



COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE



RAINBOW CC

Location: Vill- Adhkara Post- Panchmura, Dist - Bankura, West Bengal, India

Faiths/Traditions Represented

Hindu, Christian, Tribal, Muslim

RAINBOW CC

Action Areas

- ✦ Educations
- ✦ Youth Development
- ✦ Environmental Protection.





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Summary

Rainbow CC is located in West Bengal, India. The CC has seen tremendous growth over the years and has reached over 50 villages in the area. Rainbow CC engages youth in creating local employment opportunities by bringing technology, products marketing and educational programs to the region. Rainbow CC is focused on bridging the gap between elders and youth by creating a common platform for dialogue to address issues and social challenges. They work with Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and tribal groups in the area.

REFLECTION & LEARNING

- ***What is the current religious/cultural/social context in the area where your CC is working?***

In our area, opportunities for youth are minimal. There are open conflicts, a growing generation gap, and family misunderstandings exasperated by youth unemployment and lack of other social services. Young people are moving out to work in other cities and those that are staying in the area are used politically. We are seeing many young people who can't find employment opportunities, and did not acquire a level of education are now politically motivated. Caste-ism is a huge source of conflict. People separate themselves from each other in the name of caste even within their own religions. In addition to that, religious separation is also a cause of conflicts. We have seen that generally youth are very open and like to engage with others regardless of religious differences.

- ***Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed in the area where your CC works?***

When we started our CC, we felt the need to bring youth together from different castes and regions to collaboratively address the unemployment situation. We realized it is very important that we work together to create our own opportunities. So we started cultivating interfaith relationships among youth at the college level. Then we realized each individual has their unique ideas which could strengthen our network. We followed the knowledge and realized that this can help us to create an interfaith social platform, where we can share and learn from each other.

- ***Please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is carrying out this year?***

Our main activity is running local computer training programs, vocational training programs, educational training programs, environmental care programs, providing information on organic



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farming, setting up a health camp for rural children, and literacy programs for children and elders.

- ***Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?***

We are working with Christian, Tribal, Hindu and Muslim groups with our above-mentioned projects.



- ***Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that would otherwise not interact or cooperate with each other?***

At first we began with computer literacy programs for youth at various villages. With the help of URI we received some computers to start this program. This activity allowed us to engage more than 200 youth in 15 days, in 5 villages. Secondly, we took an initiative to make products out of local raw materials that can be available free of cost, such as wood. Many tribal people got engaged and started working on those projects. We also provide education for the children especially for those who do not go to school. We also run health camps and blood donation camps in rural areas to help local hospitals deal with blood shortages.

- ***Given the current context you described, what does your CC hope to achieve (goals)***

We would like to partner with the Government to sustain our training and skill-building programs, so no youth will leave their villages in the future because of lack of employment opportunities. We also want a society free of political discrimination where people from various religions can live in peace.

- ***How do you see your CC's work improving cooperation among people of different traditions?***

We see this because we are creating opportunities at the local level for Christian, Muslim, Hindus and Tribals to interact. We are all standing together to protect our local cultures and the way of rural living.

- ***How is the work of your CC helping to prevent religiously inspired violence or transforming conflict? (NOTE: This question is relevant only in areas with violence/open conflict.)?***

Being a new CC, we need to understand more deeply to answer this question.





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- ***What are some observations or signs you see that relations are improving between people of different faiths/cultures in the area where your CC works?***

As we are getting more and more youth involved in our projects, we also work for the local government to help them maintain computer databases as we are the only youth group in the area which provides service to every individual, group or community.

We have also seen when a Muslim young person goes to teach computer to a student at a Hindu home, they spend time together. This has not happened before due to religious separation. There were no other initiatives that allowed people from different religions to come together.

- ***Please share a specific short story about your CC's work that might teach a lesson about interfaith or inspire other CCs?***

One day we visited a tribal village to learn about their challenges, and we found that tribal women go to the forest to collect a specific leave to make a biodegradable plate which they sell at local market to earn money. However, because of the lack of knowledge about the livelihoods of tribal peoples means mass logging in the area, these trees are being cut down and not given a chance to regenerate. We started discussing the matter with local government, expressing our concern on how corporate expansion disrupts the earning process of tribal women. Finally the local government split the tender into various zones and started cutting the trees wisely. This action has helped women to get leaves all around the year. This story was featured in the local news and government has applauded our innovative interfaith approach to addressing this challenge.

- ***How is your CC's work helping to achieve the mission of URI?***

In every project, we share the PPPs of URI among people. We give credit to URI for supporting our network through banner, posters and publications.

- ***Within your CC, you have members from several different faiths and cultural traditions. How would you describe cooperation among your CC's members? What are the challenges?***

Because we come for common shared interests and we provide service to the various faith communities, the community understands this and does not put any pressure to separate us in the name of religion. In our group meeting we share food and other facilities together to achieve our goal. We equally practice respect for religious beliefs and do not discriminate in the name of religion and caste. All are welcome to our group.



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- ***How is being part of URI helping your CC to achieve its goals?***

We get support from URI through our Regional Coordinator, who helps us host workshops, conduct training, get information on interfaith cooperation, and peace-building. We are also connecting with other CCs to create a bigger platform for the youth and we are partnering to promoting bigger peace building actions.

- ***Aside from funding, what are some specific ways URI can better support your CC in reaching its goals?***

URI can help by providing some national & international training for the youth, by connecting us with various other youth programs and also by helping us to learn better English.

