



## Annual Report 2016

### 1. Introduction

In 2016 Afri sought to rise to the many challenges that face people and planet against the backdrop of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1916 rising and the Proclamation's bold assertion of the right to sovereignty as well as to cherish the children of the nation equally.

Cherishing the children equally is ever more pertinent in the context of the growing crisis of homelessness here at home and the shocking experience of so many thousands of children forced to flee as refugees, often as a result of war and climate change. We must cherish not only 'our own' children but also those coming to our shores as refugees, some of whom end up trapped in the cruel limbo of direct provision.

And sovereignty, in its true meaning of independence and freedom, is not only to be enjoyed by all global citizens - it also must apply to our seeds, our food and our energy sources.

The ways in which Afri engaged with these issues are outlined in the pages that follow. A lot was done in the course of the year through our annual signature events and our educational programmes in schools, but an especially strong thread of collaboration with others runs through the year. One of Afri's most important strengths is its ability to work with groups and individuals in a way that amplifies the impact of the action concerned. This is nowhere more in evidence than in the context of the gifted artists and musicians, most especially the inimitable Manning Street Preachers, with whom we worked throughout the year on a range of issues.

The raw materials of the work of peace and justice are varied and sometimes surprising, as you will see from this report. They include: search engines and fossil fuel-free engines; Gortahork cabbage and heirloom squash seeds; Panama hats and Panama Papers; Bloomsday... but not Bombsday; birthday cakes and boycott calls; snake dances and taking chances; cellos, flutes, fiddles, pipes, guitars, amhrans, bodhráns and accordions.

It's all aimed towards achieving what Chelsea Manning explained as the reason for her courageous actions: "I wanted people to see the truth"; or, as was stated at Féile Bríde 2016, "living our way into new ways of thinking".

Perhaps one of the most important lessons of the year came from the head gardener in Glenveagh National Park, who said "the best way to conserve a seed is to give it away." This report chronicles the seeds sown and those given away in 2016.

## **2. Development Education**

### **2.1 International Peace Conference**

“I became a vegetarian and I started using ‘Ecosia’ as my search engine”, was how Keziah Keenan O’Shea, one of the youngest ever speakers at Féile Bríde, described her response to becoming aware of the urgent threat posed by climate change. Keziah was one of two students from Mount Temple School, with which Afri had worked in advance of the Paris Climate Change Conference in order to send a message to world leaders on young people’s concerns about the welfare of our planet, who spoke at the conference.

The other student was Ruairí Atack, who spoke about the link between climate change and militarisation – an often missed link in public discourse. Ruairí spoke about the “incredible levels” of military spending – \$1,747 billion worth in 2014. The military impact of this was shown in a recent report in the Guardian newspaper stating that: “The Iraq war was responsible for 141m tonnes of carbon releases in its first four years... On an annual basis, this was more than the emissions from 139 countries in this period, or about the same as putting an extra 25 million cars on to US roads for a year.”

Keziah and Ruairi were among an impressive line-up of speakers at the 2016 Féile Bríde on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> February, entitled “A Time of Opportunity” which included Friends of the Earth Director, Oisín Coghlan, and Professor Emeritus of Economics at TCD, Alan Matthews. Oisín outlined a number of issues that Friends of the Earth are pursuing as a priority, such as achieving a ban on fracking in Ireland; putting in place a payment for solar electricity so households and communities can get paid for the power they feed into the grid, and making a plan to stop burning peat for electricity by 2020 and coal well before 2025. Alan Matthews said that Ireland would be better off, financially and environmentally, by getting out of beef farming and transferring land over to forestry instead.

Speaking from the floor, Paula Byrne of Wind Aware Ireland highlighted the damaging role of Moneypoint Power Station and the potential of converting it to biomass, which she claimed would meet Ireland’s 2020 target in ‘one go’. She claimed that wind energy is not as efficient at reducing greenhouse gas emissions as commonly believed. She also said that the current approach of industrial scale wind farms, imposed on communities without their consent is not the way to go.

An oak tree was planted in memory of Afri’s great friend and supporter Roisín Mhic Aogáin in the grounds of Solas Bhríde at lunch time – a tribute to a remarkably kind, caring and inspirational person.

The afternoon featured ten groups and individuals who are taking practical steps to tackle climate change. This session included speakers representing Solas Bhríde; Baltinglass Community Garden; Cloughjordan Eco-Village; Cabragh Wetlands; Dublin Cycling Campaign; Irish Seedsavers Association and Trócaire as well as a speaker on vegetarianism and the benefit of using solar panels – even in Ireland.

“Live your way into new kinds of thinking” was a message from this session and indeed from this year’s Féile Bríde and the wonderful music of Imogen Gunner and her friend Hajime as well as RoJ Whelan provided an inspiring soundtrack to the day’s activities.

A short film about the day is available on our Youtube channel: <https://youtu.be/X19c0DvgymI>. The event was organized by Afri in partnership with St. Patrick's Missionary Society Kiltegan and Cairde Bríde.

## **2.2 Famine Walk in I.T. Carlow, 9<sup>th</sup> February**

Afri held its annual Famine Walk in I.T. Carlow on the 9th February. I.T. Carlow is built on the site of a Famine Workhouse and is adjacent to the Famine Graveyard. Walk leaders included Choctaw Gary (Waylon) White Deer, Chaplain to ITC Fr. Martin Smith, and I.T. Carlow lecturer Niamh McCrea. A good number of students attended this walk, which was held at lunchtime. In addition to the walk a seminar was held with the students making the connection between *An Gorta Mór* and hunger in the world today, in particular, in Ethiopia. Justine Nantale facilitated this seminar. One of the students reported as a result of the seminar: "I always believed famine was a result of corporate and capitalist greed and poor governance but I now realise that our environment plays a huge role in food resources and the maintenance of them."

## **2.3 Food Sovereignty Assembly, Westport**

Since 2014, in partnership with Food Sovereignty Ireland and with the support of Trócaire, Afri has hosted a Food Sovereignty Assembly on the eve of the long established Doolough Famine Walk in County Mayo.

The energy and enthusiasm present in the 2014 event were reassembled in 2015 and, as a result, a Food Sovereignty Proclamation was agreed and subsequently signed by hundreds of individuals and organisations. In an action reminiscent of 1916, this Proclamation was posted outside the Department of Agriculture on the day of the climate march in Dublin in November 2015, on the eve of the Paris climate conference. The Proclamation outlines a new vision for food and agriculture and includes a reclamation of what has been good about food production and distribution in the past, raising questions about how decisions are now made and who benefits from them. It recognises the need for new ways of communication and solidarity with similar communities worldwide and questions how we overcome problems of exclusion. It highlights the danger of the capitalist growth model and how it damages both people and planet, and emphasises the need to accelerate the transition to a low carbon, fair and resilient society. It also recognises the need to grow communities.

Around thirty people gathered for Afri's 3rd annual food sovereignty assembly, which took place in the town hall in Westport on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016 to examine food sovereignty issues and to explore what practical steps are necessary to implement the ideas of the Food sovereignty Proclamation which calls for 'coherence in the agri-food sector, including agriculture, environment, forestry, biodiversity, health, land, tourism, jobs, welfare, education, training and trade policies'. Among the questions discussed at this year's event were: how can we accelerate the transition to a low carbon, fair and resilient society? How can we produce both food and energy in ways that reduce greenhouse gases and their negative impact on the planet? Among the many suggestions was to continue to have April 24th – the actual date of the 1916 Rising – as a food sovereignty day in future years as it was this year.

The 2016 Food Sovereignty Assembly was organised by Afri in association with Westport GIY.

## 2.4 Famine Walk: Memory, Solidarity, Sovereignty

On the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016 the annual Famine Walk took place. which was led by Palestinian activist and poet Rafeef Ziadah, Anti-Apartheid Dunnes Stores Striker Cathryn O'Reilly and Clare O'Grady Walshe, who has particular expertise in the area of food sovereignty (sadly Guatemalan Francisco Cali-Tzay, first indigenous president of a UN Treaty Body, was unable to make the walk due to a family emergency).

Cathryn O' Reilly's 'casual' recounting of her part in the two and a half year anti-apartheid strike delivered at the Famine walk was a powerful reminder of the importance of 'boycott' as exercised in that iconic event in the 1980s. The strikers refused to handle, effectively boycotted the fruits of apartheid in a strike that made them part of South Africa's liberation struggle. Cathryn ended her presentation by expressing her support – and that of the other Dunnes Stores Strikers – for Boycott, Divest and Sanctions, a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality.

This call was echoed by Palestinian poet and activist Rafeef Ziadah in a passionate and breath-taking presentation and recitation of her powerful poem, 'We teach Life, Sir' accompanied by the music of Phil Monsour. Rafeef wrote about her visit ahead of the Famine Walk:-

*"As I join the Afri Famine walk this Saturday I honour those who walked those steps to Louisburgh in Co Mayo, just as I do my own grandparents who were forced out of Palestine in 1948 when the state of Israel was created. With me on the walk will be the courageous Cathryn O'Reilly, who was a leading member of the Dunnes Stores strikers who were suspended by management for refusing to handle the "fruits of apartheid" in 1984 during the anti-South African apartheid era.*

*As the Palestinian-led movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel's regime of oppression gains ground around the world, we are inspired by the historic example of the workers at Dunnes Stores and hope to see such grassroots acts of solidarity supporting the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality.*

*BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity. It aims to end international support for Israel's regime of apartheid and settler colonialism that began with the Nakba. It is no coincidence that the word boycott was coined in Ireland and continues to be a powerful tool of action for all oppressed."*

Rafeef also spoke at an event in Dublin organised by Palfest Ireland and supported by Afri ahead of the Famine Walk – see 3.1.2 for more.

Clare O'Grady Walshe concluded the opening ceremony with a profound contribution on the theme of hunger and food – an issue that links all peoples in all places around our interdependent planet. About 120 walkers were then ferried out to Delphi Lodge to be welcomed by Michael Wade and his staff. Refreshments were provided and an oak tree planted with words from Choctaw Gary (Waylon) White Deer and Máire Nic Fhearraigh.

The walk was completed in pleasant weather conditions and the weekend trilogy ended with a marvellous evening of music with Máirtín O' Connor and his family. This was a new and very welcome extra dimension to our Famine Walk weekend as over a hundred people gathered in the Derrylahan in Louisburgh for an evening of extraordinary entertainment, the proceeds of which were given to Afri. Special thanks to Máirtín and his family, Mick Gavin and Cathal Ruane who helped

promote the event in Castlebar and Westport. A short film on the themes of famine and boycott was made by RoJ and is available to view here: <https://youtu.be/z6Bx5YE5wnE> .

## 2.6 Just A Second!

The 'Just a Second!' educational programme focuses on the absurdity of more than €40,000 being wasted every second on war and weapons while a billion people suffer from hunger, lack of clean water and adequate housing. The project began in September 2015 and ran until May 2016 and included a new partnership with Mount Temple secondary school in Dublin where the students were active participants in a call to action on climate change for world leaders ahead of COP21. This can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/pJaa8Xk57CM>. A graphic harvest recorded the work done during this part of the project.

This year's 'Just A Second!' project also had a strong focus on teacher training – with a day-long training in Dublin on the project themes in March as well as the launch of another educational resource for teachers in December – *Pathways of Peace* by Rose Kelly.

RoJ made a short film about the work in the Galway schools, with a focus on the Celia Griffin Famine Walk and the educational seminar held in March in the Galway Bay Hotel, which had contributions from Spunout.ie founder Ruairí McKiernan, Choctaw Gary (Waylon) White Deer, a theatre performance by Katie O'Kelly, music by RoJ as well as workshops by our Just A Second facilitators Gráinne O'Neill and Pete Mullineaux. The film can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/Wgftthyyp1I4>.

At the end of April, Afri's Co-ordinator Joe Murray and Choctaw Gary (Waylon) White Deer travelled to Moville for another 'Just a Second' event. This began with a walk from Moville Community College to the Quays. This was the departure point for many people from Donegal and surrounding areas who emigrated down through the years, often because of poverty or famine. We were joined there by Rose Kelly and students from Scoil Eoghain. We had music, poetry and readings focussed on those who are being forced from their homelands today as a result of poverty, war and climate change. Following this moving event, participants walked back to Moville Community College where we planted a mountain ash together with students and teachers and then had a seminar touching on issues to do with climate change, militarisation, famine and forced migration.

The 2016/2017 project followed a similar structure to 2015/2016 working closely with 2 Dublin schools: Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School in Drimnagh and Beneavin De La Salle in Glasnevin.

## 2.7 Hedge School

The 2016 Hedge School took place in Blanchardstown on November 8<sup>th</sup>, the same day as the US presidential election. To our surprise, the former event seemed to overshadow the latter! And we are confident that the outcome of the Hedge School will be much more positive and beneficial to people and planet than that of the election! The election was a contest between two corrupt multi millionaires supported by arms companies and oil companies while the Hedge School was organized on a shoe string and with the good will of many people.

Sorcha Pollak opened proceedings with a powerful talk on Roger Casement. Casement was a great humanitarian and internationalist, who, having carried out an investigation into atrocities on Belgium rubber plantations in the Congo, was sent by the British government to the Amazon jungle

to investigate atrocities committed by the Peruvian Amazon Company, which collected rubber in the region of the river Putumayo. Casement was executed four years later for his participation in the 1916 Rising.

John Maguire further explored Casement's work in the context of his deepening awareness of the evils of Empire and of its implications for his beloved country and characterised him as an ideal symbol for today.

Other speakers included Kay Mulhall and, the highlight of the day, Miriam, a former asylum-seeker from Uganda. Miriam spoke about the gruelling circumstances of her life in Uganda before being forced to leave her country and seek refuge in Ireland. In Ireland she experienced the Direct Provision system which poured salt in the wounds of her previous suffering.

The students made a tremendous contribution to the day in terms of both organisation, and input. They interwove workshops, music and the writing of a Proclamation into the fabric of the day. Special thanks to Liam McGlynn whose support, collaboration and enthusiasm always adds to the very positive experience of working in ITB.

## **2.5 Famine Landscape Project**

Afri have historically supported the marking of famine graves, and began a new project – the Famine Landscape Project with funding from Concern – at the end of 2014 with long-time Afri partner, Choctaw Gary (Waylon) 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 2016, first with the Famine Walk in I.T. Carlow (see above at 2.2), and with additional walks and events outlined below.

### **2.5.1 Donegal Famine Walk**

“Seeds of Hope and Remembrance” was the theme of this year's Afri Famine walk in Northwest Donegal on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June. The walk began at the Dunfanaghy Workhouse Museum and followed a 9 mile-route to the old Famine storehouse in Falcarragh, known as The Yard. Walkers stopped along the way to lay flowers at a mass famine grave while we listened to a sean nós song by Noleen Ní Cholla.

A special feature of the event was the planting of Choctaw heirloom squash seeds at The Yard, the location of the community garden in Falcarragh. The seeds were handed over to the walkers by community garden members in Dunfanaghy. The squash is called *issito* in the Choctaw language and matures into a large, oblong shape that is bright orange, both inside and out.

Sean O Gaoithin, head gardener at Glenveagh National Park reflected on the planting of Choctaw squash seeds at Glenveagh and on food security, community gardens and how planting seeds helps us to remember our heritages:

*“Heirloom seeds connect us with our histories. In the past twenty years at Glenveagh we've collected many plant seeds unique to Donegal and the country, like the Gortahork Cabbage and Irish apples. By growing them we become the keepers of these plants and we connect to our heritage directly, to the biodiversity of this particular place and to our ancestors.*

*Irish food sharing traditions tell us that the best way to conserve a plant is to give it away and we know that by sharing we are increasing the chance of our succeeding as well as the plant, because if we lose a seed we can get it back from other people. There has always been a sense that what we produce belongs to us all. Irish people have always shared their crops with others as a community activity. We have a very strong sense that food is a basic human right that we all share. We talk about different kinds of wealth but free wealth is all that nature provides.*

*The Irish State maintains a collection of over 500 varieties of potatoes in East Donegal. From that they reintroduce virus free potatoes, but increasingly, food has become genetically modified by industry. Seed companies like Monsanto have control over certain world crops. They have bred Roundup Weed Killer resistant wheat so farmers are free to use herbicides on their crops. The active ingredient of Roundup is turning up in cornflakes. That is really bad for world health, for the soil, for ground water, for what comes out of your tap and many gardeners are very aware of this.*

*But if we have our own growers of our own seeds then that's real food security, like the Sweeney family perpetuating the Gortahork cabbage whose seed originated in Scotland, or growing new seeds like the Choctaw Heirloom squash. At the end of the day, we need more good seed and more gardeners."*

Walk organisers wish to thank Pobail le Chéile, The Gweedore Bar in Falcarragh, Mangan Bus Tours, the Dunfanaghy Workhouse Museum, Noleen Ní Cholla, RoJ Whelan, Paul Kernan, Sara Kernan, Tom Feeney, Sally Boyce and family, Tony Dalton, Gerty McKinnley, Reverend David McDonald and all other volunteers and supporters.

### **2.5.2 Dublin Famine Walk**

"The Famine is an awful wound on the Irish psyche and we don't talk about it enough. I think we should have a national day of grieving when we all go a river bank or the sea or a lake and just grieve for all who died of hunger and as a result of colonialism."

These were the words of Damien Dempsey as he spoke at the Famine Walk which began at the Garden of Remembrance and ended at Glasnevin Cemetery on Saturday, August 27th 2016. The theme of the walk was 'Gan Bia, Gan Béal, Gan Ainm' (Without Food, Without Voice, Without Name) and it was organised as part of the Afri-Choctaw Famine Landscape Project.

The event was introduced by Choctaw Gary (Waylon) White Deer and the context and relevance of the walk was outlined by Joe Murray. There was music from RoJ and Paul O'Toole as well as David Fury before we headed for Glasnevin in glorious sunshine.

We were met on arrival at Glasnevin by the CEO of Glasnevin Trust George McCulloch who spoke eloquently about Glasnevin and its connection with *An Gorta Mór*. Glasnevin Cemetery has the largest mass grave in Ireland, with tens of thousands of famine victims buried there and, extraordinarily, their names are recorded – a rare occurrence in terms of people who died in *An Gorta Mór*. Other speakers included Michael Doorly of Concern, who sponsored the event, and music from Damien Dempsey and Sean McKeon.

As always, Afri and other speakers linked the causes of the Great Hunger in Ireland with the causes of hunger, poverty, and disease in the world today, as well as with the theme of food sovereignty.

### **2.5.3 Leitrim Famine Walk**

To mark the national famine commemoration day a famine walk was held in Drumshanbo on Sunday, September 11th 2016. The walk took place from St Patrick's Church to the famine graveyard a short distance away, where a wreath was laid and a tree planted to the memory of the famine dead. The walk was organised by Bryan Ryan a student of Drumshanbo traditional music school run by Mossie Martin.

The walk consisted of over sixty people which included Sinn Fein councillor Brenden Barry and Nancy Woods of Drumshanbo Comhaltas as well as poets and musicians from around Leitrim. A bass drum, played by Ronan McManus of the Four Green Fields flute band, led the walk as it made its way to the famine graveyard where over 500 victims of *An Gorta Mór* are buried. The graveyard was attached to the old pre-emancipation Church of Murhaun which stood there in 1744 before St Patrick's Church was built in 1851 closer to the village.

Fr. Frank Murray of St Patrick's Church spoke of the importance of remembering the victims of the great hunger, a huge humanitarian disaster with well over a million deaths and millions emigrating, He reminded everyone that suffering still continues around the world and in our own country. A minute's silence was held before the laying of the wreath by a local girl accompanied by Emma Benson of Drumshanbo secondary school on concertina playing an air.

Donal O' Kelly spoke on behalf of Afri, outlining the importance of active remembrance with reflecting, understanding, empathising and alerting ourselves to injustices around the world especially to the refugee crisis and Ireland's role in taking refugees. Mairead Ní Chathasaigh read words from *Na Prataí Dubha* and played *Annach Cuain* while Bryan Ryan planted an apple tree which was donated by Lough Key Garden Centre run by Gerald and Austin Mullarkey.

The ceremony finished with students of Drumshanbo traditional music course: Mairead Ní Chathasaigh on tin whistle, Grainne Ní Odhrain on fiddle and Bryan Ryan on guitar playing the *Inis Oirr*. Bryan Ryan spoke about the men, women and children who died between the years 1845-1851 and of many who died on the coffin ships; the fortunate ones were buried in graveyards many more died in ditches and fields or by the sea and lakeshore. Leitrim was one of the counties worst affected by the 'great starvation', a term Mary Robinson used to better describe the humanitarian disaster that happened to Ireland in the 1840s, a country which had an abundance of food. It is planned that a similar active remembrance ceremony will take place in Drumshanbo in 2017.

### **2.5.4 Derry Famine Walk**

A small but enthusiastic crowd gathered on the Guildhall steps in Derry on a wet weekday afternoon, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016 (International Day of Peace), for a famine walk. They were welcomed by Mayor Hilary McClintock. From the Guildhall the walk went to the former Poor House at Glendermott Road and then on to St. Columb's Park House for refreshments and chat. As a regional and transport hub, Derry would have received many starving incomers during the Great Famine, presenting themselves at the Poor House door where the famine walk stopped and remembered those who suffered and died.

Organised by Gary (Waylon) White Deer for Afri, with Concern backing, the walk leader was Linda Ervine of the Turas Irish language project at East Belfast Mission, some of whose members came on the walk. Linda Ervine, who is from a Presbyterian background, drew attention to the fact that the Protestant community also suffered in *An Gorta Mór*, but that history had been hidden. Other speakers included Gary (Waylon) White Deer, Rob Fairmichael for Afri, and Helen Henderson of St. Columb's Park House; and sean nós singer Noeleen Ní Cholla performed a couple of songs including *Éirigh suas a stóirín*.

The walk was organised in partnership with St. Columb's Park House.

### **2.5.5 Famine Landscape Project Seminar in Donegal**

Maeve Peoples led a discussion about Famine trauma at "Samhain Harvest: Food, Famine and Growing Within" organised by the Afri Choctaw-Irish Famine Landscape Project. The seminar took place in October in The Yard in Falcarragh, Co. Donegal. The afternoon session highlighted food sovereignty, security and solidarity. The head gardener from Glenveagh National Park and Joanne from the Community Gardens Network also spoke. The day finished with music, a bonfire and a Choctaw snake dance.

Gary (Waylon) White Deer commented: 'there is an emotional condition that most of Ireland doesn't know it's being affected by... Malignant shame or postcolonial stress disorder is ever present in Irish society today.' Maeve Peoples, a Dublin psychotherapist went on to say, "It's important to keep in mind that we are only beginning to understand inter-generational trauma. This type of trauma is often unknown or unrecognised by those who endure it". Increasing evidence is showing that the untreated effects of holocaust are passed on to future generations.

"By looking at inter-generational trauma in societies as diverse as third generation Jewish holocaust survivors and aboriginal tribespeople in Australia, we now know that recovery is possible. From these studies we learn to find the source of issues as diverse as food addiction, eating disorders, increased levels of suicide, alcoholism and drug addiction to name but a few. Identifying the source of the problem allows us to begin to address it," Peoples added.

## **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.

Following the GENE (Global Education Network Europe) review of Irish Aid's strategy in 2015, Irish Aid published an updated strategy in December 2016. Afri, as part of the Community Sector Working Group, fed into this process where possible to ensure that there is a strong Global South focus as well as focussing on the causes of hunger and injustice and not merely on alleviating the symptoms.

### **3. Links Project**

Afri continued collaborating with the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network (KPJN) who is doing amazing 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 Let there be (Solar) Light!**

At the end of 2016 Afri introduced a 'solar lights' gift card to enable our supporters to buy solar lights for mid wives and families in Kenya. This campaign, not only supported KPJN, but also supported Afri's work in raising awareness about climate change and its impact in the Global South.

#### **3.2 Ireland SolidariTree**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> May, the eve of the Afri Famine Walk (see 2.4 for more), Palestinian poet and activist, Rafeef Ziadah, planted an olive tree and an ash tree, sacred trees of Palestine and Ireland, in Poppintree Park in Ballymun with Lord Mayor of Dublin Críona Ní Dhálaigh in attendance. The olive and the ash, together called the SolidariTree, symbolises the bond of support between the people of Ireland and of Palestine. The event was organised by Palfest Ireland and supported by Afri. RoJ made a short film about this event which is on the Afri Youtube channel here: [https://youtu.be/z0\\_IBiGXz5c](https://youtu.be/z0_IBiGXz5c).

### **4. Campaigns**

#### **4.1 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 1916**

The 100th Anniversary of the 1916 Rising was commemorated in a number of state events around Easter time and beyond.

##### ***4.1.1 NATO out of Neutral Ireland***

While it is very important to commemorate the first steps towards Irish independence it is regrettable that such emphasis was placed on the military hardware of the NATO-linked Irish Army today, as distinct from the ideals of the Proclamation, for example. One of the most bizarre events was the presence of a fleet of NATO Warships in Dublin Port over the Easter weekend. As we commemorated the sacking of Dublin City Centre by British warships 100 years earlier, the irony of a British warship among the other NATO vessels seemed to be lost on the Government as well as those queuing to go aboard. It was a striking illustration, nonetheless, of the degree to which Ireland has now abandoned neutrality and locked arms with the former colonial powers and their military escapades and ambitions. Hearing about this at the last minute, Afri organised a small picket on the 3rd April and we were joined by anti-war activist Ciaran O' Reilly who addressed the assembled audience. Here's a short film of him speaking at this event below (film by Redjade Magyarországon): [https://youtu.be/\\_FcCiqw\\_apI](https://youtu.be/_FcCiqw_apI).

### **4.1.2 Reclaiming the Vision of 1916**

Afri was invited to take part in the Reclaim the Vision of 1916 event in Dublin on the 24th April 2016, behind the banner, “The Right of the People of Ireland to the Ownership of Ireland” which focused on the ideals behind the 1916 Rising, as distinct from the military dimension which was so heavily emphasised in so many of the state commemorations. Afri personnel carried a banner with the message “Afri rising to the challenge of tackling climate change, abolishing war and restoring Irish neutrality”.

## **4.2 The Arms Trade**

### **4.2.1 The Panama Papers**

In April, Afri expressed alarm at revelations in the *Irish Times* regarding involvement by Irish-based companies in the international arms trade.

Afri cited as one of the most disturbing revelations in the report the fact that a Drumcondra-based company – Intertrade – has acted for one of the world’s largest arms companies, Finmeccanica, whose products include jet fighters, torpedoes and electronic warfare equipment, which are shipped around the world to cause death and destruction.

The company is also implicated in financial scandals, accused of using bribes worth millions of dollars in relation to arms deals in India and Panama. The leaks show how Intertrade uses offshore companies to process sales ‘commissions’ – a classic device to hide corrupt payments.

According to Afri coordinator Joe Murray, “this report would, no doubt, elicit the usual hand-wringing by the mainstream political parties in Ireland but, when it comes to actually doing something, the same parties will be found to be sitting on their hands and doing nothing.”

Afri published the first ever report into the growth of the arms industry in Ireland in 1996 and warned at that time about the need for legislation to prevent the trend towards deeper involvement. Mr Murray criticised successive governments for what he termed “wilful negligence” in allowing this situation to develop.

“The involvement of Irish companies in the arms trade, the provision of Shannon airport for the transit of US troops and munitions, and the recent welcoming of NATO ships to Dublin Port are all examples of the headlong rush by successive governments, against the will of the people, to immerse our neutral nation more and more in the sordid war industry”, said Mr Murray.

### **4.2.2 Bloomsday Not Bombsday**

Afri staff, volunteers and supporters donned Panama hats on Bloomsday, June 16th, and picketed 30, Botanic Avenue to highlight the fact, revealed in Panama Papers and mentioned above that a company at this address facilitates commission payments on behalf of major Italian Arms Company Finmeccanica. A short film was made about this action which is available on our Youtube channel: <https://youtu.be/gRMgpKTElaE> .

## **4.3 Shannon Airport & Anti-War Activism**

### **4.3.1 Shamrock, Shame and Shannon: Colm and Dave's Action**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016 peace activists and Afri friends, Dave Donnellan and Colm Roddy, entered Shannon airport to inspect illegal U.S. military war planes stationed there. The three security authorities of the Gardaí, Army and airport police all refused to search the planes for weapons in gross dereliction of their duty to protect innocent civilians. Dave and Colm were arrested and charged with criminal damage without lawful excuse. An article about their action in *The Journal.ie* on the 25<sup>th</sup> May can be read here – “Two peace activists arrested on runway at Shannon Airport”: <http://www.thejournal.ie/shannon-airport-runway-arrests-2787498-May2016/>

Joe Murray, Coordinator of Afri said in a statement: “In light of the courageous faith actions of Colm Roddy and Dave Donnellan in exposing Shannon’s bloody role in war, Afri calls on the government to end the use of Shannon as a war port. The consequences of the wars facilitated by Shannon are seen in the chaos in the Middle East region and the tsunami of refugees driven from their homes to which, in turn, Europe and Ireland has ruthlessly closed their borders.” RoJ made a short film about the action, available on the Afri Youtube channel here: <https://youtu.be/mJgFRKeEdoE> .

A number of events were organised throughout the year in solidarity with Colm and Dave’s action – namely ‘The Resistance Continues’ in July (see 4.3.2) and ‘Anti-War Activism in Trump Era’ in November (see 4.3.3 for more).

### **4.3.2 Pitstop Ploughshares: The Resistance Continues**

On Monday July 25th Afri and friends gathered in Dublin to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the acquittal of the Pitstop Ploughshares on charges of \$US 2.5 million criminal damage of a U.S. Navy War Plane at Shannon Airport en route to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

We were joined by Damien Moran, Deirdre Clancy and Ciaran O’Reilly of the Pitstops and Peace Activist Kathy Kelly – an eyewitness to the U.S-led and obscenely named ‘Shock and Awe’ slaughter of 2003 in Iraq. Kathy had also initiated the sanctions busting ‘Voices in the Wilderness’ movement in the 1990s. Artist Seamus Nolan displayed the Pitstop hammers, playwright Donal O’Kelly read from his new play dealing with military whistleblowers, and the “Chelsea Manning Support Band” – (aka ‘The Manning Street Preachers’) comprising Joe Black, Paul O’Toole, Robbie Sinnott and RoJ – performed. Harry Browne, author of the book *Hammered by the Irish* and members of the Pitstop legal team were also in attendance.

The theme of the event was “The Resistance Continues” which was enhanced by the presence and speeches of Dave Donnellan and Colm Roddy both of whom are awaiting trial for their action at Shannon Airport. Calls for solidarity with Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning were also made. Those who gathered included staff, volunteers and supporters of Afri, Veterans for Peace Ireland, Young Christian Workers and many who had accompanied the Pitstops through their 3 trials at the Four Courts 2005-06.

RoJ made a short film about the Pitstop Ploughshares which was shown at the event: <https://youtu.be/la3fDC14UL0>

### **4.3.3 Anti-War Activism in the Trump Era**

Following the election of Donald Trump as US president Afri organised a public meeting in solidarity with war resisters and in particular with Dave Donnellan and Colm Roddy awaiting trial for their anti-war resistance at Shannon airport. Author and journalist Harry Browne spoke about 'What can we Expect from the new U.S. president' and Pitstop Ploughshare activist Ciaron O'Reilly remembered the late Dan Berrigan and imprisoned Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange. There was also music with the 'Chelsea Manning Support Band' – Joe Black, Robbie Sinnott, Paul O'Toole and RoJ Whelan.

### **4.4 Solidarity with Chelsea Manning**

TDs, Senators and human rights campaigners gathered outside the Dáil on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December at 4pm for a photo call with a birthday cake and candles for imprisoned U.S army whistleblower Chelsea Manning, hosted by Senator David Norris. Manning marked her 29th birthday on Saturday December 17<sup>th</sup>, her 7th birthday and Christmas in prison.

Irish supporters joining global calls for President Obama to pardon Manning include Afri, Amnesty International Ireland, TDs Mick Wallace, Joan Collins, Maureen O'Sullivan, Catherine Murphy, and Clare Daly, Senators David Norris and Alice Mary Higgins, member of the Council of State Ruairí McKiernan, and actor and playwright Donal O'Kelly.

"The information that Manning gave to the public exposed the torture and horror of Guantanamo Bay. It showed us the true human cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and changed journalism forever. Chelsea Manning told us what we deserve to know. Obama now has a chance to do the right thing and pardon Chelsea Manning before he leaves office next month. If he does not, it will be another stain on his legacy forever" said Joe Murray, Afri Co-ordinator.

Manning, whose grandfather came from Dublin, was sentenced to thirty five years after leaking information on U.S military abuses while serving as an intelligence analyst in Iraq.

These included the famous 'Collateral Murder' video that exposed the killing of unarmed civilians and two Reuters journalists by a US Apache helicopter crew in Iraq. It also revealed the Afghan War Diary that exposed civilian casualties and contractor abuse and the Iraq War Logs that revealed civilian casualties and contractor abuse. In addition, the leaks revealed US diplomatic cables that expose the role that corporate interests and spying play in international diplomacy.

Manning had been incarcerated since May 2010, in addition to almost a year in solitary confinement before her trial. A new White House website petition of over 100,000 signatories called on President Obama to release Manning for time served, which they say is more than any other person who has ever disclosed information in the public interest.

Although Private Manning continued to write for *The Guardian* and other media she also attempted suicide twice in 2016 and was punished with additional time in solitary. Her work has led her to receive the Sean MacBride International Peace Prize, the Sam Adams Award for Integrity in Intelligence and to be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

"Every now and then you do come across a significant choice. Do you really want to find yourself asking whether you could have done more, 10-20 years later? These are the kinds of questions I didn't want to haunt me." Manning recently said in an interview with Amnesty International.

“If you had free reign over classified networks... and you saw incredible things, awful things... things that belonged in the public domain, and not on some server stored in a dark room in Washington DC... what would you do?”

“God knows what happens now. Hopefully worldwide discussion, debates, and reforms... I want people to see the truth... because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public.”

Verified quotes attributed to Chelsea Manning: <https://www.chelseamanning.org/learn-more/bradley-manning>

A short film of the action outside the Dáil was made by RoJ and is available on the Afri Youtube channel: <https://youtu.be/o dg xEKVjs>.

## **4.5 Corrib Gas Project**

### **4.5.1 ‘Fionnuala’ Radio Play**

Afri was delighted that Donal O’Kelly’s radio adaptation of his award-winning show ‘Fionnuala’, produced by the Norwegian state broadcaster NRK in Norwegian, made the shortlist of five for the famous Prix Italia in Radio Drama, whittled down from an original 35 productions.

‘Fionnuala’ is about Ambrose Keogh, a PR executive for the Shell/Statoil gas project in Mayo. When the Tunnel Boring Machine he named Fionnuala sinks into the bog, he is magically confronted in a fairy ring by Fionnuala, the swan-woman from the ancient legend The Children of Lir. Fionnuala puts a geas (spell) on him – he’s bound to tell the truth about mysterious attacks on opponents of the gas project. During his ordeal, Ambrose comes face to face with his school classmate Malachy, and echoes from the past resound.

In October ‘Fionnuala’ competed as NRK’s nominated entry in the Radio Fiction category at the Prix Europa in Berlin. On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October, the evening the results were announced, the radio production was played, with dialogue in English projected on a screen, in Glenamoy Parish Hall, Erris Co. Mayo. Despite not winning the award it was a great achievement to be nominated. Afri was proud to host this event in Glenamoy Hall, where the first reading of ‘Fionnuala’ took place during the Afri Hedge School in August 2012.

This event is the last planned activity Afri will hold in relation to the Corrib Gas project for the immediate future. Afri will remain in touch with the local community via visits by Benny McCabe but it seems as if it is now time to let the people be for a while.

## **4.6 Home Sweet Home**

As an organisation promoting justice and equality at home and abroad, Afri supported the ‘Home Sweet Home’ group who took over the empty Apollo house in central Dublin, in December 2016, in order to provide accommodation for homeless people. This was a sensible, generous and effective response to the homelessness crisis, and it caught the imagination and garnered the support of tens of thousands of people throughout Ireland.

This action not only provided urgently needed accommodation for homeless people but it also showed up the scandal of policies pursued by successive governments, who have created this crisis by not providing sufficient social housing and by instead pandering to 'developers' and big business interests.

It also demonstrated the scandalous behaviour of NAMA, which has intensified the effects of the economic crash by selling properties to vulture funds instead of fulfilling the basic needs of people for housing and shelter.

People had grown weary of the hand-wringing about the issue of homelessness, often by those whose policies brought it about, and were invigorated by the sight of people taking practical action to address the crisis.

## **4.7 Climate Change**

During the 2016 Planning Day board member Molly Walsh prepared a briefing paper as a prelude to a position paper for Afri on the issue of climate change. This briefing paper covered 3 areas: (1) Involving Climate Change movements from the Global South; (2) Importance of Food Sovereignty as a response; (3) Ensuring Energy Sovereignty in the move towards a fossil fuel free society. After further discussion two additional points were mooted: (4) Drawing out the links between militarisation and climate change; (5) Ensuring the transition to a green economy is a just transition and takes into account workers' concerns.

Afri continues to support the work of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition but did so to a lesser degree in 2016 in part due to the absence of Lisa for 3 months from the organisation to go on a Buddhist ordination retreat.

## **5. Corporate Governance**

### **5.1 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 2016 and progress was slowly made towards complying with this code.

### **5.2 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 2016.

### **5.3 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 second annual report to the Charity Regulatory Authority in Autumn 2016.

### **5.4 Lobbying regulation**

Afri is required under legislation to submit a report every 4 months on any lobbying or advocacy work which involves either high-level civil servants or elected representatives. Afri submitted its first report in 2016 and continued to do so throughout the year.

### **5.5 Companies Act 2014: Company Conversion**

Afri received a letter from Roberts Nathan informing us that after the 30th November (due to new company legislation) our constitution would become a default 'Company Limited by Guarantee' unless we took action. Afri spoke with Jillian O'Sullivan (a friend of Úna Maguire, John's daughter) who works in Grant Thornton in relation to this year and she provided advice on the next steps to take in this regard.

### **5.6 Funding**

Afri's financial situation in 2016 continued to be precarious, in large part due to the decision of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust to cease funding in the Republic of Ireland but also due to the downward trajectory of other funding sources such as Irish Aid, WorldWise Global Schools and Trócaire. As a result in the early half of the year a funding sub-committee was formed at board level to monitor the situation. This met a couple of times throughout the year to discuss reductions in expenditure, for example by going 'office-less' as well as diversifying income sources, including by means of standing orders.

An initial plan to hold a fundraising walk in Cape Cod (The Cape Cod Charity Challenge) was eventually called off due to lack of interest. Afri was considered a 'hard sell' as the work we do is often quite challenging and does not fit easily into a niche. However, the Mairtín O' Connor concert after the Afri Famine Walk was successful as a fundraising initiative.

Furthermore John Maguire hosted a birthday party fundraiser for Afri in July. We are very grateful to John and his family for this initiative.

Joe, in particular, spent a considerable period of time in fundraising meetings with various contacts and particularly made attempts to meet with religious groups with the aim of securing new funding streams. At the AGM in September it was noted that 17 funding applications had been made since the previous AGM. With the assistance of Gráinne O'Neill Afri applied as part of a consortium of 14 different organisations for DEAR funding (Development Education and Awareness Raising) an EU

initiative. Afri successfully secured funding from The Community Foundation for Ireland for work in relation to refugees.

## **6. Acknowledgments**

Firstly, we would like to express our sympathy to Rose Kelly on the death of her mother and to Iain Atack on the death of his mother. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha dílse.*

We extend our good wishes to Colin Archer, who recently retired as Secretary-General of the International Peace Bureau after a number of decades in the role. During his term Afri worked closely with him and the International Peace Bureau, with both myself and Iain Atack serving as board members. We hope to continue our engagement with the International Peace Bureau and Colin. We wish him every success and happiness in his well-deserved retirement.

We would like to thank Justine Nantale who resigned from the Board in 2016 and welcome Gráinne O'Neill who 'took her place'. Thanks to Larysa Karankovich who is always available to help out when called upon and does so with great enthusiasm and cheerfulness and to Marion Shiel who volunteered on a regular basis during Lisa's absence. Marie Patten deserves special thanks for taking on the onerous task of organising Afri's extensive archives – ably assisted by her daughter! Thanks to RoJ for all his filming work, his music and his general support and helpfulness which often involves doing both of the above and more – all at the same time! Thanks to Priscilla Bress, our ITB intern in 2016; Ruairí McKiernan, for social media/media work; Sean Boland – website/computer support and Úna Maguire and Jillian O'Sullivan for their help in relation to Company law issues.

Thanks to our Board, especially Laura Geraty for her work on the accounts and preparing for the AGM. But to all Board members, who invariably come up trumps when called upon for various projects at different times throughout the year.

We thank our funders: Irish Aid, WorldWide Global Schools, Trócaire, Concern, The Community Foundation for Ireland and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, who sadly have discontinued funding in the Republic of Ireland. Also special thanks to St. Patrick's Kiltegan and the Spiritans for their generous support in recent years and to the Redemptorists and Franciscans for their support in 2016.

And finally, sincere thanks and appreciation to Lisa Patten who did sterling work in relation to all aspects of Afri's activities in 2016. We are glad to have her back following her extended retreat and ordination. Not only is she a champion in relation to corporate governance but also in the myriad other roles that she plays day and daily in Afri.

***Joe Murray***  
***Co-ordinator***