



Year-Round Gardens Mean Better Health

Ingenuity, Geology Maximize Results

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



Project Manager Zaza Matcharashvili in one of the Patriarchate's new heated greenhouses.

IOCC

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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. Triantafilou
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.

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
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Seeing Clearly, Moving Freely

Children Receive Devices They Need for Independence



Sarah selects and receives her new eyeglass frames.



Dia is fitted for a new wheelchair that will increase his ability to move on his own.

Children with disabilities face unique challenges, especially when their families' living situations are also difficult.

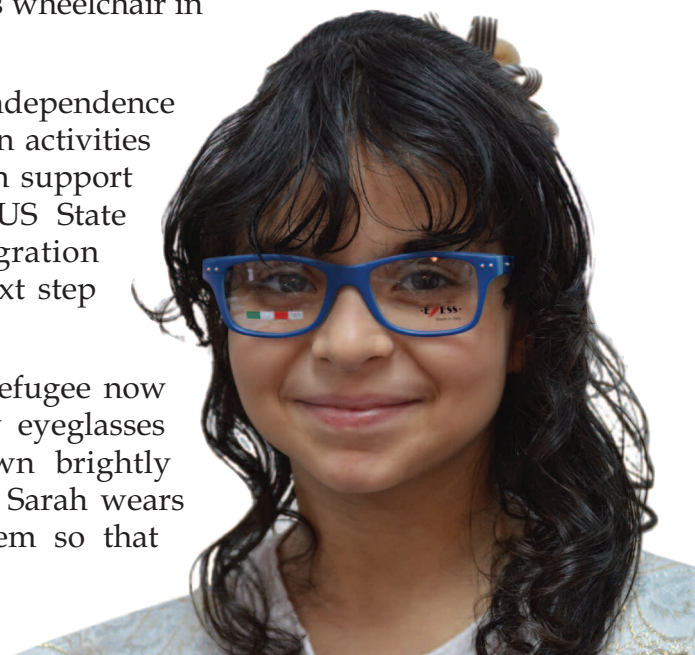
Dia was born in Jordan with spina bifida, a birth defect in which the bones of the spine do not properly form around the spinal cord; he needed two surgeries as an infant. He is unable to walk without assistance. Despite this challenging start, Dia has grown into a strong, intelligent boy who dreams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



Take Action, Get Involved

Help spread awareness through volunteerism, prayer, and fundraising.

Your participation in IOCC's mission makes all of this possible!



ENGAGE

ioccc.org/takeaction

Learn the countless ways you can get involved.



HELP

usprograms@ioccc.org

Join a disaster-response effort in the US, like a home build.



REACH OUT

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Learn about volunteering for IOCC, or plan a parish fundraiser.



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Lead others in giving with IOCC's DIY fundraising platform.



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Give to IOCC's US Emergency Response Fund.



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Join Serv-X-Treme! – a week-long gathering for high-school seniors.



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ioccc.org/internships

Learn about relief, outreach, and communications work with IOCC.



PRAY

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Your prayers can do so much to help people in the US and around the world!

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the growing season. It's more profitable to have a greenhouse than to keep cows, for example." They also provide jobs for locals who have found work in the year-round gardens. Area clergy are training to manage greenhouses, and the project inspired a group of young adults to explore building greenhouses in their community. Further, the project serves as a model for additional greenhouses in other dioceses and communities, potentially expanding the project to benefit even more families.

The greenhouse project combines simple materials, a bit of ingenuity, and a natural geothermal formation to make successful gardening possible beyond the natural growing season. Reliable access to healthful food vastly improves health and well-being, and the project has not only increased the Church's capacity but has also provided a framework for sharing knowledge with local farmers, clergy, and the next generation about the benefits of growing their own produce.

DOUBLE THE IMPACT FOR FAMILIES IN GREECE



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

ioccc.org/GiveForGreece