



COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE

St. Mary's Public School CC, Mulakuzha

Faiths /Traditions Represented: Hindus, Muslims and Christians

Location of CC: Mulakuzha, Alapuzha District, Kerala, India

Key Areas of Focus: Interfaith Processions, Inter religious harmony meetings, Visiting rehabilitation centres, Orphanages and Old age homes, financial aid and counseling classes, and an Interfaith Library in the School.

Summary:

Since its founding 25 years ago in the district of Alappuzha (Aleppey), St. Mary's Public school has been conducting numerous programs for educational development and communal harmony. This school expressed their wish to join URI in order to bring the wisdom of other religions and cultures to our younger generations. The management and the teaching community of St. Mary's are very interested in supporting interfaith activities, especially URI projects. The province is specifically known for a concentrated Dalit population, which St. Mary's is committed to serving.

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

Our CC is situated in Mulakuzha Panchayat, a rural area with Christians, Hindus and Muslims. We have a lot of people who are traditionally agricultural labourers. The famous Maramon Christian Convention takes place in our vicinity. Over 100,000 people attend each session of this convention (three meetings a day) for one week. It is convened by the Mar Thoma Church. Aranmula Hindu Temple is one of the most famous temples in Kerala. For the famous boat race in Aranmula, thousands of people assemble during Onam holidays. We can say we are in the heart of Kerala State. There are several schools and one engineering college in our area. A multi-specialty hospital is also located in our area.

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

We can answer this question with the account of a recent incident. As usual, people laid the poles for a huge pandal (to seat more than 100, 000 people) for the Maramon Convention. It is the largest Christian convention in Asia. On the next day the poles disappeared. The

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immediate reaction was that the enemies (meaning people of another faith) did this. A conflict was brewing within the group, and it could have erupted into a big communal clash. Fortunately, the enlightened leaders understood the motive behind this action. They started working again, as though nothing had happened. The problem was resolved within one night.



URI Regional Team at St. Mary's School, Mulakkuzha for Interview.

Such is the situation in our region. Conflicts can occur at any point. We have to consciously build peace when the atmosphere is congenial. That is the main reason our CC is striving to reach out into the masses through our interfaith programs.

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

We have organized a rally for religious harmony and a public meeting. In the religious harmony meeting so many Christians, Muslims and Hindu leaders and priests attended.



Peace March to promote inter-religious harmony.

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Public Meeting to promote inter-religious amity.



Audience of the public meeting



Receiving YLP check from Prof. John Kurakar.



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

Our main work is to promote harmony among three main communities Hindus, Christians and Muslims. 100% of the people belong to these three mainline communities.

5. *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.*

Our strategy is to bring people together with different faith and cultures in the same platform through various activities, like peace rallies, seminars, leadership trainings, health awareness programs, and medical camps.

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

We hope to create an impression and understanding among the youth that all the religions must respect and help each other to eliminate racial and religious discrimination.

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

Our young leaders are acting as good ambassadors to spread the values of URI to bring religious peace and harmony among different religions. During our peace procession there was excellent participation from all people of the village, which belong to different communities. We also get support for other activities. People are enthusiastic about our vision for a better world.

8. *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?*

People are eagerly watching our activities and wholeheartedly supporting our programs on interfaith harmony justice and peace. We have many parents expressing their interest in our interfaith programs.

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

Our members attended the second Zonal assembly at Karickam International Public School on the 13th of September 2014. After attending the assembly they were so impressed by the speeches from Matthew Youde and Krithika Harish. The visit of Dr. Abraham Karickam and Prof. John Kurakkar and their speeches also contributed to inspire and conduct various activities in connection with URI. The inter-religious rally was really an inspiration to our members and the public at large.

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Mr. P. S John participated in the Colombo Holy Books Conference and he testifies that it was a turning point in his life, as he was exposed to various religions and inter-faith leaders. A visit to the Hanuman Temple was an exciting experience, and opened participants' eyes to the fact that if all people unite irrespective of caste and creed, the effects will be far reaching.

The visit to the St. Andrews Palliative Care Centre was crucial in our life. We received firsthand information on how people can express real love to the suffering class, as religion or caste is no bar here. It is here that they transcend the boundaries.



Visit to the St. Andrew's Palliative Care home of differently abled people.

10. How is your CC's work helping to achieve the mission of URI?

Our CC will always act in support of the mission of URI to bridge the gap among various religions. We can collaborate with other CCs to spread the principles of URI. All our activities are in tune with URI principles.

11. 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?

Our CC members have started to study their neighbours' faiths and traditions after joining URI. Our biggest challenge is the strong hold of caste system in the society.



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12. How is being part of URI helping your CC to achieve its goals?

We are influenced by the Peace-building Initiatives of URI. We've had the opportunity to attend different camps and conferences, including international seminars. The YLP project is a real boon for our school and we hope that the new interfaith library will attract wide appreciation from all people. Parents are really happy about this pioneering move.

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

We would like to continue the YLP Project, along with training for our students; this will be very much appreciated. A Peace Building Training Institute will be very useful to our students and staff.