



## SUPPORT FOR WORKER COOPERATIVES CREATES JOBS FOR FAMILIES IN GREECE

For more than a decade, Christos, 38, made a living selling sweets and newspapers at his busy Athens kiosk. But his business took a drastic downturn along with Greece’s economy, making it harder each month to pay rent and grocery bills. With few job prospects in Athens, Christos moved his family of four back to his grandfather’s village of Kato Poroia - Serres in northern Greece. He joined a farming cooperative of 30 families growing oregano for Europe’s culinary market.

Worker cooperatives, or co-ops, benefit small farmers and other trades by providing training, support networks, and help to

bring their products to market on a larger, more profitable scale.

As part of the “Give for Greece” program, IOCC is assisting co-ops made up of farmers, fisherman, bakers and agricultural product producers who play a pivotal role in revitalizing Greece’s rural communities.

One of the biggest obstacles to their success is the lack of funds needed to expand their businesses and employ more people. IOCC and Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece, are helping 24 co-ops in northern Greece become more productive and profitable with agricultural and business training, as well as funding to buy supplies, equipment and machinery needed to sustain and grow their operations. In return, participating co-ops donate a portion of their products to local social welfare institutions such as orphanages and elder care homes. So far, more than 850 rural families are benefitting from the assistance, including Christos with his wife and two small children. “It is hard work,” said Christos, “but here I know I can build a better future for my family.”



Rada K. Tierney/IOCC

### Inside News & Needs

- School Snacks Fuel Bodies and Minds of Refugee Children in Lebanon ..... pg. 2
- From The Executive Director.. pg. 2
- Hope Springs from Safe Water for Families in Tanzania ..... pg. 3
- IOCC Farm Project Helps Feed Families in Jordan ..... pg. 3
- Spiritual Reflection ..... pg. 4

FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

## PRESERVING A LIFE OF DIGNITY

One of the most rewarding experiences in my work at IOCC is meeting the people that we serve. Many live in extreme poverty or hardship, yet these families welcome me, a perfect stranger, into their humble homes with warmth and hospitality. They have very little, but are always proud to be able to offer a drink, a meal, or a comfortable place to sit. It's a matter of dignity for them.

Preserving a person's dignity is at the heart of IOCC's humanitarian efforts. In Jordan and in Greece, unemployed fathers are receiving agricultural training to earn a sustainable living from producing food for their family table and for market. School snacks provided each morning to thousands of Syrian and Iraqi refugee children in Lebanon allow them to focus on learning instead of hiding their hunger from classmates for fear of being pitied.

Your generous support of IOCC makes it possible to offer a helping hand to those most in need, and helps preserve the dignity of our vulnerable brothers and sisters around the world. These stories are compelling examples of how your compassion is answering the call by our Heavenly Father to help "the least of us" find their way to better days so that we can all share a life full of hope and dignity.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director & CEO

SCHOOL SNACKS FUEL BODIES  
AND MINDS OF REFUGEE  
CHILDREN IN LEBANON

Learning is hard when your empty stomach is rumbling louder than the teacher's voice. That's been the harsh reality for Ahmad, 15, a Syrian refugee from Aleppo now living in Lebanon and attending school in Mount Lebanon. His family was safe but penniless, and many days Ahmed was sent to school without breakfast.

Hunger has also been a constant companion to Mirna, 12, an Iraqi refugee. Her family along with many other Christian minority families from Baghdad fled with nothing a year and a half ago when their neighborhoods came under attack. They found refuge in Lebanon, but Mirna faced a new struggle – spending hours at school with nothing to eat.

IOCC, with support from the United Nations World Food Programme, is helping ease childhood hunger for Lebanon's most vulnerable children. Every morning, more than 10,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugee children and their Lebanese classmates receive a nutritious snack with milk or juice. The distribution stretches across 13 schools located in the most vulnerable communities where classes are conducted in two shifts to accommodate Lebanese school children in the morning and refugee children in the afternoon.

Olive stuffed muffins or fortified cookies are welcome treats to hungry children like Ahmed and Mirna. The nutrition program aims to reduce hunger, increase student enrollment and retention rates, and improve the health of disadvantaged students.



Ramal Hage/IOCC

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.*



Published four times a year by IOCC, News & Needs is edited by Mark Hodde and Rada Tierney.



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## HOPE SPRINGS FROM SAFE WATER FOR FAMILIES IN TANZANIA



Mark Gruhn/IOCC

Limited access to reliable sources of safe, clean water for drinking, cooking and washing is a daily challenge in many parts of rural Tanzania. Children, especially girls, bear a special burden, often missing school to walk long distances to fetch and carry heavy 40-pound containers of water that is seldom clean or safe to drink. IOCC in collaboration with St. Paul's and St. Barbara's Greek Orthodox Churches in California is supporting the Holy Orthodox Archdiocese of Mwanza, Tanzania in improving water access.

At least 12 newly drilled wells centrally located at village schools and church properties will serve the water needs of nearly 30,000 people living in rural villages, and establish the Archdiocese as an independent provider of clean, safe water to remote communities well into the future. All wells undergo strict safety and quality testing before they are put into use and local communities share the responsibility for the care,

maintenance and safeguarding of the wells. These new sources will help bring reliable access to safe water closer to home, significantly reduce water-borne illness and help keep children in the classroom where they can get an education and improve their prospects for the future.

## IOCC FARM PROJECT HELPS FEED FAMILIES IN JORDAN

Putting food on the table for her five children is a daily struggle for Ekhlis, 48. Jobs are scarce in rural Jordan, and the little land that she and her husband own does not produce enough crops due to low rainfall and poor desert soil.

When her husband finds work on neighboring farms, Ekhlis is able to provide fresh vegetables and milk for her family. Too often though, they go hungry. Being able to provide enough nutritious food is a challenge faced by many rural Jordanian families, and civil war in neighboring Syria has increased the burden. The influx of more than 651,000 Syrian refugees into Jordan has overwhelmed this small, arid country of 6.6 million as it labors to house, feed and care for the refugees as well as Jordanian families. The increased drain on Jordan's resources is driving vulnerable families deeper into poverty. IOCC is responding to the need for better food security with an agricultural assistance program for nearly 50 vulnerable rural families. With support from Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ajalat and cooperation from the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture, IOCC is building water catchments, conducting water conservation and animal husbandry training, and providing families with seedlings or livestock. Through the project, Ekhlis received five goats and training on how care for and grow the herd. Now her days are filled with a steady supply of milk and dairy products for their needs, and enough to sell at market.



Dimitrie Djukic/IOCC

## OUR OFFERINGS TO GOD – AND OTHERS

As we proceed through Holy Scripture, we will find amongst the prophets that the litmus test of a person's sincere devotion to God is their care and concern for the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger. James, the brother of our Lord says, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27). In the Book of Leviticus 19:9-10 we read: "Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God."

The major point, we find once again, is that every good and perfect gift comes from God. There is nothing we have that did not come from Him. Secondly, because He is our Creator and Redeemer, we should honor the Lord and express our gratitude through giving back to Him the First-Fruits of all with which He has blessed us. Third, our gratitude to the Lord for His saving acts in our own lives is not limited to what we offer to Him, but is also expressed in our helping those in need, i.e., the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger. In 1 John 3:17-18 we read: "We know love by this that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." The Scripture here does not simply refer to those as brothers who share the same earthly mother and father or ancestral heritage, but all who have in common our Heavenly Father and are made in His image and likeness.

The Most Reverend Mark  
*Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania  
 Orthodox Church in America*



Rada K. Tierney/IOCC

**HELP FOR FAMILIES IN GREECE**  
 Scan here to see how you are making  
 an impact on families in Greece

## Volunteer for an IOCC Orthodox Action Team

Join the over 700 volunteers who have already helped rebuild homes and lives across the US.

Sign up to participate on an IOCC Orthodox Action Team. Become God's hands in service to your fellow man.

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

