

The Community Voice



UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE
GREAT LAKES

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REC CC's Contribution in the Fight Against Covid 19



Restoring and Empowering Communities (REC) CC is among the CCs which made some commendable contribution in the addressing the impact of Covid 19 in Uganda through some innovations. They undertook an exercise of supplying free reading books to children to help them get occupied as they await the re-opening of schools next year. They also worked with the local government and helped in the distribution of government masks in their neighborhood as a way of ensuring the safety of the people as they go about their daily activities. **Story shared by Nageeba Hassan –the Executive Director, REC**

REC CC Celebrated the Peace Day by Planting Fruit Trees



On the International Day of Peace (21st September), Restoring and Empowering Communities (REC) CC mobilized youth to plant fruit trees in their homes. Over 35 trees were planted and this is to ensure families enrich their diets with nutritious fruits to boost their immunity. We commend our sister Nageeba Hassan Executive Director- REC for these unique ways of working with young people and other sections of society.

Peace and Action Worldwide

The period of the Covid 19 lockdown saw various shifts in people's way of lives, especially in the area of livelihoods. Many families in the urban areas faced food shortages due to limited farming and these had to rely on food supply from the rural areas. The Peace and Action Worldwide CC has stepped up its efforts to educate farmers in their target constituency about environmentally friendly farming methods. The CC is also at the same time working with leaders and communities to mitigate the risk of the recruitment into violent extremism activity in communities that face difficulties in fending for themselves especially during the time of the Covid 19 pandemic. **Contribution made by Hakim Kibedi-PAW CC**



In pictures, PAW's farming program (Top) and some of the stakeholders that are supported by PAW to address violent Extremism in Eastern Uganda (Bottom)

Shaping Peace Together: Undugu Family of Hope's Peace Day Celebrations



Undugu Family of Hope in partnership with organizations in their neighborhood organized a robust celebration of the International Day of Peace. This was clearly defined by their theme, **“Shaping Peace Together”** as they passed on a message of hope, compassion and kindness in the face of the Covid 19 pandemic. The rallying of the entire community for peace was intended to have a joint effort which will happen in a continuous manner especailiyas Kenya is gearing for the general elections come 2022. In his words Mr. Edwin Nzomo reflected about this cause, *“ we wanted to make it very effective and as a way of pulling resources together we invited all local organizations working on peace to join us and everyone is playing a role to ensure its success. The event has a number of build up activities including painting peace messages in the community, sharing a meal together, among others. The partners were all appreciated for the cause as seen from the cake donned with partners’ logos . **Our special salutation goes to Edwin Nzomo and team for the charismatic leadership.**”*

Shaping Peace Together: Undugu Family of Hope's Peace Day Celebrations



The URI Africa Trustee, Ms. Wambui Ngige (2nd from right) standing next to Mr. Edwin Nzomo Founder of Undugu Family of Hope during the Peace Day Celebrations in Kibera-Kenya

IDEA Rwanda's Efforts in combating Covid 19

Initiative for Development and Environment Awareness.(IDEA-Rwanda), got a government contract to make face masks to help in combating the Covid 19 pandemic and has since been working with women to manufacture these. This is coupled with other initiatives like the hand washing equipment for keeping proper hygiene standards. IDEA Rwanda's partners: Muhisimbi, Governance Camp and Eco-Arts and URI are the force behind all these life changing initiatives. **Shared by Sumbusho Patience.**



IDEA Rwanda Connecting Communities to Nature

Initiative for Development and Environment Awareness.(IDEA-Rwanda), has also for the past two years worked with communities in their neighborhood, especially working with children to make them appreciate conserving nature at a tender age.



At the extreme left and right, a sewing workshop under construction where teenage mothers will exhibit their work



Women's rights still violated by certain African customs-CACOPA

CACOPA organized a training session in Preventing the COVID 19 in the city of Goma with the theme; 'Role of parents in the prevention of COVID 19 in households in Goma.' The aim was to train parents on practical prevention methods and make them aware of the role they must play in their homes concerning the COVID 19 during the lockdown period. During the simulation session, Mr Tamba and Mrs Lily should play the scenario of husband and wife. Then changing each others role. When coming to Mr Tamba , he objected to playing the part of the woman. For him, the woman is an inferior; He can never play the role.

However, Mr. Tamba was supported by a few male participants who find the attitude responsible. When we tried to deep and understand the behavior, we realize that was the way Mr. Tamba is treating his wife. For him, the woman must be submissive toward her husband. Coming to parity issue, he replied that, parity is a white culture that can never coexist with African values. Although, the lesson to be learned is that Mr Tamba's conception is still supported by many cultures in the African continent. So, it's our duty to advocate for parity and dissuade those customs which still degrade women. **Story compiled by Nixon KASIMU / CACOPA - CC/ Goma /RDC**

Golden Women Vision in Uganda's efforts in Combating Covid 19

The Covid 19 pandemic presented challenges to everyone and as it continues to bite, individuals and organizations have come up with a number of initiatives to combat its effects on humanity. The Golden Women Vision in Uganda initiated a COVID-19 Emergency Response support in which Golden Women Vision in Uganda, encouraged everybody to always have a risk management plan in order to address future emergencies and also to empower the vulnerable persons to be creative and innovative in designing strategies to address any emergencies. Mobilization and sensitization of the vulnerable women and children on COVID-19 information and management; community members (women and children) are accessing COVID-19 information through scientific means like phone calls, online support, peer to peer support, music, matter approaches and public mega phone information dissemination etc. Other initiatives included:

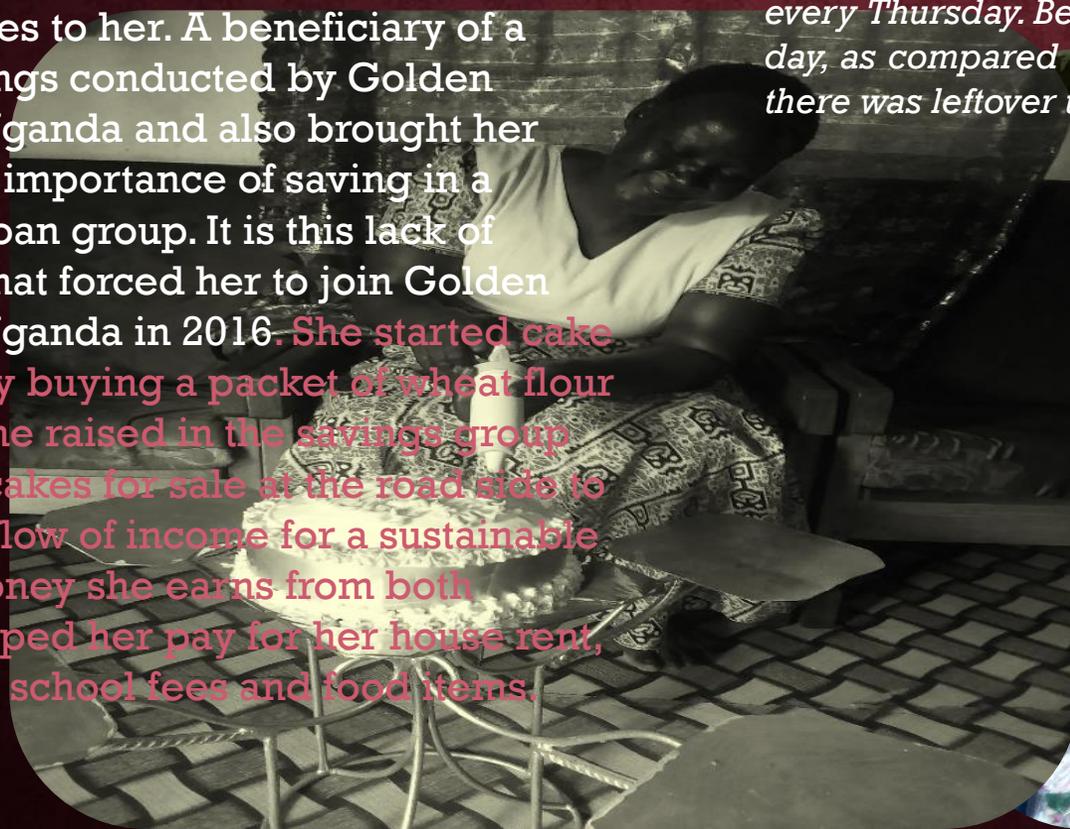
- Provision of relief supports for example food items; 158 vulnerable women and children received food aids (beans – 790 kilograms and maize flour/Posho – 1580 kilograms).
- Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) like Mask,
- Provision of Protective Materials like Liquid soap and hand washing water containers; 750 liters of liquid soap provided to 250 people
- The 158 most vulnerable people households received the support services from GWVU and contributed to improved quality lives and access to COVID-19 services like prevention, control.



War survivor women measuring beans for distributing to vulnerable women and children. Squatting on the right top picture is Executive Director Golden Women Vision in Uganda with the women

Success story by a war survivors from Golden women vision in Uganda

Acan Christine a widow, a war survivor and is a 51 year old mother of 6 living with HIV. She lacks startup capital for the small business, lacks knowledge and practical skills on anything which could bring incomes to her. A beneficiary of a cake baking trainings conducted by Golden Women Vision in Uganda and also brought her information on the importance of saving in a Village Saving & Loan group. It is this lack of financial support that forced her to join Golden Women Vision in Uganda in 2016. She started cake baking business by buying a packet of wheat flour from the savings she raised in the savings group and also fries pancakes for sale at the road side to maintain a steady flow of income for a sustainable living. The little money she earns from both businesses has helped her pay for her house rent, medical expenses, school fees and food items.



“As narrated by Christine, “I have been so successful in life after attending skill building trainings from Golden Women Vision in Uganda. Without such support especially the skill building trainings on cake baking and saving, it would not have been possible to pay for house rent, medical expenses and school fees for my daughter. I got the courage with the skills, knowledge acquired and support received from Golden Women Vision in Uganda and the Village saving & Loan group. I began as a pancake seller at roadside but now I bake different types of cakes, receive special orders for cake e.g. for wedding, birthday, graduations etc., and earning some money. Because of the small cake baking business that am engaged in, I have been able to;-Pay school fee for my daughter up to advanced level of education, Able to pay for my medical user fees and other medical expenses Joined Village saving and Loan Association group with the members of Golden Women Vision in Uganda and saving some small amount of money (5,000=) every Thursday. Besides, living a life of urban/slum dwellers that eat three times in a day, as compared to those days that we used to eat once a day sometimes twice if there was leftover the previous day but now things have changed”.



Karambi CC Demystifying Disability with Empowerment Opportunities

Karambi Group of People with Disabilities (KAGPWD) empowers persons with disabilities, their families and communities to improve their quality of life. Its a group whose community action geared towards realizing Sustainable Development **Goal 8** which is about Inclusive, Sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all including people with disabilities. **Karammbi has made enormous achievements in the past one year as highlighted below and is still counting:**

- **Inclusive Education:** 46 caretakers, teachers and school management committees were trained on the rights to education for children with disabilities. We constructed ramps at class entrances at 4 primary schools, modified two stance latrines at 4 primary schools.
- **Rehabilitation:** Supported 23 adults with mobility devices, 5 received tricycles, 1 received wheelchair and 17 received crutches. Additionally, 1 child was referred to <https://corsuhospital.org/> for correction and she was able to access the service.
- **Clean Water:** Constructed two community boreholes in Kisolholho Parish in Karambi Sub-County. The boreholes are providing access to safe and clean water to over 150 households and one primary school. The boreholes also provide water for garden irrigation.



The school children with veg's are members of the permaculture clubs that were formed and trained in modern agriculture in Schools, here they were showing their harvest.

Karambi CC Demystifying Disability with Empowerment Opportunities

- **Vocational Training:** 60 youth and women received a six months education and training in Vocational Skills. 40 were trained in tailoring and Garment cutting, 7 in Welding & Metal Fabrication, 3 in Computer Application and 10 in Hand Craft. All the trainees are now self-employed and are earning income.
- **Business Training:** 45 women and girls with disabilities and those indirectly affected by disability were trained in business development using the Street Business School Model. 88% were able to graduate and have started operating businesses.
- **Permaculture:** We partnered with 8 schools and 4 community based groups where we empowered 2142 young adults and 190 adults with permaculture ethics, principles and vegetable gardening. Installed seven min irrigation systems in Schools and 30 families received water tanks.



Top: Joseline, a single woman with disability, is one of Karambi CC's basket weaving project beneficiary using the skill to earn living comfortably. **Below:** a demonstration of how inclusive education looks, all children need to be in the same class regardless of their disability

RUDEMI CC Promoting Peace in Vihiga

In Vihiga Rural Development Ministries (RUDEMI) CC key stakeholders met on the 20th of September, and for International Peace Day, held a meeting to consult on their plans on how to promote the peace building process in the larger Vihiga area. They consulted on how to have a tree planting exercise that will be ongoing within their area of operation from Mbale to Kisumu. The CC also plans to engage teenage girls in activities that keep them involved and busy. This is in light of the recent news of increasing pregnancies among teenage girls. They also plan to have an engagement with a local community Library (SAIDE Library) to promote an exchange of knowledge in matters Interfaith among the young and the old. The religious leaders present pledged to donate literacy materials relevant to the different religious groups present. They also have plans to promote economic empowerment for widows by buying chicks and helping them rear chickens for eggs and meat.



Edward Amaya-URI Kenya Contact person (3rd from left in bottom picture) during his maiden appreciative visits to our members in RUDEMI CC



Promoting environmental consciousness during the Covid 19 Pandemic

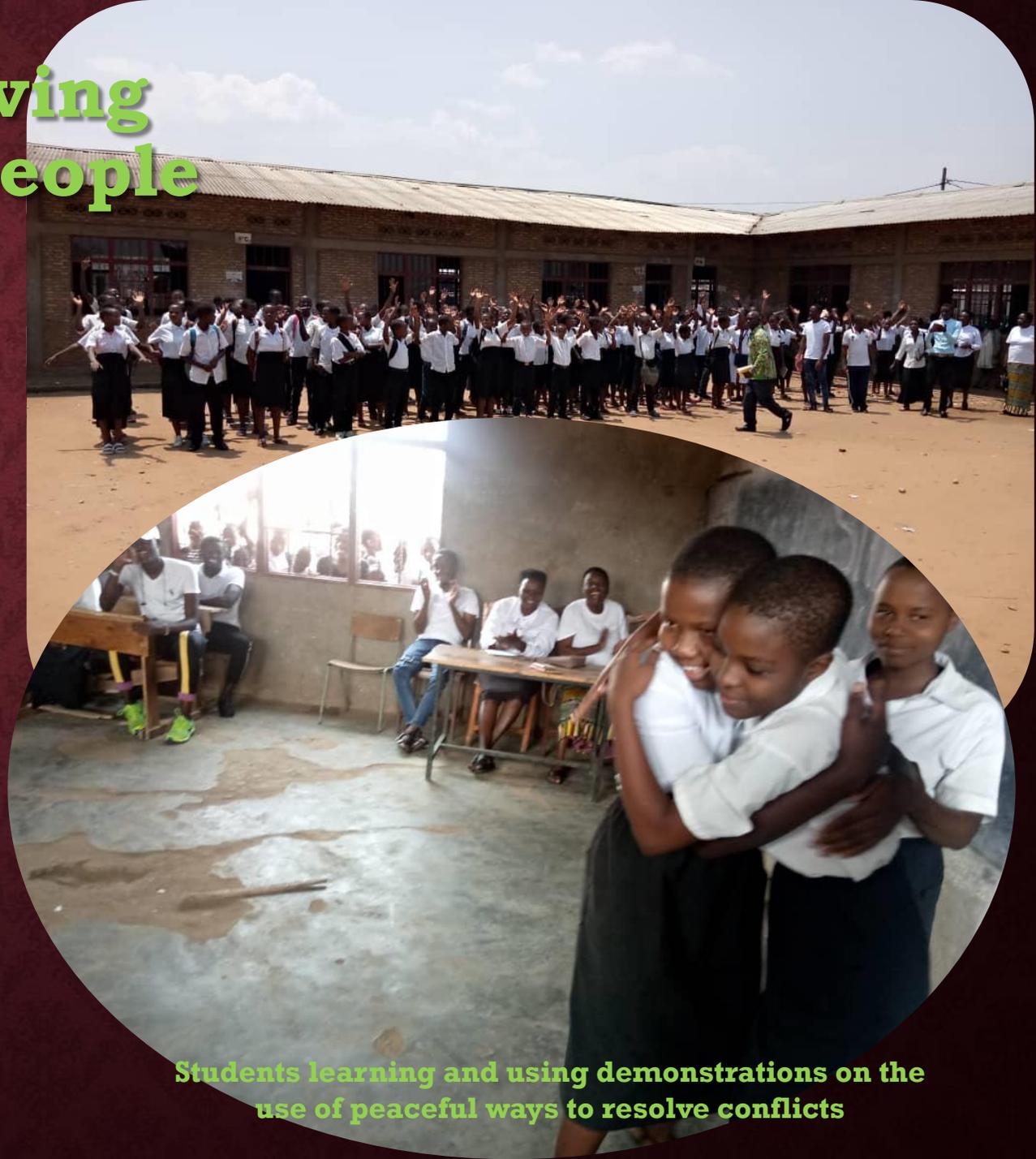
Mother Earth Network (M.E.N) is a Franciscan organization. Works closely with the Franciscan Network as well as with the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. The outbreak of covid 19 pandemic has seen a significant transition in how this are done even in the environmental campaigns. As part of their environmental Action plans, they initiated a Birthday Tree-planting Campaign as from June 2018. Through the campaign, they promote tree planting as an alternative way for young people to celebrate their birthdays. The campaign is dubbed “Planting trees, and Cutting cake as a new tradition.”

They also encourage parents to offer trees as birthday gifts through this campaigns. On April 22nd when the world commemorated Earth Day M.E.N. held a virtual concert with the Franciscan youth band (Waka Waka Band) to launch a song to create awareness on Covid-19 titled “Anti-Covid-19.”

In May, the CC joined the “Laudato si” (Praise be to you) campaign set in motion by Pope Francis through his book around the theme “On Care for our Common Home” to champion the cause of justice – Environmental and Social. In this pursuit, between May 16th and 24th they joined the rest of the Faithful in commemorating the Laudato si Week over Zoom to create awareness

Peaceful ways of resolving conflict among young people

The Burundi based Interfaith Youth for Change CC has during this year's Peace day celebration embarked on a campaign to raise awareness among young people on how to use peaceful ways of resolving conflicts among peers and their families. This was done through the peace clubs in schools where members demonstrated various ways in which peace can be promoted through drama, songs games and sketches. Such innovating ways are aimed at using a language that young people can understand and be able to sustain in the different spaces both at individual and community level. **Shared by Abel Mpawenimana-Interfaith Youth for Change-Burundi**



Students learning and using demonstrations on the use of peaceful ways to resolve conflicts

Welcoming our Newest Member to the Network

Morogoro Saving the Poor Organization - MOSAPORG (Morogoro, Tanzania) is our very first member in Tanzania to join the URI-Great Lakes Network. MOSAPORG supports vulnerable groups Orphans on the areas of Education, Health, Psychosocial Support, Child Protection, Economic Empowerment, Food and Nutrition and Peace Building. The group brings together Christians of different denominations and Muslims to address these social issues. One major highlight of their work is that , before the group started working with Local Government Authorities from the Council level to Ward Levels in supporting the Vulnerable Groups; the Local Government Authorities did not plan and allocate a budget for supporting the vulnerable groups. But after working with MOSAPORG, the local government authorities now plan and allocate a budget for supporting vulnerable Groups on areas of Education, Health and Shelter. For example in the year 2019, Morogoro District was allocated Tsh.20 Millions and Kilwa Districts Tsh.15 Millions respectively for supporting Vulnerable Children on Health Support.

The group has also been active in the fight against the effects of Covid 19 pandemic. They have been instrumental in finding sustainable peace between farmers and pastoralists in Kilosa District, who conflicted over the destruction of crops by the cattle which resulted in the death of 10 people from both sides. This prompted the intervention of the government with support from MOSAPORG to find peaceful solutions to the problem and the two communities were helped to form Community peace Committee to ensure peaceful co-existence between the pastoralists and farmers. This and so much more talks about their current efforts in combating the effects of Covid 19. **Story shared by Dr.Said Simon-Program Director-MOSAPORG-Tanzania.**



MOSAPORG Program Director, Dr. Said Simon (Right) on a Peace Keeping Discussion on Radio Imaan Fm Morogoro, Tanzania

Welcoming our New Kenya Contact

Edward is a Kenyan Bahá'í. A lover of the creative and performing arts. He is very passionate about the cause of unity and justice and loves to mobilize people around these causes.

“I bring all this love and passion as well as the skills in the above areas to the service I am embarking on together with all the members of the URI.”

Pleasure to be serving with all of the team members of the URI Great Lakes region and the global office teams too.

Shared by Edward Amaya-URI-Kenya Contact Person.

