**Speak Up-Kōrerotia**

**Community-based food initiatives**

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**Sally**

E ngā mana,

E ngā reo,

E ngā hau e whā

Tēnā koutou katoa

Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka, Speak Up-Kōrerotia.

Tune in as our guests ‘speak up’, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and

opinions and may you also be inspired to speak up when the moment is right.

Kia ora koutou. This is Speak Up-Kōrerotia. Ko Sally Carlton tēnei. Today we’re going to be talking about community-based food initiatives. Now, this is a really big topic; there are all kinds of community-based food initiatives. We’ve got kai rescue, food hubs, soup kitchens, mahinga kai, community gardens… the list really goes on. They span a very, very vast spectrum, right from initiatives which try to implement change at the start of the food cycle – so people encouraging growing or gathering your own food – to initiatives which try to make it easier for all people to access affordable, good quality and locally produced kai, through to initiatives right at the other end of the spectrum which rescue food which would otherwise go to waste to get it out of landfill and to people in need. I guess today we’ll talk about initiatives across the spectrum, introducing us to different reasons for them, but also the different outcomes and benefits from them – and there will be a lot, I’m sure. I think what else we’ll find, though, is that even though these initiatives are very different, at their heart, they seek to create a more socially and ecologically just world.

So. ko wai koutou? Who are you? What's your mahi? What brought you to this place? What drives you? It would be really great to hear from each of you a little bit about yourselves and the work that you do. Gemma, how about we start with you? Sure.

**Gemma**

Perfect. Thank you. My name’s Gemma. I’m originally from the UK, here in Christchurch for a visiting Erskine Fellowship at the University of Canterbury so I’ve been here for this semester, since August, primarily working in the Faculty of Health, working across public health, health systems and exercise physiology with nutrition kind of thrown in. But my background in terms of research from the UK is primarily looking at food systems, public health, nutrition and kind of the conditions and complexities that relate to that: food insecurity, obesity, struggles accessing benefits and welfare. And then today, I’m primarily going to be talking about one of the research projects I’ve been working on most recently, which is looking at food hubs – so that’s anything from social supermarkets, community gardens, community cafes and everything in between – looking at the impacts that they have in the community, so looking at the health impacts, looking at the economic, social sustainability, community development aspects of these organisations. And also talking about a toolkit that we produced with the organisations to better support them to evaluate their work, communicate that to policymakers and funders and support their communities more sustainably into the future. So it’s great to be here today, I’m looking forward to this conversation. Thanks for having me.

**Sally**

Thanks, Gemma. Luisa, how about we hear from you?

**Luisa**

Kia ora koutou. Ko Luisa tōku ingoa. Nō Ingarangi ahau. Kei Whakatū ahau e noho ana. Ko te Kaiwhakahaere o Kai Rescue me Hāpori ahau. So I work for Nelson Environment Centre in the role of coordinating our Kai Rescue program, which collects surplus food from supermarkets, from producers, from wholesalers, from many, many places, and redistribute that to the community. And I’m also responsible for organising parts of our Hāpori programme, which is a subscription fruit and veg box, locally grown produce, which is run by local growers and is open to anyone to kind of sign up to on a weekly basis. So those our kind of the initiatives in the food space as part of Nelson Environment Centre. But the kaupapa of the Nelson Environment Centre is actually really broad and we have other programmes as well, but this is just the kind of food side of things. And in terms of the spaces that we're moving, the kai rescue program is very different to what Hāpori offers; kai rescue is at the very, very end of that chain of how food is produced, consumed, sold, in the community and we are sitting between a dysfunctionality in the food production system and a dysfunctionality in our social space, where we have a large number of people in our community that are food insecure and can’t afford to feed themselves well with the current cost of living and many other factors. Whereas Hāpori is something which is not in the kind of remedial space, as it were, dealing with with two slightly dysfunctional aspects of the system, but Hāpori is trying to promote and support our local growers and promote more food resilience and make things accessible for really great quality produce. It's kind of a bit of information on our kaupapa.

**Sally**

Is Hāpori almost like a social enterprise?

**Luisa**

Not exactly, but it wouldn’t be wrong to kind of put it in that in that bracket. Yeah. Yeah. It’s run by Nelson Environment Centre, not for profit, and we have volunteer involvement with that. And we also have local grocers that work with us to select the produce each week and send it out. And so the price of those boxes goes back to paying for the goods and paying the suppliers. In between, we get some funding to help fund the program, but it's not for profit.

**Sally**Thanks. Great. Thank you very much. And Christine, our final guest?

**Christine**

Kia ora koutou katoa. He uri ahau nō Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungungu me Ngāi Tuhoe, engari a noho ana ahau ki Ōtautahi. So my name's Christina McKerchar, and I live here in Christchurch although in terms of my whakapapa, it’s to the east coast of the North Island. And I am an academic at the University of Otago based in Christchurch and I teach in public health Hauora Māori, and that is where my research has always been. I’ve got a background in human nutrition because my mum was a Māori dietician and so I've always been interested in kai and, I guess, how people can eat healthy kai. And so that's how I became interested in access to kai and the wider food system and that's where a lot of my research has has focussed. So I’m interested both in policy but also interested in how that policy translates at local levels in our Māori communities.

**Sally**

Really cool. And I saw – in the news, actually – that you are involved in a project around mahinga kai, particularly after the storms up north.

**Christina**

Yeah, we were really lucky. I worked with another Ngāti Porou researcher and we applied for funding really so we could do some research based where we both whakapapa to on the east coast of the North Island, looking at those kai systems that are in those remote communities on the east coast of the North Island, the impacts of the cyclone on that for people and on people's mental health, and I guess how the East Coast can work towards greater food resilience rather than being cut off all the time. You know, there was a period during the cyclones where, if I wanted to get back to either of my marae, I would not have been able to I would have had to take a helicopter and, you know, relations being cut off because – well, not the supermarket, but the one food store in your little town – closes down. So the impact of climate change is very real.

**Sally**

I think even in your introductions to yourselves and your work, we've already touched on, I think a lot of the themes that are probably going to come through. We have touched on the social, the environmental, the economic, systems that sort of underpin food and food resilience and food systems. We’re going to have our first break and first waiata.

**Christina**

I always like the Maisey Rika one, ‘Kāi Manu’ – it’s all about the environment and sustainability and that kind of thing.

**SONG - Maisey Rika, ‘Kāi Manu’**

**Sally**

This is Speak Up-Kōrerotia, and we’re talking about community-based food initiatives. We've just had a great song from Maisey Rika and it would be great now to think about some of the different food initiatives that you’re involved in. What is it that prompts these projects to be set up? What exactly are they? And also, what are the benefits or the outcomes that we’re seeing at the end of them? Feel free to jump in and ask questions of each other as well, because you’re all coming from quite different spots along this this food system chain that we talked about at the beginning but there’ll be lots of parallels, I’m sure.

**Luisa**

I’m happy to add to your question about what are some of the benefits and what we actually see in some of the outcomes. Speaking about what Kai Rescue does, I can say that there's a few layers to our impacts. The first and kind of most obvious is food doesn’t get wasted because we’re rescuing anywhere between three-and-a-half to five tonnes of food per week – so there’s an environmental impact to that, in saving that from landfill.

And then there’s the social impact of people that are struggling in vulnerable positions, don’t have food security, kai being offered to them. So that's the first layer. But I would say that the second layer is also about what we do in the community overall; we have around 45 volunteers that are brought together through our programme and we also have about 55 recipient organisations, they are the organisations that pick up the kai from us and then distribute it to their networks. So we’re a hub in creating community not only through our volunteers, but also through all of the organisations that are connected. Yeah, I’d say that’s kind of like a second layer of our impact.

We’re able to acknowledge those positive results and be proud of them, pleased with them, but we also acknowledge that we would rather not be here doing this job. In an ideal world, this project wouldn't exist because we wouldn’t be seeing massive food waste and we wouldn’t be seeing such a huge need in the community.

**Gemma**

Well, I can jump in on that, I think. The research that we’ve primarily been doing is UK base but I think, having been in New Zealand for the past three months, I’ve seen a lot of crossover and I’ve spoken to and worked with community gardens and community cafes. But in terms of the UK, the project we were doing was looking at food hubs – and we were talking about food hubs broadly, so as I mentioned: community cafes, community gardens, social supermarkets, redistribution centres and everything in between – and these organisations, I think as you were mentioning, they perform lots of different activities. They may redistribute food, that surplus; they may offer food aid, especially, for example, emergency food aid like a food bank; or walk-in, more of a kind of social supermarket food pantry model where people become members and access food for their family for the week at a more affordable cost. But in terms of the impacts that these organisations have, as the Luisa mentioned, they’re very broad and it can be anything from enabling people to access food that’s affordable or free and helping to reduce food waste, but also helping to produce that more direct link between producers and consumers, which in turn can help to reduce the food miles that food needs to be transported. Also helping local small businesses to reach markets, building that kind of social capital and enhancing the community itself. And also looking at the health and wellbeing of communities by accessing food that’s more affordable and hopefully more local. They are able then to focus on other things, not worry about where they’re getting food from, and also making sure that they’re able to access that food in a way that’s kind of socially and culturally appropriate. But kind of to summarise those impacts, looking at sustainability, the local economy, the local food system – strengthening that and also improving wellbeing. So I think there’s pretty broad impacts of these organisations and I think you can then go down into that and drill into that a lot more. Through this conversation, we can look at that in more detail.

**Christina**

Kia ora. To add to the conversation about food hubs: I’m involved in a project at the moment – and it’s actually up in Wellington and it’s with the urban marae in Wellington, a maata waka marae, so the people from that area are not necessarily mana whenua to Wellington – they do a lot of work with the community and they’ve identified, obviously, the impacts of Covid and the cost of living crisis, many whānau are unable to access food and lots of people and emergency housing, it's kind of tricky to grow gardens when you’re in motels. And so they’ve done a lot of work, they’ve got a wonderful food hub in Wainuiomata where it took them about four years to get set up. The people there were quite critical of the fact that, say for example, alcohol outlets will take a week to get approval but their food hub took, you know, four years.

And they’re going growing māra kai gardens for their pātaka kai, their pantries, and they’re kind of really into re-colonising the urban spaces of Wainuiomata so that they have land to go garden and doing things like growing a lot of seeds so that they can give seedlings out to their community members to try and sort of get that cycle going and also, you know, employ people. It is awesome to see it, but the hardest thing they are dealing with is funding because measuring impact is difficult – so I'm super interested in the work that Gemma is doing because I think at the moment things are being measured quite narrowly rather than broadly in terms of social impact. And so I am involved in supporting that work and it’s been really interesting.

But I am mindful that I did some earlier work, some focus groups with Māori about how people view sustainable food, and we also did focus groups with non-Māori and what was really interesting was that even though there is agreement in terms of what sustainable food means, Māori would also go, “Well, what about Haumia [god of uncultivated food]? What about Rongo [god of cultivated food]? Like, why are we only talking about food that is grown or food that is available in jobs? Why aren’t we talking about the broader environment where Māori traditionally got food from?” And and so there are also projects that are looking at restoring the native bush so that you can go and gather that bush kai. I found out about a really amazing project up in Gisborne where they're trying to pest trap so that you can bring back the whio, the blue duck. But also within that trapping you’re enabling the bush kai that normally would get eaten by by some of our pest animals so you’re having access to things like kareao, which is supplejack, which is a really, really old, old, old food that, you know, people would have eaten 300 years ago. And also, people are really interested in trying to restore the moana and the rivers so you can still gather your kai moana or you can go to your river or your lake and still get things like eel and it's not going to be completely and utterly polluted. And so I've been finding out about some of those projects that many, many, many people are doing, especially down here in Christchurch, there’s all these amazing making mahinga kai restoration projects which are using that really broad definition of where we get our food from. It's super interesting. There's heaps happening, it’s awesome.

**Luisa**

Kia ora, Christina, I’ve got a thought in response to what you said about those projects, which is that I think the step that you described that is happening from having hubs of food resilience to looking at the wider environment is essentially the step between food resilience to food sovereignty. And that’s something which, Gemma, I’m sure you can you can speak a lot more to. But in terms of the ends of the scale that we’re operating in our project, when we get asked about what we’d like to see as kind of solutions or improvements in the space, I actually believe that our end of the operation is not the answer and that actually most of the answers happen way, way earlier in the food sovereignty situation and that ultimately food sovereignty is a better goal than just food resilience or a kind of a low level, immediate emergency food security option.

**Gemma**

Yeah, I definitely agree with that. So you’re saying that like it would be nice for organisations not to be here, but I do think there are some organisations that are doing great work in in that space so that they’re supporting communities to have a better understanding of what good food is, how to grow food. I mean, I think also, in the UK especially, people are so far removed from where food is grown and what food looks like and how it’s grown, that there’s a big need to support people to understand, this is how carrots are grown or this is how tomatoes are grown or whatever. And so these organisations are helping to almost move to that food sovereignty aspect, but I think we’re so far away from it at the moment that there’s a lot of work to be done.

So it’s great to hear that work is already happening in Christchurch and New Zealand around that and around bringing people back to their food origins, I suppose, in that food sovereignty, and it’s great to hear that that is possible and I think there is work happening where there’s community gardens and there’s like steps being taken to move away from the emergency food aid like redistribution, which is needed now because the welfare state and the benefits system isn’t meeting the needs of communities. But I think it’s also great to see that these community gardens and kind of that move towards where food is grown is happening and it’s just… I think it’s going to have to happen in parallel until we get to a point where the wider food system is less broken and we can all access food that is grown and is accessible in all kind of communities.

**Luisa**

I’ve got another sort of question off the back of that. The shift towards more development of food sovereignty is something which depends on organisations helping to drive that change – as you've pointed out, Gemma, there’s a lot of work to be done there, it’s not just a kind of, let’s just focus on this now; there has to be a whole tide change with that – so it depends partially on the organisations, it depends on bigger systems, things about, you know, government funding and political direction. But also a huge part of that is people's attitudes and habits, and I think that one of the challenges that is present – whether it’s, you know, out there or in the UK – is that, as you said, Gemma, we’ve become so detached from most of our food system that there's not only a realigning, but there’s a whole mindset shift that needs to happen in our lifestyles. And I was curious to know if both of you have any comments to make about the ways in which that happens, who drives that change and how it can also be culturally sensitive and not an imposition of government organisations that believe that they know what is better for people’s wellbeing and therefore are trying to induce a mindset change.

**Christina**

Kia ora, Luisa, that's a really interesting question. There was a wonderful resource written by Hana Burgess and Haylee Koroi and it’s on the Toi Tangata website and it’s called *Inter-generational intimacies A whakapapa conceptualisation of kai* – which sounds like a really long title! And they were trying to think: if we started thinking about this from a kaupapa Māori point of view, what might we say about kai, and then our connection to it through whakapapa? – you know, foods like kūmara have an ancestry to them that are in Māori narratives. And so it was trying to remember that and think about that.

There's some really interesting things there, so I think for Māori people in this particular kaupapa, often it’s about reconnecting with that existing knowledge. And there are some amazing stories. I remember talking to somebody who was growing varieties of kūmara in Rotorua and getting the Rotorua Boys High involved in the particular varieties of kūmara growing, they were growing ones that were, you know, really old, kūmara particularly suited to the area of Te Arawa where, you know, that they’d had for around 400 years, it was those old seeds. So they had a local connection to that; kūmara was really important for them.

And then the other part of what Haylee and Hana thought about was coloniality in relation to our thinking about food and nutrition. And they had a bit to say about that, the way in which colonial ways of thinking had impacted on people's relation to food. I just found reading their work really, really interesting because I think part of the disconnection that we have today is because food is seen as a commodity to be grown so that it can be exported and land has an economic value and food has an economic value and and people become losers in that particular system. From an academic point of view, reading their work was quite thought-provoking for me.

**Gemma**

I think also that the conversations that you are touching on that are very relevant to too many different cultures and people from different ethnicities and different ethnic backgrounds, because – I mean, again, from the UK perspective, but I’m sure it relates here as well – people from all over the world are trying to access foods that they know, that mean something, socially and culturally acceptable. And especially and when they’re accessing food from a food bank or a social supermarket, often that cultural aspect is lost. And so to them, whilst it may be nutritionally appropriate, it's not socially and culturally appropriate, which means everything to do with that food, whilst it’s edible, doesn’t meet their needs. So arguably that is not a sustainable approach and so work is needed to move move away from that.

And I think why this question started was what could be done? Like what could we do, to to make that shift happen or to at least enable some of these organisations to move to a more kind of culturally and socially and nutritionally appropriate function? And I think the government does have a role to play: government departments and agencies and funders can do more to support these organisations to become more sustainable, providing a more sustainable source of income, for example, or enabling them to apply for funding that is more extended so that these organisations can provide that emergency food but also do the work needed to become more sustainable. So looking at delivering more holistic solutions, looking at community wellbeing, community development, cultural and social aspects, and enabling that food system in that local context to become stronger, more resilient, and also consider that need that people have to have connection to that food. So growing education, the historical aspects and the cultural importance of that.

But as well as the government, I think food hubs and organisations themselves have a role to play in pulling together that evidence of their impact – which I realise relies on having the resource to do that – but if they’re able to kind of make a compelling case to highlight their impacts on food security, planetary and human health, justice, sustainability and inclusive growth and, and everything in between, then potentially that funding and that move to a more sustainable approach will be more likely given by governments. So I think there’s a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation, but I think we need both, like a ground-up and a top-down approach. Things need to happen to enable organisations and communities to work together to shift in a way that’s more sustainable and meets the needs of the people that this food is there to support and also ensure that that community and cultural aspects are not lost.

**Christina**

Kia ora. At the moment, I’m really interested in those community-led, iwi-led solutions because I’m a bit – how can I say this? – I just don’t know if our current government are viewing food through a food sovereignty lens. I’m so interested in some of the work that our community groups are doing in spite of the government rather than because of the government. And an example of that is what happened with the Food in Schools programme, Ka ora, ka ako. A really cool program started in response to Covid and in response to child poverty and those indicators. And actually, you know, we’ve got good evidence from the Growing up in New Zealand study, longitudinal study done in Auckland, and those children – I can’t remember how many they’ve got in the cohort, it might have been 5000 children born in Auckland – they’re around 13, 14 years old now and following them. And that study looked at food security: Are the kids having enough to eat? And obviously quite a lot of that cohort are not. And what we know is the Food in Schools programme was reaching about a quarter of the people that it might’ve needed to from that particular cohort – so based on the evidence, those researchers said, actually, you need to increase the amount of schools that are getting the Food in Schools programme.

And so just that current decision of the government in terms of who is provisioning – I think that’s been a loss for our local food sovereignty because say, for example, in some of those more isolated areas, it was local suppliers working really hard to supply the school and they were being funded to do that from the government. You know, I read on Radio New Zealand there was a Māori woman in Wanganui with her large māra supplying a school – so nice, local food for the kids and they can have feedback on the menu and things like that – and now it’s all gone to one national provider, you know, so you can get $3 per head. Part of me cried, actually, when I learnt that, because I think it’s a step backwards for food sovereignty.

So I do think how the government is thinking and defining this is really important. And if they’re only thinking about food from a really narrow “Are kids getting enough protein?” lens, it’s narrow and it's not thinking more broadly about who is supplying that food? Where’s that food come from? How can we make sure Ngāta College in Ruatoria gets local food? Or are we just going to make it in Auckland, put it on trucks? So I think definitions are important – that’s where I was getting to with that particular little rant.

**Luisa**

Yes. Christina, I really think that you highlighted something really relevant there. We’re talking about the need for government policy to support food sovereignty, but the intentions of providing food security and, you know, coming with very positive intentions to support vulnerable families, can then look like in some cases what you're talking about removing some of that local local connectivity and by a government program coming in with a national perspective, the centralisation of things can override what we’re ultimately seeking, which is very, very local resilience and food sovereignty on a local level. And I think it's a massive challenge to the government to look across the breadth of the entire country and be able to facilitate that to grow and look different in many different places. Food sovereignty will look slightly different everywhere as it’s a neighbourhood-level thing, but food to be grown in the neighbourhood, shared in the neighbourhood.

Something that I wanted to, again, ask you is that, we’ve spoken about the need for government policy to provide more funding and structure support to food sovereignty and the need for grassroots organisations, neighbourhoods, to be getting into that space as well. Something that we haven’t touched on, is where do we see the role of businesses and supermarkets because the supermarket lobby is huge. The influence they have in terms of the weight of their businesses as an employer and as an economic player in the country is massive, and we know that they operate for profit. And I think that there’s a lot of control and power that they have over the way our food system works and I think that their engagement, both with the government and the policy and the grassroots level of food sovereignty, is not very clear and is quite a sticky question.

From a food rescue perspective, I can absolutely put my hands up and say I respect the efforts that most supermarket chains are making to sell more and more of their produce to avoid waste. That is increasing; we’ve seen support there. But that’s quite a different question from what we’re actually talking about with food sovereignty and the role of supermarkets in our overall food system.

**Gemma**

I think, going to that question as well, it’s like, part of the reason we have so much food waste is because there’s so much choice. It’s like, are we, as a community, willing to let the supermarkets reduce the choice? Who has that choice to make in terms of who can control what supermarkets sell? Because arguably, as you said, in a free market, they can they can arguably do what they like within remit of their policies and the kind of governance structures that they are operating in. But I think, yeah, part of the food waste issue is to do with choice, and having less choice would help to reduce the amount of food waste that exists.

And I think there’s also issues around government legislation as well to do with like ‘Best before’ dates and labels in general, and I think that governments also have a role to play in that space. So I think if we move away from the ‘Best before’ sell-by dates and move towards an approach where we are more consciously aware of what food looks like when it is edible and when it’s not edible – and supermarkets can offer support with that – then I think that would help to move away from the food waste issues in terms of supermarkets and their role in food sovereignty. I think there is a lot of work to be done, and I think part of that is working more closely with local suppliers, but in a lot of places there are local suppliers of all foods. So like, you know, you might be able to access flour or rice or whatever it might be in that particular context, but then accessing local fruit and vegetables or local meats or local things like that is harder. But also, I guess, with that, it’s moving towards more frozen food, more seasonal foods – which I have noticed here a lot more: seasonal foods change in price, whereas in the UK it’s always the same so we don’t have any concept of seasonally what's appropriate to be eating in March or in December or whatever month it might be. So I think that, as well as the food waste, choice and labelling, there’s also kind of seasonality of food and potentially more scope there to work with local suppliers, if we’re looking at that approach.

**Christina**

What supermarkets are doing is really, really important because they’re such an enormous player in the food industry – so a little change that a supermarket will do could potentially have a huge impact. If all of Foodstuffs and all of Progressive decide to, you know, say, for example, when they decided not to have plastic bags, enormous impact just because it’s so, so big. Countdown – although they’ve changed the name now, haven't they? Woolworths – I think they did think quite carefully about sustainability and did have a bit of a strategy there and you know, should be commended for that work. I think in New Zealand they are just so powerful because there are only two of them and I do know they work a lot to try and reduce the food waste. But they also sell a lot of Coke in plastic bottles as well.

**Gemma**

I think you're right in terms of like, yes, we should be commending supermarkets, but arguably they’re a business and, like, should it be their responsibility to promote health? Like, is it really up to them to do it? And also relying on organisations like supermarkets or other food manufacturers or restaurants to voluntarily change their approaches in their policies to something that’s more healthy, promoting more affordable, more sustainable, isn't necessarily going to work. Research I’ve been doing recently looks at kind of public-private partnerships and voluntary initiatives and whilst some things sound good, like reducing salt in own-brand products, for example, if you still continuously purchase and sell products from across all different brands, then that isn’t necessarily going to result in that widespread positive change that you’re mentioning. So I think, yes, it’s great that we see some positive things – like supermarket plastic bags, for example – I think there is a need for governments to have some level of kind of policy influence. But also communities themselves have a massive role to play in arguing for and campaigning for change, because if we keep going to supermarkets and keep buying the same things, nothing’s ever going to change. I think unless there’s a kind of, again, that bottom-up and top-down approach, there’s no reason for supermarkets to do anything different. They will just continue as is unless something drastically shifts.

**Luisa**

Well, speaking of the initiative that communities need to take, I was curious to know if either of you, Gemma or Christina, have any sense of – I might use the word hierarchy, even though I hesitate to do it – around the impact of different types of community-led food initiatives? So Gemma, you were saying that there’s so many different forms they can take, and I wondered if either of you consistently see that some forms are more impactful than others. For example, whether neighbourhood pātaka kai [food pantries] are regularly more effective in bringing positive outcomes for nutrition in communities than, say, a community cafe. I’m not supposing that that’s true, that’s just to give you the idea of what I’m thinking?

**Gemma**

So the toolkit that we produced from this research basically offers a way in which organisations can systematically evaluate their impacts across social sustainability, environment, health and economic kind of aspects in order for them to understand where their impacts are, but also to help them communicate better about what they’re doing and how they can move to a more sustainable approach. And from that work and visiting lots of different organisations of lots of different types all across the UK and speaking to organisations across the world, really, doing similar work, what has become evident is that organisations that have more kind of a social enterprise model, whereby they are also generating revenue as well as offering kind of a charitable branch of that work, are more sustainable and that enables them to be more impactful.

And also there’s a kind of co-location and collaboration of services, so where there’s like a central organisation. So for example, in the UK there’s one called the Active Wellbeing Society, which is based in Birmingham, which is a really big city in UK, and they act as almost like an anchor organisation. They undertake the funding bids, and they have the staff and resources to be able to do that, and then they give and work with small organisations that are context specific, locally based, to give them the funding, or to work with them to enable them to access funding, so that they can offer those kind of specific services in their specific locations. But then the Active Wellbeing Society has that central anchor system. They are working directly with policymakers, they are working directly with governments, and they can see that kind of bigger picture whilst also working with these small organisations to reduce that resource limitation and also ensure that work is not being necessarily replicated, but is being done in a way that is sustainable and also is funded in a way that can continue into the future. So I think that kind of organisation is really great and can help other small organisations to become more sustainable as well.

**Christina**

Kia ora, Gemma. That does sound really interesting and I would genuinely be very interested in following up because I see a lot of amazing work done by our communities, but it’s often underfunded, often relies on one champion. I think if there’s ways in which that impact could be measured so that people don’t get burnt out, that would be really brilliant. I think there are some good examples from Te Ao Māori, especially in Māori health. One of the most interesting things that the Whānau Ora policy did was it has Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, so in the South Island, for example, there’s an organisation called Te Pūtahitanga o Te Wai Pounamu, it’s got representatives from all the iwi of the South Island – the eight up in Nelson and Ngāi Tahu – so government funding goes directly to that organization but Māori are in charge of the way in which the funding is delivered through Māori providers and to Māori communities. I mean, I think in the Māori space, having a degree of Māori control and a say in where funds go to is really, really important. I mention it in this context because they’ve funded really cool food initiatives, gardening initiatives and food production, marae-based aunties making pickle kind of projects, coming from a sovereignty point of view.

**Sally**

I'm sure that we could keep chatting for another hour but we’re running out of time. So as we wind up, is there anything you'd like to say as a kind of final reflection?

**Gemma**

Just to say, I think these organisations are doing great work, I think that shouldn’t be forgotten. And I think there’s also a need to look at scaling up and out of these organisations but also scaling deep, looking at the root causes of the need to access them. And I think that’s also come up in this conversation: there’s a role of communities, organisations and the government in supporting communities to access food that they need.

**Christina**

I was involved in reviewing a document that the Public Health Advisory – I think that’s the name – did about the food system. It's on the Ministry of Health website – you won’t have heard of it because I think they kept it pretty quiet because some of the recommendations of the report were directly in opposition to current government policy. And so I do think we know, in public health, the food system is broken and there's a lot of things the government could be doing. And some of those great reports being written, great recommendations… I think we just need some political will, backed by community.

**Luisa**

Yeah, absolutely. I would say that to say we need to seize that political will and that that has to sit hand-in-hand with the community level of things developing in its own way and understanding that whilst it may be towards a similar direction, it will look different and diverse in every place. And that’s part of what we are seeking is a unity in our direction, but a diversity in the way that each type of food sovereignty manifests in its location.

**Sally**

Amazing. Thank you all so much. Tēnā koutou. Gemma, it’s been great having your kind of overall impact lens; and Christina, your knowledge of what’s going on with various Māori communities and initiatives has been great; and Luisa, that real on-the-ground perspective of the work that your organisations are doing. I think this has worked really well in terms of the three different perspectives coming together and I think we’ve done what we kind of set out to do, which was, despite the fact you’ve come from these three different points along this big spectrum of scale of initiatives, there’s just so much overlap and parallels between them and seeking for that just world that we’re all after really underpinning everything. So thank you all so much.

**Luisa**

Thank you, Sally, for bringing us together.

**Christina**

It’s been cool to meet you both.