



NEWS & NEEDS

SPECIAL ANTIOCHIAN EDITION

SUMMER 2018



Sarah selects and receives her new eyeglass frames.

Seeing Clearly, Moving Freely

Children Receive Devices They Need for Independence



Dia is fitted for a new wheelchair that will increase his ability to move on his own.

Children with disabilities face unique challenges, especially when their families' living situations are also difficult.

Dia was born in Jordan with spina bifida, a birth defect in which the bones of the spine do not properly form around the spinal cord; he needed two surgeries as an infant. He is unable to walk without assistance. Despite this challenging start, Dia has grown into a strong, intelligent boy who dreams of becoming an architect.

Through an awareness session at a community-based organization in East Amman, Dia's mother learned that IOCC was offering assistance for children with disabilities. An appointment followed; Dia was screened and assessed, and the team found that he needed a wheelchair with modifications that would enable him to attend school. He received this wheelchair in August 2017.

Dia now enjoys more independence and is able to engage in activities outside the home. With support from IOCC and the US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM),

Dia is well on his way to attending school, the next step toward his dream of becoming an architect.

Sarah is nine years old and in the fourth grade. A Syrian refugee now living in Jordan, Sarah (above) received screening and new eyeglasses through IOCC's program in Amman. She chose her own brightly colored frames and has said that can see much better now. Sarah wears her new glasses continuously and takes good care of them so that she'll have them for a long time to come.



Asmaa (far right) with other women in her mothers' support group and IOCC senior health officer Joyce Hayek in Bekaa, Lebanon.

Creating Community Improves Health Among Refugee Mothers, Children

Volunteer-Led Support Groups Offer Solidarity, Better Access to Care

As the mother of a two-year-old, Asmaa* knows how challenging it can be to keep her family healthy, even under ideal circumstances. It's all the more difficult for residents of underserved neighborhoods or refugee settlements, where access to basic care is limited.

In Lebanon, host to over a million Syrian refugees, many mothers are raising their children far from home and the communities they once knew. A refugee herself, Asmaa, 23, also understands how important it is for mothers to have a support network. She's been living in the Bekaa Valley since the crisis began seven years ago and knows firsthand what it's like to bring a child into the uncertain world of a refugee settlement. That's why she decided to volunteer with IOCC, leading a mothers' support group for fellow refugees.

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iocc.org/monthly

The mother-care groups IOCC has established serve women who don't have reliable access to pre- and postnatal care, helping connect new and expecting mothers to other women and the knowledge they can provide. Asmaa is one of 14 volunteers whom IOCC has trained in maternal and child health; they now support 140 mothers with children under age two, fostering improved health.

**Not her real name*

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Teens in Syria have a chance to make up for lessons missed because of conflict and displacement.

Overcoming Obstacles to Learning in Syria

Determined Teens Complete Their Education Despite Conflict

When families flee conflict, children miss out on schooling—teens may even need to work to help support parents and siblings. This has been the case for many Iraqis who fled to Syria some 13 years ago, as well as for Syrians displaced in their own country.

To help young people complete their basic education, IOCC and Church partner the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (GOPA-DERD), have organized courses prepping them for certification exams. This helps them make up for lost time and move closer to university studies.

One of these youth is 14-year-old Salem,* who was in ninth grade when he and his family fled their home city and moved to rural Damascus. “In the coming school year,” he recently said, “I am determined to pass my ninth-grade exam. My father wants me to be an engineer or a doctor, and I want it too.... My father is not able to pay for private lessons or institutes, so I am happy because I had the opportunity to join this program.”

**Not his real name*

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC), is the official humanitarian relief and development agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America 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.



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
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Creating Community Improves Health Among Refugee Mothers, Children

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At monthly meetings, the women discuss health concerns, following a curriculum that addresses topics such as nutrition during pregnancy, the importance of breastfeeding, maternal and newborn care, and food safety. The volunteers also meet individually with each of the 10 women in their group for one-on-one conversations about key messages and any associated challenges. This helps ensure full understanding and allows private conversations about pregnancy and motherhood to develop naturally.

Asmaa serves as a role model and can gently encourage peers to adopt good health practices, improving their own and their children's health. If specialized assistance is needed—for example, if a woman has trouble breastfeeding or becomes ill during pregnancy—the group leader refers her to an IOCC health-care field officer who can provide additional care.

"Children bring the utmost joy in this world," said Asmaa, who learned a great deal from the training and takes joy in supporting others. "Now I know how to treat my child's colic [and] take care of hygiene and other childcare issues ... I also share the information I learned with my neighbors and family members, so they can benefit too." Helping the young women around her brings Asmaa satisfaction, whether she does this in her mothers' group or in informal conversation, and she feels strongly that her volunteer service is valuable. She's committed to serving those around her, amid difficult circumstances, offering hope for good health and a brighter future.

A photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light-colored vest over a pink shirt, smiling and holding a microphone for a young girl. The girl has red heart-shaped face paint on her cheeks and is smiling broadly. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a community center or classroom setting.

SAVE THE DATE

IOCC SUNDAY

Nov. 18, 2018

- **CLERGY:** Announce IOCC Sunday, pray for those we serve, and plan a special collection.
- **VOLUNTEERS:** Plan an event or IOCC display. Organize a coffee hour, presentation, or luncheon to benefit IOCC.
- **YOUTH:** Organize a kit drive or your own IOCC fundraiser—a car wash, dance-a-thon, or spaghetti dinner.

More info available at ioccc.org/dayofsharing