

# NEWS & NEEDS

INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

SPRING 2017

## BACK ON HIS FEET: FATHER TAMIRU OVERCOMES PODOCONIOSIS

Father Tamiru lives in Gozamen District in Ethiopia, where the red clay soil is rich in silica. Chronic exposure to the soil from working barefoot in his fields triggered an inflammatory response called podoconiosis (podo) that caused swelling and disfigurement of his feet and lower legs. And because many Ethiopians, like Father Tamiru, rely on agriculture for their livelihood and go barefoot while farming, podo is all too prevalent in the country.

Father Tamiru was confined to his home due to the debilitating swelling, as well as the stigma that he faced from members of his community who attributed his condition to a curse. He was no longer able to work in his fields, go to the market, or participate in other daily activities. Then, through the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, he found hope:

*"One Sunday, my hopes changed. At that time, the priest [giving that day's service] announced that podoconiosis is preventable and treatable and that those living with Zehone (podo) should seek treatment offered by IOCC ... After obtaining the education on the treatment and prevention of Zehone from IOCC staff, I now wash my feet daily with water and soap ... Most importantly, I want to stay healthy and lead a productive life."*

Following his new regimen, Father Tamiru's feet are now healthy, and he is back to farming. Using his role in the Church, he also teaches others in his community about the importance of good foot hygiene in preventing and treating podo, and incorporates these lessons in sermons and Church activities.

Since 2009, IOCC has been working in cooperation with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, medical epidemiologist Dr. Gail Davey of Brighton and Sussex Medical School, TOMS, and health extension workers of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health in an effort to eradicate podo, which impacts an estimated three million people in Ethiopia alone. The program includes prevention activity (including the distribution of shoes to more than 80,000 people annually), treatment of podo patients, and education to raise awareness of the condition's causes and to dispel the stigma surrounding it.



**IOCC**  **25**  
YEARS

INSPIRED BY FAITH. DRIVEN BY PURPOSE.

**COMMEMORATING  
25 YEARS OF SERVICE**

*Thank You for Making a Difference through IOCC!*

[iocc.org/25years](http://iocc.org/25years)





*From the*  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Friends,

Christ is Risen!

In my 24 years at IOCC, I have been privileged to meet people from all walks of life who have the

courage, determination, and faith to respond to the greatest challenges that one can imagine.

From farmers in Ethiopia who suffer from a disabling disease, to the youth in Gaza who yearn for self-growth in the face of crippling economic depression, and the pensioner in Greece whose dream of retirement was interrupted by the financial crisis, people around the globe strive by the grace of God to live with dignity.

The team at IOCC is humbled by the resiliency of the human spirit to overcome adversity.

IOCC's 25th Anniversary bears witness to the steadfast support of our hierarchs, Board of Directors, Orthodox faithful, ecumenical partners and institutional donors. Since our first airlift to

Russia in 1992, we have grown into a professional relief and development agency, serving people in more than 60 countries by providing over \$600 million in program services.

We thank our generous donors and volunteers, like you, who have been with us on this journey over the past 25 years. Your support has been critical as you have helped people with critical assistance during wars, hurricanes, wildfires and droughts. You have helped children grow up healthy. You most importantly have helped people rebuild their lives, sharing with them God's gifts of food, shelter, economic self-sufficiency and hope.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and those people whose hearts and lives you have touched, I thank you.

Christ is Risen!

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director & CEO

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## THANK YOU FROM TANZANIA!

Through your support, IOCC's Katherine Valone "St. Photini" Water Fund has provided clean water to over 30,000 people of the Mwanza Archdiocese in rural Tanzania. Whereas mothers and children might have walked miles previously to find water, they now only have to take a few steps.

The students of St. Sosthenes Secondary School, one of the project's beneficiaries, send their thanks to you: *"Our great appreciation to you for the good water flowing system here at school! Before it existed, the situation was so much worse because students had no choice but to wake up early to get water from the natural well located far from the school compound ... You recognized our problem and helped the school. We say thanks and appreciate you for hearing our voices and cries."*





## ORTHODOX ACTION TEAMS JOIN IN HELPING NEIGHBORS

The first IOCC Action Team of 2017 gathered in Mandeville, Louisiana for the Fourth Annual Seminarian Home Build. Ten seminarians representing Holy Cross, St. Vladimir's, St. Tikhon's, and Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminaries participated. The team was led by IOCC Frontliner Dn. Dan Gray, with Fr. Mark Vair from St. Ephraim Antiochian Orthodox Church in San Antonio acting as the Spiritual Advisor. Action Teams, one component of IOCC's US program, promote Orthodox volunteerism to help people rebuild and recover after natural disaster. Since the IOCC Action Team Program was formed in 2005, over 235 homes have been built by Orthodox seminarians and lay volunteers.

## HOPE IN HARDSHIP

Anwar's father suffers from cancer, leaving the family without a primary breadwinner. Yet her parents believed fervently that she should finish her accounting degree and borrowed money from extended family to pay for her tuition. After graduating, she was selected to participate in IOCC's paid apprenticeship program, which allowed her to help her family financially. And because she impressed her employer so much, she was offered a full-time role with the organization.

Anwar is one of over 1,000 participants in IOCC's paid apprenticeship program, which gives Gaza youth between the ages of 18 and 24 the skills and confidence that they need to advance their careers while also serving their communities. As Gaza experiences high youth unemployment that exceeds 40%, this program is giving hope to many despite Gaza's weak economy.

*"For years, I was dreaming of this opportunity. Now I'm adding value to the community while supporting my family. IOCC has saved my life. I owe big thanks to IOCC and the Peace Winds Japan for making the opportunity available for me."*

(See chart on page 4)



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.



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL  
ORTHODOX BISHOPS  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IOCC is a member of  
**actalliance**

## REFLECTING ON THE FOUNDING OF IOCC

Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos writes about St. Paul's conversion as a "Damascus moment." He describes these as moments of illumination, moments of transformation and self-knowledge, moments of renewal and empowerment for missions.

On March 10, 1992, Orthodox Christians hierarchs and lay leaders came together to form International Orthodox Christian Charities to be our hand of compassion reaching out to those in need in times of war, civil unrest, natural disaster, and economic hardship. Damascus moment? Yes!

Thank you to all of the Hierarchs of the Assembly of Canonical Bishops of the United States of America for your love and support these past 25 years. Thank you to all Orthodox clergy and lay people who have so generously given of their time, talent, and treasures to support IOCC as we strive to fulfill our mission.

## HOPE IN HARDSHIP

IOCC In Gaza (cont'd from page 3)

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INSPIRED BY FAITH. DRIVEN BY PURPOSE.



In partnership with

**30 COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**



**1000+ GAZA YOUTH HIRED AS PAID APPRENTICES**

*giving them the opportunity to learn skills and earn income*



**THEIR WORK IMPACTED 43000+ LIVES**

*by expanding social services in Gaza, where youth unemployment is among the highest in the world (42%)*



**49 YOUTH PROMOTED TO FULL-TIME POSITIONS**

*in education, social work, finance, rehabilitation, nursing, and other roles*

## UPCOMING IOCC 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EVENTS IN THE US

[iocc.org/events](http://iocc.org/events)

- May 6, 2017 - Sacramento, CA  
Odyssey of Hope
- May 6-7, 2017 - Pittsburgh, PA  
Pittsburgh Marathon Weekend
- May 11, 2017 - Chicago, IL  
25th Anniversary Grand Banquet
- May 13, 2017 - New York, NY  
25th Anniversary Celebration
- June 3, 2017 - Potomac, MD  
Reception for Syrian Relief
- June 9, 2017 - Cleveland, OH  
25th Anniversary Celebration

## 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.

[iocc.org/monthly](http://iocc.org/monthly)

