



# AFRI

## DIRECTORS' REPORT

For the year ended 31 December 2019

## 1. Introduction

'No one is too small to make a difference', these concise but profound words from the inimitable Greta Thunberg pervaded and inspired our work in 2019. After decades in classrooms raising awareness about issues of global justice, human rights and climate change, it was heartening to see young people taking to the streets in such large numbers throughout 2019. As stated in the recent edition of our newsletter, "while politicians and Corporations dither, delay and obfuscate, young people in Ireland and around the world got out on the streets and demanded action".

Such activity by young people was, undoubtedly, a highlight of 2019 but on the other end of the age range also was our work with Veterans for Peace members Tarak Kauff (77) and Ken Mayers (82) – following their arrest and imprisonment at Shannon Airport, because of their action aimed at highlighting the disgraceful misuse of that airport as a US military base. Our support for Ken and Tarak included organising a number of speaking events, at one of which €1000 was raised. They both also spoke and made a profound impact at our Hedge School in Blanchardstown in November.

We used every opportunity to highlight the fact that the Direct Provision system is 'unfit for purpose'. This included a public meeting in Moville, County Donegal, organised by former Board members Rose Kelly and Donal O'Kelly and addressed by current Board member Donnah Vuma. We also made a submission on Direct Provision to the Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality.

We hosted the launch of Clare O'Grady Walshe's new book *Globalisation and Seed Sovereignty in Sub Saharan Africa* at the Law Library. This is a very significant contribution to the issue of Seed and Food Sovereignty and we are confident that its impact will continue to be felt in the years ahead.

In a similar vein we were pleased with the success of our two Food Sovereignty events in Mayo and Maynooth. In the process we've established a strong relationship with La Via Campesina through its European Coordinator Hanny Van Geel, as well as strengthening our partnerships with Feasta, the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology and the Geography Department in Maynooth University.

The link with La Via Campesina was further enhanced when Hanny led the Doolough Famine Walk which has now entered its 4<sup>th</sup> decade. Other leaders were Oisín Coughlan of Friends of the Earth and songwriter Pete St. John who introduced his composition on Climate Change "Waltzing on Borrowed Time".

Féile Bríde attracted a full house of over 150 people and our Hedge School had to be moved to a bigger venue due to the growing interest in Technological University Dublin (TUD), Blanchardstown. In addition, we officially launched an Afri Library in TUD Blanchardstown.

We published our ‘Lesson Plans’ to be used in Schools alongside our educational resources: *Lessons from History, Pathways of Peace* and *Exploring Development Education through Drama and Theatre*. The Lesson Plans were well received and were used as the central core of our Teacher Training seminar in 2019. These Lesson Plans form one element of our awareness raising programme in secondary schools, funded by WorldWise Global Schools.

Our archives, incorporating over 40 years of Afri work, were accepted by DCU Library and are accessible there on request. Lisa and Marie Patten’s sterling work on these deserve special thanks and appreciation.

Short films on human rights themes, made by RoJ on behalf of Afri, received nearly 20,000 views on our Youtube Channel. These included: ‘*US Vets expose Government Complicity in War Crimes*’, ‘*A Human Perspective on Direct Provision*’ and ‘*Guardians...not Gardeners*’ (filmed at Féile Bríde and promoting Biodiversity).

We produced a postcard in opposition to the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal in the Shannon estuary, and opposition to this also featured in ‘Taste the Pure Drop’, a documentary made by RoJ and supported by Afri, looking at the issue of pollution on the river Shannon and what we can do about it.

We continued to work with our partners in Kenya to enable them to purchase solar lights for children, midwives and families there

On corporate governance we continued to maintain compliance with the Governance Code and in 2019 prepared for the implementation of the Charity Regulator's new Code of Governance for Charities. In consultation with board member Emer Lynam we also reviewed a number of our policies to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

## **2. Development Education**

### **2.1 Hedge School/ Scoil Chois Cláí**

The Hedge School in 2019 had to be moved to a bigger venue – such is the growing interest as the event entered its seventh year. It is the culmination of a series of seminars organised in partnership with third year students from the Community and Youth Development course in TUD Blanchardstown (TUD/B), previously known as the Institute of Technology. The participants looked at the issues of food, fashion and fuel – how they contribute to climate change and what we can do about it. Speakers included Saoirse McHugh and Eddie Mitchell of Love Leitrim as well as Donal O’Kelly, who together with Brian Fleming and Ellen Cranitch performed an intriguing piece inspired by Greta Thunberg’s dog, called “Roxy’s Head is Melted”. The event was opened by Dr Pat O’Connor, Head of the School of Humanities, who spoke about the importance of the programme and the partnership

between TUD/B and Afri and restated his commitment to ensuring that global justice issues would remain high on the agenda as the Institute of Technology transitioned to the new entity of TUD. Saoirse McHugh, high profile environmental activist, set the scene for the day by highlighting the sustainability issues that face us as a global community. She paid particular attention to the damage caused by the ‘Fast Fashion’ Industry – a theme that was taken up in a student workshop later in the day. Eddie Mitchell dwelt on what we can learn from the success of the anti-fracking campaign, spearheaded by Love Leitrim. An unexpected extra dimension was added by the input of US Veterans for Peace Tarak Kauff and Ken Mayers. The day was interwoven with student-led music, creative arts pieces and theatre. Reactions from participating students included the following: “*I was largely unaware of the injustices associated with the fashion industry*“, “*I will now be more aware when buying clothes and will be making my friends and family aware of these issues*”, “*I have been inspired to work towards change and making the world a better place*”.

In a follow up ceremony in December, the Afri Human Rights Library was launched in the Library of TUD/B.

## **2.2 International Peace Conference**

‘We’ve won campaigns and had successes and we must celebrate and remember these as we take on the challenges that lie ahead’, so said Trócaire Director Caoimhe de Barra, setting the tone for Afri’s Féile Bríde Conference, 2019.

She recalled East Timor’s long campaign, and the genocide perpetrated against it, and how it eventually gained its independence, with much support from around the world, especially in Ireland.

Caoimhe also referred to other successful campaigns, like for example creating market access for Fair Trade products, whereby you can now find fair trade tea, coffee and bananas in many supermarkets – something that was unthinkable 25 years ago.

She recalled the success of the Jubilee campaign, which brought about cancellation of debt, lifting some of the burden off the backs of some of the poorest countries in the world. She recalled how significant advances have been made in poverty reduction; in participation by children in Primary education; in gender equality; in access to clean water and in reducing the mortality rate for children. ‘This shows us that progress can be achieved in a generation’. She quoted from the founding document of Trócaire which states: ‘Let us never get accustomed to the injustices in this world...and let us never grow weary in the work of setting it right.’ Caoimhe concluded ‘My wish for everyone here is that we never grow weary; that we see the successes; we see the progress; we see the challenges but that we never grow weary of the work in hand’.

Next up, Richard Moore of Derry-based organisation Children in Crossfire, spoke about ‘Educating the Heart’ – ‘the cultivation of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary... for a compassionate citizen’. Richard spoke specifically about ‘Educating the

Heart' through the prism of his own story. He said his aim was to acknowledge the things in his life that made it possible for him 'not only to survive being shot and blinded at the age of ten but to actually see blindness as a positive experience'. 'When you are blind you meet people in a different way' and experience kindness and love at first hand. Having experienced such tremendous love and compassion in his own life as a result of being blinded, he wanted to share that experience with others. 'What I wanted to do was give back the kindness and compassion that was shown to me'. He has done this in many ways, including through the work of Children in Crossfire which he founded in 1998.

Michael Doorly of Concern began by asking us to 'press pause' on our fears and frustrations and consider some positive news from recent years. For example, every day in 2018 another 305,000 people were able to access clean water for the first time; never have child deaths been less common; never before have so many people been literate or lived such long lives. Quoting the journalist Nicholas Kristoff he said, 'despite all the information out there, never have people been so misinformed.' And he went on to say that 'a failure to acknowledge progress leaves people feeling hopeless and ready to give up, while recognising gains made will show us what is possible and spur us on to more'.

Looking at 'education for liberation', Michael said that the problem with elitist education is that we are teaching 'more and more to less and less'. The purpose of education should be 'to empower and liberate' and we should start by listening. 'We need to recognise the strengths and resources that people already have and work with them to develop more'.

He referred to the funding deficit for education – there is a \$39 billion shortfall in the global budget required to provide good quality primary education for all. Though this might sound substantial, it is less than half the budget for just one weapons system – the stealth bomber, which is \$90 billion.

Meghan Carmody represents a new generation of activists with passion and determination to see our world transformed. Meghan said that the energy for action among young people is really growing and she profiled many young activists to emphasise this point. Under the Schools Climate Action Network, young people are mobilising and striking out for real change in policies and political priorities. Meghan spoke about her work in Friends of the Earth which includes the solar schools project – persuading and supporting schools to place solar panels on their roofs to demonstrate the value of this form of alternative energy. Already schools in every province are involved in a pilot scheme which will be built on in coming years. Meghan's role is to build activism and leadership to bring about the political will to implement the solutions that exist.

A highlight of the day was an intervention by 10-year old Ruby Jo, who is part of a climate action group in her school called 'There is no Planet B', which, appropriately, was launched on February 14th, Valentine's Day.

Finally we had Brigidine sister Kay Mulhall who set up the Tallaght Intercultural Drop-in Centre in 2003, the focus of which is to welcome migrants and refugees who are seeking to make their home here. The Brigidine community supported the setting up of this centre,

which aims to be a warm and welcoming place where new communities can meet and get to know one another. Kay started her work by listening to the needs which the migrants expressed, saying she firmly believes that societies are enriched by sharing cultures, language, food, art and music. The aim of the centre is to build bridges... not walls. Language was identified by migrants as an extremely important skill to have. When there was an attempt to close down the centre, a great cohort of volunteers organised and resisted and managed to reverse the decision. Kay concluded by saying: ‘we are all part of the one web of life and this web includes our Planet.’

Yemi Ojo said her experience of the Drop in Centre was that the door was always open and people were always made welcome. It was a place where you could relax and be yourself. Finally, Yemi said that ‘welcoming the stranger’ can be a collective or an individual act: but we all must do our part’

### **2.3 Famine Walk**

In 2019, Afri began a fourth decade of walking, remembering and expressing solidarity on the famine road in the Doolough Valley in County Mayo. Many themes had been explored in the previous thirty years of walking. People from all over the world have joined us, representing communities and nations who are under the cosh of oppression and injustice, as was the case in Ireland in the 1840s.

In 2019, Pete St John was on hand to introduce his song about climate change – “Waltzing on Borrowed Time”— which was accompanied by music and dancers from the locally-based Cresham Academy.

Walk leaders Oisín Coughlan from Friends of the Earth and Hanny Van Geel from ‘La Via Campesina’ expanded on this theme. Oisín pointed out that the Dáil had passed a Bill declaring a climate emergency and, following the ‘green wave’ in the recent local elections, now needed to take urgent action to tackle this emergency.

Hanny emphasised the urgent need to support sustainable means of food production rather than allowing control of the food we eat to be more completely controlled by corporations whose only concern is profit. Walkers were then ferried to Delphi Lodge, where we planted a tree before setting off for Louisburgh. A welcome new dimension was the provision of tea and coffee along the route by the agri-tourist centre called Glenkeen Farm.

### **2.4 Food for Thought’ /Lón Intinn**

More than forty people attended ‘Food for Thought’ at Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) Castlebar on the eve of the Famine Walk. This event, a follow-up from last year’s, was a collaboration between Afri, GMIT and Feasta. The event was focused on transformational change in the context of food systems and food sovereignty. John Hoban and Emer Mayoock provided music to ground, enliven, entertain and provoke reflection throughout the day.

Hanny Van Geel gave the opening address in which she stated that 70% of the world's food is produced by small producers, the majority of them women. The food sovereignty movement needs maximum participation from members of society: growing, cooking, writing, educating and advocating for small producers. The big question for the future is: who is going to be producing our food – small-scale, sovereign grassroots producers or big companies?

Following a discussion in relation to Hanny's input, Joss and Ború Douthwaite facilitated a session in which all participants reflected on instances of transformation in which they had taken part or witnessed.

Participants brought delicious food to share at lunchtime, which highlighted the value of sharing as a way of being in the world.

John Hoban started the afternoon with a new song about the four mountains of Mayo, which he sang for the first time in the outdoor space after lunch. The second guest speaker, Michael McCaughan emphasised the value of multilingualism as a help to seeing the world and acting in it in diverse ways. Speaking in Irish, Spanish and English he emphasised the importance of minority languages and cultures in today's mono-cultural world, and particularly the link with local resilience.

Among the attendees were representatives of the following groups/institutions: Irish Environmental Network; Maynooth University 'Communiversities' Group; Community Gardens; Mayo Organic Group; Food Sovereignty Ireland; Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association (IOFGA); Talamh Beo; La via Campesina; Celbridge CSA; Headford Community Garden; GMIT; Columbans Philippines; and the Irish Beekeepers Association. Feedback comments included: *"Another excellent event by Afri, FEASTA & GMIT. Look forward to next year's event – very relaxing, but invigorating day. I learned that I must try harder; keep going; be more radical; push back against the machine"*.

## **2.5 Maynooth University 'Food Sovereignty' Conference**

As indicated above, food sovereignty is about movements of citizens striving for democratic control of our food system. It is grounded in a belief in creating a new food system in which production and distribution protects the environment and the rights of all people to access resources such as land, seeds, and knowledge. Food Sovereignty requires transforming the current agricultural structure in Ireland and beyond. In April 2019, the Department of Geography in Maynooth University together with the Department of Sociology, the Department of Adult & Community Education, and the Department of International Development in partnership with Afri, Trocaire and Food Sovereignty Ireland hosted a unique day of participatory activities with excellent speakers and numerous opportunities for debate and discussion about changing food systems. Workshops included themes such as 'collective sustainability', 'building and sustaining community' and a keynote address on 'Food, Climate Change and the need for Transformation'. Comments afterwards included: *"This coming together of academic Institutions, activists and practitioners on a theme as important as food sovereignty is very unusual, encouraging and enlightening"*.

## **2.6 Carlow Famine Walk: Rohingya Action Ireland**

Nearly a hundred people attended the 6th annual Carlow famine walk in 2019 organised by Afri in partnership with Institute of Technology (IT) Carlow and Carlow County Council. A large group of students from Knockbeg College, accompanied by their teacher Ciara Murphy, were among those who walked the short distance from IT Carlow to the nearby Famine graveyard.

On arrival in the Famine Graveyard, walkers were addressed by local historian Martin Nevin, who spoke about the Carlow workhouse and the harsh conditions that existed there. He explained how “families were split up, husbands and wives separated and children also separated from their parents. Some children never saw their parents again after they entered the workhouse.” This helps explain why the ‘Poorhouse’ was the object of such hostility and hatred among Irish people for many years afterwards.

The next speaker was Stephanie McDermott of Rohingya Action Ireland, who was accompanied by members of the Rohingya community living in Carlow. Stephanie said that the main aim of Rohingya Action Ireland, at that time, was to have the Freedom of Galway City withdrawn from Aung San Suu Kyi because of the treatment of the Rohingya in Burma. 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.

The final speaker was Rev. David White of the local Church of Ireland who spoke about ‘scarcity’ during the time of An Gorta Mór and today and how solidarity requires us to stand with those who are suffering today, like the Rohingya.

Carlow IT Chaplain called for a moment’s silence before RoJ sang his very moving and appropriate song the Arc of Solitude while we planted an oak tree as a symbol of life in a place of death.

## **2.7 Teacher training and school seminars:**

We were pleased with the success of our 2019 Teacher Training Seminar which introduced the methodologies used by Afri in relation to our core themes of famine, anti-militarisation, climate justice and food sovereignty. The introductory session included input from Joe Murray and Karen Jeffares and was followed by a theatre workshop led by Pete Mullineaux. Nicola Winters also contributed ideas around good Global Citizenship Education (GCE) practice from the perspective of a practitioner with extensive experience. The second session was facilitated by Karen Jeffares, who used Afri’s Lesson Plans as a means of modelling good GCE practice. Teachers were invited to comment and give feedback. Other resources, such as those of DevelopmentEducation.ie, UBUNTU and Comhlamh, were introduced to the teachers. Comments from teachers present included: “What I learned will be a positive addition to the repertoire of activities I have regarding global issues and integrating them to curriculum studies”. “I learned about a range of creative, innovative approaches to exploring ideas and lessons in the Global Citizenship Education area” and “It was extremely beneficial to meet and discuss things with likeminded people”.



## **2.8 Lesson Plans**

As mentioned, The Lesson Plans based on resources previously produced by Afri were used as part of the Teacher Training and were distributed to teachers on the day and to other teachers in our network throughout the year. Covering four subject areas originally – History, English, Geography and CSPE and suitable for use in Religion Class – we have now added another module in Irish. Information was given as to where and how these can be used in the various subject areas in our training. The Lesson Plans re-inforce the messages of critical thinking, questioning, reflection, participative methodologies, curriculum links and follow up action. The addition of a module in Irish has brought a new dimension to the Lesson Plans and responds to a neglected sector in GCE. A teacher in Scoil Chaitriona commented that he is “looking forward to using the resource, which will fill a vacuum that exists regarding GCE resources for Schools teaching through the medium of Irish”.

## **2.9 School Work**

We visited seven of the eight schools in our network but were unable to conclude our programme due to the impact of Covid 19 (more on this in next year’s report). Here we report on the programme in a few schools to give a flavour of our overall secondary schools programme.

Nicola Winters led a series of workshops in Templeogue College, with teacher Amy Kelly and 20 Transition Year (TY) students. Nicola began with an introduction to Afri, outlining its history, campaigns and activism. In a subsequent workshop, she facilitated a discussion around what is GCE, and what would the students like to see different in their world and what do they feel they can do about it. She later introduced the 4 pillars of GCE: Critical thinking; Problem Solving; Systems thinking and Active Citizenship. Another session consisted of watching a film ‘Leave No-one Behind’ on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and personal stories behind the goals. Students gave feedback on what impacted them. Afri’s resources were central to the programme. In another session, students divided into groups and each took an activist’s story to read through. They then presented the story to the rest of the class. Nicola reported: “We looked at common themes and reflected on the legacy each of the people have left in the world and on what it takes to be an activist”.

In Galway, Pete Mullineaux facilitated three workshops in Salerno Secondary School and four workshops in St. Endas. He examined the SDGs and the challenges still posed by inequality and disempowerment in relation to issues such as climate change, war, hunger and gender inequality. Pete explained, “We talked about how important it was to have a voice – and to use it – we compared the voices of Greta Thunberg & President Trump – how they both spoke to an audience of billions of people – even from the same platform – but the huge difference in how each had acquired their voice - and were finding themselves being listened to”. Pete added, “The students were engaged, even captivated, by the subject matter.

In Drimnagh, Pete said “During one visit, the school had a ‘well-being’ health day going on and I was able to link themes of mental & emotional health to the work we are doing around

development – about feeling good about oneself, having a voice, being the change, etc. We explored the issue of ‘marginalised voices’ – such as Greta Thunberg & Malala Yousafzai. I talked about my own work as a writer, as a dramatist and poet and how I found my own voice when I was around their age, listening to blues people like Leadbelly, Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie and Buffy St Marie. We used the rap poem at the start of the play “More’!, in the Afri Resource as a stimulus to discussion. Similar themes were focused on and explored in all the other participating schools in our network”.

We continued with a workshop as Gaeilge in Ennis Community College – Gaelcholáiste an Chláir – building on previous work.

## **2.10 Outdoor Classrooms**

The two outdoor classroom events – one held in Meath and the other in Galway – were very successful again in 2019. Joe Murray made the link between the Irish Famine and contemporary issues of food insecurity and forced migration at the Celia Griffin Memorial in Galway. Donal O’Kelly developed this theme further at the Galway Bay hotel. Other contributors were poet Moya Roddy who read Eavan Boland’s powerful poem “Quarantine”, while Pete Mullineaux facilitated a creative workshop which allowed students to respond to the issues raised. The event concluded with the Arc of Solitude, written and performed by RoJ Whelan.

In the second outdoor classroom event the workhouse and the famine graveyard in Dunshaughlin Co. Meath provided an evocative backdrop to explore issues of power and powerlessness, hunger, inequality and sustainability. This was followed by a seminar in Dunboyne Castle hotel at which Katie O’Kelly performed an excerpt from her powerful play “The Olive Tree” and Donal O’Kelly explored issues relating to refugees, asylum seekers and people in direct provision. Pete Mullineaux concluded the seminar with a highly participative student activity that generated great energy and great discussion.

## **3. Campaigns**

### **3.1 Direct Provision**

With the announcement in the closing months of 2018 that a local hotel had been ear-marked as a Direct Provision centre, Direct Provision became a ‘live’ issue for the town of Merville and surrounding area. Merville is the hometown of Rose Kelly, until recently a Board member of Afri. As a response to the negative reaction from some, Afri supported Rose in organising an event in Merville Town Hall. The event began with a performance by Donal O’ Kelly of his dramatic piece on Direct Provision. Donal’s performance was followed by testimony from Afri Board member Donnah Vuma, who gave first-hand experience of what it is like to live within the Direct Provision system with her three young children. Donnah also represented MASI (Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland), of which she is also a member.

Afri also made a submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality regarding Direct Provision which concluded with the following Recommendations:

1. The Direct Provision system was designed to be punitive, a “pull-factor deterrent” when it was devised, and it is an enduring and ugly stain on Ireland’s humanitarian reputation since its introduction as a temporary measure almost two decades ago. It must be abolished completely and replaced with a process that respects international protection applicants and treats them with dignity, as is their right as human beings, and as is Ireland’s responsibility to provide as signatory to UNHCR directives.
2. There should be a reappraisal and right of re-submission for all international protection applicants caught up in the alarming and haphazard introduction of the International Protection Office procedures in 2017. This has resulted in possible wrongful rejection of refugee applications due to lack of opportunity for legal consultation, and pursuant deportation orders against people who did not receive due transparent process as described in UNHCR directives on asylum seeker reception procedures.
3. Forcible deportations must be ended, and the rights of children and partners of those faced with deportation to the rights of parental and/or relationship association must be given due regard and precedence.

### **3.2 Anti-militarisation**

#### **Resisting the U/S war machine and Ireland’s complicity in it**

An Afri public meeting, which took place in the Teachers’ Club in July featuring Veterans for Peace Members Ken Mayers and Tarak Kauff, raised €1000 to support Ken and Tarak while they await trial in Ireland following their peace action at Shannon Airport.

Ken and Tarak addressed the audience about the reasons for their actions and their commitment to opposing US militarism which they stated was a major cause of misery around the world, including to serving members of the military themselves (quoting a figure of 22 suicides per day), along with being a major cause of world pollution.

Ken Mayers explained that the USA has 800 military bases around the world in addition to the 400 on its own territory: their infrastructure, fuel expenditure and waste is, he stated, a major cause of pollution. Both men belong to Veterans for Peace which campaigns against the US militarisation of the economy, war, interference in the affairs of other states and for better treatment of veterans. Recently they also supported a campaign against concentration camps for migrants along the US-Mexico border.

Ken Mayers, 82 years of age, and Tarak Kauff, 77, spent 13 days on remand in Limerick jail, where their toilet did not flush unless they poured buckets of water into it. Other than that, they said they were treated well and the other prisoners treated them “like celebrities”.

The reason for their bail being refused during that period was Garda objections that they would flee the jurisdiction. Tarak Kauff exposed the illogicality of this ‘fear’ to the audience, explaining that they had taken their action at Shannon knowing that they would be arrested and wanting to use the trial to expose what was going on at Shannon airport: “For us not to attend that trial, they would have to physically drag us away from there!”

They were eventually granted bail on condition they remain within the Irish state and having to surrender their passports, due to Garda objections again that they might flee. . They eventually had their passports returned to them just before Christmas of 2019. In reply to questions from the audience about the cost to themselves, Ken Mayers revealed he was due to be on his honeymoon at that time with his new bride.

### **Save the Earth, Abolish War**

Joe Murray attended a conference in London, organised by the Movement for the Abolition of War and entitled ‘Save the Earth, Abolish War’. The first speaker was Peter van den Dungen of the International Network of Peace Museums, who referenced the title of a book he recently bought entitled ‘the end of the world generation’. He described as ‘diabolical’ and ‘the road to destruction’ the philosophy based on the theory ‘if you want peace, prepare for war’. He argued for the abolition of war and rejected the notion that it was not achievable – in the same way as people in the past rejected the notion that slavery could not be abolished; that women should not have the vote; that child labour was acceptable and that the dreadful practise of duelling was an honourable pursuit. Our ideas of right and wrong change, over time – and it is now well past time that the very idea of war was consigned to the dustbin of history.

The Second speaker was Dr Stuart Parkinson of Scientists for Global Responsibility, who outlined the impact of war and militarism on our Planet in clear and graphic terms. 60,000 US Military vehicles run at 6 miles to the gallon: F-35 fighter planes do 0.6 miles to the gallon – 100 times the pollution level of a new car; B-2 long range bomber does 0.3 miles to the gallon ; 250 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per ‘mission’ 3.2 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e emitted by UK military in one year – higher than the carbon emissions from Iceland; BAE Carbon emissions were 1.2 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e 2017/18; the pentagon is the world’s largest Institutional consumer of petroleum; US military emits 59 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e; US arms industry emissions for 2017 – 280 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e; War on terror has caused 3000 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e

He pointed out that US negotiators successfully argued for military carbon emissions to be excluded from targets under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (Clinton Administration) but they were included under Paris agreement.

Military emissions are going downwards (slightly) under the slogan “more fight – less fuel”!

## **Peacemeal Change**

‘Peacemeal Change’ is a programme of action research designed to challenge and transform the military culture and practices so prevalent, often unseen, within our societies.

As part of this initiative, students in Trinity College were invited to a convivial lunch where personnel from Afri and Concern, and their own teachers and fellow-students, outlined the present state of knowledge about Irish involvement in the arms industry, and indicated the urgent need for much wider and deeper research.

What military-related research is being carried out, and also what research is being done reflecting UN Charter Article 29’s principles of peaceful and law-bound responses to conflict situations, and the lessons of our own Peace Process and others?

This agenda was addressed by the ‘peacemeal’ step of studying the students’ own institution and its specific contributions to war, and to peace. The practice of a simple, convivial meal was to become an enduring and symbolic thread in the project.

### **Afghanistan: the forgotten war**

Afri organised a meeting in the Teachers club in October with Dr. Hakim who is a native of Singapore but who has worked for more than a decade in Afghanistan. Dr Hakim’s time is spent primarily on humanitarian work. He is an international coordinator of an NGO he started called the Afghan Peace Volunteers, a group of young Afghans working together for non-violence.

Few remember that the war on Afghanistan started a month after 9/11 and now, nearly two decades later, it seems not much closer to ending than the day it started. A forgotten war, it is now the longest in US history and is estimated to have claimed 150,000 Afghan lives and a confirmed 455 soldiers from the UK alone. Afghanistan has been classified the most dangerous country in the world, while UN data indicates that more civilians are killed or injured due to armed conflict there than anywhere else in the world.

But still there is hope inspired by grassroots actions and civil society organizing. Dr. Hakim, who is himself a source of hope, spoke about the positive things that are happening in the midst of the horror of ongoing war.

### **3.3 Book Launch: Globalisation and Seed Sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Afri, together with DCU School of Law and Politics and Children in Crossfire, hosted the launch of this book by Clare O’Grady Walshe in November 2019. Seed sovereignty means that each society has the right to access their own seeds and biodiversity in order to feed and develop their people. It allows farmers sow the seeds that have been sown locally for centuries. With globalization, the influence of large corporate food groups has spread to even the most traditional areas, leading to ownership of seeds shifting from local to corporate control. Seed laws, patents, genetically modified seeds impact on local food production patterns and the lives of millions.

*Globalisation and Seed Sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa* looks closely at how poorer countries struggle to hold onto control of the most basic of human needs, the need to eat. Making connections between the environment, climate justice, global economics and food production, Clare argues that access to diverse, locally suitable seed is a major buffer against hunger. As world leaders are forced to pay more attention to climate change she also argues that support for seed sovereignty can redress some of the damage to vulnerable communities.

The event was very successful with a large number of people in attendance. Contributors on the night included Richard Moore of Children in Crossfire; Professor Iain McMennamin, Head of School of Law and Politics, DCU; Matthew Jebb, Director of the National Botanic Gardens; Anita Hayes, founder of Irish Seed Savers Association; Turlough O'Donnell S.C; and Olive Moore of Trocaire. Dervla Murphy was unable to attend but sent a video message. Music was provided by Steve Cooney, Tommy Hayes and Cormac Breatnach.

#### **4. Links**

##### **Solar lights for Kenya**

Our partnership with Development Pamoja and the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network continued throughout 2019. Our Christmas fundraising campaign was successful and we were able to support the provision of more solar lights for families, students and mid-wives. In addition we supported a Development Pamoja Food Security project and we also presented a copy of Clare's book to its founder and Co-director, James Hennessy.

We took part in protests during the Trump visit, regarding the burning of the Amazon and many more besides.

##### **Acknowledgments**

- Special thanks to Larysa for her tremendous work in many areas including reports/applications and financial matters. Her contribution to Afri cannot be overstated and we consider ourselves lucky to have her in a key role.
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Joe Murray  
Afri Co-ordinator