



# Refuge:

**COHI's relief efforts in disaster and conflict areas**



**Circle of Health**  
INTERNATIONAL

# Louisiana

## Hurricane Katrina Transitional Relief Project

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, COHI partnered with Acadiana Outreach Center—a homeless support center in Lafayette, Louisiana—to set up the Transitional Recovery Action Center for Katrina/Rita evacuees (TRACK). In addition to providing job training, job placement,

### Organizational Background

Circle of Health International's mission is to build the capacity of women's health care professionals in crisis settings around the world. We operate on the tenets of consensus-based decision-making, non-violence, and the grassroots model of social change. In doing so, we hope that our transparent, conscious, and compassionate approach to addressing the growing needs of crisis-affected women leaves the world a more peaceful and equitable place than we found it.

and housing assistance, TRACK social workers and case managers—evacuees themselves—worked with individual evacuees to assess their physical, mental, and emotional needs and implement plans for action. This holistic approach not only identified unmet needs and helped evacuees access available resources, but also provided the support and encouragement crucial for moving beyond trauma and toward stability, empowerment, and well-being.

COHI worked tirelessly to ensure that women's health care needs were addressed at every stage of the transition process. COHI designed and implemented an assessment of female evacuees' health needs, trained TRACK case managers in gender sensitivity, held workshops to support evacuees' psychosocial



needs, and established partnerships with local organizations to ensure a strong continuum of care.

COHI also supported the Center through grant writing and fundraising. In just a few months, COHI raised over \$140,000 to support the Center's work.

For more information about COHI's work to support Hurricane Katrina evacuees, please contact Laura Williams, Project Manager, at [lauranwilliams@gmail.com](mailto:lauranwilliams@gmail.com).



*COHI member Adam Rosenbloom with Acadiana Outreach Center Director Valerie Keller*

# Sri Lanka

## Tsunami Remembrance: Loving what's left

In late December of 2004, the earth cracked open and, collectively, humanity wept. That day a devastating tsunami ravaged parts of South-East Asia and Eastern Africa, killing over 200,000 people and leaving countless others bereft. Today those affected are still trying to put their lives back together.

Circle of Health International (COHI) played a quiet, yet powerful role in the aftermath of this disaster in Sri Lanka. COHI sent a team of 11 women's health professionals of nurses, midwives and trauma specialists to assist the women of Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. Through our two months of relief efforts, we provided much needed women's focused support in local clinics and refugee camps, trained seventeen local women as researchers, conducted the first women's health needs assessment, and provided three, \$5000 cash grants to local groups working with women.

Two members of our team in Sri Lanka were Lynne Hudson, from Texas, and Sumatra Dhamadeva, a Sri Lankan woman. Lynne was responding to her personal desire to help women in Sri Lanka heal themselves, their families, and their



*Lynne Hudson, a Circle of Health volunteer, with Sri Lankan women*

communities. Sumatra Dhamadeva also responded in a personal way by working as COHI's interpreter in Sri Lanka after having recently lost her husband and her livelihood due to the tsunami and illness.

Both are feisty women, full of life. Before the disaster, Sumatra was a successful businesswoman, homeowner, and vital member of her community. When Lynne met her, Sumatra had recently been widowed and was living in a small tent, always immaculately clean, in a refugee camp. On Lynne's last night in Batticaloa, Sumatra invited Lynne to her brother's home for dinner where this family who had lost so much gave generously not only of the delicious meal they shared, but of themselves as they told stories of those they loved who had been lost.



This friendship is just one of the many sustained results volunteers at COHI forge everyday. In the face of such terrible sadness, to know that you have a friend is invaluable.

COHI continues to support women living in Tibet, Tanzania, Israel, Sudan, and Palestine. To learn how YOU can connect with women living in crises, visit's COHI's website: [www.cohintl.org](http://www.cohintl.org)



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