

# Recent News from IMHO: Sri Lanka humanitarian crisis

International Medical Health Organization (IMHO)  
<coordinator@theimho.org>  
Reply-To: coordinator@theimho.org

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## International Medical Health Organization (IMHO)

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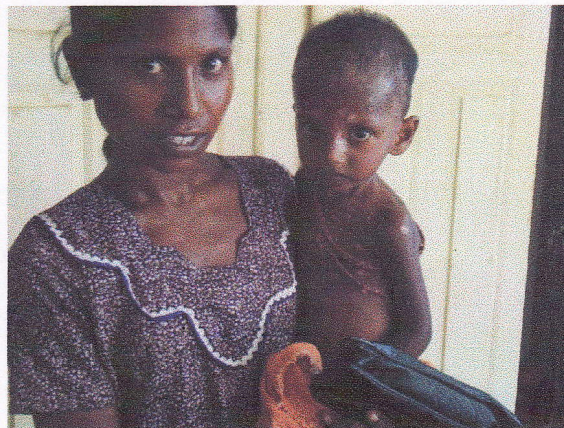
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### HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN NORTHEAST SRI LANKA DEEPENS

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As the situation in Northeast Sri Lanka continues to deteriorate, reports from the ground reveal the alarming extent of the humanitarian crisis facing hundreds of thousands caught in the conflict zones and in the IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps. In addition to the **deaths and injuries** from the fighting and a general lack of adequate medical & health care and other basic supplies, the threat of severe **malnutrition** and **starvation** remain persistent problems. Children and the elderly are particularly at risk. There has been heavy fighting in and around many areas where there are hospitals, adding further stress to those doctors and healthcare providers trying desperately to serve those with urgent



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health and medical needs. These hospitals are now **operating far beyond their capacities**, especially as those civilians caught in the conflict zones have flooded out in the past several days.

In keeping with our mission and goals, IMHO is doing everything possible to get aid to these persons. In total we have given or committed **\$300,000+ to-date** for various efforts across the conflict zone. We are acutely aware of the need for both emergency relief aid and long-term rehabilitation, and we are committed to doing all we can. We are in regular contact with the regional directors of health services, local doctors, and partner organizations, which has enabled us to keep on top of the situation and understand what the needs of these people are.

The needs of these IDPs are massive and urgent-and unfortunately there is no end in sight to this humanitarian disaster. We are urgently in need of your help to get basic medicines, antibiotics, food, shelter, clothes, and supplies to these victims. Together we can be the difference...

### **New Vavuniya Psychiatric Unit Opens**

A new psychiatric unit in **Vavuniya**, a project that IMHO has been planning and working on since the 4th Annual Convention in Ohio, officially opened its doors to patients on April 25, 2009. With the **influx of IDPs and a high incidence of mental trauma**, the timing of this center's opening could not be more ideal.



This will be the acute inpatient care unit for four districts, namely Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi and Mannar. The unit will cater to about 650,000 people in this region. Earlier, local medical staff used to treat all persons with mental illnesses in the general medical ward, which was done with great difficulty. This new ward was funded by IMHO, along with a few private donors and the SLRC.

Though the need for this acute care unit for mental health services has existed in Vavuniya for long time, it has now become a reality. And the timing could not have been better with the recent influx of IDPs now in need of such critical services. Already about 120 new patients were registered in the clinic in the last few weeks. We expect this newly built ward will be a strong pillar in the mental health services of this region.



Please read more about this exciting new development on our blog:  
<http://www.theimho.org/blog>

## **Walking for a Cause: New Jersey Walk-a-thon Nets \$20,000**



Five years ago the 1st annual IMHO Convention was held in New Jersey, just months after our organization was born and the first primary care center was established in Sri Lanka. Now we find ourselves growing as we had always hoped, enabling us to do so much to benefit those in need of health and medical care in

Sri Lanka and around the world. On Saturday, May 2, 2009 we were able to mark this special 5-year anniversary with the 2009 IMHO Walk-a-Thon in South Brunswick, New Jersey. The event was a very peaceful, enjoyable and rewarding experience for all who attended. All attendees received IMHO t-shirts and home-cooked food, and were able to participate in an auction. There was even a special police patrol for the group!

Attendees started to arrive at the Woodlot Park in South Brunswick around 9:00 am, and the walkathon started around 10.30am. The walk lasted for about an hour with everyone proudly wearing their IMHO t-shirts and carrying IMHO flags. The experience was enriching both mentally and physically. In total, the organizers collected \$20,000 for primary care and mobile clinic services in Jaffna. Special thanks to Siva for so meticulously planning this fantastic event and to all who participated and made donations!

## **Toronto Telethon Raises \$75K for Immediate IDP Relief**

Last weekend IMHO Canada help an impressive telethon fundraiser event at the Atlanta Party Hall in Scarborough to raise much needed funds for the emergency relief effort in the Northeast. As the medical and health needs have been compacted by a scarcity of food, which has led to a myriad of illnesses affecting children and others, the need for milk powder and other life-saving nutrition has become apparent. This event raised approximately **\$75,000** for immediate relief. \$25,000 was given for emergency milk powder and other nutrition, which ultimately benefited IDPs in Jaffna. Although the original destination was within the conflict



zone, the shipment had to be diverted to Jaffna due to intense fighting. The remaining \$50,000 has been spent or allocated on medications for patients in Jaffna (\$10K), the establishment of a temporary ward for women and children (\$5K), and mobile medical clinics.

This event was televised and promoted on the radio by **TVI**, **CMR**, and **CTR**. Various speakers touched on the current crisis and the massive humanitarian needs now plaguing those affected. Special thanks to all who attended, all the committed volunteers and organizers, and all our media partners who made this telethon a reality! You can read our report on this fundraiser here: <http://www.theimho.org/field-news/reports/173-canada-crisis-report>

## **6th Annual IMHO Convention a Touching & Productive Meeting**

IMHO held its 6th Annual Convention this past weekend, on Saturday, April 4th at the Doubletree Hotel in **San Jose, California** with great success. Approximately 175 people joined us for the morning session, and 250+ for the evening session. While we are excited to note the continued growth of our organization and the expansion of our programs in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, we all remain deeply concerned and affected by the humanitarian crisis currently gripping Northeast Sri Lanka. As such, IMHO has committed itself this year to do all that is possible to help address the short-term, emergency relief needs and long-term rehabilitation needs of these IDPs.

This year's convention **focused on the current crisis** and what we can all do to respond. We welcomed our **Chief Guest Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah** of the [Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies \(CHA\)](#), a Colombo-based nonprofit committed to coordinating NGO efforts within Sri Lanka. CHA has been instrumental in responding to the current crisis and serving as IMHO's partner on the ground during this critical time. He



spoke in the morning about the "Issues, Status, and Options in the Vanni", and in the evening session discussed CHA in greater detail and what their role has been with IMHO, including with the current crisis. He also made an appeal to IMHO for a long-term

rehabilitation plan for a group of several thousand IDPs with which CHA has been entrusted. For a full report on the convention, including summary of all speakers, as well as a full photo gallery, please visit our



website: <http://www.theimho.org/blog/18-event-category-in-blog/166-sixth-annual-agm>

## NorCal Event Raises \$32K in Emergency Funds under TNC

On Saturday, April 18th the Tamils of Northern California (TNC) held an event in San Jose, CA in which \$32,000+ was raised for emergency relief and rehabilitation efforts in Northeast Sri Lanka. This event came just 2 weeks after the 6th Annual IMHO Convention was held in the same city. We are very grateful for the commitment of our friends at TNC and all those who attended and supported this crucial fundraising event.

**Be the  
Difference.  
Save a Life  
with just  
\$15/month.  
DONATE  
TODAY!**

During this crucial time in Sri Lanka and around the world, as we face monumental challenges in providing better access to quality medical and health care for those most at-risk segments of society, we need YOUR HELP now more than ever. With **just \$15/month** you can meet the nutritional needs of 1 IDP (internal refugee). Please consider making a donation to IMHO today. You can **donate online via PayPal as a one-time or recurring donation** (the amount & frequency of which are up to you).

You can also **donate via mail** by sending a check made out to "IMHO" to the following address:

**IMHO Treasurer  
PO Box 61265  
Staten Island, New York 10306  
United States**

All donations are tax-deductible (tax ID code #59-3779465)

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