



# INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

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## SUPPORT FOR WORKER COOPERATIVES CREATES JOBS FOR GREECE'S FAMILIES

For more than a decade, Christos, 38, made a living selling sweets and newspapers at his busy Athens kiosk. But his business took a drastic downturn along with Greece's economy, making it harder each month to pay rent and grocery bills. With few job prospects in Athens, Christos moved his family of four back to his grandfather's village of Kato Poroia - Serres in northern Greece. He joined a farming cooperative of 30 families growing oregano for Europe's culinary market.

Worker cooperatives, or co-ops, help small farmers and other trades by providing support networks that help bring products to market on a larger, more profitable scale for underserved families. As part of the "Give for Greece" program, IOCC is providing assistance to co-ops made up of farmers, fisherman, bakers and agricultural product producers who play a pivotal role in revitalizing Greece's rural communities.



One of the biggest obstacles to their success however, is the lack of funds needed to expand their businesses and employ more people. IOCC and Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece, are helping 24 co-ops in northern Greece succeed with assistance to increase their production and profits. They are receiving agricultural and business training, as well as funding to buy supplies, equipment and machinery needed to sustain and grow their operations. In return, participating co-ops donate a portion of their products to local social welfare institutions such as orphanages and elder care homes. So far, more than 850 rural families are benefitting from the assistance, including Christos with his wife and two small children.

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# 'GIVE FOR GREECE' CAMPAIGN EXTENDS AID TO THOSE MOST VULNERABLE

More than six years after the onset, Greece's economy remains in crisis. Without government assistance, state-run homes sheltering the elderly, orphans and disabled struggle to protect the well-being of their wards during the harsh winters of northern Greece. IOCC is responding with heating fuel for 34 state institutions in northern Greece. The assistance was made possible through generous support from The Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc., which matched contributions to IOCC for its efforts to address hunger and poverty in Greece. In addition to the emergency winter aid, food and medical supplies are being provided throughout Greece in cooperation with Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece. Since 2012, IOCC has responded to the country's economic crisis with more than \$23 million in medical support, heating fuel, food, agriculture development, and job assistance programs.



## ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN VOLUNTEERS SERVE THEIR NEIGHBORS IN ST. LOUIS



With support from IOCC, Orthodox Christian parishes from greater St. Louis responded to the needs of their neighbors by helping clean out homes damaged from record-setting flooding last winter. Parishioners of all ages from three churches in Missouri and Illinois came together to help muck out and clear debris from some of the more than 4,000 homes affected by the flooding. "The damage in the neighborhood where we were working was catastrophic," recounted Fr. Anastasios Theodoropoulos of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, whose young adult group held an IOCC Saturday of Service in January. "The family we helped was grateful for our assistance, as it took us, along with another dozen or so volunteers from another Christian group, an entire day to pull out their destroyed belongings, carpets, drywall and even the ceiling."

Kara, a high school sophomore, was one of the parishioners who participated along with her parents. "I think that it's really important to help our neighbor, especially in the wake of natural disasters. Being able to be here and meet those whose homes were destroyed makes me realize that real lives are affected, and we need to help." Support for community-based outreach by Orthodox Christians like the Saturday of Service in St. Louis is part of IOCC's national Orthodox Community Action Network (Orthodox CAN!), a movement to promote volunteerism across all age groups.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian relief 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.*

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# IOCC ADDRESSES MALNUTRITION IN GREECE

Eleni and her mother shop for milk and fresh greens at an Athens supermarket using a prepaid grocery card provided by IOCC. The card allows Argyro, an unemployed bank teller, to buy fresh food needed to feed her family. “Without this help, I would feel completely hopeless for my children’s future,” said Argyro. More than 300,000 children in Greece now live in families that cannot afford to provide a healthy diet including meat or fish, according to data from UNICEF.

“Many of the families we meet have been stripped of nearly everything – jobs, savings and plans for the future. We are trying to provide assistance in ways that make an impact, especially for the children, but do so in a way that doesn’t take away their dignity,” said Constantine Triantafilou, IOCC Executive Director.

IOCC, with Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece, is providing food assistance to more than 9,000 vulnerable people every month. This includes dry food parcels and prepaid grocery cards that allow 1,000 families with small children to buy fresh produce, eggs, chicken, and dairy products. In addition, the agricultural products are all sourced in Greece to support local farmers and milk producers.



# IOCC AND GREEK DIASPORA AID FAMILIES IN GREECE WITH NO HEALTHCARE



Austerity measures brought on by Greece’s six-year economic crisis have severely crippled the country’s healthcare system and threaten the health of millions of its people. Lack of funding for public hospitals has created critical shortages in everything from bandages, syringes and surgical gloves, to doctors and support staff. To add to their burdens, hospitals have been overwhelmed with extra patients who lost their health insurance when they lost their jobs. More than a quarter of Greece’s labor force is unemployed, leaving an estimated 2.5 million Greek people with no healthcare coverage.

IOCC is responding to the urgent medical needs of Greece’s most vulnerable people including the poor, the unemployed, the elderly, expectant mothers and children. IOCC, in cooperation with Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece, has distributed more than \$18 million in medical

supplies and equipment to 50 public hospitals in greater Athens, Thessaloniki, central and northern Greece, the Peloponnese, Crete, and the Ionian and Aegean islands, as well as to free clinics throughout the country. The medical supplies range from syringes and walkers to catheters and nebulizers – all materials needed to operate a hospital on a daily basis. “Your donation helps cover our medical supply needs in all departments,” said Manolis Papasavas, administrator of the three Children’s Hospitals in Athens. “It is really a great relief to have the ability to save money that can and will be used to address hospital needs.”

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS RISK ALL TO SEEK SAFETY, HOPE IN NEW LANDS

Dressed for rough travel and toting backpacks filled with all they own in the world, Sana along with her husband and three daughters left behind the life they knew in Damascus to seek a safer one in Europe. "I just want my children to be safe and happy," said Sana. "In Syria, our lives were in danger all the time." More than 1,000 miles separate Syria from their destination, but desperation to flee civil war is driving them to make the long and dangerous journey. Europe's border closures have cut short the long trek for thousands of men, women, and children fleeing their countries in search of safety in European nations.



IOCC/Apostoli

They are now left stranded at border crossings or in foreign lands with no resources to return home.

IOCC with Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece, has assisted more than 146,000 vulnerable refugees and migrants, and helped ease some of the strain on Greece's relief efforts. On Chios and Samos, asylum seekers are receiving food, hygiene and infant supplies, as well as access to renovated shelters and private showers. In Athens, IOCC is supporting the distribution of hot meals and hygiene kits to stranded asylum seekers. Since 2012, IOCC has provided relief to four million Syrian people displaced in their country or living as refugees in the Middle East and Europe.



**HELP FOR FAMILIES IN GREECE**  
Scan here to see how you are making an impact on families in Greece



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