

## Hunger is/is not a problem for families in New Zealand

New Zealanders who are not affected by poverty and hunger may have contrasting beliefs towards this issue than people who have experienced it. Many New Zealanders find it hard to believe anyone in this country could have real problems getting enough healthy food to eat due to our community, which is rich in supply in terms of food and support. This is supported by statistics of 'approximately 15% of New Zealanders are unaware that hunger is a problem in New Zealand'. The ones that believe hunger is a problem often blame families for poor budgeting, bad planning, foolish buying habits, ignorance about healthy food, not knowing how to cook or garden, sheer carelessness and failing to get help from a food bank. These are all assumptions or misconceptions; however some of the underlying factors of why some of the New Zealand population do not believe that hunger is a problem are relevant to the issue. 1

The Hunger Project investors state that over one quarter of the New Zealand population thinks it is possible for anyone to feed a family well without spending much. This may be caused by location where members of our community are unaware of the difficulties from people living on the other side of New Zealand or in certain areas. This does not mean that every single family in an area has problems with hunger; it means that in certain areas, house rents and prices are lower than others, making it easier for some families to afford food (1). 2

Income (poor budgeting) may be out of the families reach. If a family has children, then school fees and costs of transport to get to school are all factors that are inevitable (3). A total of costs for a week related to school including activities, school fees or donations, uniform, lunches, transport etc can add up to \$25 per child. This amount may not seem like a large portion of money, but if the family has more than one child and if the parents are on a minimum wage of \$13.75 per hour, then one child's school related funds of \$25 is equivalent to nearly a quarter of a day's wages of one parent (\$110)... 3

With a lack of education, individuals have fewer qualifications which is why they often only receive the minimum wage. A lack of education may also mean individuals lack basic skills for cooking or knowledge of what is nutritious food. This could be reflected in someone buying a bottle of coke (high in sugar) instead of drinking water from the tap which is cost free and beneficial for your body – cleanses and hydrates. 4

Not having cooking skills may mean a family is spending more money buying takeaways. An average pizza costs \$10 so a family of four's dinner may be \$30 if they buy three pizzas. These are high in saturated fat and carry fewer nutrients than fresh ingredients. Making their own meal like a pizza could cost less than this – Countdown supermarket provides ideas for cheap meals for families. Their campaign is called 'Feed four for \$15'. (4) Their meal ideas include stir fries... 5

Having a low income can mean that even with cooking lessons, a family affected by low income and hunger may not have the needed equipment or may lack the basic ingredients such as flavourings and seasonings... 6

Hunger within families does exist but does not have one particular cause; it is the result of many contributing factors or determinants. For example, a large family may choose a rural location as housing is cheaper; however, this means that more money is needed for 7

transport for education, getting to work, accessing food and other necessities. Food is one of the areas where families tend to cut back. Some helping agencies see this as a problem of 'poor budgeting patterns – money for food always gets reduced.' (5) Some could argue that this is not poor budgeting, but merely a choice of priorities...