A greenhouse may seem like a simple thing, but it means fresh vegetables in winter, jobs, and increased opportunity for one diocese in the country of Georgia.

Poti, on Georgia’s west coast along the Black Sea, is one place where despite a favorable climate, farming families often struggle to produce enough food for their needs. Not everyone is trained in the work or in the agriculture industry’s latest developments. But there is great potential for growth, as Georgia has seen rising demand for local produce.

In the village of Akhalsopheli, in the Eparchy of Poti and Khobi, IOCC Program Manager Zaza Matcharashvili saw an opportunity to help local farmers while expanding the local Orthodox Church’s ability to serve the community. The Georgian diocese runs a soup kitchen there under His Grace Metropolitan Grigoli of the Georgian Patriarchate, and a nearby stretch of land has geothermal springs just beneath the surface. Matcharashvili envisioned a year-round garden that would take advantage of this natural formation and improve the variety of foods in the soup kitchen. A generous landowner donated the land to the Patriarchate, expressing strong support for IOCC’s project—a testament to the respect that many Georgians have for the Orthodox Church.

In 2017, with funding from the IOCC Foundation, four low-cost greenhouses (the first of their kind in the region) were built atop the geothermal formation, their frames of curved metal piping covered in heavy plastic. Instead of purchasing preformed frames at market price, Matcharashvili and IOCC adviser Dragan Terzic built a small machine to bend ordinary pipes—technology transferred from IOCC’s work in Kosovo. This approach has proved particularly sturdy, as well as inexpensive, saving money that can be applied to extending the work to another site.

Inside the Church’s greenhouses, heated by the naturally hot water, tomato plants are flourishing, even in the dead of winter. After a year of training and working alongside IOCC, the Church will have full charge of the project, and the greenhouses will be self-sustaining; produce that is not used can be sold at market, providing steady income for the Church and supporting its service in the community. According to Matcharashvili, “The greenhouses help the community understand the benefit of extending

continued on page 4
Dear Friends,

This is the time of year when many of us make New Year’s resolutions, thinking about a fresh start as we flip the calendar and look forward. We resolve to exercise more, to eat foods that are better for us, to read more, to be more involved in parish life. In other words, we resolve to improve our health, both physical and spiritual.

For me, this brings to mind IOCC’s work to improve the health of those in need worldwide. It’s something we do all year round, and many of the projects you generously support address health issues in one way or another, directly or indirectly. Improved health can be the first step toward better overall quality of life. Training healthcare workers in Ethiopia, Lebanon, and Jordan; clearing out flooded homes to prevent mold; supporting churches and families in growing fresh produce for their tables and for market; providing glasses and hearing aids to children who need them; offering spiritual and emotional care after disasters—all these efforts help make better health available to more people, one person and one household at a time.

Thank you for being part of IOCC’s mission to share Christ’s love. Thank you for offering better health, and hope for improved overall well-being, this year.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafillou
Executive Director & CEO

---

After the Storms
Clearing Homes to Protect Health

The news cycle has moved on, but IOCC efforts to assist those affected by the extreme weather brought by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma have continued. A hurricane can be catastrophic under the best of circumstances, but when it causes flooding, the impact it has on survivors’ lives and property is multiplied. We’ve said a lot in recent months about “mucking out” homes—clearing houses of soaked walls, floorboards, insulation, and furniture—and this is the first step toward eventually rebuilding. But the more immediate need for muck outs stems from the risk of mold.

Mold can appear within just 24 to 48 hours in a home that has been flooded, and it poses potentially serious health risks—not to mention its ability to destroy property. Fungi can grow on any surface and can cause health problems ranging from respiratory trouble and skin irritations to headaches and even memory loss.¹ IOCC aims to help people avoid these dangers after a flood, as they rebuild their homes and lives—and protect their health—after a disaster.

¹ FEMA, Dealing with Mold and Mildew in Your Flood Damaged Home.

---

A volunteer working with IOCC in Houston begins removing a water-damaged, moldy wall.
Children with disabilities face unique challenges, especially when their families’ living situations are also difficult.

Dia was born in Jordan with spina bifida, a birth defect in which the bones of the spine do not properly form around the spinal cord; he needed two surgeries as an infant. He is unable to walk without assistance. Despite this challenging start, Dia has grown into a strong, intelligent boy who dreams of becoming an architect.

Through an awareness session at a community-based organization in East Amman, Dia’s mother learned that IOCC was offering assistance for children with disabilities. An appointment followed; Dia was screened and assessed, and the team found that he needed a wheelchair with modifications that would enable him to attend school. He received this wheelchair in August 2017.

Dia now enjoys more independence and is able to engage in activities outside the home. With support from IOCC and the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM), Dia is well on his way to attending school, the next step toward his dream of becoming an architect.

Sarah is nine years old and in the fourth grade. A Syrian refugee now living in Jordan, Sarah (right) received screening and new eyeglasses through IOCC’s program in Amman. She chose her own brightly colored frames and has said that can see much better now. Sarah wears her new glasses continuously and takes good care of them so that she’ll have them for a long time to come.
Your gift can make a difference in Greece:

- Providing essential food for families and the elderly
- Creating sustainable agricultural jobs
- Delivering critical medical supplies for Greek hospitals
- Helping youth learn and develop new skills
- Giving aid to refugees

The Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc., has generously offered to match all gifts to IOCC’s Give for Greece program up to $1 million

iocc.org/GiveForGreece