

# uri : AN INTRODUCTION

[www.URI.org](http://www.URI.org)

**URI** stands for **United Religions Initiative**.

We are a bridge-building organization that respects the differences among all beliefs and traditions.

URI is a network of grassroots groups working to improve their communities around the world.

By "religions," we refer to religious beliefs, spiritual expressions, as well as Indigenous and cultural traditions.

Our network is an interconnected system of ordinary people coming together to do extraordinary things.

We work in more than 100 countries, including places like Nigeria, Afghanistan, the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

Our groups are called **Cooperation Circles**.

URI has more than 900 Cooperation Circles; some have 7 members, while our largest has 200,000 members. The important element is that at least 3 different traditions are represented in each one.

Cooperation Circles use **interfaith** collaboration to tackle **critical action areas**.

Interfaith describes people of different religions, traditions and cultures working together, while staying true to their own practices.

These action areas include human rights, environmental issues, gender equality, youth leadership and conflict transformation.

Cooperation Circles are supported by **Regional Support Offices** and a **Global Support Office** in San Francisco, USA.

We have 21 regional offices that coordinate trainings, provide networking opportunities and amplify the voices of our Cooperation Circles.

82% of our budget goes to Program, versus Operations.

# RIPPLES OF HOPE

## CASE STUDY: NORTH AMERICA (USA and CANADA)

In many communities, a growing climate of intolerance and fear drives neighbors away from each other. But, working in over 75 communities across North America, URI Cooperation Circles are bringing together people from across traditions to create social change. URI helps them meet these and other challenges by supporting and empowering communities of peace, justice and healing, and helping to build a greater collective impact.



URI staff, volunteers and members conduct workshops on intergenerational peacebuilding to support grassroots activists and increase their local impact.

URI helps facilitate conversations and host capacity-building trainings to support people of different traditions, cultures and ages work side by side for the benefit their communities.

URI funds regional offices, providing staff to support Cooperation Circles at the local level.



Sari Heidenreich (center), Regional Coordinator for URI in North America, visits one of the roughly 75 Cooperation Circles in the US and Canada to deliver URI materials and support the connection of local programs to the global community.



When Chief Arvol Looking Horse called for interfaith leaders to come to Standing Rock, URI produced a video to accompany his invitation and shared it as part of our #TangibleHope campaign. The video reached hundreds of thousands through social media and the URI global network. As a result, URI was able to deliver 1,000 prayers from people in 56 countries to the water protectors.

URI amplifies our Cooperation Circles' voices, allowing them to reach an international audience through our traditional, online and social media channels.

URI hosts regional events and assemblies where groups working toward shared goals can help each other and combine efforts.



In 2017, URI will host two zonal gatherings - one in Florida and one in British Columbia - to create networking and sharing opportunities for URI peacebuilders working in common geographic areas. In 2018, we will host a Regional Assembly in Washington, DC for all URI members from the US and Canada.