



# **DIRECTORS'** **REPORT**

**For the year ended 31 December 2022**

## Introduction

If one wanted a compendary snapshot of the work of Afri in one event the early days of '22 provided such a picture. This was captured in the context of the tribute to our patron Desmond Tutu following his death on December 26<sup>th</sup> 2021; a death which resulted in an outpouring of admiration, respect and sadness from around the world. We are proud to have had him and his wife Leah as our International patrons and the cast of contributors to the tribute showed the extent to which he was loved and cherished by so many people, irrespective of race, religion, colour or creed.

The contributors included South African poet Nandi Jola; South African born Bulelani Mfaco of MASI; anti-apartheid activist and Founder/Director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories, Michael Lapsley; singer, songwriter Tommy Sands; Dunnes Stores anti-apartheid striker Mary Manning; poet and activist Sarah Clancy ; anti-Shell activists Willie and Mary Corduff from Rossport; Fatin Al Tamimi of the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the distinguished musician Colm Mac Ionamire. This represented not only a demonstration of the respect and admiration for Desmond Tutu but also the wide range of issues, activists and artists with which Afri has worked and supported over the years.

The tribute began with Tutu's message of support, sent to Afri in the early 2000s, which continues to inspire and encourage us: 'I am happy to have been Afri's patron for many years. I've been impressed by the work of Afri since I first came in contact with the organisation in 1984. Afri has persevered in supporting the struggles of many oppressed people throughout the world'.

Emerging from the pandemic into a war in Europe is the abiding and depressing reality which the world faced in 2022. The sentiments we expressed in last year's report remain true this year: *"the hope that many people held that the pandemic would provide an opportunity to stop and think and choose a different path was shattered by the news that another war had started following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That the invasion came in the wake of unprecedented NATO expansion and build-up of weapons and has resulted in a proxy war between two nuclear-armed 'superpowers' is a deeply alarming development. The fact that the response of many in Europe, the US and indeed Ireland to this horrific war has been – not to work towards de-escalation and disarmament - but to prepare for more war, is disturbing beyond belief."*

As will be shown in this report, we did what we could to continue to articulate a strong anti-war message. Despite the war rhetoric emanating from Government and mainstream media, we used every opportunity to articulate a counter narrative. War is never the answer to any question, especially when the planet is already burning and the risk of a nuclear wipe-out is an everyday reality, a point made all the more pertinent as I write this report on the occasion of the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima.

The blindness, the absurdity, the recklessness and the arrogance of the peddlars of war and their acolytes in the media and elsewhere will propel us to work all the more determinedly to resist war and to eradicate it from the face of the planet; to tackle climate change; to ensure

that people are not forced from their homes and homelands and to address the real needs of people for food, clean water, health care and education.

Our work of awareness raising, campaigning and education takes on many forms and increased urgency in this context.

Our achievements over the past year included:

- Editing, publication and launch of ‘A Force for Good?: Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence’
- Launch of Féile na Beatha, a new festival of education and awareness raising with locally based partners, building on the Carlow Famine Walk
- Original and dynamic *Food for Thought* event organised in collaboration with Atlantic Technological University, Feasta and REDIAL
- Launches of the ‘End Direct Provision’ report in Leinster House, in the old Workhouse in Carrickmacross and in the Fulacht Fiadh Café in Manorhamilton, County Leitrim
- Launch of ‘Ireland, Colonialism and the Unfinished Revolution’ by Robbie McVeigh and Bill Rolston
- Publication of ‘Transient Evil: Remembering An Gorta Mór as a crime Against Humanity’ by Robbie McVeigh
- Support given to Veterans for Peace members Tarak Kauff and Ken Myers as they made their way through the Courts for highlighting the role of Shannon as a war-port
- The return of the Famine Walk after two years online with excellent leaders in Catherine Connolly, Robbie McVeigh and Homayoon Shirzad and music by Patrick O’ Laoighaire
- Publication of ‘An Gorta Mór agus an Bhitéagsúlacht’ le Michael McCaughan
- Hosting of public anti-war meeting, addressed by Dorothy Day’s granddaughter, Martha Hennessy and John Maguire and chaired by Petria Malone
- GCE work with ten schools including a teacher training in Síolta Chroí
- Another successful Hedge School in TUD/B with speakers including Rob Fairmichael who challenged the rhetoric around the war in Ukraine
- Deepening of our work on anti-militarisation through our involvement in StoP (Swords to Ploughshares);
- Online tribute to our patron, Desmond Tutu, with a wide range of excellent contributors which was viewed by almost a thousand people, as outlined above;
- Series of excellent films made by RoJ reporting on all our events and activities.

## **1. Global Citizenship Education**

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is an important though often less prominent part of Afri's ongoing work. It is significant in many ways, including the fact that it allows us to explore critical themes with young people in ten second level schools all over Ireland. Working with a team of excellent GCE Coordinators, our approach is distinctive, incorporating education through theatre and drama, on the ground visits with our partner Síolta Chroí and expert facilitation and exploration of diverse themes. In 2022 we worked with schools in Monaghan, Galway and Dublin. And, as in previous years, exploring the root causes of global hunger while aiming to raise awareness, increase understanding and help empower participants to take action for change, continued to be our goal. Progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underpinned all aspects of the programme.

### **1.2 Féile Bride, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmlCBZMGbKM>**

For the second year in succession our Féile Bríde gathering was forced online. But as we discovered the previous year, this had unexpected benefits in that our reach was extended beyond the people who would be able to attend in person. And so we were joined by people from all around Ireland and beyond.

Excellently hosted by Rúairí McKiernan, we had the usual blend of inspirational speakers and music that have become the hallmark of the event. It began with the carrying of the flame by Rita Minehan and this was followed by an interesting and insightful conversation on climate change with Ciara Murphy from the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice.

John Maguire introduced the Downpatrick Declaration of which he is the author and which had been launched in Downpatrick the previous December. This Declaration is a call to action to oppose war and the weapons industry and points out the incongruity between commitments made in the Good Friday Agreement and in our Constitution and the war promoting policies of the Irish and British governments. Following on from Ciara's comments on climate change, John introduced the concept of the 'weapons footprint' which greatly magnifies the carbon footprint but is often not mentioned. He spoke about the 'arms race' as a deadly game of jenga using sharpened swords which is being built over our heads by the peddlars of war. He also referenced what he called the 'nuclear priesthood' and the importance of Brigid in debunking such patriarchal hierarchies.

Richard Moore appealed to the Irish government and the Irish people not to get involved in the weapons industry. He pointed out that if we make weapons or components for weapons and they are used to kill or maim then we cannot say 'this has nothing to do with me'. In fact it has 'everything to do with me'. Holding up the rubber bullet that blinded him he said,

‘somebody, somewhere has their finger prints on this bullet’. He concluded his input with the following appeal: ‘I appeal to that spirit that we have in Ireland, the spirit of generosity, the spirit of kindness, the spirit of peace to not get involved in this industry.’

Our partner Abjata Khalif from the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network echoed that call saying that he and his community on the borders of Somalia are on the receiving end of weapons supplied by Western Countries. In a powerful address, Máiréad Maguire insisted that ‘Ireland’s message to the world should *not* be letting US soldiers through Shannon, should *not* be denying our neutrality. I have travelled all over the world’ she said, ‘and everywhere the problem is violence and militarism. We should use the money spent on militarism to feed the hungry, take care of the poor and provide education for those who cannot afford it’. We must not allow any more wars.’ The songs of the legendary Tommy Sands - *The Answer Stares You in the Eyes* and *You sowed the Seeds of Freedom in your daughters and your sons* were interwoven throughout and added to the impact of the event.

The positive response is reflected in the comments below:

*“Afri have their finger on the pulse. You are all doing a wonderful job. I loved John Maguire. Of course the others were great too. I am horrified with the Irish Government relating to our involvment in development of deadly military weapons. How can our country be awakened to this? Thanks to everyone involved in this event.”*

*“It was a superb gathering, combining spirituality, the memory of Naomh Brighíd, the need for environmental and climate justice, the links between climate change and wars, the danger of Ireland becoming an exporter of weapons, the horror of "faith wars", and the need for action to stop the manufacture of weapons.”*

*“It is fantastic to have such an event online, it is so important for accessibility in terms of location, ability, time, and cost. Ruairí moderated excellently and kept things running in a very streamlined and helpful way. I learned something from all the contributors. I think the inclusion of music from Tommy Sands was very important, the arts hold such power for introspection, connection and change. It also afforded an essential change of energy within the programme. It was great to have so many diverse contributors. That said, I would have liked to hear more female voices, and non-binary and LGBTQIA+ contributions, and feel this is an area that could (and should) be balanced for future events. I appreciate the hard work that is being done to create events like this, and thank you all for your work.”*

*“What a gorgeous community event, as always, like a hug!”*

### **1.3 Doolough Famine Walk, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJCGa1htJDC>**

After three decades on the road and two years online the Famine Walk returned to Mayo in 2022. While marking the significance of the walk and the events that surround it online for the past two years was memorable and important, nothing compares to actually doing the walk and experiencing the event.

We had outstanding contribution from our Walk Leaders: Catherine Connolly TD; Author and Activist Robbie McVeigh and Community Worker Homayoon Shirzad. Haunting music was provided by one of Ireland's "most exceptional musicians" Patrick O'Laoghaire. Robbie McVeigh repudiated the idea that An Gorta Mór was a 'famine': 'It wasn't an Irish Famine – it was a British starvation and a crime against humanity', he said. Homayoon Shirzad talked about the spiral of violence that has plagued his country, Afghanistan and the absolute folly of foreign intervention. Catherine Connolly said that the Afri Walk 'has given us an alternative narrative, an alternative vision and an alternative use of language in terms of what is happening in our world. And the title 'Tackling Global Warming and Global Warring' is a very apt title because we cannot talk about one without the other because the two are fite fuaite le chéile'. Wonderful music was provided by Patrick O'Laoghaire supported by Toni Walsh and Mick Peelo.

Comments included the following

*"The Famine Walk is a unique and powerful event. I will resist and reject the normalisation of global militarism wherever I can."*

*"[This event will] strengthen my resolve to keep believing in the less trodden path, to keep questioning and challenging the status quo."*

*"This event further enhanced my sense of responsibility to the environment for the betterment of the succeeding generations."*

*"It's wonderful – so glad it's possible to do in person again – it really is a 'one-of-a-kind' event. Great speakers and really enjoyed the singing as Gaeilge."*

*"A wonderful way to do solidarity and to inspire action for change."*

### **1.4 Féile na Beatha, 6-24<sup>th</sup> March, 2022**

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SlvkPt\\_7oE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SlvkPt_7oE)**

This was an exciting new initiative organised with a wide range of partners in Carlow. The féile saw a number of new events along with the signature Famine Walk, which Afri and IT Carlow had organised annually for more than seven years.

A collaborative art project on An Gorta Mór included stunning artwork from local artist Jim Donnelly, members of the Irish Wheelchair Association Carlow, students of IT Carlow, Dr. John McHugh of Carlow College and social care students of Carlow College. The exhibition was on display throughout the Féile at Carlow Institute of Technology (now SETU).

The Famine Walk commemorated those in Carlow who lost their lives to An Gorta Mór and acknowledges those around the world who continue to suffer a similar injustice today. Visitors heard a short history of ‘famine’ in Carlow presented by John Kelly from Carlow Historical & Archaeological Society which was followed by the planting of a native Irish Tree.

The programme continued in the evening with Dr Denise Lyons – a social care worker in education - and the Afri Coordinator hosting a public discussion from 7pm in the Haughton Building at IT Carlow. This was followed by an informative and insightful lecture by Dr. Regina Donlan of Carlow College who looked at how the people of Carlow lived and died during the ‘famine’ period. We are confident that this exciting initiative will grow and develop in future years.

*“The event spiked my interest in the local history and the famine history in particular. I will be more attentive of my surroundings.”*

*“I will do more research on the history of famine in Ireland and on ‘famines’ happening today.”*

*“I realised how useful it is merely to talk of our concerns. We all feel encouraged when reminded that we are not quite alone”.*

*“Worries about future should lead to action. We’d love to be part of helping mobilise people.”*

*“It was an excellent event for dialogue, thinking and community involvement.”*

*“The event was very informative. I felt connected and included”.*

### **1.5 Hedge School, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

The Hedge School returned as an on site event in TUD/B this year. It was, as usual an excellent event with great participation from students and lecturers. The Hedge School has become a very significant date in the calendar in the College and the numbers of lecturers and students from a range of courses that attend the event is very impressive. Our speakers this year included Rob Fairmichael who challenged the dominant narrative around the war in Ukraine and whose input sparked lively debate in the follow up group discussions. A second speaker was from Ukraine and he spoke about the experience of LGBT+ people in Ukraine and also for those arriving in Ireland as refugees. As stated previously, this is a model event in terms of themes, content, participation, student involvement and how TUD/B has taken ownership of the Hedge School.

Comments from participants included the following:

*“I thought it was very interesting and I gained knowledge in important areas. It was very well organised.”*

*“Great seminar run by students, good input of speakers; creativity; good participation and variety of activities.”*

*“Excellent event, I look forward to the Afri Hedge School every year – inspiring. I will take what I have learned today and share with family and friends.”*

*“A really good and informative event, lots of interesting activities.”*

*“It was a great day, filled with very informative workshops, beneficial to giving people knowledge on a range of different topics.”*

*“I will become more active as a Youth and Community Development worker.”*

*“I am encouraged to learn more and become involved in the anti-war movement.”*

## **1.6 Food for Thought, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq-Ghy8t2aM>**

One of the most successful, exciting and novel events in 2022 was *Food for Thought – Féile an Fhómhar*, which took place in partnership with students and lecturers in the Department of Environmental Humanities and Social Sciences in ATU Mayo. The event brought together students, lecturers and members of the public to dialogue with other people around the issues and challenges facing us today. There was discussion, music, dancing, food-sharing and workshops. There was a tangible atmosphere of welcome, inclusivity and enthusiasm present on the day and a strongly felt desire for this to deepen and grow in years to come. Sincere thanks to FEASTA and Redial partnership for their support

Comments included:

*“I welcome this day. I think it’s a fantastic day for the college, making a very powerful statement at a time of mass confusion and anxiety, especially for young people. Today we sat down together and respectfully listened to each other. This is how we can make a difference, by listening to each other and finding out what we have in common. The inter-generational aspect of today was very important – we can exchange knowledge and skills and support each other, all in the name of community.”*

*“This event was a great opportunity to discuss our fears and what we are worried about. A really nice space was created, where you felt free to say ‘I am worried about this’, whether it is climate change, lack of public transport, the cost of living or whatever. So, the morning looked at our hopes and fears, then we had food sharing and the afternoon was about looking at practical things we could do to address our concerns and to change things for the better.”*

*“I was amazed at the level of engagement from the diverse range of people present, from all ages and backgrounds, local, national and international.”*

*“It was a celebration of community. We need more events like this where community comes together because that’s where strength comes from, where change comes from.”*

*“What I am taking away is the importance of community. We need to step away from the cult of individualism, of ‘everyone for themselves’ and work, more and more in community.”*

*“It was a day of great collaboration. The students led us on a journey, demonstrating that we can learn so much without being in a lecture. We were thinking together, trying to work*



*things out, standing in solidarity, looking to find ways that we can make a difference in the world, that we can make things better.”*

## **1.7 WorldWide Global Schools Programme**

We successfully completed 24 workshops as planned, the majority of which were done in greater depth and with more variety than in previous years. We also hosted a successful Teacher Training in SÍolta Chroí. Our seminars with students, our teacher training film and our resources all promote GCE methodologies such as critical thinking, questioning, reflection, participative approaches, curriculum links and follow up action

We place a strong emphasis on action and outdoor activity in all our GCE work but these aspects of our programme are set within the context of global justice issues, recognizing the importance of laying the foundation for critical thought in the students before moving on to practical activity. Typically, an exploration of what global citizenship education is and why it is important is facilitated. This is followed by an introduction to the sustainable development goals, what they are and how they are all interconnected and how we need to work on all 17 plus Afri’s ‘Missing Goal’, the abolition of war and the ending of the weapons industry.

Gareth Conlon facilitated a series of workshops with TY students in Largy College in Clones as well as Inver College and Patrician High in Carrickmacross. Workshops included an introduction to GCE, an exploration of the SDGs and the meaning of Ecosystem Restoration. The series finished with an on-site visit to SÍolta Chroí, where students explored the meaning and importance of food sovereignty and of a resilient food system. SÍolta Chroí is a key partner for Afri in that it complements our themes of hunger, food and seed sovereignty and gives students the incomparable experience of actually planting seeds and taking part in ecosystem regeneration work.

Julia Rauch worked with 140 students in Coláiste Éinde and Salerno in Galway on exploring global issues through drama. The workshops consisted of different drama activities designed to help young people explore the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, the students create freeze frames on the outcomes of climate change such as taking on the role of refugees and devising scenes on poverty and injustice.

*“The feedback at the end of the class has shown me that most teenagers are eager to learn about Sustainable Development and enjoy exploring difficult topics through the arts.” - Julia Rauch*

*“My students absolutely loved the Afri workshop. We would be delighted if Afri could visit us again next year to work with our new TY groups.” - Anne Collins, Colaiste Einde*

## 1.8 GCE Resources

The following resources were produced in 2022:

**Micheál McCaughan - An Gorta Mór agus An Bhithéagsúlacht**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISrfix76GwU>**

**Teacher Training At Siolta Chroi <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckW-HFq4njg>**

## 2. Campaigns

### 2.1 “A Force for Good?” book launch

*A Force for Good? Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence* was launched in Dáil Éireann in November, hosted by Independent TD Thomas Pringle. It is a collection of essays by people who have long experience of working for peace and against militarism at every level from academic to activist, on this island and in the wider world. Contributors include Nobel Peace Prizewinner Máiréad Maguire; UCC Emeritus Professor John Maguire; Dr Karen Devine of DCU; Dr Iain Atack, formerly of TCD; Carol Fox of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance; and Tarak Kauff, former paratrooper with the US Army and now active member of Veterans for Peace.

The book is a vital contribution to the discussion on the importance of Irish neutrality and its role as the bedrock of Irish foreign and defence policy. Even today - especially today - as war rages in so many areas around the world and as two nuclear armed ‘superpowers’ actively engage in a proxy war, the world urgently needs voices calling for, and countries working towards, de-escalation, demilitarization and disarmament. This book seeks to amplify those voices.

### 2.2 The Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine

Afri joined the newly formed Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine, which was established with the support and endorsement of Palestinian civil society. For decades Israel has subjected the Palestinian people to an institutionalised regime of domination and discrimination amounting to the crime of apartheid as defined in international law. Ireland has a proud history of challenging apartheid in South Africa and this campaign calls on the Government to respect this history by publicly recognising that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people. It also calls on the Government to support efforts at the UN to re-establish the Special Committee Against Apartheid to investigate all practices of systematic discrimination and oppression which amount to apartheid anywhere in the world.

### **2.3 US Vets Expose Irish participation in War**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmXprqUtXkM>**

Afri supported the two US Veterans for Peace, Ken Mayers and Tarak Kauff, who were convicted of interfering with the operation of Shannon Airport during their peaceful action in 2019. The following is a quote from a statement issued by Afri, after the verdict was announced: “These are two men who, from their direct personal experience of war, have dedicated themselves over decades to the UN Charter’s goal ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war’. In doing so, they have reminded us of our own Constitution’s commitment, in Article 29, to peaceful conflict resolution – a commitment which also underpins the genesis and maintenance of the Irish Peace Process.

While the disasters of aggressive war in Afghanistan and elsewhere are temporarily eclipsed by the savage, illegal, Russian onslaught on Ukraine, it is more than ever crucial for us, while supporting and welcoming refugees from that and other conflicts, to help to make space for diplomacy rather than to fan the flames of war. How can it be right that two elderly, lifelong peace activists should be punished by our state authorities for peacefully reminding those same authorities of their most solemn obligations under Irish and international law, starting with inspecting the fleets of military aircraft which regularly use Shannon as a way-station to promote the scourge of war”?

### **2.4 Swords to Ploughshares**

Afri continues as an active member of Swords to Ploughshares an all Ireland network of groups and individuals opposed to the growth and development of militarism and the arms industry throughout Ireland. The network has been involved in a number of important initiatives throughout 2022, including the visit of ‘Brigid’ to the Department of Foreign Affairs on Feb. 1st; an Online Public Meeting entitled ‘Human and Ecological Security: an Alternative to War & Militarism’ as well as press statements on the war in Ukraine and the snowballing expenditure on weapons and warfare.

### **2.5 Downpatrick Declaration**

The Downpatrick Declaration continues to play an important role in Afri’s anti-militarisation work since it was launched by Nobel Laureate Mairéad Maguire in Downpatrick in 2021. The Declaration is an expression of opposition to the current drive for expanding weapons production in both parts of Ireland. It formed a central part of John Maguire’s contribution to our online Féile Bríde and was presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs by Brigid on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. The Declaration points out the tragic inconsistency between current government policies, North and South with the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement’s commitment to ‘exclusively peaceful and democratic’ conflict resolution. Afri, also condemned the Irish Government, the other guarantor of the Peace Process, which hosted a second public meeting in November 2022 under the grotesque title ‘Building the Ecosystem’ with the aim of introducing small businesses and third level institutions to weapons research

and development. This is an appalling and retrograde step by the Irish government which sadly, but not surprisingly, was again met with almost complete silence from the Irish media.

## **2.6 An appeal to Ireland from Africa: Do not become involved in the weapons industry**

Abjata Khalif is a peace activist, development worker, survivor of the Wagalla Massacre and also Chair of one of Afri's partner organisations, the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network in Kenya. He issued a strong appeal in 2022 for the Irish government not to get involved in the iniquitous weapons industry. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb8LfV089fg>

## **2.7 Bruce Kent & Afri**

We were deeply saddened by the death of our good friend and colleague Bruce Kent. Bruce was an extraordinary and inspirational figure who dedicated practically his entire life to the cause of promoting peace and opposing war. He was a guest of Afri on many occasions stretching back to 1984 when he shared a platform with Desmond Tutu and Sean MacBride at a memorable event in Sean MacDermott St church. He returned again in 1995 – before the Good Friday Agreement – to speak at a conference entitled 'Militarisation and the International Arms Trade' in Crossmaglen, County Armagh, organised by Afri and Peacewatch Ireland. He was a key contributor when we organised a Hedge School in collaboration with The International Peace Bureau in All Hallows College in 2006 and he returned again to speak at Féile Bríde in Kildare in 2008 and 2015.

But, perhaps his greatest contribution to humanity and the Planet was his founding of the 'Movement for the Abolition of War', which clearly demonstrated his radical commitment to peace and his utter rejection of war and the war industry. Sometime in the future, hopefully, people will look back on the founding of this movement and see it as being on a par with the establishment of the movement for the abolition of slavery. This initiative represents the kind of radical thinking and action we need in a world enslaved by war and the weapons industry. Bruce's dedication to ending war was matched only by his warmth, his wit, his sense of humour, his kindness and his unstinting encouragement. It was a real privilege to have known him and to have travelled a part of the road with him. Go raibh a anam uasal ar dheis Dé. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V\\_tsCKr6Ado](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_tsCKr6Ado)

## **2.8 'Ireland, Colonialism and the Unfinished Revolution' Book Launch**

Afri was honoured to host the launch of 'Ireland, Colonialism and the Unfinished Revolution' by Robbie McVeigh and Bill Rolston, which took place in Connolly Books in February. The authors argue that colonialism is at the heart of making sense of Irish history and contemporary politics across the island of Ireland. In the book, England's oldest colony is considered in the context of the history of colonisation and anti-colonial politics throughout the world. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ixKnVFsCLc>

## **2.9 Martha Hennessy**

We were proud to host a public meeting with Martha Hennessy who is a grand daughter of Dorothy Day. John Maguire also spoke at the meeting which was chaired by Petria Malone.

<https://www.facebook.com/actionfromireland/videos/285951570228087>

## **2.10 Alphabet Avenue/Ascal na hAibítire**

The Gaelic Tree planting project continues to grow albeit quietly and at a reasonably slow pace. It has now become almost a stand alone project with little input from Afri but groups take it and run with it on their own steam.

## **2.11 Direct Provision report**

In March we launched our Direct Provision Report in the Dáil, hosted by Senator Lynn Ruane with Bulelani Mfaco, Lucky Khambule, Wasekera-Sekerani Chiphazi, Sikhulekile Ruth Ndlovu and Donal O’Kelly

This book, which took most of a year to bring to publication, details the punishment people have endured and continue to endure in the Direct Provision (DP) system of accommodation for asylum seekers, and the ill treatment they have suffered more broadly at the hands of International Protection Office (IPO) procedures. It was published at a time of widespread concern about what will replace Direct Provision on foot of the Government commitment of March 2021 to end the system. As we write this report mid-2023, the hope of replacing the DP System has all but completely faded.

Through the words of those who have lived within the current system, the book documents “material deprivation and isolation” and a host of other abuses and humiliations inflicted by the authorities and the private contractors they have paid to implement their policies. Accommodation contractors have, the book notes, “earned more than €1.6 billion in 20 years of DP”.

The book emphasises that “the entire international protection system urgently needs deep and radical changes, far beyond the abolition of Direct Provision itself”. In particular, Afri’s aim with this book is to ensure that “the system is not maintained under another name”.

The book delivers testimonies from ten people – seven women, one teenage girl and two men – of their experiences in the international protection system. The testimonies are grouped under four headings: The International Protection System; Accommodation; Needs Assessment/Provision; and Education.

Special thanks to Orlaith Mac Eoin Manus, Donal O’Kelly, Donnah Vuma, Sian Cowman and Andy Storey for their work on this report.

## **2.12 Solar Lights partnerships with Development Pamoja and Kenya Pastoralists Journalists Network**

We continue to work with our partners Development Pamoja and the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network to provide solar lights for school children, families, mid-wives and others. Hundreds of people have benefitted since we began this project some years ago.

## **2.13 Calendar**

Afri produced its third calendar in 2022. It opened with a quote from Greta Thunberg ‘When we start to act, hope is everywhere’ and the calendar featured aspects of Afri’s work together with inspirational quotes from motivational people. The calendar is sent as a gift to our Standing Order supporters, but it is also an educational resource, a way of promoting Afri’s work and a means of supporting our work by those who buy it.

## **Acknowledgments**

- Again this year, we want to re-state our sincere thanks to Larysa for her great contribution to Afri during 2022. Whether working from Belarus, Cork or Dublin, the quality of Larysa’s work remains constant. Her work covers many key areas in Afri including reports/applications and financial matters. Larysa’s contribution to Afri cannot be overstated, and, as stated in previous years, we consider ourselves lucky to have her in a key role in Afri.
- Thanks to our Chair, Emer for continuing in this 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 for helping in many other ways.
- Thanks to Ruairí McKiernan whose contribution was invaluable, especially in relation to our online events and communication support.
- We thank Gareth Conlon, Michael McCaughan, Julia Rauch, Niamh Flynn and Katie Martin for their excellent work in our Global Citizenship Education programme.

Accounts:

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

We also thank our funders: Irish Aid, WorldWide Global Schools, Trócaire, Concern and the St. Stephen’s Green Trust. Also special thanks to St. Patrick’s Kiltegan. We also thank the Spiritans, the Loreto sisters, the Brigidines and the many individuals that have supported us and continue to do so.

Joe Murray  
Afri Co-ordinator