



COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE



PIALSOLE ABORIGINAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

Action Area

-  Environmental Protection
-  Working in Deforestation
-  Tribal Development
-  Interfaith Co-operation

Primary Contact

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Faiths/Traditions Represented

Hindu, Christian, Tribal

Date Approved

October 2012

**PEALSOLE
 ABORIGINAL
 SOCIETY CC**

**VILLAGE - PIALSOLE
 DIST - PURULIA
 PIN - 723131**





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SUMMARY

Pialsole Aboriginal Development Society CC is located in the Purulia District, of West Bengal, East India. It is one of the least developed areas in Bengal. CC members have been working for several years to bring harmony, and job opportunities for youth in the region due to the large exodus of youth from the countryside to the city in pursuit of opportunities. Pialsole Aboriginal Development Society's vision is to have a world free of discrimination, one in which no one is judged by the color of their skin, and where there are no castes. They are committed to youth and economic sustainability in an interfaith context.

REFLECTION & LEARNING

- *What is the current religious/cultural/social context in the area where your CC is working?*

Our CC is based in a rural area with little development. We are facing difficulties in providing a good education for our children, better health services, roads, and at the same time there are many harmful businesses, such as the logging factories, who are successfully doing good business. We are also faced with communities and families breaking down, separating due to migration. Young people are running away from villages to live in the city under unhealthy conditions. We are attempting to preserve and utilize indigenous knowledge on traditional healing and other valuable principles for leading a peaceful life.

Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed in the area where your CC works?

Many Indians are very religious. When we read about URI we thought this would be a moving cause that could unite people from every community. We saw it as an opportunity for our elders to share their knowledge, and to work together to create a peaceful and harmonious society. We decided to join URI to address our issues together.

- *Please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is carrying out this year?*

We are promoting interfaith harmony among our youth through various sports activities, since there are very few development opportunities for youth in this area. Our sports teams in soccer, cricket and volleyball engage a large number of youth.

- *Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?*

Our major successes are between Tribals, Christians and Hindus. The region is a border between two other areas where Maoist violent activities are very high. Killing frequently takes place during Maoist insurgencies. Many who join the Maoists are from very poor families and have been neglected years and years, with no social binding, making it easy for them to be exploited.





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- *Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that would otherwise not interact or cooperate with each other?*

We invite our elders to provide treatment to the common people with local medicinal plants. We also organize sports and health camps where everyone can participate. We share stories of people who remain in the village and lived a peaceful life. We advocate for modern ways of farming and protest environmental damage caused by logging companies. We plant trees with high earning potential; everyone is interested to know how to make a living from local sources. That is the reason we have so many people getting involved.

- *Given the current context you described, what does your CC hope to achieve (goals)*

We are working to bring modern farming technology and we want to create opportunities for people to be employed locally, so that we can all jointly build a good society and clear our obstacles.

- *How do you see your CC's work improving cooperation among people of different traditions?*

When we organize sports and health camps, we see youth and elders from various religious groups participating and uniting. One year, we organized a blood donation camp where tribal people, Muslims, and Hindus all donated blood for those in need. This is true interfaith work. Step by step, people from one faith started to visit other people from another faith. We feel social visits set the right example of interfaith cooperation.

- *How is the work of your CC helping to prevent religiously inspired violence or transforming conflict? (NOTE: This question is relevant only in areas with violence/open conflict.)?*

There is a drop in the numbers of young people joining violent groups. You can study reports in the last several years and find that our social activities have lowered violence in the region. People are learning to stand up for each other, and this is preventing conflict.

- *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?*

As previously noted, Hindus are giving blood to people from different religions which was previously unheard of. Women are coming forward to help and have been instrumental in these efforts.





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- *Please share a specific short story about your CC's work that might teach a lesson about interfaith or inspire other CCs?*

We are engaging people in social activities and empowering locals to use knowledge already present in our communities. Our region is rural, we depend on crops and other sources that people donate to us to raise funds and conduct events.

- *How is your CC's work helping to achieve the mission of URI?*

We distribute URI materials in Bengali. We are also bridging religious and cultural differences because many times young people are ill informed about people from other religions, but once they interact with each other, the misconceptions become clear, and friendships are formed. You can now see many Hindu and Muslim friends in our area.

- *Within your CC, you have members from several different faiths and cultural traditions. How would you describe cooperation among your CC's members? What are the challenges?*

Yes, our members are great examples of interfaith cooperation, because we all do the work together. When we organize an event, we meet many times in each other's home. Our homes are open to give and receive hospitality. In these moments, our family members make tea and snacks for guests during the meeting. It is through these simple moments of people getting together that we promote and live in interfaith cooperation. Our challenges are found in providing more training to move forward in planning future sustainable projects.

- *How is being part of URI helping your CC to achieve its goals?*

Through URI, our members are inspired to know that we are connected with an international organization. In addition to using the name of URI in our publications; we get helpful references from our coordinator, and support connecting with resources and organizations.

- *Aside from funding, what are some specific ways URI can better support your CC in reaching its goals?*

By providing our members with opportunities for travel so they may learn more sustainable ways of working, and training. Of course we are also looking for funds to develop sustainable projects.

