Message from the President's Desk

“It was the worst of times, it was the best of times” (Paraphrased) Needless to say that we all are suffering from the effects of this Pandemic. Our Personal and social structures have been overturned. The very fabric of our daily lives, our surroundings, our social norms and values has been torn apart. We have experienced radical changes; we have and still now are witness to the worst possible situations that we will ever experience in our lifetime. Amidst the worst possible scenario we have witnessed LOVE, FAITH and HOPE in action. We have bonded together as never before. We have held hands together and built bridges in an impossible situation against all odds. The worst possible times have brought out the best traits in our life. In spite of social distancing, our Cooperation Circles (CC's) observed the “World Interfaith Harmony Week” (1st to 7th February), many CC’s across Jharkhand, Bengal and Nepal celebrated International Women’s Day (8th March). Saplings were planted in jubilation of the World Environment Day (5th June), ofcourse every day in the URI is environment Day, some CCs are very active in saving forests and hundred year old trees. Many of our CCs are distributing sanitization kits, arranging oxygen cylinders food baskets and also cooked food. We unitedly started a program of grocery basket distribution, throughout EIBN. The term “Pearl’s of Compassion” was coined by me which has received tremendous response. We have been able to cross barriers of Religion, Caste, Color, Creed and Affiliation. We are still continuing the program. On the 9th of August we are going to celebrate the “International day of the world’s indigenous people” which we celebrate every year at the foothills of Susunia (Damin-i-koh) and prior to that event, we will also be observing Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day. These worst of times have brought out the best in us and we have “witnessed LOVE, FAITH and HOPE in action”, I thank all of our Staff and CC members across Eastern India, Bangladesh and Nepal for their resilience, patience and goodwill in overcoming all odds to bring about a healing, harmonious and just world. I thank our Regional Coordinator Sri Biswadeb Chakraborty for his leadership. May Peace Prevail on Earth.

SHANTI !!!
Looking Back at 2020

Tribal Leader - Subhash Tudu praying for World Peace in Alchiki (A santhali language)

URI EIBN celebrated World Indigenous Day 2020, online because of Covid-19. And also commemorated Nagasaki Day.

The leadership training program aimed to empower our Regional Leaders, so they can help our local groups (CCs) to mobilize, to deal with complex situation and to learn to facilitate small group meetings. They learned to create reports and help RC to strengthen regional work plan.

They would learn to work in collective manners of visioning, Strategic Planning, evaluation of techniques. They would learn to communicate with conclusions and understand the benefits of partnerships.

The training was conducted by Global staffs, National Staffs and well known people coming from relevant backgrounds. Alice Swett, Director of Global Programs conducted a session on Team Building, followed by reflection by Mr. Biswadeb Chakraborty RC of URI EIBN and National Coordinator. There were more sessions taken by other eminent URI officials.
Online Celebration featuring the success stories of our CCs. 35 participants including Bangladesh, Nepal took part and 3 stories were shared. 1st Story of Peace4Dalits CC in Nepal sharing how they members are working to end caste based discrimination, and creating opportunities for the children to access institutional education and how interfaith cooperation opening pathways of dialogues.

2nd Story was from Sarwa Dham Vichar Manch CC working to save the river, cleaning up rivers and running awareness campaign during the festivals, Md. Ainul Ansari presented a video on save the water.

3rd Story is from REO CC Bangladesh, how they have helped people during the lockdown to provide groceries and food material. Prof. Chandan Kumar Sarkar coordinator of the cc shared their district wise services in Bangladesh and extended reach out

Rural Development Society CC along with Chetana Charitable Trust celebrated interfaith harmony through women sports and cultural programs for 5 days held in chitka village of west Bengal, it is most interiors areas that merely get any opportunity of sports and cultural exchange in addition to challenges to access health services and safe drinking water, quality education etc.

Organized Drawing Competition among the school children on communal harmony. Distributed certificates and awards and gifts to all children.
Organizing women self help group, supporting CCs to provide skill building training as well working with local NGOs to create local market places to sell products made by these self-help groups in 3 different locations and each place having 150 to 200 members in each group. Nearly 600 women are involved. Working with other local organizations to create local opportunities for women to sell their handicrafts. Smile4Millions CC, Swapno Bastobe CC and Rural Development Society CC

Bokaro Peace Circle CC, a URI member group in Bokaro, Jharkhand, India, celebrated World Environment Day 2021 by planting and honoring trees.
PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Haat is a general term for a weekly market organized in a local neighbourhood. Finding a central area like on a playground where people from the area can sell their handmade products within their local reach, it is to help income generation of the people by creating a marketplace where buyers meet the sellers directly without paying any additional expense. Events were highly promoted in the local newspapers and engaging live music events to draw maximum crowd including engaging tribal and folk cultures. Started in the month of January with 25 stalls which increased to 35 stalls by the end of March 2021. Selling was recorded more than expectations.

Every Year we start around the Christmas to distribute blankets to the needy ones in partnering with various local organizations, we have distributed more than 300 blankets from December to January during the winter season, this action also bring like minded people and local organizations together.
**Covid-19 Activities**

**Distribution of Masks & Sanitizer**

URI EIBN distributed 100litres of Sanitizers and 2000 masks, to CCs and partner Organisations to distribute in the community. If any CC needs them, We still are distributing.

**Distribution in the District of Bankura**

Rural Development Society CC have distributed clothes and masks to the tribal community in the tribal village of Harekrishnapur in the district of Bankura, West Bengal.

**Food Basket Distribution at Goragacha**

Helping Hands CC working in an undocumented slum in Kolkata from many years, During lock down, members of the CC organized food distribution, and needed support from the region in transportation of the materials that they have collected form their donors.

RDS have adopted the village and won several awards for the best Niral (managed) Village.
Pearls of Compassion

The gift of giving and receiving across religions and cultural barriers led by the people themselves, would be pearls of compassion.

The rule was that each family receiving a Grocery Basket had to agree to deliver a Basket to another family from a different faith or caste. The Basket was not a donation, from those “with food” to those “without food” but it was an “earning.” Each person participated in giving and receiving. The intent was to use the terrible disruption of the pandemic to feed hungry people and to build a brotherhood and sisterhood where it didn’t exist before.

Rural Development Society CC, Helping Hands CC, Insaniyat CC, Ektaan CC, Interfaith Youth Council CC, Swapno Bastobe CC, Nayi Roshi CC, Sarwa Dharam Vichar Manch CC and Smile4Millions CC took part in this project.

Story that begins in Bankura District of West Bengal

Rural Development Society Cooperation Circle of Bankura coordinates the Grocery Basket delivery. Reverend Kalyan Kumar Kisku, a Christian Tribal leader and URI Global Council Trustee delivers a Grocery Basket to a Muslim family, Sheik Munna and his wife Sakina. Due to Covid lockdown Munna lost his job as a daily wage laborer. In addition, three in his family were very sick with Covid.
Bokaro Peace Circle CC

Bokaro Peace Circle is very active engaging youth in sports. They host a month long tournament every year, due to Covid situation, they had shortage of budget during the event, small financial support was given to buy some sports equipment. RC visited as Chief Guest of the final event.

Suchetana CC

Suchetana CC needed 100 tarpaulins to help flood victim in a village of their working area, but region could only provide 20 pieces to help members to stand for the families. Additional they were able to get 50 more tarpaulins from their known donors.

Sarwa Dharm Vichar Manch CC

Sarwa Dharma Vichar Manch CC work in addressing environmental degradation, in one of their save the river campaign, regional office contributed the transportation of the members in helping them to conduct public awareness program during a major festival.
Interfaith Youth Council CC

Interfaith Youth Council participated in a very debating stage and street play based on Hindu Muslim tension, showing how divisive forces work to separate in the name of religion. Best awareness activity. They needed financial assistance to cover local transportation and purchase some ornaments.

Peace4Dalits CC

Peace4Dalits foundation, a cooperation circle of URI in the Parsha District of Nepal, tirelessly working to promote enduring and interfaith cooperation to end caste based discrimination, providing education to the children and ensures women safety and social justice. With the help of URI East Regional team members of the cooperation Circle providing groceries to nearly 200 Dalit families in the area that are highly affected due to Lockdown situation.
"We unite to create a Community and also provide opportunities for the people locally and globally, to face challenges especially in trying times like now."

"We unite to heal and build bridges of our religious and cultural difference and creating global opportunity for participation by all people."

"We unite to Create Interfaith Community, safe places for conflict resolution, protect Environment, healing, reconciliation and provide an Ocean of opportunities to those whose voices are not often heard globally."

"We all live in this beautiful world, we should pass on a world as a gift to our next generation. Where there will be no discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, creed or gender."

"We unite to create community and to work for the common good is the greatest creed because no Religion is higher than human service."

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