

ANNUAL REPORT 2012

ATD FOURTH WORLD-IRELAND

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For more information about the work of ATD Fourth World,
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www.atd-fourthworld.org

www.overcomingpoverty.org

Introduction

ATD Fourth World is an international anti-poverty organisation that works through grass-roots projects in partnership with people living in poverty. For the past 50 years, all around the world, it has remained focused on constantly reaching out to the most vulnerable families, those who have a long history of poverty and educational disadvantage even in the so-called developed countries.

Since 1999, ATD Fourth World-Ireland has been close to family members facing persistent poverty and struggling daily to live in dignity.

During this reporting period:

At a local level, for the past 12 years, one of its main activities was to visit people living in homeless accommodations, socially disadvantaged housing estates or support groups they belong to. Many of them have faced persistent poverty since childhood and are still facing it. We encountered a number of organisations/ groups working with young adults in Dublin with the hope that some of them could take part in one of the European Youth events. We conducted a creative art project aiming at helping elementary school-age children to express what peace is for them.

At a national level, our commitment was to continue promoting 17 October, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and to coordinate its commemoration on the Custom House Quay in Dublin's city centre. We held the commemoration event in partnership with the members of the 17 October Committee who each put a lot of energy into the preparation of the UN Day. The theme chosen by the UN for this year's commemoration was: Ending the Violence of Extreme Poverty: Promoting Empowerment and Building Peace.

At an international level, we are proud to say that, in January 2012, an Irish delegation took part in a Colloquium entitled: 'Poverty is Violence, Speak out for Peace'. The aim of this event was to present the results of the action-research project on the connections between extreme poverty, violence and peace to the general public.

In March, a second Irish delegation attended the European Fourth World People's University, at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels. People gathered together around the theme: Citizens United for a Europe against persistent poverty.

In May, a third delegation was invited to take part in the General Assembly Process for ATD Fourth World International. Along with delegates from 10 other European countries, they gathered around the question: What is it exactly that destroys the humanity of a person and what is that makes it possible for a person to stand proud?

Good news: In October 2012, ATD Fourth World in Ireland became one of the 12 members of the Board of Directors of the International Movement.

Mark Hogan
Chairperson
ATD Fourth World-Ireland

Visit to families

Being close to the poorest is at the core of our identity as ATD Fourth World permanent volunteers.

Many of the parents we meet have children in care, health issues and/or addictions. They are or have been part of support groups and it is often through these groups that we first meet them. What we witnessed is that being part of a support group is very important for people who are struggling with issues that are overpowering them. While at work, as they say (because fighting against persistent poverty and its consequences is work!), they feel listened too, cared for and respected. They get up in the morning knowing that they are being expected somewhere and that the day will bring its share of fulfilment.

*Daniel, father of two, summarized it by saying: ***'The three years I spent in the group are the three happiest years of my life'.***

Getting to the end of his time was a nightmare for him and it is now a nightmare for Anna:

*Since the age of 15, I have been looking for something to do with my life. I left school not knowing how to read and write. I went to Fas, I did a few jobs...my time in the support group I am attending at the moment (CE Scheme) will be over soon... **What will I do next? Will I have to sit at home doing nothing?** I am living in a shared accommodation but would like to be able to rent my own room somewhere. I spoke with a councillor. He told me that it could take years before I get something...If it was not for my son, I would not be alive today.*

Being close to people like Daniel and Anna is at the heart of our daily commitment.

They are all fathers and mothers who are struggling against persistent poverty.

They suffer the consequences of the budget cuts and they try to cope while struggling to keep faith in a better future.

The aim of our visits is to build with each of them a relationship based on trust and respect, a relationship that will allow them, in their own time and at their own pace, to continue to express the challenges they face, how they try to overcome them and what they believe in.

Like parents from better-off backgrounds, those facing persistent poverty are very concerned by the future of their children. This is true whether or not they have children in care:

*My daughter knew Danny McAnaspie who was found dead in 2010. They were in the care of the HSE together. What happened to Danny could have happened to her. They were both in the same bad shape at the time. (...) **Hope is what keeps me going.***

*I need to be close to my children. My oldest daughter is 14 years old and it's a difficult age especially around here if she hangs around the wrong crowd... I grew up in this neighbourhood so I know what I am talking about. **I don't want them to go through what I went through.** I was homeless with my first baby.*

They know how tough it is to be homeless but they also know that having a home doesn't necessarily mean that things will be easier. Sandra expressed it very well when she said:

*I have a home, a roof over my head and there are people who are a lot worse off than me but **a home is your castle only if you have a life!***

Knowing that we belong to an international organisation is a source of strength and hope for people. They understand that sharing their stories with us won't change their lives overnight but they also understand that, by doing so, they break the silence and pave the way for a fairer future.

A mother told us once: ***'What I say doesn't usually go further than around the corner. With you, it travels the world!'***

In 2012, we made 193 visits to individual families living in Dublin city.

*All names and families details have been changed in order to protect people's identity.

Reaching out to young people

Through a regular presence in Ballymun



Once a week, starting in January, a member of our team offered to go to the Plough after-school club in Ballymun to support the team in place. Most of its members were on CE scheme and two of them were getting to the end of their employment time as CE workers. We knew this after-school club because we had already worked in partnership with its team.

In 2009, the children had taken part in a Tabori campaign and a delegation had spoken during the 17 October commemoration. In 2010 one of the CE scheme workers had spoken in Brussels during a joint event of the European Fourth World People's Universities and the European Economic and Social Committee on the theme "With young people let us build a Europe free of poverty". In 2011, also during the 17 October commemoration, another CE scheme worker had spoken of the commitment of a young man who had been attending the Plough as a child and was encouraging young children living close by to do the same.

Coming from the Philippines and having been part of an ATD Fourth World team that was running street libraries with children in Manila, Sarah Ortega took the opportunity at the Plough to be close to children from socially disadvantaged families and work with them through arts and crafts activities.

It also gave her the privilege to appreciate the commitment of those who were running that after-school while still struggling against poverty on a daily basis. She saw the commitment of Paddy Haughey who started the club over 25 years ago and still makes sure it remains a safe and happy place for the children.

An art project that reached out to different after-schools in Dublin

In May, ATD Fourth World-Ireland received funding from the Community Foundation of Ireland towards an art project with children living in disadvantaged areas. The aim of the project was to create, with the children, beautiful flowers out of recycled materials such as soda and water plastic bottles and to help them express what peace is for them.

*"I would like some peace and that there was **no recession** to Ireland and other countries in the world."* **Abbie**

*"I wish for world peace and no more fighting, **more sharing**, more caring, end world hunger, make life more possible to live. **Peace means love**, make peace possible."* **Alexis**

*"I would like to see **no bullying** around the world."* **Jade**

*"Peace is making happy. Peace makes a **happy world**."* **Claire**

Five after-schools took part in the art project .

More than 100 elementary school children got involved.



CASP'r



Wellington



The Plough



NYP1



LYCS

Most flowers were made into bouquets and on 17 October, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, representatives from different organizations laid the bouquets onto the commemorative stone.

Other flowers decorated the venue in the Liberty Hall that hosted the reception after the commemoration.



Commemorative Stone in Honour of the Victims of Extreme Poverty

Visits to Youth Clubs in the city

One of our team members visited a number of Youth Clubs reaching out to teenagers and young adults living in some of Dublin's poorest neighborhoods.

One of her goals was to learn about their work and invite them to the 17 October commemoration. Another goal was to find out if eventually an Irish delegation of young people could be part of one of the Youth European events organized by ATD Fourth World International.

One of these events was a travelling photographic exhibition with photographs from all parts of Europe showing local action on the part of youth groups. Quite enthusiastic about it, young people from Bradóg Regional Youth Service, an organization that supports the personal and social development of young people in north inner city Dublin, started thinking about the theme of their contribution. Two of them had agreed to be part of the delegation going to Champeaux near Paris, France. Unfortunately their trip had to be cancelled because one of the young people got a job opportunity which, of course, she chose to take right away.

The second event was a study session at the European Youth Centre in Budapest, Hungary and its theme was 'Toward a fairer society through the participation of all young people.' The Poppintree Youth club, in Ballymun, an organization that empowers young people to take action to address the issues affecting their lives as they make the transition into adulthood, had agreed to send someone to this session. Regrettably, it also had to be cancelled.



Commemoration of the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The poorest being at the heart of the **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**, an important dimension of our work has been to reach out to new families struggling with persistent poverty and inform them about the existence of the UN Day on **17 October**.

We also took the time to meet those who already knew about it and we invited them personally.

We met all of them in bed & breakfast accommodations, homeless accommodations, local authority housing estates, or through the support groups they attend.

Thanks to the info/invitation flyer we had been working on, they saw pictures of the past 11 years commemorations in Dublin.

Sometimes they recognised people they knew, amongst them President Michael D. Higgins who was present in 2001



Reading excerpts of past testimonies, they were able to identify with them and they immediately knew that they were part of the same people, a people of courage and undeniable dignity.

A father from Ballyfermot saw that we had inserted an excerpt of his testimony in the flyer. Amazed to read his own words, proud to discover that we had not forgotten them, he started handling the paper with a lot of respect and asked us for a few more copies...

This year again, with the active support of the members of the 17 October Committee and some of the support group leaders, we identified those who would be willing to share a personal testimony.

We made sure that the testimonies all expressed the hopes and struggles of the poorest amongst the poor.

Nobody in this world should be labelled.

I grew up in institutions. I was supposed to be in the care of the HSE till the age of 18 but when I turned 12, I was on the street and had to look after myself. I hope things like that won't continue to happen. The children who are in care, or who come out of care, need to know that they are loved.

It's hard to find your independence on your own and ground yourself. (...)

As a society, we can't forget the children, those who are in care, those who are homeless; they are the next generation... A terrible thing is to be ignored; another terrible thing is to be labelled. When you are labelled, you feel degraded...

Nobody in this world should be labelled.

We are people, we are human beings and we have names.

Lorraine



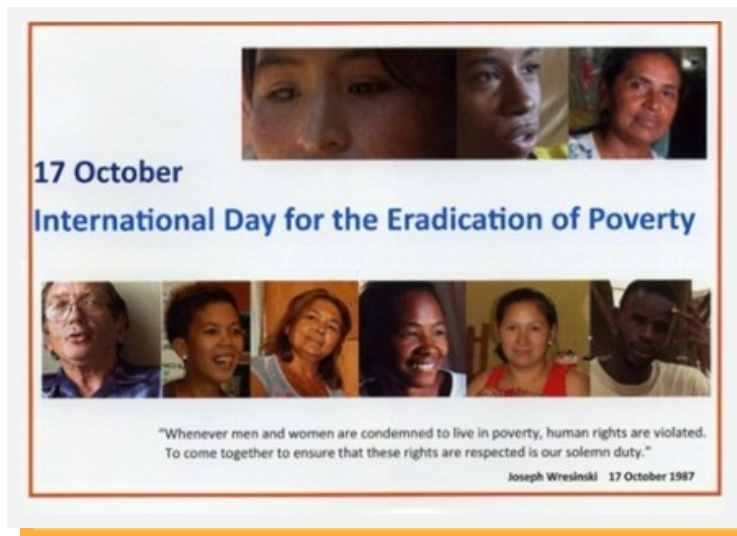
Roma and Travellers have already been hurt badly by cuts and cannot take anymore. *These have been cuts in people's income but also in the public services and Traveller specific services. For example the visiting teachers for Travellers were cut without any open report on the potential impact of this. We really want the Government to develop a fair budget; the poor in Ireland cannot take any more cuts.*

James

At the same time, as part of our commitment as a member of the 17 October Committee, our team reached out to a wide range of individuals, agencies and groups.

Amongst them, the schools have been one of our main targets. It is important for children and young adults to realise that we are all human beings with the same basic needs and the same aspiration for happiness. It is important for them to understand that those born in poverty are people of courage, that their fate is unfair and that it is our common responsibility to build a better world.

During the weeks preceding the commemoration, we have been privileged to work with teachers who are convinced that persistent poverty is a violation of human rights and who are looking for ways for their students to understand it too.



Thanks to their support, many students read the booklet '17 October, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty', had group discussions afterwards and sent us their comments afterwards

*Peace is having a home, enough money, water to drink and food for the family. Everything else is just extra. Peace is about equality. **It's about having the right to speak and be listened to.** Peace is when parents know that they and their children are safe.*

Students from Donabate ETNS

***The poorest are not given much of a chance in life.** They are sometimes judged as non-humans which is certainly not the case. **Each of us should help in whatever way we can.** The Government could also help charities across the country.*

Students from Colaiste Eoin Secondary School, Stillorgan, Co Dublin

*We read lots of articles on the Internet about homelessness and poverty. **People living in poverty should never give up.** If the whole community came together we would become stronger and take action to eradicate poverty to make poor people's lives much better.*

Students from James Larkin Community College, Dublin

Thirteen organisations/schools took an active part in the staging of the event:

St Ultan's National School, O'Connell Secondary School, the Poppintree Youth Project, Pavee Point, Migrant Rights Centre, the Life Centre in Ballyfermot, the Saol Project, the North West Inner City Training and Development Project, the Fisher Man Band (Merchants Quay), NYP1 Parents Group, LYCS, Smashing Times and ATD Fourth World-Ireland.

Our team met each of these groups at least once during the weeks preceding the commemoration.



One of the highlights of the commemoration was, for the second year in a row, the **proclamation of Joseph Wresinski's message 'I bear witness to you'** by the members of the **NWICTDP**.



These words were first proclaimed on 17 October 1987 on the Plaza of Liberties and Human Rights in Paris, France.

The presence of John Lonergan as Master of Ceremonies was very meaningful.

Amongst the family members we know, quite a few have known him when he was Governor of Mountjoy Prison. They all respected him. They all were proud of the fact that he was the MC for the commemoration.

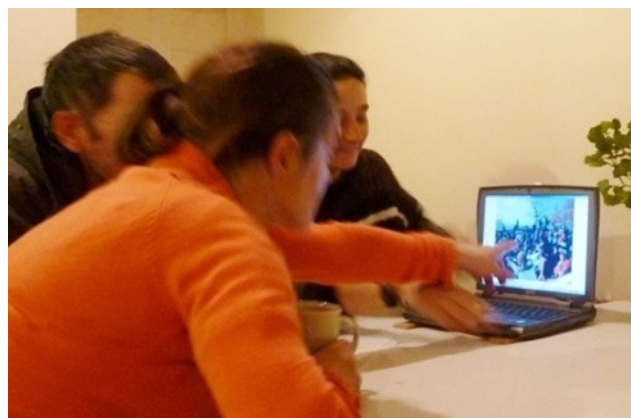
Our thanks also go to Lorraine Leeson, director of the Deaf Centre Studies at Trinity College, for being the sign language interpreter for the event.

Despite the bad weather on the morning, **over 260 people attended the Commemoration**. Some of them sent us their comments afterwards:

I highly commend the project since it highlights the plight of young men and women who are unjustly treated and denied the basics of respect and security and justice as our brothers and sisters in the human family.

It is very important to have young people become more conscious of the part they can play in standing up for what is right. We will be continuing the work in Poppintree. Thank you for the invitation to participate.

During the weeks that followed the commemoration, we took the time to share the event with family members who had not been able to attend for a variety of reasons, one of them being the uncertainties and stress they face in their daily life...



International events



January 2012 Colloquium

“Extreme poverty is violence - Breaking the silence - Searching for peace”

As a child, when you see your own mother and father damaged by persistent poverty then you look at your own kids and hope you can break that cycle.

Keith McAnaspie

Over a period of three years, the International Movement ATD Fourth World conducted an action-research project on the connections between extreme poverty, violence and peace, involving more than a thousand people from all over the world.

An international colloquium with academics, grass-roots workers from other NGOs and international organisations was organised in January 2012 in Pierrelaye, France, to finalise the results of this research. An event was organised at UNESCO in Paris to present the results of the action-research project to the general public.

The Irish delegation was represented by Keith McAnaspie, a man who has faced persistent poverty since childhood; Sean Dunne who is responsible for the North West Inner City Training and Development Project and John Lonergan, former Governor of Mountjoy Prison.

Both Keith and Sean were part of the research project (see 2011 Annual report)



During the public day of the International Colloquium which took place at the UNESCO, Sean said:

Although the community is sufficiently organized to mount protests, there is silence from the government. (...) Dialogue between the community and the authorities has ceased. Jobs are disappearing and incomes are dropping at an alarming rate. The work now has to be between the sufferers of government policy, so that at least, we can be clear on exactly what is happening and why. So that the void of silence from the government be filled by dialogue between families and the poorest of our community. So that we bear witness to the events that affect the poor, thereby giving support and hope.

In his evaluation, John Lonergan wrote: *The discussions helped to give me a far greater insight and understanding of the different levels of poverty throughout the world. (...) I think it is so important to keep “people” at the very center of all debates on poverty, to keep reminding people that poverty kills people, destroys people, young and old, that **poverty is not an abstract thing; it’s fundamentally about human beings suffering.***

European Fourth World University

CITIZENS UNITED FOR A EUROPE ACTIVE AGAINST PERSISTENT POVERTY

'You should ask those of us who have led difficult lives, because we know what our realities are and we know what impact the crisis has had on our everyday lives. For us, it's very important that politicians acknowledge us, so that not only our ideas but also our needs can be recognised.'

This statement was made by a delegate from Luxembourg during the European Fourth World People's University on **5 March 2012**, at the **European Economic and Social Committee** (EESC) in **Brussels**.

It clearly summarises the spirit of this meeting between people living in poverty and citizens who show solidarity, from 10 countries, representatives of European institutions and other players in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.



An Irish delegation composed of three women from the Dorset St Flats took part in this gathering.

They introduced themselves saying:

'In our building, some of us haven't had hot water for months and the roofs leak. The whole neighbourhood has been neglected.'

The residents got together for the first time in late 2008 to put pressure on the authorities with regard to maintaining the play area at the bottom of the building and keeping it open. With the help of the community worker, we invited representatives of the police and the municipal council to this play area. They came. This is how we laid down the foundations for a parents support group. We created an after-school club for children. We managed to get subsidies and this encouraged us to go back to school so that we could learn how better to help the children.'



In the evaluation she wrote at the end of the gathering, one of the delegates said:

In our club the motto is: 'unity is strength'. If we are more, our voices will be stronger. Listening to the different stories in the workshops, I noticed that we are all in the same situation even though we are all different in our own ways. All of us have gathered here to tell our stories and if we all stand together our motto will come to life.

As a follow-up of this partnership, Sarah Ortega, member of our team, made herself available once a week to support the after-school started by the delegation. A way for all of us to continue learning from each other!

Towards the **General Assembly**

for the **International Movement ATD Fourth World**

From **17th to 20th May** about **sixty participants** coming from **11 European countries** met at the ATD Fourth World's International Centre in Pierrelaye – Mery (France) around the theme: "Overcoming the violence of extreme poverty and striving for peace."

The **Irish delegation** was composed of Martin Byrne teacher in the Inner City, Marie Maher a mother of courage from Ballyfermot and Elisabeth Lavrand ATD Fourth World permanent volunteer. Both Martin and Marie are also members of the 17 October Committee. During this gathering, people got to know each other and learned through one another's life experiences and realities.



One of their main questions was: **What is it exactly that destroys the humanity of a person and what is that makes it possible for a person to stand proud?**



Martin: *For me, **it was great to be part of a tree rooted in the experience, wisdom and commitment of people living in poverty and their allies.** The morning sessions were discussions on the theme of "Poverty as Violence - Striving for Peace", in language groups, while the afternoons were communal, creative workshops, working towards an installation: dance, song and expressive arts focusing on "hands". (...)*

Elisabeth: *A woman in my group told us that she was housing undocumented immigrants. She was doing it out of the goodness of her heart and sense of justice despite the fact that she was afraid to be caught. **Her gesture of solidarity was a courageous one and it made me think of many other gestures of solidarity I had witnessed amongst the poorest...***



Looking at pictures of the gathering in our office, Marie also expressed how important that time had been for her.

She said: *To have the opportunity to speak about the right to education gave me strength. **I could feel that we all were sharing the same***

We would like to sincerely thank all those who have financially supported the work of ATD Fourth World throughout the year:

- ♦ The Department of Social Protection
- ♦ The Joe Lucey Fund / IMPACT
- ♦ The Community Foundation for Ireland
- ♦ The Acorn group in Ballymun
- ♦ Mrs Emmanuelle d'Achon, French Ambassador (visitors' donations made at the French Residence during the Irish Architecture Foundation Open Day, Dublin)
- ♦ The group of women who took part in the Dublin Flora mini-marathon
- ♦ The friends and supporters who sold or bought ATD Fourth World greeting cards
- ♦ All those who privately donated money



2012 Flora mini-marathon

