



NEWS & NEEDS

SPECIAL ANTIOCHIAN CONFERENCE EDITION

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Building Community, Providing Meals and Income

Lebanese, Syrian Women Work Together to Meet Neighbors' Needs

Knowing that they can count on a hot, nutritious meal several times a week is a huge relief for Lebanese and Syrian families struggling to make their way in Lebanon.

Refugee families often don't have kitchens equipped to cook or the means to purchase nutritious ingredients, and families with low income may not be able to afford to buy healthful food.

The community kitchen project, begun with seed money from IOCC co-founder Charles Ajalat's Orthodox Vision Foundation, is run today with funding from ecumenical partners. IOCC operates four kitchens throughout Lebanon to serve families in need and trains local Lebanese and Syrian refugee women to prepare food together in large quantities that is then delivered. The women who work in the kitchens receive a modest stipend from IOCC to help them support their families, and they have a chance to build friendships across cultural divides.

The kitchen in El Mina, Tripoli, has been hosted by the St. Mary Orthodox Association for the Support of Orphans since 2014. Five Lebanese and Syrian women prepare meals weekly for more than 130 families in the area. Once the food is ready, it's delivered by van to families in the program. Local parishes and staff community visits help IOCC connect with families who may need this kind of help. Hundreds of hot meals, including vegetables and bread, are delivered by van weekly to Lebanese and refugee families.

IOCC's community kitchens received the Intercultural Achievement Award from the Federal Ministry of the Republic of Austria in 2016. The initiative continues to serve nutritious meals three times per week—filling a significant gap and providing a common cause that strengthens communities.

Small Steps toward Better Health in Gaza

Health and Nutrition Initiative Serves Families, Communities

IOCC's new health and nutrition project in Gaza is underway. The programming offers basic health screening to identify and treat children who have micronutrient deficiencies and to refer them to specialists as needed. Malnutrition rates in Gaza are very high for children under age 6, so the work focuses on 12 partner kindergartens in underserved neighborhoods.

Implemented by Peace Winds Japan and IOCC with support from the Japan Platform, the project also offers health and nutrition education to parents, while training educators in basic health screening so that they can better serve their communities.

In January 2019, over 1,190 children were screened; those who needed specialized care were referred to health professionals. The teachers and staff at the 12 kindergartens attended workshops to learn screening methods, and the teachers also received first-aid training.

In all, this work is helping protect small children from the negative health effects of long-term malnutrition, while increasing community knowledge among the adults who care for them.



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.



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The Long Road after Disaster

Serv-X-Treme Alumni, Seminarians Join Action Teams

When disaster damages a home, emergency response is only the beginning. Rebuilding and recovering can take years.

IOCC's Orthodox Action Teams, part of the US program, help meet immediate needs after a disaster but also assist later by repairing and rebuilding family homes. In January 2019, this work continued in Florida and Texas as part of long-term recovery efforts after Hurricanes Irma and Harvey.

A group of Serv-X-Treme alumni—past participants in IOCC's youth service-leadership conference—traveled to Crystal River, Florida, to work on a home damaged by Hurricane Irma in 2017. Homeowner Dee had moved into her elderly mother's house to care for her, and inherited the home when her mother passed away—shortly before Irma hit. Dee's smile was bright as she thanked volunteers.

A week later, a team of Orthodox seminarians gathered in Houston, Texas, to help rebuild a home badly damaged by Hurricane Harvey. This was IOCC's sixth home build for seminarians, and participants hailed from six Orthodox seminaries across jurisdictions. In addition to working for four days to help repair a family home, the group had a chance to worship together at local Orthodox parishes in Houston and Galveston.

If you or someone you know would like to learn more about IOCC's Disaster Response Teams, find upcoming projects at iocc.org/actionteams.



Farmers across Lattakia have replanted their farms, starting over with seeds and equipment from IOCC.

Rebuilding Lives and Livelihoods in Syria

A Family Returns to Their Land

Tarek (not his real name) and his family lived in the region of Lattakia, Syria, on a farm that was their home and livelihood. Like almost half of Syria's population before the conflict, they earned a living through agriculture. Orchards of lemon, apple, and peach trees provided income. But his village's residents were displaced when conflict overtook the village; nearly everyone fled. For three months, Tarek's family and others like them sought shelter elsewhere, and during that time their land and homes were destroyed.

Convinced that their best option was to rebuild their lives, Tarek moved his family home. "We returned to our burned houses and our overturned lands to start over again," he said. "We started by sealing the holes in our homes left by the mortar shells. The land was the only hope of my family, so I had to revive it."

Next Tarek and his family began the long process of restoring their orchards. It was slow going without the proper equipment. "I began planting a small number of trees with no agriculture equipment because [while we were away] all my supplies were stolen," he recalled. Soon Tarek learned about an agricultural project in the area run by IOCC and Church partner the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (GOPA-DERD). Giving farming families a jump start on their recovery, the initiative supplied pruning equipment, seeds, gas-powered saws, fertilizers, seeds, and more to help residents return their land to productivity.

As families in Syria strive to regain their livelihoods and way of life, practical assistance like this is offering them a smoother path forward. "I hope we can return the land [to how] it was before," Tarek's oldest son remarked. The hard work continues, but this family believes a brighter future is possible.



Your Idea + Your Friends = Your Impact



Want to provide books to children in Africa, help a single mother in Gaza grow a garden, or provide shelter to people displaced from their homes in Syria?



It's easy. Take an idea, and use our DIY platform to create your own fundraiser to share with friends and family – celebrate a birthday, dedicate your wedding registry, or create your own occasion.

Start making an impact today at iocc.org/diy