



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

Refugees And Migrants Risk All To Seek Safety, Hope In New Lands

FALL 2015



IOCC/Apostoli

Dressed for rough travel and toting backpacks filled with all they own in the world, Sana along with her husband and three daughters left behind the life they knew in Damascus to seek a safer one in Europe. More than 1,000 miles separate Syria from their destination, but the desperation to flee a deadly civil war is driving them and tens of thousands of other refugees from Syria to make the long and dangerous journey. The trek is a combination of boats, buses, trains, and walking. Many land in Greece first. From there, they head north on foot, walking hundreds of miles through the Balkans in hopes of reaching Western Europe.

IOCC has been assisting Syria's displaced and exiled families since 2012 and is expanding its humanitarian reach to meet the needs of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece and Serbia. On Greece's Chios, Samos, and Kos islands, IOCC is providing thousands of refugees with relief including food, hygiene and infant supplies, as well as access to renovated shelters and sanitation facilities so that refugees have a comfortable place to rest and take care of hygiene needs in privacy. In Serbia, IOCC shelter repairs and distributed meals, water, and hygiene and infant supplies are giving comfort to 15,500 people at immigration centers in the towns of Bujanovac and Preševo.

"I just want my children to be safe and happy," said Sana. "In Syria, our lives were in danger all the time." In spite of their tired state, the family was already eager to move on from Chios to the next leg of their journey - to a new country where their children can receive a good education and grow up far from the memories of war.

Inside News & Needs

- Conferences Give Teens Fresh Outlook on Serving God through Others.. pg. 2
- From The Executive Director..... pg. 2
- New High School A Gateway For Hopeful Uganda Teens pg. 3
- Bridging The Opportunity Gap For Refugee Children pg. 3
- Spiritual Reflection..... pg. 4

FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

Dear IOCC friends,

This fall marked a milestone in my family. My son and daughter advanced to high school. As I sent them off on their first day, I said a silent prayer of thanks for being able to provide them with this opportunity to learn and grow.

As parents, we all want the best for our children – the best education and the best opportunities to carry them through adulthood. Providing the gift of learning can be nearly impossible for parents living in poverty or struggling to survive through war.

IOCC is working to help foster education for some of the world's most vulnerable children. In Lebanon, IOCC is upgrading public schools to accommodate the influx of Syrian refugee children, while in Uganda, a new school built by IOCC brings education and hope to hundreds of children in a remote rural village.

Your support makes a difference not just today, but years from now when these children become parents trying to give their families the best they can. On behalf of the children whose lives you are changing for the better, thank you.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

CONFERENCES GIVE TEENS FRESH OUTLOOK ON SERVING GOD THROUGH OTHERS



It was not summer as usual for more than 50 Orthodox Christian high school students.

They came together in Minneapolis and Chicago from more than 30 different dioceses to experience Serve-X-Treme, a program focused on strengthening their understanding of Orthodox philanthropy and putting it into practice. During each of the weeklong gatherings, the youth participated in workshops led by Orthodox community leaders and experienced hands-on service activities ranging from building homes for the disadvantaged to distributing books to at-risk youth, and preparing and serving meals to the homeless.

Dimitri Godur of Miami, Florida, says the experience completely changed the way he views community service. "Our projects and discussions truly gave me a different and fresh perspective on what it means to serve God through others, and being able to put these ideas into practice was also a blessing."

"I think the greatest 'aha' moment for me was just interacting with the people we were serving," added Sia Konstantinopoulos of Akron, Ohio. "I had never really been around a lot of poverty before, and I think I had a lot of judgments going in. When I actually got to know them, all of my negative stereotypes were washed away."

Serve-X-Treme Minneapolis was made possible with the support of the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Foundation while the Chicago conference received generous support from the John C. Kulis Charitable Foundation.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian relief agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America and a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy.

IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.



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NEW HIGH SCHOOL A GATEWAY FOR HOPEFUL UGANDA TEENS



Children's laughter and splashing water flow freely across the grounds of a new high school in Butembe, Uganda. The newly constructed school and water system are welcome additions to this community

where 500 children from 5-18 used to attend classes taught by a solitary teacher in an unfurnished one-room brick school. IOCC built the school in this village near Lake Victoria to improve access to learning for Uganda's teens seeking the knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges of adulthood.

Four classrooms equipped with desks, chairs, and essential teaching equipment, as well as bathrooms and an administrative office make up the new school designed to hold 240 students. A new well and rainwater-harvesting system ensure that the children will have access to safe water, a major concern in an area where existing water sources are often severely contaminated.

With cooperation of the Holy Archdiocese of Kampala and All Uganda of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa and generous support from the St. Nektarios Education Fund, IOCC has constructed three other schools in Uganda, providing access to education for more than 700 children living in Gulu and in the Lwemiyaga region.

BRIDGING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

Tears come easily when Joseph, 13, describes his former life in Syria ... living in a nice house with his parents and two brothers in a quiet neighborhood, gathering after school with friends to play soccer or go for strawberry ice cream, his favorite. It's all gone now, and he knows he will never see it again.

Joseph was only 9 when his family fled from the city of Hama to Lebanon at the start of Syria's civil war in 2011. They settled in the village of Kfarhazir, where his father now farms a small piece of land to sustain the family. Joseph has been able to continue his education with nearly 50 other Syrian refugee children at a local public school rehabilitated by IOCC. It is one of 61 Lebanese public schools in disrepair being renovated by IOCC to improve the learning environment for 18,500 Lebanese schoolchildren and their Syrian refugee classmates.

Lebanon's limited education resources and an influx of thousands of Syrian refugee children has severely strained the country's ability to educate so many new students in its existing schools. IOCC is helping ease the strain on the school system's infrastructure with upgraded electrical systems and

newly installed communal bathrooms, drinking fountains, windows, and doors.

Joseph, a top student back in Syria, continues to work hard at mastering math and science so that he can keep moving towards his dream of being an engineer one day. He believes that here, far from the dangers of war, he can see his dreams for the future come true.



IOCC, Theosis, and Orthodox Unity

IOCC offers us many opportunities. It offers us the opportunity to give together, witness to the world, and it offers us the opportunity to serve together. Giving is an integral part of Christianity because God, Who is love, gives and takes care of us. If we are to join in His life, we need to be giving and loving with Him, in Him and for Him. Our union with God is expressed by His mercy and love through us. To be Christian, we need to love His world, share His love and praise God. Christ offers unceasing praise and love for the Father and Holy Spirit, as well as care for us. He shows perfect love and perfect mercy. In Him, we need to be doing the same.

IOCC brings together all of the Orthodox jurisdictions in our common need to give and to serve. This Church agency allows us to serve the poorest and neediest throughout the world. It also allows us to do ministry where we Orthodox have, through our Orthodox Churches abroad, a wide network allowing for great work in underserved areas. IOCC allows us to multiply our gifts and share in God's love.



It also allows us to witness.

IOCC helps with Orthodox unity in America by showing the world that we are working together for common goals, by allowing us to better know and love each other, and by becoming aware of who we all are and what the needs of Orthodox throughout the world are. We witness to America, to churches in our mother countries, and to each other when we band

together and work for IOCC.

IOCC can help us grow in our relationships with God and each other, allow us to serve and love, and witness to our country, our world, and each other. IOCC helps us to grow as Orthodox Christian persons and to grow together in Christ.

Bishop John
*Antiochian Orthodox Bishop of
Worcester and New England*



Infant Kits Are Needed!

Help a child in need.
Find easy to follow
kit assembly directions
at ioccc.org/kits

PARTNERS IN COMPASSION

As little as 33¢ a day
can make a difference!

Join IOCC's Partners in Compassion
monthly giving program and
help ensure that we respond quickly
and effectively to people in need.

ioccc.org/monthly