



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

HELPING OTHERS HELP THEMSELVES

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Agriculture: IOCC's Next Wave

J. Hanson/University of Maryland



IOCC Georgia staff and University of Maryland professors visit the Samtskhe-Javakheti region where a new Beef Demonstration Farm has been set up to provide best practice training in beef cattle farming. Zaza Macharashvili is third from right.

Tbilisi, Georgia — Zaza Macharashvili remembers how his grandfather spoke of their native Samtskhe-Javakheti, the mountainous alpine district of southern Georgia: "If a person knows how to work this land, he will become wealthy." A cattle farmer who also grew potatoes, barley and wheat, Macharashvili's grandfather knew how to farm this ancient and picturesque corner of Georgia known for its dry lands and extreme weather (temperatures can reach 104 degrees Fahrenheit in summer and -31 in winter).

But the region's farmers face many challenges today including a central government that no longer guarantees purchases or provides subsidies as it did in the Soviet era. Macharashvili, a program manager for IOCC Georgia, says that farmers are also making mistakes such as selling their animals when prices are down because

they don't have the means to store them. "But Georgian farmers realize that in this new economy they have to be open to learning new ways," says Macharashvili.

As part of its agricultural development program, IOCC recently launched a Beef

Demonstration Farm, located on lands belonging to the Georgian Orthodox Church in the town of Akhalasikhe, the main center of Samtskhe-Javakheti. The purpose of the farm is to help Georgian farmers learn best practices in cattle farming, from animal care to pasture management to the most sanitary methods for delivering meat to market.

The program is part of a partnership between IOCC and the University of Maryland's Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics to enable IOCC to achieve a core competency in agriculture. As part of his sabbatical from the University of Maryland, Jim Hanson is examining 35 IOCC agricultural programs in order to determine which ones have had the most long term success. "Our aim is to provide communities with sustainable agricultural systems that are

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The picturesque region of Samtskhe-Javakheti is known for its extreme weather and dry lands. IOCC is helping Georgian farmers from this area better manage their land and cattle.

J. Hanson/University of Maryland

From the Executive Director



IOCC Georgia

IOCC is helping communities find sustainable solutions for growing, cultivating, and marketing their own food. Above, IOCC Board Chairman Alex Machaskee (second from right) and Executive Director Constantine M. Triantafilou (right) visit IOCC Georgia agricultural projects.

There is much talk these days about the Global Food Crisis and the need for developing countries to improve their ability to feed their own people. The agricultural sector is increasingly affected by disasters, as when the cyclone in Myanmar devastated the country's rice crop, and the U.S. Midwest floods drove up corn and soybean prices. It is even part of our emergency response, as when IOCC provided supplies of animal feed to farmers devastated by last year's Greek wildfires.

Most of the developing world is agriculturally based. The most lasting way to improve people's lives is to help communities find sustainable solutions for growing, cultivating, and marketing their own food. Agricultural development has been part of IOCC's portfolio since we helped farmers recover from Bosnia's civil war by rehabilitating their farms. We not only provided the raw materials – greenhouses, machinery, livestock, seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides – we helped communities take full ownership with

training and by setting up a revolving loan fund.

The cover story for this issue of *News & Needs* features our latest agricultural development program in the nation of Georgia. IOCC has developed a Beef Demonstration Farm that will help Georgian farmers, from pasturing their cattle to bringing them to market. Our new initiative in Kosovo also involves agricultural development and income-generating projects at its core. For nations still locked in conflict, such as Iraq, as much as we want to talk about "development" and "training," the most we can do now is help families in their daily struggle to survive. You will read

about our brave Iraqi IOCC staff who negotiate checkpoints and a poor security situation to bring emergency supplies to struggling families. Finally, two stories show the power of the Church and philanthropists to make a difference. In Georgia, a new education project with the Georgian Orthodox Church to help young people prevent drug abuse and HIV/AIDs. In northern Greece, NBA star Peja Stojakovic helps IOCC deliver more than \$200,000 worth of wheelchairs and other mobility devices to disabled individuals.

As always, we thank you for your trust and confidence as we seek to help others to help themselves.

Yours In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

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 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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recycled paper

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Matching Grant Expands Kosovo Development

Belgrade, Serbia — IOCC recently announced that The John G. Rangos Sr. Family Charitable Foundation will support IOCC's expansion of aid projects for Kosovo by creating a matching gift program. The Foundation will match every dollar contributed to IOCC Kosovo projects up to \$50,000. The goal for IOCC's Kosovo response is \$500,000 and includes economic development projects for isolated rural communities in Kosovo and aid to some of the approximately 225,000 people who have been displaced from the region since 1999.

Funds contributed to IOCC for Kosovo will go towards providing immediate assistance to families who are living in isolated minority enclaves. IOCC will also expand efforts to provide sustainable agricultural training and other projects that provide employment and foster inter-ethnic cooperation. IOCC's initiative will also provide assistance to schools and create educational and recreational programs. IOCC, which has provided assistance in Kosovo for the past 15 years, will continue to work with local community groups and the Serbian Orthodox Church, including the Visoki Decani Monastery.

"We need to provide a sustainable response that enables families to secure economic prosperity and a future for their children," said Constantine M. Triantafilou, IOCC's executive director. "The important support of John G. Rangos, a founder of IOCC and past chairman of our board, will provide new opportunities to assist families in Kosovo and to avoid further displacement of people in the Balkans."



IOCC's new initiative for Kosovo will help farmers get training and tools for income-generating projects. Above, the vineyards of Velika Hoca.



Schools in isolated enclaves in Kosovo will receive further assistance from IOCC through a special matching grant program by John G. Rangos Sr.

Frontline Clergy Offer Care for Flood Victims

Cedar Rapids, Iowa — As residents continue to recover from the Midwest floods, poignant stories have emerged such as a woman who lost everything but only cared about not finding her favorite picture of her daughter. “This is a vibrant community, which has been changed forever,” says Father Chris Flesoras, a member of IOCC’s Emergency Response Network, known as the “Orthodox Frontline,” which provided trauma counseling

and coordinated resources with other charities in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

IOCC’s US Program dispatched the Frontline team after a week of torrential rains caused the worst flooding in the Midwest in 15 years. Twenty-four people perished and more than 40,000 had to evacuate their homes in what is being described as the largest disaster since Katrina.

The IOCC team organized a pan Orthodox prayer service and performed stress management

debriefings. “We offered them our ministry of presence,” says Father Chris, who is pastor of St. Anna Orthodox Church in Roseville, California. Some of the help offered by the clergy team was as basic as filling out FEMA disaster claims and informing the survivors of other assistance options. IOCC also provided cash grants to Orthodox parishioners who have sustained damage and is partnering with Catholic Charities to reach out to the community at large.



IOCC Baltimore



IOCC’s US Program dispatched a Frontline team of Orthodox clergy to Iowa after a week of torrential rains caused the worst flooding to hit the Midwest in 15 years. (l to r: Fr. Christopher Flesoras, Fr. Vasile Bitere, and Fr. Haralambos Fox.)

Twenty-four people perished and more than 40,000 had to evacuate their homes in what was described as the largest disaster since Katrina. IOCC sent a team of Orthodox clergy, known as the “Frontline” to provide trauma counseling and connect survivors to community resources.

Agriculture: IOCC’s Next Wave

(continued from front cover)

profitable, good for the environment, and good for communities,” says Hanson. “This Beef Demonstration Farm has a real opportunity to make a significant contribution to this community.”

“The idea here is to learn from our experiences – such as working with farmers in Bosnia – so that IOCC is focused on building capacity as well as its emergency response,” says Constantine M. Triantafilou, IOCC’s Executive Director & CEO. Triantafilou

says that any country IOCC is working in is “fair game” for creating an agricultural program that takes advantage of local labor and natural resources.

Throughout its 16 year history, IOCC has been implementing agricultural programs in both development and emergency contexts. After the civil war in Bosnia, IOCC provided emergency supplies of animal feed to farmers in Bosnia, as it is currently doing in Greece following the 2007 Peloponnese

wildfires. In a development context, IOCC helped Bosnian farmers adjust to new market realities after the fall of Socialism by helping communities form agricultural cooperatives and by providing microfinancing for equipment.

“What has already emerged from our research,” says Hanson, “is that IOCC has had the most long term success in communities where it combined agricultural training with microcredit.”



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Life Inside Iraq: “We Have Become Accustomed to the Fear”



IOCC Iraq

IOCC recently delivered food and hygiene parcels to 3,000 vulnerable families in Baghdad and Mosul. The woman pictured left had her home ransacked by insurgents and must depend on such aid to support herself and her disabled brother. Daily violence and massive shortages in food, electricity, and water continue to define life inside Iraq.

Baghdad, Iraq — Before war came to Iraq, humanitarian worker Samuel* traveled from his home in Baghdad to his office in 15 minutes, but today he passes through six checkpoints in only four kilometers on his morning commute. Baghdad is divided by concrete walls and countless checkpoints.

“We enter through one gate and go out of the same gate, so this makes it very hard to get around,” says Samuel. “Parents can’t always take their children to school or go to work because a street will be closed off if they suspect a bomb. Some parents have stopped taking their

children to school altogether.”

Samuel works for IOCC, which delivered food and hygiene kits last winter to nearly 3,000 vulnerable families in Baghdad and Mosul in partnership with Action by Churches Together (ACT) International. Most Iraqis are dependent on the government’s food rationing program, but the availability of food in Iraq today is worse than under Saddam Hussein’s regime, says Samuel.

Iraqis also face other shortages. The government provides only two hours of electricity per day. Those who can afford it pay private companies for electricity. Water – when it is available – is

undrinkable. Local public hospitals lack vaccines, beds, instruments, and perform only the simplest procedures. Private hospitals are in better condition, but most Iraqis cannot afford them.

The process of getting humanitarian supplies to the families that need them the most requires careful coordination. Supplies are purchased locally to help the economy, and Samuel scours the markets to get the most competitive prices. He then contacts various churches and local non-governmental organizations to get lists of families in need and to secure a location to store and distribute the supplies.

Each parcel is designed to supplement a family’s basic nutrition and hygiene needs, and includes soap, laundry powder, spaghetti, cheese and beans in addition to other items. Families assisted by IOCC include internally-displaced persons, invalids, extended families, single-headed households, and the elderly. “Food and hygiene supplies will continue to be critical. We have heard that the government is going to eliminate food ration cards in 2009,” says Samuel.

Many humanitarian workers have left Iraq, and some are now based in Jordan, but Samuel says he will not consider leaving. “We have learned how to deal with not enough electricity, food, and water. We hear bombs all the time, but we have become accustomed to the fear.”

(*Samuel’s name was changed to protect his identity.)



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Greece: Aid to Farmers in Peloponnese, NBA's Stojakovic Provides Wheelchairs for Thessaloniki

Peloponnese, Greece — IOCC's relief to Greek farmers continues to help thousands who were affected by last year's wildfires to sustain their farms. Through \$1.8 million in grants by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, as well as thousands of donations from individuals, IOCC has provided emergency animal feed to more than 3,100 Peloponnese farmers. The wildfires destroyed more than 500,000 acres of forest and pasture lands. Farmers had no way to sustain their flocks – for some, their only source of income. To permanently solve the issue of animal feed, IOCC has

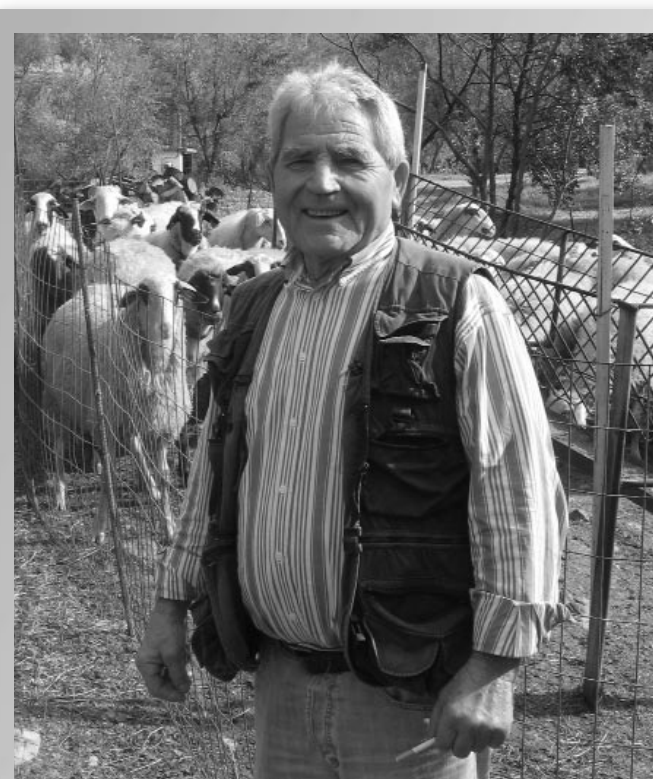
also distributed 20 tons of seed so that farmers can regrow burned pasture lands. An additional 60 tons of seed will be distributed before the end of the year.

Greece's northern Thessaloniki, Macedonia and Epirus regions also benefitted from IOCC. Through a generous gift by Peja Stojakovic of the NBA's New Orleans Hornets, IOCC distributed \$200,000 worth of wheelchairs, including sports wheelchairs for disabled athletes, other mobility devices, and therapeutic equipment. "For many people and especially children, this was the first time they

received a wheelchair, such as one 14-year-old boy who has been carried around by his grandfather his whole life," said IOCC Greece Head of Office Despina Katsivelaki. The wheelchairs were custom-fit to suit the needs of each recipient by a team of volunteer health care professionals from Wheels for Humanity and local partners in Thessaloniki. The project is part of a larger regional program designed and implemented by IOCC with the support of the Peja Stojakovic Children's Foundation to provide assistance to disabled children and adults in Greece and Montenegro.



M. Allen/Wheels for Humanity



S. Clark/IOCC Greece

"For many people and especially children, this was the first time they received a wheelchair, such as one 14-year-old boy who has been carried around by his grandfather his whole life," said IOCC Greece Head of Office Despina Katsivelaki, speaking of IOCC's recent \$200,000 shipment of wheelchairs to northern Greece.

Andreas of the village of Anilo, Greece lost his grazing land and half of his 700 olive trees to last summer's wildfires. IOCC's program is providing farmers like Andreas with forage seed to regrow their pasture lands, providing a long term source of feed for their livestock.

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Georgia: New Youth Program Focuses On Drug Abuse Prevention



D. Dzotsenidze/IOCC Georgia

IOCC's "Healthy Lifestyles" program helps Georgian youth resist the national epidemic of drug abuse. The program trains clergy and monastics of the Georgian Orthodox Church and public school teachers to understand drug abuse and to help young people avoid risky behavior.

Tbilisi, Georgia — "The ethnic conflict and economic problems definitely aggravated the abuse of drugs in Georgia," says Dr. Thea Gogotishvili, Director of Psychology and Head of the Anti-Drug Center of The International Charity Foundation of the Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II. According to Gogotishvili, an estimated 200,000 individuals are abusing drugs in Georgia, a Eurasian country located in the South Caucasus with a population of 4 million.

While the causes of drug abuse in Georgia are as complex as in any society, many Georgians say that a "Soviet mentality" of trying to prove that you are cool by using drugs is a major temptation for their youth. Georgian youth are experimenting with Ecstasy, marijuana, and other illegal substances. They are also "cooking" prescription drugs to make them more potent, and, in many cases, lethal.

So prevalent is this problem in Georgia that intravenous drug users comprise 65% of all HIV cases. His Beatitude, Patriarch-

Catholicos Ilia II, the primate of the Georgian Orthodox Church, has created an anti-drug center in his charitable foundation and made combatting drug abuse a priority for the Church.

Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), IOCC Georgia has launched a new program to prevent drug abuse among young Georgians and empower the Georgian Orthodox Church to be the change agent in this process. IOCC's "Healthy

Lifestyles" program is training clergy, monastics and public school teachers to identify risky behaviors among young people. The programs are targeted at youth aged 11 - 21.

"We want to train the priests from a scientific point of view, and not just the spiritual point of view," says Gogotishvili. Georgia has four monasteries that have set up rehab centers for drug addicts.

IOCC's program also sponsors youth clubs to promote healthy alternatives to drug use among Georgian youth. Activities include athletics, art exhibitions, and service to the poor. A mass media component of the campaign featuring Georgian sports stars also raises awareness on drug abuse by using faith-based messages. An estimated 1.35 million Georgians will be reached through the media campaign alone.

"Our goal," says IOCC Georgia Program Manager Darajen Dzotsenidze, "is to help teenagers express their creativity and to have close communication with the clergy and teachers."



D. Dzotsenidze/IOCC Georgia

Georgian youth are encouraged to pursue athletics, art, and service to the poor as alternatives to the nation's growing drug culture. The U.S. government-funded program also includes a media campaign with public service ads featuring Georgian sports stars.

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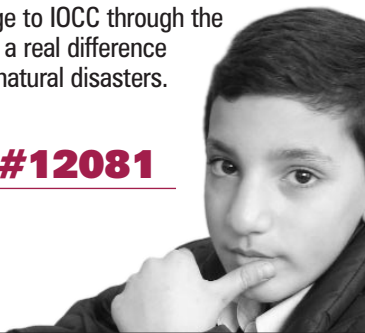
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The IOCC Foundation is a professionally managed, not-for-profit support organization which exists to further the work of IOCC and its charitable mission. Gifts to the IOCC Foundation remain permanently restricted and inviolate with a percentage of the assets disbursed annually to support the mission of International Orthodox Christian Charities. For further information contact **Dan Christopoulos, IOCC Director of Development**, toll free at 1-877-803-4622 or dchristopoulos@iocc.org.

