



Social workers complete a training workshop in assisting students with specialized social and educational needs.

Building Educational Expertise in Romania

IOCC grant supports Church curriculum, training program for social workers

With a grant from IOCC, Federation Filantropia, a social ministry of the Romanian Orthodox Church, has developed and certified a specialized training curriculum for social workers to help them obtain the skills they need to work with underserved children. The Romanian Orthodox Church has over 95 child daycare centers and some 40 kindergartens and after-school programs for kids. This project trained more than 100 social workers to assist children with special needs and those who require particular social support.

After completing the curriculum, professionals from 25 of those care centers now have expertise in legal and social counseling for families, supervising and guiding children's educational process, developing a personalized plan for each child, advocating for a child's interests, preparing psychosocial and physical profiles of the children, and integrating the children into their communities. Federation Filantropia has laid the foundation for a strong training program to help ensure that the next generation receives a solid education.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen! It is an honor to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord with you, remembering the hope that it brings, and the hope that you offer through your prayers and generosity.

This Lent, we have considered service as a kind of almsgiving. IOCC's daily humanitarian work is just one instance of this. Each of us plays a part, and you—IOCC's faithful supporters—are key to the service that the entire organization ultimately offers. Without your compassion, dedication, hard work, and generosity, these projects wouldn't be possible.

In *On Fasting*, St. John Chrysostom wrote, "Show me your fast with your works.... If you see someone who is poor, show him mercy." This is what we strive to do at IOCC, shoulder to shoulder with you—from supporting mothers in Lebanon to building schools in Uganda, and from bolstering new businesses in Greece to training young professionals in Gaza.

As we move from fasting into our Church's central feast, what could be more humbling than offering this service to God, with the prayer that He will multiply that offering.

May our merciful God extend His loving care through us, allowing us to humbly share hope with those who face great need.

Christ is risen!

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

Breaking New Ground in Uganda

Upgrades continue to rural Lwemiyaga school

IOCC, in partnership with the St. Nektarios Education Fund, has helped build and update three schools run by the Uganda Orthodox Church. In rural Lwemiyaga, one school recently received upgrades to improve students' day-to-day experience, including a privately funded dormitory for female students and a rainwater-harvesting system to collect water for laundry and washing. A second dorm is now in the works.

During a recent visit to the Lwemiyaga school, IOCC Executive Director and CEO Constantine Triantafilou attended a blessing of the land where the new dorm will stand, as well as a ribbon cutting, at which His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah presided. Construction has begun on the building's foundation. When it is completed, the school will be equipped to provide housing to both male and female students.

The school serves over 200 schoolchildren, and a well on its premises (also a collaboration between IOCC and the Fund) ensures access to safe drinking water for students and surrounding villagers. Improving this school by expanding its facilities will allow it to serve its students and the community for years to come.

Workers and staff lay the foundation of the new school dormitory in rural Lwemiyaga.



International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC), is the official humanitarian relief and development 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

a member of the
actalliance



Asmaa (far right) with other women in her mothers' support group and IOCC senior health officer Joyce Hayek in Bekaa, Lebanon.

Creating Community Improves Health Among Refugee Mothers, Children

Volunteer-led support groups offer solidarity, better access to care in Bekaa, Lebanon

As the mother of a two-year-old, Asmaa* knows how challenging it can be to keep her family healthy, even under ideal circumstances. It's all the more difficult for residents of underserved neighborhoods or refugee settlements, where access to basic care is limited.

In Lebanon, host to over a million Syrian refugees, many mothers are raising their children far from home and the communities they once knew. A refugee herself, Asmaa, 23, also understands how important it is for mothers to have a support network. She's been living in the Bekaa Valley since the crisis began seven years ago and knows firsthand what it's like to bring a child into the uncertain world of a refugee settlement. That's why she decided to volunteer with IOCC, leading a mothers' support group for fellow refugees.

The mother-care groups IOCC has established serve women who don't have reliable access to pre- and postnatal care, helping connect new and expecting mothers to other women and the knowledge they can provide. Asmaa is one of 14 volunteers whom IOCC has trained in maternal and child health; they now support 140 mothers with children under age two, fostering improved health.

*Pseudonym used

continued on page 4



Become a part of sustainable solutions around the world! Your monthly gift will offer help and hope to families in need.

iocc.org/monthly

IOCC EVENTS • iocc.org/events

- April 21: Virginia Beach, VA – 5K Walk/Run
- April 22: Boston, MA – All That Jazz
- April 26: Chicago, IL – IOCC Grand Banquet
- May 5-6: Pittsburgh, PA – Pittsburgh Marathon
- May 19: South Bend, IN – IOCC 5K Walk/Run
- May 29: Pittsburgh, PA – Singles Gathering

Creating Community Improves Health Among Refugee Mothers, Children

continued from page 3

At monthly meetings, the women discuss health concerns, following a curriculum that addresses topics such as nutrition during pregnancy, the importance of breastfeeding, maternal and newborn care, and food safety. The volunteers also meet individually with each of the 10 women in their group for one-on-one conversations about key messages and any associated challenges. This helps ensure full understanding and allows private conversations about pregnancy and motherhood to develop naturally.

Asmaa serves as a role model and can gently encourage peers to adopt good health practices, improving their own and their children's health. If specialized assistance is needed – for example, if a woman has trouble breastfeeding or becomes ill during pregnancy – the group leader refers her to an IOCC healthcare field officer who can provide additional care.

“Children bring the utmost joy in this world,” said Asmaa, who learned a great deal from the training and takes joy in supporting others. “Now I know how to treat my child's colic [and] take care of hygiene and other childcare issues ... I also share the information I learned with my neighbors and family members, so they can benefit too.” Helping the young women around her brings Asmaa satisfaction, whether she does this in her mothers' group or in informal conversation, and she feels strongly that her volunteer service is valuable. She's committed to serving those around her, amid difficult circumstances, offering hope for good health and a brighter future.



Current Agricultural Development Projects

In many parts of the world, because of your generous support, IOCC offers training, equipment, and technical assistance to increase the productivity and sustainability of small farms and household gardens. During the coming weeks, watch for updates on IOCC's current agricultural projects at ioccc.org/blog and @IOCCRelief on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



IOCC®

