

## 2010 ATD Fourth World-Ireland Annual Report

ATD Fourth World is an international anti-poverty organisation that works through grass-roots projects in partnership with people living in poverty. It was founded in 1957 by Father Joseph Wresinski and 250 families living in a homeless camp in Noisy-le-Grand, east of Paris. For the past 50 years, all around the world, ATD Fourth World 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.

### ATD Fourth World Ireland

ATD Fourth World-Ireland has worked with people facing persistent poverty and who struggle daily to live in dignity since 1999. ATD Fourth World supports and encourages them to find their own voice in the fight against social exclusion and to speak about it.

ATD Fourth World is responsible for initiating and organising the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on the 17th October. On that day, in partnership with other community groups and people in poverty, an annual commemoration is held on Custom House Quay in Dublin.



**ATD Fourth World-Ireland** worked to get a commemorative stone<sup>1</sup> to mark the observance of the 17<sup>th</sup> October United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. It was unveiled on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2008 on the site close to the Famine Memorial

This commemoration is often described as a unique event as people who are often invisible in mainstream society speak about the hardship, despair, courage, humour, compassion and hope that helps them live in challenging times.

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<sup>1</sup> This commemorative stone, crafted by Irish artist Stuart McGrath, is a collaborative effort undertaken by the 17<sup>th</sup> October group, Dublin City Council and the Dublin Docklands Development Authority. Its design has been inspired by the commemorative stone laid on the Plaza of Human Rights in Paris on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1987 by Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World and which gave rise to the naming of this United Nations International Day. It is one of 30 similar stones around the world, each representing people's daily struggle to fight poverty.

# Our Work

Our work takes place at three levels, the local, the national and the international.

## At local level

We go on weekly visits to people living in hostels or run-down estates. We visit people who are living in Simon communities or housed by Focus Ireland. Some of our visits are made in hospitals or in places where we know people spend part of their days (parking lots, street corners, etc). When trust is built, people sometimes come to our meeting room where they get an opportunity to talk and discuss issues and prepare for events.

The people we support often have children in care, have mental health issues and have addictions. Often, the human connection to others have been broken or damaged leading to a sense of failure and self blame which is usually internalized. Our visits, they tell us, decrease their sense of isolation and encourage reconnection to society. They tell us about the countless gestures of resistance and solidarity that are part of their lives.

They tell us how much they need consistent policies supporting their efforts to change their situation. They remind us that all sectors of society need to be involved in the fight against poverty.

## At national level

We bring that commitment to national and international level by the promotion of the 17th October, UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty Campaign worldwide. One of the strengths of the 17<sup>th</sup> October commemoration is that it brings together people from all walks of life. Those who haven't experienced poverty can hear the unacceptable price people have to pay in terms of isolation, blame and stress. They also hear the simple gestures of friendship, support and respect that people living in poverty have towards each other.

Thanks to our work to raise the profile of this UN Day in Ireland, 17th October is now seen as a significant date to hold conferences and events. The Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Social and Family Affairs has chosen the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty as a focus event to the Social Inclusion Week (17-22 Oct) within the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social exclusion.

## At International level

Being heard at the highest international policy levels is a priority for ATD Fourth World. ATD Fourth World has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and the Council of Europe, and has a permanent delegation at the European Union Commission and the European Parliament.

## Main activities in 2010

- Building relationships with poor families and people in Dublin by visiting their homes, hostels or streets where they gather every week. This work involves building trust, outreach, time and patience.
- Organisation and coordination of the 17 October, UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty in Ireland.
- Recording of testimonies of people living in Poverty on Morning Ireland Radio Programme
- Publication of a booklet called 'All Together for Dignity', a selection of stories of hope and courage written with people living in poverty in Dublin.
- Preparation of series of meetings with young people which allowed them to contribute to the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.
- Support for four young people who took part in a European Youth Gathering in Paris in July 2010. Two delivered a collective message on the esplanade of the European Parliament in Brussels on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010 to commemorate UN Day for the eradication of Poverty worldwide.
- Participation in the International Tapori Campaign and involvement of the children in the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Support to children and families in Haiti.
- Series of four creative wire workshops allowing men to express something about their lives.
- Participation in a conference in Brussels organized in December by the European Economic and Social Committee and ATD Fourth World.

# Impact of our activities

## Annual Observance in Dublin of the 17 October 2010, UN Day for the eradication of Poverty

*“Wherever men and women are condemned to live in poverty, human rights are violated.  
To come together to ensure that these rights are respected is our solemn duty.”*

*Joseph Wresinski*

The evaluation of the events marking the 17th October reveals that the UN Day can be empowering for people in poverty, because the event is built around the stories of their lives which are told by themselves to a large audience.

In 2010, the gathering was featured on the prime evening news slot at 9.00pm where participants were interviewed.



A group of women from the inner city SAOL Project sang ‘My children, my life!’, a song they had composed together.

One of them said: *'I live in St Mary's Mansions. I left school at the age of 12. I was helping my mother bring money into the home. Now I am a mother and have a son who is 13 years old who has started Larkin College. I want my son to have a better education than I had.'*

A young woman from Africa spoke of the harsh conditions she had to endure when she arrived in this country. She ended her testimony by saying: *'There are many other migrants in Ireland who for lots of reasons today feel alone and excluded. We need to reach out to each other, all of us! Together we can make a difference.'*

Jimmy from Ballymun started writing poems, he rapped for the crowd: *'It is good to write your feelings down, it clears the head. If you bottle them up, you can break down!'*

Two children from the CASPr after-school project spoke of the importance of education in the fight against poverty' and the children's choir from St Michael's Primary school, Ballyfermot, honoured us with its presence.

Inspired by the European Youth message, a group of young people from NYP2 sang their own version of 'Which side are you on?'

Marie, young woman friend of ATD Fourth World offered Labour Party MEP Proinsias de Rossa, the European Youth message as well as the booklet "All Together for Dignity".

Mr Proinsias de Rossa acknowledged that the EU has a crucial role to play in protecting the poor.

He said: *"It is not acceptable that those on the margins should now pay the price for the Celtic Tiger. Many organizations which support the vulnerable are living on a shoestring. Cutting that shoestring will not save the Irish economy."*

Keith, from the North West Inner City Training and Development Program, spoke of what it meant to be homeless at a very young age: *'Homelessness and poverty has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. I would like to say to others that are experiencing homelessness not to give up and have courage for the future. When people stand together and help each other things can change!'*

He invited people to write their concerns and support on pieces of paper shaped as leaves for the 'Tree of Hope'.

## **Recording of testimonies of people living in Poverty on RTE Radio One Morning Ireland Programme**

For the past 2 years, Aidan Mathews has invited families to come to RTE and share their stories of struggle and solidarities in 2010. To date ten people have spoken on RTE Radio 1.

**A father from O' Devaney Gardens** got the strength to read out a testimony that he had prepared with his wife and children.

His literacy teacher told us: *'I was amazed to see how being invited and encouraged to speak out had empowered him in his ability to learn how to read and write!'*

**Here is an excerpt of Ann's testimony:**

*'My name is Ann. I am a traveler and I have been homeless for 3 years. Today I am thinking of my 2 youngest children who have been taken away from me. If you lose your children, you lose your heart and half of your body'.*

## Printing of 'All Together for Dignity'

### All Together for Dignity



2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

During our visits to groups and families, we invited people to speak and write about what they were going through. These testimonies were published in September 2010 in a booklet called 'All Together for Dignity'.

The booklet was distributed to local and national networks organizations, voluntary and community groups, colleges and members of the Oireachtas. Through the network of our ATD Fourth World teams, this booklet is now reaching out to many people fighting against poverty in Europe.

**Many said how hard it was to find their place in a world that they don't understand.** The following excerpts are taken from the booklet.

Mary: *"The hardest thing to know that you count for nothing, that your life has no value for anyone."*

Gary: *"It is the first time I was asked to give my opinion about how to build a fairer Europe together!"*

Jimmy: *"I am telling my own story, hoping it can give courage to others whose life is difficult."*

They also stressed that they wanted to help others.

## 2010, European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

We met a number of young adults living in disadvantaged communities and those working in partnership with them. With our support, they wrote about their efforts to fight poverty and exclusion on a daily basis.

In July 2010, a delegation from the Inner City took part in a European Youth Gathering in Paris.



Like many young adults not considering themselves 'worth it', they needed focused preparation and confidence-building to prepare their contribution.

Although the preparation was hard work, one of the delegates wrote:

*'It was great to be with people who wanted to fight injustice just as much as I do. We all had a sense of achieving something important...'*

## **Celebration of the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty in Brussels**



**100 young Europeans gathered, two of whom were from Dublin to deliver a collective message on the esplanade of the European Parliament in front of 1500 people.**

Kate, one of the Irish delegates, wrote afterwards:

*'I was part of a meeting with Mr Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, Mrs Durant, vice-president of the European Parliament and Mr. Philippe Courard, Secretary of State for Social Integration and the Fight against Poverty. We told them that we wanted our governments to invest more in training and long-term solutions. They agreed to keep having an open dialogue with young people participating in organizations like ATD Fourth World. They were listening to us. I gave them our booklet "All Together for Dignity". I told them to read it so they would have an idea of poverty in Ireland!'*

## **Conference in Brussels organized in December by the European Economic and Social Committee and ATD Fourth World.**

Noleen who works at the Plough Youth Club in Ballymun was part of the Irish delegation taking part in this conference.

She had prepared her contribution with the people she worked with and had in mind all those she knows or has known in Ballymun, a neighborhood where there is still a lot of poverty!



Noleen:

*'The day I arrived in Brussels, I was welcomed by two families and went from one world to a complete different one within the same city. In both families, though, it was the same kindness. I think that opening one's door, heart and mind to others can help build bridges in the world!'*

*'The meeting helped me realize that it was the same hardship everywhere in Europe. So many people who don't have their voices heard.'*

*'People living in poverty need opportunities to meet with politicians. In my working group, one politician said: 'Keep the drip on people in authority!' Her words reminded me of the time I was homeless. Every day, week after week, I was going to the Corporation. I was taking 2 buses to get there from the hostel I was in with my baby. I put them under pressure and eventually got a flat.'*

## **The International Tabori Campaign**

In 2009, In order to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ATD Fourth World-Ireland had involved a number of schools and after-school projects in a Friendship



International Campaign organized by Taporí<sup>2</sup>. These after-schools welcomed children facing difficulties at school and whose families were also facing multiple insecurities on a daily basis. The aim of the campaign was to show that children are defenders of human rights when they make sure that no child is left out and isolated.

In 2009, a delegation of children from CASPr took part in an international gathering in Poland.

Another delegation of children from the Dominican Campus School Completion Programme in Ballyfermot took part in an International gathering in Geneva.

One of the leaders from CASPr said: *'Taking part in the international gathering in Poland made the children see their polish friends at school in another light. Hopefully, they will become adults having a better understanding of what it means to live outside one's country.'*

In March 2010, children from the Dominican Campus School Completion Programme in Ballyfermot explained publicly what they learned during the International Taporí gathering they had been part of in Geneva.

They had met children from 7 countries and found out that they had a lot in common despite their obvious cultural differences



In April 2010, when the Dominican Campus received the Yellow Flag, the children again shared with special guest, Mary Hanafin, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, what they had learned during the time they had met Mrs Kang, High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva.

One child said: *'I learned the seriousness of life and how mature and independent I can actually be!'*

Another one said: *'We learned that our voice, children's voices should be heard and our opinions are important'*

In 2010, we also visited children in several after school programs that had taken part in the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009 commemoration. These were children from the Matt Talbot Community Trust, The Plough, schools in Fairview and Ballyfermot, the Southside Traveller Action group, the CASPr Project and the Youth Reach Program.

We gave them photographs underlining their participations in our events and we showed them **a film” Come with us-Lets make the world a better place”** made by Tapor International in January 2010.



The children eagerly wrote messages of solidarity to children in Haiti, after the earthquake. These messages, drawings and scrap books were sent to Haiti where the team took them to isolated families and children living in emergency camps.

## **Wire metal workshops**

Sometimes words are inadequate to express what we feel and are going through. Our Wire metal workshops helped us meet new people at the Saol project, the Heritage project, Hill Street Family Resource Centre and LYCS. Working with their hands, people shared and created their vision of the world.



Speaking of her sculpture, Victoria from Romania said: ‘

*I made a butterfly. Parents help their children to become independent, giving them the wings.’*

Through her sculpture, Helena expressed her feelings about what’s happening in the country today:

*‘What’s happening today with the banks makes me angry. Money is what matters’.*

She made two doors, one closed, one opened to possible changes and said:

*‘in the open door, I made a musical note. It is because during this workshop we were singing together’*

One of the women explained how the workshop had put the students on placement, the workers and the participants on an equal footing. They enjoyed it and were surprised to discover that they could be creative with a material that was new to them.

Her group decided afterwards to write testimonies for the 17<sup>th</sup> October commemoration

. **Tapori** is the branch of ATD Fourth World that gathers children who have difficult lives and children who don't but are involved in the fight against poverty and exclusion. With the support of artistic activities, children have expressed their hopes and ideas for a better world. They

have created all kind of vehicles to say how they try to reach out to the children who are left alone and make friends with them.

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This year, we would like to thank the students from Maynooth University, Champlain College Dublin and Boston American College who got involved in the preparation of the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty in Dublin. Some of them didn't know about the existence of the day before we met them.

For more information about the work of ATD Fourth World, please visit the following websites:

[www.atd-fourthworld.org](http://www.atd-fourthworld.org)

[www.tapori.org](http://www.tapori.org)

[www.oct17.org](http://www.oct17.org)