

# Peacemaker

Afri NEWSLETTER 2012



*Abjata Khalif, from Afri's partner organisation, Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network, presents a solar powered lamp to a midwife in Sankuri, Garissa, Kenya*

## Editorial

**F**áilte arís to our annual edition of Peacemaker. It is always interesting to look back on some of the events, activities and memorable moments of the year in order to give you, our supporters, a flavour of the year that's been in Afri.

Partnerships are a connecting thread in many of our activities throughout 2012, a year during which we were involved in a wide array of 'education for liberation' events, campaigns, activities, theatre performances, film and film clubs and much more besides.

Among the highlights was our partnership with Abjata Khalif and the Kenya Pastoralists Journalists Network, about whose extraordinary work you can read more within and about which you will be hearing more throughout 2013. Another successful partnership was with the International Peace Bureau which held its first ever Council meeting in Ireland in November.

We also had a continuing and very productive partnership with Benbo Productions in the form of Jimmy Gralton's Dance Hall and Ailliliú Fionnuala. We are very happy to be collaborating with the award-winning film maker Dearbhla Glynn who made a very powerful and moving film on the subject of Depleted Uranium weapons (which can be seen on our website) and who is now

completing a short film on the issue of Fracking.

In addition we held, of course, our annual flagship events – the Famine Walk, Féile Bríde, the Hedge School and our education for liberation events, the latter which we do in partnership with Children in Crossfire.

Sometimes it is hard to believe that so much activity can emerge from Afri's small office in Phibsborough with only 3 part time staff and a very limited budget. And, as finding funding to continue the work in the current climate becomes increasingly difficult, we are attempting to become less dependent on 'Institutional' funding and more reliant on the kind of independent funding that would allow us to continue our work which is often challenging to Government, state bodies and corporate power. To this end we have developed a new website ([www.afri.ie](http://www.afri.ie)) and an online donations facility. If you believe that our work is important and would like to support us you can now do so through our website or, of course, you can continue to support us in the usual way – support that has been so important to us through many years.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.

*Joe Murray, Afri Co-ordinator*

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# Famine Walk

'Corporations, Crops and Control: Seeds of Life or Seeds of Strife?' This was the intriguing title of the 2012 Famine Walk.

Walk leaders Anita Hayes of Irish Seed Savers Association, Pepe Gutierrez from Chile and Choctaw Gary White Deer, explored the issue of the increasing loss of control of the food we eat and the folly of surrendering our food sovereignty to profit-hungry corporations. We in Ireland should know the consequences of such loss of control which was a central cause of the Great Hunger of 1845, yet, unbelievably, we seem determined to repeat the same mistakes again.



Anita Hayes (left), from Irish Seed Savers Association, plants some blight resistant potatoes ("butes") during the Afri Famine Walk

# Teagasc takes Ireland down GM Potato route

**T**his year has seen the GM monster raise its head again in Ireland with Teagasc's application to conduct GM potato trials in Carlow.

Afri held a protest action at the Department of the Environment on Easter Monday to express its opposition to bringing genetically modified potatoes to this island. Protesters wearing potato masks, and carrying a banner with the slogan "hands off our genes", called on the Environmental Protection Agency to reject Teagasc's application.

Lisa Patten of Afri, described the Teagasc application as "a cul de sac for the Irish people" that "will be seriously damaging to our reputation as a green, clean island. Our government should be doing everything they can to develop our proven potential

to become the hub for GM-free food which the European market in particular is demanding, as well as safeguarding the safety and food security of the Irish people."

The decision of the Environmental Protection Agency to grant the licence to Teagasc to conduct the GM trials, involving the planting of GM potatoes at the Teagasc Centre in Carlow, in open fields, was received with dismay by Afri. **The argument that Ireland needs a blight resistant GM potato is spurious and misleading.** There already are blight resistant potatoes in Ireland which are not genetically modified and therefore, unlike the GM varieties, do not pose any risk of contamination to either other crops or the wider environment. Nor do they pose a risk to public health.

Gary White Deer, Choctaw artist,



Afri were involved in a Funeral Protest in September, marching to the Department of Agriculture, to highlight opposition to the GM potato trials in Carlow

whose ancestors sent a cash donation to Ireland during the Great Hunger (An Gorta Mór), also criticized the decision of the EPA. "This is a risky experiment which, if unchecked, will eventually lead to the corporate control and manipulation of Irish food sources. Now that GM has gotten its tentacles into Irish soil it is important that we don't let them spread," he said.

Afri made a submission to the EPA in relation to Teagasc's application for a GM licence in March 2012 and produced two postcard campaigns in relation to this issue, and will continue to campaign for a complete ban on GM products in Ireland. Please contact us for an information pack and keep on supporting this campaign.

# Hedge School 2011

## *Climate Change, Conflict and Famine*

Afri began a new partnership with the Kenya Pastoralist Journalists Network, following the 2011 Hedge School which took place in Kimmage Development Studies Centre in Dublin for the second year running. The theme was Climate Change and how this has impacted on developing countries, often resulting in famine and wars.

Abjata Khalif from the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network spoke about how climate change has affected pastoralists in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia including how the famine in the Horn of Africa caused great hardship for many, resulting in a surge in refugees and other social problems.

Christine Nalubega provided some African music throughout the day. Upon leaving, participants were given a birch sapling to take with them and plant as a reminder of the important role each one of us can play in combating climate change.



*Abjata Khalif, from Afri's partner organisation, Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network, speaking at Afri's 2011 Hedge School*

# IPB in Ireland

As one of only two Irish member organisations Afri was delighted to welcome the International Peace Bureau for its first ever Council meeting in Ireland. The meeting took place in November and coincided with Afri's annual Hedge School which was held in All Hallows College. The IPB is a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and has acquired a distinguished peace promoting reputation in the course of its over 100 year existence.

Afri became a member of the International Peace Bureau in the 1980s at the recommendation of Sean MacBride who was IPB President for more than ten years and was also a special advisor to Afri. For this reason also we were happy to welcome the IPB and to be part of the Sean MacBride Peace Prize ceremony.

This year the prize was presented by its first ever recipient President Michael D. Higgins to two inspirational heroines of the 'Arab Spring', Lina Ben Mhenni of Tunisia and Nawal El Sadaawi of Egypt.



*The President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, presented the Sean MacBride Peace Prize to Lina Ben Mhenni, a young blogger and activist from Tunisia*

# Afri and Benbo Productions

## *Ailliliú Fionnuala*

Ailliliú Fionnuala is a new play from Benbo Productions. It is written by Donal O'Kelly, produced by Sorcha Fox and supported by Afri. The play takes place on the shore of Sruwaddaconn Estuary in Erris, North Mayo, where the Shell high-pressure raw gas pipeline is under construction.

Ambrose Keogh works for Shell. When the Tunnel Boring Machine he named Fionnuala sinks into the bog, he comes face to face with Fionnuala of the Children of Lir herself in a



*Donal O'Kelly performing in Benbo Productions' "Ailliliú Fionnuala" about the Corrib Gas Project*

fairy fort. Fionnuala puts a geas on him – he's bound to tell the truth about Shell's operations in Erris, such as the attack on Willie Corduff in the Shell site at Glengad. Ambrose Keogh is joined in this ordeal by his primary school classmate, Malachy Downes, now an anti-pipeline campaigner. They are pushed to reveal truths about how the holders of power operate in Ireland, behind closed doors, with no regard for civil rights of citizens, then and now.



From left to right: Andy Storey (Afri chair person), Rose Kelly (Afri Development Education Coordinator) and Paddy Reilly (Director Kimmage DSC) speaking on "Climate, Resources and War" at the 2012 Hedge School



Lina Ben Mhenni (co-winner of 2012 Sean MacBride Peace Medal) and Lisa Patten (Afri Administrator) at the Sean MacBride Peace Prize Ceremony in November 2012



Mayra Gomez from Bolivia at the 2012 Féile Bríde in Kildare town. Herman Tintaya playing flute in background



Singer Joe Black performing at the start of the 'War, Media and Wikileaks' public meeting hosted by Afri in December. Speakers were Farah Mokhtareizadeh (peace activist), Harry Browne (journalist), Ben Griffin (former soldier) and Ciaran O'Reilly (Catholic Worker)



John Maguire (Afri board member) talks to students at an Education for Liberation day in Blanchardstown I.T. In March 2012



Dearbhla Glynn, film maker, who was commissioned by Afri in 2012 to make a film about the effects of Depleted Uranium



Ruairi McKiernan, founder of Spunout.ie, speaks at the 2012 Hedge School organised with the IPB, on a panel called "Non Violent Struggles for Democracy"



From left: Clare O'Grady Walshe and Denis Halliday participate in a protest organised by Afri against Teagasc's application to grow GM potatoes in Carlow outside the Department for the Environment in April 2012



"Climate Changes Blows": Stop Climate Chaos Protest in November 2011 - Protesters called on Minister Phil Hogan to take action to prevent climate change ahead of the Durban Climate Talks



Students from Colaiste Éinde in Galway performing during the 2012 Féile Bríde Conference on "Fire and Food".

# Afri Film on Depleted Uranium Weapons

Afri commissioned a short film on the effects of Depleted Uranium weapons by award winning film maker Dearbhla Glynn, which outlines serious issues raised by the use of these weapons.

The film brings us to Basrah in Southern Iraq where terrible destruction was caused during the Gulf War in 1991 and where much of the ammunition used contained Depleted Uranium. Once DU is released into the atmosphere, it becomes internalized through inhalation,

ingestion and contact with the skin.

Afri supports the international campaign to ban the use of depleted uranium weapons and wants to see the Bill on this issue which made its way through the Seanad during the term of the previous government, resurrected and passed into law. To view this film please go to the Afri website: [www.afri.ie/news-and-events/ban-depleted-uranium-film/](http://www.afri.ie/news-and-events/ban-depleted-uranium-film/)

## Bhopal, the Leaks and the Legacy

### *Lessons for Leitrim*

In September, Afri, in association with Love Leitrim, hosted a talk called “Bhopal, the Leaks and the Legacy: Lessons for Leitrim?” The talk took place in the Glens Centre in Manorhamilton, County Leitrim. Speaking at the event were two activists from Bhopal in India who related their experiences of campaigning for justice for the victims of the Bhopal disaster of 1984, in which an estimated 8000 people died and countless others were left injured, ill and traumatised, with the effects continuing to span through the generations.

Balkrishna Namdev was a union organizer before the disaster. He survived the gas leak and subsequently set up the Gas Affected Destitute Pensioners’ Front. He continues to work with Bhopal’s most vulnerable survivors. The other speaker was Safreen Khan. 19 year old Safreen inherited the disaster from her gas exposed parents and has lived



*Members of the Love Leitrim campaign making hearts to send to the Irish Government to commemorate the Bhopal Disaster.*

all her life with contamination from Carbide’s factory site which Dow refuses to clean up. She co founded Children Against Dow/Carbide in 2008. Afri subsequently joined Love Leitrim in marking Bhopal Day in December 2012.

It is worth noting in the current context of the promotion of GM in Ireland and worldwide, that the multinational Union Carbide Plant at the centre of the disaster that cost so many human lives and devastation of the environment, was welcomed to India just a few years previously as part of the so-called ‘Green Revolution’. This ‘revolution’ was being rolled out across the Global South by Western governments and multinationals under the guise of ‘feeding the hungry’. Alarming, the very same arguments are being made now by GM proponents in governments and corporations.



*(From Left to Right) Denis Halliday, Adrienne Reilly, Joe Murray, Sunny Jacobs, Peter Pringle and Lisa Patten at the Jimmy Gralton Gathering of Solidarity and Challenge in the Glenamoy Centre, Erris, Co. Mayo in March 2012*

# Jimmy Gralton's Dance Hall and Film Club

**A**fri also supported Benbo Productions' Jimmy Gralton's Dancehall, a celebration through art, theatre, music and dance of the vision and spirit of Leitrim's Jimmy Gralton.

Jimmy Gralton returned from New York to his home place Effernagh Co. Leitrim in 1921. He was a Socialist and his ambition was to build a dancehall that would be of the community and open to all. He succeeded in building the Dance Hall and it became an extremely popular venue. However, when he wouldn't give control of the hall to the Parish Priest, he was denounced from the pulpit and people were warned to stay away. In 1932 opposition to Jimmy Gralton's Dancehall grew. One night, the hall was raked with gunfire. On Christmas Eve night 1932, it was burned down. Soon a deportation warrant was issued against Jimmy

Gralton. He went into hiding but was captured in August 1933 and deported as "an undesirable alien". He died in New York in 1945.

Jimmy Gralton's Dancehall is a metaphor for what Ireland might be. A place where people are welcome to dance in a spirit of respect for civil liberties, named after the only Irishman deported as an undesirable alien, Jimmy Gralton.

Each Wednesday in April Donal O'Kelly (Benbo Productions) facilitated, in association with Afri, the Jimmy Gralton Film Club in Manorhamilton which showed the documentary about the life of Jimmy Gralton, *Even the Rain, The Pipe and Gaslands*. After each film there was a lively discussion about a new vision for Ireland and the use of our natural resources; particularly relevant in light of the threat of fracking in Leitrim.

## Budget Summary 2011

Income  
Less Programme Expenditure  
Less Operating Expenditure  
Deficit

### Income and Expenditure in Euros

€149,951  
€115,526  
€47,557  
€13,132

# Féile Bríde 2012

## *Fire and Food*

“What if...” was the title of the short play produced and Directed by Pete Mullineaux and performed by student’s of Coláiste Éinde at Féile Bríde 2012. As usual, this was an extraordinary piece of theatre performed with insight and enthusiasm by these young students who dared to imagine a different world with different priorities where the needs of the many would take precedence over the greed of the few.

Mayra Gomez from Bolivia also presented a vision for a different world. She tilted the conventional map of America

so that it seemed to us sideways, but why is the conventional view the conventional view? What if we looked at things differently? The Be the Change team, led by Roisín O'Brien continued these themes which were also taken up in the series of workshops that followed. Wonderful music was provided throughout the day by Mayra’s cousin German Tintaya also from Bolivia and we concluded with a memorable Seisiún comprising Latin American, Blue grass and the best of Irish music.

## Education for Liberation

Afri, in partnership with Children in Crossfire, held an ‘Education for Liberation’ day in St. Columb’s Park House Derry, entitled ‘Hunger in a World of Plenty’. Joe Murray and Richard Moore gave introductory presentations and this was followed by a theatre piece entitled ‘Not My Problem’, performed for students and teachers. The theme of the piece was interdependence and the play sought to highlight and increase awareness of how we are all connected. It enabled participants to identify the role they can play in relation to global and local issues.

Approximately 70 students took part in Afri’s ‘Education for Liberation’ event in Blanchardstown Institute of Technology on Thursday March 8th. Following an introduction by Rose Kelly, Joe Murray gave a presentation on the theme of ‘militarization and famine’, which looked

at the Millennium Development Goals agreed by the UN in 2000 and how world leaders have failed to make progress towards achieving them by the target date of 2015.

The reason given for this failure is lack of resources and yet the ‘elephant in the room’ is rarely mentioned. The elephant in the room is, of course, the annual global military budget which in 2010 reached an all time high of over \$1600 billion.

Following the presentation Rose facilitated a series of ‘world café’ discussions which explored the themes raised and invited students to reflect on issues such as military security versus human security, what is militarization, where is militarization, and what can we do about it? Afri Board member John Maguire also gave some input during these sessions.

## Debt Justice Action Group formed

A new campaigning network of local and global justice organisations, Debt Justice Action, was formed in January and called on the government to stop paying the debts of the former Anglo Irish Bank / Irish Nationwide Building Society (INBS). The campaign group – encompassing a strong and unique coalition of representatives from the trade union, community, faith-based, global justice and academic sectors – argues that the debts of these now state-owned institutions are not the responsibility of people in Ireland. Their campaign – Anglo: Not Our Debt – is calling for the suspension of Anglo/INBS repayments as a first step towards renegotiation and write down of this unjust debt. The bulk of the re-payments are government issued

“promissory notes” – a promise to pay money in future – to Anglo/INBS which will cost Ireland over 30 billion during the next 20 years.

Nessa Ní Chasaide of global justice organisation Debt and Development Coalition Ireland (DDCI), and Afri board member, said “the unanimous message of campaigners in Africa, Asia and Latin America is that ruining whole societies to repay illegitimate debts is wrong and unworkable. A solution must be based on cancellation of illegitimate debts that ensure lenders are held accountable for their mistakes, rather than sacrificing people’s rights to fear of financial markets.”

# Ar Scáth a Chéile

## *Sustaining Hope and Humanity*

This event held in August was organised by Afri in collaboration with Friends of the Earth in Solidarity with the besieged community in Erris, Co. Mayo, who have been courageously standing up to Shell,

the State, the Gardaí, private security and a range of spin doctors as they attempt to force an unwanted high-pressure gas pipeline through the heart of their community.

Speakers were local resident Betty Schult, who spoke on the meaning of occupation by weaving together the words of local residents when asked what occupation meant to them; Nnimmo Bassey, Nigerian environmentalist, poet and chair of Friends of the Earth International and Oisín Coughlan, director of Friends of the Earth Ireland, both spoke on

Resilience. Richard Moore, founder of Children in Crossfire, spoke on the theme of 'Hope and Humanity'.

Afri also organised the 'Gathering of Solidarity and Challenge' in Erris in March. This event included contributions from Denis Halliday on 'Big Business and Community Resistance'; Adrienne Reilly from the Committee on Administration of Justice on 'Lessons from the Conflict in Northern Ireland' and Sunny Jacobs and Peter Pringle on 'Surviving the Struggle'.

## Arrivals, Departures and Thanks

We are very happy to inform you that Rose Kelly from Moville in County Donegal has joined Afri with responsibility for our 'Education for Liberation' work. Rose has been a long term Afri supporter and as a teacher has taken part in our St. Brigid Peace Cross campaign as well as supporting many of our campaigns and activities.

We are sad to announce the departure from our Board after many years of Brigidine Sr. Rita Minehan. Afri have had a long and fruitful association with the Brigidines and Rita has been the personification of that partnership. We are very sorry to lose her from our Board but will continue to work together especially in relation to

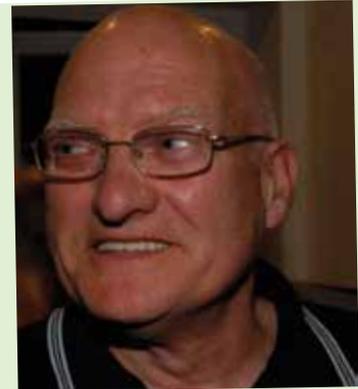
our annual Féile Bríde event in Kildare.

We've had a number of interns this year including Jessica Parker, Nora Tobin and Natalie Cullen. We look forward to continuing to work with Natalie in the year ahead especially in relation to finding an appropriate peace symbol for Ireland.

We welcome Lenka who is on a JobBridge placement with us. Lenka is doing a great job on our archives, operating the lighting for Ailliliú Fionnuala and much more besides.

Thanks to: Paul Brennan who has done so much to improve our website over the years; Smudge Design for online donations system; and Ciaran O'Brien and Larysa Karankovich for their great contribution to this project.

Finally, we are very sad to report the death of our printer and friend Andy Cunningham. Andy did tremendous work for us, including



*Andy Cunningham, long time printer for Afri, and friend, who died in 2012*

printing the Peacemaker, over many years. He was a very exceptional printer who not only produced high quality work but went out of his way to do it on time, with good humour, to deliver, and to stay and chat about the affairs of the day. We extend our deepest sympathies to his wife, Antoinette, his daughter Aisling, the other members of his family and to his work partner Mick O'Connor. Suaimhneas síoraí dá anam cróga agus dílis!



**CODE OF CONDUCT ON  
IMAGES & MESSAGES**

**TRÓCAIRE**  
Working for a Just World



*Afri gratefully acknowledges the support of Trócaire and Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.*

*Afri is a member organisation of the the International Peace Bureau and the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition.*

*Afri has signed the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.*

## Dates for your Diary

**Féile Bríde: 2nd February 2013**

**Famine Walk: 18th May 2013**

**Hedge School: Autumn 2013**