



NURTURING SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS IN SYRIA

Syria (IOCC) — Nariman fled Iraq three years ago with her four sons after her husband was murdered and she no longer felt safe to remain in her homeland. Nariman and her family share the tragic reality of more than one million Iraqi refugees living in Syria. The huge influx of refugees into a country with a population of 22 million has put an enormous strain on Syria's ability to provide basic services such as access to education and health services. Jobs are scarce and Iraqi refugees must rely on savings. As their savings dry up these vulnerable families face poverty and more hardship. The need to be self-sufficient is critical to their survival.

Throughout Syria many creative, intelligent people like Wafa, a single mother with two boys, are also trapped in poverty because they lack access to capital. She used to do simple hairdressing from home with very few clients—mainly her friends and family, but longed to develop her hairstyling skills into a business.

Commerce can make the difference between economic despair and complete financial independence. Through your financial support and a grant from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), IOCC is empowering destitute entrepreneurs to establish businesses and break free from the cycle of poverty. Working in cooperation with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of



Roy Azari/IOCC

Business is brisk for Nariman and Wafa, who tend a steady stream of clients in their new hair salon. The Iraqi refugee and her Syrian business partner received their vocational training and financial backing through an IOCC program designed to help Iraqi refugees and disadvantaged Syrians break free from the cycle of poverty.

Antioch and All the East (GOPA), IOCC provides Iraqi refugees like Nariman and financially strapped Syrians like Wafa with vocational and business training, as well as the start-up capital necessary to open a business.

Both Nariman and Wafa were enrolled in the same program where they met, shared their dreams of opening a salon, and gained the hairstyling skills and business knowledge needed to make their dream of business ownership a reality. Upon completion of the training, Wafa received a financial grant to open Brooke Hair Salon and brought Nariman

in as her partner. Their salon is one of 28 successful businesses established to date through the program. The talented entrepreneurs have launched a diverse range of businesses including a gift shop, clothing store for men and women, greenhouse, lighting fixtures store, candle workshop, convenience store, construction materials store, tire store, tailor shop, computer maintenance store, Arabic sweets shop, and auto repair garage. Collectively, the businesses employ over 56 people and directly provide support for dozens of families.

(continued on page 6)

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



An Iraqi refugee proudly accepts her literacy certificate as her young son looks on. The ability to read will give this single mother a better chance at securing a job and a better future for herself and her children.

Dear Friends,

There is an old proverb that says, "Give a man a fish and you have fed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you have fed him for a lifetime." Knowledge is power, and the bridge to a better life. It can lift a child from illiteracy, give a man the job skills he needs to support his family, and provide a woman with the capacity to keep her children safe and healthy.

Empowering people through education is one of the most transformative ways that IOCC has been able to put your support to work. Along with your generous gifts to provide emergency relief and assistance to vulnerable people around the world impacted by natural disaster or manmade upheavals, IOCC also puts your faith in action to provide these survivors with the tools and resources they need to rebuild their lives, to plant the seeds for a better future.

new school year. These kits were distributed to disadvantaged children, giving them the tools they need to succeed in school. For children in Haiti, IOCC has worked with local partners to construct schools, ensuring that the children have access to a safe and welcome place where they can learn and grow into productive adults.

These are just some of the success stories you will find in this issue of *News & Needs*. As we come to the close of 2011 and prepare to welcome 2012, all of us at IOCC send our sincere wishes for a blessed holiday season and hope that the abundance of Christ's love showers you and your family with a new year full of health, happiness and peace.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) and a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy.

IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.

Published three times a year by IOCC, *News & Needs* is edited by Mark Hodde and Rada Tierney.

In Syria, IOCC is providing thousands of Iraqi war refugees with vocational training and literacy courses to help them secure jobs and a means to support themselves and their families. In Ethiopia, where one million people are afflicted by podoconiosis, a disease that causes severe swelling to feet and legs, IOCC is distributing shoes and providing basic foot hygiene instruction to treat and prevent this painful condition. Working in conjunction with the Romanian Orthodox church, IOCC shipped 18,000 school kits to the Romanian capital city of Bucharest for the



actalliance

DEFEATING ONE OF ETHIOPIA'S MOST NEGLECTED DISEASES

Debre Markos, Ethiopia (IOCC) —

The fresh scent of soap welcomes Guday as she arrives at the outdoor clinic in Debre Markos, Ethiopia. She has traveled almost all day to reach the clinic IOCC opened here last year to treat pododermatitis, a painful disease caused by walking and working barefoot in irritating volcanic soil. She winces as she unwinds bandages from her swollen and blistered feet but fortunately she no longer walks barefoot. She has been fitted by onsite shoemakers with new shoes provided through your support. After ten months of visiting the clinic and diligently washing her feet daily at home, Guday has seen the swelling in her legs visibly diminish and definition return.

Since IOCC's inception of a 2010 pilot project to treat this disease, almost 250 people like Guday have received treatment and wellness training on how to prevent the disease from recurring. Each week, individuals spend up to an hour at the clinic washing, soaking, elevating, exercising, then wrapping their affected feet in bandages. Trained volunteers guide them through the process, providing fresh water during their therapy and replenishing their supplies as shoemakers at the clinic craft footwear to fit their misshapen feet. The patients take their supplies of a brightly colored basin, a bar of soap, antiseptic, and bandages home with them, continuing the treatment they learn at the clinic throughout the week. Before patients leave the premises, a nurse measures the progress of their healing and tracks it.

Before this opportunity, very little help was available for a disease which affects nearly one

(continued on page 6)



Hari Destia/IOCC

Guday waits patiently for her number to be called at the Debre Markos clinic she visits for her monthly pododermatitis treatments.

EQUIPPING ROMANIA'S CHILDREN WITH WELCOME SCHOOL TOOLS



Some of the youngest students at Wings of Light learning center receive an impromptu lesson from His Eminence Irineu, Archbishop of Craiova and Metropolitan of Oltenia. IOCC and the Romanian Orthodox Church have forged a decade of cooperation in working to help Romania's at-risk families.

The buoyant laughter and voices of ecstatic children filled the hallways of Aripici de Lumina (Wings of Light) learning center in Romania's Craiova Archdiocese on the day teachers presented them each with a brand new school kit from "America". These grateful students were among the thousands of Romanian schoolchildren to have received a cloth school bag

filled with essential supplies such as notebooks, ruler, pencils, erasers, crayons and a pair of scissors. Working in conjunction with the Romanian Orthodox Church, IOCC shipped 18,000 school kits to the Romanian capital city of Bucharest for the new school year. These kits were assembled and donated by generous supporters who believe in providing disadvantaged

children the tools they need to succeed in school.

Wings of Light learning center provides social services to at-risk children. Each child receives a detailed education plan with goals to ensure they continue their education, as many at-risk families historically have not made school attendance a priority for their children. Program staff also works closely with the parents, counseling them on the value of an education for their children's long-term success in society.

Some of the staff members at the learning center gained their special social service skills through an IOCC program designed to increase the capabilities of the Romanian Orthodox Church to assist Romanian families in overcoming severe social issues. It is one of the pillars of IOCC's Strategic Plan specifically dedicated to strengthening the Orthodox Church's administrative, financial and social service abilities to respond to the needs of underprivileged Romanians.

More than 175 children were helped in the past year through the activities at Wings of Light learning center. For 4th grader Bianca, the experience has introduced her to new friends and a newfound interest in learning. "I feel like the time is flying and each day I look forward to meet my friends here and my teachers and learn more new things."

 Learn more at iocc.org/Romania



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI
MINISTERUL MUNCII, FAMILIEI
ȘI PROTECȚIEI SOCIALE
AMPOSDRU



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN CHARITIES



ROMANIAN ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE



FEDERAȚIA
FILANTROPIA
FEDERATION

REBUILT SCHOOL A LIFELINE FOR HAITI'S RURAL CHILDREN



Finn Church Aid

Lovena's new school in Embouchure has six large classrooms and plans in place to install solar panels next month. As over 90% of rural schools in Haiti do not have electricity, St. Joseph School will be a rare example of a sustainable school where an alternative energy source provides lighting to all rooms.

Plateau de Fin, Haiti (IOCC) — It takes ten-year-old Lovena almost one and half hours to walk to school every morning from her rural mountain village in Plateau de Fin, Haiti, but she doesn't mind. She and her classmates from the area surrounding the town of Embouchure welcomed the beginning of their academic year this month in a brand new school. Putting your support into action, IOCC along with ACT Alliance partner, Finn Church Aid provided assistance for the demolition of the old school severely damaged in the 2010 earthquake and the construction of a new earthquake and hurricane resistant building.

Although Embouchure is in one of the most remote mountain regions of Haiti and access to

this rugged area is difficult, rebuilding in the same area was crucial to the well-being of these earthquake survivors. St. Joseph school, originally established in 1982, serves as the only school

for more than 300 children from 11 villages in the Embouchure region, and the area directly below the school hosts a large weekly market every Tuesday for over 1,000 people who come from near and far. The school also provides community shelter during hurricanes.

Rebuilding permanent and safe structures to accommodate as many children as possible at St. Joseph school in Embouchure provides the geographically disadvantaged children an opportunity to complete a highly prized education and establishes a community lifeline for the families who are otherwise isolated from the rest of the country.

Lovena's mother and cousin were among the many people hired for the reconstruction project. Lovena watched the construction progress with great interest from the nearby temporary school tent. The fourth-grader, who hopes to be a cook one day, thinks the new school is much nicer looking than the old one. "I am very happy to be one of the students studying there," says Lovena.



Finn Church Aid

DEFEATING ONE OF ETHIOPIA'S MOST NEGLECTED DISEASES

(continued from page 3)



million Ethiopians and puts another ten million at risk. Those afflicted with podoconiosis are often shunned by society because of its disfiguring appearance, banned from working, marriage or even daily interaction with others. Through the IOCC project, Ethiopians are learning that this disease is not only treatable but preventable with the proper foot care and footwear. The response from the disease sufferers and their families has been overwhelming. With funding from TOMS Shoes and private donors, IOCC expanded the podoconiosis project this year to a new site in Debre Eliyas which is expected to double the amount of patients treated. Both project sites are expected to treat

up to 1,200 patients. The plans include not only further community supported clinics and distribution of supplies, but income generating activities, as well as support groups to decrease the stigmatization associated with the disease.

As Guday packs up her supplies for the long journey home, she speaks with a newfound confidence that comes from having control over her health and hopes that the IOCC project will increase public understanding about podoconiosis. "When you have podo you live in the shadows because no one really knows what it is," states Guday. "Teaching us how to control it takes away the fear and gives me a chance to live like everyone else."

(left) Through your support, IOCC opened a second clinic in Ethiopia this year to treat and help prevent this disfiguring disease that afflicts more than one million Ethiopians.

NURTURING SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS IN SYRIA

(continued from page 1)

The women find it rewarding to wake up in the morning and go to work in a business that they own. "Thank God that we are busy and we have regular customers," says Wafa. "I am so grateful for our improved financial situation," adds Nariman. "Now I can provide healthy meals and a better education for my children."

 Learn more at iocc.org/syria

(right) Wafa and Nariman's new beauty salon is one of 28 new businesses successfully opened through a training program your support helped to make possible.



LABORING IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD

Fr. Michael Elias



Paul Jeffrey / ACT International

Recently an Orthodox priest and his wife were discussing the Occupy Wall Street phenomenon with a small group of college-educated 20-somethings. One young man supported the protesters and asserted, "Well, after all, Jesus was a communist. In the Book of Acts it says that the earliest followers of Jesus held everything in common. Each one gave what he could, and everyone had what he needed." A young woman observed, "Jesus was always on the side of the poor, the weak, the sick and the vulnerable." There was general agreement that Jesus Himself may have inspired and supported the protesters.

The priest listened quietly, but he finally replied, "Is it not possible that we could equally say that Jesus was the ultimate oligarch? After all, He created everything in the first place, and He continues to be the Lord of all." That statement provided some food for thought, but it was really the priest's wife who made the most trenchant observation. She said, "Yes, Jesus owns everything, but He also shares everything, even His broken body and spilled blood." Silence.

At the end of every Divine Liturgy in our church the celebrant stands behind the ambon and prays, "Every good endow-

ment and every perfect give is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights." (James 1:17) In this season of Thanksgiving and in anticipation of God's greatest gift – the Incarnation of His Only-Begotten Son – we would all do well to be Eucharistic, or full of thanks, for everything God does for us. Whether we are politically with the Tea Party or the 99 percenters, spiritually as Orthodox Christians we receive, we offer, and we share all of God's blessings.

+ Very Rev. Michael Elias
Member of the IOCC Board
of Directors



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

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Timonium, MD
Permit No. 90

Address Service Requested

INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

NEWS & NEEDS

A NEW LOOK FOR NEWS & NEEDS IN 2012

2012 is going to be an exciting year for IOCC as we usher in our 20th anniversary of service. As IOCC grows, so does the need to keep you better informed of how your support is answering desperate needs with humanitarian deeds.

Beginning in 2012, your IOCC newsletter, *News & Needs*, becomes a quarterly publication and will begin arriving in your mailbox four times a year. The new four-page format will feature vivid full-color images of the programs you support and the grateful families whose lives you have uplifted.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT IOCC
HAS A NEW MAILING ADDRESS:
P.O. Box 17398 • Baltimore, MD 21297-0429**

IOCC cordially invites you to our

20th ANNIVERSARY GALA

Respond. Rebuild. Uplift.

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

Capital Hilton Hotel
Washington, D.C.

Cocktail Reception 6:00PM
Dinner 7:30PM

More details to come

**INTERNATIONAL
ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN CHARITIES**