

VOICES FOR DIGNITY

Ten Years at the Irish Human Rights and Poverty Stone



SINCE 17 OCTOBER 1987
WE GATHER ON THIS DAY TO
BEAR WITNESS TO THE COURAGE
AND DIGNITY OF PEOPLE IN POVERTY
IN IRELAND AND THE WORLD.
WE GIVE VOICE TO THEIR EFFORTS TO BUILD
AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY RESPECTFUL OF
HUMAN RIGHTS. WE AFFIRM OUR CONVICTION
THAT POVERTY IS NOT INEVITABLE AND RENEW OUR
SOLIDARITY.

2020

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**An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí**
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection

This book has been printed with the support of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection under the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2018 Public Awareness Initiative.

The views expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

The printing of this book has also been supported by a grant from



Dublin Bus
Community Spirit
Initiative

ISBN: 979-10-91178-63-1

Fourth World Publications – Editions Quart Monde

Designed by Aoibheann O Sullivan

Printed by Printwell Designs

Material collected and edited by team members and volunteers of ATD Ireland

Dublin, October 2018

The printing of this book has also been supported by small grants from the North East Inner City Programme, the Community Platform and the ATD Ireland core funding from the Fondation ATD, Paris.



COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY



Acknowledgements

To Juliette Pechenart, Aoife O Fearghail and Fabienne Klein we want to thank you for your tireless work compiling and editing all the content.

We want to thank Coraline Guyot for her passion, commitment and creativity. Coraline developed the creative theme and creative photography for this project.

To Aoibheann O Sullivan we cannot thank you enough for volunteering your time to produce such a high quality design and layout.

We want to thank Paul Ginnell, Emily Logan and Seanie Lambe for their contributions to this publication and their ongoing support of the 17th October event.

This publication was made possible with the support of The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Foreword

by Emily Logan,
Chief Commissioner,
Irish Human Rights and Equality
Commission (IHREC)

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Human Rights and Poverty Stone. It is an opportunity to stop and reflect on poverty and what it means for millions of people around the globe and here at home in Ireland.

Human rights are rooted in the simple idea that each of us counts, that we are each equally worthy of esteem. They are about seeing individuals first and foremost, as human beings, just like us. In this sense, human rights are often described as a visibility project: it's about getting us to see the people around us, particularly those whom we might not see, or groups of people that it might be easier to ignore.

Poverty is most often measured as material deprivation through a lack of economic resources and is the root cause of most aspects of social exclusion. *Voices for Dignity – Ten Years at the Irish Human Rights and Poverty Stone* is a book that chronicles some of the testimonies people have shared with us at the Stone in Dublin, testimonies of what it is like to live a life where your dignity as a human being is undermined.

On a day to day basis people living in poverty are often invisible and their voices unheard.

October 17th each year is a day when people around the globe, excluded through poverty, remind us that they are not voiceless.

This day, October 17th, is an example of the more upbeat dimension of human rights, the one that emphasises human potential. Witnessing people effected by poverty speak publicly about their lives in poverty reminds us of the right to thrive, not only as individuals but also through those associations and connections – with family, community, culture,



and identities. This is the part of the human rights story that celebrates difference and diversity.

When I stand at the Human Rights and Poverty Stone in Dublin, I am struck and ashamed by the testimonies of my fellow human beings.

But at that same Human Rights and Poverty Stone in Dublin, I have also had the privilege to witness that positive dimension of human rights – the one that emphasises human potential. Women and men, children and young people who have shown their strength, their determination, their good humour, their vulnerability and their love.

When the women from the SAOL project stood together, arm in arm, and sang:

**“We’re captive on the carousel of time
We can’t return we can
only look behind
From where we came
And go round and round and round
In the circle game”**

from Joni Mitchell’s ‘Circle Game’, we understood what ‘Voices for Dignity’ really means

The Story of the Human Rights & Poverty Stone

The story starts on 17th October 1987 when, in the presence of 100,000 people from every social background and continent, Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD (All Together in Dignity), unveiled a Commemorative Stone in Honour of Victims of Extreme Poverty on the Trocadero Human Rights Plaza in Paris with this message:

“On this day, defenders of human and civil rights from every continent gathered here. They paid homage to the victims of hunger, ignorance and violence. They affirmed their conviction that human misery is not inevitable. They pledged their solidarity with all people who, throughout the world, strive to eradicate extreme 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.”

In 1992, the 17th October became the United Nations' (UN) International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Since the unveiling of the first Human Rights and Poverty Stone in Paris, more than fifty Stones have been unveiled across the world, and have become rallying points for people from all walks of life. In Dublin, from 2000 to 2007, people gathered on the 17th October at the Famine Memorial to mark the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty. In the absence of

an Irish Stone, the Famine Memorial was a fitting site to mark the occasion, as it represents the struggle and poverty the people of Ireland faced in a bygone era. It was during these years that a campaign for an Irish Human Rights and Poverty Stone began.

The 17th October 2008 marked the culmination of that successful campaign with the unveiling of a Human Rights and Poverty Stone close to the Famine Memorial on Custom House Quay in Dublin.





Speaking at the unveiling of the Stone, Dublin Councillor Emer Costello said that:

“The installation of the Stone so close to the Famine Memorial would link the struggles of Irish people living in poverty today with the struggles of the past. It will serve as a reminder to Dublin’s citizens that poverty knows no borders, is timeless, enduring and is a global issue.”

The Human Rights and Poverty Stone is now a place to discover and value the courage and the solidarity of people living in poverty in Dublin, in Ireland and throughout the world. People gather together there and commit to make poverty history.

Over the years, the Stone has also become a regular rallying point for Sustainable Development, Social Justice and Peace campaigners, and all activists from all walks of life.



Stone Images:

Left Top: Manega, Burkina Faso.,
Left Bottom: Rouyn Noranda Quebec
Right Top: Brussels, Belgium , EU Parliament.
Right Bottom: New York at the U.N.

An Irish Stone, How and Why?

by Seanie Lambe

In 1999 I was sitting in my office in the Inner City Renewal Group (ICRG) one day when a couple came in and asked to see me. Stuart and Isabelle Williams explained who they were, what All Together in Dignity (ATD) was about, and what they were doing in Dublin.

The ICRG is a community development project working in the North East Inner City, advocating on behalf of the many poor people in the area, “to ensure that local people would get tangible benefits from the regeneration of the local economy”. Those we were working for were generally working class people living in local authority housing, many experiencing long term unemployment, and trying to survive on very low incomes. The people ATD wanted to work for, and with, were the people on the margins of society, with no income, no home and no hope. I understood the difference between the two “client groups”, and the need for work with the most marginalized. Sometime later Stuart and Isabelle [first permanent ATD Ireland team members] told me about the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty, about Joseph Wresinski and about the idea of a Human Rights and Poverty Stone. I liked, and trusted them immediately and offered them whatever support I could give in their endeavours.

At that time I was a member of the Council of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA). The Council had 27 members of whom 7 were Community Representatives and 3 members of Dublin City Council, including Emer Costello of the Labour Party, who was very helpful and supportive. I explained the idea of the UN Day, and the Human Rights and Poverty Stone and had no problem getting the support of the Council. Although it took a long time to negotiate,



DDDA and Dublin City Council eventually agreed to co-fund the Human Rights and Poverty Stone on the quayside, quite close to the Famine Memorial Statues. After participating in the End Poverty Day event every year since 2001, Cllr. John Gallagher also became a key person rallying support for the Stone in Dublin City Council. Without Emer and John's determination, I doubt whether agreement and co-funding by Dublin City Council would have been obtained.

The most important thing about the Stone is the message in the words of Wresinski, "wherever there is poverty, human rights are being denied". That statement alone changes the nature of any discussion on the issue. Poverty is not just an economic issue, it's a Human Rights issue. It also impels us to do something

about it. It opens up a new and extra line of approach to combatting poverty beyond the local and into the realm of recognized UN agencies and international agreements. It seeks to put the struggle against poverty as an integral part of economic development.

I have never forgotten that meeting with Stuart and Isabelle, and the many meetings with those who followed them in ATD, and have tried to support their work whenever I can. It is important that the Human Rights message of the Stone is kept at the forefront of our endeavours. The UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty is celebrated at the Stone on the 17th October and is one of the few occasions when those in greatest need are central to the event. Long may it prosper.



Poverty in Ireland, Ten Years On

by Paul Ginnell,
European Anti-Poverty
Network (EAPN) Ireland

In the years running up to unveiling the new Human Rights and Poverty Stone in 2008 improvements were being seen in the lives of many people. As the 'Celtic Tiger' roared, the numbers of those living in poverty, while high, had been falling year on year. However, it was also recognized that many disadvantaged communities and groups had been left behind, not just because of low incomes, but because of inadequate access to key services such as accommodation, education and health and low employment levels. To address this, the Government had just published a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016.

When people gathered on the 17th October 2008, the economic crisis was already making its presence felt in people's lives. However, they could not have expected what followed.

Within five years the number of people experiencing deprivation, and who could not afford the basic essentials for life, had grown three fold to three in ten of the population; supports for autonomous community groups and essential community services were decimated and a focus put on access to employment, despite the lack of jobs. By 2009 the Combat Poverty Agency had been closed as had the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism.

While much of the social crisis Ireland experienced after 2008 can be put down to rapidly increasing unemployment, which grew from 4.1% to over 15% in 2012, a major cause of the increase in poverty was as



a result of the austerity measures implemented by successive Irish Governments. This saw cuts to and restrictions in access to services and welfare supports and a greater use of negative activation measures for those who were unemployed. Similar types of austerity policies across the EU also resulted in increased poverty in many countries, undermining the commitment to reducing the numbers of people in poverty and social exclusion in the EU by 20 million by 2020.

In media and political circles there was much talk of the impact of the crisis and austerity measures on the 'squeezed middle'. However facts and experiences showed that those who suffered worst from multiple cuts to services and supports were those on the lowest income and in the most marginalised communities. This experience was captured in 2015 by the Community Platform in *Now You See Us: The human stories behind poverty in Ireland* where people told the stories of the impact of policies in pushing them and their families deeper into poverty while also thwarting their efforts to improve their situation.

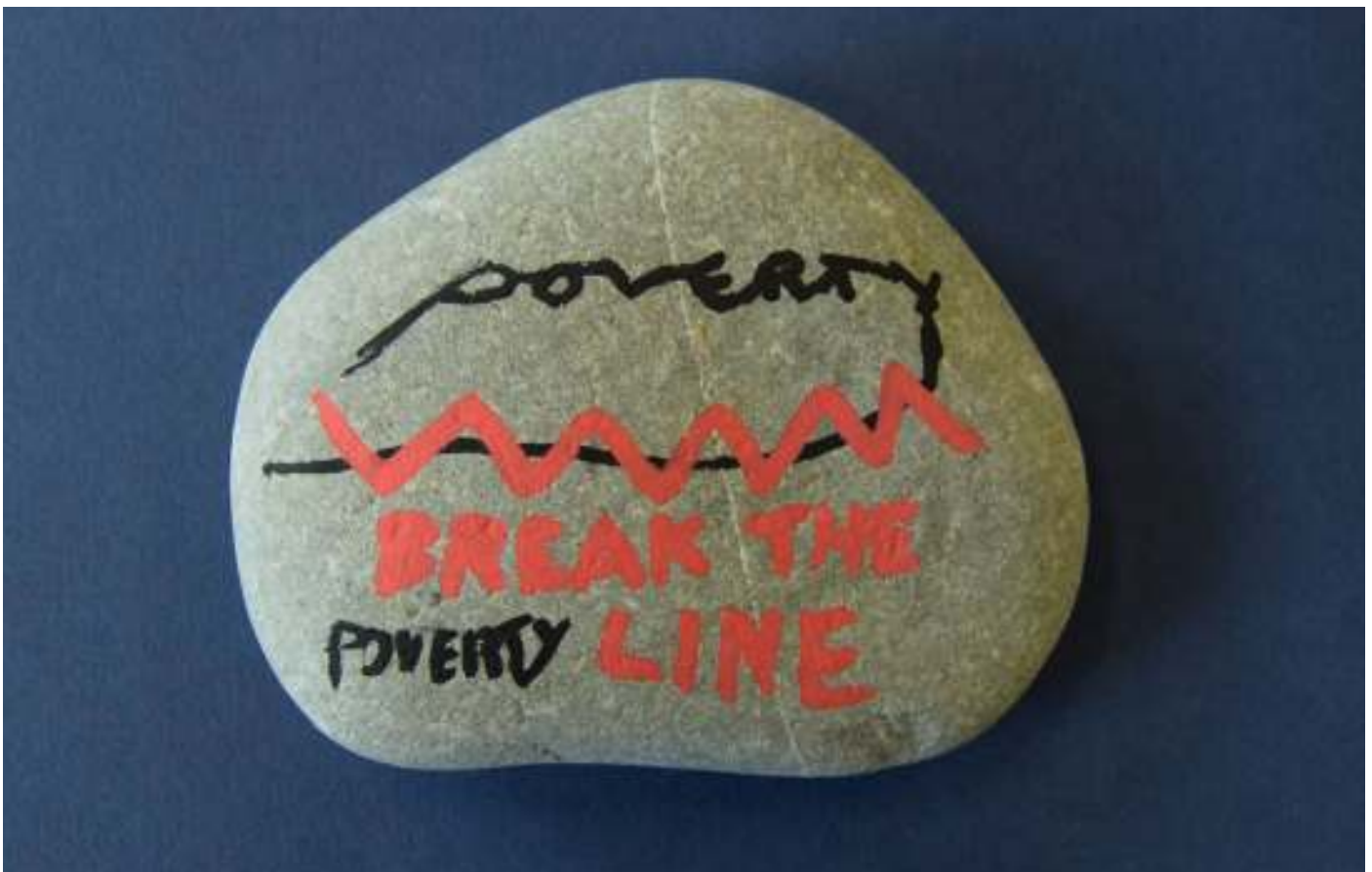
The impact was well articulated by Siobhan, a lone parent, who said “I think that all I have left is my little bit of pride”. The 17th October commemorations over the last ten years have also given voice to people who have highlighted this impact on their lives.

In 2018, a decade after the Human Rights and Poverty Stone was laid and over ten years after the crisis started, it is clear that the worst of the crisis is over and life is improving for many. Unemployment is under 6% and for the first time in ten years we see more Irish people returning to Ireland than leaving.

However, while the number of people living in poverty has fallen, one in five people in Ireland experience deprivation, double pre-crisis levels. Poverty is also much higher among some groups such as lone parents, people with disabilities and others. Homelessness is now a daily reality for around 10,000 people, including many children, something we could never have imagined.

As the economic recovery picks up pace it is crucial that we do not return to the same situation as before the crisis where marginalised groups and communities were left behind. We must learn from the mistakes of the past and make sure that we build the type of society we want and have the policies needed to make this a reality.

Ten years after adopting a failed National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, the Government is preparing a successor. This plan must address the root causes of poverty so that everyone can live a life with dignity and fully participate in society. In 2015 the UN agreed the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Irish Government has committed itself to achieving these goals by 2030. The first of these goals is to “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”. This includes leaving no-one behind. In the coming years we must ensure that this commitment to a sustainable future becomes a reality for everyone. We look forward to celebrating this progress at future 17th October commemorations around the Human Rights and Poverty Stone.



The Making of 'Voices for Dignity'

We decided to celebrate the ten years we have spent at the Irish Human Rights and Poverty Stone by compiling a book of testimonies. Each year on the 17th of October people with experience of poverty and social inequalities share their testimonies at the Stone. These testimonies are at the core of the national event every year. This book highlights those who have contributed over the past ten years. These testimonies represent people who are struggling, a struggle that is seldom if ever recorded. We believe that these voices represent a significant part of a country's history and deserve to be valued.

We explored all the testimonies that were shared at the Stone between 2008 and 2017. Each testimony is precious in its own right and represents the lives of individuals and families

who live in poverty and face social exclusion.

In this book we present a collection of testimonies that reflect a variety of recurring themes throughout the years. Themes include; the right to education, the right to housing, the right to health, the right to decent work, the fight to keep families together, and the right to dignity. The testimonies also highlight the diverse and wide range of different organizations that have been actively participating in the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty since 2008.

This book also includes a selection of testimonies from friends of ATD, written in 2018 to illustrate what the Stone means today.

We want to thank all the individuals and organizations, past and present, who epitomise the spirit of this very special day.



“Your Rights are Written in Stone”

The “Your Rights are Written in Stone” project aimed to create a positive sense of ownership of the Human Rights and Poverty Stone, and of the Human Rights Framework upon which it was conceived. 2018 marks not only the 10th Anniversary of the unveiling of the Irish Human Rights and Poverty Stone, but also the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

ATD Ireland wanted to mark this special year by running a project designed to encourage the active participation of residents from the North East Inner City. ATD Ireland facilitated workshops to highlight the fact that the Stone is located within the community, and to start a dialogue about human rights while forming a symbolic connection between those rights and the Human Rights and

Poverty Stone. During workshops participants were encouraged to write, draw, or paint a word, a name, or an image they associated with human rights or poverty, or with their personal life on a small stone.

These stones form the symbolic connection between residents of the North East Inner City, and the message of the Stone located in the heart of their community.

On the 17th of October 2018, participants will cement this connection by displaying their stones on Custom House Quay at the national event. A selection of photos illustrating the stones of individuals and groups are presented throughout this book.

We would like to thank the North East Community Garden, the SAOL project, the North West Inner City Training and Development Project (NWICTDP), Pavee Point, Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC), Ozanam House, Cross Care, Lus Na Greine Family Resource Centre (Granard), Dublin City Council (NEIC Programme - who funded this project), friends of ATD and all those who took part in this project.







Year of the Unveiling of the Stone

20

Introduction to the ceremony

by Fintan Farrell

It is a very special occasion, it's not as such a political rally, it's not a protest, it is a very solemn ceremony to commemorate particularly and to highlight the courage of people and communities who, day in and day out struggle against poverty in Ireland and around the world. So let's begin our solemn ceremony today and I want to read a message from the **President of Ireland, President Mary McAleese**. She says in her message:

"I am delighted to send my warmest wishes to all those involved with the unveiling today of the World Poverty Commemorative Stone on this, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Joseph Wresinski, his own personal experience of poverty, was pivotal in his understanding of the necessity to witness to the poor, to honour the victims of hunger, violence and ignorance and commit to join with them to ensure that everybody's dignity and freedom are respected".



"My name is Ann. I have been homeless for three years. Today, I am thinking of my two youngest children who have been taken away from me. If you lose your children, you lose your heart and half of your body. How can I go and see them when I live on the street? As a Traveller child, I didn't go to school. How could we go to school? We had no house, we were living in a wagon. I learnt to read and write on my own. When they brought me to court for the children, I didn't understand what they said and they took my children. I would have needed an interpreter because of their big words. If I had known how to read and write, I might not have lost my children"

**Ann's speech read by Mary Connors
– STAG-Southside Travellers Action Group**



"For eight years, we have worked to have this Stone in the ground, meeting other people and winning them over. It's been a long road. We've made friends and built trust. And in the fight against poverty, that counts"

Brendan Core –ATD



"It is nice to see that Stone down to appreciate and be grateful for what we have. Some people are much worse off than ourselves. We want to be part of that Stone for them, for the children especially"

Jacqueline Tobin – ATD

"This Stone is in the Docklands and it makes me think of my Dad and my brother and all the other men that used to work in the docks. My Dad worked very hard. His main dream was to see us out of the drugs. He wanted a different life for us, a good education, better jobs. It didn't happen the way he dreamt. This Stone for me represents my father's dream for us"

Christopher Tobin – ATD

"For me, the Stone in the ground represents responsibility. It's about our responsibility, all of us, to look after each other and one another's dignity, the best we can. It means no one should ever feel like I did at one time, that I was worth nothing. At the end of the day, we are all human beings and that's what the world is inclined to forget. [...] Because of what I went through before, I had no goals, no nothing. With my group, to be part of the Stone going into the ground, this is a big positive thing in my life"

Daniel McGuinness – ATD.

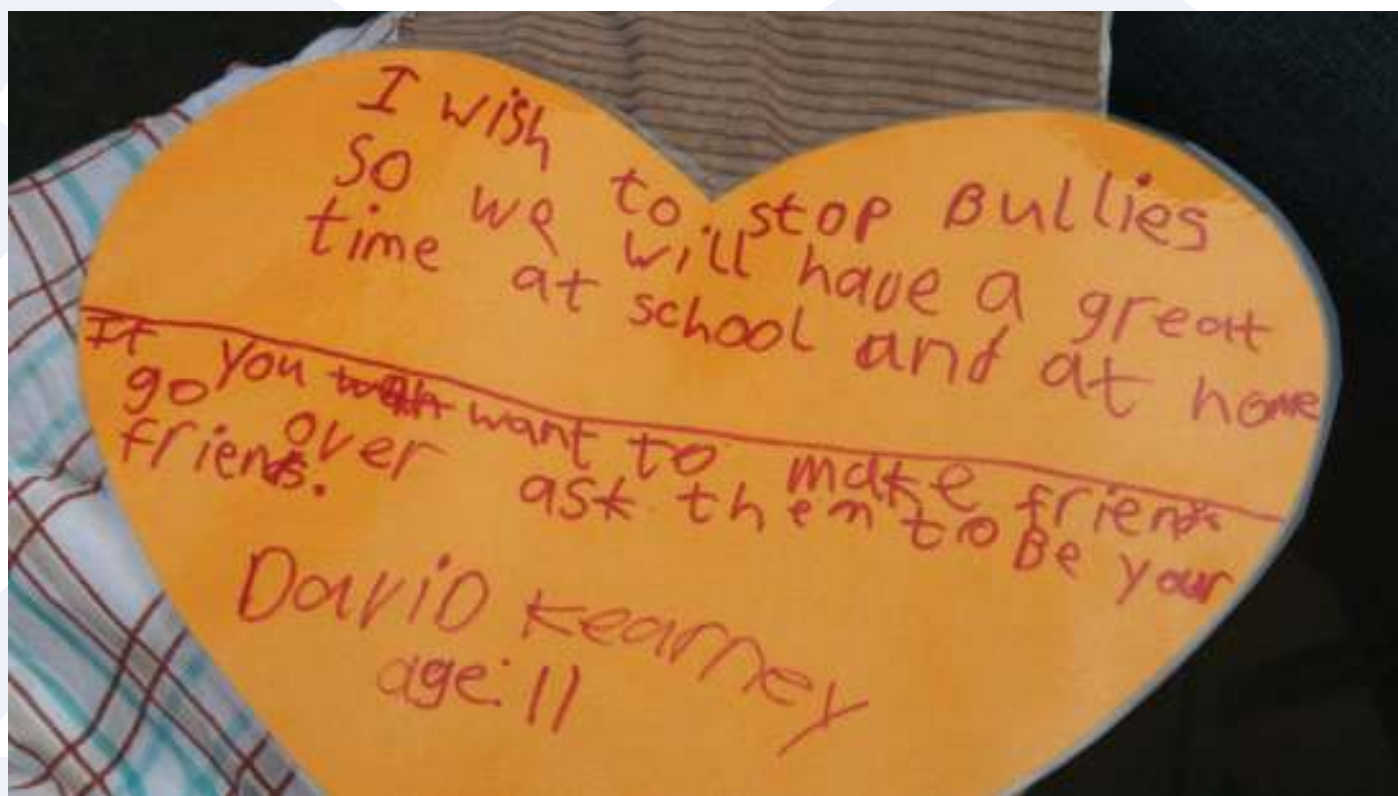


100 Messages From Children

This project was run by the children's network of ATD: TAPORI. Children from all over the world created silhouettes with messages. This exhibition travelled from one country to another.

"We are really happy to be around you, all the children here and from all around the world, who send to Ireland the 100 silhouettes and these silhouettes have travelled during one whole year from one country to another. Like, for instance, from a group of children living with their family on the streets of Guatemala City, to students from a school in Israel, or from a prison in Cameroon in Africa, to a project gathering Roma children in Poland, or... under a bridge where the children live with their families in the Philippines, to a housing estate in Switzerland. So all these silhouettes have travelled like that and everywhere children tell us that we need to get to know one another, each of us and we need to know what each of us carries in our heart"

Françoise Barbier - ATD



Children's voices

“I have a friend who gets around in a wheelchair, but that doesn't keep us from playing together”

Dominka, Poland.



“Everyone should have a friend to play with even if their outside looks bad. No matter what's on the outside, what matters is inside”

Victor and Cloe, CASPr, Dublin

“I wish there would be less racism between us. So we can keep our words because we are known in Ireland as Peace Keepers”

Katie and David, O'Devaney Gardens Estate, Dublin



“I say no to racism. I drew a mixed face of two races. It's not about race, it's about who you are.”

William (10), Dublin

Sculptures to Unite People

Phil and Françoise Barbier, two volunteers from ATD came to the art classes run by Eleanor Jones in Mountjoy Prison. They brought a suitcase full of coloured wire... Eleanor explained that after talking about the work already being done with communities outside prison and explaining how ATD hopes to unite people who have been excluded and whose voices are unheard usually because of poverty, the art students became very enthusiastic about making their own wire pieces.

These individual pieces would then be put together as one larger sculpture to make one big statement.

The following describe some thoughts by the men in Mountjoy who took part in the project:

Myles made a pair of glasses. He talked about seeing things in a different light and seeing things more clearly.

There was a very simple three-lettered word 'SAM' put together. This is very special because this person is just improving his literacy skills. He said by spelling his name in wire, the statement is made that

"I am here – don't forget me – I exist!"

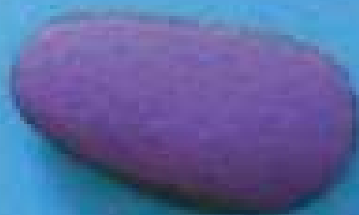


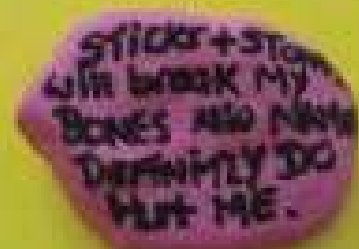
Mike designed a ladder with a little man on the top. He wanted this to be symbolic of himself trying, yes, to escape, but also more importantly of reaching new heights – climbing up and reaching for the stars.





In total, 25 sculptures were made under the supervision of Phil Barbier, with the help of hundreds of participants from 25 local groups. The art pieces were exhibited in Dublin City Hall for one week leading up to 17th October and were also displayed as part of the ceremony.





YOUR RIGHTS
ARE WRITTEN
IN STONE

Year of the Stone

20

Right to a Decent Home

“I live in O’Devaney Garden flats with my partner and three daughters. Four years ago Dublin City Council asked us to give up the flat we were in and take a boarded up one for eighteen months so they could knock the other block.

They promised us that we would get a house after the eighteen months if we agreed. We took them at their word and moved. Nothing was done to do up the one we moved into. The pipes are old and the skirting boards missing. There is a smell of damp.

Recently the children woke to find their bedroom flooded and they were floating in their beds. We got Dublin City Council out to check it. A pipe had burst so they put in a machine to clear the dampness. It is still unusable, so our three children have to sleep in our room as the walls in the third room are falling down. I am worried about the health of my children and my partner. All around us are boarded up flats where people are breaking in to deal and use drugs.



The older girls have watched their friends being housed in nice houses and now are blaming us because we are still here. I understand why they are ashamed. We feel ashamed to have our families around.

We have been let down and will no longer be able to trust officials’ promises. I fear that something will happen to the children if we are here much longer. We have now been told that it could be another three to five years before we are rehoused. This is the reality of life in Ireland today.”

Glenn Wynne – NWICTDP – ATD





Stay Close to the Children

“I didn’t like school. At the age of 10, I ran away. I started drinking. During five long years, I slept in the parks. I slept on corner steps, along the canal and on benches. I saw my friends dying. I missed out on half of my life, but two years ago, I stopped drinking. I went back to school and learnt how to read and write.

Today I am working and I am happy. All it took is someone who cared and a roof over my head. My girlfriend has been a big support for me. She really pushed me!

I didn’t have my Junior Cert. Now, I got a certificate. I did a computer course and got another certificate. Now I am doing level four. I went to a group in which people tell their stories. After two months, I found the strength to tell mine. Our stories were kept in the group. We trusted each other.

Today, I would like to tell the teachers: “Stay close to children that need help! Help them when they get stuck on their words!” I would like to tell all the young people:



“If you missed school, it is still possible to learn! Grab the chance when it comes! There are people out there who also care for you.”

**Jerry Donovan’s Testimony read
by Natasha Redmond – ATD**



ACTIVITIES

Voices of Children

Pauline Pigett from CASPr introduced the Taporí campaign.

"A number of schools and after-school activities have been involved in a Friendship International Campaign organised by ATD and Taporí.

With the support of artistic activities, children around the world have expressed their hopes and ideas for a better world. They have created all kind of vehicles to say how they are reaching out to the children who are left alone and making sure that no one's forgotten along the way.

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children from CASPr took part in a European Taporí meeting in Poland.

They met with the Ombudsman for children.

Anthony is going to read an extract of what they said to him:"

"It's important to go to school, to know lots of words and be able to answer other people's questions. At school, children that can't give their opinion feel excluded. We all want to be listened to. Children who don't go to school regularly might not have the same chances to have a life as good as others. Going to school doesn't always make us smile, but if we don't go, we can't read the sentence: "We're all equal."

Niamh said:

"There is a girl in my class, no one plays with her. The children call her "half cast" because she is half Irish and half African. I am the only one that plays with her. She has no friends, and feels left out most of the time. It is not nice to leave people out. It doesn't matter who we are, what colour we are, what size we are and where we are from if we are kind to everyone and get along."

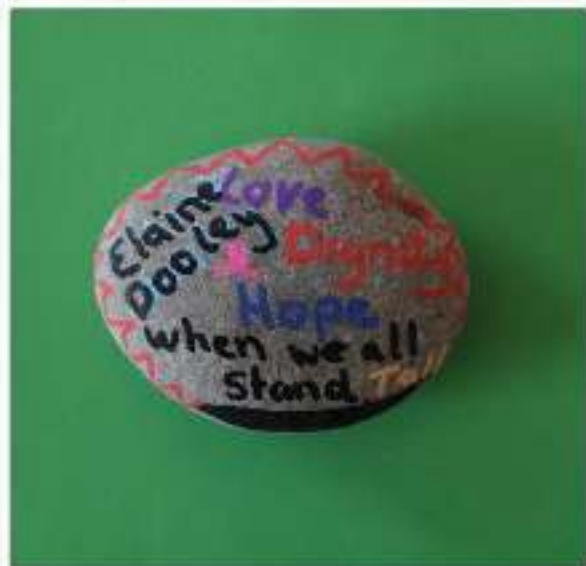


History Connects Us

“It is the history of people who have suffered generationally from poverty, wars and the Famine that we had in our country. You are thinking about people abroad in other countries that you wouldn’t know about, but there is a Poverty Stone there somewhere and their experiences are similar to ourselves so that’s the connection.

To tie people to the Stone, it’s not the Stone you are connecting them to but the sense of our own history. The community that the Stone is based in, Dublin 1, the history is bleak. It should not define the community but it was never really like explored and connected to rights. That community is still suffering. If the community grasped the history and meaning of the Stone and what it means, there is strength in it. If they come together and stop and reflect at the Stone and think, “what is the history”? It’s the history of people that have overcome incredible hardships. Because that’s what it means to us and to other people. If you learn your history you tend to try and change things and do something about it. It means a lot to us”

Paul



10/12/48
THIS IS MY
DATE OF BIRTH

LOVE

Dignity

BLESSED
and ♥
THANK YOU
FOR BEING
A FAMILY

Humanity
Freedom
LOVE

BLESSED
LOVE
LIFE

freedom

Gratitude
Family

HOPE
x
PEACE



Thank you
for
All the Good

MAM-Dad
TOMO-Dad
HOPE-LOVE

Year of the Stone

20

TESTIMONIES

Right to Express Yourself

“I left school when I was 16.
I started drinking and drugs.
I also did gambling.

At 18, I had a mental health disorder.
I went to Youth Reach and passed
my Junior Cert. With them, I
started writing poems about what
I went through. I made a first CD
and recently, a whole album!

It is good to write your feelings
down, it clears the head If you bottle
them up, you can break down.

I think that young people should
have someone to look up to. For me,
it is my step mum and my sister.

I help in a group called Acorn. I do
fundraising so we can go on trips
with people with mental health
problems. We also have meetings.

It is important to have a place where
we can talk about mental health
and give each other support.”

Jimmy Power – Acorn and ATD





Right to Community Support

“My name is Keith, I would like to thank you for coming here today.

Homelessness and poverty has been part of my life as long as I can remember. My mother was homeless too and my family was moved from place to place. My two brothers and six sisters were in and out of care during that time. My mother tried to keep us together.

It got harder when my father left for England when I was five. I went on to live with my grandmother and when I went to school I could not settle. I began to run away at the age of ten or eleven. I was staying out all night.

I started to look for my mother; I was told that she lived in Ballymun. I could see the flats in the distance but always got lost and frightened, and was always brought back to my grandmothers in a police car. At times I did not know where the police were taking me. I eventually found my mother in Ballymun but she was in no position to look after my brothers and sisters who were in foster care.



In Ballymun I met Peter McVerry and he put me up in one of his hostels. There were twelve other young people staying there at that time. My life there was much better and I made new friends. My two brothers were able to stay there too. My mother moved to a house in Finglas and my sisters went to live in a girl's hostel in Ballymun. In Peter McVerry's I went back to school to catch up on what I missed out on when I was younger. I don't know what would have become of me if I

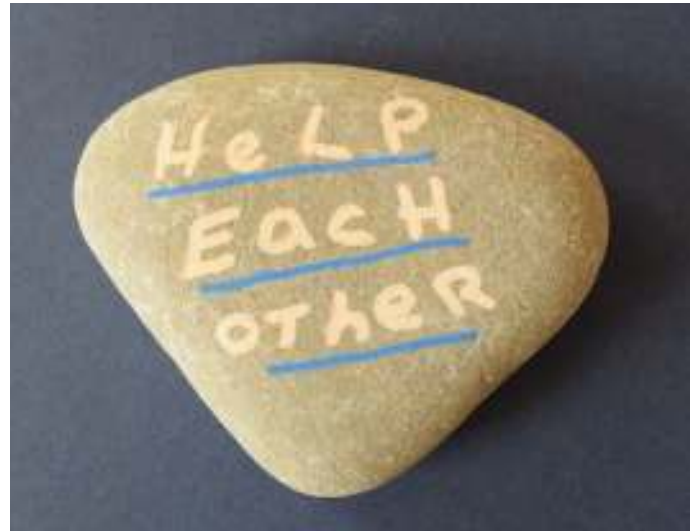
had not met up with Fr McVerry.

I would like to thank him and the others who have helped me through that time. I would also 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!”

Keith McAnespie – ATD

“In those very tough times I found people who I could rely on, people in MRCI and friends I made in the Domestic Workers Action Group. They were there for me. I trusted them. 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”

Evalyne Muthoni – Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)



Speak Up for Those Who Can't

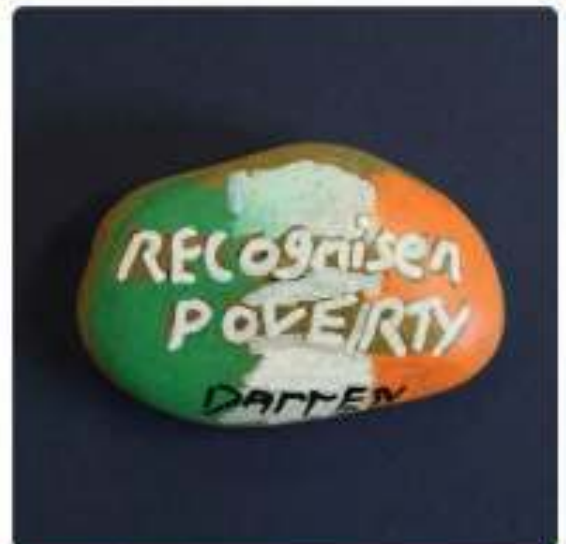
"At the Stone we all get together and we forget nobody. All Together in Dignity.

We come all together as one, and we ask for our voices to be heard on that particular day. And please God we can get the message across to the Lord Mayor, and to all these people and let them know that there is poverty. There is poverty and there are other people that are lost and they have no voice. And we stand together as one on the 17th of October to let them know that these people are not forgotten. These are our friends and we try to show them the way and show them there is an answer, well, nearly an answer.

There is hope; to let them know that there is a future.

And if somebody comes on that day, that person might hear some messages and it might not be big, but maybe they might take a little out of each speaker. So show them that they are not alone, that we are here for them, and that it's written in stone. To try to fix poverty and fix people who haven't got a voice. We stand there with them. We need to stand there and have voices for those who haven't. And maybe a message to get across to them; there is a voice for the 17th of October. It's a big day, not many people know about it"

Annemarie





**YOUR RIGHTS
ARE WRITTEN
IN STONE**

Year of the Stone

20

Fighting for My Family

“I am a mother of five. I left school when I was fourteen. I couldn’t read or write. I couldn’t help my children with their homework. I started literacy classes last September with the support of the Matt Talbot Group. About two years ago, my fourteen-year old son was diagnosed with dyslexia. It took one new teacher who paid attention to him and sent him for a test. Now he is doing much better. I thought,

“If he can do it, I can do it!”

Four years ago, we got our own house after fifteen years on the waiting list. Now someone can mind my children while I go to class. My kids are delighted that I can read. Before I did the literacy course I used to feel stressed. Now I don’t because I can understand if a letter comes in. I can take control. We got a lot closer as a family. It is important to have stability for the children. And for me to be clean from drugs and for the family to be together no matter what.



There are still people worse off than us. I tell them not to give up. There is hope!”

Amanda O'Shea – Matt Talbot Community Trust







THERE
IS ALWAYS
ROOM IN MY
HOUSE EVEN
IN MY ARMS
ROSE

My Page isn't Blank Anymore

“Sitting here with a blank page
not knowing what to write,
battling with my mind,

Sometimes I think I'm not that bright
I'm caught between two worlds in a
way wanting to be a normal Joe Soap.

Ah well I can live in hope

But then again I'd like to
have my individuality

I hope to find myself someday
along with someone that will
accept me, just to be happy.

Now today these words are
a thing of the past.

All my wishes have come true
and long may they last.

My page isn't blank any more
it's full of thoughts and ideas.

I'm not battling with my mind any
more well not with those past fears.

I have positive fears today like what
career path I'm going to take.

I'm making a life for
myself and my family



Today I'm giving myself a break.

I'm a normal Joe Soap that's
all I wanted to be

But also it's important for me
to have my individuality

I have also found my girl along
with two kids a girl and a boy

And I'm not just happy I'm full of joy”

Luke Kavanagh, Ballyfermot, Dublin





“I dream to see my kids play in a garden. I would love to plant seeds with them. We would love to have a dog!”

Michael Boylan – ATD



“I have three children at home in the Philippines and I have been working here to support them and provide them with the necessary means to have a good education. I wish I could be closer to them; I want to see them and be there for them as they grow up, but being in the Philippines I could not support them. I could not find work”

Jayson Montenegro – MRCI



A Place to Celebrate

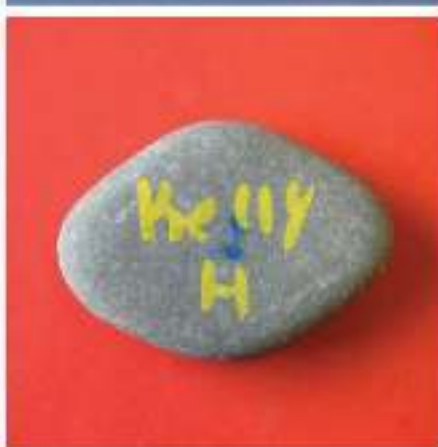
“The Stone is somewhere to go and somewhere to celebrate. This area used to be a playground for children who live nearby. Children used to swim in the river Liffey there”

Rose

“The gathering of the 17th of October is very powerful, it is the voices of people. It is the History. People can remember and campaign”

Long





Year of the Stone

20

Basic Rights for All

"The poor in Ireland cannot take any more budget cuts.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today at the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty. I don't think I need to convince anyone here of the negative experiences of Travellers and Roma in Ireland. But in case anyone doubts the racism that continues to this day, maybe I can remind us of a recent description of Irish Travellers by Judge Seamus Hughes,

"Neanderthal men laying in the long grass and living by the law of the jungle is how I'd describe them".

This Judge was not held to account in any way. This racism that Travellers experience cannot be separated from experiences of exclusion and poverty. Generations of Travellers in Ireland have experienced racism, unemployment, poor education, poor health and poverty. Today, Traveller men in Ireland live 15 years less than those in the settled population and Traveller women 11 years less. One of the most shocking statistics is that the suicide rate for Travellers is six times the rate of the general population.

The situation for Roma in Ireland also needs to be highlighted. Roma also face racism, and many in Ireland live in extreme poverty. Many Roma cannot get a job in Ireland and are not entitled to social welfare benefits. They face a situation of living in extreme poverty, or they can be given a flight to their country of origin by the Irish state. This can be a dangerous journey – the European Roma Rights Centre have noted that, "At least 20 attacks including 10 deaths of Romani people across four countries have been reported in the first half of 2012 alone".

If these issues are not enough, we now have another challenge to face, and this is surviving another budget. Roma and Travellers have already been hurt badly by cuts and cannot take any more. 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. We want every budget decision to be human rights proofed. We are not asking for anything new – this is something the government is supposed to do – it has human rights obligations.

Finally, I want to end with a short description of the experience of some families I know. They live on Dunsink lane. There are about ten families living here and there is one tap between all of them. They have no shower facilities and have to use extended families showers. Most of the men will go to the gym just to use the shower. There are only portaloos. They don't have constant electricity and use a generator to get them by. The council do not collect rubbish at this site. Just think about how hard it would be look after children and get them ready for school in these conditions. It's 2012 and people have to live with facilities that are more fitting to the 1900's. This cannot continue and poverty and racism need to be stopped".

James McDonagh – Pavee Point





“My stone is a baked cake. Traveller’s make their own bread in their own oven. There’s the cake, with the sign of the Cross, and for it never to go hungry. And as long as you have a few potatoes, and a bit of bread, you’ll always be full, if you’ve nothing else but them.”

Bridgie Collins



“This is the caravan. And meself and me brothers and sisters were reared in that kind of a caravan. It makes me think back on the old days that we had, and the good days that we had, and plenty of bad ones too.”

Sheila O’Reilly

“I just did this for ‘improvement of poverty in Ireland’, and just for, in the next few years, start seeing Travellers and settled people, and everyone coming out of poverty, and things to start getting better for everybody.”

Leng Collins



Meeting people who care helped me a lot, we all have Pride and Dignity!

"Years ago, in school, if the kids had ADHD, that was not recognized. They were considered to be bold children and left at the back of the class. I was one of those children. The teacher used to tell me: You will end up sweeping the street. Actually, I wouldn't mind sweeping the street; at least I would have a job.

A big challenge I faced in life was addiction. The Government has methadone clinics but it's a catch twenty-two. There is no encouragement to get off methadone. If you want to do it, you have to do it yourself. Sometimes they even offer you more. This is something I can't understand.

During my last eighteen months' sentence, I learned calligraphy. That was great for me. Father Declan was a great priest in Mountjoy Prison. He saw me scribbling one day; he saw I had an interest in it and he got some officers



to give me felts and pens. He helped me apply for a grant through John Lonergan. With the money I got, it was about 70 pounds, I asked Lorraine to buy me a set of pens...

Meeting people who care helped me a lot. Still, when you are homeless, you are given the run-around no matter what. Imagine how hard it is for people with disabilities, people who do not have a clue how to get on the phone, people who are not articulate enough...

Who is there to help them? Sometimes nobody. Lorraine said that, as a society, we need to care for each other and she is right. We are all human beings. We all need help and we all have pride and dignity "

Eamon Burke – ATD





“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 Farrell- ATD



“The strength and confidence I have in myself today is the result of the support I received over the years, the result of the trust people put in me”

Marie Maher- ATD



Hope

by the SAOL Sisters

Born into poverty

It's a role with no say

No escape No relief

Barely making each day

We're living in hope

As bad as it seems

Through struggle and worries

We still have our dreams





Taking Time to Be Together

“October 17th is about giving voice to people that haven’t got one and standing up for something that a small minority of us believe in. It’s about trying to get momentum behind campaigning to end poverty and trying to get everyone involved. Taking your time to do something worthwhile for others. A lot of people are too busy these days”

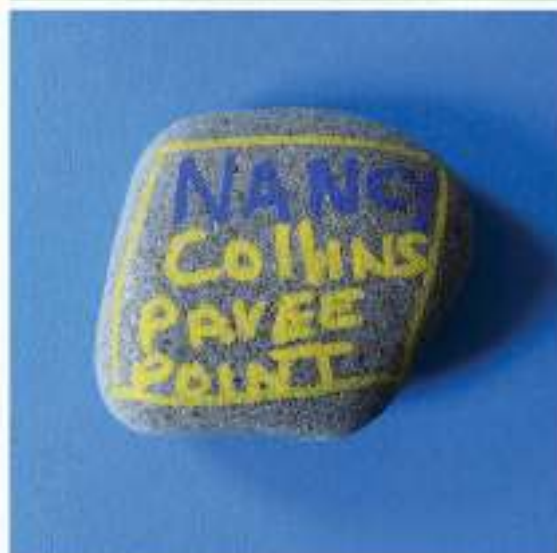
Gavin

“The Stone is next to the Famine Statues, a very special place which has a real sense of spirituality, where people come to remember and stand together”

Juliette & Gail



YOUR RIGHTS
ARE WRITTEN
IN STONE





Year of the Stone

20



Right to Education

“I’m Paul, I’m 42. I’m a product of my environment and that environment had an impact on my overall life. My environment was one marked by poverty and an absence of opportunities. Poverty to me was just a given. But that was just one aspect of Irish society at the time. And it still is.

Women weren’t valued as much as men and poor women weren’t valued at all. So how was my mam, a woman with six children, just about managing to put food on the table, supposed to give us opportunities? But she did because she instilled in me the value of education and of questioning, which despite my battles with the formal education system served me well in later life.

So I always questioned unfairness and injustice – but we weren’t encouraged to question. It felt like the system believed we should just accept our lot, what other choice was there?

Outside our community it felt like we had no power, that we were overlooked. For example I dropped out of school at thirteen and no one

in authority batted an eyelid. When you're living in poverty you can't even see it. You go with what's around you, doing things that you don't want to do. I ended up hanging around with the wrong sort of people.

But out of bad stuff comes good, and I ended up meeting a teacher who really lit the spark of my interest in education and social justice. He didn't tell me anything, instead he asked me questions. The best teachers don't instruct, they bring out what's in you already.

All through my life there have been key people that have made a difference to me – that have supported me to question and explore new ways of thinking. That's what we all need – an open door to other ways of thinking, and when you're living with poverty sometimes that openness isn't there because you're too worried about where the next meal is coming from, where you're going to live, your kid's education, your health.

So where am I now? I've overcome the environment that I grew up in, though it still influences me. Now education is not a battleground, it's my playground! There are opportunities if we seek them. I'm in college presently and am

studying. By doing this I am hoping to pass on the value of education and the principles of social justice.

I believe access to education contributes to eradication of poverty in all its forms. Poverty of hope, opportunity and inclusion must become a thing of the past.

For the next generation, my son's generation, I see hope that poverty in all its forms becomes a thing of the past. Through the work of people, people like us here today, coming together with a common goal, we can make this happen”.

Paul Uzell - Focus Ireland



“The great
appear great
because we are
on our knees.
Let us rise!”

James Larkin





Testimony of Hope

“Good morning everybody. My name is Annemarie. I have been a drug addict for twenty-four years. I am now drug-free and I would like my testimony to be a testimony of hope.

Addiction robbed five people in my family. It robbed two of my siblings. As children, we had a lot of love but we barely had a dinner, we barely had a chair to sit on and we had no heating. I left school at eleven. Maybe things would have been different if I had stayed longer in school, but I was a troublesome child.

People often ask me: “Annemarie, why did you get clean?” Sometimes, I just do not have the answer. It’s just, maybe, looking at them dying slowly.

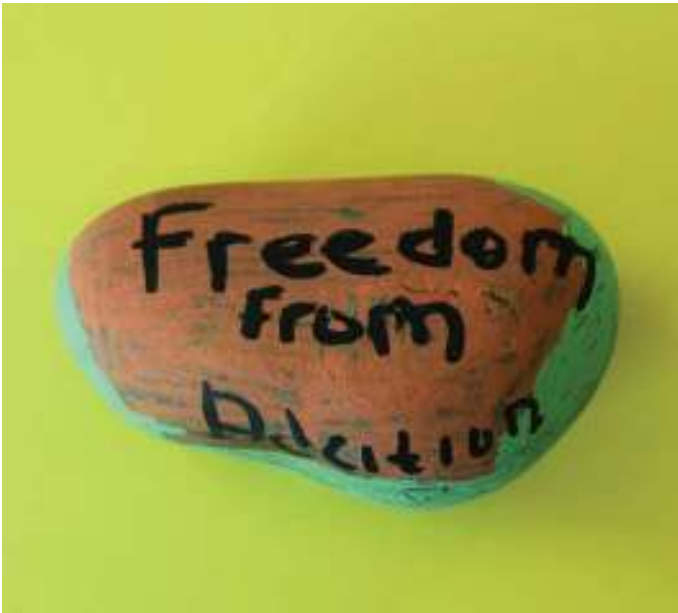
The Star Project in Ballymun gave me a lot of hope. They didn’t walk in front of me in case I couldn’t follow. They didn’t walk behind me in case I couldn’t lead. They just walked beside me. They saw me on my lowest, lowest, lowest... but they believed in me. I needed to hit my own rock bottom before they could help me. But no matter how bad it was, no matter



what state I was in, they didn’t put any pressure on me, they just listened.

In Keltoi, the treatment centre I went to in Phoenix Park, there were people I knew from twenty years ago. They had been in bad, bad addiction and I was thinking: ‘if they can do it, I can do it!’ Early recovery is not an easy road because pain has no memory. It is hard work but it’s doable!

I saw a chap the other day and he reminded me of myself. He was on Parnell St. He had a sleeping bag wrapped around his head and tears came out of my eyes. People need some kind of hope. It is not



acceptable to live in a country like Ireland and see people who are struggling with persistent poverty.

Sometimes people think that addicts do not have a voice. But we do have a voice. Everyone has a voice! Each person present here has a voice! If we stand together, we can build a world without discrimination!"

Annemarie – ATD





“Persistent poverty is the world we were born into. It’s a hard feeling not to be able to climb up the ladder little by little. It’s hard to feel trapped and dependent! We are human beings. We have pride and dignity!

What keeps me going day after day? I suppose it’s what is inside really, it’s self-pride, it’s inner strength, it’s knowing that one day our voice will have to be heard.

In November 2010, I took part in a conference organized by ATD Fourth World and the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels. The theme was ‘With young people let’s build a Europe free of poverty’. That experience absolutely gave me strength. It doesn’t matter how small you think you are, your voice can be very big if you want it to be big!

I remember having a conversation with my daughter not too long ago, because she felt that people that live in wealthier areas were better than her but I told her: you are the same as everybody and don’t you let people make you think different, never”

Noeleen Fallon- ATD

“My name is Martin. When I was in school, I was always at the back of the class. The teacher had no time for me. At the age of fifteen, I joined FAS, I became a carpenter, but I had an accident. I was in a coma and everything just went... As soon as I got better, I looked for CE-schemes...

I found one but the place closed down. When I heard about Sean’s [group], I was so happy! I started to learn how to read and write. I thought I’d never be able to do that!”

Martin Kelly- NWICTDP



A Special Place to Meet

“The Stone is a Celtic motif, it joins up everyone, no one is more important than anybody else. Everybody is equal and we all like places to meet because it adds to the occasion. You could meet in O’Connell St, but if you don’t have a special place it just doesn’t mean anything. By having the Poverty Stone, and there are similar ones all over the world, it makes whatever happens there important”

Maurice





Year of the Stone

20

Right to Decent Work

“My name is Mariann. I am South African and I came to Ireland in 2010 after I was offered work as an ‘Au Pair’. I would have liked to be here at this important event today but I am not able to do so, as many people earning very little would agree with me that missing a day’s earnings is not an option, even when unwell. Lack of decent work means many of us working for example as cleaners, restaurant workers, security guards, childminders, farm workers and many others in unregulated sectors, find ourselves working most of our lives, and live a very modest life. We only spend when it is really necessary, but despite this many of us remain poor and struggling to make ends meet.

As an Au Pair:

I worked full time hours as a childminder and housekeeper. I worked sixty-eighty to seventy hours a week (starting at seven am until nine pm), six days a week. I did cleaning, hoovering, mopping, laundry, preparing meals and school runs. I did deep cleaning of the full three story house all day every Saturday without having eaten a thing. I was being paid €400 monthly. I was lonely and had no knowledge of where to go to get information about my rights as a worker. My work was not secure as working and living in someone’s home means they have the power to treat you the way they like, while you live in fear of having nowhere to go if they decided to kick you out for challenging them or their ill treatment of you.

I managed to leave my exploitative employer half a year later and today I am in college studying, which is something that I have always wished to do all my life. However, that also means I have to work part time to be able to feed myself, to pay my rent, pay bills and afford transport to college. I work outside my study hours, eighteen hours a week. As a migrant here without a long term residence status, I am not entitled to any access to cheaper accommodation or access to affordable primary healthcare, even if my overall income is about seven hundred euros a month. Living in poverty most of my life has had an impact on my outlook on life. I always



worry about day to day costs and this makes me live in fear of the unknown if I were to lose my current income. This is a story of many other people and low wage workers like me or those who earn below the minimum wage, doing work that is not valued by many yet so valuable in the society. The kind of life these people have is not quality life, but just enough for us to breathe from day to day. And that is very sad it is still happening today. However, living in poverty like this does not break us, I know for certain that this gives us an opportunity to come together and demand a better and fairer society where we all have a place, we are all valued, and we are all respected and have a decent living wage. It’s not enough to survive; we should all have a right to thrive. Thank you for allowing me to contribute today”.

Mariann – Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland (MRCI)

Janet spoke on Mariann’s behalf



We
ARE ONE



VHAS.





Leave No One Behind

“We are twenty men and women from Dublin who worked together to write this message. Most of us know very well what it means living on a very low income, and some of us have slept on the street. We know what it is to be put down.

To leave no one behind, we have first to put the homeless on a bigger agenda. They live in extreme poverty and are isolated, especially the very young. It's easy to turn to drugs when you're homeless, because you give up. Taking drugs is an easy delusion to life.

Jackie said: “Leaving no one behind means bringing back a homeless person to my home, like someone from my family. I could lose my flat for taking this risk. But I do it because I was homeless”.

Teresa said: “Now I have my flat, but I would not walk past a homeless person. If you're my friend when I'm on the street, you're still my friend when I'm not. When you are in the street, it helps a lot when fathers and mothers can keep contact with



their children. If you have children, it gives you the will power to say: ‘We don't want this for them!’ So, we can start to get help.”

Around town we see homeless people, young and old. Why can't all the empty buildings be used to offer them proper homes? What can we do to leave no one behind? We are born equal and in innocence, but our paths in life are not equal. One father said, “I was left behind at school years ago. The class teacher hit me and I reacted. I told the teacher what I thought of him. I was then thrown out. I was just thirteen and school was finished for me. There were no more chances to learn. I stopped going to school. No one ever came to my house to ask ‘why?’ Yes, I was left behind. It is lifelong access to education that gives people another chance.”

To leave no one behind, we have

to understand each other, to take time to walk in each others' shoes, especially when we want to work together. In everyone's life, it's important to have people who set an example. Our communities can offer the chance not to be left behind! For each person who faces hardship and a risk of isolation, for those who receive a prison sentence, let's not turn our backs. An answer lies in friendship and in the people you get to know in your community; keeping contact and talking with each other; being a good neighbour is very important. We need to have a sense of humour as well, that we share with others. It is part of being together. But we never should put anyone down. All this gives you the understanding of belonging somewhere. Everyone should have their chance to make their mark in their community. Today we want to remember all those who have died in misery, especially those who died during the past year. Their lives were too hard. Sometimes our lives are the same. Whether our problems take us to hell and back, we do still have feelings and we have the right to live with respect. Our humanity can never be taken away from us".

**A group of adults friends of ATD Ireland read
by Rose Murray and Daniel McGuinness**



TESTIMONIES

“The economic crisis and austerity measures we have experienced in Ireland had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable of our people. It is now much more difficult to feel part of the same society, to feel a sense of being equal citizens together, when there are such inequalities”

Liam – NWICTDP

“Sergiu, my husband, is proud that he is the Director of a music school for young Roma boys and girls. His father, Severin, used to play the accordion at the ATD celebration. He passed away in 2009 but he gave to our family some very important values. These are a love of our families, Roma culture and also an appreciation of education for the boys and also for the girls. It is important to us that music is not just for the men but that everyone’s talent is given a chance. This is also true for education”

Isabel Cuilin





Right in the Eye of the Storm

“The Stone couldn’t have been in a better place than right in the middle of the Financial Centre. It is right in the eye of the storm. That it is where the financial centre is”

Terence





Year of the Stone

20

The Roles We Play

“My name is Ritah, I am twenty-four years old and I have a seven year old boy. Diane, who wishes she could be here today to read this with me, is twenty-three and has two boys who are six and four. We both got pregnant when we were teenagers and life changed for us completely. At eighteen years, we were single young mums with no family support.

[...] Diane and I became friends and we would speak about all the challenges of being a young mother and hoped one day to reach out to others. Because of what we went through, we never want to see any other young mother with no family support or other networks to go through the same challenges we did. [...] Some people need a holding hand, a shoulder to cry on, and we wanted to be the people who can empathize with them.

We also want to remind mothers that having a child young cannot stop you from reaching all your goals. It could be education, employment, engaging in different activities or anything. There are barriers such as child care, the stigma attached to being a young mother, mental health issues, but there is power in togetherness, and once we come together we can overcome these barriers and reach for our dreams.

[...] What we thought was missing in Irish society was help for young mothers, mothers who are alone, young mothers with no family around, young mothers who are completely isolated and lonely and having to grow up quickly. Our idea to create a support network for young mums won first place. And after that happened we thought “do you know what? We have to work towards this, we have to make it happen”. So today we are working on our dream, we’re working with Marie in the Dominican Justice Office and we have our first meeting of the Young Mothers Network in a few weeks, we’re starting small at the moment but the whole idea is for young mums to meet with other young



mums, to find strength in being together, to help each other not to lose their goals, or to forget who they are. Yes they are mothers, but they’re still individuals with dreams of their own. Maybe someone here will want to come to our group. We want to tell you that you would be welcome”.

Testimony of Diane and Ritah with the Dominican Justice Office





TESTIMONIES

“My experiences, good and bad, have helped to inform my understanding of how support services should work. You can see from my story that a couple of things are very important – start working on issues early and don’t wait for a crisis; focus on people’s strengths and build

on these, not on their difficulties; don’t let people go round and round in a broken system. I believe that working with people to address their own needs early and consistently contributes to an equal society, a society that we can all be proud of”

Ann – Focus Ireland





“We all bring something to our communities, be we unemployed or someone earning multi-millions. We all have something to give. When you’re in poverty, it’s important to feel you’re a valued member of the community. If you feel your opinions matter and your voice is important to someone out there, you will constantly grow and evolve”.

James - ATD UK

ATD- UK , in partnership with artist photographer Eva Sajovic were proud to present work from their book “The Roles We Play”.

The self-written biographies explore the roles played by those living in poverty within their families, communities and society at large.

Joining Forces for a Better Life & Respect for Our Rights

"My name is Phyllis and I have been a resident in Dolphin House, Dublin 8 for many years. My community is a strong, vibrant one, full of people, some of whom have lived there for generations, but all of whom put their hearts and souls into building homes for their families.

But for years the odds have been stacked against us doing just that. We have lived and continue to live with poor housing: damp, mould, sewerage, overcrowding - for which we pay rent, and which costs a fortune to heat and decorate, which impacts negatively on our health and the health of our children, which in turn costs a fortune in medical bills and in time off school and ultimately causes huge mental stress on a daily basis.

Until such time as we started naming this lived experience as a violation of human rights, we were getting no satisfactory response from the state. We had nowhere to turn but were left frustrated, powerless to get on with it. We never saw the Celtic Tiger but we were told that now that he was gone, we could expect even less by way of state response to our living conditions. That is what prompted us to set up Rialto Rights in Action and to rename poor housing as human rights violations and to campaign for change.

Before this, the only human right I had ever heard about was the right to remain silent but over time I learned you have human rights because we are human. We are supposed to live a life of dignity and respect. From the very beginning, I really connected to that idea of emphasizing the "human" in all of us, especially when so much of our experience is dehumanizing. And yet all we want is an adequate home which is a basic human right. I have come to know that an adequate home means: a dwelling that is fit to live in, affordable, has access to services, family and community supports, and is one where adults and children can live

in peace, security and dignity. How can families be fully human when they live in overcrowded poor conditions that damage their health and well-being? How can we as a society respond in a more human way to this type of reality?

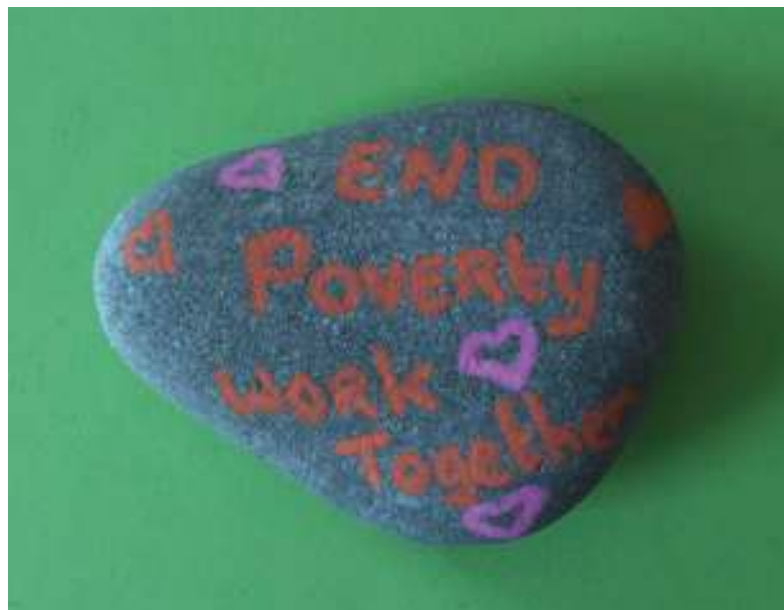
In our campaign in Rialto Rights in Action, we learned that the state has a duty to respect, protect and fulfill our right to adequate housing, and that they can be held accountable for not doing this. We experienced the power of using human rights language, of gathering evidence, of using the media to highlight our experience in a new way. And it has delivered real outcomes in terms of:

- Empowerment,
- Better quality short term refurbishment,
- Regeneration
— at least Phase One has begun,
- More respectful engagement.



But it is a long journey and one where we have to keep the pressure on all the time, otherwise the system just has a way of reverting to old ways. That is our story locally, but it led to a bigger campaign to deal with similar housing issues for Local Authority tenants on a national basis. Through this national campaign we gathered evidence across many more communities and lodged what is known as a Collective Complaint with the Council of Europe. I know it is no longer about asking please and being made to feel grateful, undeserving and blamed. This way of working is all about shifting the blame from residents to systems. It is all about taking power and feeling equal”.

**Testimony of Phyllis read by Cecilia Forrestal,
Community Action Network (CAN)**



We Want to Be Recognized

“It’s to recognize poverty. I come from a poverty stricken area so I know how most people are. We have to be recognized so that we are not forgotten about”

Darren

“I spoke out, publicly. It’s ten years ago... That was the first time I spoke about friends I lost, about my family and about being homeless. It was good to speak at the Stone and say it out loud. I remember me saying “Oh no, I don’t want to speak”. I gave a speech; it was read out for me. It was my words but someone read for me. I’ve been through a lot since then. I don’t know, I think we just tell about homeless, the rights that we have”

Lynn





YOUR RIGHTS
ARE WRITTEN
IN STONE



Year of the Stone

20

Right to Health

“Our Voices” Project

Stacey: “Hello everyone, my name is Stacey and I am here with Paula, Ciaran and Philip. We are involved in the “Our Voices” project with other women and men from the SAOL project, the North West Inner City Training and Development Project, The Clondalkin Traveller Development Primary Care Group, Pavee Point, and ATD – All Together in Dignity. We are discussing issues from our lives with people in Poland and Spain. Both here and there we face hardship. Here and there we struggle. One question we discuss is this one: ‘Is the European Union helping us to deal with our health issues?’ Next year, in June we will be able to tell you what we have learned and share our ideas to improve the situation”.

Ciaran: “The first thing we want to tell you today is that we feel many of us are condemned to an early death sentence and this has to stop. This very day, four weeks ago, Jason, our friend who was involved with us in this project, took his own life. I think that it is poverty, exclusion and the fact of being unheard that was also responsible for taking his life. In July this year, we started to discuss about the rights we should have to make sure we have good health and good health care. Jason’s first response to this was: “to be entitled to my own say, to be able to say what I have to say and not remain unheard”. I would now ask you to share a minutes’ silence to remember Jason, and other people in this city, in Ireland and across the world who have died too early”.

Stacey: “In the discussion we have in the “Our Voices” project, we agree that there is still a lack of education and awareness programs within our schools around health - especially addiction and mental health. Louise told us, “If I had gotten the right information on the effects of drugs and the damage they could do to your life, maybe I wouldn’t have turned to drugs. There were no advertisements on bus stops or ads on TV that warned me of the outcomes of substance misuse.

My body is damaged to the point of being at death’s



door.” The lack of education exists also among people working in Health Services. Are they being trained to better understand the trauma people in poverty are going through? We even meet doctors who don’t seem to know much about certain diseases, for example Hepatitis C.

A health issue that Louise is passionate about is mental health. There are so many issues for people in addiction or recovery who have mental illnesses that we would ask any and every politician and civil servant here to join us in the debate about a quality health service for all who have dual diagnosis issues”.

Philip: “Living in poverty can be stressful and you get excluded at an early age. Over the years, many of us here would have been in and out of prison. We know well the barriers in trying to access funding to return to education. Some of us struggle to pay for a course that we really feel passionate about. Education is central for everyone to move out of poverty and to move forward. Women with kids who are trying to get back to education struggle with child care and other costs. For those on Community Schemes, to give twenty euros extra a week to pay for childcare, travel and lunches is really not enough. There will, of course, be changes in policies, but many more changes are needed when thinking of families living under the poverty line”.

Paula: “We as mothers have enough to deal with on a daily basis, like making sure our kids are clean, in school, and have food on the table. But more and more mothers don’t have a table to put the food on because they don’t have homes. I’m currently living in a small hotel room where there is myself, my partner and three boys aged two, three, and fourteen. Now what fourteen year old boy wants to share a room with his own mother, her partner and two

small children? My son is at an age where he should have some sense of privacy when he goes to bed but with the way we are living at the moment that's a luxury. I can't afford him, so most of the time he stays with my mum. I know people might say all they need is enough love and care. My children get that in abundance. And I thought I was handling this really well until I tried to cook potatoes in my microwave for my kids. They turned out great so I mashed them and tried to soften them with milk, the milk turned sour as soon as it hit the hot potatoes as it had been there since the night before - I'm in a hotel I don't have a fridge. So this made me fall apart and cry my eyes out like a fool. Before anyone thinks 'for fuck sake it's only potatoes', it had actually nothing to do with the potatoes, it was me realising that I live in poverty. I am in this hard stressful way of life, and this means I cannot be the mother I am more than capable of being. Yes my boys are loved, and no matter how I manage, they are fed, washed and have clean clothes every day. But it shouldn't be this hard. There are thousands of mothers in the same situation as myself, and that needs to change. Let's fight this together so myself and every other mother can finally get their own dignity."

**Stacey, Paula, Ciaran and Philip –
SAOL, NWICTDP and ATD Dublin**



The Everyday Life of a Mother & Carer

“Good morning, my name is Debbie and I live in East Wall. I would like to tell you a bit of my story. I was a single mother of two disabled children, Amy and Daniel. I was renting accommodation and was offered a council house. All my time was spent going up and down to Temple Street Hospital where my son Daniel was very ill. Unfortunately on January 15th 2002, Daniel died.

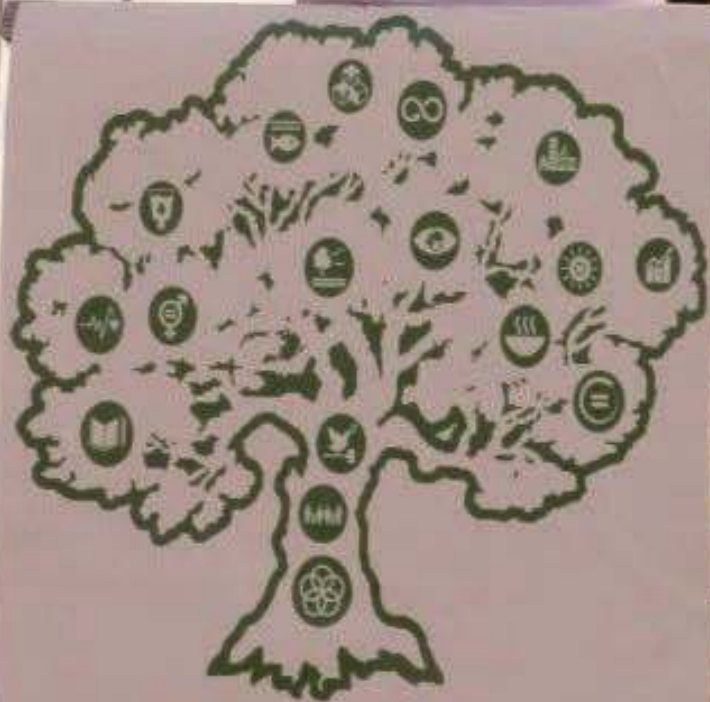
I was lost and went into myself and didn't know what to do. After a few weeks, I gave myself a kick in the backside as my daughter, Amy, needed me. At that time she was six years of age. I heard there was work going in the North Wall Women's Centre and I got a job and some training there. For three years I worked as a crèche assistant. I continued naturally to have good days and bad days. Then I went to work as a carer for the elderly, but found it extremely hard to hold down a job, as I needed to spend every hour looking after Amy. I needed to be at home when she got in from school and the training centre. I helped Amy to walk and to talk, to feed and to toilet. Believe me, though she is now twenty, I'm still doing these things for Amy. Luckily, she was in St Michael's House until she was eighteen years of age and at the moment she is in a training centre in Coolock. I'm dreading when she has to leave that centre.

The advice I have for any parent of a disabled child is, never give up... keep fighting for your child. It has been a constant battle. I had to fight to get her a new wheelchair. It took months to get her a medical card, which was just for a twelve month period. To get Amy a place in the Training Centre was a hard struggle. Recently, transport to the training centre for Amy was cut and Amy cannot be put on a bus without an escort, so I bring her to the centre daily.

Right now I need a home with a bedroom downstairs, as Amy cannot climb upstairs. It is a never ending struggle. What keeps me at my best and on my toes is Amy... caring for her and enjoying her love. I know this love will keep me going until the end of my days. Of course, I still have good days and bad days. After ten years of being alone as a mother, I met my partner and he has made a very big difference to my life and to that of Amy. I am grateful to the family and friends I have around me. Another thing that really helped me to value myself, was that about twelve years ago, I wrote my story, and had it published in a book. I look around and see parents out there who are much worse off than me, and I never feel sorry for myself and I never ask 'why me?' Actually I feel very lucky to have Amy in my life. Thank you for listening to some of my story and remember never give up... Keep fighting for your child and for everyone struggling with poverty”.

Debbie from East Wall Community





**Growing
Together to Leave
No One Behind**

TESTIMONIES

“I’m Paul, and this is Emma and Kathleena, and for the past year we’ve been volunteering with Focus Ireland as peer researchers. A peer researcher is someone who has experience of a particular issue – in our case homelessness – and who, with training and guidance, can become a researcher in that area, giving a different point of view and understand both the way

the research is carried out, and the reports that are produced.

In late 2015, we were offered an opportunity to become peer researchers for a European research project led by Dr Mary Murphy of Maynooth University. This project is called Re-Invest”

Paul, Emma, Kathleena – Focus Ireland





“Good morning. My name is Mihaita, I am from Romania and I’m glad to be here today to speak to you all. I am here in Ireland with both of my parents, who are working, and my younger brother Gabriel, who is aged seven. When we came to Ireland none of us spoke any English, it was very difficult. This is our third year in Ireland. We have moved three times in total. We have gone from homeless to three emergency accommodations in Dublin city. At present we have been in our current emergency accommodation for six months. [...]

Emergency accommodation is as follows: There are six families in the house I live in; twenty-three people in all. There are nine bedrooms, six with families and three with single beds. All twenty-three people share the same kitchen for cooking.

All twenty-three people share the same living room and dining room. All twenty-three people have to cook and eat at different times. All twenty-three people share the washing machine, the drier, the microwave and the same TV (there is no dishwasher). My family and I live in one of the six family bedrooms”.

Mihaita, O’Connell Secondary School, Dublin

A Place to Remember

“The Stone is the place where people who have a hard life tell their own story about themselves and what they struggled through. When we gather at the Stone, there should be a minute silence for everybody who died. That would be good.”

Michael





Year of the Stone

20

TESTIMONIES

Right to long term Support

“My name is Belinda, I’m representing Ireland in the International Committee for the UN End Poverty Day. I will read this on behalf of Lynn and Sandra who can’t be with us today.

Lynn and Sandra wrote this for you today: “This year is a special year. We are writing a book with a group of friends and activists who have an experience of hardship. We wrote this testimony based on what we said in the book. Although we have got homes today, the consequences of our years of homelessness left marks on us and our families. We think anyone that’s been homeless is very brave from being on the streets with kids for so long. When you’re dragging kids from here to there, it’s very hard. We had to keep going because of our children. We didn’t have the choice. We had to look after them and protect them. When you are a mother with your kids on the street, you overcompensate because of the guilt, especially when you are an addict, you blame yourself because you think you didn’t give your kids the right tools in life.

Our children remember being homeless, but they don’t remember the bad times because we never let them have bad times. We never let them without a meal. We were always trying to keep them going to school.

Today, we have a house. Our children are adults now but some of them are still at home, some ask us to come back because they were homeless. We live with them and our grandchildren too. You can never say no to your children, so of course we welcome them. They are old enough now, they should have their own place. They don’t have work. For some of them, they never got a chance to learn a skill or a trade because of our past of homelessness or times when they were locked up.

Homelessness is like history repeating itself but it’s bad history that you don’t want repeated for your children. Being homeless takes your dignity away, your dignity is gone. You don’t think you have much inside your four walls but at least you have your serenity and your dignity

behind it. It doesn’t matter if you are sitting there clattering your teeth. At least you have somewhere to go. It makes a difference. We are always affected by what happened in our past. The effects and trauma are long term.

Today we are worried about our children and their future. We never want to see them go without and that is part of being a mother. We are worried for all the children and parents who face homelessness, they need homes, but we want to say that rehousing people is not enough: we need long term support such as education, stability and healthcare”.

Belinda Hopkins on behalf of Lynn and Sandra – ATD





“17 Goals – 17 Boats”

The Lord Mayor of Dublin said:

“I am honoured to welcome Ambassador David Donoghue. I guess that history books will remember that an Irish Ambassador, together with a Kenyan colleague, changed our common future in the Summer of 2015. Together they lead one hundred and ninety-three countries to agree on the most ambitious and best ever plan for a sustainable future for people and the planet.

I know many of you prepared “Global Goals Boats” for today to symbolize the hope and the mobilization this new agenda is generating. Thank you for your work and creativity. You have brought these boats to a very special place. Here, so close to the Famine Statues and in front of me, the Human Rights and Poverty Stone which gives to our City a role and a responsibility to end poverty”.

In 2017, ATD Ireland suggested to primary schools and different groups that they make a boat from recycled materials and that these boats would be launched on the 17th of October in the Liffey. Each group chose one of the 17 goals for their own boat.



“Poverty is like an epidemic affecting every corner of the world. From Delhi to Dublin, it’s relentless. Our boat is shaped like a coffin to represent the death of poverty and the negative nets symbolize our hope for a world free of the effects of poverty. The nets contain things like death, hunger, depression, hardship, famine and disease, all of which can be directly attributed to poverty. We say death to poverty!”

INOUE

(Irish National Organization of the Unemployed)

“Hello, our names are Lucy and James. We wish to speak on behalf of the schools who could not get here today [because of Storm Ophelia] to launch their Global Goal Boats of hope and express their own hopes for a better and fairer world for everyone. They hope that this event is a success and that the rest of the world can play their part in making the world a fairer place for everyone.

Did you know that even a small amount of money spent on weapons and nuclear bombs could eradicate poverty on our planet?”

Schoolchildren Lucy and James.



We are Humanity

I come from Eritrea, and we come from Poland,

We come from Mauritius, and we from Ireland.

We all live together, in peace and harmony

Here in Dublin city, we are humanity.

Chorus

We are one,

but we are many,

We come,

from every land and sea,

We share a dream,

and sing with one voice,

I will, you will,

we'll end world poverty.

We gather here together, on this October day,

We want the world to listen, to what we've got to say,

Millions live in hunger, millions live in fear,

The cries of children dying, some refuse to hear.

Chorus

Yes, we must all stand together, or
at least we must all try.

To help our fellow human beings and listen to their cry.

So let's stand beside our refugees,
and keep an open door

Let's open up our hearts and minds,
and stand beside the poor.

Chorus

Let's make the world a better place,
where everybody shares,

Where peace and justice they prevail,
and everybody cares.

We can talk about our values and preach solidarity,

But we are all just hypocrites, unless
we end world poverty.

Neighbourhood Youth Project 2 Band





TESTIMONIES

All at Sea

Trying to keep afloat

Opportunities sail away

Trying to get somewhere

Navigating through obstacles

Trying to keep head above water

Without sinking

Avoidingicebergs

Crowd around me

Man overboard

WE'RE ALL OVERBOARD

Carried away by a current

Not known where we are going

out of control

ruthless

At the mercy of greedy captains

AND SHIVERING SEAS

A mass of desperation fighting against the current

sending up flares

Hoping to be seen whistling,

hoping to be heard

hoping in a life jacket

In case we capsize

no longer a third world

now a third of the world

AND GROWING

getting weaker more powerless as we

drift the sense of sharks below

CIRCLING

Waiting to pick us off

But there is strength in our suffering

There is strength in our numbers

Strength in our numbers

Strength in our unity

One voice becomes a mighty roar

Raging against the strength of uncertainty

And we are roaring now

It will echo

AND WE WILL BE HEARD

NWICTDP





Never Again

“That area in Dublin is where the ships left during the Great Famine. It was the Docklands. The generations of poverty in the North Inner City stem from back there and look, the Poverty Stone means ‘Stop, we’re not getting on the boats, we’re going back’. Because people went on to build America. They went to build a part of the world. So if they had not left, if it was different, what country would we have?

So we don’t want the emigration... For me the Stone is here, we stopped, we’re coming back where we all started, we are not going. This is very symbolic. It’s our own history. The history has been selective. We get a link between what did happen (the Great Famine, emigration) and what the Stone says: Not Again. That’s what it says. That’s what it means.

The Stone gives people a connection when we go to the Stone. We listen to these stories. We all make our own personal connection to the Stone. We all have something in common. The Stone is a place where people come together”

Paul





YOUR RIGHTS
ARE WRITTEN
IN STONE

THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND:

Michael D. Higgins (2016)

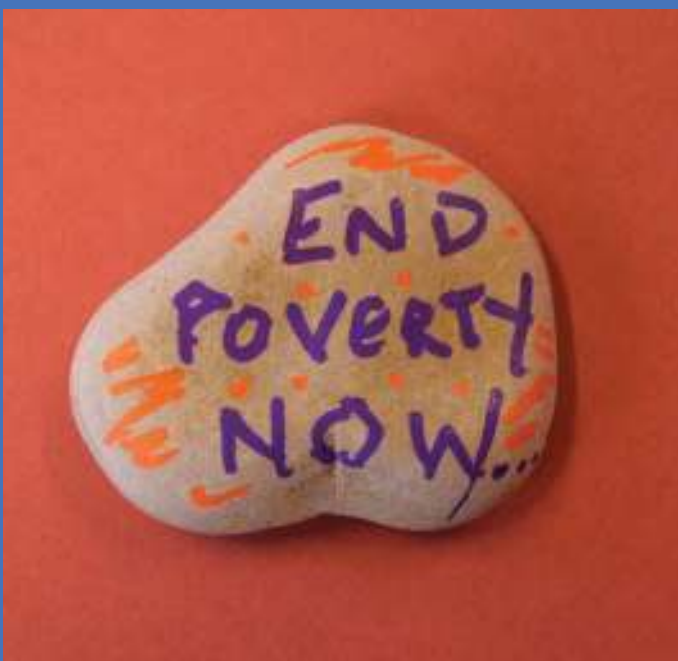
I wanted in particular to hear these five testimonies and the first thing I want to say is I have no difficulty using whatever influence I may have in conveying them to those that I hope will respond, as it is past time responding. This is a very important day around the world and for a long time before I became President I have been coming here, indeed before we even had this Stone. Sometimes the crowd has been very small, however the numbers today are very good, it is very important to see so many young people. It is very important that they do not see in their generation the failures that we have had in my generation and generations before me, that is that the capacity that exists in our work, and everything we are doing to actually eliminate poverty, not just alleviate poverty. We have failed in that. When we hear reports of great global councils and gatherings of people discussing these affairs, this issue should always be there. This particular day is an important day to express solidarity throughout the world, the importance of dignity and giving real meaning to our words. [...]

Today marks the [...] International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Today also marks the first gathering to take place in the time-frame of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016-

2030) which has as its first goal: End Poverty in all its forms everywhere. As President, I have spoken before of how critical it is that we look beyond the aim of alleviating poverty, even beyond eliminating extreme poverty; of the importance of broadening these aims and seeking to eliminate poverty in all its forms and to address issues such as needless and avoidable early mortality and morbidity, the elimination of diseases, and the many other factors which so impoverish the lives of citizens across the world. [...]

The new Sustainable Development Goals recognize the need for a redefinition of the very notion of 'development'. They signify an invitation to a crucial advance in multilateral diplomacy, in their being universal, in their applying to all countries, and no longer primarily to those labelled 'developing' or 'poor'. The new 2030 Agenda provides a comprehensive blueprint for an integrated continuum of action at international and national levels, stretching from the necessary response to emergency situations in the short term, to the need to empower vulnerable communities in the long-term. [...] It is appropriate therefore that, during this important year, the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty has asked us to focus on the theme of 'Moving from humiliation and exclusion to participation: Ending poverty in all its forms'. Every day, around the world, human beings living in poverty are denied the basic human dignities that so many of us take for granted. [...]

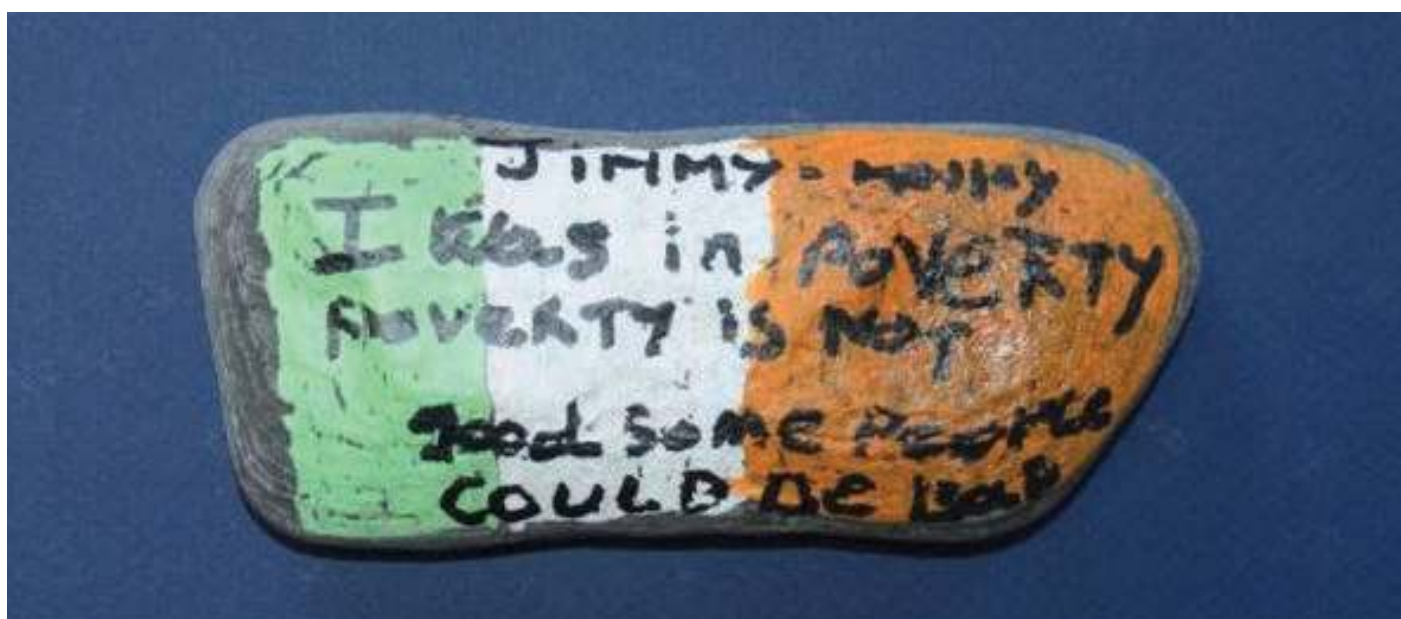
A denial of basic human rights to those who live below the poverty line is not, of course, limited to any particular part of the world. Even in countries with developed economies and advanced technological infrastructures there are those who are left behind; discriminated against, isolated, insulted, stereotyped, and made objects of condescension by fellow members of society who, deliberately or unthinkingly, dehumanise and further impoverish the lives of those struggling with chronic poverty. Let us also not forget the many ways in which societies create a



culture of dependency, forgetting that truly effective compassion means striving for human flourishing and seeking the conditions that make it possible. [...]

On this important day, when we come together in solidarity with the poor across the world, let us consider how we treat those amongst us who are in difficulty or in need. Let us pledge to strive to ensure that the common good will always be placed above narrow interests. Let us also consider the many ways in which we can enable those living in poverty to make that life changing move from humiliation and exclusion to full participation in their society and their communities; a participation which will allow their voices to be heard and their possibilities to be realised. We must, as a nation, continue to strive to deepen our understanding of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, ensuring that our policies focus on all aspects of poverty, including the shame, humiliation and social exclusion that so negatively impacts on the human dignity of citizens living in poverty”.





A Long Walk to Freedom

The annual gathering to mark the United Nations' Day for the Eradication of Poverty, began in 2000 at the Famine Statues. From 2008 the gathering moved to the Human Rights and Poverty Stone. The new UN Agenda 2030 puts an emphasis on its Goal 1: the challenge to end poverty in all forms by 2030. Together our journey at the Stone will continue to strive to reach this goal and be all free from poverty.

In this book we have reflected on the journey thus far and it is time to thank the many people and organisation who dedicated time and energy throughout the years to create life, mobilisation and authenticity at the Stone. Our walk to freedom was made possible by so many. We want to thank:

Belinda Nugent, Bernadette Browne, Sr. Bernadette McMahon, Brendan Core RIP, Sr Caoimhín Ní Uallacháin RIP, Cecilia Forrestal, Charlotte Tiffon, Deirdre Connolly, Dereck Savage, Dominique Vinchon, Edel O'Donnell, Eileen Donovan, Elaine Phelan, Fabienne Klein, Fergus McCabe, Fidelma Joyce, Françoise Barbier, Françoise Sleeth, Gary Broderick, Isabelle Williams, Juliette Péchenart, Marie Maher RIP, Marie-Ange Zakrzewska-Husson, Mark Hogan, Br. Martin Byrne, Ray Hegarty, Maurice Hurley, Michael Kilbride, Noel Clarke, Br. Patrick Maddigan, Paul Ginnell, Paul Uzell, Phil Barbier, Phil Brennan, Pierre Klein, Sancha Mangat, Sean Dunne, Seanie Lambe, Stuart Williams.

We have been lucky throughout the years to have walked with friends and supporters of the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty:

Barbara Walshe, Emer Costello, Emily Logan, David Donoghue, Fintan Farrell, Fr Frank Brady, Hans Zomer, Hugh Frazer, Cllr John Gallagher, John Lonergan, Jillian Van Turnhout, Maire O'Higgins,

Mary Murphy, Maureen O'Sullivan TD, Nadette Foley, Fr Peter McVerry, Proinsias De Rossa, Rita Fagan, Robin Hanan, Sean Healy. We also thank all the Dublin City Councillors who served as Lord Mayor of Dublin and who continuously supported the tradition of gathering at the Stone.

The spirit of the gathering each year at the Stone is centred on a promise to give voice to the voiceless. These voices for dignity have resonated loud on Custom House Quay with thanks to the work and partnership of many. We are grateful to the volunteers, staff and board members of:

The Acorn Group, All Together in Dignity, Coláiste Eoin, The Community Action Network, The Daughters of Charity Community Services, The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland, Focus Ireland, the Larkin Community College, The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, The Matt Talbot Community Trust, The Neighbourhood Youth Project 2, The North West Inner City Training and Development Programme, O'Connell Secondary School, Pavee Point, The SAOL project, St. Laurence O'Toole School, SIPTU and the Liberty Hall staff, the Sheriff Youth Club and Paul Ryan, the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice.

The gatherings at the Human Rights and Poverty Stone have also regularly been supported by grants from the Combat Poverty Agency and in more recent times by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection as part of the Government

"Awareness Raising Initiative on the UN United Nations' Day for the Eradication of Poverty".



The Groups behind the Human Rights and Poverty Stone

The Irish 17 October Committee

The Irish 17 October Committee is made up of local community groups, activists, teachers, home school liaison officers and members of community and anti-poverty organisations. The Committee first started to meet informally in 2002 after the first UN Day gatherings at the Famine Statues.

For more information about the work of the Committee visit www.17october.ie



The drawing used as a logo by the Irish 17 October Committee is a gift from Joe Connolly who died, aged 79, in May of 2018. Joe began his teaching career as a Christian Brother in St Laurence O' Toole primary school in Dublin's North Wall in 1959. Later he mainly worked as a teacher of Art in Derry, also during the height of the troubles. For twenty years Joe illustrated and enriched the annual book of North Wall stories with his contemplative and lively creations. The Stone drawing was initially created for one of these books.

The International 17 October Committee

The International 17 October Committee was launched in 2008. The structure of this committee is unique, with members from various backgrounds, including people with first-hand experience of extreme poverty. The Committee promotes the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty globally. The promotion at its core maintains the original spirit

and meaning of the day, first marked on 17th October 1987. In 2014, the International Committee held its biennial working meeting in Dublin (See picture). In 2015, Belinda Nugent, an activist from the Dublin North Inner City, was welcomed as the first Irish member in this International Committee.

For more information about the work of the International Committee visit www.overcomingpoverty.ie



All Together in Dignity Ireland (ATD)

Joseph Wresinski is the founder of the International Movement ATD and he is also the man responsible for the initiation of the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Since 2000, members of ATD have taken a leading role in the preparation of the annual gatherings to mark this Day on Custom House Quay. ATD facilitates the meetings of the Irish 17th October Committee and hosts its secretariat.

In Dublin, ATD also runs various community and advocacy human rights projects involving young people and adults who have direct experience of poverty and/or social exclusion. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, ATD Ireland has been committed to the 'Leave No One Behind Promise' and to creating ways to walk the talk at local and national levels.

For more information on the work of ATD visit www.atdireland.ie



I Bear Witness

*You, the millions and millions
of children, women and fathers
who have died from misery and hunger
and whose legacy we hold.
It is not your death that I evoke,
today on this Plaza of Human Rights
and Liberties.
I bear witness to your lives.*

*I bear witness to you, the mothers,
whose children are cast aside in this world,
condemned as they are to sheer misery.*

*I bear witness to your children,
twisted by the pains of hunger,
no longer able to smile,
yet still yearning to love.*

*I bear witness to the millions of young
people who have no reason to believe
or even to exist,
and who vainly search for a future
in this senseless world.*

*I bear witness to you, the poor of all times,
still poor today, forever on the road,
fleeing from place to place,
despised and disgraced.*

*Labourers without a trade,
ever crushed by their toil.
Labourers whose hands, today,
are no longer useful.
Millions of men, women, and children
whose hearts are still pounding strong
to the beat of the struggle,
whose minds rise in revolt
against the unjust fate imposed upon them,
whose courage demands the right
to priceless dignity.*

*I bear witness to you,
children, women and men,
who do not want to condemn,
but to love, to pray, to work, and to unite,
so that a world of solidarity may be born.
A world, our world, in which all people
would have given the best of themselves before dying.*

*I bear witness to you,
men, women and children.
Your renown is henceforth engraved
by heart, hand and tool,
in the marble of this Plaza of Human Rights and Liberties.*

*I bear witness to you, so that humanity
may at last fulfil its true destiny,
refusing forever that misery prevail.*

**Address by Joseph Wresinski, at the unveiling
of the first Commemorative Stone in honour of
the victims of extreme poverty on 17th October
1987, Human Rights Plaza, Trocadero, Paris.**





“You see people reaching from the darkness towards the light, to catch, to hold onto the bird which symbolizes hope, love, brotherhood, as well as joy and freedom. The circle shows that everything takes place within a community, a sense of solidarity. The whole of humanity lunges forward, constantly reaching toward the horizon.”

Joseph Wresinski in 1987

All Together in Dignity Ireland presents **Voices for Dignity**. The publication offers a collection of testimonies, photographs and speeches collectively illustrating a visual and written history of the Human Rights and Poverty Stone in Dublin. The Stone, located on Custom House Quay next to the Famine Statues, was first unveiled 10 years ago. On the 17th October each year people gather at the Stone to mark the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This publication offers highlights from each year's event, tells the story of the Stone, and considers what the Stone means today.

“When I stand at the Human Rights and Poverty Stone in Dublin, I am struck and ashamed by the testimonies of my fellow human beings. But at that same Human Rights and Poverty Stone in Dublin, I have also had the privilege to witness that positive dimension of human rights – the one that emphasises human potential. Women and men, children and young people who have shown their strength, their determination, their good humour, their vulnerability and their love.”

From the foreword by Emily Logan, Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

“To understand poverty, we usually read reports from academic experts. But the real experts are the people who are struggling to retain their dignity in the midst of poverty and often against overwhelming odds. In this book, they tell us their story, they inspire us with their determination to overcome the obstacles society places before them and challenge many of us to examine our consciences.”

Fr. Peter McVerry SJ

“The Dublin replica of the Commemorative Stone is an important symbol of the daily struggles faced by people who continue to live in poverty in Ireland. This book creates an inspiring mosaic of the voices of the people who fight to defend the human rights and dignity of those who live in poverty. It is a fitting tribute to their courage and commitment to building a better and peaceful world for all.”

Donald Lee, President of the International Committee for October 17th

“I participated in the unveiling of the Human Rights and Poverty Stone on 17th October 2008. It was ironic that as this Stone was been unveiled, the Irish Government was in the process of closing down the Combat Poverty Agency. The Stone and this memorial book are a reminder to all that the challenges of poverty and social exclusion, that the Combat Poverty Agency strived to research and highlight, continues to be prevalent in Irish society.”

Kevin P O’Kelly, last Director of the Combat Poverty Agency

