



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

CELEBRATING IOCC'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY

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From Education to Cooperatives, Building a Future for the Middle East

Saed Mustafa/IOCC Jerusalem



George Malki/IOCC Jerusalem



(left) Through more than \$4 million in grants by USAID, IOCC has built and repaired public schools and community centers throughout the West Bank. (right) IOCC's latest initiative in the West Bank will equip families cut off from their farmlands to provide themselves with 25% of their food needs.

Jerusalem, West Bank – “The okra, tomatoes, and cauliflower are ripe and ready for market. There is talk of getting a different breed of goats to produce better quality milk, and the possibility of teaching the village women’s cooperative how to weave wool into Scottish-style pullovers.” Nora Kort, Head of Office for IOCC’s operations in Jerusalem and the West Bank, speaks of the latest initiative to bring food security, new skills and cooperation among West Bank families. In this venture, funded by the European Community Humanitarian aid Office (ECHO) through IOCC Greece, over 300 families in five villages of the isolated Qalqilia region of the West Bank, who have lost access to their farmlands and sources of water due to the Security Barrier, are being trained by IOCC to

cultivate house gardens and to breed their own livestock. The program’s aim is for families to be able to supply themselves with 25% of their own food needs.

The emphasis on sustainable development in the West Bank program is typical of IOCC’s work throughout the Middle East. In Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, programs target nutrition, education, skills training for women, and infrastructure rehabilitation.

In 1997, a conference was convened in Cyprus to explore the humanitarian role IOCC could play in this part of the world. One of the prime movers of the Middle East initiative was IOCC founder, Charles Ajalat. “I had always felt that it was our obligation to help the lands of the Mother Church,” says Ajalat.” He traveled to the Holy Land in

1997 to meet with Kort and Constantine M. Triantafilou, who was then serving as IOCC’s Director of Programs. They opened an office in Jerusalem and began with small projects to support local schools.

During this time, another staff member was also looking for opportunities to expand IOCC’s work from Eastern Europe to the Middle East. A Lebanese-Canadian national, George Antoun was serving as IOCC Country

Representative in the Republic of Georgia.

During his trips back to Lebanon he would explore

different options for IOCC. In 2000, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded IOCC a contract under its Global Food for Education program. “While other organizations were concentrating on single areas in Lebanon such as water purification or dental health,” says Antoun, “the USDA program was the first holistic plan for public schools that involved nutrition and health, training for teachers and administrators, and infrastructure repair.” IOCC’s program, which started with 80 public schools, has now grown to 243. IOCC Lebanon is also currently implementing a \$4.7 million program from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to rehabilitate 200 public schools.

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From the Executive Director

Yorgos Asthianakis/IOCC Greece



IOCC Executive Director and CEO Constantine M. Triantafilou led an emergency assessment team to Greece during last summer's wildfires. IOCC then moved quickly to provide tons of emergency animal feed to farmers whose grazing lands had been destroyed.

If someone were to ask me about IOCC's impact around the world, I would tell them about the 7 million Ethiopians who have been trained in HIV/AIDS prevention, or that IOCC's program to rehabilitate crumbling schools benefits one-third of Lebanon's public school students.

But I would also tell them about the 31 families in Bosnia who are going to receive milking machines. IOCC assisted these families to return to their farms following the war in 1998, and to recover their dairy businesses by replacing their heifers. Today, IOCC is going to help them find sanitary methods for collecting milk.

Whether 7 or 7 million, IOCC has impact wherever it helps people recover their homes, their communities, and ultimately, their ability to be self-sufficient.

This issue of *News & Needs* is the final in our year-long retrospective look at IOCC's 15th anniversary. Our cover story focuses on IOCC's operations in the Middle East. In a world where conditions are less

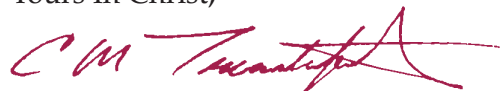
than ideal, I'm proud of what our Middle East staff has accomplished. From infrastructure repair, to nutrition and education, to income-generation projects, IOCC has been steadily expanding in the region.

You will also read about our project to provide medical care in rural Ethiopia, and our partnership in Kosovo with the monks of Visoki Decani Monastery that will develop their wine business and create more cooperation between ethnic Serb and Albanian communities.

Finally, our emergency aid work in Greece has had great impact for hundreds of farmers who saw their grazing lands and livelihoods decimated by last summer's wildfires. The expertise of our Athens-based staff, who coordinated the distribution of tons of animal feed to Peloponnese farmers, made the critical difference.

And we thank you for the impact you have made by supporting IOCC. Some of you have done so every year for the last 15 years. You believed that a pan Orthodox organization had a role to play in the expanding field of global humanitarian aid. We ask that you would continue to support this ministry so that together, as God's ancient and undivided Church, we can continue our mission and our impact.

Yours In Christ,



Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

IOCC Program Manager Nenad Prelevic talks to Kondilla, a survivor of last summer's wildfires in Greece. "You are a 'lambatha' (Greek for 'tall candle') says Kondilla to Prelevic who oversaw IOCC's distribution of emergency animal feed to farmers. Prelevic, who is based in Belgrade, Serbia, says last summer's wildfires affected most those who had the least.



Yorgos Asthianakis/IOCC Greece

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 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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From Education to Cooperatives, Building a Future for the Middle East

(continued from front cover)

IOCC would also work successfully in the areas of education and infrastructure in the West Bank. Through Hellenic Aid of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, community centers throughout the West Bank were built and equipped, and impoverished families of Gaza received medical care and infant formula. Through USAID, more than \$4 million was invested in building public schools and community centers, and in providing jobs to construction workers.

Through its relationship with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, IOCC began working in Syria in 2002 to rehabilitate schools, hospitals and orphanages. IOCC recently received grants totaling \$2 million from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) to provide schooling and supplies to Iraqi refugee children and families living in Syria as well as to disadvantaged Syrian children.

One of IOCC's most dangerous assignments was in Iraq, where IOCC opened an office in 2003. Working in partnership with local churches, IOCC provided emergency food and supplies to those who were most affected by the second Gulf War. George Antoun, now an IOCC Regional Director, remembers the precautions they had to take. "Most of the time we did not stay in hotels because all the hotels were targeted, so we stayed in the homes of our Iraqi colleagues until this became too dangerous. Eventually, we pulled all of our expatriates from the country. Today, all of our work in Iraq is done through qualified local staff," he said.

IOCC continued its steady expansion in the Middle East in 2005 when it opened an office in



Fadi Haddad/IOCC Lebanon



Ziad Haddad/IOCC Lebanon



Crystal Safadi/IOCC Lebanon

(left) IOCC's USDA nutrition program in Lebanon was a landmark, says Regional Director George Antoun "because it was the first time that public schools were approached with a holistic plan that involved nutrition, training, infrastructure repair, and health." (right top) The Orthodox Church, government and school networks that IOCC Lebanon had long cultivated were invaluable during its emergency response program during the 2006 war. (right bottom) IOCC's latest program in the Middle East will provide thousands of Iraqi refugee children living in Syria with a chance at an education.

Amman, Jordan. It has since provided millions of dollars in donated medical supplies and pharmaceuticals, sewing machines, blankets and books to Jordan.

While IOCC has focused on long term development work in the Middle East, there have been opportunities when the church and government networks that IOCC has long cultivated became invaluable in emergency situations. This was the case in Lebanon during the war of 2006 when IOCC staff created an emergency program for the thousands of displaced families that streamed into the Beirut area. IOCC then received a \$3.7 million grant from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to help returnees rebuild their lives in southern Lebanon.

As for the future of IOCC's work in the Middle East, Antoun says the organization will remain active in the countries where it is

currently working while diversifying into other areas such as health awareness programs and agriculture. "We have positioned ourselves strongly in the area of education, but we also need to move into agriculture," says Antoun. "Many small-scale farmers in the Arab world need technical and material support to improve the quality and quantity of what they produce." As for the quality and quantity of the first harvest of the Qalqilia villages of the West Bank, Nora Kort looks forward to the day when she can network these villagers to the community of Taybah, earlier IOCC beneficiaries who have since gone on to initiate their own cooperative ventures. "These kinds of cooperatives are rare in the West Bank," says Kort, "but I like to think that IOCC has proven to the people we serve that they are absolutely necessary for success."



RELIEF FOR GREECE:

Peloponnese, Greece – As the wildfires that consumed Greece continued last September, IOCC sent a disaster assessment team that included Executive Director and CEO Constantine M. Triantafilou to plan for IOCC's relief and recovery program. After consulting with local government officials, Greek Orthodox Metropolitans, and villagers who had experienced the devastation, IOCC determined that Greece's most pressing need was for farmers to be able to feed their animals. The wildfires had consumed nearly 500,000 acres of forest and pasture lands, and small and subsistence farmers had no way to sustain their flocks – for some, their only source of income. On September 8, IOCC began delivering 170 metric tons of animal feed to farmers in the prefecture of Ileia. A gift from IOCC founder John G. Rangos and a \$252,853 grant from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America will further expand IOCC's work to farmers in Arcadia and Ileia prefectures.

(photos by Sophia Clark/IOCC)



"I ran down to open the stables to free my animals. Some made it, some did not," says Diamando from atop her mule, referring to the fires that in addition to killing her animals, destroyed her home, her vineyard, 350 olive trees and some pine trees. "Thank you," she says, referring to IOCC's donation of animal feed. "It is our greatest need right now."



IOCC Executive Director and CEO, Constantine M. Triantafilou and IOCC Greece Head of Office Despina Katsivelaki met with villagers in Ileia to plan for IOCC's intervention for Greece in the aftermath of the wildfires.



A survivor of the wildfires that devastated his village of Andritsina, 72-year-old Sophianos was so grateful for a donation of animal feed that he tried to offer one of his sheep to the IOCC worker who was helping him load his pick-up truck. The four 88-pound bags of feed Sophianos received fed his flock for 10 days.

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IOCC'S EMERGENCY PROGRAM PROVIDES ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS



Forced to decide between saving his ancestral home and the house he was constructing for himself and his three adult children, Kosta and his wife poured water on themselves while spraying the perimeter of their home. The old family home is gone and in its ashes their horse and five goats are being fed by IOCC's emergency supply of animal feed.



A little oregano to sell was all that Barba Yanni had after the wildfires burned half of his flock and all of his fields. The shepherd and church chanter set off from his village of Milies to ancient Olympia to sell the oregano. On his way, Barba Yanni met IOCC workers who needed directions to Lala for their next distribution of animal feed. The next thing he knew he was loading his pick-up truck with enough animal feed for the next five days.



When IOCC workers saw Stathia on her hands and knees in the rain picking up the corn kernels that had leaked from the bags being distributed to the shepherds of Andritsina, they asked her how many animals she had to feed. The widow informed them that she had only two goats. IOCC with local authorities have helped people like Stathia with less than the minimum livestock required for government assistance.



The wildfires blackened 360 degrees of the panoramic surroundings of their home which borders Ileia and Arcadia. Only 15-20 sheep survived from Eleftheria and Dimitri's original flock of 80. "Now they are just for milk for our grandchildren," says Dimitri. "We thank God for our lives and for any help we can get until we get a little rain and we see a little green again," he says.

To learn more about how IOCC helps others help themselves, please visit www.iocc.org

IOCC Brings First-Time Medical Care for Woliso, Ethiopia

IOCC Ethiopia



On a trip to Ethiopia with Constantine M. Triantafyllou, Bishop ANDONIOS was able to see firsthand IOCC's work in that country. IOCC recently completed the construction of a medical clinic in Woliso through a grant by the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society.

Woliso, Ethiopia – Modern medical care for expectant mothers is nonexistent in many parts of Africa. But the residents of Woliso, Ethiopia will now be able to receive such care along with preventive medicine for malaria, typhoid, dysentery, and other common African ailments. IOCC has recently completed the construction of a free medical clinic in Woliso, a western highlands town 77 miles from the capital city of

Addis Ababa with a population of about 37,000.

The medical clinic, whose construction was funded by the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society and a group of private donors, will have a full-time staff of one physician, two nurses and one lab technician. "We are expecting this clinic to receive hundreds of patients every day because the clinic will mean access to medical assistance

for people – particularly children – who have no access for basic medical problems," said IOCC Head of Office Thomas Kivlan.

The clinic, which was constructed in cooperation with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's humanitarian arm, DICAC, will treat children for common illnesses such as diarrhea and parasites caused primarily by poor hygienic conditions. The clinic will also offer workshops for mothers to improve their families' sanitary habits. "I am thankful to God that I was able to be part of this project which will positively impact the lives of so many children," says His Grace ANDONIOS, Bishop of Phasiane and Director of the Department of Philanthropy at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. "I am deeply grateful to Philoptochos and those individuals who generously responded to this need, and I hope that this will be the first of many projects we do on the African continent," he continued.



Philoptochos: A Shared Vision of Philanthropy Through the Church

It was 1994. The war in Bosnia was raging and IOCC Executive Director & CEO, Constantine M. Triantafyllou, then a field worker, was running humanitarian supplies from IOCC's Belgrade office into Bosnia using a 20-year-old *Zastava*. When the car was stolen he could no longer reach the refugees who were in dire need. But all it took was one phone call to his hometown of Houston and the local chapter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society to get IOCC back on the road. On the other end of that emergency call was Martha Stefanidakis, the Houston Philoptochos chapter president. "Replacing that car was probably the very first thing that Philoptochos did for IOCC," recalls Stefanidakis, "but our trust in IOCC was so complete that the funds would be used effectively that it was easy to bring a resolution to the national convention in 2000 to get our support for IOCC to be at the national level." Since then, Philoptochos has provided a total of almost \$500,000 in support of IOCC programs that focus on children in need and the handicapped in Jerusalem, Georgia, Albania, the U.S., and Southeast Asia. "The Philoptochos Society is honored and privileged to be able to support many of these timely programs and we look forward to working together in future endeavors with IOCC, to further our shared vision of philanthropy through the Church," says Georgia Skeadas, Philoptochos National President.

Successful HIV/AIDS Program Extended

IOCC recently announced a \$7.8 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that will extend and expand its activities in Ethiopia through 2011. IOCC has been working in partnership with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's humanitarian agency, DICAC, to combat HIV/AIDS since 2004. More than 7 million Ethiopians have received training in HIV/AIDS prevention, and more than 22,000 individuals who have AIDS, and those who have been orphaned by the disease, have received food, clothing, and start-up funds for small businesses. Ethiopia recently reported that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS had been reduced from 2.2% in 2004 to 2.1% in 2007.

Medieval Monastery Cultivates Good Will in Kosovo

Kosovo, Serbia – As a boy tending his grandfather’s vineyards in the Croatian foothills, Dragomir Diklic never imagined that his beloved homeland of Yugoslavia would someday collapse and be divided. In the ensuing years Yugoslavia, now a divided country, descended into civil war and the young boy grew up to become an Orthodox monk and – like his grandfather before him – a winemaker.

Diklic, tonsured as Father Marko, now lives in Kosovo, where for the past eight years he has tended the winery belonging to his monastery, the medieval Visoki Decani. The monks of Visoki Decani have been making wine in the region of Metohija for more than 600 years. Today, through a partnership with IOCC, the Visoki Decani winery is being repaired and expanded. This expansion will not only increase wine production and create more job opportunities for the residents of Velika Hoca, the winery’s location, but also will encourage greater cooperation between Kosovo’s ethnic Serbian and Albanian communities.

“The climate for grape growing is excellent in this region,” says Father Marko, who oversees production of about 27,000 liters annually of Cabernet, Merlot and Rakija, Serbian homemade brandy. In partnership with IOCC, the winery has just completed the first stage of a renovation including major repairs to the roof. This is the building’s first significant rehabilitation since 1850.

Two 15,000 liter wine barrels have arrived from Croatia and Father Marko hopes to raise further funds for three more barrels. With additional equipment pro-



Nenad Prelevic/IOCC Serbia

(left) Father Marko Diklic has tended the winery belonging to his monastery, the medieval Visoki Decani, for the last eight years. (right) Through a partnership with IOCC, the Visoki Decani winery is being repaired and expanded. The expansion will increase wine production and encourage greater cooperation between Kosovo’s ethnic Serbian and Albanian communities.

vided by IOCC, the winery will be able to increase its production capacity four-fold to 100,000 liters annually. More wine means more grapes purchased from more ethnic Serb and Albanian growers resulting in cooperation and better relations between the two communities. Father Marko has studied in wineries of France and Italy and shares his knowledge on growing grapes with farmers from both communities.

His contact with the Italian United Nations peace-keeping forces guarding Visoki Decani Monastery 24 hours-a-day allowed him to meet winemakers in Tuscany. Like other Serbs, Father Marko is taking a daily risk living in Kosovo. “Sometimes people do not have guards to escort them so they travel with two cars for safety,”

he says. “If they go through a village of another ethnic group they go very fast.”

The situation has forced many young Serbs to leave Kosovo in order to seek work and security in central Serbia. They return to Kosovo regularly in order to maintain their residency status, but many have left permanently.

“I felt a calling to be here, and I want to stay here as long as possible,” says Father Marko who has lived in Kosovo for the last 17 years. The monks of Decani, who have a history of peaceful cooperation with their Albanian neighbors, sheltered those neighbors during the 1999 NATO bombing campaign. “For Serbs, Kosovo is holy land,” says Father Marko, “and Visoki Decani has become the spiritual center for all Serbs today.”





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Parish Representatives play a vital role in generating support for IOCC – in just a few hours per month:

- Display IOCC Materials in fellowship hall
- Insert IOCC ads in church bulletin
- Stay current on IOCC news and be available to answer questions
- Show IOCC's annual DVD on a Saturday night or Sunday at coffee hour
- Keep priests informed of IOCC related news and campaigns.

IOCC will provide materials.

**Contact Vasi Jankovich,
at vjankovich@iocc.org
or 1-877-803-IOCC (4622)**



VOICES of: Faithful Supporters

"We started supporting IOCC because it gave the Orthodox a chance to support humanitarian causes. As the Church we must support the needy. We especially appreciated that wherever IOCC worked, it worked through the Church. As Orthodox we should not be so parochial. IOCC expands our outlook. IOCC is about all the Orthodox working together, and we liked that."

John G. and Mary S. Gatsis, Des Plaines, IL • IOCC Supporters Since 1992