



AFRI

DIRECTORS' REPORT

For the year ended 31 December 2020

1. Introduction

Writing a report to cover the events of 2020 is a strange and somewhat surreal experience. For a while it looked like it might consist of an almost completely blank page but as time went on that page began to be filled in and in the end, as is evident from the report that follows, there has been quite a lot to write about. The year started off like any other – we sent out our Peacemaker newsletter, material for our ‘Brigid’ schools campaign and prepared for Féile Bríde, which came and went with its usual message of new hope and new beginnings. We had the Carlow famine walk and then everything changed as lockdowns, face covering, social distancing, PPE, flattening the curve and sanitising entered the lexicon and became the order of the day! The question then became how does Afri’s work continue in these challenging new circumstances. Things shifted quickly from working in the office to working at home, from meetings in person to meetings on Zoom and on Skype. When Lisa suggested doing the Famine Walk online it seemed like an absurd idea but now some 15 months later it is no longer a strange or unrealistic concept.

People have suffered from social isolation, sickness and sadly in some cases from the death of a loved one, during this period. But people also showed an admirable ability to adapt to new circumstances. Afri also showed dexterity and flexibility and became a ‘leader in the field’ in terms of working creatively online. Great credit is due to members of the Board for their support but especially to Larysa, who worked from Belarus for a number of months and RoJ, both of whom showed tremendous resilience, flexibility, and commitment throughout this whole period. We also acknowledge the contribution of Ruairi McKiernan who lent his considerable technological and social media skills to Afri for several of our events and activities.

2. Global Citizenship Education

2.1 Féile Bríde

One of our few actual events was Féile Bríde, which was entitled ‘Rekindling; Revitalising; Rewilding and Restoring’ and was set in the context of the need for urgent action on climate change. Over recent years, many people, of all ages, are getting actively involved in fighting for change. This was reflected at the conference, where we heard from a number of mature activists who have been around for some time but also from Ruby Jo, who set up “There is no Planet B” as an 11-year old activist! This shows that we can all be involved in action to tackle climate change – as Greta Thunberg says ‘no-one is too small to make a difference’. This was the 28th year of tending the Brigid flame in Kildare, which as Rita Minehan explained, was lit at the first Afri Conference in 1993 and burns as a “beacon of hope, peace and justice.” It was noted, that one of the trademarks of those who attend Féile Bríde is a spirit of positivity and hope, and a determination, no matter what, to keep on working for a better world for all.

At the beginning of the event we had beautiful music from Cormac Breatnach, Steve Cooney, Emer Lynam and Roger Whelan.

The first speaker of the day was Clare O’Grady Walshe, who had recently published her book “*Globalisation and Seed Sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa*”. Clare spoke about why seed diversity matters for our food supply because crops can get wiped out by disease and climate change, which can lead to hunger and death as we know from our experience of An Gorta Mór.

Mary Reynolds spoke about how we need to be aware of biodiversity and habitat loss. She founded a movement called We are the Ark – Ark standing for Acts of Restorative Kindness. This happens when a green space is allowed to grow freely, so it can restore itself back to the way it was.

Our third speaker Nelly McLaughlin explained that “every day is earth day.” Nelly spoke about Green Sod Ireland which works with local communities to restore habitats and enhance biodiversity. In some cases, land has been given to Green Sod Ireland where it is held in trust for the future welfare of people and planet. “We live in a planet of abundance, not scarcity”, she said.

After lunch, we had wonderful lively and energetic music from the Dublin Ukulele Collective, which had the participants on their feet to the sound of Creedence Clearwater Revival’s ‘Bad Moon Rising’ among other classics.

Ruby-Jo then spoke about “*There is no Planet B*” – a club that she and her friend Isabella set up when they were in fourth class. Ruby-Jo wants to inspire others to stand together to make a change and raise awareness of climate change. She certainly inspired those of us lucky enough to hear her speak on February 8th.

Shivam O’Brien then spoke about how he was involved in allowing 200 acres of Welsh forest to return to its wild nature. This is an extraordinary example of what can happen when land is allowed to heal and restore itself.

Michael Long of Cabragh Wetlands was our final speaker and said that “each person’s awareness is important”. He explained how wetlands are rich in biodiversity. And how the Wetlands where he works have up to 15 different habitats including ponds, reed swamps, hedgerows, streams and wild flower meadows. It is frequented by walkers, photographers, artists, families and children in search of knowledge. It is a great place to educate future generations about the importance of conservation, preservation and biodiversity.

The day concluded with RoJ Whelan singing the great Pete St John song about Climate Change – ‘Waltzing on Borrowed Time’ – including the verse:

*“Across the world in every land, let a new awareness grow
That Nations must protect the earth
As the seeds of hope we sow
A hope, a dream, a way of life when man and nature rhyme
And creatures of the earth won’t need to waltz on borrowed time”*

2.2 Carlow Famine Walk

Climate Change was the theme of the Carlow Walk which began in IT Carlow and concluded in the nearby Famine graveyard. Approximately 70 young people attended from schools including Gaelscoil Eoghain and Tyndale College. Each year an oak tree is planted as part of the ceremony of remembrance and solidarity and this year the tree was supplied by two Transition Year students – Eimear and Abbie – who had set up a company to grow and sell trees as part of their course. Thanks to Eimear and Abbie for this excellent initiative and generous gift.

Among the speakers was Lynne Whelan, who is Design Strategist at Design+ Technology Gateway, in IT Carlow. She gave a moving account of the history behind the Famine Graveyard in which she estimated that 3000 people are buried.

Sinead Doyle, who works to promote the Sustainable Development Goals with Carlow County Council spoke about what Carlow County Council is doing to tackle climate change. Their areas of concern include land-use and natural resources and the Famine Graveyard provides opportunities in this regard.

Joe spoke about re-wilding and the great importance of preserving sites such as the Famine Graveyard in Carlow and of treating them with dignity and respect. He raised the possibility of the Famine Graveyard – a symbol of hunger and death – becoming a sign of hope and of life by becoming a place of abundant biodiversity. He referenced the work of Mary Reynolds, founder of ‘We are the Ark’ and advised participants to check out her website.

Martin Smith from IT Carlow also spoke about how mass hunger still happens in the world and how An Gorta Mór is an important part of our history. He then asked for a moment’s silence to remember the significance of the place in which we were standing and to reflect on the real human stories of those who were buried there.

There were a number of teachers present and some parents of the young people as well as students and Lecturers from The Institute of Technology Carlow, Carlow College and representatives of the Rohingya Community.

The event concluded with music from RoJ, who played ‘The Arc of Solitude’ on the theme of solidarity.

2.3 Doolough Famine Walk – online

Despite the strangeness of doing the Famine Walk virtually instead of actually – there was an immediate sense that this would be a memorable event, when we went on air on Saturday, May 16th for the first ever online Famine Walk. The easy and friendly personality of our host, Ruairi, set the tone for a remarkable two hours of recollection, reflection, insight, conversation, inspiration and beautiful music. The wonderful music was provided by Colm Mac Con Iomaire, who spoke powerfully about the ‘collective vulnerability’ that we were experiencing during the pandemic, before playing a stunning version of Róisín Dubh. Emer Lynam spoke about an oil spill affecting the Kichwa tribe in the Amazon Rainforest before playing a beautiful piece by O’Carolan. And RoJ Whelan, who had just released his new album ‘Sacred Moods’ brought the curtain down with the ‘Afri anthem’, ‘The Arc of solitude’ – accompanied by singer-songwriter Paul O’Toole.

Many friends from the ‘Afri community’ joined in from around Ireland and around the world – from eleven countries including Brazil, India and El Salvador and 23 counties around Ireland. We saw familiar names coming up on screen as well as new people learning about the Famine Walk for the first time. Between 200 and 300 people were ‘present’ for the duration, while there were almost 2000 ‘views’ within 24 hours!

Following some reminiscences from Joe on more than three decades of the walk, John Maguire spoke about the Doolough Tragedy as being “an exemplary tragedy, within a huge catastrophe”. He also pointed out that more money was spent on maintaining the military than on food relief during the period of An Gorta Mór. In one example, two guns and fifty soldiers were used to escort a shipment of food – not into – but out of Waterford harbour to feed the colonial economy.

Clare O’Grady Walshe described this as ‘such a hopeful time’ during her powerful input. She said the Covid 19 pandemic, amidst the sadness and grief, also provides a monumental opportunity for ‘restoration, recovery, revitalization, remembering and putting things back together so that we can have the sovereignty to grow in our own place’. Mother Earth needs to breathe and we need policies to be put in place to support ‘conservation through use’. “We cannot allow ourselves to be caught again in the trap of monoculturism, we need polyculturism, and hubs of seed sovereignty all around the country and the world.”

Donnah Vuma, speaking from Limerick, said that she hoped the Covid 19 pandemic has shown that the Direct Provision system is totally unfit for purpose. The pandemic has highlighted all the major flaws with the system. She expressed the hope that we would soon see a move away from DP to a more humane system, where people are accommodated within the community and where the ‘profit model’ has been totally abolished. There is hope, she believes, in the sense that the campaign to end DP is louder and stronger and public opinion is more informed. “If we are able to come together to fight the pandemic, why can’t we do the same to fight other injustices”.

Our youngest speaker, Gráinne Malone got the opportunity to take part in a climate action while in France and it was a pivotal moment in her life. Since then, the issue of climate change has been a priority for her. She was chosen as one of the delegates to represent Offaly in the Youth Assembly and was one of over 150 young people who took over the Dáil for a day and came up with a series of recommendations for Government on climate change. She strongly believes that change is possible, “we can do things in our own lives that make a difference and we must keep up the pressure for action on this most critical issue”.

In his contribution Michael Doorly from Concern said that “we honour the memory of those who died in our own ‘Famine’ by striving to end famine, hunger and injustice everywhere in our world today.” He added that the World Food programme has warned that the Coronavirus crisis will push more than a quarter of a billion people to the brink of starvation, unless swift action is taken. “Meanwhile in Kenya and ten other countries in East Africa a swarm of locusts have been decimating crops since December last year, so the challenges are great”. Michael concluded: “as we emerge from lock-down, many of us are asking how do we *not return* to the old normal. How can we press the re-set button on so much of the old world that led to so much waste and unfairness and inequality? I believe that it is at forums like this that we will begin to find the answers”.

Caoimhe de Barra said that Trócaire and Afri share a common set of values and beliefs; belief in a just world; belief in peace and human rights. The Famine Walk is an expression of compassion and human rights. Afri’s Famine Walk has reminded us, for example, of the Choctaw donation given to Ireland during An Gorta Mór. Such solidarity resonates strongly in our memory and connects us to the present day when COVID 19 is creating untold misery in many parts of the world. Participating in the Famine Walk is a way of showing solidarity with the people around the world affected by COVID 19. “It’s a great way to exercise our common human spirit, our love for humanity. Through reflection, analysis and action, Afri is on a path to creating a better world and Trócaire is proud to be a partner with Afri in this endeavour”, she concluded.

So, though not like ‘walking the walk’, the virtual famine walk was a great experience that re-connected the ‘Afri family’ around important issues at a critical time.

2.4 Hedge School

Our first ever online Hedge School entitled *Human Rights Challenges*, covered issues including racism, conflict and sustainability. The event was done in collaboration with Technological University Dublin (TUD) Blanchardstown and was opened by Head of School Dr. Pat O’Connor and Dr. Lavinia McLean of the Department of Humanities there. Joe then welcomed people to the Hedge School on behalf of Afri. Keynote speaker Donnah Vuma was preceded by an artistic piece from students and was followed by a discussion on Racism and Direct Provision.

The afternoon session began with an Afri Film on Sustainability, Biodiversity and Climate Change featuring Joe Murray and Oisín Coughlin (Friends of the Earth). As with all the sessions, this was chaired by students and was followed by a discussion on Biodiversity and the Pandemic. The day was interwoven by student presentations and music and a wonderful segment including the use of puppetry. Liam McGlynn closed the event and also acted as host for the entire event.

2.5 Food for Thought

Our annual Food for Thought seminar was on 11 September 2020. As with our Famine Walk, we were unable to organise this event in the usual way because of COVID restrictions – so it was a virtual food sovereignty event, instead. In this online gathering around the critical issue of food, Clare O’Grady Walshe spoke about the absolute importance of seeds – ‘who controls the seeds, controls the food; who controls the food controls the nation’. And together we explored the relationship between our emotional and cultural response to COVID-19, the present and historical phenomenon of enforced absence brought about by environmental degradation, colonialism and racism, and our universal need for basic sustenance, in particular food. We also had a contribution from Fergal Anderson, farmer and founder member of Talamh Beo, and live music by Tommy Hayes and Matthew Noone. In order to increase interaction, we asked participants to send an image or short piece of text in advance which was incorporated into the discussion. This highly participative event was organised by Afri, Feasta, Irish Seed Savers and Maynooth University.

2.6 WorldWide Global Schools Programme

Attempting to carry out the work involved in the WWGS programme was challenging and frustrating in the context of the many restrictions and lockdowns that came into effect throughout the year. Sometimes it seemed almost impossible as schools opened and closed like a flickering flame. But by being as creative, flexible and adaptable as possible, and with the supportive and accommodating attitude shown by WWGS staff, we managed to complete the lion’s share of the work outlined in the original application. It seemed particularly difficult at times when our target audience were completely inaccessible to us, but we succeeded in completing all the elements – or in doing alternatives that had been agreed with WWGS – albeit in a more pared down way than usual. Reduced direct contact with students and teachers resulted in a less enriching or satisfactory experience for all concerned.

Nevertheless, we are pleased that we managed over the entire funding period to organise the full complement of workshops as planned. Likewise, unable to organise an actual teacher training workshop, we organised an online version alongside a launch of our resources. So instead of the usual eight to ten participants, fifty people – including many teachers – availed of the online event afterwards. Once again this required thinking outside the box and it is good to be able to find an alternative when we ran into a *cul de sac* regarding our original plans.

Making the move from actual events to online platforms was a very important part of our programme during this period, whereby many, though not all of our workshops with students were done online. We were both surprised and pleased by how successful this transition was – as it was not something we’d have considered had we not been forced to do so. Following

an online seminar with Tyndall College the teacher, Dermot O'Boyle commented: "that was a very successful workshop. I am pleasantly surprised at how interested and engaged the students were". There was a good degree of participation by students during this workshop - given by Joe and Nicola Winters - with several asking questions and contributing comments during the session.

A second element that was very successful was the outdoor classroom events. Again, we couldn't do the number we had planned to do nor were we able to use two of the planned locations but where we did succeed in doing some – especially in the Monaghan region – they were both appropriate to the context and successful. Being outdoors was not only a good location for doing Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and exploring issues especially in relation to the theme of food, but it also took students out of Covid-restricted classrooms, which had of course mental health benefits, as well. A third successful element was in relation to new resources – either adapting existing ones to digital versions or designing them specifically for online use. So, whereas it was undoubtedly a difficult year it was also one in which we learned a great deal and found new ways of working in very challenging circumstances.

We intended Monaghan and the north east to be a major focus of our work in this period. And while it wasn't possible to do it in the way that we planned we are still very happy with the progress made in the course of the year. We are working in partnership with Karen Jeffares and Gareth Conlon – both very experienced in the area of Global Citizenship Education. The work that they do in the project they've initiated called Síolta Chroí is very compatible with Afri themes of hunger, food sovereignty and seed sovereignty. They carried out some excellent workshops on behalf of Afri in outdoor settings – one in the Famine graveyard in Clones where they explored issues around obstacles to food security and another in their own outdoor premises near Carrickmacross in County Monaghan. To see students actually planting seeds and taking part in an ecosystem regeneration project is practical and powerful and shows the potential for developing this project further in the coming years. A particularly good relationship was established with Inver College with both the Principal and Vice Principal attending the workshop and expressing a determination, afterwards to place an increased emphasis on Global Citizenship Education within the college.

The adverse circumstances affected our ability to carry out the Galway workshops and the Celia Griffin Memorial event in the usual way. However, Pete Mullineaux facilitated three online workshops in St. Endas dealing with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), using our newly published resource *Interdependence Day: Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals through Drama*. Ordinarily this would have been an interactive session using some drama, but under Covid restrictions this was of course not possible. Instead he made it interactive by some of the follow-up exercises in the book, relating to some of the SDGs and by doing creative writing. The focus was on making it participatory and inclusive, so that everyone in the class wrote a poem during the session. Pete commented: "I was struck by how empathetic they were and open to exploring the issues through their imaginations. Students from each session volunteered to read out/share their poems within the class."

Teacher Resources and Lesson Plans

Afri produced three new Global Citizen Education Resources in 2020. The resources are designed to support secondary school teachers and other educators to deepen global citizenship education within their classrooms and schools.

The Web of Life (Nicola Winters) contains a wide ranging series of workshops on themes relating to biodiversity and interconnectivity with a particular reference to the critical lessons to be learned from An Gorta Mór. The Web of Life presents cross curricular opportunities in the following subject areas: Geography (Global Interdependence); History (Colonisation, Economic consequences, Decolonisation, Trade, Aid and Famine); Religious education (the religious imperative to act for justice and peace); Ethics; Politics and Society; Social Education and Contemporary Issues in Leaving Certificate Applied as well as Leaving Certificate Economics, Home economics and Biology.

Interdependence Day: Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals through Drama for all Ages (Pete Mullineaux) is an innovative and imaginative resource that can be used by all teachers, offering eight projects that are relevant and appropriate to all ages. The overarching aim is to encourage a whole-school approach to Global Citizenship Education. The intention is to bring on board teachers in all subject areas, offering engagement with history, geography, languages, science and technology, ecology, ethics and religion, business and economics, politics and society, art, dance and movement, mathematics and even home economics!

Pleananna Ceachta: Tá pleananna ceachta as gaeilge bunaithe ar thrí acmhainn atá mar chuid do chlár Oideachais Domhanda Saoránach Afri. Is é sin, Ag Déanamh Iniúchadh ar Chúrsaí Domhanda Trí Dhrámaíocht agus Amharclann, Casáin Síochána agus Ceachtanna ón Stair.

Léiríonn na pleananna ceachta rianta de chleachtas oideachais maith- ceistiúchán chriticiúil, cruthaitheachas agus nósanna trí lionsa cearta sóisialta agus dlúthpháirtíochta. Is treor iad na pleananna ceachta chun teacht ar an 'nóiméad múinteoireachta' i rith an lae sa churaclam laethúil. Is fearr iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar oideachas domhanda saoránach nuair a fhaightear bearna nó oscailt agus tú ag múineadh gnáth ábhar go laethúil. Is ansin gur féidir iniúchadh criticiúil a dhéanamh ar ábhair an domhain leathan.

Dunshaughlin Workhouse & Celia Griffin Memorial Park

Standing in the shadow of the formidable old Workhouse in Dunshaughlin or in the small famine graveyard beside it – in which hundreds if not thousands of famine dead are buried – is a remarkable experience which drives home the immorality of hunger as few other things can. Likewise, the memorial park in Galway to the memory of six-year-old Celia Griffin who died during An Gorta Mór because of ‘a lack of the basic necessities of life’ is a siren call that impacts on young people in a profound way. Sadly, though these events were in the calendar, hotels booked, etc. – they had to be cancelled, because of COVID-19.

Instead we organised small scale events and made short films in the same locations. We used the Dunshaughin location as the context in which to make a film about An Gorta Mór and biodiversity, which included interviews with Oisín Coghlan and student activists Gráinne Malone on the issue of biodiversity. And in the Celia Griffin Memorial Park our focus was on the issue of forced migration and Direct Provision and this included interviews with Donnah Vuma, Wasakera Sekerani and Donal O’Kelly.

3. Campaigns

3.1 Colm and Dave found not guilty

Afri is proud to have supported Colm Roddy and Dave Donnellan on their long journey through the legal system, following their anti-war action at Shannon Airport in 2016. We organised a number of public meetings in support of Colm and Dave and also invited them to speak at Féile Bríde and other Afri events,

Their trial took place in October 2020 and ended with an acquittal of all charges - over four years after they had entered the airfield at Shannon Airport to protest the presence there of the “murderous machinery” of the US military.

After a nine day trial at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court the jury of eleven men and one woman took a little under two hours to return unanimous verdicts of not guilty on the two charges of criminal damage of the airport perimeter fence and runway.

Colm and Dave had defended themselves and Judge Karen O'Connor commended them both for running their own cases in a dignified and courteous manner.

In the courtroom, there was a sense that it was important to both Colm and Dave that they ran their case in a way that honoured their own core ethical beliefs. The means was as important as the ends, and throughout the trial one was struck by the lack of ill will or bitterness harboured towards anyone involved in their prosecution.

At the heart of their actions was the belief that their actions were a reasonable response to the use of Shannon Airport by US troops and this belief would form the main plank of their defence.

Colm Roddy of Sutton, Dublin and Dave Donnellan Rialto, Dublin were stopped on the runway after they had walked towards a US Learjet and asked army and garda officials guarding the plane to search it.

The officials declined to do so and Dave Donnellan later told gardaí in interview that he believed that by doing so they were in gross dereliction of their duty to prevent the further loss of innocent life.

Before being stopped by officials the pair had spray-painted a number of red crucifixes on the airfield tarmac and on the walls of a substation building. These 45 minutes during which the

men had walked around unchecked was cited by Dave Donnellan as evidence that the security at the airport was a “laughable joke”.

The charges facing the men alleged that they damaged the fence and runway without lawful authority or lawful excuse, in contravention of section two of the Criminal Damage Act, 1991.

Section six of the Act provides for a defence of lawful excuse where a defendant acted in order to protect himself or another and his actions were reasonable in the circumstances as he believed them to be.

In moving and heartfelt closing speeches both men spoke of their need to respond to the war mongering of the US military.

3.2 Swords to Ploughshares

Afri maintained its focus on the impact of militarisation and the waste and damage wrought by war. We responded enthusiastically to the initiative of INNATE in Belfast to establish a network opposed to the arms trade. Under the name 'Swords to Ploughshares' (StoP), this group will seek to ensure that current 'all-island' initiatives will embrace peaceful rather than warlike production. Afri also contributed to the forthcoming Downpatrick Declaration, which will emphasise the profoundly peaceful and democratic commitments of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and Article 29 of *Bunreacht na hÉireann*.

3.3 Alphabet Avenue/Ascal na hAibítire

At many of our regular events, such as Féile Bríde, our Famine Walks and Hedge Schools, Afri has planted a tree to reflect our commitment to living in peace and justice with our species and our planet. In 2020 we initiated an exciting new chapter in this decades-long tradition. This involves planting 18 trees or plants, corresponding with the 18 letters of the ancient Irish alphabet.

Uniquely, each letter in that Gaelic/Celtic alphabet is named for a tree or a plant: Ailm (Elm), Beith (Birch), Coll (Hazel), Dair (Oak) and so on (see below). This emerges most graphically in the Ogham script, which is based on the notion of an upright tree-trunk and its differing branches. We must explore the wisdom of this ancient symbolism, but it already bespeaks a profound truth: our trees and plants give us beauty, sustenance and shelter – and from ancient papyrus to modern paper they have provided the bridge carrying our words between successive generations.

As we turn towards these literal roots of our culture and history, we must sadly recognise how fragile and threadbare human destructiveness and carelessness have let them become. And, despite the rich heritage of our ancient alphabet, Ireland has fared particularly poorly: a decline from an initial forest cover of around 80% to the lowest forest cover of all European countries: approximately 11%, compared to a current European average of well over 30%.

Our project will evolve along many lines. Afri plans to invite partners to join us in hosting a complete ‘forest’ of 18 trees/plants, or perhaps each to host one tree among 18 dotted around the island. Thus we will reflect on and reconnect with our ancient history – and with the language that bears witness to our once-abundant forest cover.

This project will provide a way of looking forward to a more hopeful future – when we will have a greater appreciation of the splendour of our Planet and when we will again have native species forests flourishing throughout our island.

Afri wishes to acknowledge the support of Concern and the Mercy Sisters in this project.

4. Links

4.1 Solar Lights partnerships with Development Pamoja

The area where we support the work of Development Pamoja in Kenya is almost on the Equator and therefore night and day have equal length all year long. This also means that it gets dark at about 6pm every evening. Most people in the area have no electricity, and therefore no light after 6pm. Solar lamps are a cheap, safe and reliable way of lighting homes. They can be installed in individual homes quickly and easily and take advantage of the most abundant local resource - the sun. A single lamp is sufficient to light each home's living space. It allows children to do homework, mothers to cook and do other chores and everyone to enjoy reading. Development Pamoja has supported over 150 families since this project began. They continue to identify the most vulnerable in society and provide them with the lamps.

4.2 Solar Lights and Covid Support with Kenya Pastoralists Journalists Network

The text below is taken from a report sent to Afri by Abjata Khalif in KPJN:

“Solar lamps, masks and soaps support from Afri reached one of the remote border villages in northern Kenya known as Shimbirey. The village is 300 kilometres from Garissa, and its 5 kilometres to Somalia. The village has one makeshift health dispensary made of sticks and mud and its dilapidated and deserted due to security challenges and crisis in the area posed by armed militias from Al-Shabaab. The only working nurse charged with offering health services fled the border centre some years ago due to spike in violence and abductions. “

“A solar lights training took place in Shimbirey village, Garissa County and it brought together 20 solar lamps recipients from two women’s groups. The training was conducted by a public health technician from Garissa and a team from Kenya Pastoralist Journalists Network. The public health technician took the women through an informative educational series and questions and answers session so that they could understand all details on Covid-19. The interactive session took the women’s groups through Covid-19 transmission, origin as well as public health protocols and guidelines. They were also offered tips and skills for preventing the transmission of the virus and measures to take at individual, family and community level. The team from Pajan Kenya trained the two women’s groups on usage of solar lamps in enhancing their talking space where women meet in groups and discuss their problems and challenges while adhering to social distancing.

Two women's groups comprising 20 women were trained and 20 solar lamps [were given to them]. They also came up with plans for management of the solar lamps with people given responsibility for lamp maintenance and storage”

Calendar

We produced a Calendar at the end of 2020 with suggestions as to how we can work towards a more sustainable world. This was the first time we produced a calendar and we discovered it worked very well. We originally produced it as a way of saying thanks to our Standing Order supporters. But then realized it had a wider application. The calendar contains suggestions for building a more sustainable world at a personal and political level. Suggestions range from walking, cycling and using public transport to promoting biodiversity, buying second hand clothes, supporting political and economic system change, divesting in fossil fuels, and opposing militarism and war.

Acknowledgments

- As mentioned in the introduction, we want to express sincere thanks to Larysa for her great contribution to Afri during 2020. Despite working for part of the year in extremely difficult circumstances in Belarus, Larysa continued to do exceptional work in many areas including reports/applications and financial matters. As stated last year, we consider ourselves lucky to have her in a key role in Afri.
- Thanks to our Chair, Emer for taking on the role despite being very busy in her work and her studies.
- Thanks to all Board members for their availability, when called upon.
- Thanks to RoJ for filming so many of our events and activities so excellently, and helping in many other ways.
- Thanks to Ruairi McKiernan whose contribution was invaluable, especially as we transitioned to online platforms.
- Thanks to Sean Boland for his work over the years on website/computer support. Sean will be less involved from now on but his contribution to Afri has been extremely important and very much appreciated.

Accounts:

- Thanks to Brendan Malone for doing the accounts – and Boylan & Dodd our auditors

We also thank our funders: Irish Aid, WorldWise Global Schools, Trócaire, Concern, Irish Quaker Faith in Action and the St. Stephen's Green Trust. Also special thanks to St. Patrick's Kiltegan. We also thank the Spiritans, the Mercy sisters, the Brigidines and the many individuals that have supported us and continue to do so.

Joe Murray
Afri Co-ordinator