



# Bosnian youth shaping a peaceful future

By Miroslav Strinic and Tina Wolfe, IOCC-Bosnia

**Bosanski Brod, Bosnia-Herzegovina (IOCC)** — As we enter the room, groups of teen-age girls and boys are shuffling papers, drawing on flipcharts, rehearsing a song, working on a computer, cutting out newspaper articles, whispering and laughing. In the background, an old cassette player is playing a popular folk song.

Danijel, 18, a member of the recently-formed “We Care” drama club in Nikola Tesla High School, is rehearsing a skit on the topic of street violence and alcohol.

“Through the club, I’ve had a chance to meet other young people, make new friends, learn about and openly discuss taboo topics like drugs, STDs, AIDS and family violence, and to express my feelings about these issues through comedy sketches,” he said.

Danijel spends about two hours a week at the club, learning about the characteristics, threats, symptoms and consequences of legal and illegal substances through an alternative after-school program designed by one of IOCC’s local partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Zdravo da ste (“Hi Neighbor”), one of many Bosnian organizations supported by IOCC, is implementing an educational project to prevent drug addiction, alcoholism, smoking and other risky behaviors among youth by



Photo: Mike Dubose-Act

## Wave of relief follows tsunami

Looking forward in hope, Syntrudin (right) and his friend Ramadham pick their way through streets clogged with debris following the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. IOCC and its partners are bringing life-sustaining humanitarian assistance to the tsunami survivors. **Article on page 3**

instilling values based on work, ethics, responsibility, healthy lifestyles, tolerance and compassion.

With IOCC’s support, “Hi Neighbor” has established four youth clubs — environmental, drama, citizenship, and journalism — to offer young people a positive learning environment and keep them off the streets.

“In addition to teaching kids about these topics and other social problems through interactive learning, the clubs offer them an opportunity to learn life-long skills,” said Dalibor Vukman, a young “Hi Neighbor” staff member and workshop leader.

These skills include teamwork, communication, listening and public speaking, group decision-making, critical thinking, and research methods, as well as how to use computers, digital video cameras and the Internet.

With an estimated post-war population of 10,000 (35,000 pre-war, according to the last census),

Bosanski Brod is a small rural county in northern Bosnia-Herzegovina that shares a border with Croatia and was the center of many hostilities during the 1992-1995 civil war. It is also a crossroads for trade and commerce — both legal and illegal.

Recent statistics show that the consumption of legal drugs (alcohol, cigarettes, glue, gasoline, etc.) by young people in this municipality has increased by 50 percent in the post-war period. Experts cite a variety of factors: poverty, rising unemployment, limited parental supervision, municipal government apathy, and a lack of extracurricular or entertainment outlets for young people.

With most of its public buildings and infrastructure devastated by the war, Brod doesn’t have a movie theater, a gymnasium, a playhouse or a decent soccer field, the sport of preference for most teen-age boys.

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# From the Executive Director

*“The waters stood above the mountains.  
At your rebuke they flee.”*

— Psalm verse read at Orthodox vespers

In the Orthodox Church, we celebrate the transforming power of water in many ways — at baptisms, when our homes are blessed, during vespers, and so on. Water is the source of life, but it can also bring destruction.

The world witnessed this destructive power recently in the tsunami that struck 13 Asian and African nations bordering the Indian Ocean, particularly Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India. As I write this letter, 40 days have passed since the tsunami hit, and still it seems that we have hardly been able to mourn because all we can feel is shock — at the power of nature, at the number of lives lost, at the communities literally washed away. Were it not for the “before” and “after” pictures, it would be hard to believe that devastation of this magnitude is even possible.

Less than 24 hours after the tsunami hit, IOCC and its ecumenical partners responded by airlifting shelter and sanitation kits, blankets and emergency foodstuffs to some of the hardest-hit areas. With your generous support, IOCC also is delivering multi-vitamins to tsunami survivors in Sri Lanka; fresh fruits and vegetables to people left homeless by the tsunami on the east coast of Sumatra; and medicine boxes with enough medical supplies for 1,000 adults and children for three months.

You have responded by assembling thousands of “Gift of the Heart” health kits, which are being delivered to tsunami-affected areas right now. As children in the tsunami-affected countries return to school, “Gift of the Heart” school kits also are urgently needed. Going back to class with basic school supplies will help the children, many of them now orphaned, feel that their lives are returning to normal.

So it is appropriate that this issue of News & Needs be



Photo: Paul Jeffrey-ACT

devoted to the theme of education. Whether providing school supplies, supporting drug abuse awareness, repairing decrepit school buildings, encouraging computer literacy, or offering vocational training, IOCC has always sought to put education at the center of its humanitarian outreach. As an Arabic sign recently seen at the dedication of a West Bank kindergarten read, “Education is light.”

Water and light — both are basic elements necessary for human survival. But in a symbolic sense, both define the humanitarian mission of IOCC: Water brings life when used for irrigation, sanitation and human consumption; light illumines the path of those lost in the darkness of despair and brings hope for the future. Thank you for being such a critical part of this mission of light and life.

Yours In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director



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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recycled paper

*To learn more about IOCC's education programs, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)*

# Wave of relief follows tsunami

Photo: Orla Clinton-ACT



A doctor from IOCC partner Church World Service speaks with a tsunami survivor at a shelter in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. IOCC's tsunami relief efforts are addressing health concerns in some of the hardest hit areas.

are ongoing) to the tsunami-affected countries. IOCC is coordinating its response through the Metropolitanate and other ecumenical partners, including Church World Service (CWS) and Action by Churches Together (ACT).

Daskalakis said the emergency phase of the humanitarian relief operation could last six months. "The first thing you have to do is cover the basic needs," he said, "because these people have lost everything. They had no time to prepare. I met one guy who lost 20 of his relatives."

The biggest needs, he said, are medical personnel and medical facilities, medicines, health and hygiene supplies, basic and supplementary foodstuffs, shelter, clothing, and household items. According to the needs-assessment report, the tsunami disrupted life on the island of Sumatra in six main areas: Livelihood; Food; Shelter; Health, Water, Sanitation; Education; Infrastructure.

"The whole population is in shock," Daskalakis said. "The biggest problem they have is ... what now? They need to see that their way of life is going to be rebuilt, with the conditions that they are used to. They need hope."



**Baltimore (IOCC)** — Like the end of the world. That's how IOCC officials described the tsunami devastation they recently witnessed on the island of Sumatra.

"It's unlike anything I've ever seen before. It's hard for me to even describe," said IOCC staff member Yorgos Daskalakis, who is coordinating IOCC's ongoing response to the tsunami disaster from Medan, Indonesia. "The west coast is completely destroyed."

Daskalakis traveled to the tsunami-devastated island as part of an IOCC needs-assessment team to meet with humanitarian agency representatives, survey the damage and determine how best to administer additional relief. The team visited the hardest hit Indonesian province of Aceh, where an estimated 170,000 people have perished.

"The damage within two miles of the coast can only be described as apocalyptic. There was nothing left except endless piles of debris," said Christopher Ebe, director of the joint Office of Philanthropy operated by IOCC and the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.

The needs-assessment team visited the eastern coast of Aceh province, which sustained serious damage and

loss of life but has been lacking in humanitarian assistance. IOCC will distribute fresh fruits and vegetables on a regular basis at camps in Sigli and Lhokseumawe, Sumatra, where people displaced by the tsunami are staying.

Accompanying Daskalakis and Ebe on the mission was Fr. Chrysostomos Manalu, an Orthodox priest with the Metropolitanate.

Less than 24 hours after the tsunami devastated parts of South Asia on Dec. 26, 2004, IOCC participated in a series of humanitarian airlifts (which

## In response to the South Asia tsunami, IOCC and its partners are:

- Airlifting urgently-needed humanitarian supplies, including 43,000 soy rice meals and 20 tons of canned meat to the island of Sumatra.
- Airlifting 8,000 "Gift of the Heart" health, school and baby kits to Indonesia, with more on the way.
- Delivering nearly 300 medicine boxes to Indonesia, each with enough medical supplies for 1,000 adults and children for up to three months. That's enough to help 300,000 people in need or to restock medical clinics.
- Supplying food and other goods on a regular basis to displaced people living in camps or in homes with relatives on the east coast of Sumatra. The camps identified by IOCC are home to more than 34,000 people made homeless by the tsunami.
- Shipping four 40-foot containers of multi-vitamins to tsunami survivors in Sri Lanka. That's enough vitamins to provide 53,000 adults with a daily dose for a month.
- Working through the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.

To learn more about IOCC's education programs, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)

# Windows of opportunity opening for women in rural West Bank

By Nora Kort, IOCC-Jerusalem



Photo: Paul Jeffrey-ACT

Women in the West Bank village of Ti'innik listen intently during an IOCC-led workshop on public health education. IOCC programs in skills and leadership training have empowered Palestinian women to become leaders in their communities.

**Jerusalem (IOCC)** — *Al Ilm Nour* (“education is light”) and “give us more educational opportunities” were two of the many signs welcoming IOCC’s efforts at Beit Sira, a West Bank village 18 miles west of Ramallah, on the opening of the village kindergarten built by IOCC in the spring of 2004.

Throughout the West Bank, IOCC programs have opened windows of learning for adults and children alike.

“Having the opportunity to learn transformed my life. I dare say I am no longer the person I used to be — I am a new woman altogether,” said Abeer, a mother of five who participated in an IOCC health training

session in her village of Kafr Dan, 82 miles north of Jerusalem.

Rabiha, who lives in Rummana, a village of 3,000 in the Jenin Governorate, expressed her feelings after completing IOCC training by saying: “My self-worth and the respect of my community came with the education and skills I acquired at IOCC’s training here in this forgotten village.”

It is true that IOCC training and education programs have been a catalyst for change and social transformation, especially in the acceptance of women and the empowerment of grassroots leaders.

But “education is true empowerment for women in rural Palestinian areas,” said Ruwaida Al-Ghoul, IOCC program coordinator in the Jenin District. “For a long time, their voices were not

heard. With education and training, women have proven themselves in their own society. Their self-esteem has grown, and their opinions are sought by their family and community members.”

Ruwaida’s work with IOCC strengthened her own self-confidence, and now she has become a true community leader and mobilizer.

The diversification of educational programs proved to be a key for the success of IOCC’s work.

“It’s been our dream,” said Dr. Simon A’raj, chairman of the board of the Benevolent Society in Beit-Jala, Bethlehem. “We’ve worked hard to establish a computer center at the

Benevolent Society. The students and businessmen have a great need to quench their thirst and connect with the world, so this is a skill they need to learn. Now, despite the hard living conditions, they have the opportunity and all are excited.”

Community-based programs and the importance of “reaching the unreachable” are major elements of IOCC’s development work in the Holy Land.

“How can we ever forget IOCC’s work and impact?” said Ayed Qett, head of Madama Village Council, seven miles southwest of Nablus, upon IOCC’s visit to Madama Women’s Community Center, built with IOCC-USAID funds in 2003. “No other organization has ever trained our women and opened new windows of hope for them except you. What we have is a new and better world for our families, and for this we are proud.”

**“Having the opportunity to learn transformed my life.”**

— Abeer, a woman from Kafr Dan, West Bank

Since beginning work in the Middle East in 1997, IOCC has focused on education for all: men, women and children. From civil society and capacity building to women’s empowerment and job creation, IOCC continues to focus on education and skills-training based on the conviction that sustainable development comes with knowledge.



To learn more about IOCC’s education programs, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)

# Community initiatives prepare Bosnian young people for the future

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"Our local government is overburdened with transition and reforms, and it lacks the human resources, expertise and funding to address these problems," said Dragica Bardak, "Hi Neighbor" project coordinator. "They've lost control of the situation, and youngsters are left to their own devices."

Ms. Bardak said participation in the "Hi Neighbor" project has been much higher than expected. The original plan was to enroll 50 young people, an average of 10 to 12 per workshop. "Now we have 90 kids, 20 to 25 in each group," she said. "We'd like to include as many as possible, but it's not easy to run a workshop with a larger group."

IOCC supports grassroots organi-

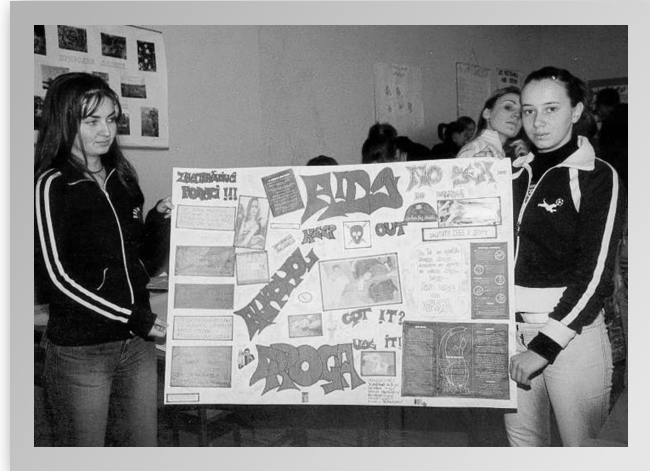
zations such as "Hi Neighbor" as a way to change attitudes, behaviors and practices, both individual and corporate, in post-war Bosnia. With funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, IOCC currently is working to build the capacity of more than 160 Bosnian organizations that are working for change.

"I have broadened my knowledge," said Jasmin, a 17-year-old member of the environmental club. "Before, I didn't pay attention to the dangers of smoking cigarettes, but now I realize that the risks of getting cancer are much higher among smokers than non-smokers."

"What I enjoy most about being a member of the citizenship club is our debates," said 15-year-old Vera, "where I have an opportunity to learn about my rights and the possibility to influence my peers to turn away from risky behaviors and to warn those who are on the right path not to turn the wrong way."

Each club, eager to share its knowledge with classmates and visitors, collectively brainstormed its ideas and findings to develop group messages through a series of practical exercises: skits, essays, articles, poll results, debates, cartoons, paintings, photos and research. The high school's main entrance and halls are covered with a colorful array of panels echoing each club's work.

IOCC's grant to "Hi Neighbor" paid



Two members of the citizenship club show off their substance abuse poster, which will be displayed at the main entrance of Nikola Tesla High School in Bosanski Brod, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The club is a project of the IOCC-supported organization Zdravo da ste ("Hi Neighbor"), which uses the clubs to teach Bosnian young people positive values.

Photo: Dalibor Vukman-IOCC

## 'Connecting Kids'

Young people in the former Yugoslavia are learning about each other through IOCC's "Connecting Kids" project, a partnership with the Vlade Divac Group 7 Children's Foundation. Here is what has been accomplished so far in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia-Montenegro:

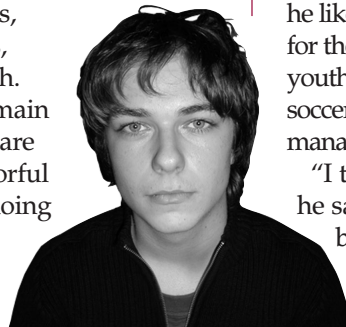
- Seventeen rural middle schools are participating. Each school has been equipped with computers, a printer and a hub.
- Computer science is being taught using a hands-on approach, rather than just theory.
- Children ages 11-14 are learning various computer skills.
- A Youth Community Action Team has been formed in each participating school (comprising students, teachers and local residents). Each team has developed and implemented a project to improve conditions in its school vicinity.
- Young people from different ethnic backgrounds have connected with each other across boundaries, many for the first time since the 1992-1995 war, through computers, games and other activities.

for the purchase of equipment and materials needed to run the workshops and club activities, as well as workshop facilitator fees and operational costs. IOCC staff also helped "Hi Neighbor" refine the project and develop the tools, systems and methods necessary to manage it effectively.

Beyond teaching students about the dangers of drugs and its consequences, the project is also having a positive impact on teacher-student relationships. "I have a much closer interaction with these kids, who are more open, spontaneous, creative and communicative than my other students," said Mira Jeremic, a biology teacher and adviser to the environmental club.

Danijel, the drama club member, said he likes to spend his free time preparing for the workshops, volunteering in the youth club and playing handball and soccer. He hopes to become a lawyer or manager in the future.

"I think it's good for my character," he said confidently as he strolled back to his group.



Danijel, age 18



To learn more about IOCC's education programs, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)

# Lebanese children find stability, hope in IOCC education program

By Rachel Azzi, IOCC-Lebanon

## Beirut, Lebanon (IOCC) —

Thirteen-year-old Rana and her 8-year-old brother, Ali, are students in Al Shiyah Public School in Beirut, one of 181 schools being served by IOCC's education program in Lebanon. As they speak, their eyes tell a sad story of negligence and loneliness.

"I like going to school," Rana said, "but last year, we had to stay in the streets, my brother and I, because we had no money or food." Even so, she shows a quiet pride and fortitude. A young girl in the fourth grade, she takes responsibility for herself and her brother, who is in second grade.

"We are like others. We have everything we need," Rana said, trying to find some hope in their situation.

The truth is: Ali is sitting next to her wearing only a sweater — no coat for the winter, shivering from the cold. "I enjoy eating the meals they give us," he said of the IOCC school lunch program. "I always wait for it because I usually don't have enough money to buy food at school."

The IOCC program, now in its fourth year, serves 35,000 underprivi-

leged Lebanese children, providing them with nutritious lunches and lessons on personal health, hygiene and care for the environment.

So far, the impact of the project has gone well beyond the walls of the participating schools. Its seven components — nutrition, education, capacity building, advocacy, child health, infrastructure repair, and equipment — have brought hope and opportunity not only to students but also to parents, communities and local organizations.

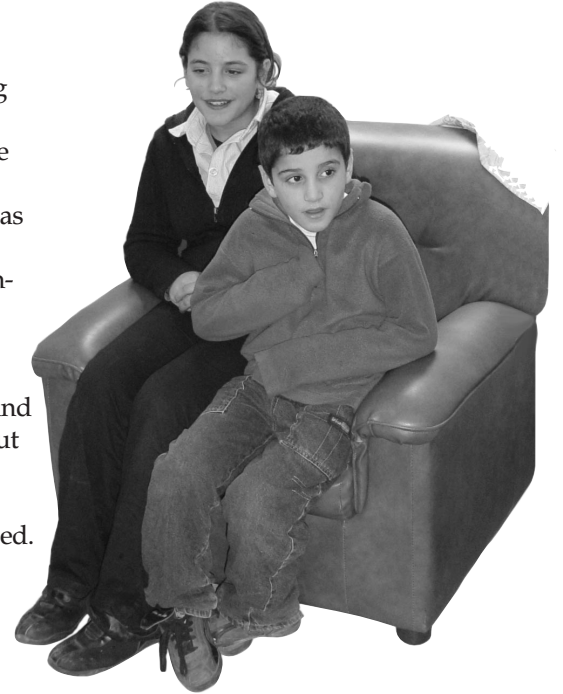
Rana and Ali's parents are divorced. Their father has spent more time in jail than he has at home, and their mother left them after the divorce, seeking a new life with a new husband.

Under these difficult circumstances, Rana and Ali had to search for love, care and stability on their own. But where?

At first, they stayed with their father, who left them with no food, just some money to buy junk food — a potato sandwich, a fajita sandwich or anything to ease their hunger, and only their hunger. Children at this

age need healthy food and a balanced diet to ensure proper growth and development.

After a while, the father arranged for the children to live with their grandmother. The school principal said that after the move, the children started coming to school with lice. The principal



Rana (left) and Ali, a sister and brother from Beirut, Lebanon, talk about the hardships they faced after their parents' divorce and how IOCC's school nutrition and education program has helped them. The program, now in its fourth year serving Lebanese public schools, has seven components that address the students' nutritional, social and educational needs.

called their mother, and Rana and Ali were taken back under her care. "Staying with our mother is better than with father because she looks after us and gives us food," Rana said.

Now some teachers and the school principal are trying to help Rana and Ali by paying for their transportation, their school registration and their books. In doing so, they hope to keep Rana and Ali from living on the streets once again because of lack of money or care.

Rana and Ali said that every day they look forward to the lunches and lessons, which provide students with their minimum daily nutritional requirements and help prevent short-term hunger. The mid-morning meals also contribute to increased student productivity and lower rates of student absenteeism.



Photos: IOCC-Lebanon

Students at an IOCC health fair in Bourj Hammoud, Lebanon, explain their project, which is similar to 4-H projects in the United States. The fair was one of 12 held throughout Lebanon in 2004 as part of IOCC's school nutrition and education program. The program, serving 35,000 children in 181 public schools, continues in 2005.

To learn more about IOCC's education programs, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)

# New textbooks will support schools, academic achievement

## Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (IOCC) —

In some parts of Ethiopia, children have only one textbook to a classroom, and their schools cannot afford new books.

But that's about to change. IOCC is providing schools operated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with enough textbooks to fill two 20-foot containers — a value of nearly \$1 million. The shipment also includes classroom instructional aids such as rulers and maps.

"These textbooks and classroom materials will open new horizons of opportunity for the school children," said Ivan Zivkovic, Serbia-Montenegro ambassador to Ethiopia, who, along with Los Angeles Laker Vlade Divac, is assisting IOCC with the project.

"I am pleased to join IOCC in bringing compassionate assistance to the children of Ethiopia — the same kind of assistance that IOCC has been bringing to suffering people in Serbia-Montenegro and throughout the Balkans for 12 years," Zivkovic said.

**"These textbooks and classroom materials will open new horizons of opportunity for the school children."**

— *Ivan Zivkovic, Serbia-Montenegro ambassador to Ethiopia*

The textbooks, donated by leading U.S. publisher McGraw-Hill through Brother's Brother Foundation in Pittsburgh, will be used to teach English, math, science, history, physics and biology to students in grades 1-12.

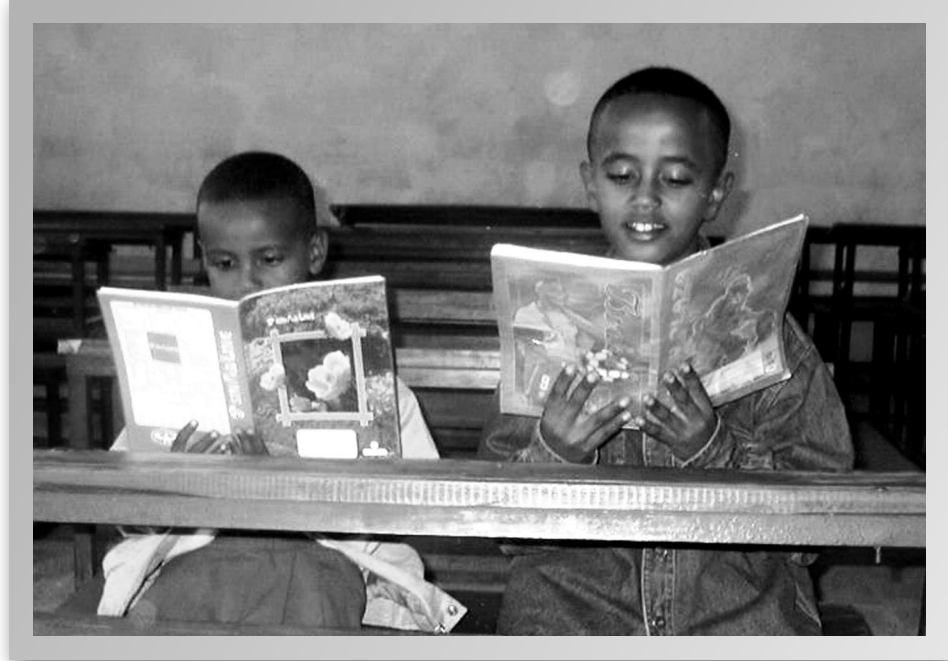


Photo: Inia Asuncion-IOCC

IOCC is delivering nearly \$1 million in new textbooks to schools run by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Here, two Ethiopian boys read from textbooks in a rural elementary school.

"Most families in Ethiopia cannot afford to buy books, and students do not have textbooks to take home and use as a reference for studying," said IOCC-Ethiopia Program Manager Ken Baker. "This donation will allow the students to have their own textbooks for each subject, and this will improve the level of learning and achievement significantly."

Baker said the Ethiopian Orthodox Church began developing a parochial school system about 70 years ago and, today, operates thousands of schools across the country.

"These schools still need support from different sources to strengthen their capacity, and the lack of sufficient and appropriate textbooks is one of the major difficulties they're facing," Baker said.

The textbook initiative is part of IOCC's newly-expanded material aid program, which leverages material goods from corporate partners and

matches the aid with the specific needs of vulnerable people around the world.

IOCC currently is seeking private donations to cover the costs of processing, transporting and handling the textbook shipment. Such contributions provide a vital link in the provision of this aid.

"School teachers have clearly identified that this shortage of textbooks at all grade levels has significantly affected their ability to teach in the classroom," Baker said, "and has generally resulted in a lower academic standing for the students, especially in rural areas."

The textbook project is another example of how IOCC works to strengthen the humanitarian capacity of the Orthodox Church worldwide. In Ethiopia, IOCC also is partnering with the Church to implement an HIV/AIDS prevention and education project and an agricultural development project.



To learn more about IOCC's education programs, please visit [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)

# Leave a legacy through St. Basil Society

St. Basil the Great, one of the Three Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church, 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.

The 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 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. IOCC will also honor requests for donor anonymity.

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 filling in the online form at [www.iocc.org/stbasilsociety](http://www.iocc.org/stbasilsociety) or by calling Mark Hodde, Director of Development, toll-free at 1-877-803-4622.

## School kits needed

From Philadelphia, Pa., (right) to Tbilisi, Georgia, (below) "Gift of the Heart" school kits are sent long distances to equip children with the school supplies they need to succeed. IOCC recently distributed 15,000 school kits to underprivileged children in the Republic of Georgia.



"When I went home, I kept telling everybody that I received school kits, and I was almost flying from joy all day long," said Mariam, 8, a second-grader in the southern Georgia town of Akhaltsikhe. The school kit distribution was part of a larger, ongoing IOCC project to improve the quality of education in Georgia. Find out how to assemble school kits for children in need by visiting [www.iocc.org/kits](http://www.iocc.org/kits)



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