



Media Advisory

For Immediate Release

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New Orleans Community Leaders to Visit Asia For Exchange of Hurricane-Tsunami Survivors

New Orleans, LA, September 7, 2006--Representatives from the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, the New Orleans East Vietnamese community, The Welfare Rights Organization of Gentilly, and St. Bernard Public Housing Complex "Survivors Village" are among a group of New Orleans housing and community activists visiting Aceh, Indonesia and coastal Thailand. They plan to tour areas affected by the 2004 tsunami and meet with small fishing communities and local grass roots organizations that are leading a people-driven rebuilding process and defending the human right to housing.

The visit is being coordinated by the New Orleans-based National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness (NPACH) and the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI), and follows a visit to New Orleans in June of activists from the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR). The on-going exchange between community leaders from some of the hardest-hit areas of the Gulf Coast and their counterparts in Asia represents an effort to learn firsthand about what survivors of the tsunami and hurricane, respectively, have been doing to rebuild their homes and lives.

The destruction from the Asian tsunami wiped out whole villages and left many of the poorest displaced from their homes, communities, and livelihoods. Many of the survivors that teamed up with ACHR received little or no support from their government and were in fact prohibited from rebuilding, in deference to commercial real estate and tourism ventures. Ignoring this forced exclusion, they built a network that provides support for participatory reconstruction, reoccupied their villages and are building thousands of homes on their own terms.

"This is an excellent opportunity to complete the first exchange and to learn, in person, from people advancing the rebuilding process in another part of the world. Though it is far away, we face similar challenges and hope to learn from their experience," said Pam Dashiell, President of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association

The New Orleans group will visit the Network of Tsunami-affected Communities in Rannong and Phang Nga Province, Thailand, featuring meetings and dialogue with small fishing villages that have negotiated for resettlement, community lease housing projects, land sharing and cooperative agreements. The New Orleans group will also spend several days visiting and touring with the Urban Poor Consortium in Indonesia to learn first hand about rebuilding efforts underway in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

For more information on NPACH's tsunami-hurricane exchange, contact Tom Carton, tcarton@npach.org, (504) 524-8751