



Seminars Empower Local Leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina

by Tina Wolfe

"We cannot serve all the community needs at the municipal level and we must rely on the help and services provided by local non-governmental organizations..."
~ Mr. Djordje Umicevic, Mayor of the Banja Luka Municipality



Photo: Zoran Mitic/IOCC

Community leaders from Bosnia-Herzegovina participating in an IOCC sponsored training seminar in Banja Luka.

Banja Luka (IOCC) - A month-long training program recently conducted by IOCC opened a prospect for long-term community projects in towns and cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina by bringing together local community leaders.

"We learned new concepts on how to plan ahead, how to make future projections and how to think in terms of survival of our operations beyond the international community's support," said Mr. Radomir Cirkovic, president of the Association for the Disabled after completing the IOCC seminar in the town of Doboj.

The goal of the program is to strengthen the capacity of local organizations and citizen associations

and to contribute to the development of civil society and the fledgling nonprofit sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"We cannot serve all the community needs at the municipal level and we must rely on the help and services provided by local non-governmental organizations," emphasized Mr. Djordje Umicevic, Mayor of the Banja Luka Municipality. "This is the first time an international organization has offered us an opportunity to participate in a ceremony like this," he explained to local leaders and IOCC representatives as they celebrated the completion of a training program for local non-governmental organizations on July 21.

The ceremony was the successful conclusion to an IOCC program that provided intensive training in basic management and leadership skills to leaders of non-governmental organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Organizations active in the regions and municipalities of Brod, Derventa, Doboj, Anvil and Banja Luka participated ensuring that the program would have a wide-ranging effect.

Seminars were held in various regions of North and Western Republika Srpska (RS) including Derventa, Doboj, Mrkonjic Grad, Sipovo and Banja Luka. The attendees represented diverse sectors, social interests and constituencies in agriculture, democracy building, youth, conflict resolution, refugees and displaced

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Photo: Zoran Mitic/IOCC

Mr. Drago Tadic, president of the "BIOS" Association for Paraplegics and Disabled in Derventa, receiving his certificate from Mark Ohanian, IOCC's Head of Office in Bosnia-Herzegovina after completing the training program.

New Chances in Life



Photo: Courtesy of Joseph and Angelyn Mitchell

Sharing God's gifts, siblings Joseph and Angelyn Mitchell of Billings, Montana are two of the many people who have lent a hand to those in need through IOCC.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) was established in 1992 by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) as the official humanitarian aid agency of Orthodox Christians to work in cooperation with the Orthodox Churches worldwide.

The mission of IOCC is to respond to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ, to minister to those who are suffering and are in need throughout the world, sharing with them God's gifts of food, shelter, economic self-sufficiency and hope.

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Over the summer months it seems all of us have been overwhelmed with emotion as we watched and read about the tragedies unfolding in Kosovo, the NATO bombing campaign and most recently the devastation wrought by the earthquakes in Turkey and Greece. The numerous pictures in the news have illustrated the horrors of war and natural disasters.

Through it all, though, we have seen people persevere. We have also seen the outpouring of love and support as people from around the world respond through IOCC to lend a hand.

While the calamitous events have affected many people, thousands have come together to reach out to those in need... a brother and sister in Montana... a catechism class in Japan... a priest and his parishioners responding from Australia... the Greek Government... fellow Christians who have been joined together through the ecumenical network "Action By Churches Together."

Together with you, the staff of IOCC are also reaching out to help their brothers and sisters in Christ. Throughout the NATO bombing campaign, for example, IOCC staff in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia managed to maintain distributions of much needed relief supplies on schedule. They continue to distribute emergency relief supplies to displaced people in Serbia and Montenegro in addition to the refugees from the Bosnia conflict whom they have been supporting since 1995.

In Albania, Bosnia, Jerusalem, Russia, the Republic of Georgia and Turkey, IOCC project staff work to rebuild homes, provide food assistance and offer training and loans to people recovering from these disasters. In so many places, you are helping people help themselves.

As we hear the devastating news of hardship the world over, we can rejoice in the difference that can be made as we "respond to the call" together.

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou

IOCC AID TO VICTIMS OF KOSOVO CRISIS CLIMBS TO \$3 MILLION

Relief is part of long-term commitment by IOCC to the Balkans that began in 1993

Contributed by Rev. Fr. Irinej Dobrijevic

BALTIMORE (IOCC) - The crisis in Kosovo forced an estimated one million people—Serbs and Albanians alike—to flee their homes and seek refuge from the carnage. While many have returned home, nearly 200,000 people remain displaced within Kosovo unable to return to their homes. Others have been forced into Serbia and Montenegro where they are still stranded.

Underscoring its commitment to the region, IOCC distinguished itself as the only private humanitarian organization to maintain deliveries of critically needed humanitarian aid to Serbia throughout the NATO air campaign. The relief was an extension of the aid effort that IOCC has maintained since 1993.

Orthodox Christians from near and far joined together with IOCC to respond to the needs present in the Balkans since the widespread hostilities began in March. The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch responded with a gift of \$25,000 to support IOCC's relief efforts. The faithful of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese were similarly generous in their gift of \$85,000 to IOCC's Balkan Relief. His Eminence Archbishop Spyridon presented the check on behalf of the Greek Archdiocese adding his Archpastoral blessing for



IOCC File Photo

Refugees at a roadside camp as they fled Krajina in 1995. More than 500,000 refugees from the Krajina remain in Serbia unable to return home. IOCC projects are helping some of them return and assisting others in towns and villages across the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

God's assistance in the challenging work to be done. IOCC's total response to the region has now reached \$2.95 million.

Among the numerous initiatives underway to serve the myriad of needs, IOCC issued an appeal through Action by Churches Together (ACT), an ecumenical network of humanitarian aid organizations of which it is a member. Working with partner agencies in the ACT network, IOCC is providing relief directly to Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia.

With the support of this network, IOCC is supplying 14,000 displaced persons with "winterization kits" to refurbish damaged homes in Kosovo. Each kit consists of a stove for both cooking and heating, heavy plastic sheeting, fiber boards and tools to reinforce damaged homes before colder weather returns to the region. IOCC also continues to deliver emergency relief to Kosovo and Montenegro—a project that reached desperate groups during the height of the air campaigns.

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Valaam Monastery Infirmary Continues Service to Community with Help from IOCC

by Alexis Troubetzkoy



MOSCOW (IOCC) - In its heyday it was home to more than 1200 monks and 100 novices and supporters. Today, the Valaam Monastery remains an important center of Orthodox education to more than 80 monks and novices who reside in what has been referred to as the "Athos of the North."

Situated in a 100-island archipelago in the north end of Lake Ladoga, Europe's largest lake, the monastic community at Valaam serves the isolated island community of 600 people through its infirmary.

Through a special collection, IOCC recently made possible a significant renovation to the medical facilities that will enable the monastery to continue



Photo: Alex Troubetzkoy / IOCC

Dr. Sergei Alexievich stands in the examining room of the recently renovated infirmary of the Valaam Monastery. Inset: A patient is recovering in one of the newly renovated rooms of the infirmary. The modest room used to serve as one of the cells at the monastery.

its service to the isolated island that is virtually cut off from the outside world during the long winter months.

The community's medical care is provided by the monastery under the watchful eye of Sergei Alexievich, a volunteer physician. The rudimentary infirmary is housed in four chambers which used to house monks and can accommodate 16 patients. Until recently, the thick stone walls sweated humidity for most of the winter months, the porous stones of the floor accumulated dirt, and plumbing was virtually non-existent. Hot water and toilets were unavailable and laundry facilities did not exist.

The IOCC project made possible the renovation of walls and floors, the installation of substantial plumbing and laundry facilities.

"We are all exceedingly grateful to IOCC," Archmandrite Penkrat, the monastery's Abbot, declared,

"for the God-sent assistance in carrying out these desperately needed improvements. The island's infirmary can now more effectively and comfortably attend to the needs of our community."

The renovation of the Valaam Monastery infirmary represents a small part of IOCC's efforts to provide assistance to the scores of people who are at risk as the Russian economy continues to falter on the edge of collapse. As it does in Valaam, throughout Russia IOCC works closely with the Russian Orthodox Church to coordinate its efforts aimed at easing the suffering of the Russian people. Through this cooperation and its recently implemented food distribution program, IOCC is committed to extending its aid to the most vulnerable during this very difficult period.



The Perfect Setting to Share Our Many Blessings



BALTIMORE (IOCC) As families gather to observe Thanksgiving, first in Canada on October 11 and then in the United States on November 25, millions more around the world look forward in the hope of sharing the blessings we celebrate.

Economic collapse and poverty in Russia... War in the Balkans... Tornadoes in the American heartland... Earthquakes in Turkey and Greece... Hurricanes along the East Coast of the United States...

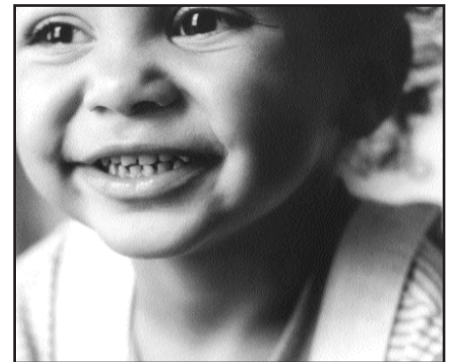
Virtually everywhere one turns in the world it seems that people are faced with tremendous challenges.

Sunday, November 21st will be more than just the Sunday before Thanksgiving. The annual "IOCC Sunday" is an opportunity to

consider the many blessings we have and share with those whose lives have been touched by war, disaster and poverty this year.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, love your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27) Whether they live next door or in a village thousands of miles away, the "Lunchless Lunch" is a perfect way of demonstrating the love of our neighbors that Luke's Gospel asks of us.

For its annual Thanksgiving "Lunchless Lunch," IOCC invites all Orthodox Christians to reserve an extra place at their Thanksgiving table as the "the perfect setting to share our many blessings." As a



way of sharing your blessings, you are asked to consider offering a gift of \$19.99 or more to assist in feeding the hungry, sheltering needy refugees, and offering new prospects for well being among the poor.



Jerusalem Youth Education Project



Photo: IOCC Jerusalem

Frere Noel Sakr, Director of the De La Salle Institute, and Nora Kort, IOCC Representative in Jerusalem, present a certificate to a participant in the Jerusalem Youth Education Project. The IOCC project has given underprivileged young adults in Jerusalem the chance to learn skills enabling them to find employment and new opportunities.

Empower *(continued from page 1)*

persons, elderly and disabled, and environmental organizations.

IOCC enlisted the professional training services of multi-ethnic local trainers from RS and the Bosnian Federation, the two entities that make up Bosnia-Herzegovina. The trainers, themselves members of two local non-governmental organizations, had the opportunity to share their experiences and transfer their knowledge and skills to fellow colleagues. Commenting on the opportunity for interaction with other organizations, the president of a Derventa-based beekeeping association "Zlatna Pcela", said "What I've enjoyed most was having the opportunity to meet and network with counterpart organizations that share similar goals and aspirations."

The training program is funded

with proceeds generated through a grant of agricultural commodities donated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Grants of up to \$6,000 have enabled participants to not only gain new skills but also to have the opportunity to begin implementing projects discussed collectively during the seminars. Many of the participating organizations have plans to submit project proposals which strive to implement socio-economic, relief and psychosocial related projects in Western RS. The first grants under the program will be awarded this Fall and will emphasize continued cooperation among the diverse organizations and opportunities for them to advocate policy improvement and recognition of their work at the community and local municipal level.



Kosovo *(continued from page 3)*

Among the refugees being assisted by IOCC in Montenegro are Serbs from Krajina (a Serbian enclave in present-day Croatia) who were forced to flee for the second time in the past three years. Projects underway include the provision of emergency food and hygiene articles benefiting 14,000 refugees in Montenegro.

Working through ACT, IOCC also provided support to four camps serving more than 10,000 refugees and more than 30,000 refugees in Albania. Many of these refugees

continue to be served as they return to Kosovo, while other projects are being planned in cooperation with the Autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church to implement winter programs in Albania.

IOCC's commitment to the Balkans did not begin with the recent crisis. Since 1993, over \$22 million in humanitarian assistance has been delivered to the former Yugoslavia through field offices in Belgrade, Banja Luka and most recently in Podgorica. IOCC continues to provide a

vital lifeline through numerous projects which provide desperately needed humanitarian aid supplies to people who were displaced from Krajina earlier this decade and still remain in Serbia.

With the continued support of Orthodox Christians worldwide, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church, and its many partner organizations, IOCC will continue to help repair the hundreds of thousands of lives that have been shattered by conflict in the Balkans.



Responding to the Call

Cleveland's International Orthodox Festival Engages Youth and the Local Community in Fun and Philanthropy



IOCC File Photo

A dance group from St. Sava's Serbian Orthodox Church in Broadview Heights, Ohio was one of nine such troupes to perform at the International Orthodox Festival in Cleveland.

Cleveland (IOCC) - It was an idea that began as Radovan Radujkovic wondered how the Cleveland Metropolitan Committee could encourage greater participation by the youth in the philanthropic activities of his community. What started as a question has now become an annual gathering that is not only enjoyed by the youth but has become a community-wide event in Cleveland.

The second annual International Orthodox Festival, held during the last weekend in August, drew more than 1,000 people from throughout the greater Cleveland area. The two-day event featured performances by dance groups representing the cultures of the Orthodox community in Cleveland, a soccer tournament, live music and food.

The success of the festival, according to Radujkovic, was evidenced by the fact that "people stayed on enjoying themselves until well into the evening—even after the performances had finished."

The festivities also provided an opportunity for those

in attendance to sample the best of American and ethnic foods. A steak dinner held on Saturday was enjoyed by over 200 people who also sampled cevapi, a grilled Serbian shish kabob, roasted lamb and pork. Ladies auxiliary organizations of St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church, the Circle of Serbian Sisters, and the women of St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church also donated pastries.

All of the bands and dance groups which performed for the event donated their talent in support of IOCC's humanitarian work. The performances featured Greek, Serbian, and Romanian music, as well as a full orchestra performing Russian pieces, and more than 300 people watched dance groups from nine area Orthodox churches.

Fr. Jim Simeonidis, the chairperson of the Cleveland Metropolitan Committee, was on hand at St. Sava's Picnic Grove where the festival was held. He was joined by Fr. Irinej Dobrijevic and each took the opportunity to highlight the current efforts of IOCC. Not only was fun had by all but also \$10,000 was raised to support IOCC's relief efforts worldwide. Information about IOCC was also distributed at a booth that was set up during the festival.

Other members of the committee who brought the event together included Milka Gvozdenovic, Danica Kecman, Judy Khoury, Steve McGarrity, Millie Vovos, Paula Svilar, Mara Todorovic, Vesna Kutlesic, and Ramona Darmour.

Radujkovic summed up the success of the event saying, "The second year proved to be very nice with a lot of people coming and going." In the same spirit of hopeful inquiry that gave rise the original idea for the event, he added "We look forward to the participation of even more people next year." And on behalf of the multitude of people who need our help so does IOCC.



IOCC Responds to Earthquake Victims in Turkey and Greece



Photo: Despina Katsivelakis

Lucky to have escaped the destruction, two boys stand in front of the broken remnants of what was once their home in Golcuk, Turkey.

Athens (IOCC) - After surveying disaster areas in Turkey where she described scenes of chaos and devastation, IOCC Country Representative Despina Katsivelakis returned to Greece to be greeted by yet another earthquake. The quake, measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale, struck in the heart of Athens just miles from the IOCC office.

Katsivelakis toured the hardest hit districts of Aharnes (Menidi), Ilion (Liosia), and Thrakomakedones in Athens to determine the needs and coordinate aid efforts with local officials and other Greek non-governmental organizations. The assessment came immediately following her visit to Turkey where she spoke with His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch

Bartholomew about the current needs of Turkey's earthquake victims.

IOCC pledged its assistance to the relief efforts in both countries. In Turkey IOCC is working in support of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and local Christian Churches. In cooperation with Action by Churches Together an appeal for more than \$1.1 million has been issued to aid the survivors. In Greece, IOCC is working with Catholic Relief Services to provide more than 5 tons of urgently needed equipment, including tents and emergency food supplies. The aid has been coordinated with the support of the Greek Office of Internal Affairs in tandem with the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Office of National Defense.



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