



UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE-GREAT LAKES AFRICA

# The Community Voice



*A Highlight of the 2017 Benefits from the Network*

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2017

# The Year 2017

The last three years have been dedicated to enhancing URI's relevance to the Network by stepping away from the one-off conference/assembly meetings to having more impactful engagements that help our members realize tangible benefits from being part of the network.

Among other initiatives, we introduced the CC Exchange Learning Program, the CC Coaching and also Tapping from Resources/Expertise within the staff and CC members to reinforce each other's abilities and service to the whole. We have also fostered linkages of support whenever they come our way. So far we have registered great strides in this light and still counting. The challenges are still there to ensure that each CC is actively part of the network because we have also grown to almost over 50 organizations in the region. We are though determined to continue networking and learning from each other as well as offering lines of mutual support and connection.

This Edition is therefore dedicated to all our CC members who have made use of the URI network to impact lives in the communities they serve. We know each and every one of our CCs has something to take stock of the network benefits since they joined URI but we shall only sample a few of out of the so many stories of URI's contribution to its membership. **In this edition, we bring to you a tip of how much the URI network can do to change and impact lives through the great and admirable efforts of our membership.**

# Alliance for Development CC's Peace Initiatives Getting Revamped with URI's Support



The Alliance for Development (AFODE)CC in Kasese District, Uganda is progressively holding the grip to harness the opportunities that the URI Network has to offer. Through their vigilant relations, AFODE is cultivating from every opportunity that prevails. Their remote operation in an ethnically turbulent region has not let the group to slumber into comfort, for the locals who hail from diverse ethnic, traditional, religious or political backgrounds; always calls for new yet spontaneous responses to address the persistent issues there. **Just a year back, on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2016**, tragedy befell the region's Rwenzururu Kingdom with one of the most heinous brutal attacks by the Government's army, which bombed the King's palace, killing over 100 guards and other inhabitants. It is in this light, that AFODE's Peace Drive that is slated for April next year, comes as a move towards restoring peace and compassion amidst the broken souls that are struggling to bury a gruesome history. **AFODE** stands to condemn any such heinous practices against humanity exterminated by both government and / or in some instances the civilian population. Such a drive is to appeal to all power holders to preserve and protect the sanctity of humanity, giving room for due processes over any form of violations or abuse of the law. The harsh indiscriminate attacks over innocent souls **MUST** stop. Let there be Justice, let all those suspected law offenders be brought to book in a more humanistic manner other than killing indiscriminately.

In light of this, our intention as AFODE is to affirm the freedom of religion, belief, social and cultural identity, self determination and other aspects that make this life enjoyable. It is hoped through the peace walk, all acts of discrimination, torture, harassment, intimidation, or violence directed at people or groups because of their religion, race, or place of origin, shall be highlighted and strongly condemned, to regain the glory of our community and for peace to prevail in the souls of the people that call this region their home. **We greatly appreciate the support of Greg Davis of Safe Alliance of Interfaith Leaders, Columbus, OH, through URI North America RC for the financial support for such noble for our organization and globally.**

# Kenya Women's Walk for Peace



Nyambura Mundia-Kenya Contact (at the front) participating in a procession of the women's White Ribbon Campaign

A month back, in the face of a possibly violent presidential rerun election, Kenyan women from all classes, ethnicity and faith started a campaign dubbed the '**white ribbon**'. It was a call of peace by women, most significant because there had been threats of rape and violence against women who came out to vote. The March attracted about 3,000 women among whom were Kenyan Eminent Women, who were involved in creating progressive spaces for women leadership. About 30 women from the Kibra cluster CCs, Young Mother's and Undugu attended.

Prayers and calls for soberness and an end to extra-judicial killings were made against the placards the read '**a mother's cry**'. The grass root's women also replicated the event in their own counties.

Kenya now stands in a post electoral situation of political uncertainty. However, such efforts like these of women have had a lasting impact in allaying violence across the diverse sections of society. Our hope is for peace to prevail in what we regard East Africa's pride and the Africa continent at large.

# New Addition to the Network\_Wipe My Tears Foundation

The name alone tells a powerful story of the initiation of

**The Wipe My Tears Foundation (WTF).** Based in South Sudan, the organization comes at such an appropriate time, when the country is still struggling to overcome the endless nightmares of war. Wipe my Tears Foundation was formed by women who have been affected by war, and it is an all inclusive women's groups with men as part. Our membership is more than seven members and hails from different religions and cultural backgrounds and the support from groups of well-wishers.

A country that has endemically faced gruesome conflict episodes, with some of the latest notable attacks being in 2013/2014 such as the *Bentiu massacre* where up to 300,000 people are estimated to have been killed in the war between forces of the government and the opposition. In what seems to be a war driven along ethnic undertones mainly between the Dinka ethnic group widely accused of pitching hatred against other ethnic tribes; a courageous group of seven members of WTF, hailing from the Catholic, Anglicans, Muslim, Pentecostal, Adventist and Orthodox faith background has provided a window of hope to address some of the ripple effects of the war.

Since the past twenty one years of Sharia law wars (between Muslims against Christians) that caused unrest in the country, and additional past four years of tribalism war (between the Dinka against Nuer and Eguatoria people), it has divided several communities and delayed the progress of the communities, denied them the opportunity to establish the simplest basic service.

Amidst such divisions, the group aims to **Wipe the Tears** of the so many broken souls through supporting the destitute population that has been robbed by war of their dignity and esteem regardless of their religions or cultural difference. Through its efforts, it intends to build connections, trust and harmony in the community. Other efforts are geared towards fostering awareness on HIV/AIDS pandemic, disability, orphans and street children living free from violence, discrimination and empowered to make decisions affecting their lives with a purpose of ensuring improved quality life for the vulnerable groups of people living in South Sudan.





**We wish you Happy  
Holidays and a  
Merry Christmas to  
our Christian Friends**