

# AFRICA CENTRE



## ANNUAL REPORT 2012



[WWW.AFRICACENTRE.IE](http://WWW.AFRICACENTRE.IE)

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## **1. Acknowledgement**

Africa Centre sincerely thanks our funders the European Commission, Trócaire, Concern, Dublin City Council and all those who have provided us with financial support during 2012.

The Africa Centre would not have been here today without the dedication of the Board of Directors, Staff and volunteers and our many supporters (individuals and groups) to whom we are very grateful for their invaluable contribution to the work of the organisation during the year.

## 2. Chairperson's Introduction

It goes without saying that the year 2012 has been a challenging year for the Africa Centre. We experienced a sharp decline in funding as a result of which we had to let go of all our key operational staff including our finance officer Liam Ryan, our development education assistant programme officer Rebecca O'Halloran and our development education programme officer Mbemba Jabbi. We are, however, thankful to Mbemba who offered to stay and serve in a volunteering capacity.

The impact of the funding and financial crisis was not just felt in the area of staffing. Frequent meetings of the board to address urgent governance issues put unexpected pressure on all board members. As a result we regrettably lost Tendai Madondo and Emeka Chukwureh who were voted on the board at our last AGM. Both of them were very skilled individuals whose contributions to the Centre we sadly lost. I want to take this opportunity to thank them sincerely for single-mindedly serving the Centre when they were on the board.

We also co-opted three people – Lucy Franks, Brendan Dardis and Mireille Ndikumangenge. Unfortunately, however, only Mireille continued to be on the board. Both Lucy and Brendan stepped down, although Lucy offered to continue to help the Centre in whatever way possible going forward. She is a very experienced and skilled lady, and the Centre can continue to benefit from her advice and support. The Centre is very grateful to Lucy and Brendan for their support to the Centre and to Mireille who still continues to serve on the board. Mireille comes to us with years of experience working in the charitable sector, lately Concern Worldwide. She is a great asset to the Centre.

During the year Peace Nukunzwe, Selam Desta and Nobuhle Ncube also had to step down from the board for personal and family considerations. David Nyaluke and Ian Calligy also indicated their wish to step down from the Board. We thank them all very sincerely for their many valuable contributions to the Centre over the years. David is available to help the Centre in other ways as and when needed.

We are delighted to report, however, that despite all of these pressures we were able to fulfil the requirements of our final year European Commission funding which kept the Centre in operation with matching funds from Trocaire and Concern for activities carried out in the year.

Over the summer the Centre, again due to financial constraints, had to give up the office in Stephens Lane and negotiated with the Dublin Central Mission for office space. We are grateful to the Rev. Dr. John Stephens and the staff of DCM who kindly offered us a room here to house our office and at reasonable rates.

The funding and financing problems unfortunately have not gone away. The board hopes to hear from members how best the Centre can proceed in these difficult and challenging times.

On behalf of all the members of the board and on my own behalf, I welcome you all to this AGM.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Africa Centre staff Mbemba Jabbi, Sebit Iwa, Rebecca O'Halloran and our many volunteers during the year for their hard work and of course the supporters of Africa Centre for their invaluable support during the past year.

I cannot end this report without paying tribute to Lamin Bojang for his tremendous sacrificial services to the Centre in the last year not just as a committed board member but for fully taking on the responsibilities of finance officer of the Centre in a totally voluntary capacity. I know this placed an enormous and unexpected burden on him, even though he has carried out his responsibilities with enormous grace and commitment. On all of our behalves I want to most sincerely

thank Lamin for his generous service to the Centre.

Let me also do the same for Mbemba Jabbi who has been serving us for the last six months in a totally voluntary capacity. These two people have made very real sacrifices to help us through these difficult times and we do truly owe them sincere thanks.



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Sahr Yambasu  
Chairperson  
Africa Centre

### **3. Proactively promote community participation, dialogue, inclusion and facilitate a network to encourage a culture of collaboration among Africans at home and at European level**

In the past year Africa Centre has designed a regional approach to work with regional African groups in Kilkenny, Galway and Sligo based on the consultation for our strategic plan. With the help of dedicated leaders in Kilkenny, our collaboration has led to the formation of Kilkenny African Community (KAC), first of its kind at regional level and work will continue on meeting the community leaders of Galway and Sligo to initiate a similar network.

Africa Centre during last year had provided information and referrals to over 100 members of the African communities in Ireland. On daily basis Africans and interested persons would either ring or call into the office looking for information on services in Ireland, about Africans or country specific issues. Our Toyosi Memorial resource Centre has been visited by African students, mainly PHD candidates for their research.

The centre had engaged the African community setting up a task group and planned the Africa Forum, held on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013 at the Dublin City Council, Civic Offices. The forum was aimed to focus on some of the key challenges facing African communities in Ireland in the context of government policies and the role Africans can play working with other stakeholders to facilitate a smooth integration process for their communities. The forum task group targeted:

- African leaders
- African diplomatic missions in Ireland
- NGO Sector and agencies involving with African immigrants
- Educational institutions having African students
- Civil society groups in Ireland

The Centre continues to link with the African embassies in Ireland and discussions were held on how to strengthen relations that will involve embassies in the work of the centre. Key issues raised were the proposal for the Africa Centre board to meet with the ambassadors to discuss where they can complement each other's work and this will be followed up after the 2013 AGM when new Board members are elected.

The centre is member of European Network Against Racism (ENAR) and Africa Europe Platform (AEP). The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is an EU-wide network of vibrant NGOs in all EU Member States, as well as Iceland. ENAR combats racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and promotes equality of treatment between European Union citizens and third country nationals. We will be working towards building stronger links with ENAR next year in partnering with some EU country groups to strengthen our community participation programmes.

Our membership of the AEP is very important to strengthen our work with African communities here in Ireland, but also linking our communities to the African Diaspora in Europe. The AEP is a network of African Diaspora organisations and networks from the 27 EU Member States plus Switzerland and Norway. Through the Platform, the capacity of the African Diaspora in Europe to contribute to Africa's development will be made visible and enhanced. It is an innovative space to share knowledge, accumulate ideas and create strategies together to participate meaningfully in the development cooperation process in Africa. In other words, this Platform allows for improvement in coordination, communication and cooperation of development activities undertaken by African migrant organisations, by sharing information, knowledge and expertise. Africa Centre is the contact for Ireland at this platform and we will build stronger links to other Diaspora organisations in Europe for our visibility and work on areas that concern us as citizens and immigrants in Europe.

Africa centre attended the AEP meeting in Paris in November 2012 to build relationship with African Diaspora organisations like African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) in the UK, which has been supporting Africa Centre at our Africa Forum 2013 and assisted us financially.

#### **4. Create a platform for the participation of African young people in Ireland**

This year Africa Centre initiated the Intercultural Youth Society (IYS). The IYS is organised by a voluntary working group of African and Irish young people which was chaired by a volunteer of the centre. They identified their target group all young people aged between 18 and 25 years.

The purpose of this youthful society will be to provide a friendly, open-minded and free-racism zone where young people from different backgrounds can share, appreciate, teach and learn different aspects of other cultures.

Africa Centre is really excited about this new project and the fact that it will benefit the youth of Ireland. The founders of the project, Hafsa Belayachi, Jill Kirwan, Claudia Gentile, Takudzwa Nyazema and Hannah Ojuolape, have laid down the principles according to which the company will operate. Respect and equality were the first two on which founders all immediately agreed and the main principle they adopted has animated from an Africa Centre value of "Ubuntu", through which every human being is related to all the others.

"Ubuntu" is a conception according to which all human beings are connected to each others in a culture that nurtures participation and interdependence. The group also underpinned their approach with Racism-free zone; the IYS does not tolerate any form of racism and administrators will undertake to expel anyone acting in this direction.

The group planned to organize a discussion session on African culture and this will follow the official launch of the society with the night of the "Talent Show" showcasing youth talent.

#### **5. Promote the inclusion of multiple African perspectives in Development Education discourse, policy and practice in Ireland and at European level**

The activities of the development education have been concentrated on the final year of the European Commission project. The project facilitated media training for trainers, attended by 5 participants in Dublin on the 6th and 7th October with 2 male and 3 female. The training was in collaboration with Near90.3Fm at their Studios in Coolock, Dublin 13.

An independent Africa Centre media survey was also conducted among 25 RTÉ (Irish National Television station) personnel on 31 August 2012.

The main objectives of the survey were:

To gauge the perception of Africa by media personnel and how they report on Africa

To gain an insight into how these perceptions influence the reporting on Africa and how these could be changed (if desired)

The following limitations are built into the survey:

The survey was conducted only among RTÉ personnel, and not all of those interviewed were necessarily reporters

The survey was also conducted on a voluntary basis so only those who chose to take part responded to the survey questions

However, despite these limitations the value of the survey lies in the fact that:



- (i) It gives us a good starting point for a more extensive media survey
- (ii) It gives us an insight into the perception of Africa by a portion of media personnel working in arguably the largest and most influential media firm in the country

The results of the survey clearly indicated that Ireland's perception of Africa is predominantly determined by its charitable links with the continent (100% of respondents associated charity with Africa). Irish charities have of course done commendable work in Africa and continue to do so. But because this is the primary link between Ireland and Africa, Ireland's perception of the continent is consequently funnelled through the lexicon of charity: poverty, disease, natural disasters, famine, humanitarian emergencies, under-development, corruption, etc.

On the positive side, the survey illustrated that nearly 50% of respondents are keen to hear about or report positive stories coming out of Africa. This offers a unique opportunity to all those interested in altering the Irish public's largely one dimensional perception of Africa as a continent hopelessly plagued by poverty, famine, disease, corruption, and political instability. However, because the media largely reports on issues that have a link with their audience, it is important, if positive news stories on Africa are to be reported, that Ireland develops and strengthens different links with the continent.

We continued our 'Africa Tell It Like It Is' campaign distributing posters at every opportunity. Our Resource Centre has continuously being restocked with new books, journals and DVD's, which brought an influx of International Relations and Development Students into the Centre (<http://www.africacentre.ie/resources/resource-centre.html>) and the general public through our Movie Nights. Our website continues to be restructured with additional functionalities to bring a bigger audience to our homepage incorporating the 'Africa Tell It Like It Is' and the resource centre. We continued our work on the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages task group. We participated on the review of the Code of Conduct and the outcome of having a minimum criteria strengthening adherence to the code and an illustrative guide to make its interpretation easier was accepted by the Dochas Board.

We participated at a conference hosted by Africa Centre Slovenia On 29th of November 2012, within the frame of the project "Images of Africa from an African perspective". The conference was organized in Koper, the biggest coastal town of Slovenia and hosted by the Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska region. While the target audience of the conference were students and professors of the Faculty, primarily from media studies and anthropology departments, the conference was open to general public and was attended by over 70 participants.

The project also commissioned a policy paper written by Dr Alfred Hickey M'Sichili. It is a clear and concise document that found out that the use of emotive images and messages about Africa in aid charity fundraising campaigns has and continues to inflict real long term harm on Africans and those of African descent around the world. The paper highlighted that images and messages reinforce negative stereotypes and help create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating and offensive environment for many Africans and those of African descent in Europe.

We are hoping to use this document in our lobbying for change in which fundraiser of NGOs conduct their business and see if we can influence the media to adopt some of the recommendations in their code. The policy paper is planned to be launch in 2014.

## **6. Communication (Website, Facebook and Tweeter accounts)**

The Africa Centre Ireland website continues to be managed by an intern. The website is continuously updated with current events and news reels from African Newspapers. There is also an area dedicated to the Resource Centre and the Africa Explorer game. The website can be viewed at [www.africacentre.ie](http://www.africacentre.ie). During the past year the website has had over 10,000 visitors.

The Centre has been actively using social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter as well as redeveloping our website to improve its external communication. The network sites were used to communicate Africa centre's work and invites to its events. Our Facebook account (<https://www.facebook.com/africacentredublin>) has 4790 friends and it has been a valuable resource for advertising our events and act as a forum for discussion on development issues among our friends. Our twitter account ([https://twitter.com/Africa\\_Centre](https://twitter.com/Africa_Centre)) has 233 followers, we are following 455 people and tweeted 159 tweets and these are mainly on news related to Africa and Africans in a positive way.

## **7. Challenges and the way forward**

Africa Centre faced lots of challenges in 2012. We lost our funders Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and Irish Aid, who are the funders of our community participation and development education activities and our CEO was made redundant due lack of funding for the position. We were also faced with diminishing membership as the centre was faced with reduction in staff hours and few active Board members to step up membership recruitment and retention drive.

The way forward for the Africa centre is to have a strong Board of Directors with different expertise needed to engage a vibrant African community behind the work of the centre. Membership drive should be the core work of the Board to get many paid up members, a dedicated fundraising working group to develop strategies for the centre to have financial self sufficiency. The centre will need to develop partnership with other European African led organisations to secure funds that will facilitate its work with the community on the asylum process, antiracism, intercultural and integration activities.

## **8. Appendix 1: Membership list 2012**

1. Adisa Salawu
2. Alagie Touray
3. Angela Ugonado
4. Brian O'Toole
5. Chinenye Anameje
6. Eritrean Youth Solidarity for Change\*
7. Fields Obasuyi Omorogbe
8. Fleachta Phelan
9. Gambia Association Ireland\*
10. Hamdi Tounsi
11. Hanna Olaide Ojuolape
12. Ian Calagy
13. Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) \*
14. Janet Horner
15. Jide Obarotimi
16. Logan Raju
17. Malcolm Eremionkhale
18. Marie Corcoran. Tindill
19. Mary Muddiman
20. Nchedo Obi\_Igweilo
21. Peace Emerigeno
22. Peace Nukunzwe
23. Sahr Yambasu
24. Selam Desta
25. Sheila Power
26. Shireen Sanders
27. Synzi Dadie
28. Theophilus Clegg
29. Wendy Cox
30. Winifred Akhine

\*Organisation/group

## **9. Appendix 2: Staff, Intern/Volunteers and Board Members 2012**

### **Staff Members**

Mr. Eric Yao	Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Redundant June 2012
Mr. Liam Ryan	Accounts Officer
Mr. Mbemba Jabbi	Programme Officer, Development Education
Ms. Rebecca O'Halloran	Programme Assistant, Development Education

### **Volunteers/Interns**

Mr. Sebit Iwa	Community Participation Project Officer
Ms. Hafsa Belayachi	Community participation
Ms. Linda Logli	Community Participation
Ms. Niamh O'Rourke	Development Education/Community participation
Ms. Roberta Tipo	Development Education
Ms. Valeria Zagnoli	Administration

### **Board Members**

Mr. David Nyaluke
Mr. Ian Callagy
Mr. Lamin Bojang
Mr. Sahr Yambasu
Mr. Richard Njoku
Mr. Emeka Chukwureh – Resigned June 2012
Ms. Tendai Madondo – Resigned September 2012
Mr. Nabuhle Ncube – Resigned December 2012
Ms. Salem Desta – Resigned December 2012



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