

Institution: University of the West of Scotland		
Unit of Assessment: 20: Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Building a more sustainable and equitable society: The UWS-Oxfam Scotland Partnership		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Ms Maria Feeney	Lecturer	1993 - 2016
Prof Chik Collins	Professor	2004 - 2019
Dr Darryl Gunson	Senior Lecturer	1994 - 2020
Dr Lawrence Nuttall	Senior Lecturer	2004 - 2020
Dr Hartwig Pautz	Lecturer	2014 - 2020
Dr John Connolly	Senior Lecturer	2013 - 2020
Prof Mike Danson	Professor	1998 - 2012
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>The exemplary partnership between Oxfam Scotland and UWS is leading efforts for a more equitable and sustainable Scotland. UWS-Oxfam Scotland Partnership is of vital importance for addressing poverty in Scotland, enhanced further due to Oxfam's globally significant 'Sustainable Livelihoods approach' within its analysis of poverty around the world. Partnership research actioned sustained advocacy for a 'Poverty Commissioner' and substantially contributed to the creation of the Scottish Government's Poverty and Inequality Commission. The 'Decent Work' project informed policy debates in the Scottish Parliament and within the Scottish Government, and contributed to the formulation of the Fair Work Convention's 'Fair Work Framework'. The 'Austerity and Health' project contributed to public understanding and discussions of health inequalities. Partnership research has facilitated capacity building in community organisations, enabling them to improve their services for marginalised groups. Finally, mental health and social work practitioners have benefitted from Partnership research by helping them to consider more culturally-aware services.</p>		
2. Underpinning Research <p>The Partnership – benefitting from funding from, inter alia, UWS, Oxfam Scotland, ESRC, the Scottish Government, the Poverty and Inequality Commission, and NHS Scotland in addition to in-kind contributions from further academic and non-academic partners – has led research in two main areas: challenging poverty and inequality and strengthening communities. Five key projects are highlighted.</p> <p>Challenging poverty and inequality The ground-breaking seminar series <u>Whose Economy?</u>, organised by UWS and Oxfam Scotland in 2010 – bringing together researchers, representative organisations, policy-makers and people with experience of poverty – laid the Partnership's foundations and gave rise to the joint publication of fourteen research papers [3.1]. Poverty has been recognised as a continuing severe problem in Scotland and the series was thus the backbone of Oxfam's 2013 'Our Economy – Towards a New Prosperity' strategic report and bolstered the evidence underpinning the Partnership and Oxfam's sustained call for an independent Poverty Commissioner to be established by the Scottish Government to hold it to account.</p> <p>The <u>Decent Work in Scotland</u> (2015/16) project, supported by Warwick University's Institute for Employment Research, focussed on low-paid workers' views on what 'makes work decent'. It established that decent pay, job security, paid leave, a safe work environment, and a supportive manager are crucial. The project produced policy recommendations aimed at all stakeholders, but</p>		

particularly the Scottish Government [3.6], and an agenda-setting analysis [3.5] to understand how and which recommendations impacted on discourse and policy-making.

The Austerity and Health project (2015/16), involving NHS Health Scotland, the University of Glasgow, and Community Development Scotland, underlined the need for an improved understanding of the consequences of the unequal distributions of wealth and income on health. The project illustrated that those living in deprived areas have a nuanced understanding of what influences health inequalities [3.4].

Strengthening communities

The Partnership provided crucial support to the women's support centre, Tea in the Pot, by conducting the project Tea in the Pot: A 'Great Good Place' in Govan? (2013/14). This research evidenced the key role of the centre in creating a supportive community for vulnerable working-class women (e.g., decrease of 1,835 in drop-in visits in the first year between April 2013 and March 2014). It also found that grassroots voluntary organisations are critical informal spaces for women on low incomes, that they offer a vital and cost-effective public service to them, and that they can generate best practice specifically around mental health support [3.2].

The project Belief in 'Spirit Possession': An Obstacle to Muslim Women Accessing Mental Health Services? (2013 to 2019), was conducted with an award-winning organisation, AMINA, a resource centre known for its pioneering and responsive approach to addressing key issues and needs of Muslim women. Asked to help AMINA understand the rise of helpline calls about 'spirit possession', the researchers found that there was strong belief among Muslim women that 'spirits' cause mental illness and, as such, a more culturally-aware provision of mental health services is essential [3.3].

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Danson, M., Trebeck, K., (eds, 2011) *Whose Economy? Seminar Papers. The Complete Series 2010-2011*. Oxfam Discussion Papers. <http://uwsoxfampartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Whose-Economy-Seminar-papers-complete-series.pdf> [accessed 26/3/2021]
- 3.2 Feeney, M., (2018) *Tea in the Pot, 'Third Place' or 'Social Prescription'? Exploring the positive impact on mental health of a voluntary women's group in Glasgow*. In: L. McGrath and P. Reavey, ed., *The Handbook of Mental Health and Space. Community and Clinical Applications*. London: Routledge: 250-262. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/tea-pot-third-place-social-prescription-maria-feeney/e/10.4324/9781315620312-16>
- 3.3 Gunson, D., Nuttall, L., Akhtar, S., Khan, A., Avan, G., Thomas, L., (2019) *Spiritual Beliefs and Mental Health: A Study of Muslim Women in Glasgow*. *UWS-Oxfam Partnership: Collaborative Research Reports Series, No. 4*. <http://uwsoxfampartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Spiritual-Beliefs-and-Mental-Health-Final-Report.pdf>
- 3.4 Mackenzie, M., Collins, C., Connolly, J., Doyle, M., McCartney, G. (2017) Working-class discourses of politics, policy and health: 'I don't smoke; I don't drink. The only thing wrong with me is my health'. *Policy & Politics*, 45(2): 231-249. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557316X14534640177927>
- 3.5 Pautz, H., Wright, S., Collins, C., (2019) *Decent work in Scotland, an agenda-setting analysis*. *Journal of Social Policy*, 50(1): 40-58. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279419000916>
- 3.6 Stuart, F., Pautz, H., Wright, S., (2016) *Decent Work for Scotland's Low-paid Workers: a Job to be Done*. Glasgow: Oxfam Scotland. <http://uwsoxfampartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Decent-Work-in-Scotland-Low-Paid-Workers-final-report.pdf>

4. Details of the impact

The Partnership's central purpose is to lead and direct research that helps build a more equitable and sustainable Scotland. In how it connects the strengths of a university with those of an NGO in order to achieve shared objectives, the Partnership is exemplary in the UK and beyond. Via impact-focussed research, policy recommendations are made and aimed at a variety of stakeholders, including the Scottish Government. This work has been accompanied by concerted and sustained efforts to advocate for policy change, often with further stakeholders, through Policy Forums and coordinated media work. Furthermore, the Partnership has sought to support grassroots community organisations focussed on inequality, poverty and exclusion through participatory research projects guided by these groups' needs. Via Oxfam Scotland's membership of Oxfam GB, Partnership activities have fed into advocacy beyond Scotland.

The Whose Economy? research seminar series [3.1] directly influenced the creation of the Scottish Government's Poverty and Inequality Commission, understood to be the first of its kind, in mid-2017 it underpinned Oxfam Scotland's strategic report 'Our Economy' calling for a 'Poverty Commissioner' (2013). Continuing its advocacy efforts, in June 2017 the Partnership held one of its regular Policy Forums to influence remit and form of such a future Commissioner, with high-ranking civil servants and community group representatives all attending. Stakeholder contributions at this Policy Forum influenced the civil service's thinking about shape and remit of the Commission as evidenced by testimonial letters. In 2019, the Partnership and the Commission hosted a Policy Forum to help the Commission shape its advice to the Government. The Commission's response to the Scottish 2019/20 Budget contains the Partnership's summary of the Policy Forum in full and states that "the evidence from this event is brought together in this report with the Commission's other analysis to help inform the assessment on the extent to which this is a Budget which tackles poverty and inequality" [5.1-5.3].

The Decent Work in Scotland project (2015/16) [3.5, 3.6] steered both public and policy debates on this vital issue and was timed to do so ahead of the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections. Members of the Scottish Government's Fair Work Convention attended a March 2015 Policy Forum which shaped their views, and one member was on the project's steering group. The Convention used the project's preliminary March 2016 report to build its 'Fair Work Framework', as stated in a testimonial [5.4]. As stated in a further testimonial [5.5], the Policy Forum influenced the shape of the Inquiry into Work, Wages and Wellbeing in the Scottish Labour Market, undertaken by the Parliament's Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee in 2015. In 2016, the Partnership's report and related media activities led to a public discussion evidenced by newspaper reporting and references in parliamentary debates, and by the launch of the final report at the Scottish Parliament in September 2016 with the Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work in attendance and responding to the report's findings and recommendations.

The Partnership directly assisted the community organisation Tea in the Pot by providing research-based evidence of the effectiveness of its services for socially and economically marginalised working-class women [3.2]. In 2015, this evidence was used by the group to support funding applications and ultimately ensured its continued existence. Partnership research also highlighted what makes Tea in the Pot successful and thus illustrated best-practice evidence to other local community groups [5.7].

The pathways to impact for the Austerity and Health (2015/16) [3.4] project included briefing representatives from national government agencies and community organisations via a Partnership Policy Forum at which awareness of the causes and consequences of de-industrialisation and its links to health inequalities were recognised. The beneficiaries of this research were public health leaders and Scottish Government officials as the research constituted a core part of NHS Health Scotland's inequalities agenda in relation to addressing the structural causes of health inequalities [5.8].

The Partnership's work, in 2019/20 [3.3], enhanced AMINA's understanding of how belief in 'spirit possession' can impact on the mental health of Muslim women in Glasgow and provided it with evidence for promoting awareness of mental health issues in the Muslim community – for example:

through the inclusion of the topic in its regular mental health awareness workshops and for lobbying for more culturally-aware mental health services [5.9]. The research has helped mental health practitioners, in that researchers delivered input to Glasgow City Council's Mental Health Officer Forum, as evidenced in a testimonial letter [5.10]. The research outcomes inspired the creation of a pioneering artistic sound installation, at the internationally renowned Tramway Glasgow (July, 2019), and this attracted a diverse audience – including Muslim women – and contributed to wider awareness of the issue.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

'Whose Economy?' and the Scottish Inequality and Poverty Commission :

5.1 Testimonial from the Scottish Government

5.2 Testimonial from the Poverty and Inequality Commission

5.3 Poverty and Inequality Commission. (2019) Response to the Scottish Budget 2019-20. Online from <https://povertyinequality.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Poverty-and-Inequality-Commissions-response-to-the-Scottish-Budget.pdf>. [accessed 23/03/2020]

Decent Work in Scotland

5.4 Testimonial from the Fair Work Convention

5.5 Testimonial from the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, SPICe

5.6 Testimonial from the Citizens Advice Scotland

Tea in the Pot

5.7 Testimonial from Tea in the Pot

Austerity and Health

5.8 Testimonial from NHS Health Scotland

AMINA

5.9 Testimonial from AMINA

5.10 Testimonial from Glasgow City Council Mental Health Officer Forum