



NEW SCHOOL REMOVES BARRIER TO LEARNING FOR UGANDA'S CHILDREN



Father Evan Armatas

Each morning, hundreds of children sit shoulder to shoulder on the packed dirt floor of this one-room, red brick village school near Lake Victoria in Butembe, Uganda. There are no desks or books, only a chalkboard at one end of the room used by a solitary

teacher to instruct all 500 students. This is the legacy created by decades of civil war and an AIDS pandemic that left 2.7 million of the country's children orphaned and millions more with no education. Those who tried to seek a better future through learning have been impeded by overcrowded schools and a chronic shortage of study materials and well-trained teachers. Recent efforts by Uganda's government to improve school management and teacher training have resulted in a sharp rise in boys and girls completing their primary education. This, in turn, has spiked a demand for secondary education from older students seeking the knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges of adulthood.

With cooperation of the Holy Archdiocese of Kampala and All Uganda of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa and a generous grant from the St. Nektarios Education Fund, IOCC is working to improve access to learning for Uganda's teens with the construction of a new 240-student capacity high school in Butembe. The new school will include four classrooms equipped with desks, chairs, essential teaching equipment, as well as bathrooms and a school office. Through support from the St. Nektarios Education Fund, IOCC has constructed three other schools in Uganda, providing access to education for more than 700 children living in Gulu and in the Lwemiyaga region.

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From The Executive Director



On a recent trip to the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, I visited a school which IOCC had rehabilitated to improve learning conditions for local underserved schoolchildren and to accommodate a growing number of Syrian refugee children now living in the area. As I entered a classroom filled with students, all I saw around me were eager-eyed faces, pencils in hand, ready to learn. In this school far from conflict, these children come to learn, to play, and to forget for a few hours the hardship they have faced in their young lives. For these children, being able to continue their studies means being able to keep hope for the future alive.

IOCC is also providing a safe and healthy learning environment for children in Uganda, where we are building a high school for teens keen to equip themselves with the tools they need to build a better future. These new and rehabilitated schools are more than buildings; they are an investment in the future of our communities and our world. By providing children with access to a place where they can learn and be inspired, we are preparing the next generation of men and women to think and act with greater purpose and compassion. I hope that you will be inspired by these stories of children around the world, eager to learn, and to grow.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO



Dan Christopoulos / IOCC

ORTHODOX YOUTH GATHER FOR SERVICE LEADERSHIP

When record rainfall drenched the Midwest in July and triggered massive flooding in communities across Minnesota and Iowa, teen volunteers from St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church in Minneapolis were among the dozen members of an IOCC Orthodox Action Team who traveled to hard-hit Rock Rapids, Iowa, to help an elderly flood survivor clear waterlogged debris from his home. Orthodox Christian youth across the U.S. also have a history of eagerly volunteering their time and energy to assist IOCC in helping families rebuild storm-damaged homes and assemble emergency kits for disaster survivors.

IOCC is fostering this philanthropic spirit among Orthodox youth through its inaugural Serv-X-Treme! Youth Leadership Conference. Twenty-five teen delegates appointed by hierarchs from the US pan-Orthodox community came together in Minneapolis for a week of meaningful opportunities

to serve others while developing a better understanding of Orthodox Christian philanthropy and *diakonia*, or service. Along with workshops led by Orthodox community leaders, teens also spent time in hands-on service projects at local soup kitchens, shelters and home builds. A Habitat for Humanity build was especially memorable for the teens when they had the opportunity to meet the homeowners, new Minnesota residents from Ethiopia and the Ukraine. The week concluded with each participant signing a pledge committing them to continue seeking out service opportunities and encouraging others to do the same. Serv-X-Treme! Youth Leadership Conference is part of a broader effort by IOCC to develop the Orthodox Christian Action Network (Orthodox CAN!), a US-based initiative to nurture and activate the Orthodox community's value of philanthropy through volunteerism across all age groups.

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.



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IOCC WORKS TO EASE STRAIN ON SCHOOLS IN LEBANON



Lebanese students in the Bekaa Valley are feeling the squeeze as they return to school this fall to find classrooms and playgrounds that are overflowing with children. The crowding is challenging school administrators and school facilities that are being strained by an influx of Syrian refugees seeking to continue their studies. IOCC is working to ensure a healthy and safe learning environment for Lebanese school children and their Syrian classmates as the conflict in Syria continues and more refugees – half of them children – continue to seek refuge in Lebanon. This school in Bar Elias is one of more than 50 Lebanese public schools in disrepair being rehabilitated by IOCC to improve the learning environment for local children and to accommodate the swell of Syrian students enrolling this fall. Plumbing, electrical systems, and playgrounds are being upgraded to meet safety standards, while classroom improvements include new paint, windows and doors. The school rehabilitation project is aimed at improving school conditions for more than 7,500 Lebanese children and 5,000 young refugees.

IOCC REACHES PAKISTAN FLOOD SURVIVORS IN HARDEST HIT AREAS

Survivors of Pakistan's deadly floods carry food parcels filled with flour, lentils, tea and cooking oil provided by International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), in cooperation with the Orthodox Church in Pakistan. Emergency food parcels are being distributed to 700 flood victims from the hard hit communities of Wazirabad and Hafizabad in the Punjab province, home to more than half of Pakistan's people.

More than two million people have been affected by the floods. Heavy monsoon rains earlier this month unleashed a torrent of water that swept away thousands of villages across Punjab's agricultural heartlands, destroying 1.7 million acres of crops and leaving thousands of families in Pakistan without homes, a source of food or farm income. Food, fresh water, hygiene kits and shelter are the most urgently needed relief, but

restoring livelihoods will be a critical issue in the weeks and months ahead in order for communities to recover. Emergency hygiene kits

continue to be in great demand. Kit assembly instructions can be found on IOCC's website at iocc.org/kits.



Father John Tanveer

Loving Christ by Loving Others

We want to love Christ, and we love Him by loving others and showing others the kind of love He has given us, freely giving our time and our resources for the benefit of others. "True religion," as James writes, is "to visit orphans and widows in their trouble" (*James 1:27*). He exhorts us to give others "the things which are needed for the body" (*James 2:15-16*).

Everything that is good has its source in God, as it is written in the Wisdom of Solomon: "We and our words are in his hand, as are all understanding and skill in crafts" (*Wisd. 7:16*). Any skill that legitimately enhances one's life can be taught to others. Since one cannot always be present with a needy person, and since it would be inappropriate for us to expect anyone to unnecessarily depend on us, we must teach others to be as self-reliant as possible. For example, one could show a hungry family how to cultivate a small vegetable garden, or teach the importance of proper hygiene to prevent the spread of diseases. Whatever knowledge of the Lord's creation we have can be taught to others.

Along with these important things, we as Christians have the great privilege of pointing to the beauty, joy, and benefits of living in God's kingdom. All things that God has made are beautiful, and yet "how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them" (*Wisd. 13:3*). All point to the spiritual reality of His beauty. The community of God is His dwelling place: "Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary" (*Ps. 96:6*). God is present in His community, and His presence brings joy and blessings, as the Psalmist says: "You bestow on him blessings forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence" (*Ps. 21:6*).



Sharing time, money, resources of all kinds; teaching others skills that can better their way of life; and pointing people toward God's beauty in His community are all ways that we show the love of God to others.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Thomas
*Antiochian Archdiocese of North America,
 Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic*

SCHOOL KITS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED



Please encourage your parish youth group to help families in need by assembling IOCC School Kits. Instructions are available at ioccc.org/kits.

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