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NGO Update

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To foster communication among human rights organizations around the world, each issue of the Human Rights Brief features an “NGO Update.” This space was created to aid non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by informing others about their programs, successes, and challenges. The views of the organizations below do not necessarily reflect those of the Human Rights Brief. For information on how to submit updates for your organization, please see the instructions provided at the end of the column.

This fall the NGO Update is focused on organizations working along the Gulf Coast of the United States in communities that were affected by the recent hurricanes.

US HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
www.ushrnetwork.org

The US Human Rights Network was formed to promote U.S. adherence to international human rights standards by building linkages between organizations and individuals working on human rights issues in the United States. The Network strives toward building a human rights culture in the United States that puts those directly affected by human rights violations in a central leadership role. The Network also seeks to connect the U.S. human rights movement with broader social justice movements in the country and around the world. It is headed by a Coordinating Committee comprised of leading human rights organizers, lawyers, policy analysts, educators, researchers, and scholars. The leadership also includes individuals directly affected by human rights violations. Hadar Harris, Executive Director of the American University Washington College of Law Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, is a member of the Network’s Coordinating Committee.

The US Human Rights Network has been assisting members with responding to the recent hurricanes along the Gulf Coast of the United States. The Network has set up a blog page, http://ushrnetwork.typepad.com/hurricane_katrina, where members and readers can discuss forthcoming issues and post concerns and hopes for dealing with the aftermath of the hurricanes. It has also set up a webpage, http://www.ushrnetwork.org/page5.cfm, with links to some of the latest alternative news on the hurricanes. In addition, the US Human Rights Network has identified several direct-service organizations that are accepting donations and/or shipments of non-perishable items for people in need in Louisiana and Texas:

Center for LIFE Outreach Center  
Attn: Minister Pamela Robinson  
121 Saint Landry Street  
Lafayette, LA 70506  
(337) 504-5374

Mohammad Mosque 65  
Attn: Minister Andrew Muhammad  
2600 Plank Road  
Baton Rouge, LA 70805  
(225) 923-1400  
(225) 357-3079

Lewis Temple CME Church  
Attn: Rev. Dr. Ricky Helton  
272 Medgar Evers Street  
Grambling, LA 71245  
(318) 247-3793

St. Luke Community United Methodist Church  
c/o Hurricane Katrina Victims  
Attn: Pastor Tom Waitschies  
5710 East R.L. Thornton Freeway  
Dallas, TX 75223  
(214) 821-2970

S.H.A.P.E. Community Center  
Attn: Deloyd Parker  
3815 Live Oak  
Houston, TX 77004  
(713) 521-0641

Southern Empowerment Project (SEP)  
www.southerneempowerment.org

The Southern Empowerment Project (SEP) is an association of member-run, community-based organizations. SEP supports oppressed communities in Kentucky, South Carolina, and Tennessee in challenging racism and social injustice. SEP recruits and trains community leaders to assist organizations in the southern United States to solve community problems. SEP training sessions include in-depth community organizing and grassroots fundraising. Topics addressed in the community organizing trainings include building membership, legal defense, public education, advocacy, and action.
organizations, models of social change, the role of organizers, leadership development, grassroots fundraising, challenging "isms" (racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism), accountability, and strategy. Fundraising training topics include: appropriate methods in different approaches to social change; who gives money and why; the role of the organizer and the fundraiser; developing a donor base; and elements of successful fundraising programs.

The SEP is providing organizational support to community organizations and social justice groups involved in rebuilding neighborhoods, towns, and cities along the Gulf Coast of the United States that were severely hit by hurricanes this fall. A list of the organizations that SEP is associated with is available on the organization’s website.

**The Mississippi Workers’ Center For Human Rights**

[www.msworkerscenter.org](http://www.msworkerscenter.org)

The Mississippi Workers’ Center for Human Rights was founded in 1996 in Oxford, Mississippi, by human rights activist and attorney Jaribu Hill. The Center’s concept grew out of the Southern Human Rights Organizers’ Conference in September 1996, where activists recognized the need for a new approach to solving the pressing problems facing Mississippi’s low-wage workers, most of whom are not unionized. The workers had no recourse and needed programs that spoke to the quality of their lives both inside and outside of the workplace. The Center began providing organizing support, legal representation, and training for low-wage, non-union workers in the state of Mississippi shortly thereafter. As an advocacy organization that links legal strategies with organizing strategies, the Center represents an alternative to traditional labor organizations. The Center now has a membership of over 600 workers and supporters.

The Center’s work focuses on two primary campaign areas: “Terror on the Plant Floor,” which assists workers in challenging hate crimes in the workplace (e.g., hanging nooses in public places, Ku Klux Klan terror, and racist graffiti on bathroom walls), and “Dying to Make a Living,” which focuses on environmental justice in the workplace and provides workers with information about chemical poisons and toxic substances. In response to the devastation by the hurricanes this fall, the Center has also established the Mississippi Workers’ Center Southern Relief Fund for Hurricane Katrina Victims. This is a separate fund that is used to provide relief to hurricane victims.

*The Human Rights Brief is accepting submissions for the next edition of “NGO Update.” If your organization has an event or situation it would like to publicize, please send a short description to hrbrief@wcl.american.edu and include “NGO Update” in the subject heading of the message. Please limit your submission to two paragraphs. The Human Rights Brief reserves the right to edit for content and space limitations.*

Lauren Bartlett, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of Law, covers NGOs for the Human Rights Brief.