



Clothing design and construction are marketable skills in Armenia's second city, where a Church vocational course is helping women train for sustainable careers.

Simple Gifts, Determination Drive Success in Armenia

Donation of Fabric, Supplies Supports New Careers for Women

“Success in work is about trying the impossible to make the possible happen,” said Lusine, 30, who recently completed vocational training in garment design and construction at the Social-Educational Center run by the Armenian Apostolic Church’s Shirak Diocese and is embarking on a new career.

Lusine studied education at university and once taught Armenian language and literature, but Armenia’s slow economic growth has meant that jobs in her field are difficult to find and keep. And she’s not alone: for 53-year-old Gohar, an economist by training, maintaining a reliable income in Armenia’s challenging economy once seemed impossible.

Armenia’s economic growth has been slow since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and is still hampered by regional instability. The educational system doesn’t cater to current market demands, so unemployment remains high among the educated. However, the textile and garment industry is growing in Gyumri, Shirak’s administrative center and Armenia’s second city, so vocational training delivers opportunity.

Seeing this, Lusine and Gohar decided turn a beloved hobby into a new career with a promising future: they enrolled in the Shirak Diocese’s vocational course in clothing production and tailoring. IOCC provided 3,000 sets of sewing supplies to the course, part of a 14,500-item shipment to Armenia and a collaboration of IOCC and Lutheran World Relief.

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FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

In this season, we celebrate the light of Christ, our Lord and Savior. In the Resurrection service, the priest declares, "Come receive the light!" The church fills with the warm light of many candles, their light driving back the darkness—just as Christ drove back the darkness of death.

You share that light in many forms through your gifts to IOCC, driving away the darkness of great need. The candles of your generosity light even the darkest corners of the world.

This light may take the shape of vocational training that helps Armenian women find jobs in a growing industry. It could be a vibrant school that is strengthening a rural Ugandan community. Or it might mean equipping young adults in Greece to enter today's digital workforce, inspiring them to pursue a career they'd never imagined before.

Thank you for sharing the light of Christ with everyone that we serve together.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

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The diocese's program serves between 250 and 300 participants yearly, providing women who are unemployed with training and experience in various sectors, including culinary arts, woodworking, cosmetology, business correspondence, accounting, and more.

Women in the garment course learn how to create clothing from start to finish—from design to assembly and on to alteration and repair. They train on sewing machines and study techniques for creating high-quality work by hand. Supplies delivered by IOCC provided the means for additional training as participants gained mastery. The course culminated in a fair at which participants sold their work to members of the public. Nearly all the pieces on offer sold.

Equipped through the Shirak Diocese's vocational course with new skills and confidence in their expertise, Lusine and Gohar are planning for the future. Both have applied for full-time jobs in garment making, and they're outlining steps to open their own business. "It is just the beginning," they said.

Women train for viable new careers at the Shirak Diocese Social-Educational Center in Armenia.



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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IOCC's work at the Lwemiyaga school is making education more accessible to young people in rural Uganda.

Upgraded School Fosters Motivation, Ambition

Equipped for Success, Ugandan High-Schoolers Aim High

Education is crucial: it improves job prospects and exposes learners to new ideas and experiences. Educated women, especially, are healthier and economically better off than those with less schooling.

In rural Uganda, IOCC has partnered with the St. Nektarios Education Fund to build and update three schools run by the Uganda Orthodox Church. The Lwemiyaga school first opened in 2014, with new classrooms and separate latrines for boys and girls. To better serve students, it became a boarding school, and in 2015 IOCC added rainwater-harvesting systems to supply laundry and washing. Work continues as the campus expands.

“There have been big changes,” said 18-year-old Annet, a fourth-year at Lwemiyaga who plans to become a doctor. “We started with a few buildings, and we never had a dormitory for the boys, but now it’s already there.... [These are] big changes.”

IOCC built that new dorm (with its own rainwater-harvesting system); constructed a modern latrine, laundry area, and shower; and equipped the girls’ dorm with bunk beds. Next up is a science lab. These facilities are helping students better prepare for university-level studies – and to build the lives they envision.

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IOCC EVENTS • iocc.org/events

- May 4: Denver, CO - IOCC Awareness Dinner
- May 4-5: Pittsburgh, PA - Pittsburgh Marathon
- May 16: Chicago, IL - IOCC Grand Banquet
- May 19: Orange County, CA - Share the Love
- May 19: Cleveland, OH - Annual Banquet

High-Tech Training Offers Path Forward

Young Adults in Greece Prepare for 21st-Century Careers

Still feeling the effects of economic crisis, Greece hosts over 71,000 refugees and migrants. Young adults past school age can't participate in many of the aid programs available to younger refugees, but they're finding inspiration through IOCC's Co{de}+Create*.

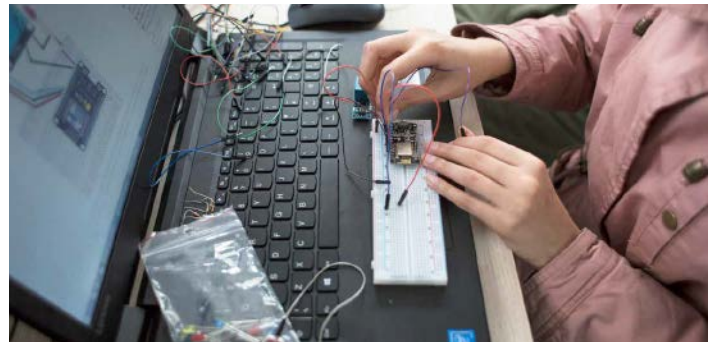
The program brings together Greek and refugee youth to learn digital skills—a must for today's job market. Participants learn the course material but also forge connections across cultures.

"The Co{de}+Create program has been a fantastic experience," said Kadir (not his real name), 18, whose family came to Athens from Syria. "I had the opportunity to not only learn web design and programming, but I also got to learn them with people from different backgrounds and with their diverse way of thinking."

Digital work is Kadir's path to a stable future. He's pursuing a career in tech and credits Co{de}+Create for providing a solid foundation. "This project is a fantastic idea," he said, "and it's run by a lovely team of teachers and coordinators.... I hope it will continue making ... this field [as] accessible for everyone as it was for me."

* The Co{de}+Create concept was created by Finn Church Aid in 2017.

*A course in digital skills offers young people in Athens – Greeks and refugees – tools to pursue in-demand careers.
Photos: IOCC/Eirini Vourloumis.*



Did You Know?

In Ethiopia, IOCC is fighting podoconiosis, a neglected tropical disease. Podo is painful and stigmatized, but treatment is simple and inexpensive.

Did you know that you can help fight podo?

IOCC's work to combat podoconiosis in Ethiopia helps rural communities take control of their health through training and education.

ioccc.org/podo

