**Food Security: Are Food Charity and ‘Corporate welfare’ Schemes Undermining the Right to Food?**

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**Abstract**

Olivier de Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur for Food (2008–2014) argued that state assistance is fundamentally different from charity based approaches. In 2013 he said:

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

Of course hunger is emotive whether in Hebrew with the associations with famine (raab) or the cultural memory of the Irish and the links with famine. There is a desire to tackle the problem by providing food as a ‘gift’. Yet with food insecurity this success hides a downside which is what have been termed ‘*successful failures’*. Food aid charities have been successful in highlighting the problem, providing a response, tackling immediate hunger and for the growth in the sector; the food aid/charity sector has grown so large in many instances researchers refer to it alongside hospitality and retail as another food supply chain. But they can be regarded as but failures as they cannot tackle the underpinning causes of food insecurity and failures as they allow governments to point to action.

Food charity and aid does not and cannot tackle the underlying problems of food insecurity, which are structural. The hidden costs can be broken into two broad categories: the first is the that the link between poverty, hunger and diet related non communicable diseases is broken in favour of siloed policies; the second is that the responsibility for welfare can be disavowed by the state as the charity sector is providing a response. This can hasten the flight away from food welfare by allowing governments not to tackle the social, economic and cultural determinants of food poverty.