the temporary accommodation, then they gave us a studio flat on the third floor. It was like heaven for us, getting somewhere to stay. But every few months, they started to move us. Within 4 years, they moved me around Glasgow seven times. The accommodation they provided us was below standard. Honestly none of us want to live there. I never saw that kind of accommodation in my own country. I was expecting that here everybody have the rights and they know how to treat people. But the asylum process is very hard for every single one, I am not saying only for me, but it was hard for me as a single divorced mother with a young child, like my handbag, wherever I am going, I need to take her. Weather, raining and you know, the cold winds making us feel shivery. End of October the nights getting darker. So it was a horrible, horrible time. It impacted on my physical and mental health. Changing housing, they are giving us worse areas in Glasgow and I have to change schools for my daughter 3 times. I was doing my HND Travel and Tourism but I couldn't manage to complete because so much stress. Moving from south side to east side, east side to west side. You don't know where you are and how to cope with all these things.

My health was getting down and down, respiratory conditions and fibromyalgia. It was difficult to get going on.

Eventually after 5 and a half years, I got leave to remain. Nearly 2 and a half years ago then we started, we always prayed to God okay, we want a positive decision to live in this country. When you are in the asylum process, you can't sleep at night, people are deciding on your behalf; it is not you deciding for you and your child’s future. If they send us back, how are we going to cope? It was a really hard time.

But now I can say after getting permission to stay, my health improved. My daughter is in a good school, and after eight years we got a right to choose our accommodation and now we are in the west end. When we got permission to stay in this country, you know, you need to come into the mainstream very fast. It took months. Within 28 days you need to leave your accommodation; people look at you strangely. I think we should think about other people that are suffering in this country for different reasons and take a step on behalf of all human beings, as a human being, for them to take a positive change.

Thank you (Applause).

Dee: Thank you so very much Shamaila. I will invite Meriam…

Meriam Mahi: Good morning everybody. I, like Shamaila, will talk about the impact of education that affects asylum seeker children as well; the system of the asylum seeker here in the UK always affects the children. They are victims just because the parents came to the country to claim asylum. They are not eligible to go to university because they are asylum seekers, and they have to wait for the Home Office decision to go to university regardless of if they are doing well or not.

I am not just presenting myself; I work with a woman and I know the stories of the other women. I have a family that I am working with; their daughter was doing very well and she got a grade A1 but she was not eligible to go to the university because her parent was an asylum seeker. She had to go to the college but not for the full time studies; just part-time. She was not eligible for full time.

After two years, her parents were granted asylum so she had a chance to go to university. This year she received an award because she was always doing very well. So, it should be thought about: asylum seekers’ children; they should not be a victim twice because their parents came here to seek asylum and a victim of the Home Office system, you know? They should know how to deal with children in Scotland and we have to think of their children as the future of Scotland. Most of the parents, they get granted, so why not use this time, from their lives here, for their children to do other subjects, not those that do not suit them?

There are also other things that affect asylum seeker children and also the unemployed families here who have children in school, not just asylum seekers. For example, the schools are offering trips to go aboard in secondary schools, and asylum seeker children can't go because of the travel documents and the money. I think those trips should be organised for poor people because rich people can go around the world; the prices are very high so an unemployed family or, if they have a low income, their children can't go. We hear about their peers that went abroad and come back and tell the stories. In this case the peers will lose their confidence even in school. So, I think it's a bad impact on their confidence. They may have less focus on education and think better to leave school in the fourth year to get a job, but because they are so young they don't have that experience.

I was going to say something, but I lost it... I will talk about study support. Glasgow City Council used to offer support for kids that are doing a Higher in secondary school; it was eight weeks support study after school. The kids can get more hours to catch up with a subject they need help with. The next year it was reduced to six weeks because of the cuts. This year it's four weeks. This is the last year to offer this support study, help from the school, which is a disaster. If the kids don't get the support they need, they leave the school and we know they are the future of Scotland. So, I think it's a disaster when the cuts reach education. You know, we can pass everything but not education; we have to educate our children properly because some families are unable to offer someone to tutor their kids, and they may be unemployed parents, or with low income so they can't do it. So, they need the support to at least do well and to see they are doing the same as their peers.

There is no equality here in the schools; the kids lose their confidence and you can't imagine this disaster. Parents and everybody want their kids to do well in their studies.

In terms of employment, asylum seekers here, even if they become highly educated, there is no recognition of qualification; they do not take their qualification in consideration here, from their own countries. They have to go through the system. They can't get a job. They have to do volunteering. We found out that some private companies are using innocent people, you could say here, where asylum seekers do volunteering for the job that should be paid.

I am representing another organisation as well. We had a conference last year and we met women and asked about their experience. One woman was working in a care home, volunteering for three months to gain experience; on a placement, or whatever they call it, but after three months she applied for that job in the same place where she was doing the volunteering but she was not offered the job. What is the point in doing three months’ volunteering in a care home, the place where they don't ask for grades or experience or anything?  
This organisation should think before putting those innocent people into a wrong place; if they want to gain experience they should have two weeks to gain experience, not in retail like Marks and Spencer, or with a lone parent, you know. But at the end they give you job at six o'clock in the morning and you are a lone parent. There is no crèche that starts at six o'clock in the morning. So, they are just ‘excuses’; they use those people for some time to work and then give them ‘very clever excuses’ not to give them a job.

I wish at the end of the day we could have a solution to all the problems, especially education, please. (Applause)

DEE: Thank you so much, Meriam.

Our next speaker is David Cairns -I can't see him?

David is going to tell us his story of growing up in privilege and then finding himself in a very different position.

Thank you, David.

DAVID CAIRNS: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am David Cairns.

My story is of growing up in wealth and privilege in a family that provided a lot of warmth and love and support going through a high degree of education, Strathclyde and Fraser of Allander Institute, into good employment and ending up at junior board level in Marks and Spencer as an economist.

The story I had was living in a Salvation Army hostel called Hope House, which all of is for another time because I don't think Dee would thank me for the time it would take to go into this in full.

Five years to the day I found myself at Hope House; it's now been converted into student hubs which you can buy and rent out to students for a guaranteed 9% of income per annum. It's part of Glasgow's policy to close large hostels. I found myself there. I was there for four months and I received a different sort of education in Hope House than I did at Strathclyde and Fraser of Allander Institute.

At that time in my life it was a relief to be there. I knew things probably could not get any worse. So I was at a stage of my life where, thanks to Glasgow that provided a system to catch me when I fell, I had a roof over my head. I was not ashamed to be there. It was difficult to explain how I felt at that time.

My parents at that time had passed away and I exhausted the patience of my sister. Most of my friends didn't know what had happened; they thought I was travelling throughout South America on one of my business trips. But I was there and I was relieved to be there. I was not ashamed to be there. Hope House – there were probably about 100 people there: there were people that had just been released from jail, people with serious alcohol and drug addictions. As I said, it was not a problem for me to be there; it was a relief. But what I could not do on my first night was go to one of the numerous soup kitchen places. This was almost five years ago, and food-banks were not really a feature in Glasgow at that time but there were plenty of soup kitchens to get a good meal and they still exist thank goodness, well not thank goodness, but there is a need for them to exist. I could not bring myself to go there. I didn't think I was beneath there but I could not go there. So I went along to a common room. There was a place/group of boys and men and a place called the "way-side" underneath Central Station. One of them, was Bobo – (I don't know his real name - but they all had funny names).

There was an ‘expensive’ sandwich, “Wouldn’t you enjoy this?” Bobo said to me. It was something I had never had before. He was right I did enjoy it! He said "You will never be hungry in Glasgow, pal". However, what he should have said "There is no reason to be hungry in Glasgow".

We live in a country, Scotland, the United Kingdom; however you want to describe it; we live in a country with an abundance of natural resources. We have a thriving industry in food-banks; it is sadly not beyond my comprehension.

I could talk about politics and access, or lack of access, to land in Scotland that stops people providing for themselves. I could talk about Glasgow City Council’s policy on becoming a sustainable food-bank city, on being part of one of the Rockafella’s foundations, one of the top one-hundred cities of the world. There are a lot of policies in place to prevent the necessity for food-banks. It does not take somebody with an economic background, as I have, to provide you with evidence about the lack of efficiency that exists in our society to a situation where people are queuing up for free food. Do we want to look back to 2015 as one of the periods of time when Scotland was going through a depression and people were queuing up for hand-outs because they could not feed themselves, nor their families?

I work on the Poverty Leadership Panel with Shamaila, and Meriam and … and try to , with Glasgow City Council, come up with a civic response in the city.

A lot of my time is spent addressing welfare reform and I would love to come up with policies on why and how food poverty exists in Scotland, and look at food-banks and turning them into something more sustainable and a little more dignified for the people of Scotland.

As I said, about 85% of the meetings I go to are initiatives where money is spent on welfare reform. There is some evidence that exists that explain the majority of people that go to food-banks go there because they have had their benefits sanctioned. We have the evidence in Glasgow that the vast majority, about well over 50% of people, that appeal against, actually know they can appeal and appeal sanctions which get them over-turned that suggests they are being applied, at best, inappropriately, and probably illegally. Although the benefits are reinstated and benefits payments are back-dated, it does not take any effect on a human being to get to queue up and to feed themselves and their children too. Often they take their children, so the children know they are begging to be fed in Scotland.

As Alan said earlier on, when introducing this morning, I got an email a couple of months ago from Dee. I would like to thank Dee and her colleagues for being supportive to come here to cover to our stories.

As Alan said earlier today, and I will mis-quote Nelson Mandela, so I am sorry, don't think of Human Rights as a charitable response to poverty. It's an act of justice. It's basic Human Rights and people deserve to have a roof over their head and clothes on their back and food in their stomach and they should not have to beg for these things. As I said, if, when whenever we do get on top of welfare reform and I have a chance to continue the work that has already started to convert food banks at least, and further afield that is sustainable and economically for everybody in the country, and the media decide to take aspects of your speech on food-banks then… There was a point made by the Baroness Kennington that a lot of people that come to food-banks don't know how to cook food. Yes, they don't know how to cook food. I have given people a dirty potato and they don't know what to do with it. It’s not difficult; it takes about ten minutes to show them what to do. If the facilities are there and there are food-banks to show people how to cook food, to show people how to budget for food, then food-banks will become a thing of the past. As I said, we can turn them into things that can turn them into communities and a country as a whole.

I was told to keep it short…   
The Poverty Leadership Panel will continue do this. I will let Baroness Kennington have something to say… she makes soup every week for a food-bank and some people might not like her because she is a Tory MP, however we need to make friends not enemies.

I will be here for the rest of the day if anybody would like to talk to me, and if they think they have a contribution to make or alternative view point I would be delighted to hear from you.

Thank you very much to Dee for all the support you have given and the reminding in E-mails that speaking was better than sitting at home and watching the box-set of Silent Witness!

Thank you for listening to me and thank you very much for your time.

(Applause)

DEE: David, thank you so much for everything; that is great.

Our next speaker is Aimee Ottroh. She will give her personal testimony, so we will hear from Aimee from the Poverty Truth Commission.

AIMEE OTTROH: Good morning everybody. I am from the Ivory Coast, a French speaking country so forgive my accent and my English.

I was in Egypt when it started. I will share my story as an asylum claimant but I am now a refugee. (Repeated due to microphone)…  
I was in Egypt when it started. A new regime came to power in my own country of the Ivory Coast; there was a lot of danger, and I was in the same Tribe as the Old President and I was well-known as a political activist. I was afraid to go back home. I was afraid for my life.

I came to the UK from Egypt on a visa and sought asylum.

Asylum seekers are people who ask the Government of another country for protection. We come to the UK because of war, political belief, torture etc; we come because we are fleeing for our lives. I was scared for my life when I came to the UK but when I arrived I was full of hope.

I was in the UK, the home of justice, equality, democracy: the home of a better life. I opened up my heart and told my story to the Home Office. I told them everything that had happened to me and would happen to me if I went home. Then they told me that everything I had said was a lie, and they would refuse my request for asylum. All my hope disappeared. I was so shocked. I had told them everything, opened up my heart, told the whole story; so what was there left to say?

We are given the feeling we are not wanted here; and we feel we are lying, the process was hard for me and I lost confidence in myself and other people and I found it hard to trust anyone.

The level of anxiety, stress, fear, and loss of confidence and trust is very high in the asylum process. The Home Office constantly still has that, ‘real liars’ type-approach. It is a traumatic process. The system is very hard to understand. At first I didn't realise that the Home Office would send me back, there and then if they felt the asylum process was finished. I didn't know that until my time came. I was sitting waiting to sign when two big men came over to where I was sitting in the waiting room; they confirmed my name and took me to a small room. I didn't know what was happening and was scared.   
The officer asked me what I knew about the asylum process and then told me it was finished. It was over. They had booked a plane for me to go home in a few days.   
I knew that as soon as they saw my name as a passenger in my country, they would know where I came from. I know they would rape me to bring shame on me. I was very scared about the way I would be treated, and for my life.

Thankfully I was given the opportunity to make a phone call; my solicitor was not at his office but the secretary told me not to panic, they would see what was happening. She said they didn't understand why this was happening to me as my case was not finished yet.

I was sent to (place-name...), a prison. When I got there, there were only males outside. I am not normally shy but I felt very ashamed and humiliated.

The system makes you feel you are doing something wrong; I felt dirty. When you claim asylum no matter what you do, who you are, no matter what you have achieved in life, as soon as you claim asylum you are crushed; you are nothing. It's like being told you have done something wrong and now you are nothing. But, I am still the same person. I am still Aimee Ottroh, a human being.

Being an asylum seeker is about feeling shame; feeling vulnerable; feeling that nobody can help you. You come here with knowledge, experience, with something to offer but when you get here, it's not easily recognised and you have to start again.

Many asylum seekers are living in poverty and many are forced into homelessness and institutions. You are pushed down so much, and you have what has happened in your own country and then the asylum process here, when you struggle by on the little money you get every week, £36, it's hard to stand up and actually achieve something with your life.

Thank you. (Applause)

DEE: Thanks a million, we are now going to hear the experience from 2 young Scottish gypsy traveller women, so Elizabeth and Bernadette will you come up and speak to us please?

ELIZABETH: Hello, good morning we are the core group of the young gypsy traveller group. . I am Elizabeth, this is Bernadette. We are here to give testimonies of what it means for our community to be living in poverty. We experience discrimination at every level of society, as ... this means we have extremely poor access to services in comparison with the rest of society. Such as education, employment and health. Above all the ... historical discrimination, our communities faced over the ages, a poverty of the mind for us, as we feel the rest of society views us as not good enough, our aspirations for the community are far lower than they should be.

BERNADETTE: We believe it is difficult to trust others outside the community. It is difficult to trust those who do not trust you. For example, we often do not disclose our ethnicity, ... we have experienced times when in need of care for young children, people feel they will be judged for living in a caravan and deemed unfit to be a parent.

This results in them not accessing the correct care for them and their needs.

Another example, in central accommodation, is we don't want the neighbours to know our ethnicity, to avoid past experiences of abuse and violence.

ELIZABETH: Experience:, refused drinking water and had to beg or pay over the odds for it. As a result of no running water, we are forced to use public swimming pools. ... Having no fixed address means we have poverty of access for all services, including benefits. Despite this, we are continually accused of being benefit scroungers by the mass media.

BERNADETTE: Appalling living conditions; often forced to live with health hazards daily, rats, sewage, ... recycling centres, land fill areas and are almost always isolated from local amenities. We feel this is a direct result of taking measures to segregate us from mainstream so services and sites are of poor standard, electricity...the third met...method on site, if the site warden is not around, families have to go without. Local authorities often increase electricity tariffs and we can't afford the new rates, this caused people to move off the site, increasing the number of road site encampments. Emergency repairs take weeks and there is poor information given of who to contact.

ELIZABETH: Why not live in a house? Our answer to that is, how would you feel if you are told you have to be on a site on a caravan?

... Because of severe mental health difficulties, lonely, anxious, claustrophobic, ... many families have to move to sheltered accommodation, having no fixed address means doctors, schools, employers will not recognise you. We would argue that services should become flexible in order to recognise this....

BERNADETTE: Pressure to fit ... but we have been here as long as anyone else so why should we feel that we are in a dangerous community? We don't want to lose who we are, but unfortunately the policy and legislation we are subjected to, both at local and national government levels continue to undermine our rights as gypsy travellers.

Thank you. (APPLAUSE).

DEE: Thanks excellent.

Next to the stage here can we get Anne Gordon, Anne is going to tell us her story.

ANNE GORDON: I would like to thank you for being able to tell my story, throughout my life I have known poverty for different reasons, as the gentleman earlier said, you wouldn't believe from my accent I have experienced poverty.

... My dad was in the navy, we didn't have all the things, I didn't have a toothbrush, on cold days you didn't have gloves or things like that. We were always told there was no money for Christmas and there wasn't. So you would be sitting on December 25th, other children would be skating down the road on their skate boards, skates or on their bike you know, sitting there with nothing or next to nothing.

In a land that largely *has*, you feel the stigma of being a "have not". Once I was taken shoplifting by my mother. I was criminalised at the age of 5 or 6 by the police. They didn't realise I was taken there by an adult, if they did realise that, they treated me like a criminal.

Most of my clothes when I got a bit older came from charity shops. Nowadays that is not a stigma thing, lots of people buy from charity shops, now what you can buy is really good quality. Quite fashionable clothes. Back then, more than 30 years ago, when someone died that is where the clothes were dumped. We looked like we were wearing older people’s clothes, you do not fit. You don't have the basics that you need to be a person in society.

So again, we face the stigma.

My mum died in October, when I was 16. At the funeral I wore a duck egg blue tiling suit, skirt and top. I had white and red striped jacket -- Ronald McDonald had nothing on me. I went into care shortly after that. Stayed with foster parents, I should have been in care a lot sooner than that. This was in the 70s. The one thing you are hearing now about the enquiries that was back in the 70s is that we weren't human back in the 70s. We just heard children screaming in the house and we left them to get on with it. Left them to abuse their children. That was fine.

My foster parents used the money they got for me, to fill their freezer which was okay, I got fed well. As you can see, I like my food.

They also made home improvements, didn't give me the money that was for me, didn't teach me how to budget. My parents should have done that. My foster parents should have taken their responsibility to give me some of the money and teach me how to budget. They failed to do that.

I went to university. As a student, because I hadn't been taught the value of money, and what it could or couldn't do for me, I hadn't a clue. I didn't know what I had to do with a cheque book, I had no clue of how to basically live outside. I had the brain to go to university, but didn't have the skills to live.

I met a man who said he loved me, became my husband. I left university because although I could earn the degree, I didn't have the confidence in myself to carve out a career. I had experienced every type of abuse, some that you can imagine, some you can't. When I remembered it, I couldn't imagine it had happened to me.

I was beginning to realise at the age of 20 that although I was no longer in my home environment, my home environment was most definitely in me, and affected me as a person. Being told I was stupid, worthless, completely unworthy.

Early married life was okay financially. We had 2 children and then bumph, out of nowhere, the mortgage interest rate rose ten times in ten months, we had to pay it out. Like a lot of people, we had to move to a one bedroom flat with our two children. My husband was later made redundant, became a student, and we couldn't afford basic things. I went to the supermarket once and could only buy one banana.

One Christmas, the school asked for tins or packets for the poor people. I said, “Sorry; we are the poor people of Dennistoun”. When you are a student, you get £25 less, than ... minimum benefits to live on. So if you are getting the minimum, being a student means you are getting less than the minimum. They offered me a chance to have some of the tins. Pride wasn't a commodity that I could afford.

Shortly after that, my daughter, at 9, was diagnosed with ME, a chronic, debilitating condition. Shortly after that, again, my husband was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, another chronic condition. My son had already been diagnosed with hemiplegic migraine, which hadn’t run true to form. He still had it at 27 and should have outgrown it by 25. He has a brain issue.

He’s also been recently diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome. I was the carer for 3 sick family members. *"The"* carer, with little help and quite often when the services that were there to support me would phone 5 minutes before the session was supposed to begin, “Sorry, we can't send you a carer”, blah, blah, blah.

Always a poverty of services. DWP phoned me at that particular time and said, “Do you know, you could be working Mrs Gordon?” I said, “Oh really? When would you like me to work? I’ve got 3 full time jobs: they are called, Ian, Andrew and Ruth” and I explained all the illnesses I was facing alone.

I said, “Would you like me to work when I was supposed to be sleeping? I rarely get a night’s sleep”. I ended up with fibromyalgia because of that. At that time we had a social report written about our family. Saying we had a good quality of life because of good management, despite the fact we are dependent on benefits.

I split up with my husband. He divorced me. Then I went to work, my kids sick teenagers couldn't work or go to college, didn't get one penny from the state. I had £120 a week, ... fed and clothed two sick teenagers, I went bankrupt.

I became too ill to work because of depression, stress, anxiety and I have arthritis in all of my joints, because of my childhood trauma and my caring responsibilities.

At the time I was told by ATOS I was articulate and intelligent, surely fit for work? That is fair enough, articulate and intelligent not denying that. Physically, I am wrecked, and emotionally I am wrecked.

I tried to work. Last summer, I attempted suicide because of the pain I was in. I didn't want to be dependent on the state. I got DLA after 5 and a half attempts at trying to get it. I had to appeal on ... the reason I got it was because I said, I have been granted 15 points on ESA, employment support allowance, for being virtually unable to walk, why are you denying me DLA? I got it within 2 weeks. Since then I’ve given it up because I cannot stand reading in the paper about how I am a sponger. I can't afford to keep my house. I am living 20 up. Yesterday the temperature outside was 1 degree. Imagine what the temperature is in my flat, 20 up. The reason I am there, is because I was homeless. That was the only kind of accommodation they could accommodate me in, with my son's condition, and my condition. He is a prisoner in his own home. At 27 he can't go out, he has a problem with fluorescent light, the -- dark glasses won't help. It is the strobe. It causes his many neurological problems, a big issue, and makes him very sick. Hemiplegic migraine works like a stroke; every time he has an attack, he loses maybe the use of his hands. Now at 27 he is virtually incapable of doing anything for himself.

Been recently assessed by an occupational therapist with my son, my carer’s assessment and his needs assessment. Now, the occupational therapist we had to wait for, we had to be put on a waiting list, each service is stalling for time before they put you on the waiting list. They obviously have targets, they can't put you on the waiting list because they have got too many people there. If you want to be put on the waiting list, tell us. You have been referred for an assessment and said you want the -- why write to them and say “Yes…we want?”

My son is now told he needs 24 hour care, moderate maximum help to live in society. Again, a poverty of services. Sometimes it feels like I must give up but I can't. Thank you so much for listening (APPLAUSE).

DEE: Anne thank you so much, can I invite Roseanna McPhee please, thanks Roseanna.

ROSEANNA McPHEE: Good morning, I am Roseanna, I am a Scottish gypsy traveller from Perthshire. Just going stick to the human story because time is of the essence. The height of abuse, so called what happened to me, my family, and many others, was sanctioned from the very top and continues to be so in terms of treatment of the community as a whole. It is known to the very top and they do nothing.

This was Bobbin Mill, where I was raised. You see in the hut in the distance, one bedroom, cold water, a toilet, a fire and there were 8 of us.

That is a picture postcard version but the next one shows the reality. That is the next slide shows the actual, the top bit. That is the bit, and that is the winter where the gas bottles would freeze and at minus 18, 20 degrees, you couldn't make tea or heat yourself. Nothing.

This was an experiment which was established at the behest of the children and Church of Scotland, done with...in conjunction with the local landlord, land for rent.

Next one up it was the, next slide, it was the extended family project in so far as the ... joined they decided that the best way to stop feuding amongst the nomads, was to put 4 families together. This is my mum, dad, and 5 elder siblings and along the site everybody looked out for everyone else’s children.

Go to school, those that didn't, were taken to care homes.

My younger sister who didn't do great, she did well academically, my brother and I were usually first in the class. The next one shows a general report, 5, firsts and ... fourth year secondary, first class merits at Aberdeen University. ... Mr McPhee was one of the most talented ..., well he was fine while in Spain, that was life in Spain with his girlfriend. Then he came back to Scotland, and the only work he could get was planting trees and digging ditches and general heavy handed work. That is -- 3 men walked off the field because they couldn't do it. I had to do it, I needed the money.

This was actually my last teaching appointment where I was an acting head of department for 6 months, I will go into the summary that just says, pleased with Miss McPhee as a teacher ... fortunate to have her services, ... promising practitioner, benefit from permanent employment.

There is where I was for the next 10 years; in that caravan, minus 18, 20. A soldier came from the Falklands and gave me a sleeping bag because he felt sorry for me.

I forced the environmental health to come out. -- Demolition order.

Then the next one, what went wrong? I went back to the site, my father took a massive stroke, and no one at the time could look after him. He couldn't use his hands and he was trying to deal with hot water off a big stove, no hot water or electricity. The thing is about the identity, my younger sister, went out of the region with another ... suppressed her identity, permanent teachers now, they didn't know them, couldn't recognise them.

I worked as a field worker for the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association. I had discrimination in every aspect of life on a daily basis, exposed institutional racism, deeply entrenched in every single service I came across. Life and numbers, there is a whole list, they have never worked again after doing this sort of thing.... took a case in ... Ken never had any other work.

So the inciting incident, if you challenge the State and the racial prejudice ... (INAUDIBLE).

The third thing was my, if you go back to the slide, campaign for better site conditions and I couldn't get a single soul in Scotland to help me. Not a single organisation I went to. Every equality organisation; I went to MSP's, I went to equal opportunities committee, race reporter, MP's, the house -- everyone not a soul. The only thing that happened was, was on the board of the UK association of gypsy women, and I got them to go over and disrupt a meeting of the European Traveller Meeting in Strasbourg, about the framework of convention coming to the site. That is what brought that, (INAUDIBLE) in March 2007 just before they came, the authority ran 6 showers in a field. They lay there from January 2007 until 25th June 2009. My father died that day of cancer, he never got the hot water ... that he paid council tax for, for 20 years.

That was the condition on site. ... He didn't want a council site. I want to live here, I never agreed to live in a council house. So, when The Sun did the “Stamp on the Camps” campaign, a lot of youths come down and broke the windows and pulled the boards off around about. At the back you will see they pulled out, I was in the house when they did that. Never told us.

When I went lastly for an upgrade with those conditions I was told apparently, no need for an upgrade. Apparently I was being very, very unreasonable in asking for hot water and electricity in Scotland in 2006 and also “I am not a nice person”. Then, as I am not a nice person, -- not allowed to work.

That was a conversation I taped from a senior council officer, the reasons I couldn't work again because nobody likes me, because I make a din about Bobbin Mill too often. Challenged too many departments on the policies.

Traditional farm-based jobs were gone. Everyone I went to, to pick berries, “Oh no, we have got enough Romanians and Bulgarians”. I have nothing against foreign people. I welcome it. But I think the hire and fire policies of the farmers are questionable and something needs to be looked at and investigated. Likewise when talking to others in the community, I discovered the itinerant scrap metal dealers eradicated. Cold calling is forbidden except for Jehovah’s, Mormons and Baptist churches. They weren't interested in the body perishing at minus 18.

Extreme poverty in the Scottish scale, I will say human and degrading living conditions, nothing nice at all, poor diet, poor health, social isolation, no money to go anywhere, don't have the money to pay for a stamp until Friday.

(INAUDIBLE) I don't have -- low self-esteem, I think not bother getting up those weeks. The rise in suicides, 6 in the last 8 years within a 40-mile radius, of young men in my community.

Legal assistance, this was a racial equality officer who tried to help me. Strangely enough he lost his job, now a lawyer. You will see from this, said that most lawyers he approached couldn't actually, didn't actually, want to deal with the gypsy traveller community. That is the e-mails. [showing file], (INAUDIBLE).

So, what is the upshot? I don't know what the future holds, there is not a soul there doing anything. No gypsy traveller bodies, (INAUDIBLE) a handful in the public sector, no counsellors ... so we are effectively debarred from mainstream Scottish society at any meaningful level and debarred from the building, so I don't know where we are going from here.

I would like to leave you with a question: what kind of state party mechanism, or social and political set up, actually sits by idly and silently condones an economic annihilation of a community or even an individual for asking for hot water and electricity in 2006?

Thank you. (APPLAUSE).

DEE: Thanks very much. We are going to hear from just one last speaker, then hand you back over to Alan and hopefully we will get a warm cup of tea or coffee if you are that way inclined. Scottish Refugee Council, come up and finish the session for us thank you.

ASO FOTOCHI: Hi everybody, I am (INAUDIBLE) I…

NEW SPEAKER: Can't hear you!

ASO FOTOCHI: Aso, from Kurdistan Iran. Iranian part of Kurdistan, born in Iran, grown under the Islamic republic of Iran's government. I have lived in Iraq, in Turkey, Greece and now I am living in Scotland, and planning to spend the rest of my life in Scotland.

So when it comes to human rights, it is always about, the tendency always to complain about breaching human rights but before I start my complaint, I want to be fair and mention that from my personal experience of living in different countries and being amongst different people, I have felt that my right as a human is being respected and fulfilled to a greatest level in Scotland than in any other countries that I have been. This is absolutely something to be appreciated and celebrated I think.

However, we all know that in order to make progress we need to be critical and we need to think and talk about (INAUDIBLE) we heard a lot about asylum seekers today; they are all true. I had all the experiences, I won't repeat them. But there are points, there are challenges that people face when they get refugee status. When you get refugee status, when you get that, that doesn't mean it is fine and you are in heaven. You get new challenges. One of them is the 28 days period after you get refugee status. So I would like to start with something that I really believe in. I believe that asylum seekers and refugees are treasures of skills and talents and the only thing that needs to be done for them is support and empower and mobilise all their assets and contribute to society. But, what is being done, in reality, is that, in putting them in poverty and making them homeless. I was made homeless without having any more options. When I got refugee status, I automatically became homeless. After those 28 days when you get refugee status, you have 28 days to leave your accommodation and be homeless. You resist ... (INAUDIBLE) you don't receive any benefit because the process takes longer than 28 days, everybody knows this. So after 28 days, you become extremely poor with nowhere to go, you have to go to ... stay there from 9 until 5 and then the accommodated in a hotel and go back tomorrow morning at the same time you don't have benefit and your support is cut. Everybody experiences that, my experience was a week. I had nothing eat and I had nowhere to go. From 9:00 o'clock to 5:00 o'clock then going to a hotel.

It is easy to prevent, there are practical steps that we can take and prevent people being destitute for a week. People who don't deserve that.

Nobody deserves to be destitute.

Another thing, I am trying to make it very, very short. Another thing I experienced and felt like it is really not fair and I am being treated injustice way, being accommodated in a hostel. Not the fact of being accommodated in a hostel, but being accommodated with another group of people with another kind of need, need for another kind of care. People suffering from drug abuse and alcohol abuse. I totally respect those people and I totally empathise with them, but I was experiencing racism and I was experiencing tension and conflict every day and every night with those people. So the image that I had as a new arrival in Scotland, with all my energy and passion and all my willing to establish a new life here, bringing experience into society, was damaged by that experience. That can be fixed as well. This group of people, asylum seekers and refugees, being accommodated with these people, drug and alcoholic people because they have different needs and different needs for different care is not true. It is having a long lasting effect on their mental health.

Another fact about employment, I got refugee status, I immediately started volunteering with Scottish Refugee Council and had a great experience with them. I started studying an access course in Glasgow University in social sciences, aiming to get a degree in social sciences although I have done (INAUDIBLE) in the past and never been interested in that, anyway I started access course, I was trying to get a qualification, attending different training sessions -- with (NAME - INAUDIBLE) and so I was trying to build my CV to get job experience, improve my language, in order to get suitable employment. But none of these steps was recognised as reasonable steps towards seeking employment by Job Centre that was being sanctioned. So the experience I have had with Job Centre was, has never been, supporting me in order to get to employment.

The job that I have now is because of all that I have done volunteering training sessions and building my CV, but the Job Centre job sanctioning me and putting me in poverty. I had to go food banks to support myself, asking for free food in order to continue building my CV and building my knowledge and experience to get the job.

I made it but, it was not fair. Thanks for listening and I am out of time thank you.

ALAN MILLER: I would like to thank all of you, it hasn't been easy to step up here and share your life experience, thank you to all those who have done that. I am sure, like many of you, sitting there and filled with many emotions, one is anger; one is frustration; one is bloody determination that this is intolerable and it has to be changed. Many of these stories you know, we have heard that some were told well, if you joined the mainstream things will be fine and things will get better, or if you found a job, things will be fine and things will get better.

We know that even that is not the case that you can find a job, you can join the mainstream and you will still be in poverty.

The case for a living wage is unanswerable. But the frustration I felt is that you know, all of this is not new and it is not just in Scotland. That the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, I talked of earlier, the right to live with dignity. It was introduced because we came out of a period of the Great Depression, which is worse where we are now. It was probably worse than where we are now, that gave rise to the need, and we have to draw a line and have to set line standards and have to work towards realising the standards. This is not the way human beings should be living.

It came out of the holocaust where we have heard about persecution and harassment against minorities whether it is asylum seekers, gypsy travellers.

We had the annihilation of millions of Jews, because they were Jews; that’s why the declaration came into effect. No, humanity can do better than this. It can rise above this.

On top of that, two world wars. Out of that the recognition came. We have to stop this and draw a line, set standards and values and work towards realising that. That is what today is about, we are now moving on to saying, right, it is not just enough to complain about the lack of human rights, it is what do we do about it?

Based on the universal values and rights of an agreed because we have had all these experiences before but define the ways and means of actually using those values and rights to make a difference to improve the quality of life and not to repeat the same mistakes and it is. It is common sense, you don't have to be a professor or whatever to understand that we can do things better than the way we are doing and if there was more recognition, if the rights of everyone were respected, from beginning with budgeting of economic and political priorities, right through to treating people in Job Centres or in asylum seeking process as human beings with dignity, that is the sort of culture we want to create. That is what we want SNAP to contribute towards building and making some definable, measurable process in Scotland.

We will move on. We are going to have a cup of tea, a cup of coffee, then going to open up into learning from others who are tackling the same problems what we might learn from them; what we can contribute to the broader experience and I look forward to sharing that rest of the day with you. Meanwhile, a cup of tea and exercise and get some warmth into you, many thanks to the speakers again. (APPLAUSE) (APPLAUSE)

ALAN MILLER: Now you are all warmed up, we'll carry on with the rest of the programme. I would like to introduce Diana Skelton, the Deputy Director General of ATD Fourth World, and a global organisation that very much addresses what we are addressing today. That perspective is a very good beginning to look at what are the practical things to do to make progress in Scotland and through that contributing progress internationally.

Diana and I crossed paths not long ago in Newry, which is on the border of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and so we are in for a very good presentation from Diana, and I will ask her to come up.

DIANA SKELTON: Good morning. Is the sound okay?

I wanted to start with an immense thank you to all that spoke this morning and those that helped prepare today because it's so incredibly powerful to be working on Human Rights both at policy level and VERY grounded in all the abuses of Human Rights that continue.

Before the break Alan was speaking about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which right after World War 2 expressed the idea that all people in every country would be able to enjoy freedom from fear and want; and it was summed up by Alan that we can do better and the world should not be as it is now.

In the Declaration, it says all human beings were born free, with dignity and rights and that is stressed on each person as the centre of Human Rights and all of us to have the right to freedom of opinion, expression, to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment, and a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing, for himself and family to have access to food and medical resources; to enjoy the arts, and share scientific advancement and its benefits.

Everything is there in that Declaration, but expressing the ideal didn't make it into a reality, and through the decades round the world there have been movements on women's rights and racial and ethnic minorities and movement on people born into colonisation. Only more recently it was recognised extreme poverty is a result of Human Rights violations that should stop, not just academic developments that could be a rising tide.

People born into poverty: there continues to be more work to be done for Human Rights to be respected.

A Human Rights approach has to be based on agency, on free participation of all people, not handed down from above.

One of the landmark moments in the Movement for Human Rights in poverty was put into place in 1987 when Joseph Wresinski, who was born into poverty, called on members of a society to join together to ensure that Human Rights and poverty would be respected. On October 17th 1987, the day was the International Day for Eradication of Poverty and 100,000 people travelled to Paris from around the world. He had an inaugurated stone with words engraved here in Glasgow in George Square. There is a replica of the same stone in Paris and the words on the stones say "Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, Human Rights are violated; to come together with rights is our solemn duty”.

Coming together, is everybody, people in power, between, in between. We all have responsibilities.

A message was broken to the Commission of Human Rights. There was work started in the 1980s, in the UN, between extreme policy and Human Rights.

The UN was consulted in Peru and many other places where people living were in poverty. In one of the consultations in Peru, several people spoke about the outrage about being discriminated against; and they said at the market they throw you out and don't let you sell anything.

The word, "pity" and when they say "you poor thing"; that hurts, and discriminates against even further. We want to become part of society to feel we exist, and that we are human beings like everybody else. These participants in Peru and many others who have their dignity denied, all led to the UN guiding principles on Human Rights and these principles were the first Worldwide guidelines of Human Rights living poverty.

Thanks to many people in many parts of the world, many living in poverty, guidelines were adopted and the goal is to ensure all public policies uphold the rights of all people and particularly the lowest income members of society.

The guidance principles are unique because they draw directly on the experience and knowledge of people in poverty like those mentioned in Peru and many places that shape them.

The story of how the principles were written in the consultation of people in poverty should be shared because everybody in poverty should share a sense of pride and ownership in the guiding principles.

The principles state extreme poverty is because of Human Rights violations, Governments are obliged to eradicate poverty, and Human Rights should guide all effecting persons living in poverty and people living in poverty should be recognised as rights-holders and agents of change.

There are many citizens that can make their opinions known, i.e. meeting with Government reps, but too often people in poverty are not heard. People may not express themselves and have feelings of shame or more often may express themselves for not being listened to.

The guiding principles state that people in poverty, like everybody, have a right to look at policies and programmes that affect them and these principles are founded on agency and autonomy and their position in empowerment. The principles make recommendations about many, many rights: the right to housing, health, education, and social justice and the question of social services.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 there was a right to national social services but no discussion on how to address those social services and how to design them. When social services are designed from the top down, without meaningful dialogue with families in crisis who depend on those services, they can sometimes do more harm than good because they are based on incomplete understanding in ways that people become and remain trapped in extreme poverty.

The guiding principles call on states to ensure that financial and material poverty is never the sole justification for removing a child from parental care or preventing his/her reintegration to the family, and in line with legislation, to protect the best interests of the child. Any child protection proceedings efforts should be directed to enable the child to remain or return to his or her parents... That is what it says in the guidance principles. We know it's not a reality in many places and there is a lot of work needed, but it's important that the UN adopted the text that highlights the need for completely new approaches to family support, child care proceedings and placement orders.

To speak about what Human Rights should mean in practice, I will talk about a guide book. After that, I will give an example of Human Rights work that is being done in France. When the guiding principles were first adopted two years ago, there were a number of non-profit groups that decided to have a hand book to make things more accessible to community level workers and low income communities. The book makes people understand poverty from a Human Rights perspective and enables people in poverty to claim rights and responsibilities to be recognised, and the steps for Governments, businesses and civil society to take. The book is still a draft; it's being field-tested and comments can still be supported. Because of the context of Human Rights work and accountability mechanisms, it's a very different context depending where people live. In the future there may be groups that want to adopt a group specifically for countries. So far in the field testing we have looked at different comments; there is one non-profit group that appreciates the way of the descriptions in the hand book on how to live with extreme poverty and what shame and stigmatisation feels like when a child in a school setting is treated differently from others. That normalises that discrimination at an early stage.

Other comments the hand book should include are more details about how to monitor Government implementation of policies and programmes at a local level. The hand book shares many key principles. Among them the need for grassroots practitioners to build trust with people living poverty; to avoid raising false hopes, because Human Rights issues take time to resolve and the manual stresses the importance of assessing the risk of the Human Rights advocate; exploitative situations can be maintained by landlords, employers and public officials that have an interest in exploiting people and who have the power to engage in low level individuals and communities. People living in poverty report often that they are depressed and desperate and failing to get treatment can be interpreted by service staff as aggression and can lead to assistance being denied. It's important for each person to be able to understand what those risks are before engaging in Human Rights advocacy, and to make that choice freely. This one step of implementing the principles of Human Rights, and the manual stresses of how much is to be gained for unity enables us to think together of the ideas of starting with individual dialogues but bringing people together in a community to develop solidarity and to provide space where people with different individual experiences and poverty can analyse a situation together to clarify what they are hoping for and develop proposals they want to make to the relevant authorities.

When that trust is established, people could be encouraged to share information with one another and every person has the authority to know what are the relevant facts and arguments, and to be aware of their own rights and to be aware how they can apply those together and to develop the skills and capacity.

One of the important advances by the guiding principles prohibit public authorities from stigmatising people in living poverty and to take appropriate measures to monitor social patterns to limit stereotypes...society is very far from that; it's an ideal.

In many countries there is discrimination and the example I will give is from France in 2010 where young people speak about their lives; that was important to them. Most people in poverty spoke about stigma and the way people look at you can kill you inside.

The Prime Minister of France was called on to work against prejudice. The prejudice they spoke about causes poverty-based discrimination in many ways. There are landlords who refuse accommodation just based on the physical appearances, even if they people have the money to afford the rent; children are bullied in schools because they are ‘social kids’ or social parasites. And, there are Mayors that decided against creating low-income housing because of poverty. Mayor's passed laws against begging and scavenging and there are doctors in France that refuse to treat patients that are unemployed; and some job applicants are not equal to others and discriminated against for living in emergency shelters or having a house in a low income area.

Together, some of the ‘groups’ within France launched a petition to the French Parliament. The Government definition of discrimination in France speaks about sex, disability, age, language, ethnic origin and sexual orientation, but not about poverty-based discrimination. It's important to have a word for that, because all different causes of discrimination matter and in low income communities there is a lack of resources for everybody that can pit people against each other. Here, we are thinking about all kinds of different discrimination and saying what's worse and trying to protect all from all discrimination, which is a way to erase discrimination including poverty-based discrimination.

In December 2012 the French Government organised a National Conference against poverty and for social inclusion. There was a woman in living poverty here, Micheline Adobati, and she says “Stigmatisation is caused by poverty which weighs people down until we no longer dare look at anyone else in the eyes".

About forty non-profit organisations and others have circulated a petition to look at the recognition for discrimination on the basis of social exclusion and trying to change public opinion; the petition has 22,000 signatures and a book published called “Disproving misconceptions about the poor and poverty” which sold 36,000 copies.

Now, the French look at discrimination linked to place of residence because, from now on, in France, changes can't be filed by anybody that thinks their address led them to be refused from employment, housing or from being able to pay with a cheque or use banking services.

The law calls for equality between men and women and the struggle against the forms of discrimination, to look at disadvantaged neighbourhoods, to a person's resident or origin, to look at the ground of social exclusion, and to end stigmatisation of people that depend on welfare, and to look to support people in poverty to overcome it.

There is a lot of work ahead. This is an Innovation Forum which is a very important place to salute all, the innovation and the intelligence, and the courage of people living in poverty in low income communities. Around the world, daily lives are hard but it is important to reach one another in solidarity and stand up to injustice.

Thanks to the efforts and civil society and policy making that use a Human Rights approach; we continue to move forward to the rights of a world where dignity, and every person and family will one day be respected.

Thank you. (Applause)

ALAN MILLER: Thanks very much, Diana. I am very conscious you have been listening all morning but don't worry, this afternoon it's going to be over to the tables to discuss and decide what the things are that we now need to do; the innovative things we can do to apply a Humans Rights approach to tackle poverty.

We have run a little behind the clock and therefore suggest we break for lunch which is ready at the back I hope in five minutes. So five minutes until lunch is ready.

What I suggest you do for the time being is this afternoon we are going to hear some very concrete presentations about work that is being done elsewhere on this agenda, quite ground-breaking and innovative work we felt we would all benefit from listening to. Then we'll ask each of the tables to ask questions of those presenters and including Diana and then to tell yourselves: "Could any of the things work here? What are the three most practicable things that can be done in Scotland that we want to be part of to ensure things happen in Scotland"?

To maybe begin exercising yourselves mentally this afternoon, if you spend a few minutes unpacking what you have heard today: the testimonies and perspectives from Diana, and then begin to talk to one another to say what you would like to see come of this afternoon. Why is poverty a Human Rights issue? How seeing it in that way may have the potential of beginning to make a distinctive contribution towards the eradication of poverty.

So, if you introduce yourself more to another round of tables, and then have the beginning of a conversation on what you can take forward from this day, and may be at the end of it begin to warm up (Laughter) for this afternoon's conversations. Then we'll take a break in five minutes. Thanks.

(LUNCH)

ALAN MILLER: Okay thanks very much for coming back. We are now going to begin the next session where we are going to hear 3 presentations. There will be no plan for immediate questions and answers, the way we want to do it is to have the presentations and then in the tables you have the conversation about what is the benefit of these presentations? What could translate into a Scottish context? What are the priorities that we should be taking out of today in terms of actions?

Then each of the presenters are collectively, they will be going around the tables and answering any questions that you have to inform the discussion on the tables. So that is the way that we plan to do it. So in which case we are going to go through the 3 presentations now and then go to the tables and have the presenters go around the tables and give you any further information or clarify anything.

So the first one is Aoife Nolan who is a Professor of International Human Rights Law at the University of Nottingham. I think one of the things we clearly got from this morning’s testimonies was that if priorities at the high level determining economic and political and budgetary priorities, if it was got right at that level, then it would lead to a much better living experience for those who are at the other end of the food chain; the impact of policies, economic priorities that are made and the budgetary decisions that are made that have such an impact on all of us living in the communities that we do.

So one of the relatively recent innovative developments has been how do you integrate human rights into that budgetary process? How right at the very beginning do you ensure that is on the table and what are the benefits of that? What is the experience that we might want to learn from?

So Aoife is the go-to person for that, and I’m now very pleased to hand over to her. Aoife.

AOIFE NOLAN: Thank you for having me. As an Irish person, thank you for laying on weather that is grimly familiar, thank you Scotland. Seriously, it is great to be here. I would like to echo Diana and say thank you for the presentations earlier, I found I got a lot from it. There is a lot I still need to absorb and think about, but certainly what was said today has made me think of the relationship between poverty and human rights and the treatment of poor people, both in Scotland and elsewhere, in a new way, and in a concrete way.

So thank you for that.

As Alan said, I am not going to talk about -- sorry, Alison my lovely assistant is going to help, I am not going to be talking about a particular project rather focus on an area of work that is growing in terms of attention and growing in terms of the number of people doing it, and the range of people doing it.

This is work around the budgets and human rights. There has been in the last ten years an absolute explosion in terms of people doing this work who are keen to do this work both internationally and within the UK.

Often this work has been carried out in situations that are much less human rights friendly than in the UK and in Scotland. So essentially you are in a good position and I would like to talk about moving it forward.

So what is human rights budget work? There is a range of ways, described as work that seeks to relate human rights to government budget and budget work to human rights work.

Historically budgets in one corner, human rights in the other and there hasn't been conversation between them. What you will see, as I say, if you look at SNAP and the aims of SNAP, one of the key aims is to integrate human rights to a greater degree into budget decisions and, again very positively, then if you look at statements from the Scottish Government in their recent government equality statement, there we see the government giving commitments to embed human rights budgets more exclusively. The time has come in Scotland, unlike in other places, you have a government who seems, certainly on paper, to commit to this. Okay, so it is a good time, it is a positive environment for this.

This is, I mean you may go, look at all the definitions and terms? The reason I have them up there, because people tend to use a lot of different terms to describe a lot of different types of work around budget and human rights. It can lead to confusion…human rights budgeting, human rights budget analysis. Examples of the different types of work that are done, a lot of civil society organisations, and people and social movements are focusing on increasing transparency around budgets to advance human rights work, freedom of information legislation, why is government making decisions, is it to benefit the cronies or what are the reasons for it?

Another major kind of area a lot of work has been done here in Scotland already is the issue of gender budgeting, the application of equality analysis to budgets. How does this impact on women? How does this process impact on peoples with disabilities?

The other area you want to be aware of, and certainly Dessie will talk about this a bit more, if you think back to what Diana said, if you think people are affected by budgets are rights bearers and they should be social actors and political actors, they have to be involved in budget-making decisions and a lot of work has been done for instance, particularly in Latin America, about ensuring people, you know, often in marginalised and poor areas of society, ensuring that decisions made on resources are actually heard. So there is a range of this.

The final thing, area that I just want to flag is this thing called human rights based budget analysis. This is essentially taking the budget and evaluating the outcomes of the budget and evaluating the processes of how the budget was arrived at from a human rights perspective. So it is using human rights as an analytical tool.

So why do we care about human rights and budget making? Straight away I refer you to a Scottish Government statement: Budgets are a key sign of government's values. You know what, if human rights are not in there, they are not a value worth counting. That is why work has to be taken to make sure that the government isn't going ... human rights, fuzzy, great, making sure they are reflected in the budgetary processes and decisions.

When we hear talk around budgets, welfare rights budget form, it is all about economic growth. It is all about the fact that you know, all boats will rise with the rising tide.

Human rights is very different. It isn't simply focused on economic growth, in fact primary focus is human dignity. When we look at budgets there is a tendency to go off on the talk of economic growth, socio-economic indicators. With human rights it brings us back to the idea, what budgets are for is to advance everyone, everyone's position within society or taking you know, ensure a safety net for everyone in society.

So this is one thing that human rights do.

The other thing that human rights do is, as I said, set out a set of standards for processes and for decisions around resources right. If you have an obligation to do something specific then it has to be reflected in a budget and why does it have to be reflected, because the human right, not another fluffy policy principle, it is actually a legal obligation. It is very important when we talk about the relationship between human rights and human rights and poverty, that we remember that a key strength of human rights is that they are legal obligations.

The other thing they do is, if you think of a human rights based approach, think of important elements of human rights, they emphasise transparency, participation and accountability. Think of Scotland, compared to other places. You have a transparent, participatory accountable set of budget makers. Yet you would sit back, I am sure, and go, who writes the budgets and who do they listen to? Is it business or is it human rights organisations?

The key thing about bringing human rights into the discussion is that they have to...

Why do we have human rights? It is another tool that shows us, when we apply it, who benefits and who doesn't. So it is the hard facts of who does well out of budget decision making that can be had by human rights analysis.

What I want to talk about now is, one of the key things is, why would you want to talk about human rights advocacy? What I will say is you need to be careful. There is a tendency to go, budget work, it is fantastic. I have a human rights problem, it is about housing or it is about legislation, it is about security. It must be a budgetary issue but actually it isn't always.

Sometimes you will have human rights violations that are not about resources. They might be about arbitrary decision making or simple discrimination outside of budgetary context. It is important that the buzz word of budget work isn't regarded as a panacea that is everywhere. You see it being used more and more and not always in context for where it would be useful.

There is a number of key challenges I want to flag up before I finish. None of these are insurmountable, but they are important to bear in mind as you develop the work around it. Because essentially they are serious obstacles -- there are conceptual challenges relating to the current human rights framework. There are practical challenges you come across in your day-to-day efforts to use analysis or budget work. Then there are advocacy challenges.

Okay so what are the conceptual challenges? Well, human rights are written to be general and broad and generally applicable. That means that sometimes it is not very clear actually what a particular human right or a particular human right duty has to say about budget decisions. Okay so that is not to say you can't find out what human rights have to say about budget decisions but you are going to have to do some work around it. You can't use human rights as a tool to evaluate budget decision if you do not know what human rights are.

The other thing that we have here, and in Scotland it will certainly be relevant is, on the one hand you are trying to use human rights, they tend to talk about the state or particular levels, often national governments, if you are using international human rights law.

In Scotland, some of the areas are devolved and some aren't. How do you ensure you are targeting the right duty bearers? Again it is about being careful.

Practical challenges, there are times when the data simply isn't available. We were doing work in Northern Ireland around budgeting analysis, we wanted to do work on mental health and -- astronomical levels of suicide amongst young people. We could not get the data for us to do the analysis. There wasn't a separate budget line dealing with children and young people, it was all meshed in. In the end, you can only do the work partially. That is a challenge you may come up with.

Often human rights experts, we don't know much about economic analysis and the fact is developing those skills, takes time; it takes resources you know training costs etc. and it may also require the development of partnerships. Now all of these things are positive but basically it is not going to be something you can wake up and do in the morning. It is something certainly you don't want to do budget work and get it wrong. The second you get one figure wrong, well government, it de-legitimises all the work in the area.

Finally, I suppose something I flagged in you are talking about partnerships between human rights and economists, they think in different ways, and often the aims are different. With the best will in the world, don't assume it is an uncomplicated conversation.

Finally, advocacy challenges. First of all, factors impact on the success of budget advocacy as a tool. There is a political environment, I have to say Scotland, and I am not romanticising Scotland, compared to other places you don't have a history. Well, you may, you may just not have the same level of governmental political resistance to even the idea of human rights you would find even in other parts of the UK. I am not saying it is easy, this is a challenge that other places may have but not have to the same ebbing extent.

The other issue, government may turn around and say, we have human rights, the Human Rights Act and the European Convention, we don't have the right to social housing or -- that is international law, why talk to us about that? The answer to that is, you signed up to the treaties with these legally binding obligations for housing and health. It is important to know you may come across this mind-set when you are dealing with government.

Finally communication and findings. When you are dealing with economic analysis the language is technical, it is quite opaque, it is you know, it is often these acronyms etc. One of the things that is really important when you are pushing your work forward to think carefully about the fact that you have to make this palatable and understandable to a general audience that takes longer and requires significantly more work than you think. There is a lot of budgetary analysis that doesn't hit the target. I want to flag that as a warning before you set off. I will leave it at that so thank you. (APPLAUSE).

ALAN MILLER: Thanks very much indeed Aoife, it is a lot of food for thought there, rattled through that quickly, many thanks.

We are now going move on, assuming we are getting loaded to James Harrison and Mary-Ann Stephenson to talk about impact assessments. The commission has had a relatively long working experience with James and Mary-Ann and we have found them to be extremely valuable in partners in many of the things we have done, looking forward to them present this to you.

JAMES HARRISON: So all the speakers have said, we would also like to say thank you very much, to Alan and the other organisers for allowing us to talk today about our experience in terms of hearing testimony and the other speakers this afternoon.

We want to talk to you specifically about is the project that we have been running now for almost 5 years looking at the impact of public spending cuts on women in Coventry. A collaboration between the Centre for human rights and Practice, that I am the co-director of, and Coventry Women’s Voices, that is a civil society organisation representing more than 200 women’s organisations in Coventry.

Together we have produced, and shows you how collaborative we are, Mary is doing the slides for us, three reports looking at the impact of the spending cuts on women in Coventry. I have hard copies if you are interested in looking at that after.

First one looked at the impact on women generally in Coventry, and then we moved on to looking at older women and then finally black and minority ethnic women. The 3 reports we did were between 2011 and 14. We adopted an approach we termed intersectionality. We looked at structures of oppression and inequality that women faced in Coventry. Looking at their racial background, their gender. Women that were disabled, women that were facing extreme poverty and looked at the intersection of those characteristics and as a result how the public spending cuts were affecting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals in the city. So single parents, disabled women, women from particular ethnic groups, that is a strand that runs through it all.

So I think what I would like to say is about the power of the alliance of academia and civil society to do work like this initially. So, from academia we bring at least a perception, if not a reality, of expertise and the research methods to undertake this type of research and the status. So when we walk into a room as an academic and go into Coventry City Council, we bring with us a status, the perception of projects we are working on, whether the reality is another thing.

Teaming up with a civil society organisation in Coventry takes me out of my ivory tower, brings us knowledge and experience. So we are able to start with the experience of women in Coventry, working with organisations that know the experiences of women in Coventry. We start off learning about the experience and at the end, disseminate the findings. Often reports sit on shelves. This academia had an impact -- reports in Bristol, northwest of England, adopting the model we put forward. And local impact and sense we weren't going away, we kept on talking about the human rights impact to the public spending cuts in Coventry. This is a report that brought, talks a bit about the national impact but, we are now in a situation, 4 or 5 years on we are in partnership with the local council doing a joint project looking at the impacts of welfare reform, and the human rights of vulnerable people. This draws on what Aoife was saying before, the human rights when you first talk to policy makers they say, what is that about? Showing how a human rights lens can tell them things about the vulnerable people within the city and their experience of the public spending cuts and doing that over a period of 5 years, they start listening to you and start understanding the insights and they end up wanting to work with you.

Finally, before I hand over to Mary-Ann, I will say about the 3 questions that drove our research. So in a way, this boils it down to 3 simple questions of what we think the human rights lens brings.

So firstly, how badly are people affected by a policy or policies? Looking at the idea of severity.

Secondly, which groups does the policy impact and thirdly, is there is a fair process going on?

I’ll say just a few words about each of those.

So how badly, we have a slide here, one sense it is maybe unique. A Daily Mail headline that seems compassionate about people in poverty. It is not unique. We found British people, driven to suicide to escape policy, that is something we found in relation to one story in Coventry, as a result of welfare reform, a 5-mile walk to a food bank, a couple committing suicide in the city. A lot of people suffering severe impacts so the human rights lens, we think, captures that by focusing on the severe impact of the public spending cuts. As I say, I have also written specifically on this and can talk to people who are interested in this. Go and talk to your own individual tables about food banks as a response to that. The problem of food banks is not adopting a human rights based approach to dealing with the issue of spending cuts and the poverty. The dangers of us, what I describe as an American style situation, where a sixth is now fed with emergency food aid. We may be going into that direction. I will leave that thought with people as we talk later on.

That severity, then our report looking at the particular impact on groups, so, there is a disproportionate number of certain groups affected by particular policies so we say look, when you look at the benefits you need to recognise that it affects more black and minority ethnic families than it does other families. That is important in terms of analysing the policies and response to it across the city.

There is a disproportionate impact on certain groups, women suffer as a result compared to men. They are ‘shock absorbers’ of poverty is a phrase that’s used. They’re more likely to go without as a result of public spending cuts, so that is to focus on severity on the one hand and particular groups will suffer more; it goes through our reports.

It is about fair process: Human Rights are also about the process by which decisions are come to. We have written subsequent reports; Mary Ann has finished one looking at welfare benefit sanctions and this quote here is perhaps symbolic of wider problems and the way that welfare benefit sanctions are reached.

One personal advisor backed-up claims that targets led advisors to set up claimants. He said poor English skills were often targeted in his office, and people with learning disabilities or those with English as a second language, is the easiest way to meet those targets under pressure.

Human Rights want to make sure that disadvantaged people are not targeted.

So, I will move to Mary Ann now.

MARY ANN STEVENSON: As James said, I am the co-ordinator of the Coventry Women's Voices. We are a network of individuals and Trade Unions and women from anti-racist groups and faith groups and other organisations across Coventry.

I wanted to talk a little bit about what we did. Briefly around some of the stuff we found and why do local impact assessments.

There is a lot of mythology around impact assessments and some people think you need a great deal of expertise. And you do, if you are doing budgetary things, but we used data that was there already and we looked at national data sets and local data sets and looked at what groups were most likely to be effected by certain changes, and how many people in Coventry fell into those groups. We looked at numbers. We also interviewed people. The first report we did was before the cuts actually took place, so after they were announced but before they were implemented, and nobody knew they were going to be affected. We interviewed a lot of voluntary groups and support organisations and advice group about their anxieties.

In subsequent reports we were able to do interviews and focus groups with particular individuals and groups that had been affected by spending cuts too and use their own personal testimony. It was important for us to have both.

In academia there are arguments about qualitative and quantitative analysis and some people are more likely to be convinced by numbers and some are convinced by stories. And so if you are trying to convince people it's quite a good idea to have both because you hit both groups.

The information that we gathered and the work we did was based, well, I say "consultation" but it was collaboration. All the women of Coventry at Women's Voices and a huge range of organisations to look at issues about what they thought we should look at. We did not come in with issues but they came from groups we were working with; working together around jobs, housing, pay, poverty, financial security, health, social care, education, legal aid changes, voluntary services and violence against women.

The first report did not include transport and then it became clear that was a major gap so the second report we included transport as well.

We looked at that consultation and collaboration. Then we applied, and used, as James said, the Human Rights and the Equalities lens to look forward. We found certain groups were disproportionately affected and certain groups badly affected. That language was quite helpful to the council because it gave us some leverage.

I will focus on one area, and you are very welcome to read the reports. But as James said and identified, many more groups were likely to be effected by the spending cuts. It was not just women particularly that were badly affected; so, we looked at different groups of women and one of the groups was disabled women.

We tried to start from the perspective of the individual person rather than the service area cut. Quite often when you look at impact assessment and the change for the welfare benefit or social security provision, they don't like what all the changes mean. For the person concerned, one change does not matter but it’s the whole array of the changes.   
These were issues we identified to disabled women that were being affected at the same time. It's the cumulative impact; it's not that these cuts add-up but multiply and one makes another worse; you get a lot of unexpected impacts.

There is a case where in Coventry there was a rape crisis of an adult surviving child sexual abuse, and the attacker was still at large. She was a mother of a disabled child and her child support package was cut and she said I have one fight in me, and she said she would focus on the fight for her child rather than her own fight for justice. You would not expect that somebody's justice for sexual assault would be limited by something else happening somewhere else; that is what the cumulative assessment shows.

A few points: why do something local rather than national? The cuts are affecting people locally hugely and differently. This data is from England. Sure, there is similar situations in Scotland but for example in England, in Blackpool, people are going to be losing £900 per working age, yet the city of London is less than £200. So, there are different areas which are different.

Similarly there are cuts to Local Authority budgets and Local Authorities in the poorest areas are losing more money quite significantly than the richer areas. Local Authorities are making different decisions; there are political decisions on what your priorities are.

In Coventry they have carried on funding the Law Centre to do work on welfare benefit cases and that is huge importantly. That is a political decision because it's seen as important to do.

Why do we do it? We have got evidence for local lobbying and you say it's happening and this is happening and they say "It's anecdotal”, you would say this. But if you say Dr James Harrison, from the law department is saying this, and he wears a suit etc, then people suddenly take that evidence a lot more seriously.

We were able to show how people could take action to mitigate the impact of certain cuts. The decision to keep funding work on welfare benefit cases: one of the things we lobbied the council on quite strongly was by saying, "Look, all the cuts are happening; you need to support advice services because it's the only way that people will not be in a worse situation and get what they are entitled to".

So, we got somewhere there.   
We can demonstrate combined impact, again not only something that councils’ impacts look at, it is not what the national government does.

International lobbying; at the end of the day, when we put pressure on the local council in Coventry, the decision to cut public spending is national and all that local evidence up and down the country fits into it.

The position from some member organisations looking at cuts when they applied for services: they said this group is facing cuts…

A few more things, and this is important which came up today about countering this Government message about the skivers and scroungers; the difference between the deserving and undeserving poor. The Government said, “We are all in this together”; that all fell apart when we realised we were not all in this together. We said in our report that some people are not in it together: some people are in it more than others.

The Government narrative has moved to say it's a moral crusade to those lying in bed watching Jeremy Kyle, whilst other people are out at work. Since it is a distraction by those in work, in low wages and those paying for high property prices; they suggest it's to do with immigrants.

So, by building those sorts of relationships we were able to counter that narrative and make a case for a welfare state we all have a stake in.

Also other benefits for us as an organisation: it helped us build alliances member organisations. One of the things happening with these cuts is that everybody is facing the biggest crisis of their professional life and it's difficult to see what is happening to others because you are focused on your area. But, we have made connections at people providing service to women who have been raped and sexually abused, but a lot of clients are on benefits and will have cuts and that will have an impact on other areas of their life. So, it is about those connections and improving understanding between different groups. We have different languages and work in different ways; Trade Union women work in different ways to the voluntary sector women, but working together helps.

Finally, to bring solidarity: one of the most dangerous impacts of the cuts apart from stating the impact on people's lives is the way they are used to undermine solidarity and to get people to retreat in to their own little group and to find somebody else to blame and attack. What is happening is that process of talking to different groups of women in our city was a REALLY important part of beginning that solidarity.

That is it. (Applause).

ALAN MILLER: Thank you very much Mary Ann and James.

I would like to move on to the third presentation. When I was elected to become Chair of the Commission I got a call from a close friend and colleague, Ms Robinson saying, "You are in the job now, get yourself over to Belfast to the Seven Towers housing estate. I have just been there and you will learn a lot there”. I replied, “Mary, the first thing is I can't leave the country, you know? It would not look good”. She responded, “I am telling you, get yourself over there”.

When she says jump, it's how high you jump. I went to Seven Towers in Belfast, I met Dessie and the tenants in that housing estate and she was right; the lessons that have been learned over the years from the experience there are absolute nuggets of gold.

I hope very much now we're at the stage in Scotland where the ground is prepared and is ready and communities through the country can take up and put into practice a lot of the learning that has come from the Seven Towers.

So, I will pass you over to Dessie now.   
  
DESSIE DONNELLY: Yes, thank you very much Alan. Thanks very much to all the Commission staff for inviting me over to make this presentation and looking forward to the conversation this afternoon.

I hope what I say is very interesting and practical as well as looking at shaping priorities.

The process we use to shape priorities: I will talk about that, but I want to open with a few remarks about participation.   
The Organisation I work for, really, in a nutshell, we look at organising and policy support to groups who are living in poor housing or experiencing mental health problems to help them assert and fight for the realisation of their rights as well.

When speaking about participation, it is a particular type of participation, and I mean that it's participation of the most vulnerable people in society as well, so those voices which have been excluded from budgetary decisions, policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, by whom those policy decisions are about; their voices need to be mainstreamed into the process as well. A critical part is power and power imbalances in society as well.

We see participation has not a nice add-on to the realisation of Human Rights but an indispensable part to realise Human Rights as well is very much about democratic participation.

In terms of housing, when we started working in 2006 in the Seven Towers there was not a critical mass of people in the Towers saying “What we need are Human Rights”. They did say they needed change and needed change that affects their lives. That was the advocating factor and what we brought to the equation was that we were able to provide support with a certain amount of expertise on a particular framework.

The fact is that today we are still working with groups of residents from the Seven Towers and those residents and their children, now teenagers, are organising other areas in Belfast as well. I think that speaks to the relevance of Human Rights; if used in a way that is a practical tool to create change in communities.

Human Rights for us are not a trick you pull out of your sleeve; people realise there is a light bulb moment and there has been oppression for a long period of time. But it provides a framework to understand the relationship between who has power and responsibility to deliver rights and people that live in the absence of rights and daily indignity. Human Rights should be empowering to assert their rights as well. That relationship can be very challenging, and it's necessary; it can be extremely uncomfortable as times because it involves challenge but that challenge is necessary as well.

Why is participation in this framework? This is why it's indispensable. One short example: in 2006 the big issue with the Seven Towers in Belfast, the critical part was the religious inequality in North Belfast in particular. It was mentioned two times by the separate UN Bodies in the last five years, looking at the Catholic community, and looking at a shortage of social housing. If you said “What is the issue with Belfast”? “Religion and housing”: that would be the response.

But when we had conversations with people in the Seven Towers, it was acknowledged as the worst housing in Belfast.

Sorry, there is a picture there but it is pretty dark, but we had pigeon waste as a main issue. These are the partition panels, so on every landing you have these windows and literally it's decades of pigeon waste, carcasses and mites and that infestation was in the flats as well in high-rise blocks. Many know this: there is nowhere for kids to play so the kids were playing on the landings and you had high rates of respiratory problems. The issues had been raised loads of times and it was not addressed; not a single member of staff, person, policy worker or academic worker could have identified that.

You have these abstract concepts like religious inequality but this is a daily manifestation for a mother struggling to try and raise their child.

Participation is critical and you would not be able to name those issues if people had not been involved.

We look at participation as a string of identifying problems; identifying solutions and also monitoring if change is happening in people's lives as well. You don't know if change is happening unless you are living with that change. There is an expertise that no-one can bring to the table other than the person having there; it's not a nice thing.

We work with families and they will constantly say they are sick of being patronised and they tell their stories over and over again; it's soul-destroying. So, we need to make change; that needs to be shaping policy as well.

I will look at the whole issue of prioritising issues and how we came to that.

The very first thing we do is quite an extensive outreach, usually working among people who experience Human Rights abuses find they are sick of consultation and it’s difficult in such a way for them to organise to come together and have faith in a process. I think it's wrongly interpreted as apathy or alienation from the political process, but it's alienation from systems and governance that excludes them.

The first thing we did, the first principle, was we need to know where people are at. We knocked on doors and generated open surveys to see what the most pertinent issues were in the Seven Towers. There is a process of four to five months trying to build this up. We created a diary room, way back when Big Brother was big, but in the local leisure centre where we set up a camera and created uncensored safe space where people could go to feel free to articulate what they wanted and contact the Local Authority and have no fear and say what they wanted to say. Then they turned that into a short video and had a number of viewings and they were then invited back together again. That was the first meeting, and so it was a group meeting.

We would have showed the diary room video, as it only five minutes long -not trying to produce a big Hollywood production - but for people to see that that is a collective trigger to conversation.

We had a group meeting together where we pooled people together and tried to trigger conversation. At that first meeting when we had a lot of people together, you can see images emerging from the diary room. So, we have flipcharts and we call it, "What is crap about your life"? You end up with a large list of issues. It can be anything from very subjective; the pigeon waste, dampness or sewage, to can't stand your neighbour, whatever. But it can be unwieldy at that stage because you see the sheer size and extent of the number of problems there, and so there has to be a way you look at this and think where do we start? That involves a prioritisation and narrowing down of issues.

We use a criteria; you can't apply it to every issue; they are broad values but the first thing is issues would be raised and we would do a Human Rights thing by saying “What is covered under human rights, international rights standard, and what are not”?

So, an example here, to read here: When the pigeon waste was covered, inadequate housing must protect inhabitants from disease and vectors.

There were policy staff that would filter out these and see what was covered or not. The next time we repeated this process in two years' time, after the first time, we let the residents do that themselves. We selected the general comments and standards. I went to a session and I had to leave early but I would say “Go through those, would you?” And, they would bring them back highlighted; and it's not the most complicated thing. When people used it for their own purposes, they interpreted them to find out which issues were covered with international standards as well.   
The pigeon waste was covered and, once covered, we would say what should the Government be doing? Are there any domestic standards to hold to account for?

We found that pigeon waste could be classified as a public health nuisance; urgent repairs which the Housing Executive must address in four days. This had been here for over a decade.

According to the Housing Executive's own monitoring, there is a massive 98% of urgent repairs not carried out in 4 days. It's a real eye-opener to see if it's the case; it's not that they have not already fined the Housing Executive; they have, many times, but it had not been a prioritisation amongst the decision makers and the public authority as well. So, there was a series of accountability.

You have these issues, can you measure it?

You want to realise here is how bad the problem is. Does it change in six months' time, a year’s time? And, it has to be capable of being measured.

Here is the dampness. The Housing Executive still denies it's dampness but say it's condensation; a form of dampness.

To go into more detail, things needs to be measured, and that can be through surveys, photography and audio recording. One of the criteria we use is we try to narrow down the issues that span forward considering small issues, not small on the impact it has on people's lives, but it would take relatively little effort on behalf of the public authority to address it. You would have smaller issues like the pigeon waste and then dampness, or long term issues like how many social housing units are being built where there is demand.   
There is a process, and there is no point having a process with no movement, so you have to be smart, and campaign and try and get some movement on these things. That was very important.

Next thing is simply a measure. When you have a number of issues, find out outright what extent and how big the problem is. Usually that involves surveys and photographs. We looked at temperatures and used thermometers to get average temperatures too. We monitor that. Like was said before, that allows you to quantify the extent of the problem but it's not enough because statistics can be extremely dry and don't speak to people, so when people are out doing the surveying, if there is a particularly bad or good story, they go back to record the story so you get a very human impact on these statistics. So you have the quantitative and cooperative side to produce a more effective picture.

At this point, you are building-up quite a sophisticated case and outreaching to identifying issues, and carrying out the research to find out what strength the problems exist. That helped identify a problem. But it's not enough to do that. We had to figure out how you assert your rights. How do you hold the Government to account? At that point, it's a very important point, but it's telling a story of the social and economic rights abuses in your community.

One thing was that issues persisted for a long period of time. How do we trigger action on behalf of the public authority in relation to this or the duty bearer?

You need the Practice of Rights. You look at the progression. So, under social and economic rights, the State has a responsibility to make sure things get better over time; things do not get worse, and that no deliberate measures are taken which make people's situations worse. We thought, well, why don't we measure that ourselves? Why don't we try to develop? You hear from the UK Government or the Northern Ireland administration that things are getting better and that they are spending a lot of resources and maybe there are little elaborations but, by and large, moving in the right direction, to counter the experience of these residents.

We looked at how to measure this. It was not rocket science, but it was important to have a very robust policy basis so it could not be dismissed.

We looked at families in the Towers and at the time the high rise Towers were not suitable for young people, and we wanted to see them re-housed in appropriate accommodation over a period of time. Our indicators were what shall we monitor the families in the Seven Towers?

Back in 2007, there were 63 or so families in the Seven Towers and that is where we were at. It was said, okay, here is a reality: here are the Human Rights standards and what Governments should be doing about it. We worked with the freedom of information, within the regions. The Chairperson of the Housing Authority had written to the Children's Commissioner accepting the Towers is not an appropriate form of accommodation for children but they continued to house them there.

Within 12 months we wanted to see all families housed across and on a quarterly basis would find out how many families were living in the Towers and campaigning around that as well. The purpose of this is not just to sit back and passively monitor, you are trying to set the pace and tempo of change for the people who need it, not for the people who have responsibility for delivering the change as well. Which is extremely important, these are set by the group, not by the government or the State. They are an accountability tool.

Right?

That is some of the monitoring that happened at time over the year. What we did see across that 12 month period reduced about 60% across the year itself we saw a bigger reduction of families than had been across the decade, there was something about the mix of the campaigning, monitoring, that produced change as well.

What I would say as well, once this body of work was created, is where you go with it and one thing that the group were very, very clear about is that it is the state, and particularly the minister responsible, who should be held to account for this. They had a long history of trying to engage with statutory bodies of the housing authorities or the city council to deal with them as well. They hadn't received any progress on this, so they took a conscious decision at the beginning: bypass the structures, nothing that forced them to engage with the structures. They didn't want to sit through a series of consultation meetings where they express problems. They used their rights to media, held protests, law, freedom of information requests, data requests. Went in front of Stormont, went to the United Nations, secured a recommendation, observation when the UK Government was being examined that the issue of Belfast,-- they took back from the traditional type of advocacy and looking at it said, we are rights holders and we exercise these rights as well. You can see some of them, that is some of the media stuff. The political lobbying, the black taxis on the political bodies, in front of the Ministers office as well. Some of the meeting strategy is very important in terms of making it visually quite appealing. That is the thing about the pigeon waste or the dampness or the sewerage. It is very visual and that would look good in the media, very attractive in terms of raising the issues as well.

Okay I will finish in a wee second but, in terms of this, I mean I just want to highlight some of the results using this approach. Using the human rights based approach produced change that was intractable for a number of years; the pigeon waste was cleaned within 3 months of launch. Launched around 7 years ago remember?

The sewage system was replaced within 8 months, cost 900 grand to replace, over 300 balconies, 60 families rehoused, thousands of pounds of in compensation. When you see now, the traction on it. It is building momentum and they know that is a deeper problem.

I suppose in conclusion on this, this is a housing example. We work right across work, welfare, domestic violence, work with homeless people in hostels as well. We have seen using this approach can produce change. It is not something that is just unique to housing at all. But what it does require is really that consistent use of the human rights framework, not forgetting when you work with these, vulnerable rights holders should be holding the State to account. A lot of the time, we run a summer school and look at the response of the State to this as well. Trying to avoid the tricky questions of partnership, which bring people into the room but don't have a human rights framework on them. It takes a vigilant group to hold the line on that and look for accountability and look for transparency and participation and hold to that.

Also the whole issue is how we use human rights I think. If human rights does not look at the whole issue of power, you won't be able to get sustainable change. Really, what you are looking at when it comes to the issues of the pigeon waste or dampness or sewage, is that peoples voices are being excluded from decision making processes. That is the core problem, that is due to power balance. You need to be conscious of the fact that, yes you want the pigeon waste addressed and the dampness eradicated. You want to open up the democratic space for people who are excluded. Thanks.

(APPLAUSE).

ALAN MILLER: Thanks very much indeed Dessie, so we’ve reached the stage now where over to the rest of us at our tables for the next hour we will have Dessie, Aoife and Mary-Ann and James circulating around, picking up anything you want to.

The job to identify is, could what we have heard from the last 3 presenters, could they work in Scotland? What will we need to do to enable them to work in Scotland? What are the 3 most important things that coming out of today we identify as really needing to be done? Could contribute the most to making progress in eradication of poverty. So that is what we want to do for the next hour, then we will have a wrap up session at the end to identify what are these priorities? Conclude by about 4 o'clock or so. So, if I could just ask the presenters to begin to circulate and for you to start these conversations. If you find you are sitting at a table that is pretty sparsely occupied, then just join another table.

[table work].

ALAN MILLER: Okay folks. I would like to thank you all very much for the high degree of engagement throughout the day, and particularly in the last session there. We now have the recommend things that need to be done on the flip charts on the wall. The next stage is I am going to ask each of you with the three dots and the sticky paper to go and look at these recommendations on the flip charts and just beside the one that you agree with, of the three that you agree with, just put your sticky dot there so we can get a gauge there of how you would prioritise the thing that is to be done. Walking around the tables, there is a lot of commonality that is coming out of the flip charts probably the one is that there can’t be clones of Aoife, James, Mary-Ann and Dessie, we don't need to do that. We can produce our own in Scotland but clearly everything that has been said this afternoon has resonated. The budgetary stuff, the impact assessment and the community empowerment and one or two requests for a clone of Dessie really, really clearly resonated throughout all the tables.

So, what we want to do then is, as I say, ask each of you to go and look at the flip charts and put your sticky dot beside the point you think is the priority one, two, or three of them, maximum of three. Then once you have done that, if you could move around these fantastic graphics from Graham and I will ask Graham to come up here and indicate what he would like you to do in a similar way once you have finished this exercise with the graphics.

GRAHAM: A very similar process once you put your dots on the flip charts on my left there. Have a wee look around the gallery, all the thumbs have been taken off the pictures, I have counted them all up. You have bundles of 3 arrows and the idea is to simply take the bundle of 3 arrows, out of the drawing, choose the 3 drawings that you think are the 3 things that resonate most to me.

Okay, I very much like what you are doing there, but just doing it on this side. Is that cool?

ALAN MILLER: Thank you very much. Then if you could do all that as quickly as possible. Take your seats back, at the outset we want to end the days event as we started it with the last voices being those of the individuals we heard from and the testimonies at the beginning of the day and we are very keen to have an opportunity to learn what their reflections might be of how the day has gone and how they see things being taken forward. I will ask you to do this stuff and then get back to your tables as soon as you can thanks.

Okay, if you can take your seats we will wrap up.

Well thanks very much for identifying your choices as to what the priorities are and also your favourite graphic. It seems to me just looking around the wall that is we actually ended up where we began the day that human rights are not about charity; they are about justice and that is very good that that seems to have struck a chord throughout the day. Thanks for the priorities here on the left hand side.

What happens now is that all of this gets fed back. If you look at this document you have on the table, it is the SNAP's first annual report, page 3 of the Standard of Living Action Group. These are the organisations who are currently involved and it is an evolving, ever-expanding circle of organisations that were involved with SNAP and it is an open, evolving process. But what has come out of today will go back to this human rights action group for them to unpack the day and recognise the priority that is have been agreed today and then that the actions for 2015 and how these actions can be measured in terms of the targets and indicators and very much to involve the rights holders in that whole process.

So, that is what will happen from a SNAP point of view. From the Human Rights Commission's point of view, we are planning very much to over the next few months begin to publish a series of papers, documents, capturing some of what is being said today in order that it can reach a wider audience for example on human rights budgeting, on human rights based approaches towards poverty, economic and social rights and how they can be given grater status within Scotland, what is the experience elsewhere when the rights have been brought into play.

So, momentum certainly is coming out of today is. The impression I have is that the positive engagement in the environment where we are in, which has got warmer, you are all relaxed now, I can see that, it has been very, very good. I would just like to finish my part here by thanking all of you. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Commission for a lot of the hard work that they put into preparing for today. I would like to thank Matt Smith, fellow commissioner, Emma, Annie, Laura, Sharon, and Dee, who you will hear more from in a couple of minutes.

Thanks Pearce institute for making this hall available. It has been the right place to do this I feel and I would like to thank Mike for the very discreet way he has gone around capturing us all on film and of course I’d like to thank Graham for fantastic quality, quantity of these graphics which will also be put to use in one way or another.

Many thanks from you all. We will end as we began, I will ask Dee to take us to the last session, asking those individuals with experience of direct poverty to come forward and reflect on the day for them. Make an announcement for what further role that will play. Thanks very much. (APPLAUSE).

DEE: Okay so, if I can get the people who gave their testimony earlier to come up and join me here. Thanks very much. David.

I am afraid we have lost a couple of people. But, we haven't lost them for this, this will now be Scotland's reference group for the right to adequate standard of living so these brilliant people that we heard from earlier, will be holding the action group to account for the commitments going forward from today, I think we have heard enough from me. I think Anne, are you going to say the last word for us here and give your verdict going forward?

ANNE GORDON: It has been a great privilege. When I was first invited to speak, my friend Meriam said, “There is a group and they want people to speak.” I love to talk. What I have come away with today is hope and let's face it, anybody who has experienced poverty, whether now or are in it at some point in their life, they need hope. You can throw a lot of money at a problem, but if you don't have hope, how do you manage from one day’s end to the next? I am encouraged that there are actually organisations working on poverty and working from a human rights framework. Of course it is a human rights issue. How can you be equal in gender or religion or anything else if you are hungry and don't have a roof over your head?

It has been great to be here today, it has been a really great privilege. I think for all of us it has been great just to know that someone is doing something. It gives great hope and it is really encouraging. Thank you. (APPLAUSE).

DEE: Thanks very much everyone, that's us.

ALAN MILLER: That's it! (APPLAUSE)