



Envisioning a Stronger Economic Future in Greece

*Wide-Ranging Assistance Supports
Growing Businesses, Jobs Training*

Officially, the economic crisis in Greece is over. But in reality, its effects are still ravaging the country. The unemployment rate, though lower than in previous years, hovers around 19% (Elstat).

Give for Greece, IOCC's flagship initiative, has been working nonstop to address the lingering effects of the crisis. Working in partnership with Apostoli, the philanthropic organization of the Archdiocese of Athens under the Church of Greece, IOCC has reached tens of thousands of people since 2012, providing medical supplies to hospitals, supporting agricultural associations, and investing in microbusinesses.

Agriculture, for example, is one of the few growth sectors of the Greek economy. In the village of Neapoli, in the region of West Macedonia, IOCC is helping the 35-member Voio Agricultural Cooperative open up an international market.

The Voio creamery produces batzos, a semihard local specialty cheese made of sheep or goat milk or a combination of the two, along with more traditional varieties like feta and goat-milk cheese. Using donated equipment funded by IOCC, Voio was able to create a new production line for feta that met packaging standards of both the Greek and the German markets, giving them the opportunity to expand sales to Germany.

In addition, Voio's cheeses won major awards in



*Cheesemaker Vasilis uses a traditional cheese-straining cloth during the cheesemaking process.
Photo: IOCC/Konstantinos Tsakalidis.*

2018 at the 5th Dairy Expo in Athens, taking gold medals for their feta and goat-milk cheeses, plus a bronze for their smoked cheese.

Voio is just one example of the economic development projects sponsored by *Give for Greece*, a program supported by generous gifts to IOCC from the Jaharis Family Foundation Inc. Since 2015, more than 80 associations and microbusinesses have

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The calendar says the New Year starts on January 1, however, the Church tells us otherwise, as the ecclesiastical year begins September 1. This time of year marks a time of renewal and recommitment to our faith and to the things that are important to us.

In other words, September is when life resets. It's a time to reevaluate where we stand in the world, and how we connect with it.

In this edition of *News & Needs*, you'll see some of the ways that your generosity is helping IOCC connect with the world: supporting economic renewal in Greece; fighting the scourge of podoconiosis in Ethiopia; and supplying hearing aids to a schoolgirl in Jordan.

As September unfolds, I hope you'll consider what you can do to help someone else as Christ calls us to do—someone a lot like you who may be fighting disease, evacuating from a war zone, or struggling to find gainful employment.

Then I hope you'll renew your commitment to supporting IOCC. It has meant so much to so many—and I am very grateful.

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

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received equipment and training, benefiting more than 3,000 families. That support included 265 pieces of new production equipment (valued at more than \$1.3 million), plus technical services to help the fledgling businesses scale up production and improve their viability.

In 2017, IOCC added a pilot program to this initiative: business mentoring that connects participants with experienced professionals who volunteer through KEMEL, a Greek nonprofit dedicated to supporting businesses. The mentors help small enterprises create stronger business plans, improve productivity and marketing, and increase their sustainability.

The mentors' impact was real and immediate. "You woke us up from dreaming about success and helped us ... take real actions," said Athina, a small-business owner in Athens who participated in the business-mentoring program.

Economic progress is still slow in Greece, and recovery will be a painstaking process. But with your support, *Give for Greece* is helping thousands of people realize their dreams of employment and entrepreneurship.

Cheesemakers Vasilis and Kostas working on their specialty-cheese production line at Voio Agricultural Cooperative.

Photo: IOCC/Konstantinos Tsakalidis.



International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC), is the official humanitarian organization of the United States of America and a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and religious groups.

IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and support to people in need.

Photos: NIHR Global Health Research Unit on Neglected Tropical Diseases at Brighton and Sussex Medical School.



Clinics in Ethiopia Combat Neglected Disease

*Enatnesh (far right) and other patients
at an IOCC-supported podo clinic.*



Treatment in Rural Areas Offers Hope of Restored Health

When Enatnesh, a farmer, arrived at an IOCC clinic in Ethiopia, she was in terrible pain. Her badly swollen left leg meant she was unable to work. Her family was losing much needed income and she was shunned by members of her community.

Enatnesh had developed podoconiosis (or podo). It's a noncommunicable disease that worsens over time – a painful swelling of the legs and feet caused by the very soil she tilled on her farm.

Like many rural Ethiopians, Enatnesh didn't wear shoes. And continual contact of bare feet with certain volcanic soils can cause podoconiosis.

The good news is that podoconiosis is being successfully treated at IOCC-supported clinics throughout Ethiopia. IOCC has also provided shoes and self-care training so that patients can manage the condition on their own. Since this disease is neglected, progress in Ethiopia has only been

possible because of support from many individuals and the ongoing commitment of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc.

After nearly a year of treatment, Enatnesh reports that she's feeling much better. "Now my podo doesn't interrupt my work," she said. "I am wearing shoes, and I can go to church." Her five children are more secure now, because she can help support them again.

Helping treat this often neglected disease makes a tremendous impact in Ethiopia's rural areas, enabling hard-working people to make a living again and be productive in their communities.

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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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Fresh Confidence through Expert Care

Children Receive Diagnosis and Treatment for Hearing Loss in Jordan

Amal* is an eight-year-old Palestinian refugee who lives in Jordan, with her parents and five siblings. She loves fashion, and wants to be a hairdresser someday. When she's not in school, she enjoys electronic games, cartoons, and puzzles.

But in second grade, Amal started having trouble in school. Her teachers complained about her lack of participation, her grades slid, and many of her classmates ostracized her. Amal's self-esteem started to crumble.

Amal's parents had long thought that their daughter was simply shy. But as Amal faced more difficulty in school, the family began to suspect there was another problem.

Neighbors told Amal's mother about the Institute of Family Health clinic in East Amman. There, through an IOCC partnership with Diakonie

Katastrophenhilfe, funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation, IOCC's community-based rehabilitation workers conducted screenings and assessments. They arranged for Amal to see an audiologist.

The specialist ran tests and diagnosed the real problem: Amal had hearing loss. Next she was fitted for hearing aids, and speech therapy sessions were scheduled.

The results were immediate. "We noticed a huge difference," her mother said. "She can hear better and her speech has improved. She also feels satisfied, since her grades and interaction at school have improved."

Amal's family is grateful for the help they received from IOCC. And Amal herself summed it up best: "I am very happy now because I am able to hear."

**Pseudonym used*



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SAVE THE DATE



IOCC
Sunday

A DAY OF SHARING

November 24, 2019