

IMHO: June 2009 Update on Sri Lanka Efforts

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International Medical Health Organization (IMHO)

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Update on IDP Situation in the Northeast & IMHO's Efforts

With the conflict now officially over, attention has turned to the poor humanitarian conditions under which hundreds of thousands of displaced persons are now living. The most recent figures from the Northeast reveal that there are an astounding 25 IDP camps in Vavuniya housing over 255,000 people. Jaffna has 12 camps and 11,064 people, Trincomalee has 2 camps and 6,642 people, and Mannar has 3 camps

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and 845 people. The needs of these people are, as ever, colossal and varied. Aid agencies have been scrambling to meet these massive needs, while also trying to guarantee the release of as many persons as possible.

IMHO is amongst those groups doing everything possible to aid these IDPs and has been able to do so in 4 districts over the past 5 months through an extensive network of contacts at the ground level, including:

- a. **CHA** - Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies
- b. **Mercy Malaysia** - primary mobile health clinics
- c. **Lions Club** - providing hygiene products to camps
- d. **Thooku** - adopting orphans at Sivan Arul Illam
- e. **MSF** (Medicines Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders)
- f. **RDHS** (Regional Directors of Health Services for various districts)
- g. **MOH** (Medical Officers of Health)

Our efforts thus far have been broken down below by region:

Conflict Zone

A shipment of milk powder worth \$50,000 was sent along with the help of CMDDA to the conflict zone to address the very pressing issues of malnutrition and starvation amongst those caught in the crossfire. The supplies were handed over to Dr.Sathyamoorthy, RDHS official.

Vavuniya

An in-patient psychiatric unit was established a few weeks ago at a cost of \$62,000. The unit houses 16 beds and is run and managed by two psychiatrists, Dr. Suthakaran and Dr. Sivathasan. Due to high demand, the unit is operating at about 5 to 6 times its intended capacity.

Another major ongoing effort is the nutrition program through which food supplements have been provided to IDPs at one of the larger camps. So far \$120,000 has been committed, helping to provide extra nutritional food by adding one more vegetable to lunches, an egg and milk for kids and pregnant mothers, and so on.

Women at the Manick Farms IDP camp have received sanitary pads, for which \$5,000 has been contributed.

A primary care center at the very large Manick Farms IDP camp has been sponsored by IMHO for 2 months at a cost of \$40,000. The center is being manned by Dr. Sundran from Chettikulam and operated by the Malaysia Mercy Mission with the help of other volunteers.

IMHO is covering the cost of medicines at a second primary care center

in Vavuniya for two months, also at a cost of \$20,000/month or \$40,000 total. Local staff have been provided by Dr. Mahendran from the Vavuniya Hospital and are currently using an ambulance provided earlier by IMHO.

Another effort currently being orchestrated consists of getting 60 Tamil-speaking doctors from Jaffna to work on a volunteer basis in the Vavuniya IDP camps, for which clearance is still being obtained. IMHO is committing \$15,500 for the first 2 months for air and land transport and accommodation facilities.

In Settikulam, IMHO is supporting displaced health care workers to start working in the Manick Farms camp at a cost of about \$40/person for 300 persons, or \$12,000 total. Additionally, IMHO is seeking to obtain a monthly salary of Rs.5,000/person as well. These persons will coordinate with medical teams on health education, prevention of infectious diseases, identifying the high-risk patients, facilitating access to existing health services, and more.

Mannar

One of our earliest efforts consisted of sending \$5,000 worth of surgical suture materials to the Mannar Hospital.

A change of clothes for IDPs for basic hygiene purposes was also provided for 5,000 people who were amongst the last arrivals in the IDP camps that came in a very pathetic and desperate condition. \$6,000 was committed for this purpose.

An additional \$10,000 was committed to help address the basic needs of these desperately needy patients, including food provisions, dressing of wounds, etc.

Finally, working with a UK-based charity called Thookku, an initial commitment of \$10,000 was given for sponsorship of 300 kids and 60 seniors at Sivan Arun Illam. The children were adopted while receiving medical treatment at the hospital and before they were sent back to the IDP camps. These children, some as young as six months-old, have no one to care for them. The cost of covering one child's needs is \$40/child /month to support on an ongoing basis. IMHO is seeking sponsors for this purpose.

Trincomalee

Another one of our first efforts was a contribution of \$10,000 for urgently needed medicines at the Trincomalee General Hospital for wounded patients.

Jaffna

Working with Dr. Ketheeswaran, the Regional Director of Health Services for Jaffna and the only medical officer to have access to the camps, we were able to send a shipment of milk powder (originally intended for the conflict zone but diverted due to high levels of violence in the area) valued at \$70,000.

Medicines for surgical patients and the wounded was also supported with a \$10,000 gift from IMHO.

Renovation of Varani Hospital was accomplished with \$8,000 in support from IMHO. The hospital is now capable of accommodating displaced pregnant mothers and providing much needed post-natal care.

A renovation of Chavakachcheri Hospital is currently underway and due to be completed on account of an initial commitment of \$10,000 by IMHO. A semi-permanent ward was established recently by the WHO, and a second semi-permanent ward is now being set up to help address the overflow of people in need of medical treatment.

In total, IMHO has contributed to-date an incredible \$483,500 with your support! What a difference this has made in helping those at the ground to save lives and to improve the conditions and quality of life for those who survived this terrible tragedy. We will continue to press on.

Upcoming IMHO Events



*****New York: Uyir Kappom Fundraiser for IDP Relief*****

The New York chapter of IMHO is having its annual fundraising event on Saturday, July 11th. The Uyir Kappom (Save Lives) event will inform friends and supporters of the current situation and issues facing IDPs in Sri Lanka's Northeast, as well as cover IMHO's efforts to-date. You will get to hear a first-hand report of the conditions and needs of the people in the internment camps from a visiting physician from Sri Lanka.

WHEN: Saturday, July 11, 2009, 6:00-9:00pm

WHERE: South Beach Psych Center, 777 Sea View Ave., Staten Island, NY 10305

WHY: To raise funds for emergency relief & nutrition for IDPs in the Vanni

HOW: Stop by, donate online, or call in 347.208.7930. You can donate by check/cash, PayPal, or direct debit.

If you plan on attending, please RSVP to Dr. Rajam Theventhiran, IMHO Treasurer, at treasurer@theimho.org.

*****Los Angeles: Update on IDP Situation*****

Please save the date: on **Friday, July 17th** visiting physician Dr. Jude will be making an evening presentation on the current IDP situation and the most pressing needs of these people. Details TBD; please check in

later with the IMHO website (www.TheIMHO.org).

*****Lancaster, CA: Update on IDP Situation*****

Please save the date: on **Saturday, July 18th** visiting physician Dr. Jude will be making an evening presentation on the current IDP situation and the most pressing needs of these people. More details to follow; please check the IMHO website or contact Dr. Sunder at 661.942.1036.

*****Ohio: Uyir Kappom Fundraiser for IDP Relief*****

WHAT: Please join us for a presentation by visiting physician Dr. Jude, update on IMHO's efforts, and simple dinner.

WHEN: Saturday, July 25, 2009, 6:00-9:00pm

WHERE: 9306 Towne Square Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45242

WHY: To raise funds for emergency relief & nutrition for IDPs in the Vanni

If you plan on attending or would like more information, please contact Thavam (937.654.3211) or Malathy (513.793.0804).

*****Los Angeles: G-VO Unity Concert for IDP Relief*****

WHEN: Saturday, August 22nd

WHERE: Ambassador Auditorium, Pasadena, 131 S. St. John Ave.,

Pasadena, CA 91105

WHY: New CD Release party for G-Vo (Rajeev Nandakumaran) while bringing together those deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation of the IDPs in Sri Lanka for a benefit concert

HOW: Tickets are \$10/general admission and \$25/VIP. Tickets available pre-sale and at the door. Donations encouraged.

Past IMHO Events

*****Ohio Golf Fundraiser*****

On May 18th IMHO hosted an 18-hole scramble golf fundraiser at the Jack Nicklaus championship golf course in New Albany, Ohio. The event included a free golf clinic, demo day with manufacturers on-hand with some of the latest state-of-the-art golf equipment, lunch, reception, silent auction, awards ceremony, dinner, & IMHO presentations. It was the first ever golfing event in Ohio, and we had a great turnout. Over 48 players joined us for the tournament and 65 guests joined us for the evening dinner and activities. \$3,500 was also raised for immediate IDP relief in

the Vanni. Thanks to all of our sponsors, including Community Tissue Services, New Albany Country Club, and Callaway Golf Co., as well as all who joined us for the tournament and the evening reception-you helped make this first annual event a great success! We are looking forward to an even bigger and better event next year.

******Natya Samarpanam Dance Performance******

The Kalapeetham Dance Company put on a special dance presentation to benefit IMHO's efforts to send relief supplies to IDPs throughout Northeast Sri Lanka on June 13th in Bellflower, California. Natya Samarpanam was an evening of traditional dance featuring Sheejith Krishna of Kalakshetra and Tharini Shanmugarajah, who organized the event. They performed to a full audience and raised over \$12,000, providing a great opportunity to share our work and the severity of the situation for the displaced civilians in Sri Lanka during this most crucial time.

******IMHO Canada Youth Telethon Fundraiser for Emergency Relief and Nutrition******

The IMHO Canada Youth Committee organized a 2-day "Uyir Kappom" telethon event to raise emergency funds for the internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Vanni region of Sri Lanka. The event took place on Saturday, June 20th from 8:00am-5:00pm at the Jaya Dhurga Temple in Mississauga, and again on Sunday, June 21st from 11:00am-8:00pm at the Atlanta Party Hall in Scarborough. Many supporters and well-wishers joined us at the hall or called in to make a contribution to this important, life-saving work. Through this incredible effort spear-headed by the youth and the IMHO Canada team, over \$36,000 was raised to help save lives and improve the quality of life for the many IDPs in the camps across the Vanni.

Psychiatric Needs of IDPs Are Overwhelming, as Expected

Psychiatric staff in Vavuniya have confirmed that which everyone expected, that the mental health issues facing the IDPs and populace fazed by the recent violence are overwhelming. Working overtime and stretched to the limits, their needs are great. Some of the issues being addressed include depression (most common), schizophrenia, unresolved grief, PTSD, adjustment disorder, and much more, both related to the latest violence and general illness. Patients who are classified as psychotic are known patients, while the patients classified as neurotic are new patients, so both types are being served. Counselors in the camps have been conducting psychological interventions amongst the IDPs. Those patients with violent and

aggressive tendencies, especially towards harming themselves, are being transferred to the General Hospital in Vavuniya. Thus far over 20 such patients (all IDPs) have been transferred, which now puts the new ward with 20 existing beds at more than twice its intended capacity. The head psychiatrist at the Vavuniya General Hospital Mental Health Unit, Dr. Suthakaran, has been doing a phenomenal job managing all of the patients, but a great deal of further assistance and resources are needed. Similarly, more facilities and resources, including a vehicle, are needed to provide satisfactory mental health care amongst the Vanni IDPs still in the camps. While there is still much to be done, we must acknowledge the incredible dedication and commitment of the staff working so diligently on developing mental health care services for the IDPs.

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

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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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