



A Multitude of Needs in the Balkans

BALTIMORE (IOCC) -Working together with partner agencies in the Balkans, IOCC's response to the Kosovo crisis has grown to more than \$2 million since bombing began on March 24. Twenty-eight IOCC staff members working in Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Greece are delivering emergency supplies including supplementary nutrition parcels, infant care packages, personal care parcels, and shelter materials to needy individuals and families in the region.

Over 135,000 people are being directly aided through IOCC relief efforts in the region.

Recently IOCC's Country Representative in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Matthew Parry, monitored the delivery of emergency supplies arriving to Montenegro. Parry emphasized that, "While the assistance provided by IOCC will meet the needs of these recipients for an interim period, continued outside assistance will be necessary." IOCC is one of the few aid agencies to successfully deliver aid to that region.

He echoed the concern of people helped by IOCC who are dependent on aid to meet their most basic needs. While IOCC staff works to address the immediate emergency needs, plans are

underway to provide assistance into the winter and beyond. Emergency aid projects will be balanced with programs that offer long-term solutions to the devastation.

The elderly, patients in hospitals, children in orphanages, refugees in tent camps in Albania are just some of the most vulnerable people in need of assistance in the Balkans that IOCC is aiding. The need of the region's people is staggering while much of the suffering is unseen.

In Montenegro, where there are an estimated 65,000 displaced persons, many people forced from Kosovo are finding refuge in the homes of friends and family. As the conflict drags on, the resources of many of these host families are being depleted adding to the number of people in need.

In Albania, an estimated 36,000 refugees hosted in private homes are finding assistance through a program managed, in part, by senior IOCC staff. Those families are feeling similar strains on their resources.

In Serbia, the effect of the conflict is felt directly and indirectly. While the bombs being dropped in heavily populated areas present a direct danger to

life, the psychological and economic effects of the destruction are placing a heavy burden on the populace. Serbia is already home to more than 500,000 refugees who themselves were forced from areas of Croatia and Bosnia during the conflict that plagued the former Yugoslavia just a few years ago.

According to the European Roma Rights Center, IOCC is one of the very few international organizations providing assistance to Romany people who have been forced from Kosovo. IOCC provided plastic sheeting, wood and styrofoam to repair provisional shelters for Romany families in Montenegro.

In Belgrade, IOCC works together with the Democratic Roma Association and has identified more than 1,000 Romanies who have been displaced from Kosovo. IOCC has assisted the Association through the distribution of emergency food and hygiene parcels.

IOCC's dedicated staff, which has worked uninterruptedly throughout NATO's bombing campaign in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, will continue to deliver critically needed aid to the many people suffering in the Balkans.



Credit: Matthew Parry/IOCC

A Romany girl looks after her younger sister in Niksic, Montenegro. The girl's family received aid from IOCC after being forced from their home in Kosovo. IOCC is currently helping more than 50,000 people in Montenegro.



Credit: ACT International/Hans Marklund

Senior IOCC staff are working together with Diakonia Agapes, the humanitarian office of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania and other partners to manage two refugee camps like this one in Ndroq, Albania.



Credit: Matthew Parry/IOCC

Displaced persons in Montenegro unload a recent shipment of food delivered to an IOCC warehouse. The food was donated to IOCC by the Mennonite Central Committee.

New Chances in Life



Executive Director Constantine Triantafilou (left) is pictured with IOCC staff during a recent visit to a food assistance program in Banja Luka (Republika Srpska). Metropolitan Iriney's support for programs like this one was central to IOCC's humanitarian efforts in the Balkans.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) was established in 1992 by the Standing Conferences 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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News & Needs is edited by Mark Hodde.

In this period of conflict in the Balkans, the images of Albanian refugees and destruction from the NATO air campaigns remind me of those who give of themselves so that others who have nothing can be fed or get a new start in life.

His Eminence Metropolitan Iriney of New Gracanica of the Serbian Orthodox Church, who passed away on February 2nd, was one such person who gave selflessly to those in need.

I first met Metropolitan Iriney when we traveled to Bosnia-Herzegovina to deliver a field hospital and see firsthand the needs of the people there.

His compassion stirred by the privation of the people he met, he returned to the United States to raise funds and organize shipments of food, clothing, medicines, and hospital supplies.

During some of the darkest hours of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, IOCC was able to share with the people there the life-sustaining aid and hope that Metropolitan Iriney provided.

Now we are faced with a new crisis in the Balkans, it is our Christian duty to stand up as the Metropolitan did to respond to the needs of the people. We must provide the physical and spiritual comfort to those who have lost their jobs and homes, who have been forced to live in shelters, who are struggling to find their next meal and face an uncertain future.

Thank you for joining us in responding to the call.

Sincerely,

Constantine Triantafilou
Executive Director and CEO

Respite for Suffering Russians

BALTIMORE (IOCC) - For tens of thousands of the most vulnerable Russians the transition to a free market economy has meant little more than increased hardship and uncertainty.

George Antoun, IOCC's Regional Director for Russia and the Republic of Georgia, found that many orphanages and other social and medical institutions in Russia have less than 5 rubles (around 30 cents) to spend on food per person per day - barely enough to buy bread at current prices.

In response, IOCC has launched a food aid program in Moscow and eight other regions of Central Russia, to begin this Spring. The twelve-month project to provide essential aid for an estimated 250,000 needy people will be implemented in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church Department on Church Charity and Social Services.

"This program demonstrates IOCC's ongoing commitment to the vulnerable during this turbulent and very trying transition to democracy and a free market," said IOCC's Chairman of the Board, Mr. Charles Ajalat.

Orphanages, homes for the aged, hospitals, and soup kitchens are some of the institutions that will benefit from the 21,000 tons of food. The elderly and pensioners, large families, and the disabled will also be assisted. The IOCC distribution



Credit: IOCC Archive

Patients on the Oncology Unit of the National Children's Hospital in Moscow (pictured here) and other hospitals and social welfare organizations in Russia will benefit from the IOCC program in Russia.

program is part of a massive food aid package by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Metropolitan Theodosius of the Orthodox Church in America responded to the news, saying that "In frequent contacts and conversations with Patriarch Alexy of Moscow I have been moved by his intense awareness of the desperate need for food assistance among the vulnerable in Russia, especially the elderly pensioners and children in orphanages. The IOCC program will help the Church to help those in need."

Enormous need has affected Russians at a time when the ailing Russian economy has greatly diminished the purchasing power of the ruble. For elderly people on state pensions and for government

employees, the winter has been particularly difficult. In many instances, salaries and pensions have not been paid for months.

The IOCC program is the first step toward easing this widespread suffering.



Credit: IOCC Archive

The meager salaries of doctors and nurses often go unpaid for months. Food distributions to hospitals will provide for a better working environment where recovering patients can at least receive nutritious meals.



Disrupted Lives – Refugees Get A Fresh Start With Help From IOCC



Leila K., 47, a research assistant for 15 years at the Sukhumi Research Institute is now living in a refugee center. She completely depends upon the IOCC's Blanket Project in order to feed her small family.

BALTIMORE (IOCC) - Since it began, IOCC has been working to ease the suffering and reduce the uncertainty that confronts refugees every day. Especially heart rending are the needs of young refugees for whom childhood means the loss of home and friends and sometimes even family.

According to information from the United Nations, one out of every seven refugees and displaced persons in the world resides in a country served by IOCC. Many of IOCC's programs provide direct assistance to help refugees rebuild lives broken by war and natural disasters.

In the Republic of Georgia, IOCC and Lazarus (IOCC's implementing

partner) provide food to people forced from their homes by clashes between separatists and government forces. Between 1995 and 1997, IOCC helped to sustain tens of thousands who fled the conflict in Chechnya in the south of the Russian Federation.

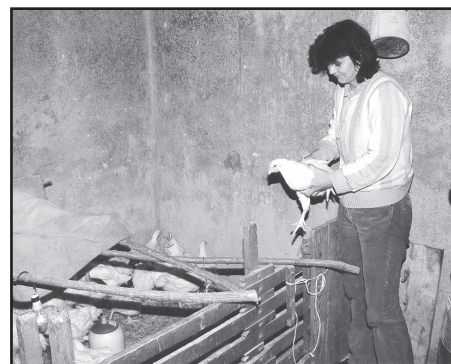
Food and emergency supplies, however, are just the start.

When conflicts are prolonged or armed disputes redefine borders, "temporary" refugee quarters often take on the permanence of home. Refugees may find themselves living in gymnasiums, warehouses, abandoned hotels, army barracks, or whatever buildings are available.

IOCC is working with refugees housed in shared accommodations like these, helping to build new communities and options for the future. In Yugoslavia, IOCC has worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and others to repair and refurbish refugee centers. Working directly with the refugees, IOCC also helped to organize small employ-



Refugee schoolchildren in Sabac, Serbia receive food parcels from IOCC.



Mirjana, a refugee living in Serbia, is raising chickens with the help of a IOCC Micro-Credit Loan.

ment projects for adults and recreational activities for the children.

Most refugees simply want to go home. Those refugees who are lucky enough to return to their places of residence frequently find their communities in shambles. Every part of the community must often be rebuilt, sometimes literally from the ground up.

"Returnees," as they are known, must also find new ways to support themselves financially. For Bosnian refugees, IOCC issues low-interest loans to help people start small businesses, which provide not only work but hope for those starting out again.

The hard reality for many refugees is that they will remain in host countries for years-some can never go back. Wherever that may be, IOCC is committed to helping refugee children and their families make their new lives peaceful and free from want.

Hurricane Survivors Begin Rebuilding

BALTIMORE (IOCC) - One of the deadliest seasons on record for hurricanes turned the lives of hundreds of thousands upside down in Central America and the Caribbean this past autumn. Two massive hurricanes in the region took the lives of nearly 10,000 people and the homes of hundreds of thousands more.

Out of the devastation, the survivors of Hurricanes Georges and Mitch received a boost from the gifts of Orthodox Christians throughout the United States and Canada, who to date have contributed more than \$40,000 to the relief and recovery efforts.

“The heartfelt expression of solidarity by Orthodox Christians to those in need in Central America has been tremendous,” said IOCC Executive Director Constantine Triantafilou. He emphasized that “The magnitude of the disaster requires our ongoing support.”

In Haiti, where Hurricane Georges wreaked havoc last September, IOCC is working with the Very Rev. Archimandrite Michael Graves of the Orthodox Church in the Caribbean to provide relief.

An IOCC grant to the Orthodox community in Petion-Ville, Haiti, will assist in repair efforts for two churches that are centers for social assistance in the community. The grant will also help repair homes damaged in the hurricane.



Photo courtesy of Church World Service.

A medical volunteer in Honduras examines a small child. Medical teams like this one were supported by donations to IOCC.

Working together with partner agencies in Honduras and Nicaragua, IOCC has helped to support the more than 60 medical volunteers who traveled to the region since Hurricane Mitch struck in late October 1998.

According to one IOCC partner agency, Church World Service, the medical teams were moved not only by the immediate suffering caused by the storm, but also by the great need that would be found, even under ordinary circumstances, in many of the communities they visited.

Initial donations have allowed for the provision of urgently needed food and other supplies to disaster areas, including baby kits, blankets, family-sized tents, rice, beans, oil, corn, plastic sheeting, and oral rehydration salts.

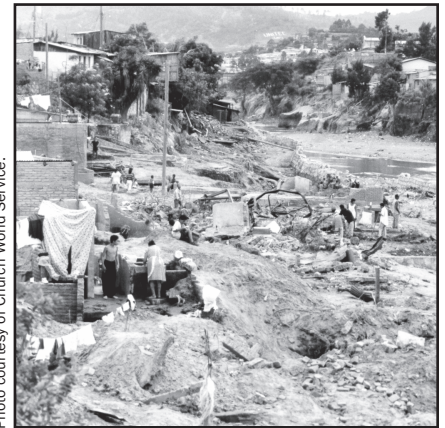
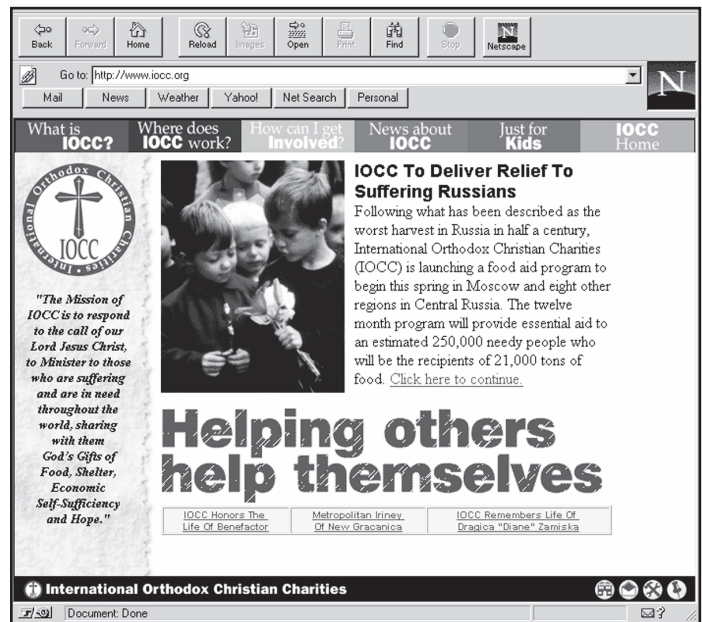
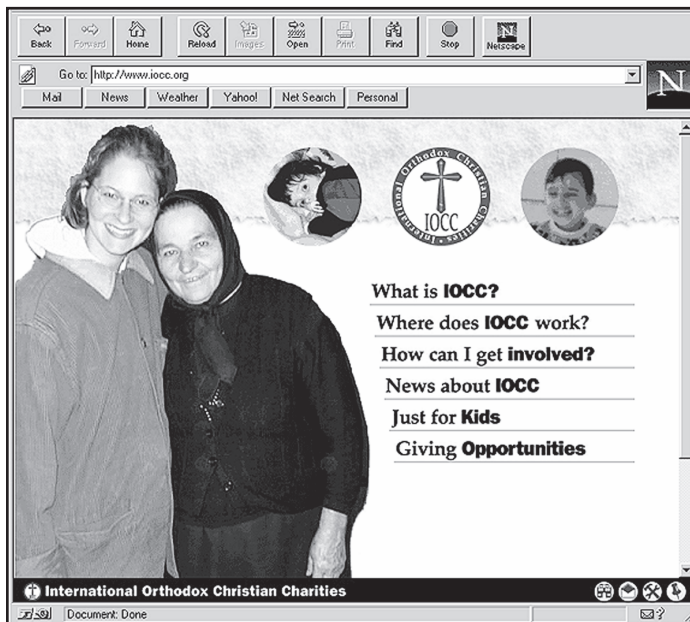


Photo courtesy of Church World Service.

The aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras. The storm washed away whole communities and claimed the homes and lives of tens of thousands.

Now the challenge for those affected by the storms is to rebuild homes and find jobs. Many agricultural crops and the work they provided – were wiped out during the flooding that occurred.

A Web of Hope



Shown above is a preview of the redesigned IOCC website launched in May 1999. The IOCC web address will remain the same and can be found on the worldwide web at <http://www.iocc.org>

“ This is one of the most effective ways that we can bring IOCC’s message of help and hope to Orthodox Christians and the public.”

Dr. Lila Kalinich
board member

BALTIMORE (IOCC) - With increasing numbers of people using the Internet for communication and information, IOCC is working to make its Internet site a tool for sharing the work of Orthodox Christians helping those in need.

“We want to make the site as interactive as possible so that more people can participate in the work of IOCC,” said Executive Director Constantine Triantafilou.

The redesigned IOCC website was launched in May 1999 and will link the efforts of metropolitan committees, parishes, and others who participate in the work of the organization.

The IOCC homepage can be found on the worldwide web at <http://www.iocc.org>

“This is one of the most effective ways that we can bring IOCC’s message of help and hope to Orthodox Christians and the public,” explained board member Dr. Lila Kalinich, whose gifts have allowed IOCC to implement the changes. “This technology ensures that IOCC can continue to devote the vast majority of its resources to helping people directly while also communicating the needs of people around the world.”

Also under construction on the website is a section that will feature activities for children, to help them learn about the needs of others. The children’s section is expected to be ready by summer.



Metropolitan Committee News Briefs



Members of the IOCC Metropolitan Committee in Charlotte and the Ladies Philoptochos Society of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church sponsored an "Art & Silent Auction" on the Sunday of Orthodoxy to benefit the work of IOCC.

The IOCC Cleveland Metropolitan Committee held its Seventh Annual IOCC Dinner on Thursday, May 20th at St. Paul Hellenic Banquet Center in North Royalton, Ohio. The Right Reverend Bishop Demetri representing the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America was on hand for the event that drew more than 500 people. Mrs. Millie Vovos was honored with the Committee's first Diane Zamiska Humanitarian Award. The award is named for the past Chairperson of the Committee who passed away in December 1998.

IOCC metropolitan committees around the country were busy sharing the work of IOCC on February 28th, the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Committees in Baltimore, Los Angeles, Charlotte, and San Francisco featured IOCC as part of the day's celebration. Doria Phillips of the IOCC Los Angeles Committee was on hand at Saint Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Irvine, California, that day to talk about IOCC.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Dimitra and Jeff Mathews together with Gloria Kontoulas and Laura Nixon organized an art and silent auction sponsored by the Philoptochos of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. Proceeds from the auction went to a social service center in Charlotte to help people locally and to IOCC for assistance to those in need overseas. Gary Anderson, chairperson of the IOCC Metropolitan Committee in Charlotte, spoke about the current work of IOCC at the event. (see photo)

The IOCC Midwest Committee held its fifth annual banquet at the Carlisle in Lombard, Illinois, April 25th. His Grace Bishop JOB of the Orthodox Church in America was honored at the event and presented the Crystal Globe Award for his support of IOCC's humanitarian work.

Metropolitan committees are currently forming in New York, Boston, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Harrisburg (PA), the Greater Detroit area, and elsewhere. If you would like to become involved in IOCC through a metropolitan committee, contact Fr. Jim Kyriakakis in Baltimore at (410) 243-9820.

While visiting the IOCC Office in Greece during March, Fr. Jim Kyriakakis, IOCC's Director of Development, met with His Beatitude CHRISTODOULOS, Archbishop of Athens and all Greece. The two discussed IOCC's relief efforts in the Balkans and agreed to work closely on humanitarian initiatives.



IOCC Supports Tornado Relief in Heartland



BALTIMORE (IOCC) - IOCC teamed up with St. George Orthodox Christian Cathedral and St. Mary Orthodox Church in Wichita, Kansas to provide relief for those affected by the vicious storms that tore across the American heartland on May 3.

"The full gamut of human need is present in this tragedy," explained Father Paul O'Callaghan, Dean of St. George Cathedral. "People have lost their homes entirely and need shelter, lost all their clothing, lost electricity." He added, "There has been a good response community wide, but the need is tremendous."

Some \$5,000 has already been committed by IOCC to aid in the local relief efforts. Fundraising drives by the churches in Wichita will further increase the impact that Orthodox Christians are having in response to the widespread destruction.

IOCC Board member, Dr. George Farha, a long-standing member of St. George's Cathedral described the "terrible storm" that damaged or destroyed more than 200 homes in a suburb of Wichita, Kansas. "We stand ready to do all that we can to help these people," pledged Dr. Farha.



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