



UNITED RELIGIONS  
INITIATIVE

# ENERGIZING THE NETWORK

## COOPERATION CIRCLE TOOLKIT



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# I. INTRODUCTION TO URI

## URI's Global Network

When URI was formed in June, 2000, Cooperation Circles (CCs) were designated as “the center and life of URI”. CCs were created to carry out URI's purpose of promoting daily interfaith cooperation, ending religiously motivated violence, and creating cultures of peace, justice, and healing for the Earth and all living beings. It was envisioned that CCs would make contributions to their own communities, and as members of a global network, would strengthen each other and collectively generate an impact greater than individual efforts alone.

For the URI network to reach its full potential, active sharing of ideas and experiences and partnership building among CCs is necessary. It is our hope that this toolkit will provide a deep understanding of URI, and guide CCs in how to actively participate in the network.

A large group of diverse people, including men and women of various ages and ethnicities, are holding hands in a large circle on a grassy lawn. They are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire. In the background, a building with the name "Wright Hall" is visible. The scene is outdoors with trees and a clear sky.

**“CCs are the center and life of URI.”**

Bishop William Swing – URI President and Founder

## WHAT IS URI?

It is a global grassroots interfaith peacebuilding network

It is a coordinating structure that fuels a global movement for peace and social change



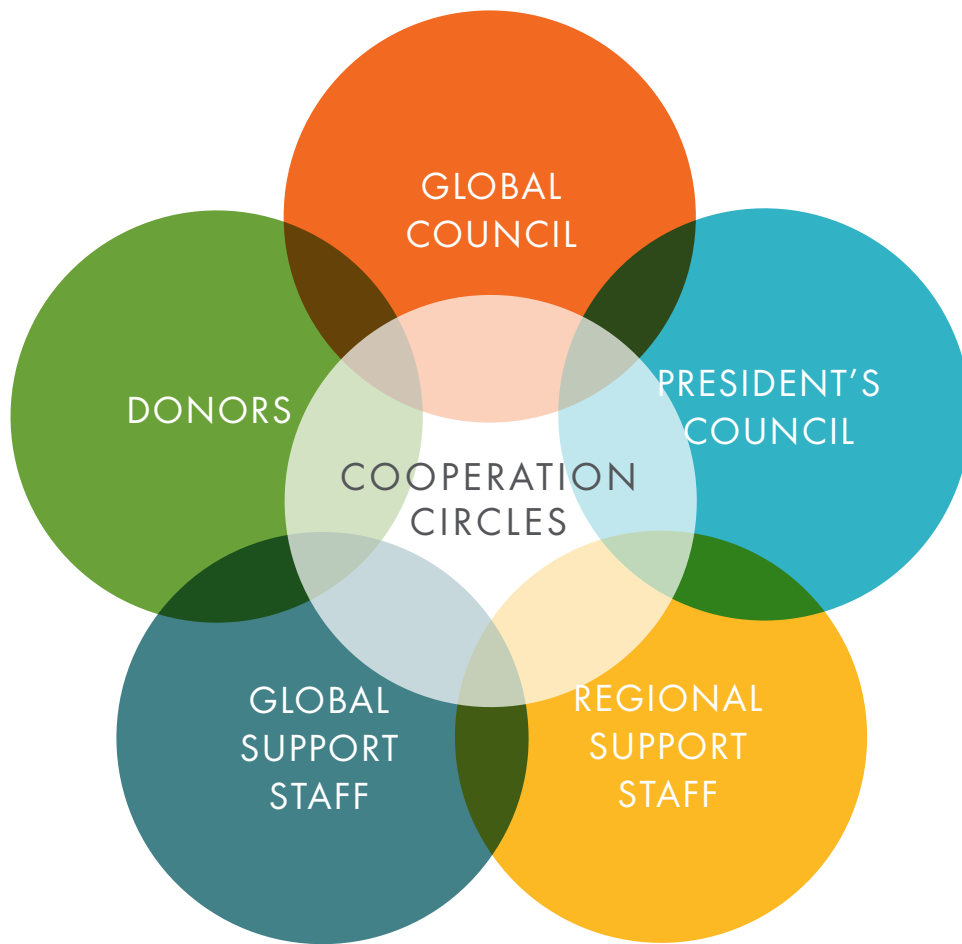
It is a global learning community of individuals, organizations, and groups committed to interfaith/intercultural harmony

It is a bridge building organization formed by people from diverse traditions working together to address the challenges facing our planet

*“A network is not hierarchical. It is a web of connections among equals, held together not by force, obligation, or material incentive, but by shared values and the understanding that some tasks can be accomplished together that could never be accomplished separately.”*

Tools for Transition to Sustainability - Donella Meadows, Jorgen Rander, Dennis Meadows

# URI STRUCTURE



## Cooperation Circles

Cooperation Circles are the heart of URI. Self-governing and self-funding, they bring people of all traditions together to address the most pressing issues facing their communities.

## Global Council

URI's Global Council is democratically elected by our Cooperation Circles to serve as our Board of Directors, providing leadership, governance, strategic direction and fiduciary oversight to URI.

## President's Council

The President's Council is comprised of prominent individuals from around the world who offer their substantial experience, business and organizational expertise, and financial support to help build URI's growing global presence.

## Regional Support Staff

Led by the Regional Coordinator, the Regional Support Staff energizes the network of Cooperation Circles in seven geographic regions and one transnational region.

## Global Support Staff

Under the leadership of the Executive Director, the Global Support Staff works in partnership with the entire network to support Cooperation Circles.

## Donors

Our donors, as partners and members, make it possible for URI to live into our core principles and practices so that we can fulfill our mission as a grassroots interfaith peacebuilding movement.

## BENEFITS OF THE NETWORK

*“One of the most important purposes of a network is simply to remind its members that they are not alone.”*

Tools for Transition to Sustainability - Donella Meadows, Jorgen Rander, Dennis Meadows

### Connection



Through URI's Preamble, Purpose, and Principles (PPP) CCs across the globe have a shared vision and values for building interfaith peace, justice, and healing

Opportunities to connect with and share ideas and experiences with like-minded groups (CCs) across the globe

Unlimited potential to create cross border interfaith/intercultural partnerships

### Support & Growth



Elevated visibility through membership with a global interfaith peacebuilding organization

Training and capacity-building opportunities

Participation in worldwide events such as World Interfaith Harmony Week and the International Day of Peace

Opportunities to link with potential funders and resources

Best practice and resource sharing among CCs across the globe

### Hope



Becoming a builder of a global network for peace

Providing and receiving deep daily inspiration from the work of other groups and organizations



## BENEFITS OF THE NETWORK

### What is a benefit your CC has received from the URI network?



“Before we joined URI, we took time with the Regional Coordinator, Ms. Despina Nawembe, who advised us to give **more focus on our biggest strength, which is using music and dance to build peace between people of different cultures and religions here in Uganda**. Since becoming a CC and joining URI, we have received mentoring to develop our organization, and have been re-energized. Recently, our CC (Faiths Together Uganda) in partnership with URI Great Lakes office, co-organized an Interfaith Harmony Week program. Such platforms have opened our CC to wider exposure to promote our message to people whom we would otherwise not reach by ourselves. Through URI's nomination of our program to the King of Jordan, who holds an annual Interfaith Harmony Week contest, our CC won a \$5,000 award. I went to Jordan to receive the award where I had the opportunity to witness the true sense of religious harmony. URI truly unlocked our potential as a grassroots interfaith organization.”

**Michael Buyondo, Faiths Together Uganda Cooperation Circle, Mukono District**

## CC TESTIMONIALS: BENEFITS OF THE NETWORK



“From our very first encounter with URI, we fell in love with the preamble, purpose and principles of URI, which have served us with deep insights and we use as our masterpiece for peace building work”

SANGWA Cultural Network CC, Rwanda

“URI provides our CC with tested models and best practices, and brings us awareness and networking opportunities with other local interfaith organizations.”

Silicon Valley Interreligious Council SiVIC CC, United States

“My own capacity has been built. I remember our first attendance at a URI regional assembly, the number of CC members was huge and doing a presentation in front of them was a big challenge. But now, even if I stand among thousands of people, I don't get scared to talk.”

Ms. Jane Alex Lagu, PITA Women's Association for Development CC, South Sudan

“Being part of URI's large international network gives our voice more weight. We can more easily cooperate with municipal and state offices, such as the integration office for the city of Bonn. We receive invitations which we would not receive if we were just by ourselves”.

Intercultural Circle URI Bonn CC, Germany

“URI is an extended family and we are really informed and inspired by all the important peacebuilding projects that are taking place around the world.”

Kerala Kavya Kala Sahithy CC, India

“We gain benefit by sharing a common purpose, and from exchanging stories and experiences with interfaith peacebuilders all over the globe.”

URI for Interfaith Dialogue and Peacemaking CC, Iraq

“URI provides hope that our voices will unite the world.”

Alianza por la Espiritualidad Maya Q' eqchi', Mopán e Itzaj-APEM, Guatemala



## II. PARTICIPATION IN THE NETWORK

### Recognizing Responsibilities

URI's staff and trustees work daily to help the network reach its full potential. Here are their basic responsibilities:

#### URI regional and global staff:

- Contacting CCs regularly and building relationships
- Organize regional CC gatherings, assemblies, trainings
- Facilitating connections and collaboration among CCs in each region
- Asking CCs what support they need to reach their goals, and providing support when possible
- Inviting CCs to participate in local and global events
- Collecting information from CCs about their stories, achievements, and best practices and sharing these across the network through URI website, newsletters, and Facebook
- Assisting CCs in reflecting on the impact of their work

#### Global Council Trustees

- Providing mission-based leadership and governance for URI on a global level
- Serving as a resource for CCs on interfaith/intercultural peacebuilding



**One CC is rarely like another.** They form for unique reasons. CCs can be large or longstanding organizations, while some are small clusters of friends. Some produce sophisticated interfaith material, some are just beginning interfaith outreach. Some lean toward community organizing, some toward dialogue and spiritual practices. The diversity of CC shapes, sizes and initiatives is what makes the URI network buzz with resources and life.

## HOW CAN OUR CC ENERGIZE THE NETWORK?

### CONNECT

Reach out to contribute your expertise to CCs in the network (be a friend and mentor!)



Reach out to other CCs to share experiences, form partnerships and collaborate to achieve common goals

Have regular communication with your URI Regional Coordinator or URI Regional Leadership Team, and share information, experiences, and photos of your CCs work



**SHARE**  
stories, best practices, and updates on projects/events with URI staff and other CCs in the network

Get involved with worldwide peacebuilding projects such as International Day of Peace, World Interfaith Harmony week, and the Golden Rule

Send messages of recognition, appreciation, and acknowledgment to honor work of others

Participate in URI's Facebook page and listserve. Pay attention to URI news and information through eblasts and website. Look for potential partnerships and mutual support.

## MENTOR

**If your CC specializes in training, offer the opportunity for members of other CCs to participate**

Update changes in contact information for CC contact persons



Participate in the URI Global Council Trustee selection process every four years

## COMMUNICATE

**your CC's challenges and needs with regional staff**





## CONNECTING THE NETWORK

*“In the URI network, we are taught how other CCs are dealing with many issues which are for us sources of inspiration. Since URI is a family, it’s very simple to ask questions at any time and to anyone.”*

– Burundi Women for Peace CC

When CCs connect, they co-create and inspire one another. We invite you to use the various tools available to connect. You can start by finding the most current information on the URI website at [www.URI.org](http://www.URI.org) for resources like:

**Cooperation Circles worldwide, searched by action agenda, region, country, city and CC name:**

[http://www.uri.org/cooperation\\_circles/explore\\_cooperation\\_circles](http://www.uri.org/cooperation_circles/explore_cooperation_circles)

Update your CC page by signing in to URI.org!

**In-depth Information About CCs:**

[http://www.uri.org/cooperation\\_circles/cooperation\\_circle\\_profiles](http://www.uri.org/cooperation_circles/cooperation_circle_profiles)

**The Regional Coordinators and Global Support Office:**

[http://www.uri.org/about\\_uri/staff](http://www.uri.org/about_uri/staff)

**The Global Council Trustees:**

[http://www.uri.org/about\\_uri/global\\_council\\_trustees](http://www.uri.org/about_uri/global_council_trustees)

**InterAction Newsletter:**

[http://www.uri.org/browse\\_resources/uri\\_publications/interaction](http://www.uri.org/browse_resources/uri_publications/interaction)

**Intefaitth Peacebuilding Guide:**

[http://www.uri.org/files/resource\\_files/URI\\_Intefaitth\\_Peacebuilding\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.uri.org/files/resource_files/URI_Intefaitth_Peacebuilding_Guide.pdf)

### Follow URI on Social Media!



Facebook: [unitedreligionsinitiative](https://www.facebook.com/unitedreligionsinitiative)



Twitter: [@global\\_uri](https://twitter.com/global_uri)



YouTube: [URIglobal](https://www.youtube.com/URIglobal)

#### Question from CC:

Our CC is new and we are looking for ideas to help improve interfaith relations in our community. Whom should we speak to for guidance and support?

#### Answer:

Contact your Regional Coordinator. Through the URI.org website, you can also find a CC that shares your interest, reach out and introduce yourself, and mention your openness to ideas for contributing to interfaith bridgebuilding.

## WAYS TO CONNECT

METHOD	NETWORK VALUE
<p><b>Face-to-face meetings with URI regional staff/ regional leadership team members</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Share detailed information about CC achievements, challenges, needs</li> <li>▪ Strengthen personal relationships with URI Regional Teams and establish communication lines</li> <li>▪ Allow URI staff to understand on-the-ground context where CCs work, and therefore better serve CCs</li> <li>▪ Allow more CC members (aside from primary/secondary contacts) to engage with URI staff and learn about worldwide URI news</li> </ul>
<p><b>CC ASSEMBLIES: Annual regional gatherings and/or smaller CC meetings by topic, or geographic proximity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CCs can make connections, share best practices, and align strengths and needs with one another</li> <li>▪ Friendships and partnerships can blossom</li> <li>▪ CCs and URI staff can strategize practical possibilities for strengthening the network</li> </ul>
<p><b>Listserv: <a href="mailto:contacts@uri.org">contacts@uri.org</a></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Open, safe space for exchange of ideas, events, reports, expressions of appreciation, and support</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facebook</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fast, efficient communication</li> <li>▪ Great for sharing media such as photos with a wide audience in the URI network and beyond</li> <li>▪ Effective way to organize messages to groups</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conference calls and webinars</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CCs can engage on topics specific to their interests</li> <li>▪ Access to expert facilitators and teachers</li> <li>▪ Learn about other CCs and like-minded efforts</li> </ul>

### NEWSLETTERS: Another Way to Connect!



Subscribe to *InterAction* or *YOU ARE I: Stories from the United Religions Initiative* to stay up-to-date on CC stories and other news about URI. Send an email to [newsletter@uri.org](mailto:newsletter@uri.org) to add your contact information to our list.

## III. TIPS FOR CCs

### Fundamentals

**Start** with the URI Preamble, Purpose, and Principles (PPP). Let the PPP be your guide as you plan and undertake activities that make the URI vision a reality. Revisit the PPPs often.

**Cooperate**, Cooperate, Cooperate! Build friendships and partnerships, and collaborate for solutions that affect change.

**Empower** others. Share power and unleash creativity by listening for the strengths others bring and by encouraging them to share leadership and improve their skills

**Resolve** differences through dialogue in a way that produces learning and growth.

**Identify** inter-religious/intercultural and social challenges at a local level. Solving these together unites diverse people, which benefits the community.

**Promote** interfaith cooperation. Your CC activities, whether social services, environmental protection, etc., should aim for an outcome of improved interfaith relations.

**Focus** on the root causes of major challenges facing your community. Don't let the pressures of existing unsustainable systems and practices deter you from action.

**Be Resourceful** and creative. Don't be restricted by dependence on money. Use your imagination to make things happen.

**Honor** the Sacred. Sensitively use the gift of diverse cultures, faiths, beliefs, and practices to build mutual respect and trust, and to deepen the experience of your CC's work and life together.



*Reach out to those  
you fear*

*Touch the heart of  
complexity*

*Imagine what is  
beyond what is seen*

*Risk vulnerability  
one step at a time*

— John Paul Lederach



How is your CC practicing the URI Preamble, Purpose, and Principles?



## CC MANAGEMENT



1. **PRACTICE** shared decision-making. To learn more about shared decision-making tools and practices, contact your URI regional office.
2. **IDENTIFY** how your CC can put the PPPs into practice.
3. **CREATE CC AGREEMENTS** about how often to meet, governance practices, respectful behaviors, actions to begin and end meetings, etc.
4. CC contact persons should **CIRCULATE** to their other CC members any relevant information received from your regional office and Global Support Office.
5. **REFLECT AND EVALUATE** how your CC is performing. Are plans and ideas working? What might be changed?
6. Maintain good **COMMUNICATION** with URI regional staff to maximize your CC's benefits and contributions to the network.
7. Ensure **CONTACT PERSONS** understand their responsibility to maintain good communication.
8. Consider **ROTATING** contact persons once every year or two.
9. **TRANSITION LEADERSHIP.** Think ahead about giving opportunities for new leadership in your CC, especially for youth, so your CC continues to be creative and strong.
10. Use the library of **RESOURCE** materials for CCs. Go to [http://uri.org/browse\\_ resources/](http://uri.org/browse_resources/)
11. **PARTICIPATE IN NOMINATING AND VOTING** for candidates to represent your region in the Global Council.

When making decisions within your CC, it is important to keep in mind Principle 15 of the URI Charter:

*“Our deliberations and decisions shall be made at every level by bodies and methods that fairly represent the diversity of affected interests and are not dominated by any.”*

## CIRCLE CONVERSATIONS

Dialogue, planning, and sharing reflections while sitting in a circle has proven to be an especially effective practice for CCs.

Sitting in circles has roots in ancient tradition. Circles were a common form for discussing issues of importance. Circles provide support, generate mutual understanding, strengthen relationships and create spaces for healing and transformation. Circles allow all voices to be heard equally because there is no front of the room or VIP table. They convey a sense of connectedness – we can see each other. The center becomes a focal point – a sacred space.

**Circle Conversation Guidelines** by Kay Lindhal, former CC leader and URI trustee



*We don't pay nearly as much attention to shape, to the form of the meeting. We spend a great deal of time preparing content, agendas..., but then barely notice the shape of the room in which we are going to work. Circle is an ancient archetype of the human spirit – one that summons people everywhere to step into conversation.*

Excerpt from Margaret Wheatley's forward to the book, *The Circle Way, A Leader in Every Chair*, by Christina Baldwin

# INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

## Interfaith Dialogue Guidelines

*“How can we have peace if we don’t build good relationships?”*

— Kenna Ezeibe, CC member, Abuja, Nigeria

Interfaith cooperation depends on mutual understanding and respect across religious, spiritual, and cultural differences. Success is rooted in cooperation – the ability to work together, to listen and speak with respect, and establish relationships of friendship and trust. Interfaith understanding usually develops gradually and is nurtured through dialogue. Deepening one’s knowledge and skill in leading and participating in interfaith dialogue is important for CCs.



To get started, here is a brief summary:

### Dialogue is:

1. A two-way communication that involves speaking, listening, giving, and receiving for mutual growth and enrichment.
2. Deeply needed in peacebuilding.
3. A communication leading to a common goal. At a deeper level, it leads to an interpersonal communion.
4. An example of people from different religious traditions engaged in relations or collaborations with each other.
5. Representing one’s own faith as well as maintaining openness to that of others.
6. A positive expression of one’s religious traditional values among those who do not practice that particular religious tradition.
7. A personal encounter between people of different belief systems in an atmosphere of love, peace, and respect for one another’s faith, with a commitment to solve critical issues within the community.
8. A good way to overcome ignorance, individualism, intolerance, prejudices.
9. Genuine interest to understand the other.
10. A way to enrich and strengthen one’s identity.

### Dialogue is Not:

1. A comparative study of religion.
2. An attempt to proselytize or convert.
3. A debate.
4. Condemnation of other people’s views.
5. A monologue.
6. Only a discussion, but calls for future shared actions.



## YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN URI

“We unite to provide a global opportunity for participation by all people, especially by those whose voices are not often heard.”

— URI Preamble



How is your CC inviting young people to help design spaces and ways of working that are inclusive of all generations, such as deciding everything from where and when a CC meets, to the work that it does?

URI values the leadership and wisdom of peacebuilders regardless of age. Young people, as the majority of the population in most countries in the world, are key stakeholders in peacebuilding work. URI strives to be an interfaith movement that leads in its inclusion of young people in leadership roles. Through regional programs, URI supports the development of young people as leaders with training and other opportunities. The goal is to help CCs create opportunities for young people to participate and be full decision-making leaders, supported and mentored by elders in intergenerational partnerships.

## FUNDING AND PROJECT SUPPORT

“We have the responsibility to develop financial and other resources to meet the needs of our part, and to share financial and other resources to help meet the needs of other parts.”

— Principle 17

The URI network has hundreds of member groups and organizations, and hundreds of thousands of people, and is growing. This means potentially unlimited resources that can be accessed and shared among CCs.



URI is not a funding organization, and CCs develop their own financial and other resources to meet their needs. By being proactive and connecting with other CCs and URI staff in the network, it is possible to gain access to potential resources or funding.

Through research, establishing connections, and creating strong project proposals, many CCs have obtained project funding from foundations, foreign and domestic NGOs, companies, banks, ministries, etc. CCs can also find alternative resources for projects through donations of goods, materials or services, or by partnering with another organization.

## PATHWAYS TO POLICYMAKERS



*“URI staff and trustees work daily to create partnerships with key decision makers, including political leaders, and international organizations and institutions. In doing so, the voice of the grassroots interfaith movement is being brought to the policy level, creating a platform for CCs to succeed in their efforts.”*

**Ambassador Mussie Hailu, Africa Continent Coordinator,** URI representative at the Economic Commission for Africa and African Union, UNEP, IGAD

Using the URI platform, CCs can reach out to policy makers to make their voices heard and build partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

## GOOD PRACTICES

1. Use existing occasions (religious holidays, festivals, international UN days, Independence Day, etc.) to organize an interfaith program related to the theme of the day. Invite political leaders or key policy makers to present a brief welcome. Consider presenting awards to policymakers that demonstrate your values and aims. Partnering with other CCs is helpful because several groups working cooperatively across different sectors (such as, religion, education, environment, etc) can gain more attention from media and policymakers.
2. Bring excellent information about your CC to the attention of policy makers. Tell media outlets about your CC events and issue a press release. Use your CC profile (see page 35) to create a fact sheet about the purpose of your CC and the positive impact it has in the community. Create a poster with great photos and captions of your CCs in action. Request an appointment with an appropriate policy maker and bring materials about your CC's aims and successes.

## EXAMPLES OF URI'S PARTNERSHIPS:

- ▶ URI has official consultative status at the UN, with a staff representative.
- ▶ In Africa, URI signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Union. The agreement creates a pathway for CCs in Africa to work in partnership with their respective governments on issues of peace and the implementation of African Union initiatives to combat extremism and promote interfaith dialogue across the continent (African Union Interfaith Dialogue Forum).

## URI AND THE UN

### International Day of Peace and World Interfaith Harmony Week

URI is an enthusiastic advocate of the UN-sponsored International Day of Peace (IDP), September 21, and World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW), which is the first week in February.



IDP and WIHW provide opportunities for CCs to participate in collective global actions for peace every year. While having a positive impact locally, the actions CCs organize for IDP and WIHW also become a worldwide force for peace.

**URI encourages CCs to participate in their own ways by:**

- organizing actions
- creating new partners
- accessing their local UN Center of Information Office
- sending IDP news to local media outlets
- posting their stories and reports to the URI global website

For more detailed information about how your CC can participate in IDP, see [https://www.uri.org/action\\_areas/peacebuilding/international\\_day\\_of\\_peace](https://www.uri.org/action_areas/peacebuilding/international_day_of_peace)

For more detailed information about how your CC can participate in WIHW, see [http://www.uri.org/action\\_areas/united\\_nations/world\\_interfaith\\_harmony\\_week](http://www.uri.org/action_areas/united_nations/world_interfaith_harmony_week)



## CC REFLECTION, LEARNING, AND SHARING

**“We are committed to organizational learning and adaptation.”**

— Principal 19

### Why are Evaluation and Learning important for URI?

- To identify valuable practices and lessons to share across the network.
- To reflect and actively share experiential information and ideas – this is the critical fuel needed to power URI's network.
- Often, people who are actively doing URI work have not taken time to reflect on the changes that result, both short and long term, and to remember the personal or anecdotal experiences that touched them deeply. Doing so increases a CC's self understanding of their work and significance given the context and needs in their area.

***“We don't learn from experience alone.  
We learn from reflecting on experiences.”***

— Bishop Swing, URI President and Founder

When reflecting on your CC's work, it is helpful to reference the purpose and mission of URI:

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

#### **Mission**

URI is a global grassroots interfaith network that cultivates peace and justice by engaging people to bridge religious and cultural differences and work together for the good of their communities and the world.

# REFLECT



# LEARN



# SHARE

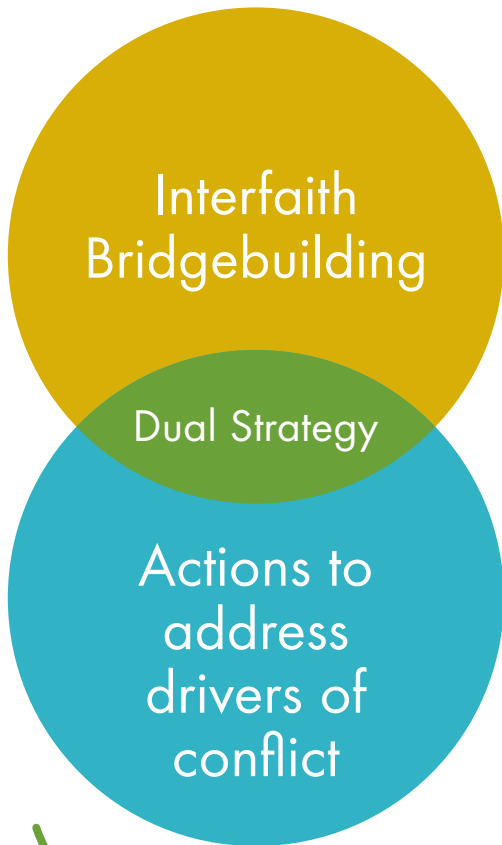


# HOW URI CREATES IMPACT

## The URI Model

How does URI achieve its purpose? CCs positively transform their communities using two strategies: **interfaith bridgebuilding** and **community actions to address drivers of conflict**. This model is proving highly effective in reducing violence and achieving peace.

## Strategy



## CC Actions

- Interfaith dialogue
- Interfaith education
- Reconciliation & healing
- Conflict transformation

- Education, health & social services
- Empowering marginalized groups
- Environmental & economic justice
- Women & youth leadership

Support CCs & deliver benefits of network

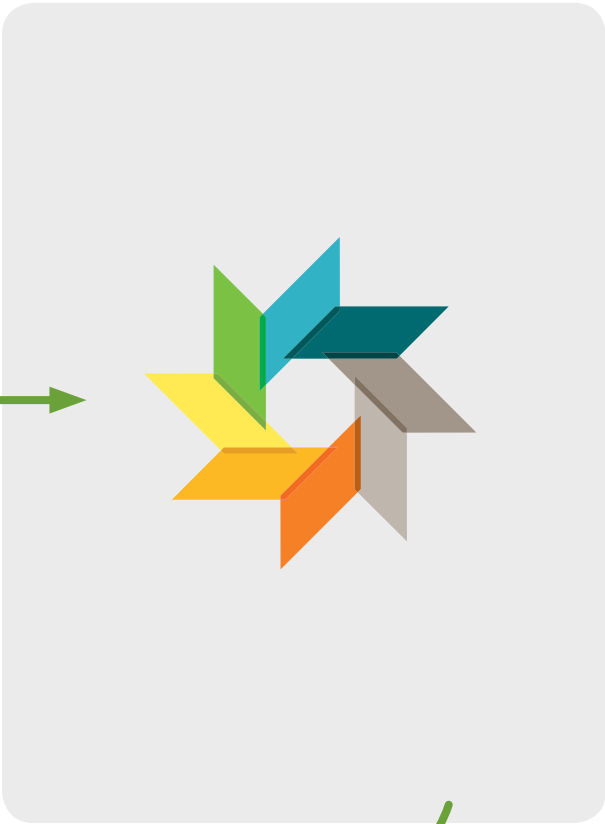
Unite CCs globally under shared value system (PPP)

Foster creation of CCs

**URI Organizational Actions**  
(Global Council, Global & Regional staff, President's Council)

At the same time, URI has an “organizational arm” that includes staff, the Global Council, and President’s Council, who together promote the creation of CCs and provide direct support and interconnection to CCs (i.e. deliver benefits of the network).

## URI Purpose



This organizational arm of URI also influences policy makers to embrace and institutionalize core URI values. Such efforts, combined with the work of CCs in their communities, is awakening a feeling of possibility and inspiration in societies across the globe.

**Institutionalize interfaith bridgebuilding**

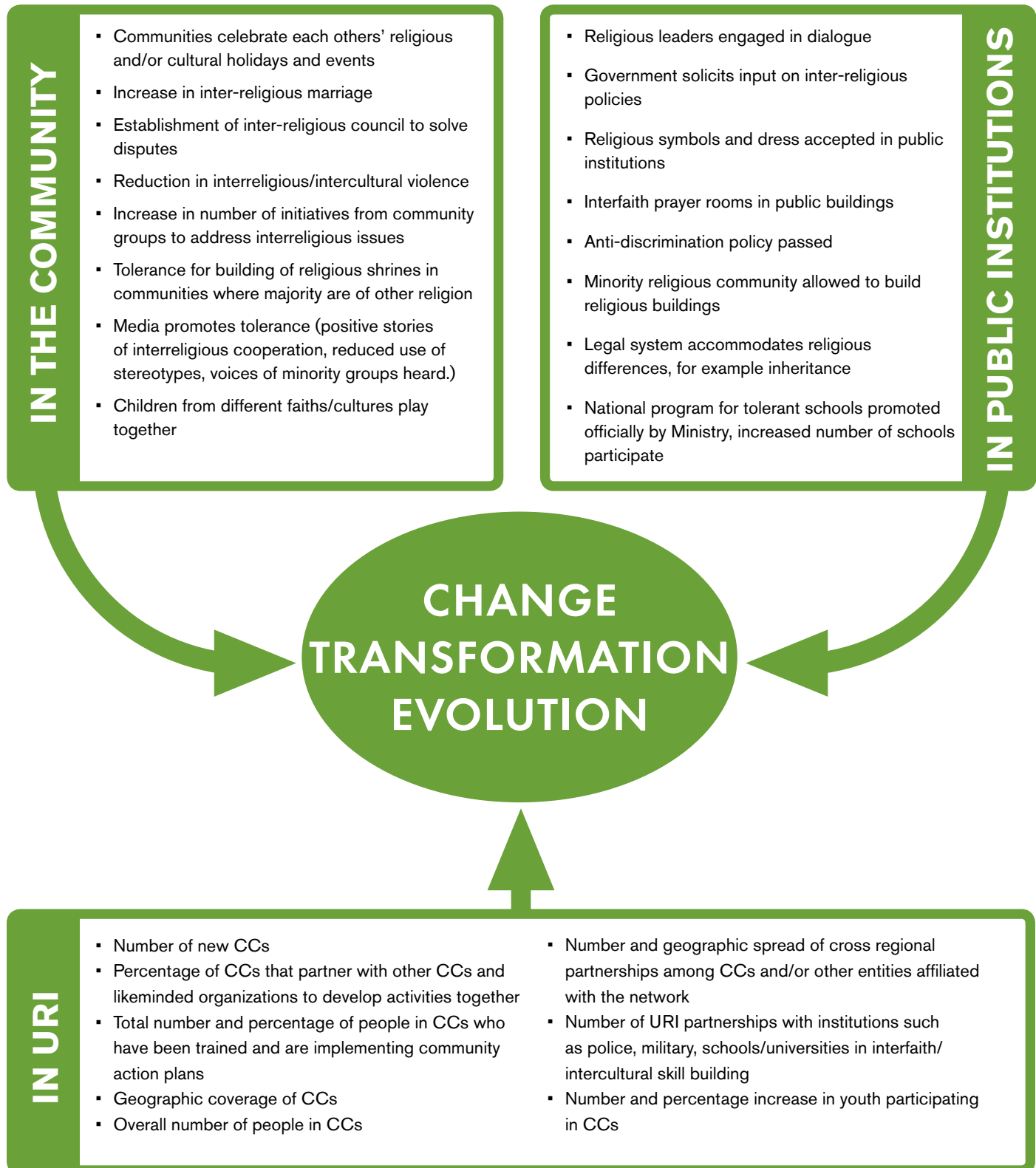
**Influence figures of authority on interfaith**

**Advocate & raise public awareness**



# EXAMPLE IMPACT INDICATORS

## For Interreligious/Intercultural Bridgebuilding & Increased Tolerance



## PROJECT DESIGN AND EVALUATION

**“We have the right to organize in any manner, at any scale, in any area, and around any issue or activity which is relevant to and consistent with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.”**

### — Principle 14

Groups who join URI as a CC are required to have members from at least three different religions, spiritual expressions, or indigenous traditions. This ensures there is always interfaith cooperation (among CC members) for any activity a CC carries out, which is important because when people who usually do not work together to solve problems due to religious or cultural differences join together and cooperate, the impact is greater.

CCs carry out many types of activities, from interfaith dialogue and conflict transformation to social services and economic justice. As shown in the impact model on page 26, CCs can positively transform their communities by using two strategies: interfaith bridgebuilding and actions to address the root causes of conflict. By thoughtfully designing and evaluating activities, CCs can ensure both of these strategies are being used, thereby creating a deeper impact. Below is an example of a CC that provides a critical health service while also engaging communities in interfaith dialogue and education.

### CASE STUDY: INTERFAITH APPROACH TO A SOCIAL ISSUE

#### Blood Life Initiative CC (Kenya, Africa)

In Nairobi, where there is a wide diversity of religious and cultural beliefs, some people believe it is wrong to donate or receive a blood transfusion. This is problematic in emergency situations as people’s lives can be lost due to such beliefs.



While our CC provides blood transfusions which is considered social work, we use an interfaith approach because some religious and cultural groups reject our services. We engage in dialogue with their leaders to better understand beliefs and share our ideas, which usually results in permission to talk to the community about the importance of blood transfusion. By the time we finish our dialogue sessions with the community, they are often already convinced about donating blood in the spirit of “love for all humanity”.

A story that demonstrates how we use interfaith strategies in our work is once we were in a hospital in rural Kenya when we encountered a Muslim patient who needed an urgent blood transfusion. As we quickly prepared to perform the transfusion, he insisted he would only accept blood from a fellow Muslim. We showed him two packages of blood, and asked him to select the one that had been donated by a Muslim. Realizing this was impossible, and after dialogue with him, the man admitted that blood has only one color, regardless of one’s religion, because we are all human beings. After this incident, with our encouragement he became a strong campaigner for blood donation and transfusion. When people understand each other and eradicate the fear of the unknown, they will embrace each other for their own good. This is the reason why we spend time to educate them that blood has only one color.

## PROJECT DESIGN AND EVALUATION

### How can our CC design projects that use an interfaith approach?

As seen in the Blood Life Initiative CC case study, activities can be designed in a way that produces many levels of impact. Using the method below, CCs can assess potential or ongoing projects by identifying levels of impact.

#### MAIN IMPACT

The main intended outcome for an activity

EXAMPLE

*The main intended outcome of Blood Life Initiative CCs work is to create healthier communities through blood donation and transfusion services.*

#### SECOND IMPACT

Occurs based on the specific approach used to achieve the main impact

EXAMPLE

*Blood Life Initiative CC addresses stereotypes and teaches communities that blood has only one color regardless of faith. This interfaith approach results in raised consciousness among people of different religions and cultures of a "shared humanity", while also resulting in increased blood donation and transfusion.*

#### THIRD IMPACT

Generated from the interfaith cooperation that takes place inside the CC among its members who are of many different faiths, and also by the CC being a model that demonstrates to its community and the world that interfaith cooperation and harmony are possible.

EXAMPLE

*Interfaith/intercultural relations are improved through the diverse members of Blood Life Initiative CC teaching and learning from each other, and achieving rare cooperation delivering a critical health service. The work of the CCs also creates an "external" interfaith peacebuilding impact by increasing public awareness (through observing the CC and through media ) of the possibility for people of different religions/cultures to cooperate and solve problems together.*

More examples of analyzing levels of impact for CC activities are provided on the following page. **NOTE: THERE CAN BE MORE THAN THREE LEVELS!**

# LEVELS OF IMPACT

ACTIVITY/ PROGRAM	MAIN IMPACT	SECOND IMPACT	THIRD IMPACT
<p><b>Sports camp for Palestinian and Israeli youth</b></p>	<p>Interfaith bridge building and conflict mitigation through increased understanding, tolerance, between Palestinian and Israeli youth participants.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Strengthened relations between people of different faiths and cultures who belong to CC through cooperation in implementing sports camp training program. Greater public awareness among Palestinians and Israelis regarding viability of interfaith/intercultural cooperation in peacebuilding.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Family members and friends of youth sports camp participants become more positive in their attitudes about Palestinian-Israeli relations after hearing experiences from the camp.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>
<p><b>Vocational training (sewing) program for women in Sri Lanka</b></p>	<p>Economic empowerment and increased independence for women in Sri Lanka.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Interfaith bridge building and conflict mitigation through improved relations and understanding between Tamil and Buddhist women participating in vocational training together.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Strengthened relations between people of different faiths and cultures who belong to CC through cooperation in implementing vocational training program. Existence of CC and its activities result in greater public awareness of viability of interfaith/intercultural cooperation in improving communities in Sri Lanka.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>
<p><b>Substance addiction treatment program in Kerala</b></p>	<p>People overcome alcohol addiction and reclaim their lives.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Interfaith bridge building and conflict mitigation through improved understanding between Hindus, Muslims, and Christians participating together and overcoming addiction together—side by side—in Alcoholics Anonymous program.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Strengthened relations between people of different faiths and cultures who belong to CC through cooperation in administering alcohol addiction treatment program. Existence of CC and activities result in greater public awareness of viability of interfaith/intercultural cooperation in improving communities in India.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>
<p><b>Environmental program to protect waterways from industrial pollution in Bengal region</b></p>	<p>Pollution in waterways reduced.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Interfaith bridge building through improved understanding between people of different castes, cultures, and religions who join together to protest and advocate for cleaner water.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Strengthened interfaith/intercultural relations between CC members through organizing environmental campaign. Existence of CC and activities result in greater public awareness of viability of interfaith/inter-caste cooperation in improving communities in India. Initiative inspires creation of new CCs.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>
<p><b>Promoting education for girl children in Uganda</b></p>	<p>Improved opportunities for females in Ugandan society.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Faith leaders mobilized by CC work together to promote girl child education and become more aware of shared values among different religions/cultures. Communities understand importance of girl child education.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>	<p>Strengthened cooperation among people of different faiths and cultures who belong to CC and jointly organize and implement girl child education program.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building</p>

Can you identify the interfaith/intercultural element in the activities being carried out by your CC?



## METHODS FOR CC REFLECTION

### Self Evaluation & Sharing

There are many methods that can be used to reflect and learn from your CC's activities. Use each of these methods individually or in combination.



#### Direct Observation

Involves watching, taking notes, and recording specific actions within a target community, such as communications, interaction, or exclusion. For example, observing cultural diversity at an event or activity provides direct information on participant characteristics. It can also be focused on changes, such as in people's behaviors and attitudes, which involves watching people go about their daily business at home, in the community, or in the field.



#### Interviews

Involve one-on-one discussions with community members and other peacebuilding stakeholders, either face-to-face or by telephone. Interviews can be structured, with a questionnaire that is followed, or semi-structured, without a questionnaire.



#### Circle Conversations

Involve small-group conversations that seek to understand how people where your CC is working feel or think about an issue, service or idea. Circle conversations involve a small group sitting in a circle, with each participant speaking and listening with respect, allowing all voices to be heard without critique. Circle conversations are like "focus groups," as they have a specific purpose, size, composition, and process. They are best conducted with 6-8 people who are selected because they have something in common; for example, a group of women who own businesses, or a group of youth who are unemployed. Leading circle conversations requires a skilled moderator and is best done in a comfortable, confidential environment.



#### Survey Questionnaires

Involve a set of specific, targeted questions to which stakeholders respond in writing. The questions should follow a set of formal survey standards. They should also reflect cultural and language sensitivity. Questionnaires can be distributed electronically, by post, or by hand.

**Quantitative methods gather data to be analyzed in numerical form. Qualitative methods have greater flexibility and pose questions in a more open-ended manner, with the goal of understanding WHY people hold particular views.**



### Diaries

Describe a personal experience. They allow individuals to capture what was of importance to them each day or week. Diaries can also be structured so that individuals take note of specific attitudes, events and behaviors that they have experienced/observed. For example, a CC providing leadership training to women might ask the women to each keep a diary to record their reflections and feelings during the training period.



### Photos/Videos

Collect visual information such as interfaith/intercultural interaction. Photos can capture “faces of success.” Videos can provide a compelling view of inter-religious cooperation in action beyond the power of words alone.



## EVALUATION TIPS

**Using the reflection and learning methods list above will allow your CC to answer key evaluation questions including:**

1. During the past year, what impact has our CC’s work had on our community? What changed?
2. What evidence do we have that our CC contributed to positive changes?
3. Regarding activities, what worked well? What didn’t work well? Why?
4. What changes might our CC make going forward?

# STORYTELLING

## A Powerful Way to Share and Learn from Interfaith Experiences

Many cultures use oral history to share lessons and morals. CC members can use storytelling, such as “oral history interviews”, which involve speaking with people in their community who have familiarity with its history and social dynamics. Storytelling can reveal how a community has evolved, including during the time your CC has been active.

Inviting people to tell their stories can be done through an interview question-answer format, with notes taken or an audio/video recording. Hearing personal experiences from people who are meant to benefit from your CC's work is very important. Does someone have a story about how your CC's efforts changed their life?

Everyone relates to stories, so CCs can communicate across the world through storytelling! There are two types of stories related to interfaith/intercultural peacebuilding that you might consider collecting and sharing:

- 1) A very important personal experience you had related to interfaith/intercultural relations that changed your beliefs and behavior;
- 2) Something unexpected that happened in your community related to interfaith/intercultural relations (example: two tribes were enemies, but something unique happened that led to reconciliation and greater understanding between them)



### BENEFITS OF STORYTELLING

- Enhances understanding of the impact of your CC work from the viewpoint of the participants/broader community
- Provides a way to directly engage with participants and the broader community in evaluation of CC projects
- Captures the specific context of the work, and reveals levels of impact including tangible changes in people, relationships, and communities
- Allows the identification of surprises and unintended consequences





- ▶ **Storytelling provides meaningful information that can highlight both the strong points and weaknesses of a project, as well as any unintended consequences.**
- ▶ **Storytelling can bring out rich, colorful, and emotionally compelling information. Telling and listening to stories builds bonds of trust and opens doors for friendship.**
- ▶ **Stories don't always have to be about achieving success. A story can even be about NOT achieving a goal, but learning a valuable lesson that was completely unforeseen!**

## INTERFAITH STORY

Whether telling a story about a personal experience or something that happened involving a whole community, it is important to identify the key lessons and how the story is relevant to interfaith peacebuilding. Below is an example of a powerful story:



*In 2002, the largest communal riot in India's history took place in Gujarat Province. The riot pitted Hindus and Muslims against one another. As the horrific violence ended, thousands of victims remained. A Hindu woman from the Brahman class began working as a trauma counsellor in a refugee camp for Muslim girls who were rape victims. Although she was Hindu, the girls viewed her as a mother. It was extremely unusual for a Hindu woman, especially someone from a high class, to provide services to the Muslim community. So much so, that back in her own community, she was shamed for helping Muslim girls. Some said to her, "Why are you helping these people? What happened is already done." Despite being admonished by her own community, she remained strong and continued doing what she knew was right. — Gujarat CC, India*

This story revealed a key principle - for change to happen, we must go beyond dialogue and actually LIVE interfaith. We must step outside our own community and show courage in practicing interfaith principles. While showing tolerance is an important first step towards harmony, actually living the values of interfaith is the most important transformation individuals and communities can make to achieve peace.



## TIPS FOR GATHERING & ORGANIZING STORIES



1. **Be consistent and systematic.** Create a template to record your stories, and allow sufficient time to write them down. Don't wait; record stories when they are fresh in your mind!
2. **Invite members of your CC to be storytellers and story-collectors.** Responsibilities include recording and writing interfaith stories. Identify good storytellers among your CC members and in the community where you work, and encourage them to tell their stories.
3. **Use stories for evaluation.** Stories can illustrate problems and challenges; demonstrate successful interventions and positive transformation of an individual or group; and highlight needs and strengths of the CC itself or communities where working is done.
4. **Combine stories with other methods of evaluation.** Use surveys/questionnaires, focus groups, observations. Providing multiple forms of data enhances the richness of stories, and strengthens evaluation and learning.
5. **Always ask for permission before recording a story** and for approval to share it with others. Offer the storyteller the option to use their real name for the story or to remain anonymous.



**Share Your News!** Sign-in to URI.org, click "The Latest", then click "Add Post"

# STRENGTHENING THE NETWORK

## Sharing Information

### HOW CAN OTHER CCS BENEFIT FROM YOUR SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES?

When your CC shares information about its work, it provides concrete examples of successful practices and inspires other CCs. As powerful stories about achievements in interfaith peacebuilding are shared across the network and beyond, a new vision of what is possible for humanity emerges.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CC'S ACHIEVEMENTS

1. What is the current religious/cultural/political context in the area where our CC is working?
3. What strategy does our CC use to bring people together from different religions/cultures?
4. What impact does our CC hope to achieve?
5. How is our work improving relations among people of different faiths/traditions or transforming conflict?
6. What are some signs that relations are improving between people of different faiths/cultures in the area where our CC works?

## Cooperation Circle Profiles



URI staff are dedicated to helping CCs reflect on and share their work. CC profiles are written by URI staff based on an in-depth conversation with a CC. The profile offers a comprehensive look into the life and work of a CC, which provides the network with valuable information on interfaith best practices and innovative strategies for peacebuilding. Individuals within and outside of the URI network are encouraged to read CC profiles to gain a rich understanding of URI's work around the world. New profiles are added regularly, so please come back and check.

**CC Profiles:** [http://uri.org/cooperation\\_circles/cooperation\\_circle\\_profiles](http://uri.org/cooperation_circles/cooperation_circle_profiles)



If you are facing a challenge, maybe another CC has found a successful way to address it. **Contact your Regional Coordinator.**

# CC STORIES FROM THE NETWORK

## California Interfaith Power and Light

We bring people together by uniting them around a specific issue that affects us all. If more than 90 percent of scientists told the public, “Stop drinking water, it’s poisoning you,” we wouldn’t say, “Oh, that’s just a Baptist issue,” or “That’s an Episcopalian issue”; we would all come together. And that is what we are calling for on this issue. I may believe in the Trinity and you may pray to Allah, but that doesn’t mean we can’t learn to address this challenge together. Air pollution is air pollution. Sea level rise is sea level rise. Oceans without fish are oceans without fish – these matters have nothing to do with your race, class culture or religion.



Based in San Francisco, USA, California Interfaith Power and Light is a Cooperation Circle in the URI North America Region

## Rio Inter-Religious Movement CC

We held the “Faith in Climate” initiative in Rio de Janeiro to encourage our government leaders to take ambitious attitudes towards addressing climate change, to promote education, and to take actions for the protection of those in vulnerable situations. Representatives from different faiths came together to demand action towards the common goals of reducing greenhouse emissions, preserving biodiversity, controlling deforestation, and preserving cultural traditions and ways of life. Acting collectively, we had strength that we would not have had acting alone. Together, we can call loudly for a commitment to a healthier environment and good relations between all of Earth’s creatures.



Based in Brazil, Rio Inter-Religious Movement is a Cooperation Circle in the URI Latin America and the Caribbean Region

## COEXISTER CC

At Coexister, our motto is “Diversity in Faith, Unity in Action.” Our members (over 1800 young people from all religious or non religious backgrounds) act in various fields including dialogue, solidarity, outreach, and study trips. We emphasize respecting all religions for a tolerant, multicultural society while cases of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination against Christians, and religiously-motivated violence are increasing. Each year, Coexister youth travel the world to train young people in interreligious and intercultural understanding. The current tour is visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Norway, Morocco, Poland, the UK, Russia, and onward. We carry messages of peace to thousands of people worldwide.



Based in France, Coexister is a Cooperation Circle in the URI Europe Region

## Youth of Peace CC

Since Yemen’s revolution, there have been increasing clashes between religions. In an effort to replace stereotypes and hatred with understanding and friendship, Youth of Peace CC organizes interfaith activities. In February, we organized a silent event promoting the values of forgiveness and peace. Men, women, and children held signs to remind our community that Yemen will only flourish once coexistence is embraced. This brave display of peacebuilding took place only 43 days before the 2015 Sana’a mosque suicide-bombings, which were the deadliest terrorist attack in Yemen’s history. We continue to call out to the world to stop the violence.



Based in Yemen, Youth of Peace is a Cooperation Circle in the URI Middle East and North Africa Region



# CC STORIES FROM THE NETWORK

## CARAVAN

We presented the art exhibition THE BRIDGE, which showcased the work of Christian, Muslim and Jewish artists as they focused on what they held in common through their cultures and creeds. The exhibition, which gained an immense following as it traveled through London, Paris, Egypt, and throughout Europe and the United States, aimed to enhance understanding, bring about respect, enable sharing, and deepen friendships between different faiths and cultures of the Middle East and West. It worked. Here are some of the comments we

received: "Thank you for showing us ways to be bridges - unity and complexity together." "THE BRIDGE has given us hope for a future filled with love and peace between all members of our human family." "This exhibition provokes thought and can lead to ground-breaking discussions. Let's get them started!"



CARAVAN is a Cooperation Circle in the URI Multiregion

## Buddha Education Foundation CC

When our CC hosted a Women's Day for economically disadvantaged communities, 245 women came. Though their ages and religions varied, most were illiterate housewives, unaware of their rights, who hesitated to share their suffering in public. Finally, a Hindu woman carrying two babies stood. "I will speak. We women live like animals. We work the whole day and at night get beaten by our husbands." She had never spoken about it because, until that moment, no one had invited her to speak. Soon, everyone including Christian, Jain, Muslim, and Sikh women wanted to bond over the similarities in their situations. In creating a safe space to speak, we opened the door to progress.



Based in India, Buddha Education Foundation is a Cooperation Circle in the URI Asia Region. The photo features sharing stories at a women's rights event hosted by Action Against Poverty CC.

## Interfaith Youth Circle of Cambodia (IYCC) CC

We were moved by the plight of the farming families in despair due to severe flooding and low harvests. Responding to this crisis, our Cooperation Circle provided education on safe migration, as well as how to reduce land destruction brought about by climate change. We help families safeguard their livelihoods and lives, and protect children from work exploitation. CC member Mr. Ros Sam An shares his experience: "With this kind of work, I learned to get along with persons from any other faith. Personally experiencing Buddhists and Christians seated side by side, whether in a church or in a pagoda, is genuinely inspiring. You know deep in your heart you have created or at least done something, no matter how little, to make a difference! A Buddhist at a Christmas party organized by the Christians became teary-eyed, and when asked why he was tearful, replied, 'We can be happy even if we have different religions.'"



Based in Cambodia, IYCC is a Cooperation Circle in the URI Southeast Asia and the Pacific Region

## Réseau Culturel SANGWA CC

In Rwanda, people of all faiths and cultures are trying to move on from the genocide. However, the country and soul of Rwanda cannot be rebuilt if each group/religion makes separate efforts. Influencing youth is important to ensure they embrace peace and do not carry forward the hatred and suspicions and discrimination that fueled the atrocities. Many youth, especially children of single mothers from the genocide, took to the streets and a life of crime. Our CC, which is led by women, approached them to participate in street drama and make some income, as we realized these underprivileged children needed to be looked after, both Hutu and Tutsi tribes. Our CC members are also training youth using religious and cultural teachings to promote tolerance and reconciliation. The trainings are conducted by women of different backgrounds, which in itself is profound. The children may be too young to fully understand discrimination, but for elders who aware of segregation before the genocide, this is a big step forward. We see ourselves creating a generation of young people that is tolerant and lives beyond ethnic differences that tore our communities in the past.



Based in Rwanda, Réseau Culturel SANGWA is a Cooperation Circle in the URI Africa Region

## TYPES OF INFORMATION

### Descriptive vs Analytical

When sharing information about your CC's activities with the URI network through Facebook, Twitter, listserves, or other methods, it is helpful to think about what types of information will be most valuable to other CCs. Information is usually either descriptive or analytical. Both are necessary, but understanding the difference is important.

#### DESCRIPTIVE

(Very basic information)

- ▶ Location
- ▶ Date/time
- ▶ Type of activity
- ▶ Number of attendees
- ▶ Target population/intended beneficiaries
- ▶ Organizations/government agencies participating

#### ANALYTICAL

(Draws conclusions and contains "knowledge")

- ▶ Provides historical/cultural context of activity and why interfaith bridge building and conflict transformation is critical
- ▶ Explains method or strategy for bringing together people of different cultures and faiths that would otherwise not have interacted or cooperated
- ▶ Explains between which specific religious or cultural groups bridges are being built and why this is needed
- ▶ Explains how activity contributes to ending religious/ culturally inspired intolerance and violence
- ▶ Explains how activity improves people's lives
- ▶ Explains why the specific organizations/ government agencies participating in an activity are key partners

**Descriptive information, while important, does not tell us HOW an event made an impact, HOW it built bridges between people of different faiths/traditions, or WHY it matters.**

**Analytical information that allows for "reflection" is required.**



# REFLECTION AND LEARNING FORM

## SAMPLE

This form can help CCs to think more deeply about their activities. The answers to these questions will benefit other CCs who can learn new ideas and be inspired.

CC NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

FAITHS/TRADITIONS REPRESENTED: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION OF CC: \_\_\_\_\_

PRIMARY CONTACT: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL/PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

SECONDARY CONTACT: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL/PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions:

1. What is the current religious/cultural/social context in the area where your CC is working?
2. Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed in the area where your CC works?
3. Please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is carrying out. Please specify the year in which the activity took/is taking place.
4. Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?
5. Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that generally do not engage or cooperate with each other.
6. Why do the activities your CC is carrying out improve cooperation among people of different traditions in the broader community?
7. Within your CC, you have members from several different faiths and cultural traditions. How would you describe cooperation among your CC's members? Have there been any challenges?
8. What are some observations or signs you see that relations are improving between people of different faiths/cultures in the area where your CC works?
9. What does your CC hope to achieve?
10. Aside from funding, what are some specific ways URI can better support your CC in reaching its goals?
11. In what ways do you feel your CC's work helping to achieve the purpose of URI?
12. What value or benefits does your CC receive from being a member of URI?
13. What value or benefit does your CC currently provide or could potentially provide the URI network?
14. Do you communicate or work with other CCs in the URI network? If yes, please share a few examples. If no, please explain why you have been unable/ uninterested to connect with other CCs.
15. As a CC that works on improving interfaith relations, perhaps you have seen, heard, or experienced something interesting. Please share a very important personal experience or lesson related to interfaith/intercultural relations that changed impacted your beliefs OR a story about something that happened in your community related to interfaith relations.

# IMPACT ANALYSIS FORM

**SAMPLE**

Refer to page 29 for example of Impact Analysis Form.

## Analysis of Activity and Program Impact:

ACTIVITY/ PROGRAM	MAIN IMPACT	SECOND IMPACT	THIRD IMPACT
	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building
	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building
	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building
	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Interfaith Bridge Building

Identify the interfaith/intercultural element for the activities and programs being carried out by your CC.

# PREAMBLE, PURPOSE, PRINCIPLES

## Preamble

We, people of diverse religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions throughout the world, hereby establish the United Religions Initiative to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

We respect the uniqueness of each tradition, and differences of practice or belief.

We value voices that respect others, and believe that sharing our values and wisdom can lead us to act for the good of all.

We believe that our religious, spiritual lives, rather than dividing us, guide us to build community and respect for one another.

Therefore, as interdependent people rooted in our traditions, we now unite for the benefit of our Earth community.

We unite to build cultures of peace and justice.

We unite to heal and protect the Earth.

We unite to build safe places for conflict resolution, healing and reconciliation.

We unite to support freedom of religion and spiritual expression, and the rights of all individuals and peoples as set forth in international law.

We unite in responsible cooperative action to bring the wisdom and values of our religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions to bear on the economic, environmental, political and social challenges facing our Earth community.

We unite to provide a global opportunity for participation by all people, especially by those whose voices are not often heard.

We unite to celebrate the joy of blessings and the light of wisdom in both movement and stillness.

We unite to use our combined resources only for nonviolent, compassionate action, to awaken to our deepest truths, and to manifest love and justice among all life in our Earth community.

## Purpose

The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

# PREAMBLE, PURPOSE, PRINCIPLES (CONTINUED)

## Principles

1. The URI is a bridge-building organization, not a religion.
2. We respect the sacred wisdom of each religion, spiritual expression and indigenous tradition.
3. We respect the differences among religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions.
4. We encourage our members to deepen their roots in their own tradition.
5. We listen and speak with respect to deepen mutual understanding and trust.
6. We give and receive hospitality.
7. We seek and welcome the gift of diversity and model practices that do not discriminate.
8. We practice equitable participation of women and men in all aspects of the URI.
9. We practice healing and reconciliation to resolve conflict without resorting to violence.
10. We act from sound ecological practices to protect and preserve the Earth for both present and future generations.
11. We seek and offer cooperation with other interfaith efforts.
12. We welcome as members all individuals, organizations and associations who subscribe to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.
13. We have the authority to make decisions at the most local level that includes all the relevant and affected parties.
14. We have the right to organize in any manner, at any scale, in any area, and around any issue or activity which is relevant to and consistent with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.
15. Our deliberations and decisions shall be made at every level by bodies and methods that fairly represent the diversity of affected interests and are not dominated by any.
16. We (each part of the URI) shall relinquish only such autonomy and resources as are essential to the pursuit of the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.
17. We have the responsibility to develop financial and other resources to meet the needs of our part, and to share financial and other resources to help meet the needs of other parts.
18. We maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct, prudent use of resources, and fair and accurate disclosure of information.
19. We are committed to organizational learning and adaptation.
20. We honor the richness and diversity of all languages and the right and responsibility of participants to translate and interpret the Charter, Articles, Bylaws and related documents in accordance with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles, and the spirit of the United Religions Initiative.
21. Members of the URI shall not be coerced to participate in any ritual or be proselytized.

## REGIONAL & GLOBAL CC SUPPORT

This first ever toolkit for CCs was born out of countless conversations with CC members and URI staff and trustees around the globe. We are most grateful for these valuable contributions which will enable CCs to energize the network.

### **The URI CC Toolkit was developed by**

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Argus, LLC, layout and design

Special gratitude goes to all Regional Coordinators and CCs who provided guidance in developing the toolkit.





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