

UNITED
RELIGIONS
INITIATIVE



2014–2015
ORGANIZATIONAL
REVIEW

Creating Impact, Together



In the 15 years since its founding, the United Religions Initiative has become the largest grassroots interfaith organization in the world. During this time, URI has developed and piloted a new approach to building diverse and cohesive communities, while engaging the causes of conflict and injustice that have plagued the global community. URI brings people of different faiths and cultures together to work on issues that improve their community. This model - which combines interreligious bridgebuilding with community-based actions that address the causes of conflict - has been highly effective for reducing violence and creating the conditions necessary for achieving sustainable peace. This dual strategy, together with a global network of support, is at the heart of URI's success.



“URI’s kaleidoscope of individuals and communities involved in interfaith action brings a rich resource for sustainable social transformation and cohesion. This collective global action is an effective instrument to enhance the health, wellbeing and education of communities whilst promoting creative environmental and development opportunities. Seen in a multitude of dimensions across faith, cultural, economic and other boundaries, we rejoice at the powerful impact of these sterling efforts. The work of our Cooperation Circles is central to building inclusive civil societies of lasting change.”

Kiran Bali, MBE JP,
URI Global Council
Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kiran Bali".



“While much of the world is bemoaning religiously motivated violence, URI is out in the hot spots of competing faith groups bringing harmony and hope through direct, positive and coordinated actions. While scenes of environmental degradation appear in multiple directions, URI is doing something to repair the earth in almost 200 Cooperation Circles around the world. While news reports accentuate what is wrong with life, URI creates stories of individuals and communities that have progressed to places of healing, justice, and peace. “URI” might well translate to mean “Your Recurring Impact.”

The Right Reverend
William E. Swing,
URI President and Founder

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William E. Swing".



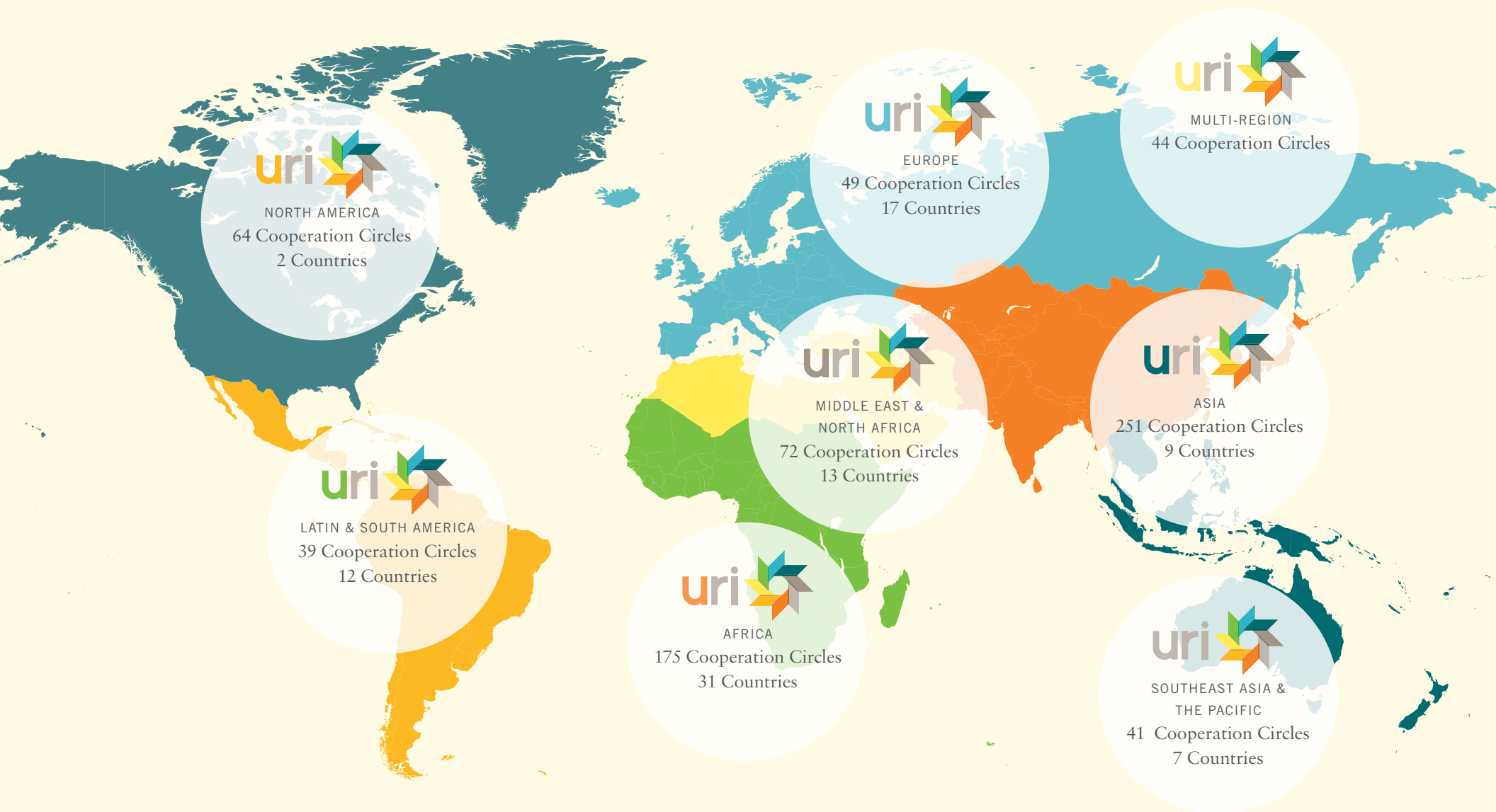
“Where ignorance and prejudice fragment communities, URI Cooperation Circles build bridges of interreligious and intercultural understanding, enabling diverse communities to establish cohesive relationships. Where active violence is occurring, URI Cooperation Circles intervene by bringing combatants together into dialogue to stop the violence, build relationships and begin the peacebuilding process. Where the legacy of war has left deep scars on communities, URI creates coalitions which are working together to rebuild communities and countries. Where issues of poverty, injustice and deteriorating social and environmental conditions are disrupting life, URI works to address issues of economic development, education, health, women’s empowerment and youth leadership. This is the impact of URI.”

The Reverend
Victor H. Kazanjian, Jr.,
URI Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victor H. Kazanjian, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

The World of URI

735 Cooperation Circles in 91 countries



From Purpose to Impact

The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

The URI Model

URI Cooperation Circles combine interreligious bridgebuilding with community-based actions that address the causes of conflict.

This model has been highly effective for reducing violence and achieving long-lasting peace.

This dual strategy together with a global network of support is at the heart of URI's success.

Strategy

Interfaith
Bridgebuilding

Dual Strategy

Community-
Based Actions

Actions

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE
INTERFAITH EDUCATION
COMMUNITY BUILDING
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

EDUCATION, HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES
EMPOWERING MARGINALIZED GROUPS
ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE
WOMEN'S AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

URI Impact

INTERRELIGIOUS &
INTER-CULTURAL COOPERATION
ENDING VIOLENCE
RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS



SOCIAL COHESION
ECOLOGICAL WELLBEING
HEALTHY & JUST SOCIETIES
SUSTAINABLE PEACE

1 in 3

women worldwide have experienced
physical or sexual violence

(SOURCE: [HTTP://BEIJING20.UNWOMEN.ORG](http://beijing20.unwomen.org))

Buddha Education Foundation Cooperation Circle provides free education to 5,420 students from rural Rajasthan, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, India. It also hosts community events promoting human rights and moral principles common to all religions.

Faiths/Traditions Represented:

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Jainism

Empowering Women



— Asma Gull Hasan; URI President's Council; accomplished lawyer, Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer of Health Trio, LLC in Denver, CO; nationally recognized author of *Why I am a Muslim* (Harper Collins 2004) and *American Muslims: The New Generation* (Continuum 2000)

“URI shows us all, every day, that women are essential in the fight for peace and harmony. URI is the dream of concerned sisters fulfilled.”

*Buddha Education Foundation CC
Delhi, India*

ASIA



When our CC hosted a Women's Day for economically disadvantaged communities, 245 women came. Though their ages and religions varied, most were illiterate housewives, unaware of their rights, who hesitated to share their suffering in public. Finally, a Hindu woman carrying two babies stood. "I will speak. We women live like animals. We work the whole day and at night get beaten by our husbands." She had never spoken about it because, until that moment, no one had invited her to speak. Soon, everyone including Christian, Jain, Muslim, and Sikh women wanted to bond over the similarities in their situations. In creating a safe space to speak, we opened the door to progress.

*Sharing stories at a women's rights event hosted
by Action Against Poverty CC*

83%

of Africans living in rural areas do not have access to basic health care

(SOURCE: UN INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION)

Bloodlife Initiative Kenya Cooperation Circle saves lives by working against the cultural and religious stereotypes associated with blood transfusions. The group teaches: “If blood has just one color, then humanity is one.”

Faiths/Traditions Represented:

- Bahá’í
- Christianity - Catholic
- Christianity - Protestant
- Hinduism
- Islam

Teaching Tolerance



— William P. Fuller; URI President’s Council; former President and CEO of The Asia Foundation; and two-time recipient of the United States President’s Meritorious Service Award and USAID’s Distinguished Honor Prize

“Imagine a world without violence associated with religion - a world in which leaders and people of different faiths not only meet and understand one another, but also work together to improve quality of life in sustainable ways, for example in health and education. That is a world the United Religions Initiative is building, community by community.”

*Bloodlife Initiative Kenya CC
Nairobi, Kenya*

AFRICA



Patients receiving life-saving blood transfusions in rural Kenya

We were in rural Northeast Kenya when we encountered a Muslim patient in urgent need of a blood transfusion. As we hurriedly mobilized blood donations, however, he insisted he would only accept blood from a fellow Muslim. So we showed him two bags of blood and asked him if he would point to the one that had come from a Muslim donor. Realizing that was impossible, the man admitted that blood has only one color regardless of one's affiliations; we are all human beings. After the transfusion, he recovered and went on to become a strong campaigner for blood transfusions.

70%+

of European countries report significant anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hostility
(SOURCE: COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMISSION AGAINST RACISM AND INTOLERANCE)

Coexister CC is a youth-led organization located in Paris, France. Coexister CC's main focus is the promotion of religious equality with respect to each person's belief. They inspire individuals and organizations not to engage in evangelism, discrimination, and proselytization. Their activities, Annual Festiv'All Together and InterFaith Tour, promote civil secularism and unite societies.

Faiths/Traditions Represented:

- Bahá'í
- Christianity - Catholic
- Christianity - Protestant
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism

Energizing Youth



— *Maria Eugenia Crespo de Mafía; Director of Cooperation Circle Support Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Escuela de Amor Cooperation Circle member*

“There is power everywhere, in everyone; young people show us this. At this very moment, the young people of URI, of all backgrounds, are sitting together in circles all over the world empowering each other to go out and bring their message of peace to politicians and people everywhere.”

*Coexister CC
France*

EUROPE



At Coexister, our motto is “Diversity in Faith, Unity in Action.” Our members (over 1,800 young people from all religious or non religious backgrounds) act in various fields including dialogue, solidarity, outreach, and study trips. We emphasize respecting all religions for a tolerant, multicultural society while cases of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination against Christians, and religiously-motivated violence are increasing. Each year, Coexister youth travel the world to train young people in interreligious and inter-cultural understanding. The current tour is visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Norway, Morocco, Poland, the UK, Russia, and onward. We carry messages of peace to thousands of people worldwide.

Cooperation Circle members marching in Paris, France last January to proclaim “We Are Together” (© Laurent G)

3,400+

people including 1,900 civilians were killed in the Yemen conflict from March to August 2015

(SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS VIA CNN)

Youth of Peace Cooperation Circle in Yemen tries to restore harmony between followers of different faiths. They host interfaith events to help children, the elderly, the handicapped, and society as a whole.

Faiths/Traditions Represented:

- Christianity
- Islam - Shi'a
- Islam - Sufi
- Islam - Sunni

Stopping Violence



— Emmanuel Ivorgba;
Regional Coordinator,
West Africa; founder of
Creative Minds International
Academy and New Era
CC; and director of Project
Happiness-Africa

“You have bombs going off in the churches...the mosques...the roads leading to prayer and worship places are blocked. Religion has become a huge tool for division. The level of animosity created for so many years is so deep, it requires a long process of healing and reconciliation. But gradually, through URI, we are beginning to come together.”

Youth of Peace CC Yemen

MENA



*Cooperation Circle members holding
signs of peace on a street in Yemen
last February*

Since Yemen's revolution, there have been increasing clashes between religions. In an effort to replace stereotypes and hatred with understanding and friendship, Youth of Peace CC organizes interfaith activities. In February, we organized a silent event promoting the values of forgiveness and peace. Men, women, and children held signs to remind our community that Yemen will only flourish once coexistence is embraced. This brave display of peacebuilding took place only 43 days before the 2015 Sana'a mosque suicide-bombings, which were the deadliest terrorist attack in Yemen's history. We continue to call out to the world to stop the violence.

Thank you for
your support and
generosity.



Together,
we are URI



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January 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

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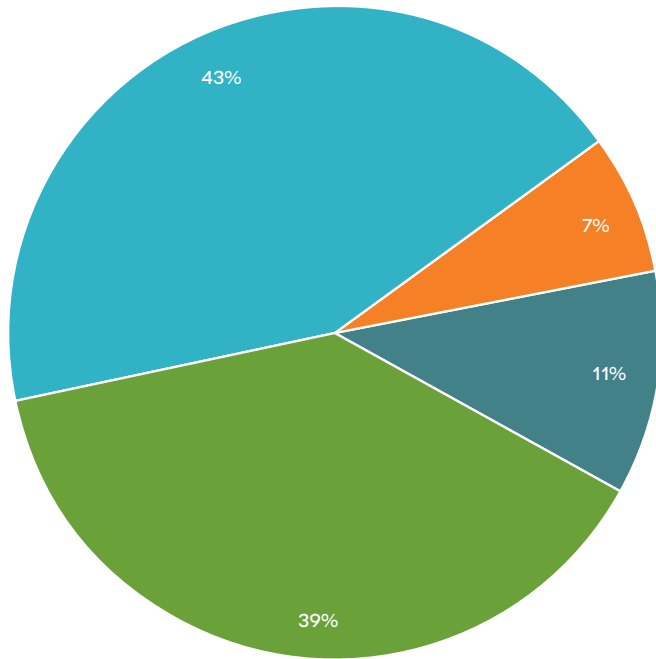
ISABELLE ORTEGA

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TOTAL REVENUE
\$3,503,980



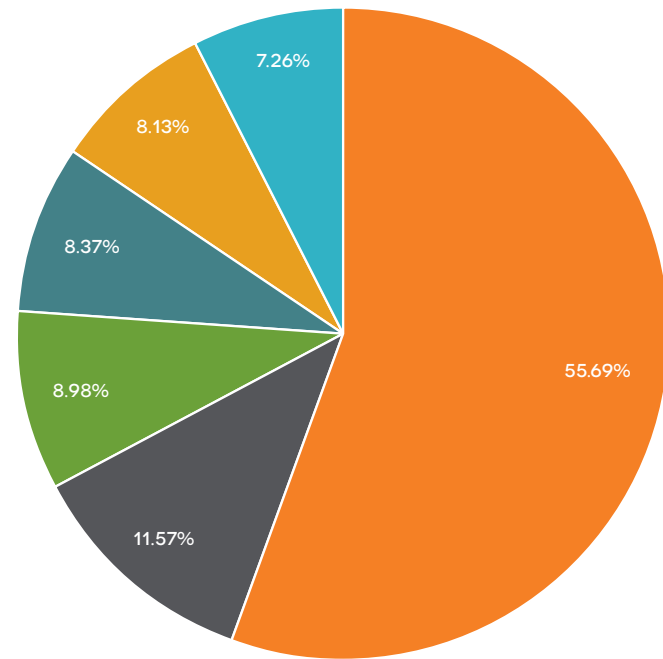
INDIVIDUALS : \$1,355,001 ●

FOUNDATIONS/CORPORATIONS : \$1,519,428 ●

FUNDRAISING EVENT : \$249,481 ●

OTHER REVENUE : \$380,070 ●

TOTAL EXPENSES
\$3,345,314



● \$1,862,860 : GLOBAL PROGRAMS

● \$386,844 : GLOBAL COUNCIL

● \$300,390 : FUNDRAISING

● \$279,967 : COMMUNICATIONS

● \$272,268 : MANAGEMENT & GENERAL

● \$242,985 : EDUCATION & OUTREACH

*Copies of audited financial statements are available upon request.

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