



Annual Report 2015

Achieving the significant milestone of our 40th anniversary was among the many highlights of 2015. We hope and believe that people and communities at home and throughout the world have experienced some benefit from the solidarity and support of so many people, channelled via Afri; that has been our aim and our constant purpose over the past four decades. In doing so, we have always attempted to remain true to our core values, to plough our own furrow and to act out of conviction and principle, even when it hasn't been popular to do so.

Afri's 'message' is not an easy one, not one that tugs at the emotions or the heart strings, but one that advocates the urgent need for a radical change of direction in our world. All our work, in its many shapes and forms, is geared towards the same ambitious aims: tackling the scandal of war and militarisation and the refugee crisis that it creates; bringing an end to poverty and hunger and to our addiction to the fossil fuels that threaten our very survival and that of our planet itself.

Emanating from our aims is the range of programmes, activities and events outlined in this report. 2015, as usual, was replete with an extensive array of events all of which sought to educate, motivate, take action and raise awareness about key global-justice issues.

Among the more satisfying elements this year was the work carried out over several weeks with students at Mount Temple school in the context of the Paris Climate Conference. Extraordinary work was done through workshops, seminars, music, song-writing and graphic harvesting, resulting in the making of a powerful short film by RoJ, which sent a clear and urgent message to world leaders gathering in Paris. A similar project was undertaken with páisti in Gaelscoil Cholmcille, based on the Pete St. John song 'Waltzing on Borrowed Time'. These were inspiring experiences for all involved, which gave the lie to the idea that young people don't care about the world we live in.

Another great initiative was the Food Sovereignty Proclamation which came about after the second Food Sovereignty Assembly organised by Afri in conjunction with Food Sovereignty Ireland in Mayo, on the eve of our Famine Walk. Indeed this initiative has brought a whole new dimension to the Famine Walk, which looks at causes, consequences and similar contemporary issues related to Famine. We focus on solutions to the corporate takeover of food through promoting locally produced food, whose primary aim is to feed people not to maximise profit.

The visit of Michael Lapsley, founder of South Africa's Institute for the Healing of Memories, to Erris to facilitate a series of workshops was the fulfilment of a long-held ambition to provide support to the community there in ways beyond that already offered. It was an extremely interesting and intriguing experience for all of us who were involved, and feedback from the community seemed to justify our belief in the importance of this initiative.

Another new departure was the publication of a booklet entitled 'End the Scandal of Direct Provision' written by ITB student Sakhile Heron during her internship with Afri. The issue of refugees and those caught up in the scandalous Direct Provision system is one we plan to pursue in the coming years.

Finally, the issue of fundraising was a dominant theme throughout 2015. This becomes ever more time consuming and arduous in the difficult climate in which we operate. However, we are encouraged that we have enjoyed good success in this area over the past 40 years and plan to continue doing so into the future.

2. Development Education

2.1 International Peace Conference

Imagination and celebration were the order of the day at Afri's 22nd annual Féile Bríde gathering in Kildare. 'Occupy the Imagination' was the theme, and the new Solas Bhríde Centre was the venue. This in itself was a cause for celebration: built with the utmost attention to detail, as explained by Rita Minehan, in the teeth of the recession; a prizewinning example of a sustainable building in the heart of the Curragh. Warmth and welcome were provided in abundance by Mary Minehan, Phil O'Shea, Rita and other members of Cairde Bríde, continuing the tradition of hospitality for which Brigid was renowned.

Bruce Kent, founder of the Movement for the Abolition of War, and Colin Archer of the International Peace Bureau – both of whom have devoted most of their lives to promoting peace and, daringly, to the abolition of war – gave dynamic and thought-provoking presentations on the extent to which 'the world is over-armed and peace is underfunded'. Bruce, who is in his 8th decade, is an inspiration with his indomitable spirit, his great sense of humour and his constant commitment to the cause of peace. The essence of Bruce's presentation was that 'unless war is eliminated, the human race will be', which is why he founded the Movement for the Abolition of War. This may seem like a far-fetched idea – but so did the elimination of the slave trade when small groups of Abolitionists met in various parts of the world in the 17th century. (Of course we now have a new slave trade in the form of human trafficking but – unlike the older slave trade – at least it is generally regarded as the odious crime that it is).

The discussion then moved from anti-militarisation to food production. Emanuela Russo spoke about the urgent need to wrest control of food production from the hands of profit-driven, environmentally destructive corporations and to establish food sovereignty, defined as "the right of people to grow and consume food that is socially, culturally, ecologically and economically appropriate to local conditions." She went on to say: "the current global food system creates hunger and obesity at the same time. There are 900 million hungry people in the world and almost the same amount of obese people. One of the reasons why this is happening is that all around the world more and more food systems are controlled by big corporations and agribusinesses with the support of national governments and international institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation); these food systems regard food as a commodity and their main goal is not to feed the people but to make profit."

Salome Mbugua from Kenya outlined her work in Akidwa and spoke about the new organisation that she has co-founded called Wezesha, a Swahili word meaning Empowerment, the aim of which is to support and promote human rights for women and children in Africa on the journey towards achieving a more equal and just society.

Rose Kelly explained the meaning of 'Occupy the Imagination', and the vital role that imagination plays in bringing about change. She quoted Pablo Picasso's famous and inspiring words: "everything

you can imagine is real” and Arundhati Roy’s equally inspirational “another world is not only possible: she is on her way; on a quiet day, I can hear her breathing”.

Finally, no Féile would be complete without music, provided this year by Imogen Gunner, Rachel Duffy, RoJ, Paul O’Toole and Brian Fleming. Wonderful music, the echoes of which linger long after the final note is played.

2. 2 Famine Walk in I.T. Carlow, 12th February

On a visit in early 2014 Afri discovered, from the chaplain Martin Smith SPS, that I.T. Carlow is situated next to a famine graveyard. Arising from this, a ceremony was held later that year at which the town council was represented. This event arose almost by accident, but very well makes the link between the past and the present. In 2015 Afri developed this link further and held a ‘Famine Walk’ from I.T. Carlow to the Famine Graveyard. Walk leaders included Choctaw Gary White Deer, Fr. Martin Smith, and I.T. Carlow lecturer Niamh McCrea. We were also addressed by the Cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council, Fergal Browne, as well as Rev Olivia Williams, who lives near the site, and Sakhile Heron, an Afri intern, originally from South Africa.

Gary White Deer wrote the following report on the event:

I.T. Carlow chaplain Fr Martin Smith spoke about the profound significance of this famine graveyard, situated in the grounds of the college. He stressed the need to be silent in this sacred place, to become aware of those buried there and to embrace the reality that these were real people, as real as the students who are now attending the college, largely unaware of the extraordinary history associated with the ground on which they tread. Church of Ireland Minister Reverend Williams lives close to the graveyard, and she referred to the strong presence that can be felt there. Three- to four thousand Famine victims lie buried together in Carlow Town, many of them children. The veil is thin in such places.

The Poor Relief Extension Act 1847 empowered Guardians to grant relief at their own discretion to the aged and infirm and to widows with two or more dependent children. The Guardians were also empowered to grant food aid to able-bodied persons for limited periods... In Carlow the guardians were firmly against such measures. This attitude gave rise to the overcrowded conditions in Carlow Workhouse from late 1846.

When the potato blight hit Ireland, only the lumper variety was affected. Over one million men, women and children died because they had been forced to depend on a single crop, the lumper potato, though enough food was being exported out of Ireland to have sustained them. If ignored, such epic human trauma stays trapped within a nation’s soul.

Last February, we gathered again in Carlow Town; Afri partnered with the Carlow Institute of Technology and with Carlow County Council. A pilgrimage was made from the Institute to the cemetery, where a strong spirit was felt and a Famine memorial unveiled. Such healing acts of remembrance let us see more clearly how essential biodiversity is for human survival, that there is still enough to eat in the world and that access to food and water are basic human rights which, in solidarity, we must all work to ensure.

2.3 Food Sovereignty Assembly, Westport

Following the success of last year's Food Sovereignty Assembly, Afri, with the support of Trócaire, and in partnership with Food Sovereignty Ireland, continued our exploration of what food sovereignty means in an Irish context. A preliminary meeting was held in Dublin to discuss what is needed to make the concept of food sovereignty more comprehensible and accessible. Members of groups such as Lourdes Youth and Community Service (LYCS), Cork Food Policy, Leitrim Organic Farmers Cooperative, Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Latin America Solidarity Centre as well as two Community Supported Agriculture projects attended. The general consensus was that there was already a lot of 'invisible' food sovereignty work happening around the country and it would be good to connect different people and groups. In particular, it was agreed that it would be useful to formulate a 'proclamation' of food sovereignty which individuals and groups could sign up to, to foster a sense of solidarity – not just with those doing similar work in Ireland, but around the world.

This, then, was the aim of the Food Sovereignty Assembly, which was held, like the previous year, on the eve of the Afri Famine Walk. In 2015 it was held in Westport and began with short inputs from Maitet Ledesma, who brought a Global South perspective; Rachel Dempsey from LYCS, speaking about the importance of food education; Emanuela Russo, an Irish Farmer and part-time co-ordinator of the Nyeleni network in Ireland, and John Brennan from Leitrim Organic Farmers Cooperative. The main part of the day, facilitated by Davie Philip from Cultivate, was focused on inviting participants to discuss these key areas:-

- How our food is produced: how we farm, who farms, how we eat, what we farm, what we eat, who eats it;
- How our food is distributed: where we get our food, who controls our food supply, who buys it, who sells it, who processes it;
- How we manage our commons: who owns our land, our water, our seeds, our resources, who manages them, who benefits;
- How we shape our public policies: how are they formed, where are they formed, how do they impact on us, who benefits, who doesn't.

Key points from this discussion were 'harvested' and 'processed' into a draft Food Sovereignty Declaration which was then circulated for groups to sign. This led to the agreement of a Food sovereignty proclamation which was signed by hundreds of groups and individuals and then posted outside the Department of Agriculture in Dublin on the day of the Climate March in advance of the Paris Climate conference in November 2015. A short film was made of this action and is available on our YouTube channel (Afriireland).

2.4 Famine Walk: Food Sovereignty, Global Warming and Resisting Militarism

Many themes have been explored in the Famine Walk over the past 27 years. The Philippines was the focus of the first ever famine walk as Columban missionary, Fr. Niall O'Brien, recently released from prison, outlined the experience of living under the Marcos military dictatorship. Significantly, the Philippines was again a focus of the 2015 walk as Maitet Ledesma updated us on the current situation there, with particular reference to the devastating impacts of militarism and global warming. She also spoke, graphically, about the migrant crisis, in terms of the return of the 'coffin ships':

Today, the "coffin ships" are back. They cross the Mediterranean sea every day, bringing an exodus of Palestinians, Somalis, Syrians, Libyans, Ethiopians, Iraqis, Kurds – people fleeing for

their lives, their countries ravaged by resource grabs and ensuing proxy wars and wars of aggression; fleeing famine, their lands plundered by the 'empire in new clothes' – big business monopolies and their transnational corporations, supported by the ruling elites and military infrastructure of their countries which are at their disposal, and whose greed and hunger for ever-growing profits knows no boundaries nor respects no laws. (Maitet Ledesma, at the Afri Famine Walk 2015).

The issue of food and famine has always been a central theme of the walk, as it was this year. As nations continue to turn to war as a first resort, in many cases, food security is further threatened, global warming is intensified and corporate control of food is extended, despite the fact that small-scale producers remain the mainstay of global food supplies. Food sovereignty is the common ground on which the realities and hopes of many of these small producers meet.

Conflicts are raging in many places throughout the planet – fed largely by the military/corporate nexus in its insatiable appetite for expansion and exploitation. The unremitting aggression of Western capitalist greed has led to growing anger and resentment in many parts of the world, leading to violence which is met by further violence and to the development and deployment of ever more cruel and inhumane weaponry, a burgeoning growth in what is euphemistically titled the 'security industry'.

Then, out of the darkness a light shines! Chelsea Manning sees from the inside the horror of war and the extent of the lies used to justify it, and, taking her courage in her hands, exposes the truth to the world. For her troubles she is called a traitor and given a sentence of 35 years in prison. Chelsea's courage has now won her a committed solidarity group here in Ireland. We were delighted that Chelsea's aunt, Sharon, was one of the leaders of this year's Famine Walk. Several of Chelsea's Welsh family joined us for the Walk. RoJ – a Manning 'Truthfest' regular – not only escorted the Manning family around Mayo, but dedicated a song of solidarity to Chelsea Manning at the start of the walk.

Abjata Khalif is well acquainted with conflict, global warming and food insecurity on the borders of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. He also knows about conflict resolution, about tackling global warming and about empowering people to resist, to build community and to work together in solidarity. Abjata has used the experience of surviving a massacre as a child in his village as motivation for his life's work of building peace, promoting development, supporting food sovereignty and resolving conflict. Unfortunately Abjata, though listed to speak, was unable to make the Walk this year due to visa difficulties, but we hope that he will join us at another Afri event soon.

This year the Walk commenced from Delphi Lodge and walkers headed back to Louisburgh, after a short ceremony and tree planting. Delphi Lodge provided fruit and water for Walkers at the beginning of the Walk, and as usual there was the customary fair-trade tea- and coffee stall at the half way point, thanks to the ever reliable Cathal Ruane. Later that evening there was the usual *ceol agus craic* with musicians RoJ, Joe Black and Imogen Gunner playing in Teach na nÓl in Louisburgh.

2.5 Famine Landscape Project

This project arose out of the initial contact from Bill Fahey, a U.S citizen involved in the Committee for Commemoration of Irish Famine Victims. Having read Afri's publication, *They All Had Names: A Survey of Tithe na mBocht and Famine Graveyards in Ireland*, he made contact with a view to partnering with Afri to mark Famine Graveyards in Ireland. Afri have historically supported the

marking of famine graves, and began a new project – the Famine Landscape Project – at the end of 2014 with long-time Afri partner, Choctaw Gary White Deer, who is very familiar with the Irish Famine. The idea behind this project is to mark sites of significance to the Irish Famine and bring them into local consciousness. This work has continued into 2015, first with the Famine Walk in I.T. Carlow (see above at 2.2), the site of which was marked by unveiling a plaque, but also with walks in Donegal, Derry and Sligo.

2.5.1 Donegal Famine Walk

A former Famine storehouse, The Yard, in Falcarragh was the departure point of the Donegal walk. The majority of the participants were Irish speakers from the Gaeltacht. The Walk received extensive media coverage and was featured on Radio na Gaeltachta. Alliances with community groups associated with the Workhouse Museum and The Yard contributed to an excellent result. Participants from Ghana and South Africa led the walk, and carried the Afri banner through Falcarragh. Church of Ireland ministers, Reverend John Merrick and Reverend David McDonald, Rector of Holy Trinity in Dunfanaghy, spoke at the workhouse following the walk.

A series of lectures preceded the walk, which included local historian John Conahan, Gleanveagh National Park gardener Sean O Gaoitthin, who addressed food sovereignty, and Gary White Deer, who spoke about social justice and humanitarian solidarity. The four strands of the walk were commemoration, healing through remembrance, food sovereignty, and solidarity.

2.5.2 Derry Famine Walk

Around thirty people gathered at the Guildhall in July to take part in Derry's first Famine walk. Afri's Co-ordinator, Joe Murray, introduced the idea behind the Famine Walk and explained why this has become one of Afri's signature events, over many years. Deputy Mayor of Derry city and Strabane District council, Thomas Kerrigan of the DUP, then officially launched the walk, which was also addressed by Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. Helen Henderson, director of St. Columb's Park House, spoke about the importance of the walk and the danger of history repeating itself. She warned especially about the dangers of TTIP (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership), a series of trade negotiations being carried out mostly in secret between the EU and US. TTIP is about reducing the regulatory barriers to trade for big business, covering such topics as food safety law, environmental legislation, banking regulations and the sovereign powers of individual nations; it has been described as "an assault on European and US societies by transnational corporations."

Following the opening speeches, walkers proceeded from Guildhall Square across the Peace Bridge to the Londonderry Poor Law Union Workhouse, located on Glendermott Road in the Waterside. First opened in 1840, Derry's workhouse didn't close its doors until 1948. We commemorated "The Longest Walk": the 13 steps to the workhouse master's quarters that starving families once had to climb to ask for admittance.

On entering, the poor were placed in 'receiving rooms' where details of age, sex, religion, employment or trade were recorded before being put into a probation ward. Here they were stripped of their clothes and personal possessions, washed, deloused, examined by a doctor and then dressed in the workhouse uniform to begin life in the house. Daily life was organised in such a manner as to encourage them to want to leave as soon as possible.

The severity of life in the Workhouse was increased by the psychological harshness experienced through the system of classification which separated male and female at entry. This rule effectively destroyed the individual's emotional and family support system; as a result husband was separated from wife, parents from children and sister from brother. (From The Workhouse, Waterside Community History Group).

Concluding remarks were contributed by Gary White Deer, Rose Kelly and Máire Nic Fhearraigh who said, while laying flowers: "We are walking to heal, to commemorate, and to stand in solidarity with those who still hunger in our world of plenty today".

Afri wishes to say *go raibh míle maith agaibh* to walk organisers Gary White Deer and Máire Nic Fhearraigh.

2.5.3 West Sligo Famine Walk

The first Dromore West area Famine walk took place on Sunday, October 18th at the Dromore West workhouse in West Sligo. The Walk began at St Farnan's Shrine, Doonaltonin. After an initial welcome at the Holy Well, walkers made the journey of four miles along country roads back to Dromore West workhouse. This commemorative walk was organised as part of the Afri Famine Landscape Project and in partnership with the LEAP Community Project in Easkey.

Choctaw Gary White Deer was the walk leader for the West Sligo commemoration. In 1847, the Choctaw, who had undergone similar suffering themselves, donated monies to help feed Irish Famine victims. "Let's honour Ireland's forgotten" said White Deer, referring to the unmarked Famine grave at the Dromore West workhouse. "And then together we can walk into the future remembering others."

Afri gratefully acknowledges the support of Concern Worldwide for the Afri Famine Landscape Project.

2.6 Just A Second!

Afri continued to work with three schools in Galway as part of our second-level educational programme, which is funded by Irish Aid's WorldWide Global Schools.

The theme of our education programme is 'Just a Second!' and it focuses on the absurdity of the choices that we make – or that are made on our behalf by governments and corporations. For example, in excess of €40,000 is spent every second on war and weapons while a billion people suffer from hunger, lack of clean water and adequate housing. In May 2015 the Afri team visited Galway as part of the 'Just A Second!' schools project, holding a number of events including a Famine Walk to the Celia Griffin Memorial in Salthill.

There was a special connection between Presentation Secondary School Galway and the Celia Griffin memorial. Celia Griffin was a six-year-old girl from Connemara who lived at the time of the Famine. She, with her family, walked the 30 miles to Galway City to look for food. The Presentation Sisters gave her food, but she was so weak she was unable to eat it and she died. Unusually, an inquest into her death was held and it was said in the inquest that she died from lack of the basic necessities of life i.e. of hunger; a very powerful statement.

In October and November 2015 we also worked with Mount Temple Secondary school in Dublin as part of the 'Just A Second!' project to create a short film calling on world leaders to act ahead of the Paris Climate Conference (see 4.4.1 for more).

2.6.1 Book Launch, Development Education Seminar and Training

Pete Mullineaux's book *Just a Second! Exploring Global Issues through Drama and Theatre* was launched at the Galway Education Centre in May. Finger food was provided as part of the launch and RoJ provided music. The book features 5 short plays on global justice themes with suggestions for follow-up activities suitable for school groups, youth theatres, college students and others. It is available to buy from the Afri office and it has already gone in to a second print.

The culmination of the project took place in the Galway Bay hotel with the participating schools attending a development education seminar. This lively day involved the students in exploring the project themes through discussions and drama (facilitated by Rose Kelly and Pete Mullineaux) as well as inputs from Choctaw artist Gary White Deer, Sakhile Heron from South Africa, and music from Justine Nantale and RoJ. Gráinne O'Neill was on hand to capture some of the themes from the day in a graphic harvest.

Dave Donnellan and RoJ made a series of films of these events, all of which are available to view on the Afri website and our YouTube channel (Afriireland).

On the 5th August Afri held the Dublin launch in Liberty Hall of Pete's *Just A Second! Exploring Global Issues Through Drama and Theatre* development education resource. At the same event, 'Turned Away' – a specially composed instrumental piece by the multi-talented Imogen Gunner – was officially released. Live music was played by Imogen Gunner and Friends and we had reflections on the publications by Pete Mullineaux and Rose Kelly.

This event was preceded by staff training on the project themes, facilitated by Rose Kelly.

2.6.2 Launch of Pathways of Peace

On 4th December, Afri's former Development Education Co-ordinator, Rose Kelly, travelled from Moville to St. Columb's Park House with around 30 pupils from *Rang a 4* to launch her book *Pathways of Peace* and to plant a tree, donated by the Woodland Trust, in honour of the occasion. These were an exceptionally talented group of students, who had written and performed their own song as well as sharing their reflections and poetry on care for the planet. They even drew inspiration from the haka – made famous by the New Zealand rugby team – to convey a message of hope and peace!

Pathways of Peace is an excellent development-education resource, comprising stories of the lives of inspirational young people and the example of peace and justice that they have embodied. The resource includes their stories along with suggested activities for the classroom. This resource is now available to buy from Afri.

2.7 Hedge School

The 2015 Hedge School was held in I.T. Blanchardstown, and the focus was on climate change and its impact on human rights. Students from the Social and Community Development Course, with the guidance of their lecturer, Liam McGlynn, had been preparing for the Hedge School for several weeks and were actively involved in contributing to all aspects of the day, including workshops on the theme of climate change and human rights as well as registration of attendees, creating a short film on climate change and organising an action entitled: “Act Now or Pay Later”.

Maitet Ledesma from IBON International spoke eloquently about the impact of climate change in the Philippines as well as the lead-in to the Paris conference. This was followed by a debate between Oisín Coghlan of Friends of the Earth and Harold Kingston from the Irish Farmers’ Association on the impact of Irish Agriculture on the climate.

Harold argued that the Irish climate is best suited for growing grass – which is then used in dairy or beef farming. He also maintained that the targets set by the EU were unrealistic. Oisín, on the other hand, maintained that targets are essential to drive action to tackle climate change and that the government was not even trying to meet the 2020 EU targets, so as to get easier targets for 2030. Oisín also held that Ireland needs to do its fair share to tackle climate change and should not be looking for special exemptions. The debate was facilitated by Afri chair Nessa Ní Chasaide.

The day of the Hedge School itself coincided with the 20th anniversary of the hanging of the Ogoni 9 by the Nigerian military dictatorship, with the collusion of Shell. At the beginning of the day a candle was lit by one of the students – from Nigeria – in memory of the Ogoni 9. After lunch playwright and actor Donal O’Kelly drew parallels between the writer and nonviolent environmental activist Ken Saro Wiwa (one of the Ogoni 9) and Frederick Douglass, a freed slave, in a dramatic piece.

The day concluded with a ‘world café’, which was an opportunity for all participants to reflect on how they felt about climate change – hopeful, angry, despairing and so on – and a chance to interact with others who felt differently.

Afri would like to thank ITB, and in particular Liam McGlynn, for hosting the 2015 Hedge School.

2.8 Other Development Education Related Initiatives

Lisa Patten regularly attended the Community Sector Working Group on Development Education organised by Irish Development Education Association (“IDEA”) to share learning, identify opportunities for collaboration and ensure coherence throughout the sector.

Irish Aid invited GENE (Global Education Network Europe) to conduct a peer review of their development education strategy, ahead of the development of their new strategic plan. IDEA’s Community Sector Working Group on Development Education were invited to contribute to this. Joe Murray participated in the GENE review in April 2015 as part of this group. The GENE report was launched in November, which incorporated some of the suggestions from development-education stakeholders, but as yet Irish Aid have not published their new strategy.

3. Links Project

It was disappointing that Abjata Khalif of our partner organisation the Kenya Pastoralist Journalists Network (KPJN) was unable to travel to Ireland for the Famine Walk, because of visa difficulties. Afri has been able to continue collaborating with KPJN's inspirational work in conflict resolution and promoting solar energy. The small assistance given by Afri makes a major impact on the lives of the community among whom KPJN works in Northern Kenya and surrounding areas.

3.1 From Doolough to Dili and back

In May 2015, Afri Co-ordinator Joe Murray flew to Timor Leste to accept an award from the Timorese government on behalf of the East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign. He wrote about that experience:-

One of the highlights of Afri's year is the annual Doolough Famine Walk, and 2015 was no exception. The walk encapsulates many elements, from the tragic story which it commemorates to the reality of continuing famine and food inequality today; the local and the global, connecting Ireland, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the entire world. The breathtaking beauty of the landscape and the way in which Delphi Lodge has now embraced the story add another dimension. East Timor was the focus of the 1993 walk, which was led by Tom Hyland and Timorese students Dino Rai and Jose Lopez. The walk is always a generator of ideas and images, a place to plant trees and potatoes, to sow seeds, to sing songs and recall stories.

In May 1994, Don Mullan and I left directly after the walk to attend the inauguration of Nelson Mandela in South Africa. On that occasion Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, and his wife Sunandra had just led the Famine Walk and unveiled a memorial to Mahatma and Michael Davitt in the famine graveyard in Swinford. Gandhi of course had strong links with South Africa, spending many of his formative years there before returning to India to lead the independence movement.

In 2015, I left the Famine Walk to fly to Dili, capital of the first newly independent state of the 21st century, Timor Leste. I had last visited Timor in 1999, as part of a human rights delegation including Fr. Michael Lapsley and Robbie McVeigh from Derry. We met with many groups and individuals on that occasion including the leader of the resistance, Xanana Gusmao, who was then in prison in Jakarta. Soon afterwards he was released, and a referendum was held in which the people overwhelmingly voted for independence.

A period of extreme violence followed when Indonesia unleashed armed militia against the people. More than a thousand were killed at this critical period of Timor's liberation story, and tens of thousands were forced from their homes to seek refuge in the mountains. A decision to deploy UN peacekeeping troops was crucial and one in which the East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign (ETISC) played an important role by lobbying key decision-makers in and around the UN. This allowed Timor to make the transition from occupation to independence, which was officially 'restored' in May 2002, having been first declared before the invasion in 1975.

This was one of many important interventions by ETISC since it was founded by Tom Hyland and launched at Afri's Good Friday event in 1992. Another such intervention was when Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating made a nostalgic visit to Ireland, the land of his ancestors, in September 1993. It is believed Keating's family left Ireland around 1855, 'probably as a result of evictions'. ETISC organised a well-attended candlelight vigil outside Dublin Castle, while the Prime Minister was being wined and dined inside, highlighting the parallels between Keating's ancestors

and the latter-day eviction of people in East Timor under Indonesian occupation. The vigil also called attention to the Australian government's extensive military and economic support for the occupation, despite five Australian journalists having been among the first to be murdered as Indonesian troops invaded in 1975.

I flew to independent Timor Leste on May 17th 2015 to accept an award from the President in recognition of the imaginative and consistent solidarity offered by ETISC during the occupation. I was accompanied by fellow ETISC member Oran Doyle who accepted an award on behalf of campaigner Sean Steele, who unfortunately was too ill to travel.

The heroes of East Timor's independence struggle were of course its courageous people, nearly 200,000 of whom were murdered and many of whom endured unspeakable hardship and oppression. We met 'veterans' of the struggle, some of whom had spent twenty-five years in the mountains, tirelessly resisting the brutality and the occupation. But the Presidential awards served to illustrate the importance of international solidarity, especially on behalf of small nations crushed under the jackboot of powerful neighbours. West Papua and Western Sahara are in a similar situation today and we must show solidarity whenever and wherever possible to these long-suffering and courageous people. Also, Australia refuses to negotiate regarding the resources of the Timor gap, which were 'given' to Indonesia as part of a flawed agreement with Australia during the occupation in 1989 – an issue on which Timorese activists are calling for international solidarity.

And Timor teaches us never to underestimate the power of solidarity; to paraphrase a well-known quote "Solidarity...can turn the direction of history."

4. Campaigns

4.1 Fracking

Afri worked in partnership with Letterbreen and Mullaghduin Partnership ("LAMP"), an anti-fracking community group based in Fermanagh, and with award-winning filmmaker Dearbhla Glynn, to create an anti-fracking film called "Fermanagh's Future: Farming and Lakelands or Fracking and Wastelands?". This is an important initiative in that the film is made largely from a Unionist perspective, on an issue that is sometimes seen north of the border as a Nationalist or Republican one. It is available to view on the Afri YouTube channel (Afriireland).

Afri also, in partnership with Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training and Education (INNATE), contributed towards the hosting of Andreas Speck, a trainer in nonviolence and strategic campaigning. Andreas visited Belfast, Carrickfergus, and Manorbhamilton and held several workshops. Topics included an analysis of general social and political movements and the strategies and stages involved in campaigns, which was tailored for anti-fracking groups. Feedback from the workshops was positive.

In November Afri coordinated 'Making the Connections, Fracking No!', in Manorbhamilton, in collaboration with local anti-fracking activists and supported by Love Leitrim. A group of anti-fracking activists from Spain and the UK were invited to Ireland on a four-day visit over the weekend of November 27th 2015. The visit began with a talk in Dublin, hosted by the Worker's Solidarity Movement, in Jigsaw. The following day they made their way to Leitrim and on to Fermanagh to meet members of the anti-fracking group LAMP (Letterbreen and Mullaghduin Partnership). A visit

to the site of the planned exploratory well in Belcoo preceded the main event 'Making the Connections, Fracking No!' which took place in The Glens Centre in Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim. This event brought together anti-fracking activists from northern Spain, England and Ireland in an evening of theatre, singing, discussion, music and dancing.

Donal O' Kelly performed his award-winning one-man show *Fionnuala*, in which the human rights abuses perpetrated at the hands of Shell during the Corrib Gas Project in Erris, Co Mayo are starkly conveyed. Spanish subtitles accompanied the performance – to critical acclaim and oddly timed laughter!

Next up came The Kidz from the Glen who sang an anti-fracking song called 'Stand Up for Ireland' written by Michael M Loughlin. Then four speakers took to the stage for a lively and stimulating series of talks about the various anti-fracking resistance movements. Clara Noriega from Cantabria and Eduardo Rodrigo from Burgos in Spain gave an account of their current situations, describing the campaigns used to inform people in sparsely populated rural areas about the dangers of fracking. Information stands, door-to-door leafleting, talks in town halls, rallies and marches all formed part of the work of both campaigns. Photos of pristine valleys, waterfalls, rivers and small-scale farming – not unlike the landscape in parts of Leitrim and Fermanagh – acted as visual reminders of the imperative of protecting our respective environments against hydraulic fracturing.

Rachel Thompson from Manchester gave an overview of the anti-fracking movement in the UK and highlighted the successes to date in Balcombe and Barton Moss. Tom White highlighted the need to ensure that the EPA research study in Ireland is stopped, on the basis that it is being carried out by CDM Smith, a company itself involved in the shale and gas industry in the US and Poland. DJ Enda from Firehouse Skank finished off the evening to the beat of reggae tunes.

The idea for the international solidarity event was born out of a trip to the Basque Country in July by Leitrim-based activist Caitriona Kelly to attend Frackanpada 2015. This international gathering of anti-fracking activists brought together people from over fifteen countries for six days of workshops, talks, debates, plenary sessions, theatre, film and art around the themes of fracking, the environment, TTIP, sustainability, food sovereignty and much more. Connections were made, solidarity forged and the way paved for creating 'Making the Connections, Fracking No!'.

(Report: Caitriona Kelly).

4.2 Corrib Gas Project

4.2.1 From Victim to Survivor to Victor

Sadly, despite courageous and consistent opposition over fifteen years or so, the Corrib gas Project was completed at the end of 2015. This incredibly divisive project has left many in this small rural community at odds with one another, and traumatised by a long battle against a huge multinational corporation with deep pockets. In this context Afri invited Michael Lapsley, a campaigner against Apartheid, and the survivor of a letter bomb which blew away both of his hands, as well as causing him to lose the sight in one eye and shattering his ear drums. Michael founded the Institute for Healing of Memories in South Africa, which seeks to help individuals, communities and nations to heal.

Michael facilitated a two-day event with a discussion on the impact of trauma on individuals, communities and nations. It was very different from previous events in Erris – this time exploring the impact of the project rather than focusing on strategies or political campaigns. In an interesting, indeed enthralling, discussion, some of Michael’s perspectives were challenged. He made it clear that he was in no way suggesting that people are obliged to forgive, but rather that healing is important. Such healing does not mean that the struggle is over, or that we must forget the struggle in favour of healing. However, some people still maintained that his message was based on the need to forgive. Furthermore, some argued that it is easier to move on when the reason for the struggle has ended, for example after the end of apartheid.

At the end of the event Benny McCabe (a trained psychologist who had already been meeting with members of the local community) offered to follow up with any members of the community who might be interested in pursuing these questions further.

4.2.2 Campaigning Communities

Afri joined with St. Columb’s Park House in Derry for the launch of their ‘Campaigning Communities’ initiative on 3rd December 2015. This project aims to support communities who are campaigning around a broad range of justice and peace issues. As part of the launch, Donal O’Kelly performed his award-winning play *Fionnuala* about the community resisting Shell in Erris, Co. Mayo, who are an inspiration to many communities throughout Ireland.

Director of St. Columb’s Park House, Helen Henderson, opened the proceedings with a profoundly insightful reflection entitled ‘Spaceship Earth’, which was followed by an introduction to the ‘Campaigning Communities’ initiative by its co-ordinator Nuala Crilly. Afri Co-ordinator Joe Murray also spoke, referring to some of the significant campaigns in which Afri have been involved – such as the Dunnes Stores Strike, East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign and supporting the community resistance in Erris. The evening concluded with a rousing medley of protest songs performed by Paddy Nash and Diane Greer.

4.3 20th Anniversary of Execution of Ogoni 9

On Tuesday November 10th, 2015, human rights campaigners and environmentalists gathered at Shell’s Irish headquarters to mark the twentieth anniversary of the execution of poet and playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others known as the Ogoni 9. The vigil was organised by Afri and was supported by Christy Moore and Sr. Majella McCarron, an Irish missionary nun from County Fermanagh who was formerly based in Nigeria and was a friend of Saro-Wiwa.

The Ogoni 9, campaigners against Shell’s activities in the Niger Delta, were executed by hanging in 1995 by the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha. In 1996 the U.S.-based Center for Constitutional Rights sued Shell for its complicity in human right abuses against the Ogoni people, including collusion in bringing about the deaths of the Ogoni 9. In June 2009, on the eve of the trial, a settlement of \$15.5 million was made to establish a trust on behalf of the Ogoni people. Shell continue to face fierce criticism for the environmental and health legacy they have left in Ogoniland.

Ken Saro-Wiwa’s brother Owens, in a letter to Afri to mark the 30th Anniversary of Ken’s death, said that he fears lessons have not been learned:

Shell talks of jobs and progress, crows about its lavish philanthropy and promises that no harm will be done, no chaos left in its wake. I heard these promises in Rossport and I fear that Shell's bounty in Ogoni may yet be repeated elsewhere. This is a company that pantomimes concern and compassion for human beings when its only true concern is for where new money can be found. No doubt Shell's sights are already set on its next oil field conquest, irrespective of who lives there or their history with that land.

When my brother Ken was executed, his last words were "Lord, take my soul...but the struggle continues." I hope Ken is watching and seeing that, yes, it does. From Ogoniland to the Arctic, to Erris County Mayo and beyond, people are rising up to say "Shell No!" They are standing strong against a corporation and an entire industry that will mortgage our future for quick profits.

Joe Murray outlined the clear parallels between Ogoniland and Mayo.

Just as Shell colluded with the military dictatorship in Nigeria, the Irish State has colluded with Shell in bribing, bullying and intimidating the community in Kilcommon into accepting a monument to fossil fuels at a time when climate change threatens the very survival of our planet. The Corrib gas project, in which Statoil is also a partner, has been a disaster for human rights, civil liberties and the environment; the natural-gas giveaway has already resulted in a very bad deal the Irish taxpayer.

Willie Corduff, one of the Rossport 5 who spent 94 days in prison at the behest of Shell, said the community in Erris remember the Ogoni 9 on a daily basis: "As Shell preaches progress, many miles from their homeland in Nigeria the crosses of the 9 Ogoni heroes stand defiantly in front of the main refinery gate at Ballinaboy as a reminder to Shell that their sins will follow them forever."

4.4 Global call on Climate Change

The Global call was an appeal to artists to awaken the conscience of their supporters to the opportunity presented by the UN climate conference in Paris at the end of 2015. In January Afri joined with the Choctaw people – renowned for their respect and reverence for the planet – to call on artists everywhere to raise awareness and inspire urgent action on global warming. The effects of global warming are increasingly clear: ecosystems are being lost at an alarming rate; species extinction is occurring on an unprecedented scale and communities, especially those who are already suffering, face devastation and displacement. Unless we make radical changes, things are going to get a lot worse.

But resistance is also on the rise. In 2014, a coalition of native Alaskan tribes, backed by green campaigners, won a court victory against Shell's drilling for oil in the Arctic. Indigenous groups in the Amazon have been holding back plans to cut down more forests to facilitate oil exploration.

Following from Afri's call a number of artists pledged to act: Damien Dempsey, Liam Ó'Maonlaí, Steve Wall (The Walls/The Stunning), Colm Mac Con Iomaire (The Frames), Donal O'Kelly, Noirín Ní Riain, Theo Dorgan, Paula Meehan and more.

4.4.1 Waltzing on Borrowed Time – working with schools

In June Afri, having approached the principal of Gaelscoil Cholmchille, filmed students from the school dancing to Pete St. John's song "Waltzing on Borrowed Time", which was written about climate change. This film is available to view on the Afri website and features an interview with Pete St. John as well as singing by Justine Nantale, and called for action to be taken ahead of the Paris climate change conference.

For several weeks in Autumn 2015 Afri worked with students in Mount Temple School in Dublin on an exciting film- and music project with the aim of preparing a strong message to send to World leaders gathering in Paris for the UN Conference on November 30th. Afri is very pleased with the outcome of this collaboration. A short film was produced which expresses the creativity, passion and hope of a new generation: young people who can see the madness of destroying our planet through war, violence and an insatiable addiction to fossil fuels, and who are willing to do what they can to bring about change. This was part of our 'Just A Second' project, funded by WorldWise Global Schools.

4.4.2 Climate Change and Flooding in Ireland

One of the problems about the debate on climate change is that people keep speaking in the future tense, about what will happen to our children and our grandchildren. Unfortunately, however, climate change is not a future tense issue, but rather a real and present danger. Another myth is that climate change affects only countries of the Global South. While it is true that countries in the southern hemisphere are among the most seriously affected, there is already a profound impact on all countries, including Ireland.

Anyone who doubts this would need only to have travelled through Ireland in December 2015 to see the floods that laid waste to much of the country. Severe flooding is now occurring with a regularity and intensity not seen before, while the response of our governments has been less than inspiring. There was widespread perception of a discordance between An Taoiseach's remarks to the Paris Conference and his reassuring message to the Irish Farmers' Association. Meanwhile the North of Ireland remains the only part of Ireland or Britain with no legislation to tackle climate change.

The message is clear: we cannot wait for our governments to act on such a crucial issue. We, the people, must lead and they will be forced to follow. Afri drove home this message by taking photos of the flooding on midland farms, with a placard: "Now will you tackle climate change Enda?". One of those photos was published in the *Irish Times* online edition.

4.5 Stop Climate Chaos

The Stop Climate Chaos Coalition (of which Afri is an active member) continued to campaign to strengthen the Climate Bill. Disappointingly, the Bill failed to include specific targets for 2050, an omission which, the Coalition deemed, would undermine the transition to a low carbon future, and it also failed to ensure that the advisory council would be independent. The Coalition was also critical of the government's failure to take on the concerns and advice of the Oireachtas Environment Committee and Fine Gael and Labour backbenchers.

In June Stop Climate Chaos released a petition calling for Minister Alan Kelly to improve the Bill. More than 5,000 people signed this petition, calling on him to bring forward amendments that would strengthen the Climate Bill and to ensure it is passed into law before the summer recess. To

keep the pressure on the government, a 'Head in the Sands' action was organised on Sandymount strand in July calling on the government to start tackling climate change here and now. Approximately 150 people turned up and the photographs taken were disseminated to the media and were carried by the *Irish Times*, the *Sunday World* and the *Irish Examiner*.

In September the premiere of Naomi Klein's film 'This Changes Everything' was screened in Merrion Park, helping to keep awareness of the issue in the run-up to the Paris conference. A group of Irish campaigners and activists attended the Paris conference in December, although activities were somewhat curtailed due to the attacks in the city a few weeks prior to the opening of the conference. Stop Climate Chaos also coordinated the People's Climate March in Dublin on the 29th November, which Afri also attended. During this event the Food Sovereignty Proclamation was launched (see 2.3).

4.6 Manning Truthfest

Following our successful visit the previous year, the Manning Truthfest – a collection of musicians and activists – headed to Wales again to support the family of imprisoned whistleblower Chelsea Manning, jailed for 35 years for exposing the truth about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite a rocky start when all the musicians missed the ferry to Wales, the visit was another success in providing solidarity to the Manning family. The show went on, as they say, the first night, with Afri managing to secure alternative musicians, and the Manning Truthfest musicians arriving a little later than anticipated, at 11pm. The visit consisted of two musical gatherings and a morning of awareness-raising about the plight of Chelsea Manning on the streets of Broadhaven West, Wales.

Genny Bove, the co-ordinator of the Welsh Manning solidarity group, wrote this of the family:

Chelsea Manning's Welsh-Irish family received next to no support in the years from her arrest until the trial, and dealt with the most difficult situations, from the media camped on their doorsteps to the FBI showing up at Susan's [Chelsea's mother's] house accompanied by local police. The family made four visits to Chelsea in prison with no financial support. They had to live with the hell of learning that Chelsea was being tortured thousands of miles away in Quantico. Through all this, and much other adversity, they have managed to retain their warmth, openness and a great sense of fun. We are proud to be associated with them now, sharing their struggles in however small a way, offering our solidarity for as long as it is desired and feeling the love.

The solidarity continued in May, when Afri invited Sharon Staples, Chelsea's aunt, to be one of the walk leaders for the Famine Walk. Sharon was accompanied by other members of the family – Joe, her husband; Kevin, Chelsea's uncle, and Joan, Chelsea's aunt. They stayed in Louisburgh with the legendary Betty McSweeney, whose hospitality is second to none, and were well looked after by both her and RoJ, who drove them to Louisburgh.

4.7 Shamrock, Shame and Shannon: Reclaiming Ireland's Pride

A number of events were organised around St. Patrick's day to mark the 12th anniversary of the 2nd U.S.-led war on Iraq, and to highlight the role that Shannon plays in such wars. A 'cycle of nonviolence' was organised from Dirty Nellies at Bunratty Castle to Shannon Airport, followed by a protest at Shannon airport which was organised by Afri and supported by Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA).

While this protest was happening outside the airport, inside Donal O’Kelly and Dylan Tighe staged a performance-art piece. A short film of this was made by Dave Donnellan (with additional footage by Muireann De Barra) and is available on the Afri website. Dylan Tighe stated: “As St. Patrick’s Day looms I want to help focus attention on the fact that the shamrock is stained with the blood of hundreds of thousands of lives taken by the U.S military campaign, of which Shannon is an essential component. Is this the kind of Ireland we want to celebrate?”

Likewise Donal O’Kelly outlined his reasons for staging their action:

At this time of year when a bowl of shamrock is handed over in the White House as a symbol of the gombeen attitude of our leaders, it’s vital to challenge the hypocrisy of the neutral Irish state letting its second airport be used as a warport by the US. How many rendition kidnap flights flew through Shannon with prisoners now in Guantanamo for more than a decade without trial, many force-fed for months? We’ll never know because military flights were not and are not inspected.

I feel compelled to use whatever artistic skills I might have to challenge glib acceptance of the use of Shannon by the US army, as a gesture of solidarity with those far-off communities suffering attack by US armed forces with the complicit aid of Shannon Airport. Not in my name, not with my compliance.

4.7.1 Shannon Air-show and Arrest of Mick Wallace and Clare Daly

Joe attended a protest at Shannon against an air-show advertising military airplanes. As approximately 40,000 people attended the air-show, it was a chance to highlight the issue to a new audience.

In December, Afri strongly endorsed Shannonwatch’s condemnation of the arrest of Deputies Mick Wallace and Clare Daly as a result of their action to inspect war planes passing through Shannon. An Afri press release stated:

As the world drifts deeper and deeper into war, wreaking havoc on families, communities and our planet, the actions of people like Mick Wallace and Clare Daly in attempting to put on the brakes should be applauded and commended – not penalised. Wars facilitated by Shannon have helped to destabilise areas in the Middle East and beyond, created the anger contributing to the rise of IS/Daesh and unleashed the most serious refugee crisis since the Second World War.

It is extraordinary that perpetrators of war and destruction can parade through Shannon unhindered while those who are opposed to war are arrested, demonised and imprisoned. The actions of Mick Wallace and Clare Daly should be a wake-up call to the Irish Government to reverse the process of shredding the last remnants of our neutrality and end the use of Shannon for war and destruction.

4.8 Robert Zamora visit

“Making peace by making war is what we are trying to do – but it doesn’t work”, stated Edward Horgan, former commandant in the Irish Defence Forces and Shannonwatch spokesperson as he

addressed the public meeting on 'Peace and Neutrality: International and National Perspectives' in February. Peace can only be achieved by positive neutrality.

One country which has pursued the path of positive neutrality is a country with approximately the same population as Ireland: Costa Rica. Costa Rica disbanded their army in the 1940s and the President at that time, Jose Figueras, declared that the military budget would be used on healthcare and education instead. Figueras believed it was pointless for a country the size of Costa Rica to have an army as it would never be able to compete with a larger country. Costa Rica has since become renowned for its neutrality and peaceful stance in foreign affairs.

Despite that stance, however, the Costa Rican government joined George Bush's 'Coalition of the Willing' and approved the U.S. military invasion of Iraq in 2003. Roberto Zamora, then a law student, decided to take a case against his own government for supporting this war, on the grounds that it violated Costa Rican neutrality, and won. This was an important case as, while neutrality was something that the Costa Rican government had proclaimed, it was not written in their constitution. Since the Zamora legal victory, however, neutrality has now been enshrined as a constitutional principle.

Zamora spoke in Dublin about his decision to take a case against the government and emphasised that you do not need to be a lawyer or the smartest person in your class to take such a case, but just to have a sense of what's right and wrong. He reminded the audience that, as defined by the United Nations, peace is not just the absence of violence and war but freedom from fear and from want.

Costa Rica provides a vision of what Irish neutrality could look like, argued Carol Fox of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance. Despite the fact that 78% of Irish people are in favour of neutrality according to a 2013 Red C poll, Ireland has pursued a number of avenues that violate neutrality, such as the 'dual purpose' clause which enables Ireland to be involved in the arms trade, and the government allowing military flights – including rendition-related flights – to pass through Shannon airport. Carol mentioned that there would be an opportunity to get neutrality enshrined in the constitution in a bill to be brought forward in the Dáil and urged the audience to engage with their local politicians on this issue.

Afri was pleased to host this public meeting as part of our continuing opposition to war and militarisation.

4.9 Direct Provision

During the 2014 Hedge School, one of the students from ITB invited a speaker, 'Sue', currently living in the direct provision, to talk about her experiences. This input made a powerful impact on those present. Sakhile Heron, the student who arranged for Sue to speak at the Hedge School, began an internship with Afri in 2015.

Direct provision is a topic close to Sakhile's heart, and as part of her internship in Afri she wrote a booklet on direct provision, which Afri published and sent to Cabinet ministers. This publication outlines a number of statistics about direct provision – including how much money is spent on direct provision, the nationalities of those involved, the length of time applicants spend, and the number of centres involved. Ireland is one of only three states that do not permit asylum seekers to work. In 2014 51.97% of those in direct provision were from the continent of Africa, 21% of whom had been in direct provision for 7 years or more. There are high numbers of children in direct provision (1,522

at the end of 2014); since 2005 children born in the country can be deported even though they are Irish citizens.

It was noted that whilst Minister for Justice Aodhán Ó Riordáin had taken a strong stand against direct provision at the beginning of his term, this faded as time passed.

Sakhile's publication, *End the Scandal of Direct Provision*, is available from the Afri office.

5. Afri's 40th Anniversary Celebrations

5.1 Board reunion

Joe and Mary Lou Murray hosted a dinner in their home for past and current board members. There was wine, food, chat and a special 40th anniversary cake and a chance for the board past and present to reconnect and share memories.

5.2 Afri Friendship Gathering

This was an opportunity for our supporters to come together to celebrate Afri's 40th anniversary. The event was held in the Ashling Hotel and approximately 100 people attended. It was an occasion to highlight Afri's work, on which Dave Donnellan created a short film; there was also a slideshow of photos from past events and actions. Light refreshments and musical entertainment were provided. At the end of the evening Ruairí McKiernan made a stirring appeal for support, and a specially produced 40th edition of *Peacemaker* was handed out to attendees.

5.3 Famine Walk CD

There is a long-standing idea to get the artists who have previously contributed at Afri Famine Walks to donate songs to a CD. Pat Pidgeon, Clara Purcell and RoJ Whelan are all involved in this project. The CD will contain a booklet with a short history of the Famine Walk. There will be opportunities to sell the CD on the Famine Walk and possibly have a launch event. In addition, if Afri managed to get the Famine Walk listed on the Wild Atlantic way this could be an additional way of selling the CD.

6. Corporate Governance

6.1 The Governance Code

Afri continued to work towards the achievement of the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable organisations. Corporate governance was an item of the agenda of all meetings in 2015. At the 2015 AGM all board members signed a code of conduct outlining their responsibilities to the Board.

6.2 The Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages

Afri is one of the signatories of the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages. The Code was developed by the members of Dóchas, the Irish association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations, and adopted in 2007. It supplies a framework for sound and fair communications across the NGO sector in Ireland and beyond. By signing the Code Afri commits to a set of principles, ensuring that we will avoid stereotypical or sensational images, respect the dignity and equality of all people portrayed and promote fairness, solidarity and justice throughout all our communications. Lisa Patten is Afri's code 'champion'. To find out more about the code: <http://www.afri.ie/dochas-code-of-conduct-of-images-and-messages/>

Afri was deemed to be meeting the terms of the code in 2015.

6.3 Charity Regulatory Authority

A Charities Regulator was appointed in 2015 and Afri was automatically registered as a charity as it has charitable exemption from the Revenue Commissioners. The accountability requirements for charities have become increasingly onerous since the scandals in the sector. Afri submitted its first annual report to the Charity Regulatory Authority in Autumn 2015.

6.4 Lobbying regulation

New legislation now requires Afri to join a register of lobbyists, since we carry out advocacy work, and to report on any lobbying done. This includes lobbying of high-level civil servants as well as elected representatives. There is a requirement to submit a report every 4 months. Afri will submit its first report in 2016.

6.5 Funding

Securing funding continued to be difficult in 2015. In addition to the work outlined above we spent a longer than usual period in submitting funding applications to Irish Aid, WorldWide Global Schools, Concern, Trócaire, Ireland Funds and others. The amount of time taken by reports and applications is quite significant. Afri is very conscious of the gap that the end of Joseph Rowntree funding will leave, and used the 'hook' of Afri's 40th anniversary to attempt further to diversify our funding base, particularly by approaching religious organisations.

7. Acknowledgments

We would like to wish Rose Kelly - who joined Afri during the summer of 2012 as our Development Education Co-ordinator – the very best of luck as she returned to her job as a primary school teacher in Merville. She made a fantastic contribution to the role and was a welcome addition to the Afri team. We are delighted, however, that she has joined the Afri board, along with Justine Nantale, singer and development education specialist. Thanks also to Gráinne O' Neill for her positive and enthusiastic contribution to both our educational and fundraising work throughout the year. Gráinne is another example the right people also come along at the right time, as far as Afri is concerned.

We would like to congratulate Afri's chair Nessa Ní Chasaide and her partner Tom McDonnell on the birth of their son, Ferdia, in December. We would also like to congratulate Andy Storey and Miriam Barragry who got married since our last AGM. We wish them all the best in future years.

We say a special word of thanks to Dave Donnellan who has filmed many of our events over the years and also to RoJ who has recently joined him. Between them they have helped to compile a rich resource of Afri material.

Thanks also to Ruairí McKiernan for publicity and social media work and to Sean Boland for his work on our website.

Thanks to our Sakhile Heron, our intern from ITB who contributed significantly through her involvement in Afri's Development Education work in schools, as well as through her publication on direct provision. We were also very pleased to work with some intelligent and inspiring young people through our Just A Second! Project – in particular Keziah Keenan O'Shea who was involved in the Mount Temple film and who, together with a fellow student, Ruairí Atack (son of board member Iain) contributed to the 2016 Féile Bríde.

A special word of thanks too to Mick Gavin, who has been a tremendous support in the area of fundraising; his enthusiasm for this area is both a cause of wonder and a source of encouragement.

We thank our excellent Board who contribute so much to the success of Afri. We thank Laura Geraty for her contribution as Afri's accountant. We also thank our auditors Roberts Nathan, and a special thanks to Arminster Flora and Brendan Kean for their work which is much appreciated.

Lisa Patten deserves special mention for her exceptional skill, commitment and attention to detail in relation to all areas of Afri's work. We can rest assured, in terms of Lisa's work, that Afri is held compassionately in a safe pair of hands!

Finally, we wish to express our grateful appreciation to our funders Irish Aid, Trócaire, Concern and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, as well as our loyal and generous supporters who continue to contribute as they have done for many years. A special word of thanks to St. Patrick's Kiltegan and the Spiritans for their generous support in 2015.

Joe Murray
Co-ordinator