



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

VOLUME 7, NO. 3 WINTER 2004

'I will not leave you as orphans' Ethiopian children orphaned by AIDS receive care through new project

Photos: Inia Asuncion-IOCC



Samuel, 6, recently lost his mother and father to AIDS, making him one of an estimated 1.2 million AIDS orphans in Ethiopia. Here he talks to Dr. Mesfin Tegegne, director of the HIV/AIDS Program for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, IOCC's partner in its anti-AIDS initiative.

Ambo, Ethiopia (IOCC) — Samuel, a 6-year-old orphan, tells of the recent death of his parents to HIV/AIDS and how lost he felt. He is outwardly "brave" and refuses to cry as he tells his story, but you can see the sorrow and pain in his eyes.

Then there is 19-year-old Joseph, who lost both parents to HIV/AIDS and must now take care of his three younger siblings. At a very young age, he became the head of the family.

Meleke, 7, a girl with HIV/AIDS from birth, recounts how she recently had been denied entry into school. In some Ethiopian communities, the suffering of people with AIDS is compounded by the discrimination that results from the stigma of the disease.

These are just three of the 9,000 AIDS orphans and vulnerable children that IOCC expects to help in the next

three years through its new HIV/AIDS prevention and care project in Ethiopia. Funded in part by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the \$6 million project is a collaboration between IOCC and the Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC), the humanitarian arm of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Currently, Samuel, Joseph, Meleke and 1,855 children like them are receiving help through a part of the project that places AIDS orphans with loving families. More children from 100 *woredas* (districts) throughout the country will be added to the program each year.

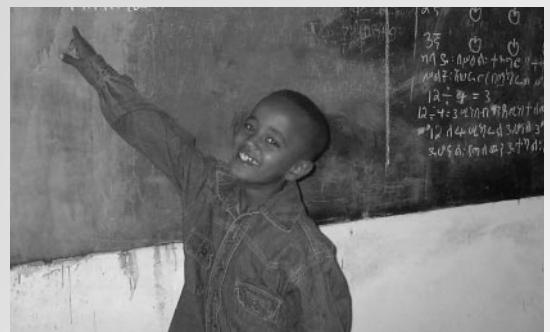
One of the devastating consequences of the HIV/AIDS

pandemic in Ethiopia is the vast number of children it has orphaned. According to UNAIDS, the joint United Nations program on AIDS, more than 1.2 million Ethiopian children under age 15 have lost one or both parents to the disease. The number of AIDS orphans is expected to rise in the coming years. It is estimated that by the year 2010, 43 percent of all orphan children in the world will be HIV/AIDS orphans.

In its Ethiopia program, IOCC provides the caregivers with a monthly stipend to help them cover the cost of additional food, shelter, clothing, school fees and medical assistance, said IOCC-Ethiopia Program Manager Ken Baker. "Our program does not institutionalize the orphans, but rather places them with families," he said.

The stipend amount varies from child to child, depending on the individual circumstances. In addition, trained para-counselors provide the orphans with counseling services as needed.

continued on page 5



IOCC-Ethiopia is augmenting its program on behalf of AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children by delivering \$1.8 million in new textbooks to schools run by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Here, an Ethiopian boy reads from a chalkboard in a rural elementary school.

From the Executive Director



Photo: IOCC-Ethiopia

His Holiness Abune Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with IOCC Executive Director Constantine M. Triantafilou after the February 2004 signing ceremony formalizing a new partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia.

We've all heard the phrase "equal-opportunity employer" or "equal-opportunity lender." The idea being that while society's institutions — government, banks, corporations — cannot guarantee equal outcomes, they can strive to give everyone an equal opportunity to succeed. The same holds true in the field of humanitarian relief.

IOCC seeks to create opportunities for people who have been denied them by war, poverty, disease and

natural disaster. We believe that people, given the right tools and skills, have the ability to not only recover from these circumstances, but to leave a better life for their children. What they need, then, is for someone to give them the opportunity to succeed, creating the conditions necessary for them to work their way out of poverty with dignity. That's what it means to "help others help themselves" and "share God's gift of economic self-sufficiency."

In this issue of News & Needs, you'll read about the ways in which IOCC creates opportunities for people in need around the world — the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and beyond.

In the West Bank, where unemployment is about 50 percent and freedom of movement is severely restricted, IOCC is creating job opportunities for adults and educational opportunities for their children. In the Republic of Georgia, struggling to overcome decades of central planning and state control, IOCC is creating opportunities for economic growth and entrepreneurship.

In Lebanon, where the flight of young, educated professionals is draining the country of its resources, IOCC is creating educational opportunities for students, so that they won't have to leave to succeed. In the former Yugoslavia, where hostility among neighbors led to war, IOCC is creating opportunities for young people to be peacemakers. In Ethiopia, where HIV/AIDS has left 1.2 million children as orphans, IOCC is creating opportunities for a future filled with hope and promise for these little ones.

Now more than ever, IOCC needs your support to make these programs possible. Thank you for your commitment to IOCC's vision of expanded opportunities for all.

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.

Published three times a year by IOCC, News & Needs is edited by Stephen Huba and Mark Hodde.



recycled paper

To learn how IOCC creates opportunities for people in need, please visit www.iocc.org

'Window to the world' opens up for children in Serbia, Bosnia

By Nenad Prelevic, IOCC-Serbia and Montenegro

Photos: Nikola Culic-IOCC



Serbian school children from the village of Badnjevac gather around a computer recently installed as part of an information technology project by IOCC. The "Connecting Kids" project fosters exchanges between children in Serbia and Bosnia, and incorporates computers into their curriculum.

Belgrade, Serbia-Montenegro

(IOCC) — The excitement at St. Sava School in the village of Badnjevac was palpable. A feeling of expectation was in the air as the teacher rang a bell to gather the children.

It could have been a scene from another century, except for one thing. Inside the school, brand new computers awaited the students — a "window to the world" for children isolated by years of war, sanctions and economic uncertainty in their home country of Serbia-Montenegro.

An IOCC computer project in partnership with the Vlade Divac Group 7 Children's Foundation is establishing Internet connections across the once-hostile borders of the former Yugoslavia.

The "Connecting Kids" project is introducing information technology to nine rural and suburban schools in Serbia and incorporating it into the curriculum. Through the pilot project, IOCC is providing computer equipment and training to participating schools, as well as creating a network

to connect children and allow them to communicate with each other.

IOCC is establishing a similar network in eight schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina, offering the same assistance and bringing children together throughout the region. The goal of "Connecting Kids" is to facilitate dialogue between schools and young people in Bosnia and Serbia, using modern technology as a tool.

"I have a computer at home," said Nemanja, an eighth-grader at "Ljubomir-Ljuba Nenadovic" School in the village of Ranilovic, "but there is nobody to teach me how to use it for anything other than computer games. These classes help me to learn how to operate different kinds of programs."

A variety of activities are being organized to foster healthy, civil exchanges, including an interactive Web site, discussion forums, e-learning and technical assistance.

"The teacher helped us a lot," said Sanja, a seventh-grader at "St. Sava" School in Badnjevac. "She taught us many things, such as how to connect to a Web site. I didn't know any of these things before. My English is also improving."

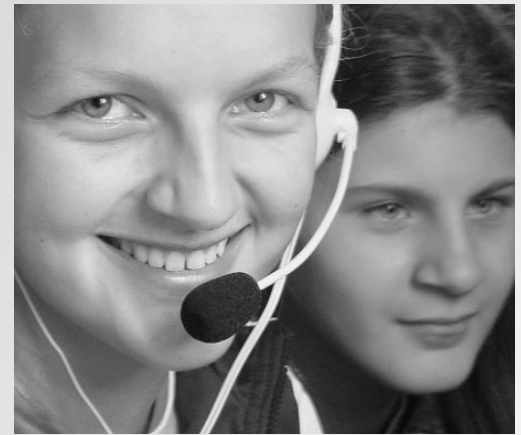
In the spring of 2005, IOCC plans to host the first-ever competitive School Fair between the participating network schools. Young people from Bosnia and Serbia will have a chance to compete against each other on educational games and quizzes

and to make a presentation about their schools and communities.

IOCC hopes that with the Internet connection comes new interpersonal connections — that these encounters will promote partnerships and friendships between the young people, teachers and school officials and become an annual event.

All the participating communities have responded positively so far, providing support for the project as they are able. Parents see the chance for their children to do new things and to learn something other than handcrafts, which is what rural children usually do.

"It hurts me as an educator that our children in rural areas are deprived of possibilities to build a foundation for a better future," said St. Sava Principal Zorica Milojevic. "Through 'Connecting Kids,' children have a chance for a better education. They have discovered that the Internet is a window to the world."



Serbian school girls learn how to use a computer newly installed as part of IOCC's "Connecting Kids" project.

To learn how IOCC creates opportunities for people in need, please visit www.iocc.org

Small loans bring big possibilities for Georgian business owners

By Pascalis "Lee" Papouras, IOCC-Georgia

Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia (IOCC)

— There is a time when humanitarian work changes its focus from helping people without opportunities to providing people with opportunities.

That is the nature of IOCC's ongoing micro-finance program in the Republic of Georgia, where individuals and groups are given opportunities to provide for themselves and their families.

Manvar and his wife, Nargiza, of Poti in western Georgia, have been married for almost 40 years. In the past, Nargiza worked as an accountant at the state trade organization, and Manvar worked as a taxi driver.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the civil war in western Georgia, the family was in financial dire straits: Nargiza lost her job, and the family's only source of income was Manvar's earnings from driving a taxi.

In 1994, Manvar and Nargiza started their own bakery, but business was not good. In 2003, Nargiza took out a micro-loan from IOCC to buy new equipment for the bakery. The new equipment enabled the Garuchava Bakery to become more efficient and productive, and the loan was paid back on schedule.

Loans to clients in western Georgia are paid back at a rate of about 97 percent. Currently, the bakery produces bread, buns and cookies for local grocery stores and a nearby school.

As the family business improved, the couple also decided to get into farming. In early 2004, they rented 123 acres near Poti and planted corn and soybean. With a promising harvest ahead, the couple hopes that another IOCC loan will help them buy fuel and build a better storage facility.

Stepane, 41, is a farmer of

Armenian origin who has taken out a fourth-cycle \$1,000 loan from IOCC. Stepane is married and lives with his wife and two sons in Tskruti village in southern Georgia.

In 1999, his father was seriously injured in a car accident. Stepane had to empty his savings account and sell three cows to cover his father's medical bills. His financial situation was desperate. Then he learned about IOCC's micro-credit project and applied for his first loan. From the \$1,500 that he received, he bought six cows. Proceeds from selling dairy products and calves went to repay the first loan, which put him in better financial shape.

He applied for a \$2,000 loan to open a grocery in his village in 2001. The small grocery shop began to

provide his family with a stable income. The third loan of \$2,500 was used to expand the grocery and expand his inventory.

"I am much better off now," Stepane said, "so I do not need as much as I needed before. For my fourth cycle, I have taken \$1,000 to strengthen my cattle farm. I plan to buy more cows. Thanks to IOCC and its credit project, my family is now more secure."

IOCC began providing business training and small loans to farmers and entrepreneurs in southern Georgia in 1997. The program has grown to more than 1,000 loans worth almost \$1 million, allowing people in this former Soviet republic to establish new sources of income and put market economics to work for them.



Left: Manvar and his wife, Nargiza, of Poti in western Georgia, were able to expand their bakery and make a better living for themselves with IOCC micro-credit loans.

Right: Stepane (left), an Armenian farmer who lives in southern Georgia, was able to expand his farm and provide for his family with the help of several IOCC micro-credit loans.



Ethiopian children orphaned by AIDS receive care through new project

continued from page 1

Recently, Baker and senior DICAC officials visited several branch offices in east and west Shoa, where orphan care and support is being provided. At each location, the orphans and their caregivers gathered to speak about their situations and how the IOCC program had made a difference in their lives.

They spoke of their challenges and hardships, but also of how IOCC's program had made their future look brighter and more manageable. The partnership between IOCC and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is creating opportunities for less fortunate children in Ethiopia who are the future of the country, Baker said.

“Neither words nor statistics can adequately capture the human tragedy of children grieving for dying or dead parents.”

— Ken Baker,
IOCC-Ethiopia Program Manager

Neither words nor statistics can adequately capture the human tragedy of children grieving for dying or dead parents, stigmatized by society through association with HIV/AIDS, plunged into economic insecurity by their parents' death, and left without services or support systems in impoverished communities, Baker said.

“It is difficult for those in the developed world to fully comprehend the extent of the suffering of these innocent children,” Baker said. “Children suffer psychological, social and material hardships because of HIV/AIDS. Some must care for dying parents,



Photos: Inia Asuncion-IOCC

Seven-year-old Meleke, denied admittance to a local school because of HIV/AIDS, talks to Ken Baker, IOCC-Ethiopia program manager, in the town of Ambo. Meleke and children like her are being matched with loving families and given resources to help them succeed.

while others drop out of school to help with farm or household work.”

According to a recent study in Ethiopia, the many challenges faced by orphans include loss of family, depression, malnutrition, lack of immunization and health care, lack of schooling, early entry into paid or unpaid labor, loss of inheritance, early marriage, exposure to abuse, and increased risk of HIV/AIDS.

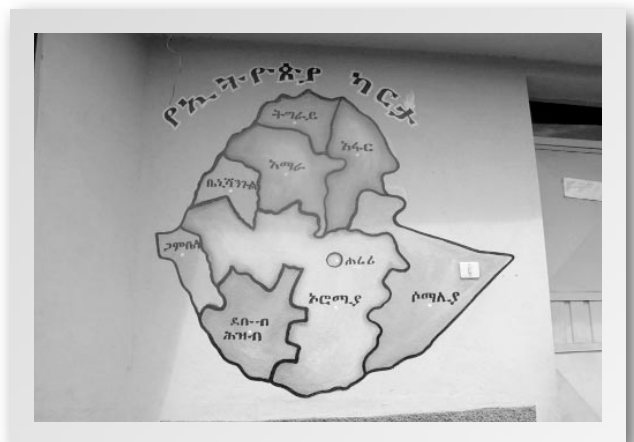
In Ethiopia and elsewhere, the extended family takes the responsibility of raising these orphan children. In many cases, the orphans are sent to different households to minimize the burden of caring for them, but this is traumatic for the children since they also lose the support of their siblings.

Furthermore, many of the extended families are already very poor or are headed by elderly people who depended

on their (now deceased) adult children for survival.

Oftentimes, these extended families have to stretch their already minimal resources to provide not only for their own families but also for the additional orphans coming into their home, Baker said.

Dr. Mesfin Tegegne, head of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care for DICAC, and Ken Baker, IOCC-Ethiopia Program Manager, prepared this report.



IOCC's \$6 million anti-AIDS initiative in Ethiopia is being implemented in six of the eight major regions of the country, depicted here in the Amharic language at a rural elementary school.

To learn how IOCC creates opportunities for people in need, please visit www.iocc.org

Education program in Lebanon lays foundation for future

By Rachel Azzi, IOCC-Lebanon

Beirut, Lebanon (IOCC) — For many people trying to get ahead in Lebanon, the best option seems to be getting out.

In the airports of Beirut, growing numbers of Lebanese young people can be seen leaving their homeland for different parts of the world. This country of 4,000 square miles is reaping a bitter harvest from its 15-year civil war, which had a devastating effect on Lebanon's people, economy and infrastructure.

Against this bleak backdrop, IOCC and its partners are laying the foundation for greater educational opportunities and a brighter future for Lebanon's school children. IOCC implemented a school lunch and education program for the third consecutive year in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the University of Balamand and the Lebanese Ministry of Education.

"This program aims not only to deliver school lunches but also to promote better living and learning conditions for children," U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Vincent Battle told the *Annahar* newspaper.

The program, now being proposed for a fourth year, served 35,000 underprivileged Lebanese children in 2003-2004, providing them with nutritious lunches and lessons on personal health, hygiene and care for the environment.

The impact of the project was felt far beyond the walls of the 180 participating schools: Its seven components — nutrition, education, capacity building, advocacy, child health, infrastructure repair, and equipment — brought hope and opportunity not only to students but also to parents, communities and local organizations.

Jamal, who lives with her disabled husband, Youssef, in a two-bedroom

Lebanese students from Beirut display their nutrition project, including a food pyramid, at a health fair that was part of IOCC's school lunch and education program in 2003-2004. The health fairs, held around the country, allowed participating students to show what they had learned about nutrition, hygiene and the environment during the school year.



Photo: IOCC-Lebanon

apartment in Beirut, believes her three children have benefited from the meals and school supplies.

"The program has made a difference in our lives," she said. "Our children are performing better at school; they are well equipped with adequate materials they use in the classroom.

"Furthermore," Jamal said, "hygiene is respected at school after repairs were made by IOCC to the water system and to the restrooms. The parent committee had asked the school director on many occasions to do these repairs, but he always replied that there was not enough money in the budget."

Assessments done by IOCC early in the school year revealed that special attention should be paid to the participating schools' infrastructure needs. Renovation work was done in the 75 neediest schools, including repairs to restrooms, plumbing and electrical systems, roofing, playgrounds, and classroom walls and ceilings.

Lebanese public schools also suffer from a lack in equipment. Many do not even have a photocopier or com-

puters. IOCC, in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Higher Studies, provided participating schools with the equipment needed to keep pace with modern educational standards.

In addition, school clubs were re-activated with the help of newly-trained club advisers and a series of 15 health fairs that were held throughout Lebanon.

Parents said they benefited from a series of lectures that covered various health, family and social issues. Children said they enjoyed the "Nour & Noura" magazine, a 40-minute play titled "A New Day," and other educational materials and activities that were part of the wide-ranging program.

Meanwhile, a team of experts from the University of Balamand is working on establishing a computerized child health file in all Lebanese public schools.

Through educational initiatives such as this, IOCC hopes that, in the future, the young people of Lebanon won't have to leave to succeed.



Training brings 'hope and work' to struggling West Bank families

By Nora Kort, IOCC-Jerusalem



Women from the West Bank village of Kafr Dan, 82 miles north of Jerusalem, speak their minds at a public health training session led by IOCC. Developing grassroots leadership among Palestinian women and young people is the focus of a new IOCC project in Kafr Dan and seven other rural villages.

Jerusalem (IOCC) — “We were blessed with IOCC’s coming to Rummana village,” said Mizien, the mother of eight children. “For the first time ever in our small village, women have a center where they can meet, share common concerns and dreams, and learn a skill.”

Mizien, energized by the health training she received from IOCC, now wants to get involved in a new IOCC project (Civic Education in Rural Palestine) that will establish computer centers and libraries in eight rural West Bank villages.

At this critical juncture in history, the new project will train hundreds of Palestinian women and young people in grassroots democracy building and civic leadership through the use of computer technology, small groups and library resources.

“All of us, mothers and children, want to learn how to use computers, even my 65-year-old mother-in-law,” Mizien said.

temporary jobs, while leaving a lasting legacy for the eight participating villages and their 20,000 residents, said Nora Kort, IOCC-Jerusalem director.

“With access to library and computer resources and the proper training, the next generation of Palestinian leaders will learn how to emulate and incorporate the ideals of democracy into their communities,” Ms. Kort said.

Trainers will use the libraries for afternoon youth tutorials on public health, sanitation, the environment, water and other topics.

“In 2000, IOCC trained me in health education and first aid,” said Abeer Rahhal. “For three years, I volunteered to spread the knowledge I gained in my

Funded by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the project seeks to identify women leaders and train them on issues of health, civil society, environment and democracy. It will create 25 tem-

own village of Kafr Dan. I was then expecting my youngest son, Nibras, who attends the kindergarten IOCC constructed last year.

“The knowledge I got, boosted my self-esteem. Now it will bring me work and an income to spend on the education of my children. I feel happy to be a health educator,” she said. “I badly need a job, since my husband’s income is hardly enough for food.”

Sahar, who lives in the remote village of Kfeiret, recently received training in bee-keeping from IOCC. “God has provided for us, and we’ll provide for our successors,” she said. “The bee-keeping project brought us hope and work. It is true that the honey we produced gave us food and an income, but it also strengthened our family and community ties.”

“Even my youngest boys help me take care of the bees, which is our main source of income,” said Tamam, a mother of 11 children.



A Palestinian woman from the village of Um Anas leads a training session using leadership skills she learned from IOCC. More women like her will receive leadership training through a new IOCC project funded by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Photos: IOCC-Jerusalem

To learn how IOCC creates opportunities for people in need, please visit www.iocc.org

Donated cars still a vehicle for change

Donors rushing to contribute vehicles before new regulations take effect January 1, 2005

Congress is changing the regulations on tax deductions for those who donate their automobiles to charity. Currently, those donating vehicles receive a tax deduction based on the fair-market value of the vehicle.

Under the new regulations, owners of cars valued at \$500 or less will still be able to deduct the fair market value on their taxes. For those donating vehicles valued at more than \$500, the regulations require that a donor wait until the car is actually sold before claiming a tax deduction. The amount that can be claimed as a tax deduction will be the value received by IOCC at the time of auction.

IOCC will still accept car donations and will still realize the same amount of money from the sale of each car that would have been received prior to the new regulations. When a car is donated, IOCC's designated agent will sell it at auction, with the proceeds benefiting its humanitarian work worldwide.

If you are considering donating a vehicle to IOCC, log onto the IOCC Web site at www.iocc.org/cars. Online contributions may be made 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays.



Photo by Arthur Haralampopoulos and Jonathan Wong

DONATE YOUR CAR!

Help hungry and hurting people around the world by donating your used car to International Orthodox Christian Charities.



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN CHARITIES
Online: www.iocc.org/cars
Toll-free: 877-803-4622 • Free Towing



110 West Road, Suite 360
Baltimore, MD 21204 USA
Internet: www.iocc.org
E-mail: relief@iocc.org

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Rockville, MD
Permit No. 800