

CPA Conference on Child Poverty

Child Poverty in Austerity Times – The Rights of the Child

Mairéad McCafferty
Chief Executive

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Overview

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1. Child Poverty in NI: The Reality

‘Poverty is a war on children’

Eglantine Jebb 1923

Over 100,000 children living in poverty in NI

Impacts on all aspects of their lives, including:

- Educational outcomes
- Health outcomes
- Opportunities to access play and leisure activities
- Safety and environment

2. A Time of Austerity

Defining austerity:

‘difficult economic conditions created by government measures to reduce public expenditure’

‘a set of economic policies implemented with the aim of reducing government budget deficits’

‘a difficult economic situation caused by a government reducing the amount of money it spends’

ENOC Position Statement

Post crisis child poverty is rising disproportionately

- Disproportionate impact of austerity measures
- Basic rights are being affected
- ‘Resource constraints’ issue
- No justification for discrimination

UN Sustainable Development Goals

On the 70th anniversary of the UN, last September, the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development was adopted by the General Assembly.

➤ 17 Goals – the first and majority of which, focus on the eradication of poverty, in all its forms including the reduction of inequality.

Goals 1-10

“We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources.”

UN Agenda for Sustainable Development
September 2015

3. A Charitable Approach

‘Children in need, just like persons with disabilities, have long been the favourite ‘objects’ of charity. They have been given support, not as a matter of right, but because people have felt pity for them. This is one of the attitudes that the Convention challenges.’

Thomas Hammarburg
November 2009

4. The Rights Based Approach

‘The Convention sees the child as a subject. He or she has the right to schooling, health care and an adequate standard of living, as well as to be heard and have his or her views respected. This goes as much for the cute toddler as for the problematic teenager.’

Thomas Hammarburg
November 2009

4. The Rights Based Approach

- Empowering
- Accountability
- Non-discrimination and equality
- Participation
- Progressive realisation

5. The UNCRC

The most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child.

Art 4:

‘...With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, State parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources...’

5. The UNCRC

Art 26:

1. States Parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law.

2. The benefits should, where appropriate, be granted, taking into account the resources and the circumstances of the child and persons having responsibility for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other consideration relevant to an application for benefits made by or on behalf of the child.

5. The UNCRC

Art 27:

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
2. The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.
3. States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing...

5. The UNCRC

Relevant here:

Draft General Comment 19 on Children's Budgeting which

... seeks to provide States with a framework for respecting, promoting, protecting and fulfilling the Convention in relation to public spending.

Also the link between Art' 4 of the Convention and public spending and:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 2.1)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (article 2.1), and
- Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (article 4.2).

6. The Children's Services Co-operation Act

- Outline purpose: improving the wellbeing of C&YP
- Defines well-being:
 - (a) physical and mental health;
 - (b) the enjoyment of play and leisure;
 - (c) learning and achievement;
 - (d) living in safety and with stability;
 - (e) economic and environmental well-being;**
 - (f) the making by them of a positive contribution to society;
 - (g) living in a society which respects their rights;
 - (h) living in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share that characteristic.

6. The Children's Services Co-operation Act

Requires:

- that, when determining the meaning of 'well-being', regard is given to relevant provisions of UNCRC;
- every children's authority to co-operate with other children's authorities and with children's services providers to contribute to the well-being of children;
- publication of the **Children and Young Person's Strategy** outlining:
 - actions to improve well-being of C&YP;
 - monitoring and reporting on progress; and
 - provides for the pooling of funds and sharing of staff, goods, services, accommodation or other resources.

7. NICCY's work on Child Poverty

- ❖ UK State Party examination by CommRC (today!)
- ❖ Prioritised by all 4 UK Children's Commissioners

Key calls:

- Prioritise the eradication of child poverty through allocation to 'the maximum extent of available resources'
- Ensure children's rights to social security and an adequate standard of living are not eroded by welfare cuts.
- Ensure benefit sanctions are not applied to families with children.

7. NICCY's Work on Child Poverty

Key specific actions:

- Raising awareness of child poverty in NI;
- Advising Government on the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy;
- Advocating for schools to become 'poverty free' – tackling the costs of education, and subsequent exclusions;

Further Actions:

- Advising Government on the CYP Strategy – the Executive 'Action Plan' for Children [- GC No. 5] – and its obligations to deliver
- Promoting 'rights based outcomes' as fundamental to making the difference necessary in the lives of our Children and Young People.
- Monitoring & challenging Govt and keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services – again in line with NICCY's legislative remit.

Child Poverty

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.”

Mahatma Gandhi

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity, it is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”

Nelson Mandela