



## COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE

### **Santhwanam Cancer Care and Palliative Centre**

*Faiths /Traditions Represented:* Hindus, Christians and Dalits.

*Location of CC:* Lyppalloor, Kottarakkara in Kollam District.

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*Approved:* December 2012

*Key Areas of Focus:* Cancer Care, health care, environment, agriculture, fish, and farming.

### **Summary:**

*Santhwanam Cancer Care and Palliative Centre CC is located in Kottarakkara in Kollam District, Kerala, India. The CC is primarily dedicated to ensuring the enhancement of services to people with cancer and their families through education, advocacy, health care programs, and interfaith understanding. Santhwanam Cancer Care and Palliative Centre CC recognizes that society can only achieve peace when all communities co-exist in a peaceful atmosphere. They provide a space for interfaith understanding to bring peace among different cultural, class, and religious groups.*



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

Our CC functions in the Eastern part of Kottarakara where there are an equal number of Christians and Hindus. The Muslim population is limited, but we also have a large number of Dalits in this region. The region is primarily made up of farmers and business people. There are also many poor people who work as casual laborers and cashew factory workers.

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

Peace-building is very essential to keep society on track, even in the face of political and religious problems. People of different communities live in segregated compartments, usually in fear of the other. Political manipulation will destroy the social fabric, if people are not careful. In order to build peace, people will have to understand their neighbors and their beliefs and customs. We are doing our best in promoting interfaith understanding and peace.

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

Our main thrust is on cancer care and palliative programs. We mobilize funds to help poor and needy persons. We have purchased an ambulance to provide services to the poor. We receive many applications every year but our resources are limited. We promote agriculture, farming, fish farming, bee-keeping, medical camps, and health care programs. We also organize interfaith seminars and other study programs related to health care.

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

Our work is mainly among Hindus, Christians and Dalits. Our society can be peaceful only when all these communities co-exist in a peaceful atmosphere. Interfaith understanding is very essential to maintain the calm and serenity of our society.

**5. *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.***

Our strategy is to help all patients (especially cancer patients) irrespective of their religion and caste. We reach out to all sections of society through our health care programs and training programs for farmers, women and other laborers. We also support the Kudumbasree project, which brings in women of all communities together for family welfare programs.



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

Our aim is providing relief to the suffering community at large. Ever since our inception, we have been able to provide assistance to more than 120 patients who were suffering with cancer and other acute diseases. We mobilize support of so many well-wishers who are willing to help in this process. As URI we want to set an example of a compassionate community that cares for the well being of our neighbors, irrespective of their religious or other differences.

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

We are able to muster the support of all communities for our activities. Cooperation among them has improved a lot because of our untiring efforts.

**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?**

We find a lot of people coming forward to support to us in our helpful projects. 'Santhwanam' means relief and we have been able to bring solace to a large number of people who have been ailing for so long. People forget their communal differences when we approach them seeking support for our projects. More and more people come forward with a helping hand for URI activities.

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

Mr. Muraleedharan was a casual a labourer of the Electricity Department. He fell down from the electric post while working with the electric lines. He was paralyzed and in bed for several years. He did not get any support or insurance coverage from the Electricity Board, as he was only a casual laborer. Our CC supported him in several ways by offering water, a bed, wheel chair, etc. Assistance was also made available for his family.

We come across several people suffering like this. The pity is that we cannot help all those who approach us for assistance. We often wonder about the ways and means to mobilize maximum support of the people to bring comfort to as many patients as possible.

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

All that we do is in line with the URI Principles. That is the reason why we opted to become a CC. We practice healing, which is very central to the URI philosophy.



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***11. 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?***

Our main challenge is to reach out to the Dalit Community, who are generally timid and fearful. Sometimes, they react in unexpected ways. Otherwise, our relationship is fine and smooth overall.

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

We learn a lot when we hear to the reports of CCs during Zonal and National assemblies. "Interfaith Link" also provides our CC with inspiring stories. We are especially challenged by the numerous activities of the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka.

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

We look forward to the Ecological training program scheduled to be held in March in San Francisco. We hope our representative can attend.