



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

FOCUS ON WOMEN

A Force For Change

BALTIMORE (IOCC) - According to the United Nations, women make up about half the world's population, but own only one percent of the world's land and receive just ten percent of the world's income. Yet, as IOCC's work with women in Albania and the West Bank demonstrates, effective programs that promote self-sufficiency for families and communities can only be achieved with the full participation of women in all areas of society.

As leaders in their homes and communities, women are a force for positive change and partners in IOCC's work around the world.

Situated in the mountainous Shpati region of Albania are 17 villages with a total population of 8,000. Amidst the hilly terrain, families subsist on small parcels of land by growing wheat for their bread and by raising livestock.



Photo: Nicholas Chalkos - IOCC

As leaders in their homes and communities, women are often the primary partners in IOCC projects. In Albania, a training project will assist women improve the health of rural families.

There isn't enough arable land to adequately support the population and many of the villages lack water. The region is only

accessible by narrow dirt and cobbled roads. A journey to the nearest city takes three hours by bus — one way.

In this remote area of Albania — like many other rural areas of the world — the women face problems alone. Most of the men work as laborers in other countries in order to support their families; and the women are left to care for their homes and their children — including the difficult task of finding enough to eat. Daily life for these women includes caring for the animals and working the fields. In most of the villages, women must carry water from far distances back to their homes.

Health care, like many other things in this region, is in short supply. Villagers must walk for hours in order to see a doctor — a difficult proposition for those who are ill. With the lack of health services and their isolation, add family health care provider to



Photo: Lee Papouras, IOCC-Jerusalem.

Aliya Nusseibeh, Director of the Nizamia School for Girls in Beit Hanina, Jerusalem (center) flanked by two of IOCC's Country Representatives — Nora Kort who heads IOCC's program in Jerusalem and Despina Katsivelaki, who leads the effort in Greece.

the list of roles assumed by the women in this region.

Even though their work is essential for the survival of the family, women of the Shpati region are considered less important than men. The phenomenon faced by these women is not unique. All over the world, women sustain families and communities in times of adversity; yet they often receive less education, have inadequate health care, are subjected to violence and discrimination and earn less for their work — if they are compensated at all.

IOCC, working with Diakonia Agapes, a ministry of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania, is providing training in primary health care to the women of Shpati. The program aims to increase local awareness of health issues and techniques for dealing with everyday health problems. The program is quite simple, but its effects can make a lasting impact on the lives of the 200 women participating in the project and on the families of these women.

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From the Executive Director

For nearly ten years now, IOCC has responded with aid to the victims of natural disasters and war and to communities in need. Whether the need is caused by a refugee crisis triggered by armed conflict or the result of deep-rooted poverty, time and time again, when communities are left broken by these catastrophes, women and girls take the lead in caring for their families when social and economic life is interrupted.

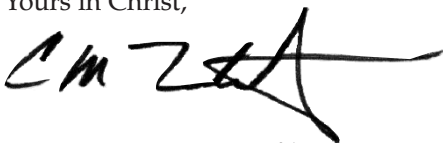
While women sustain families and communities in times of adversity, on average they receive less education, have inadequate health care, are subjected to violence and discrimination and earn less for their work — if they are compensated at all.

In the next few pages you will read stories of the women “responding to the call” in their communities — whether working to establish small business ventures, initiating health care to the sick, or serving as interns assisting in emergency distributions — women play vital roles as they rebuild their lives and communities.

Whether I am in Albania, the Republic of Georgia, the West Bank, the Russian Federation, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina or in the United States, I am consistently reminded of the courage and faith of the women in our lives who make our world a better place to live.

Thank you for your continued support of IOCC and its mission to reach out to those who are suffering and in need.

Yours in Christ,



Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director



Photo: IOCC Georgia

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Last year, IOCC fed 810,500 people in need through our international food distribution program. The program is currently providing essential food commodities to families in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia. The largest food distribution was in Russia, where 480,500 people were fed — most of them women and children.

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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The Circle of Life

By Nenad Prelevic, IOCC - Podgorica



Photo: Nenad Prelevic

Metropolitan Amfilohije joined the Circle of Serbian Sisters in Podgorica, Montenegro to celebrate the feast day of St. Marko, the patron saint of their association.

Serbian Sisters and IOCC Join to Help Nourish Children and Families in Montenegro

Podgorica, Montenegro (IOCC) — As their name might suggest, the work of the Circle of Serbian Sisters flows much like the unending shape of a circle. Whether in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or in the United States, the chapters of the women's association work tirelessly in service to their communities and have been inspirational partners in IOCC's work from the start.

While the work of the Circle of Serbian Sisters in Podgorica, Montenegro over the past decade has been constant, their history is anything but. Founded in 1936, the organization was active until 1941 when World War II brought the dissolution of the association. In 1992, during the more recent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the Sisters re-established their work in Podgorica, the capital of

Montenegro. With the blessing of Metropolitan Amfilohije and the leadership of their president Branka Vojvodic, the Sisters settled in the spiritual home of the Orthodox municipal office in Podgorica and today have more than 100 active "sisters" as well as dozens of displaced women who join the organization in various projects of humanitarian aid. All members give generously of their time and energy as volunteers.

The Circle of Serbian Sisters in Podgorica has a well-established tradition of sponsoring community-building activities such as workshops for rug makers, an open kitchen program to feed the poor and sponsorship of a school for poor children. Their funding comes through a partnership with IOCC and from sales of the beautiful, intricate rugs made in the workshop and donations from door to door solicitations. With these revenues, the Sisters have been able to educate, clothe and feed the poor children

and their families in Montenegro.

During some of the most difficult and trying days of the conflict that gripped the former Yugoslavia over the last decade, the Circle of Serbian Sisters set up aid for children who were made orphans. With IOCC's help, the Circle has provided food, personal care items and other emergency assistance to more than 8,000 vulnerable families since 1998. The women have also assisted IOCC in identifying participants in tailoring workshops in Podgorica. The two organizations have also combined to promote better communications about the ongoing project of repatriation in the fragile country.

The revitalization of the Podgorica chapter of the Circle of Serbian Sisters is not only a new beginning for the women who participate in its work, but has been a source of hope and comfort for thousands who have benefited from their determination to help those in need.

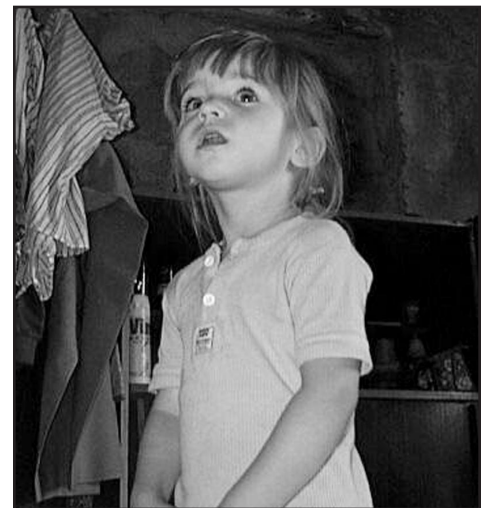


Photo: Nenad Prelevic

Partnering with IOCC, the Circle of Serbian Sisters in Podgorica, Montenegro assists underprivileged children and orphans.

The Credit They Deserve

By Maria-Cristina Sinzianu, IOCC - Georgia

“Micro Credits” Enable Women to Start Businesses In The Republic of Georgia.

Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia

(IOCC) - “Day in and day out, it is sad to see the elderly, women, children and the disabled begging and sleeping in the streets because of the dire conditions,” writes Maria-Cristina Sinzianu, who recently completed an internship and now serves as Project Officer with IOCC in the Republic of Georgia.

“Sometimes they starve for days. Yet with the help of generous people working through IOCC, we can try to help some and offer hope for the future.”

Since 1994, IOCC has worked to ease the suffering in the Republic of Georgia, a country whose people have endured near economic collapse following more than seven decades of a socialist economy and years of separatist fighting that has made thousands of people refugees in their own country.



Dali, a recipient of an IOCC “micro-credit” loan, opened a small grocery store which provides income to support her family.



Maria-Cristina Sinzianu (right) in Akhaltsikhe, Southern Georgia visits with a beneficiary of an IOCC food distribution project. The single mother and her six-year-old daughter make ends meet with food they receive from IOCC.

Photo: Mary Davlasheridze, IOCC-Georgia

The cornerstone of the IOCC program is a project which extends “micro-credits”, or small low-interest loans, to families so that they can start new businesses, foster self-sufficiency and develop stronger communities.

Maria-Cristina described the impact one micro-credit loan had for a 50-year-old woman named Dali.

“Women’s lives are difficult,” said Dali as she related the tragedy she had experienced in the past year. “One of my daughters died just over a year ago at age 26 from an injury she suffered when she was just 13.” Two months later, her husband died from a heart ailment. Recently she lost her granddaughter and her father. Her son at age 22 is unemployed and lives with her. The only income Dali has is about \$15 a month she receives from the Department of Education where she works as an accountant.

Despite her difficulties, Dali is upbeat about the prospects for her future. Five years ago she received her first loan from IOCC and working with her husband was able to open a small grocery store. Since then, the family has been able to expand the business which supports her family.

Although her shop is only about 750 square feet, the venture has been successful. By the spring she plans to pay back the remainder of her loan from IOCC. She plans on investing subsequent proceeds from the shop to start a cattle breeding business with a partner who owns a shed and six cows.

For Dali and the 579 recipients of IOCC micro-credit loans in the Republic of Georgia, the seed capital is not only a source of hope for the future, it is the credit they deserve.



A Force For Change

(cont'd from Page 1)

Bringing the women together for health training provides an opportunity for the women to share their experiences, support each other, and coordinate their efforts to sustain their families.

As the women of Shpati exemplify, women often bear an overwhelming share of childcare and domestic responsibilities. Yet, while women contribute to the well-being of the family at home, nearly half of the world's women are also economically active — balancing dual roles in the household.

Sustainable long-term projects aimed at building stronger communities that can care for the most vulnerable of its citizens — children, the elderly and the disabled — must include the participation of women whose daily work and wisdom are the heart of their communities.

In the strife-ridden Holy Land, the

rural economy, which suffered even before the latest escalation of violence, has now come to a near halt with closures of the West Bank. Subsistence farming, which is the basis of the Palestinian economy, is no longer economically feasible and many farmers have given up their agricultural work. As in Albania, women have been left to care for their families and the land while men seek employment as laborers in Israel.

Though they are the lifeblood of the villages, rural Palestinian women lack essential community services such as health care and basic sanitation. Safe places for their children to live and learn while the women work are also at a premium.

Even the home is not a safe place for many Palestinian women. Away from the scenes of violence in the streets, women are the unseen victims of domestic violence and physical abuse that has increased dramatically

amid the tension and escalating unemployment.

In contrast to these bleak circumstances, local village committees are working with IOCC and partner organizations in the West Bank and Gaza to strengthen community centers that provide space for women's groups, kindergartens and youth centers. The centers also provide safe gathering places where women, many of whom drop out of school and marry at an early age, have the opportunity to continue their education, participate in employment training programs, and learn techniques for improved health, hygiene and sanitation.

Supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IOCC's current efforts will reach more than 1,300 women in 24 villages in the West Bank. In addition to enabling communities to repair and renovate existing centers, community improvement campaigns will ensure that local infrastructure, such as access roads to farmlands and retaining walls around agricultural areas, will be improved.

With women playing a vital role in the home and in their communities, investments in programs which provide women with health instruction and access to education, adequate nutrition and sanitation are investments that not only improve the lives of women, but also have far-reaching effects on their families and communities.



Photo: IOCC-Banja Luka

In many of the countries where IOCC works, women often care for the children in addition to the land, like this woman plowing her field in Bosnia-Herzegovina.



A Dedicated Healer Nourishes Body and Soul

By Tatiana Vinogradova, IOCC - Moscow

Photo: Tatiana Vinogradova, IOCC Moscow



Despite the lack of resources, Dr. Shidlovskaya (front, second from left) inspires all of the Penza Hospital's staff to provide loving care to their patients.

Moscow (IOCC) - She's described simply as, "a charming lady, a sunny soul." This is how all regard Dr. Nina Mikhaylovna Shidlovskaya, chief obstetrician and head administrator of the Penza Maternity Hospital, the largest medical center in that region. It is here that IOCC has instituted a food program, where flour, rice, oil, beans and milk distributions enable maternity patients and their newborns to receive a proper, highly nutritious meal. For what amounts to the cost of a cup of coffee in the United States, patients here benefit from a bounty of IOCC's food gifts.

At the center of this hospital is Dr. Shidlovskaya. Caring and devoted, she is in charge of more than 1,500 patients who come to the hospital from different corners of this and neighboring provinces. She has been working here for more than two decades, beginning her service in

1978. Although it is very difficult to count and to remember all the women who have visited this hospital looking for help and relief, and there certainly have been many, Dr. Shidlovskaya was recently awarded the title "Honored Doctor of the Russian Federation."

Dr. Shidlovskaya spearheaded a new

system under which newborns are kept with their mothers directly after birth — much like a western-style center where mothers enjoy taking care of their babies themselves. This system was given the support of the city and the Maternity Hospital.

There have been trying times lately for the hospital financially. Under the Soviet regime, the hospital was financed through the local budget, and the management was able to cope with making both ends meet. But the situation became different after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nowadays, under the times of almost total poverty, and with hospital resources depleted during the 1990s because of soaring mortality rates and low fertility rates, alcoholism and rampant heart disease, Russia has become an almost incurably ill place. This situation has left the hospital lacking the most essential things like

medicines, equipment, new bedding and other supplies. In these dire circumstances, providing a proper diet was low on the list of priorities — until IOCC stepped in.

Healers like Dr. Shidlovskaya are always ready to help people with practical advice, or just by listening to them, which sometimes is the best remedy for their troubles. During our visit, we could see how very strict she was with doctors and nurses, but we also saw how they really adored her and rushed to do everything she had asked. It is gratifying to see a physician such as Dr. Shidlovskaya who makes absolutely sure that the most experienced and professional doctors, as well as the most caring nurses, work in her hospital. Under her care, they will always serve those in need, doing their best to help people and relieve their pain.



Photo: Tatiana Vinogradova, IOCC Moscow

Food commodities granted to IOCC from the U.S. Department of Agriculture are prepared into nutritious meals for the patients of the Penza maternity hospital.

Community Action

By Robert Pianka, Director, US Program

Baltimore (IOCC) - "Some five years ago a great number of Serbian refugees from the former Yugoslavia began to arrive in Cleveland and our parish priest at the time, V. Rev. Vasilije Sokolovic, made every effort to help them settle in," recalled Borjana Simic-Glavaski.

"After talking with him and realizing the difficulties our newcomers were faced with in everyday life, in searching for jobs and in almost everything around them, I volunteered to teach a class on Sundays after the Divine Liturgy."

From Mrs. Simic-Glavaski's realization that people in her own community could benefit from her talents, the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) course at The Saint Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio was started. Simic-Glavaski, a former teacher, assists fifteen refugees in the familiar and supportive environment of their parish by helping the bread-winners of refugee and immigrant families to re-enter their fields. She also reaches

out to the often-neglected stay-at-home family members who manage the household, raise the infants, deal with the school system and pass on so much of our tradition and faith.

The support of programs such as the one run by Simic-Glavaski are the focus of IOCC's U.S. Program initiated late last year through a grant from the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Foundation. The U.S. Program seeks to complement the philanthropic initiatives of the Orthodox Christian community and link volunteers with projects in their communities. The U.S. Program seeks to support projects that assist newcomers and help them realize their dreams.

"I knew that dedicating one hour of my time was insufficient and was hoping that language classes recommended to them by the State of Ohio and evening classes at some high schools would suffice," explained Simic-Glavaski. "Most of the students had great difficulties understanding the programs offered and relied heavily on the one I selected

"I'm happy to say that my students are all employed. They have become useful members of our society, ready to help others."

for them. I dedicated extra time at home and gave individual attention to those who were applying for jobs in their professional fields, such as land surveyors and technicians."

By encouraging Orthodox Christians to become involved in initiatives based in their communities, the potential impact of IOCC's U.S. Program is great.

"I feel that the most important factor in the success of this program is my knowledge of both the native language and English, coupled with my past teaching experience. I'm happy to say that my students are all employed. They have become useful members of our society, ready to help others. The group will be graduating in February 2002."

The cooperative efforts of Mrs. Simic-Glavaski, the Saint Sava Parish School and the Vuk Stef. Karadzich Serbian National University are making a real difference for these refugees. Working together in communities across the United States we can ease the path to achievement and a full family and community life, thereby helping to ensure the continued blessings of Faith for all of us.

For more information on IOCC's U.S. Program, contact the Program Director, Robert Pianka at (410) 243-9820 or by e-mail rpianka@ioccc.org.



IOCC's United States Program aims to "help you help others succeed in your community" by encouraging Orthodox Christians to help people right here at home.



IOCC at Ten

Next year marks IOCC's 10-year milestone. Among the events being planned to celebrate this occasion is a cross-country bicycle trek. The IOCC 2002 "Race to Respond" will kick off in New Jersey on Saturday August 3, 2002, and finish at the Pacific Ocean near San Francisco 21 days later. The 3,500-mile cycling event will traverse 11 states. Although billed as a race, the event is geared as a team effort by the cyclists, who aim to raise awareness for IOCC's international programs. Information will soon be available at www.racetorespond.org.



Remember IOCC for Your Workplace Giving Programs!

IOCC participates in many workplace giving programs, including the United Way and Combined Federal Campaigns. International Service Agencies is IOCC's agent for many of these campaigns and has designated 0348 as the IOCC donor number. Please note that some campaigns have different designation codes for IOCC. Please consult your campaign materials, the IOCC website (www.iocc.org) or call IOCC at (877) 803 4622 for information.



IOCC INTERNS

Ever wonder what it would be like to work in the field of international humanitarian aid? The IOCC Honors Internship Program seeks individuals who are current college or graduate school students interested in non-profit management. This exciting program requires a 10 to 12-week full-time commitment with internships available in program management, news and information and administration. Internships are available at IOCC headquarters in Baltimore or in one of IOCC's field offices overseas. A limited number

of one-year internships are also available. For more information, visit the IOCC website at www.iocc.org.



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