



# INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

HELPING OTHERS HELP THEMSELVES

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## BRINGING STABILITY BACK TO HAITI'S FRAGILE LANDS



Paul Jeffrey / IOCC

Twelve-year-old Wilna and her grandfather, Celessius, work side by side clearing growth from around newly planted trees as part of a hillside reforestation project in Foret des Pins, Haiti. Plagued by deforestation, much of it to produce charcoal for urban cooking stoves, residents of the area are working to bring the forests back to life.

**Foret des Pins, Haiti (IOCC)** — Cool, misty mornings on the mountains of Haiti's Foret des Pins create the perfect conditions for planting young pine seedlings on the steep barren slopes, and local farmers work hard to fill the empty spaces. A 79,000 acre preserve once covered in dense forests of pine, Foret des Pins was cleared of its vast stands of trees over the years by local residents for construction lumber, to produce cooking charcoal and to make way for cabbage and potato fields. The short-term survival solutions took their toll on the

stripped land, as soil became less fertile and susceptible to dangerous landslides in the heavy tropical rains, driving away many of the young mountain villagers to neighboring Dominican Republic in search of work.

Deforestation has long been a challenge in Haiti, but it was worsened by the 2010 earthquake, leading to widespread erosion and landslides. At one time more than 70% of Haiti's dramatic landscape was covered in forest; today, less than 2% of this original forest cover remains, most of it in the isolated mountains of the Foret des Pins and Parc

Macaya. In partnership with Lutheran World Federation, IOCC is working with Haiti's remote mountain farming communities to bring the forests back to life and preserve vital watersheds needed to keep soil fertile and the land stable. The reforestation effort targeting 370 acres of the highly deforested areas of Macaya and Foret des Pins is designed to not only stabilize the environment but also help create sustainable jobs for the locals.

With \$100,000 in financial and technical support from IOCC, community-based organizations in

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Kate Holt/IRIN

More than a 1,000 Somali refugees fleeing drought and civil unrest in their own country arrive daily at the Dollo Ado refugee camp in southeastern Ethiopia hoping to find food and water for themselves and their families. Through your generosity, IOCC responded with financial support to help alleviate the emergency needs of Somali refugees in southern camps of Ethiopia.

The severe drought that has driven millions of men, women and children in the Horn of Africa on a desperate search for food and water is without a doubt the most tragic humanitarian crisis in the world today and a stark reminder of how fragile our food supply can become when growing conditions are severely impacted.

Even when water is plentiful and summer days are warm and sunny, producing an abundant vegetable garden from a few packets of seeds or a tree laden with fruit from a fragile little seedling requires patience, perseverance and faith that one's efforts will bear fruit. These are the qualities that have sustained families living in the West Bank, feeding themselves and their children from small home gardens. Because of your ongoing commitment to our mission, six rural communities there have benefitted

from an IOCC program that provides tools, seedlings and training to produce sustainable sources of food for 150 isolated families.

These qualities are also producing a better way of life for people in the post-war Balkans. Through your support, IOCC and its partners are building on many years of experience in agriculture development to help farmers in Montenegro, Kosovo and Albania cultivate a culture of cooperation with the exchange of ideas and information about improved farming practices.

The need for a balanced use of natural resources was direly needed in

Haiti, where severe deforestation practices over the years had stripped the forests bare and led to widespread erosion and landslides. IOCC channeled your support towards efforts to work with the remote mountain farming communities to bring the forests back to life and preserve vital watersheds needed to keep soil fertile and the land stable.

Through agricultural development, IOCC is planting seeds of hope and sustainability for families around the world and sharing the bounty of God's blessings upon us with others.

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director & CEO

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) 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.*

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# AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BEARS FRUIT IN THE BALKANS

## Prizren, Kosovo (IOCC) —

Growing vegetables or raising cattle high up in the mountains near Prizren is an ongoing struggle for the people who call this region of southern Kosovo home, forcing them to seek supplemental sources of income. The dense forests of southern Kosovo are a gourmet's delight, filled with a bounty of high-quality woodland mushrooms, wild strawberries, blueberries and mountain herbs. These sought after foods, collected by mountain villagers almost year round, provide a much needed source of income for poorer families within the area. IOCC Serbia and Montenegro Program Manager, Nenad Prelevic, says that those earnings are limited because the current system is fragmented, with each mountain villager's home doubling as an impromptu market where people and local traders come to buy herbal teas, mushrooms and forest fruits.

"By selling their products together instead of dealing individually, a group of farmers could attract larger buyers and negotiate better prices," says Prelevic. "If we can advance their knowledge in negotiating, product marketing and selling they would realize the joint benefits and significant increase in what they could earn."

Building on many years of experience with agriculture and rural development programs, IOCC in cooperation with professors from the University of Maryland and AGROLINK, a local independent network of agricultural consultants, launched a program to elevate this patchwork of approximately 300 independent producers into an organized agricultural cooperative to



Farmer Zecir proudly shows dried herbal teas ready for market to an AGROLINK representative. Working with the local agricultural agency, IOCC provides farmers in Kosovo with technical support on how to improve their income by packaging and marketing woodland products like these herbal teas for buyers beyond the local villages.

enhance the ability of rural families to increase household income in isolated areas of Kosovo.

Working with local agricultural partners, IOCC provided technical and financial support for remodeling a vacant village storefront into a food collection and storage center, and equipping it with the tools needed to sell the woodland products in bulk. Beneficiaries were introduced to the importance of elevating the large scale buyer's image of rural food products by setting product quality and safety standards, sorting products according to those standards, and parceling them into attractive packaging with informative labels. As this cooperative effort progresses and proves its ability

to improve the earning capacity of the participating farmers, the hope is that the model will be duplicated by other communities in the region seeking to improve their economic situation.

The program is an integral part of the overall IOCC "Regional Agriculture Development Program" in Northern Montenegro and Western Kosovo. During 2010, the program was launched with the establishment of an Agriculture Business Incubator (ABI) in Albania. ABIs are intended to provide the agricultural sector the advanced knowledge needed to capitalize on opportunities and to strengthen the spirit of cooperation in order to build a better future for all families in the region.

# FARMING PROJECT SWEETENS LIVES OF WEST BANK FAMILIES



A small girl savors honey harvested by her mother and other women beekeepers in the West Bank village of Jurish. Producing their own honey and garden vegetables represent efforts by IOCC and partner agencies to ensure reliable food sources for poor and vulnerable families living in isolated rural communities of the West Bank.

**Jurish, West Bank (IOCC)** — West Bank resident Khuloud says she will always remember the 12th of June as “Honey Day”. In the early morning, her kitchen buzzed with activity as women from her village of Jurish gathered around a new extractor to help press honey from honeycomb frames collected after months of hard work tending the beehives. Swarms of village men and children crowded into the kitchen just to watch; curious to see since it was the first time this was done in their community. Each of the women received more than 19 pounds of honey for their efforts. One of the beneficiaries, Fathiyeh, commented, “It is one of the best days in my life. We never thought that we will have that much honey. I will use it to feed my children because it is healthy, and I will sell the rest.”

This memorable day of honey harvesting represents efforts by IOCC and partner agencies to ensure sustainable and secure food sources for poor and vulnerable families living in isolated rural communities in the West Bank. The people of Jurish are more familiar with cultivating olives and fruits, and depend on a spring that feeds a community reservoir. However, the spring water is contaminated due to a lack of waste water networks, so the families depend on home water tanks for their precious water supplies. The IOCC Food Security Project has provided training and tools needed to help these struggling families sustain themselves through alternative agricultural activities such as beekeeping or home gardening.

Jurish is one of six villages representing more than 13,000 men,

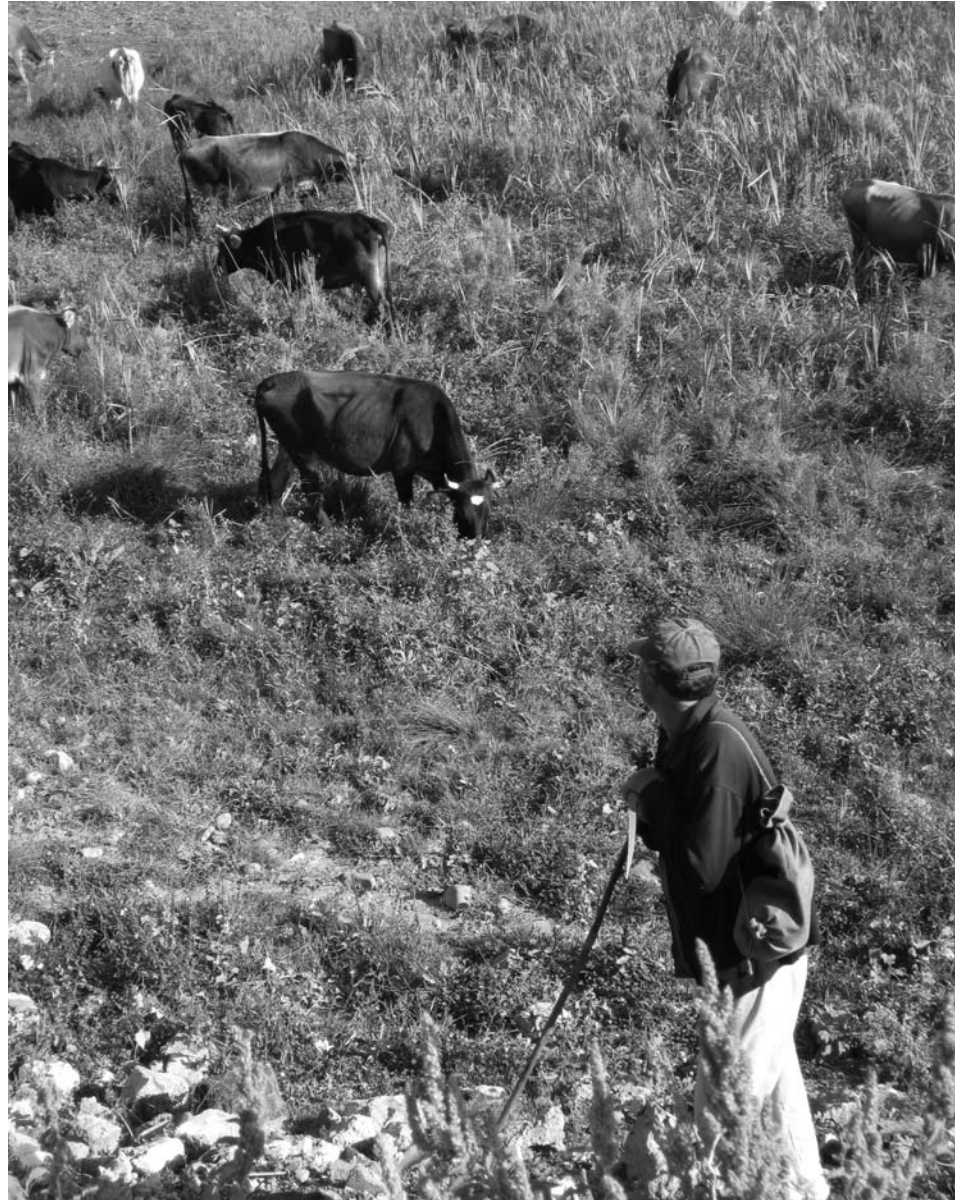
women and children selected to receive agricultural assistance. Some of the villagers were given beehives, beekeeping equipment, and ongoing practical training on how to feed and care for the bees. Others, like those living in the village of Majdal Bani Fadil, were selected to receive home gardening support and equipment. Home gardeners like 45-year-old Tamam were supplied with gardening tools and seedlings, and introduced to the use of water saving drip irrigation. “This system is very efficient, especially in our areas where we have water problems.” The home gardeners also receive ongoing visits from IOCC agricultural partners to make sure that beneficiaries continue to cultivate and take care of their gardens and to inspect the plants for any diseases or other growing problems.

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# REVIVING GEORGIA'S DAIRY INDUSTRY

**Baltimore, MD (IOCC)** — The fall of the Soviet Union restored land ownership back to Georgian farmers and their families, giving them freedom to use their land as they saw fit. It also led to widespread subsistence farming as former large collective farms were broken up into millions of small, privately owned parcels rarely exceeding two acres. The situation is mirrored with dairy cattle ownership. Almost all of Georgia's livestock is held by families in small, fragmented herds. Aging farm equipment and buildings, outdated milking methods, and limited access to funds for improvement have only exacerbated a decade of declining agricultural production as dairy farmers struggle to eke out a living from selling small quantities of milk and homemade dairy products.

Working in partnership with the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate (GOP), IOCC will assist local farmers by creating a demonstration dairy farm that will introduce them to modern practices and technologies in dairy production. Automated milking equipment not currently used by local dairy farmers, yet considered standard in any modern dairy operation today, and Western design elements will be incorporated into the self-contained dairy complex which will be constructed on seven acres of land owned by the Patriarchate in the South Georgian village of Chacharaki. The site was chosen for its close proximity to the Patriarchate cheese plant, which will be supplied with milk from the farm, and its central location for farmers and agricultural students who will visit the model dairy to learn about breeding,



A farmer keeps close watch on his modest herd in southern Georgia. Many of the small-scale farmers in this former Soviet republic struggling to support themselves will soon gain more profitable dairy farming skills at a modern demonstration dairy to be constructed with the support of IOCC and the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate.

management, feeding, housing, disease control and hygienic production of milk.

The southern region of Georgia has significant agriculture potential to produce five times its current output with the proper development. Upgrading the local dairy industry to modern

standards and understanding the benefits of pooling resources together with other farmers could bolster a family farm's productivity and provide a steady source of income for poor farming families currently unable to produce enough marketable products to support themselves.

## FARMING PROJECT SWEETENS LIVES OF WEST BANK FAMILIES

(continued from page 4)



Everyone in Tamam's family, from her husband to their four children, is involved in the cultivation of their home garden. Together they plant and harvest new crops every four months, rotating seasonal produce such as tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers and peas. "We benefit from cultivating our land," Tamam says. "We consume a lot from the garden. Sometimes we sell extra produce at the market and I also sometimes distribute it to my relatives."

Women's participation continues to be an essential part of this project's success. Out of the 150 household beneficiaries selected,

more than 92% are female beneficiaries. The 2011 continuation of the IOCC project will provide the women with additional farming and business tools to help them reap higher crop yields that they can sell at market and improve their income. The ongoing support from IOCC was welcome news to Mariam, one of the honey farmers from Jurish, who responded, "Last year, we collected 33 pounds of honey. This year and with the increased number of hives and additional tools hopefully we can cultivate more. Many thanks for IOCC and the donors."

(above) Vegetable gardening becomes a family activity as Tamam's youngest son helps her pick vegetables for their evening meal. With support from IOCC's agricultural development program, West Bank families are able to sustain themselves on seasonal crops such as tomatoes, onions and peas, and sell any excess produce at the market for much needed income.

## BRINGING STABILITY BACK TO HAITI'S FRAGILE LANDS

(continued from page 1)

the region selected the lands to be reforested and hired the local workers who would be responsible for maintaining the tree nurseries and plantations. During the six-month project, eight tree nurseries with reliable access to water were built, native and fruit tree seeds were planted and grown into seedlings, and a system was created for transporting the seedlings to mountainside plantations where they would be transplanted and nurtured to maturity.

Sowing the seeds of understanding the long-term value of reforestation and empowering locals

with the tools needed to manage the area's natural resources reaps the added benefit of improved health through revitalized food security and access to water, so important to Haitian farmers like Renaud, who wants to ensure a better future for his children. As the mountainous lands of Foret des Pins and Parc Macaya grow more resilient through reforestation, the people of the forest gain strength in their newfound knowledge and respect for the lands they call home.

 Learn more at [ioccc.org/haiti](http://ioccc.org/haiti)

(right) The tree seedlings that nursery worker Renaud, 35, takes great care to water each day will eventually be replanted in one of the nearby tree plantations perched in the mountainous community of Foret des Pins, Haiti.



Paul Jeffrey / IOCC

# THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Archbishop Nicolae



We are still in the blessed period following the Descent of the Holy Spirit, after the sending of the Spirit into the world to complete the saving work of the Resurrected and Ascended Christ. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and made them the Body of Christ, His Bride. The Church is a new reality that unites heaven and earth, God and man. And this new reality is born through a new power, *the power of God's infinite love*, which came to raise man out of his infirmities and grant him eternity, triumphing over "death by death." The Church was born on Pentecost as a reality filled with a power from heaven borne within itself and communicated to the world.

St. Paul tells us that the first fruit of the Spirit is love. Then he adds other fruit that flow from

the outpouring of the Spirit upon every Christian: *joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Gal. 5:22-23). Among these we find goodness mentioned after love, but before faithfulness. It seems that St. Paul wants to tell us through this listing that the presence of the Spirit in our lives has visible signs for those around us; and these are virtues that our brethren can experience directly: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness. In the life of a spiritual person, one who is filled with the working of the Holy Spirit, we can see all these qualities that have to do with our relationship with our neighbor, beginning with love—a reflection of God's love for each and every one of us—and culminating in goodness, the evidence of love bearing fruit in us.

Goodness—benevolence

toward those who are suffering and in need of our help—is not therefore merely an act of human solidarity. It is the sign of the presence of the Spirit in our lives; it is proof that we are Christians who embody the work of the Spirit in the world. We offer to others not only material help, but actually the Spirit, which makes them also bearers of the fruit of the Spirit. This is the *mystery of Christianity*, handed down from the Apostles to us, from the *upper room* at Pentecost (Acts 1:13) to the Church of the 21st century, which continues to ask for and receive the Spirit.

**+ Archbishop Nicolae**  
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## LEAVE A LEGACY THROUGH IOCC'S "ST. BASIL SOCIETY"



St. Basil the Great is renowned for his acts of philanthropy, including the establishment of the first orphanage in human history, the first Christian hospital and homes for the elderly. His compassion for children, the poor, the elderly, the sick and the oppressed is a model for the work of IOCC in its ministry to people in need throughout the world.

IOCC's "St. Basil Society" honors and recognizes the generosity and vision of those who, like St. Basil, have chosen to leave a legacy of compassion to the world through IOCC. St. Basil Society donors (unless requesting anonymity) will receive special recognition in IOCC publications and the IOCC Web site for choosing to designate IOCC as a beneficiary of their estate or deferred gifts.

Enrollment in this honorary society is simply a matter of advising IOCC of the creation of a legacy gift: a bequest in a will or living trust; a charitable gift annuity; a charitable remainder trust; or designation as a beneficiary of a retirement plan or life insurance policy. The receipt of a signed letter of intent or of an outright gift to the endowment entitles the donor to the designation of "St. Basil Society Member."

If you have included IOCC in your estate, please contact IOCC by going to [www.iocc.org/giving](http://www.iocc.org/giving), clicking on the St. Basil tab and completing the form, or by calling our headquarters toll-free at 1-877-803-IOCC (4622).



IOCC cordially invites you to our

## 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION GALA

**Tuesday, May 8, 2012**

Capital Hilton Hotel • Washington, D.C.  
Cocktail Reception 6:00PM • Dinner 7:30PM

*More details to come*



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*Respond. Rebuild. Uplift.*