



AFRI

DIRECTORS' REPORT

For the year ended 31 December 2018

1. Introduction

A four month spell of sick leave in 2018, gave me, as Afri co-ordinator, a different and unusual perspective on Afri's work. Among the valuable lessons learned during this period was a realization of the resilience of the organisation and the fact that Afri is not dependant on one or two people but that when necessary, other people step up, rally around and ensure that the work continues. In this regard, special thanks is due to Lisa, Nessa, RoJ, Larysa and Donal who not only 'kept the show on the road' but ensured that exceptional work was done during this period - and this, among other things, is reflected in this report.

Another significant and unusual event in 2018 was the fact that we moved office from 134 Phibsborough Road to 8 Cabra Road. This can be a source of upheaval in any organisation but it was handled with the usual systematic efficiency in Afri – special thanks again to Lisa, Marie and Larysa for this; and of course, to Rob, for 17 great years in 134!

In our work we continue to tackle major themes and issues that confront us as a people and, especially those that confront and threaten our Planet. War and climate change are foremost among these but so also are the related issues of food insecurity and forced migration. The threads of these issues, and more, woven together, make up the tapestry of our year that was 2018.

For example, *Jimmy's hall today*, hosted by the Abbey Theatre, organised by Donal O'Kelly and supported by Afri and MASl addressed the realities of the deportation system as it operates in Ireland today. This was done in the context of a long run of *Jimmy's Hall*, in the Abbey and was extremely memorable for anyone lucky enough to experience it.

In relation to food insecurity, Afri has been instrumental in putting Food Sovereignty on the map in two regions in particular. Food Sovereignty is now part of the Geography curriculum in Maynooth University, where we were partners in the fifth Food Sovereignty event in 2018. Also in 2018, we joined with Feasta and GMIT in Castlebar to host a new initiative entitled 'Food for thought'/Lón Intinn, which was billed as eve of Famine Walk, '*Conversations on Cultural Resilience - Famine, Food, Energy & Culture*'. Issues such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, climate action and food sovereignty were covered. This initiative arose as a result of a talk given by Afri to the Feasta AGM in 2016.

In addition, we hosted a visit to Ireland by Nicola Peel, award winning environmentalist, filmmaker, speaker and solutionologist during which she participated in a series of meetings in Dublin, Longford, Galway and finishing up in the Eco Village, Cloughlordan, Co. Tipperary. Her talks focussed on the work she has done with communities in the Amazon since 2000.

Our signature events - Féile Bríde, the Doolough and Carlow Famine Walks and the Hedge School – all linked to third level educational institutes in the relevant regions, attracted a combined audience of approximately 520 participants.'

The Hedge School was particularly successful in 2018. The theme was 'Human Rights Activism' and it reflected on 50 years of activism from 1968 to 2018. ITB Registrar, Dr. Larry McNutt, who was born and raised on the Donegal/Derry border made a link between the Civil Rights Movement in the North of Ireland, the US and the student uprising in Paris and elsewhere.

We began work on 'Lesson Plans' for teachers to be used in conjunction with our excellent Resources: *Exploring Global Issues Through Drama and Theatre; Pathways of Peace* and *Lessons from History*. This work will be completed in 2019.

We continued our 'Just a Second!' schools programme in secondary schools, funded by WorldWide Global Schools. When we didn't get sufficient sign up for our Teacher training, we produced, with RoJ's help, an excellent teacher training film. This was very well received and a teacher when asked to review it said it was an excellent resource and that 'many schools would welcome sending it to their staff'. It would 'also be good to use within teacher training colleges to introduce the idea of Dev Ed to trainee teachers'.

Working with RoJ we produced a significant number of other films – including an interview with Sunny & Peter at Féile Bríde and a special film reflecting 30 years of the famine walk. These were uploaded onto our website and YouTube channel and provide a creative record of events and campaigns in which we are engaged.

40 years' worth of Afri history, archived by Lisa and Marie Patten in 2017 was completed and within the period under review Maynooth University, TU Dublin and DCU are all interested in 'hosting' the archives.

Afri continued to work with our partners in Kenya to enable them to purchase solar lights for children, mid-wives and families there

We continued to oppose PESCO and speak out in defence of Irish neutrality.

In Governance matters, we maintained and updated our various governance codes, as appropriate, throughout 2018.

2. Development Education

2.1 Hedge School/ Scoil Chois Cláí

As stated above, the Hedge School was particularly successful in 2018. The theme was 'Human Rights Activism' and it reflected on activism from 1968 to 2018. ITB Registrar, Dr. Larry McNutt, who was born and raised on the Donegal/Derry border made a powerful link between the Civil Rights Movement in the North of Ireland, the US and the student uprising in Paris and elsewhere. He drew attention to the current crises facing the Planet and suggested a similar awakening would be required to tackle the threats of climate change and War.

He also commented favourably on the Hedge School in the following terms: 'the Hedge School provides an opportunity to remind educators of the important role we play, our programme plays

and our graduates play in promoting peace, justice, solidarity and sustainability.’ He continued: ‘Our experience of An Gorta Mór provides all the reasons necessary as to why Ireland as a nation – and Irish Higher Education Institutions – should be taking the lead in ensuring that these global justice issues are to the forefront of all that we do. I congratulate the Youth and Community Development Programme for ensuring that these issues are embedded in this programme. And I would hope the ambition in the new Technological University of Dublin would be to see them embedded across all disciplines’.

Emmet Sheerin of Trócaire, who also spoke at the Hedge School, said that ‘climate change is one of the greatest injustices of our time. It’s driving people into greater poverty in the global south, especially. That needs to stop and Ireland must take the lead in the campaign to stop climate change.’ Emmet then showed a film that he had made about the Divest Campaign, which resulted in three Universities – Trinity, NUI Galway and Queens in Belfast – committing to divesting in fossil fuels. The Government also committed to becoming the first country in the world to sell off its investments in fossil fuel companies, after a bill was passed in the Dáil in July 2018. There were further contributions at the Hedge School from Donal O’Kelly and representatives of the Rohingya people.

In addition there was great student participation with wonderfully creative drama pieces and powerful music and poetry.

2.2 International Peace Conference

‘Life has given me many challenges, which I choose to take as opportunities to learn and grow. This is my choice. I learned this on death row. I chose life, health, forgiveness, and love. That choice saved me from bitterness and hatred that would have destroyed me from within. I have dedicated myself to an end to violence – in all its forms. This is the way I honour the lives that were sacrificed along the way. This is the way I give back to the universe. Love is the answer. Fear is the enemy. We must choose the world we want and work towards making it happen every day in our own lives.’

These are the inspiring words of death row survivor, Sunny Jacobs, whose life epitomized our ‘light out of darkness’ theme of Féile Bríde 2018. Reading like a Shakespearean tragedy, with injustice heaped upon further injustice, creating circumstances that would have crushed many people, Sunny comes shining through with dignity, strength, courage, compassion and hope.

In a further twist of fate, she met Peter Pringle, the last person to have been on death row in Ireland and now they both have devoted themselves to promoting healing, peace and reconciliation. Together they have established The Sunny Centre – a sanctuary for others who suffer injustice, especially people who are wrongly convicted of crimes they did not commit and have spent time under sentence of death. We heard their extraordinary stories at Féile Bríde this year.

Other speakers at our 2018 Féile included the distinguished academic and activist Peadar Kirby, who plays a leading role in the Cloughjordan Eco-Village. Peadar stated that ‘the social struggle and the struggle to find new ways of living on this Planet that sustains us and all the creatures we share the Planet with, is central to our struggle for justice. What’s ultimately necessary is a new model of development in which we experiment...with new ways of living in synergy with the Planet. This is not a threat...it’s an opportunity.’

Afri Board Member, UCC Professor Emeritus and life-long peace activist John Maguire, added ‘we know about the horrors of war; we know about the two and a half million troop movements through Shannon; the fact that CIA torture-related planes have gone through Shannon and quite possibly victims, too.’ He posed the question: why do we have a sense of powerlessness to deal with this? ‘There is some element of weird, destructive secrecy that happens around the military. If we realize what’s happening, if we confront the awesome power that’s wielded in our names, we begin to realize that a process of grooming has gone on, grooming of adults and children...”

Hanny Van Geel of La Via Campesina who describes herself as ‘rooted in farming’ said that La Via Campesina is a global movement that offers solutions. Working together we have the ability to change the world’, she said. Other speakers were Rose Hogan of Trócaire who has a life-long commitment to agro-ecology and sustainable agriculture, peace activists Dave Donnellan and Colm Roddy.

In a world marred by war and the destruction of our exquisite Planet, Féile Bríde is one expression of the many, many people and groups throughout our world who hope for and work for a better future, a more just world and to ensure that the light will overcome the darkness.

And we also had music because, as Hans Christian Anderson says, ‘where words fail, music speaks’. The music that spoke was provided by Mabel Chah, Emer Lynam, the RoJ Light and Scare Crow. Mabel’s song ‘Burning Coal’ referencing her experience of Direct Provision, was particularly memorable and haunting.

2.3 Famine Walk

‘It was excellent’, the talks beforehand were focussed and linked the Irish Famine experience with current global issues, very well; excellent music and great opportunity to meet and discuss with people from far and wide”. This was the feedback from one participant on the 30th Anniversary Famine Walk. In his introduction, Donal O’Kelly talked about the need to actively commemorate An Gorta Mór by pointing out similar injustices in our world today. ‘The ghastly events in Gaza,’ he continued, ‘demands that we hear the voice of Palestine here today, on the 30th Afri Famine Walk’. Fatin Al Tamimi, chairperson of the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign provided that voice and reminded us that 2018 marked 70 years of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people by the state of Israel. She went on to say that ‘the cause of Palestine resonates with Irish people - many Irish people can identify with the causes of the suffering of the people of Palestine such as occupation and colonisation. These things happened to Ireland and now they are happening to the people of Palestine”

Walk leader Richard Moore, recalled taking part in the first Walk in 1988, and said “Isn’t it fantastic that the memory of those people who died tragically during An Gorta Mór is being used to raise awareness about other people who are experiencing similar injustice in the world today.”

A highlight of the walk was the singing of Lisa Lambe, accompanied by Nigel Linden and Cara Nicole. Lisa’s first song ‘Shelter’ was written especially for the walk and her second song ‘The West’s Awake’ sung as we planted a tree at Delphi is one of those never to be forgotten moments in the history of this extraordinary event, now entering its fourth decade.

2.4 Food for Thought – ‘Conversations on Cultural Resilience’

Food for Thought arose as a result of a presentation by Afri to the Feasta AGM 3 years ago. Its aim is to remember the Irish Famine and to explore its links with some of today’s sustainability challenges in Ireland and globally.

Food for Thought - ‘Conversations on Cultural Resilience - Famine, Food, Energy & Culture’ 2018, took place in the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology Castlebar, followed by an evening celebration of Cultural Resilience with further conversation, ceol and craic in Westport.

The event was organised to coincide with the Famine Walk by a number of leading Irish NGOs and groups who came together including FEASTA (the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability), the community resilience NGO Cultivate, a recently formed Irish language group, Teacht Aniar, and Food Sovereignty Ireland.

The open format of the event was based on conversation through culture, using the Great Famine as a backdrop, reflecting on the policies and politics of famines. The events were held in solidarity with the global justice movement and covered issues such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, climate action and food sovereignty.

One of the event organisers, Mark Garavan, FEASTA member and lecturer with GMIT Castlebar said: ‘County Mayo was one of the counties which suffered most when the great famine hit between 1845 – 1848. The recent extreme weather events in Ireland, international instability and the refugee crisis have focussed many minds on the fragility of the global economy and the vulnerability of ecosystems worldwide. There is a need to build resilience on a grassroots local level whilst also reinforcing global solidarity and justice.’

‘Food for Thought’ also explored and celebrated the legacy of the radical economist and founder of Feasta, Richard Douthwaite, who is known internationally for his writing on different aspects of sustainability and his work with communities in Ireland and abroad.

2.5 Carlow Famine Walk

Students from Gaelscoil Eoghain Uí Thuairisc were among nearly a hundred people who attended the 5th annual Carlow famine walk organised by Afri in partnership with IT Carlow and Carlow County Council.

On arrival in the Famine Graveyard, walkers were addressed by Fr. Martin Smith, Chaplain at IT Carlow, who reminded us that we were standing on holy ground. Mayor of Carlow, Cllr Jim Dunne attended in his a chain of office and emphasised the point made by Martin Smith by reminding all present that about 3000 people were buried in that famine graveyard, on which we were standing. ‘It’s important that we remember but it is also very sad because the great injustices that happened at that time, continue today.’ As if to underline this point, Rafique Mahommed, representing the Rohingya people, spoke about the shocking treatment of the Rohingya by the Burmese government. Tens of thousands of Rohingya were forced to flee across the border to Bangladesh after troops, backed by local militia, burned their villages and attacked civilians.

RoJ sang his very moving and appropriate song An Gorta Mór before we planted an oak tree - a symbol of life in a place of death.

2.6 Festival of Food Sovereignty, Maynooth

Afri's intervention at a meeting of the Geography Department in Maynooth in 2014, at which we were asked to speak has led to that Department taking up the issue of Food Sovereignty, in subsequent years. In April 2018, the third festival of Food sovereignty took place in the University. It consisted of talks, conversations, workshops, art, music, activities for kids and food. The focus of the event was on how we can construct food sovereignty in Ireland. Attendees included La Via Campesina, Food Sovereignty Ireland, Dublin Food Co-op, Irish Seed Savers, cultivate, Community Supported Agriculture, Ireland and edible Landscapes Westport. While the event was very successful in terms of content, the decision to hold it on Saturday was not a good one as it attracted much less numbers of students and members of the general public that we would have hoped to see.

2.7 Teacher Training and School Visits

Instead of a Teacher Training workshop in 2018 – for which sufficient numbers didn't sign up - we worked with RoJ to produce a teacher training film, bringing together methodologies and examples of activities that teachers can use in the classroom. We trained 13 teachers by this means, with one of them stating: 'This film would definitely motivate teachers to try new activities in the classroom; to remind us as teachers, of the need to embrace song/drama/active teaching methodologies and to keep our students 'moving' and motivated' Another teacher commented: 'I watched the film and I found it brilliant. I suggested to my colleague that she should show it to all staff members. Many of us feel somewhat unqualified to teach Dev Ed, but many of us are actually teaching it unbeknown to ourselves. Your film illustrates this, perfectly'.

We built on the foundation of previous years and carried out 22 seminars over eight school visits. We explored what development education is by exploring the four 'legs' of the DE 'table': critical thinking, problem solving, systems thinking and active citizenship. Various methodologies were used including film, moving debate and art as well as a game on interconnectedness.

Other workshops explored the Global Goals and what issues and challenges the students thought should be discussed. One exercise used by Pete Mullineaux was the 'two queues'. In this exercise students form two queues – one for the global goals; the other for armaments and military hardware. The latter queue rotates ten times faster than the global goals queue, to demonstrate the huge disparity between the economic spend on arms as opposed to the resources made available to achieve the Goals.

This was probed to try and understand how and why human beings are so committed to war and violence, and to try and understand better what fuels conflict and violence. In this context, a play written by Pete and students as part of Afri's 'Just a Second' project was independently produced by a group of young people in Louth, in May 2018.

In Mount Temple, following a setting of the context by the drama teacher Laura Doak, and an introduction to the Just a Second project by Joe Murray, Katie O'Kelly performed her play on the theme of forced migration and conflict over resources. Donal O'Kelly performed a poem about Direct Provision. Both sessions were followed by questions, answers and discussion.

Other sessions took place in Scoil Mhuire, Clare and in Scoil Chaitriona, Dublin where the Afri Co-ordinator was accompanied by Children in Crossfire director, Richard Moore, who is a living example of the negative impact of war and militarism.

2.8 Outdoor Classrooms

An important part of our school programme was the two outdoor classroom events – one in Meath and the other in Galway. The idea here was to offer a space for students to come together and to explore themes such as food and hunger in the context of their local landscape and history. The first such event was held in Galway at the Celia Griffin Memorial where Donal O’Kelly introduced the project and made the links between Celia Griffin’s situation (a child who died of hunger during An Gorta Mór) and the choices with which refugees today are faced with.

The second outdoor classroom was held in Meath at the Dunshaughlin famine workhouse. Again Donal O’Kelly introduced students to the project outlining links between the Irish Famine and the experience of refugees today, particularly those in direct provision. He pointed to the foreboding looking workhouse and invited students to reflect on how they would feel if forced to live in such a place because they have no other option – a plight faced by those in the direct provision system in Ireland. This was followed by a session by a local historian, Dr Danny Cusack, who explored the famine in Meath, about which he has written a book. By reading out a list of young women who were forced to emigrate to Australia from the workhouse (at a similar age to the Transition Year students) he brought home to the students what it might be like to be forced to leave home because of poverty and hunger - a reality facing many today.

After both outdoor classroom events, a seminar was held in a nearby venue with a performance of Katie O’Kelly’s play ‘The Olive Tree’ followed by a question and answer session and music by RoJ Whelan.

3. Campaigns

3.1 Anti-militarisation Work – Shannon, PESCO and ‘Peacemeal Change’

Afri’s work against militarisation continued during 2018, and took on some exciting new dimensions. We continued to support Shannonwatch’s monitoring of and opposition to US military flights, including the vigil at the airport on the second Sunday of each month. A partner programme to ‘Just A Second!’ was the launch of our ‘Peacemeal Change’ programme, inviting and assisting third-level students to learn more about what their sector, and specifically their own institution, was doing to assist Ireland’s growing involvement in military-related research and production. This programme, in which we are happily joined by Concern Worldwide, has now ‘taken off’ in Trinity College Dublin, and we hope to replicate the pattern and develop synergies in the near future.

Afri also, having participated in the major world conference against military bases abroad, hosted by PANA, the Peace and Neutrality Alliance, in Dublin in late 2017, was proud to support the publication of PESCO: Irish Neutrality and the Militarisation of the EU. This publication, to which board-member John Maguire contributed a major article, “‘A Vivid Impression’: The repressed potential of Irish

Neutrality”, is particularly significant because it was issued by Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan and four other TDs, members of the new Oireachtas Neutrality, Peace and Disarmament Group, with which Afri has established fruitful links.

3.2 Refugees, Forced migration, Deportation and Direct Provision

Jimmy’s Hall Today

This assembly, hosted by the Abbey Theatre, organised by Donal O’Kelly and supported by Afri and MASI addressed the realities of the deportation system as it operates in Ireland today. For every person who comes to Ireland seeking refuge, the fear of deportation is deep.

The assembly included testimonies from international protection applicants and their supporters on how Department of Justice policy and procedures deeply affect their lives. It also addressed the changes to detention and deportation procedures introduced by the International Protection Act 2016. Jimmy’s Hall Today also featured dance, music and performance in the spirit of Galton’s vision.

The assembly was introduced by Paul Galton, Jimmy’s grand-nephew: ‘I listened to my grandmother expressing the hope she had for her cousin Jimmy’s return. I think of Alice Galton’s plea to Leitrim councillors in 1933 to stop the deportation of her son. It would make a stone cry. We are a nation well experienced in the pain of emigration. Yet today we perpetrate a totally inhuman system in our treatment of those fleeing appalling violence and persecution, those seeking to better themselves and those caught in the web of movement’.

State of Exception

Afri was proud to support ‘State of Exception’, a dance work, choreographed by Catherine Young and performed at the Backstage in Longford, the Firkin Crane in Cork and the Project Theatre in Dublin in the Spring of 2018. Each show was followed by a panel discussion. In Dublin Bryan Fanning, professor of Migration and Social Policy at UCD, chaired a discussion with Lucky Khambule, of MASI – Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland, Vukasin Nedeljkovic of Asylum Archive and Donnah Sibanda Vuma, Afri Board member and Place of Sanctuary scholar at UL.

Reviewers reaction to the show included the following: 'this is Irish dance-making at its best; political, urgent and intelligent.' It was also described as ‘ a powerful dance work, inspired by Catherine’s experience of working with refugees and asylum seekers, the show takes us right to the heart of the necessity to reach across, connect and challenge the divides created by the State of Exception. This powerful new dance, featuring a cast of outstanding Irish and international performers delves into the world of ‘the other’ to try to understand and tear down the walls and borders that divide.’

4. Links

Solar lights for Kenya

Joe Murray visited Kenya in the summer of 2018, where he met some of the people who've received solar lights as part of Afri's partnership with Development Pamoja. He was amazed at the difference that a small and relatively inexpensive solar light can make to people's lives.

In the company of James and Maasai from Development Pamoja, he visited many homes where the light was shining and was told of the benefits it had provided. For example, Christina Sorte uses it as a torch, if she hears rustling outside after dark, she can check to see if there is a snake about. She also uses it when she is cooking, to help her grand children when they are reading at night as well as to charge her phone, saving her a walk of many miles, which she used to have to do.

Likewise, 28 year old Judy Chelangat lives in the village of Lomolo with her eldest son, Matthew who has a disability. Judy says the solar light helps her to care for her children in the evening, helping with cooking and other chores. The solar panel also enables her to charge her mobile phone and to keep in contact with the local clinic regarding Matthew's health.

We also met Oscar Kiprotich, who is thirty four years old and has suffered from multiple sclerosis for fifteen years. Oscar, who is wheel chair bound, lives with his mother and twelve year old niece Florence. The solar lamp allows Oscar to read in his bed in the evenings. It also enables him to assist Florence with her homework when she returns from school.

In the context of a world facing the threat of climate change, this is a small but significant way of positively impacting people's lives, in a way that is viable and sustainable and provides an example for all of us – in our fossil fuel addicted society.

Acknowledgments

We were extremely sad to see Lisa moving on from Afri after 7 years working and 2 years volunteering with the organisation. Lisa made an enormous contribution to Afri in many different ways but none more so than in getting to grips with the major issue of Corporate Governance. She negotiated her way through this minefield with determination, skill and great competence. And among her legacies is a fully up-to-date file on the many elements of Corporate Governance. With her mother Marie, she also archived 40 years of Afri's work – a tremendous achievement. Not only that but she always carried out her work with calm, quiet efficiency.

Thanks to Larysa for taking over the reins with great enthusiasm, dedication and proficiency.

Special thanks to our Chair, Nessa for all her help this year. Nessa and Lisa deserve special thanks for all their work in running Afri when Joe was in hospital for a month and off work for 4.

Welcome to Emer Lynam who joined our Board in 2018

Thanks to Rob Fairmichael, our exceptional landlord, for providing long-term, secure and very fairly priced office space, and extending our lease until 2018. We were sorry to have to leave 134 in October 2018 but are happy with our new office in number 8 Cabra Road.

Thanks to all Board members for their availability, when called upon.

Staff:

Larysa was recruited to job-share with Lisa in 2018.

Thanks to RoJ for filming so many of our events and activities so excellently, and helping in many other ways.

To Ruairi McKiernan for social-media work.

Thanks to Sean Boland for website/computer support.

Thanks to Nicola Winters and Pete Mullineaux for their contribution to our 'Just a Second' programme.

Accounts:

Laura Geraty and Brendan Malone for doing the accounts – and Boylan & Dodd our auditors.

Other:

Special thanks to Marie Patten for tremendous work – together with Lisa – on the Afri archives. Much of this work was completed in 2018.

We thank our funders: Irish Aid, WorldWide Global Schools, Trócaire, Concern, Irish Quaker Faith in Action and Porticus. Also, special thanks to St. Patrick's Kiltegan, the Spiritans and Christian Aid for their generous support in recent years and to the Jesuits and Mercy sisters for their support in 2018.

Joe Murray

Afri Co-ordinator