

The Community Voice



UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE
GREAT LAKES

JAN-MAR 2019

Message from the Africa - Great Lakes Office

Dear our beloved CC members, we start 2019 with your amazing stories of empowerment, building bridges, social justice and peace building. I therefore take this opportunity to thank you all for all the great work that you continue to do in order to build better communities. The staff team, Trustees and I and all our friends globally in the URI network are always humbled by your commitment to peace and social justices. It is those small process that you do in your communities that build a global peaceful and just world. **April 5 is the Golden Rule day** , lets do something that we wish to be done for us as our religious, spiritual and indigenous traditions teach us. This can be between two people or more. Just one small social action in remembrance of this day is enough.

We always love to hear your stories and share them beyond our regional settings both electronically and verbally when we get an opportunity. So thank you to those who shared during this quarter and we do look forward to hearing more from you and the others . In Peace and appreciation, **Despina Namwembe - Regional Coordinator.**

The World Interfaith Harmony Week Celebrations

This year six of our CCs joined the rest of the world in celebration of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. We had from DRC: the **Central Africa Conflict Prevention Association CC (CACOPA)** holding an anti-Ebola campaign, **Fire Women Association CC** did a distribution of basic commodities to rural women and the Elderly in Kalehe and Mushenyi, and cocktail with Religious leaders. From Burundi, we had the **Interfaith Youth for Change CC** who engaged university students on religious and ethnic tolerance. In Uganda **Faiths Together Uganda CC** reached out to its school clubs on realizing sustainable development through interfaith harmony. Efforts like these remind us of our calling to touch lives through any means possible by using our diverse faiths as the driver.



IDEA Rwanda CC Youth in an Environmental Awareness training

Burundi Youth for Religious Tolerance



The Interfaith Youth for Change CC have programs that are dedicated to enhance social cohesion and avoiding discrimination based on religion, ethnicity or social status. Recognizing the important role played by young people in making a positive change in the community, Interfaith Youth for Change CC found it strategic to get students involved in their programs to help in achieving their goal of creating the culture of peace, uniting people regardless of their faiths.

It is for this reason that on 14th February, a new English club was launched at **Bujumbura International University (BIU)**. A discussion was therefore held about conflict resolution and how to tolerate religion and ethnicity related differences as seen from the photos taken during the moments of the event. **Story by Abel Mpawenimana**

The Interfaith Youth for Change CC in Burundi awakening university students to religious tolerance



CACOPA CC's Efforts on Ebola Prevention in DRC

The **Central Africa Conflict Prevention Association CC (CACOPA)** carried on with their anti-Ebola campaign during the World interfaith harmony week under the theme: **'Talk for Ebola prevention and blood pressure screening'**. The city of Goma was preferred for the event as the endemic is just 350 km away from Beni; the epicenter of the endemic. The event was blended with a sensitization talk about the endemic as well as a blood pressure harmony test. The talk emphasized the 'hygienic and social behavior issues', the latter stressing the way in which people should socialize with victims to become more vigilant in reporting any suspect cases for proper management. CACOPA CC demonstrates a spirit of selflessness and the sacrifice they take in engaging a risky venture such as this one where only professional health workers would be expected to engage.

Contribution by NIXON KASIMU; CACOPA's National Coordinator



Health officers undertaking medical tests during the camp

A Demonstration of Interfaith Harmony by RCV CC

The Restoring Community Vision International, a new CC based in Bugiri district-Uganda, during this year's World Interfaith Harmony Week celebrations brought together clusters of Christians and believers from the catholic, protestant and advents, orthodox among others to deliberate, debate and appreciate each other's faith under the theme "**peace and development will never be sustained unless there is harmony amongst the different religions and spiritual expressions**". They flagged off the day with a cleaning exercise of prayer centres for both Christians and Muslims, namely, St. Mary's church of Uganda and AL-JAMA Mosque respectively. The dialogue that ensued after highlighted the need for peaceful co-existence and appreciation between the many religious beliefs and indigenous traditions in Bugiri District. Being, the first ever interfaith gathering in the history of Bugiri district since its cessation from Iganga district in 1997, a symbol of unity and peace was witnessed and appreciated by all that participated and observed the procession. **Please follow this link for the events video** <https://youtu.be/p7O2iT-EfY>. **Story by Waiswa Dan-Co-Founder RCV**



Restoring Community Vision CC's WIHW activities at a glance



Making Sense of SDGs and Interfaith Harmony to Learners

The World Interfaith Harmony Week extends the Two Commandments; 'Love of the Good, and Love of the Neighbour'. This call includes all people of goodwill. It includes those of other faiths, and those with no faith.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week provides a platform—one week in a year—when all interfaith groups and other groups of goodwill can show the world what a powerful movement they are. The thousands of events organized by these groups often go unnoticed not only by the general public, but also by other groups themselves. **In commemoration of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, Faiths Together Uganda CC in Collaboration with TEENS Uganda (Kampala) conducted a school debate to bring light to the students on the importance of observing such days in reflection of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** Students develop skills in research, critical thinking, organization, persuasion and communication. A motion was created based on the Theme; **Sustainable Development through Interfaith Harmony.** Their ideas on the theme revealed that the motion promotes democratic practices, opportunities for skills development and connection amongst citizens. That this form of harmony generates opportunities for job creation religious interconnections, and poverty eradication and peace. **Story by Buyondo Michael- Founder FTU CC**



Learners during the Faith Together Uganda CC's WIHW celebrations

Faiths Together Uganda In Partnership with United Religions initiative Celebrates United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week (UN-WIHW) 2019

Theme: Sustainable Development Through Interfaith Harmony

Faiths Together



FAITH TOGETHER INTERFAITH SCHOOL CLUBS



PEACE DRUMS



Learners debating on the Theme



Infinix smart 2

Debates of this kind empower students with tangible benefits while in school – confidence in speaking situations, spontaneity in interviews, improved writing in other courses, diverse perspectives. Continuous dialogue and debates in all forms are therefore important for information dissemination purposes especially among young people's spaces for interfaith understanding and harmony. **By Michael Buyondo-founder-Faith Together Uganda CC.**

AFFCAD's Business for Peace Forum

It was a business Forum for Peace at the **Action for Fundamental Change and Development (AFFCAD) CC** held on 28th December, 2018. The event was organized as an effort to mitigate the possible grievances of slum dwellers as potential triggers to Violent Extremism. It attracted more than 500 youth from five slums in Kampala, including, Bwaise, Katanga, Kalerwe, Kabalagala and Kisenyi. The event showcased how promoting youth employment opportunities can help prevent their involvement in conflict of marginalized communities in urban slums.

Special about this event was the blend of various activities, with the most outstanding one being **the Business pitch competitions and awards** which attracted a total of 150 competitors (all AFFCAD alumni graduates from its Business and Vocational institutes). The competitors presented their business plans before a panel of judges and the winners each of them walked away with a cash prize and other participants taking with them certificates of recognition for their exceptional business ideas. Such impactful initiatives can go along way in creating lasting peace as was the case for AFFCAD in contributing to Violent free slum communities. The event was all thanks to AFFCAD in partnership with URI, Trocaire, and ARIGATOU International. **Story shared on behalf of AFFCAD by Agnes Dhatemwa, Program.**



AFFCAD CC's model of youth empowerment is an exceptional learning model for communities living in slums

The Launching Leaders Program Bearing Fruit within the Great Lakes

In their quest to triggering mindset change among young people, the alumni of the YLP, have geared efforts to creating a Youth leadership responsive strategy to shape both mind-set and nurture consistent practice of Core values among the young people across the URI Great Lakes region. The program is an inspirational life changing experience that has equipped young people with life skills and other meaningful service to elevate life situation of people in their immediate communities. Exceptionally, the launching leaders foundation course has successfully enabled participants mostly the youth to gain self-awareness along other aspects of adopting personal Vision for their life, internalizing applicable core values and living in a very personalized context on a daily basis. Maurice Simiyu –a pioneer LL course participant living in Uganda, proudly shares that **“Launching leaders has enabled me appreciate and develop a personal value system that helps me consistently evaluate multiple opinions and options while making my daily choices and key life decisions”**. Additionally, Susan highlights that **“the LL helped me learn how to manage my time profitably that has over the time led me into a sense of self-worth, self-contribution with value. More stories shall follow suit in our next editions. Story contributed by By Nganda Kizito – INTERDIP CC**



Young Leaders Program being actualized by one of the Ambassadors in Uganda

Amplifying the Cause for Women Centered Development

WOMEN OF PEACE and ADVOCACY IN BURUND CC

joined the International Women's Day Celebrations under the theme "**Peace consolidation: women self centered development**", in an effort to amplify how peace consolidation can trigger development. Women appreciated that, living together, holding each other regardless of their differences or backgrounds contributes to women self-centered development. Therefore to sustain this noble cause, women's groups were established and will be operating based on accepted team goals. Some will run business such as selling vegetables; some will be farming and others. It has been proved that women's role does not only entail giving life, it goes beyond that. Coming together as gifted and talented women in different ways does finally strengthen them and will consequently awaken them for the consolidation of peace which brings to development and its sustainability. **Story by Denise BANTEGEYEKO, Burundi Women for Peace and Advocacy.**



Working in community with others- women came together to reach out to each other.

IDEA Rwanda CC Empowering villages to plant “Domestic Edible Fruits”

Gathered under the theme: “Improving village communities’ livelihoods and environmental health through Domestic Edible Fruits”, **Initiative for Development and Environmental Awareness in Rwanda CC** (IDEA Rwanda) trained 30 youth coordinators from the cells and villages of Ntarama Sector on Domestic Edible Fruits Program in order to make them the principle actors who will help in the implementation of this project by acting a Agents of Change in their communities. Their strategy for targeting youth is bed rocked on the escalating numbers of young people feeling helpless, and sometimes restless as they are faced with global facts and figures of increased level of unemployment and poverty that is strongly linked to current global ecological crisis. IDEA-Rwanda CC’s initiative is therefore is making an attempt to change people’s way of life by being more mindful of the harsh human activities that affect the health of world. When food, water and air are contaminated, they can make us sick. If we are not careful about how we use the air, water, and land, we can harm ourselves. By protecting our environment, we protect our health. Thus, when households plant trees in their surroundings, which must be fruit-bearing types, they will serve multiple of purposes. Trees in the vicinity will provide shade, protect the abode against strong winds, provide fresh fruit to the community and lastly absorb the carbon dioxide and emit oxygen through photosynthesis. **Story contributed by Shumbusho Patience, The Chairman of IDEA Rwanda CC.**



IDEA Rwanda CC Youth in an Environmental Awareness training

IDEA Rwanda CC Empowering Women with Life Skills

We bring you more initiatives from **Initiative for Development and environmental Awareness in Rwanda CC (IDEA-Rwanda)**, in partner-ship with **Muhisimbi Voice of Youth in Conservation** during the International Women Day celebrations, the CC also supported 90 hundred single mothers in Kinigi sector Musanze District. These mothers live around Volcanoes National park and were always struggling with life on how they could raise their children in that situation. We had to think of activities which can income to them so that the could raise their children. It is for that reason that **Margot from remembering Great Ape** supported the activities of **Muhisimbi** and **IDEA-Rwanda** by providing 30 sewing machine which we will use it to teach those single mother to sew and after learning to sew they will build Sewing cooperative so that **IDEA-Rwanda** will help them to sell their product at international level. **Story contributed by Shumbusho Patience, The Chairman of IDEA Rwanda CC.**



IDEA Rwanda Women empowerment project



Men standing with Women to own Property



Two URI CCs, Latter Glory of Religions in Busoga and Friend of Community Health moving on with their interfaith approach to bringing women to the family property allocation table



Women's Day Celebrations in Bukavu- DRC



Enjoy the Fire Women Association way of bringing women together to honour and celebrate their day. Dances and festivities were witnessed in honour of women. Pictures by Safari Buhendwa

