



NEWS & NEEDS

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Growing Self-Sufficiency in Georgia

Using the Sun to Raise the Standard of Living

The nation of Georgia emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Located in the Caucasus region, the country has faced continual challenges, from a severe economic crisis triggered by the disintegration of the USSR to various conflicts.

While conditions have improved, 20% of Georgians still live below the poverty line; 14% get by on less than \$1.25 per day.* IOCC has been working to help improve living conditions since 1994.

In Georgia, current efforts are powered by the sun. Since 2017, IOCC has been working with local farmers and the Georgian Orthodox Church to build and maintain inexpensive plastic greenhouses, enabling them to raise vegetables – and their income. Building on its initial success, the program is now moving ahead on two fronts.

*National Statistic Office of Georgia, Geostat 2018.

Like Revaz, this family of three – wife Neli, husband Paata, and son Davit – received a new IOCC greenhouse, plus agricultural training. They helped install the structure, which gives them space to expand the amount and variety of vegetables they grow and sell at market.

First, IOCC is providing these greenhouses and training to local farmers and people displaced by the conflicts that have wracked parts of Georgia. For training, IOCC partners with AgroLink: an independent consultant network of international agricultural experts focused on education. The training covers crop diversification, processing practices, marketing, and adopting new technologies.

Participants receive seeds or seedlings, fertilizers, and a drip-irrigation system. The goal is to plant high-value, nontraditional vegetables in 10 demonstration plots. Potato, lettuce, pepper, and radish seeds are distributed, along with containers for the seedlings and peat concentrate. The program emphasizes learning by doing – which participants greatly appreciate.

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FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

The global pandemic has created new realities for all of us – requiring that we quickly adapt the way we live and the way we work. IOCC has been able to make adjustments that allow us to continue our mission thanks to your generosity, a lot of hard work by IOCC staff, and through the IOCC Foundation. The Foundation helps fund innovative projects to support existing initiatives and establish new ones. Its resources give us the flexibility to implement inventive approaches to help respond quickly to emergencies such as COVID-19.

As you can imagine, that flexibility has been crucial to us since the onset of the pandemic. But it doesn't end there. We're also working to ensure that the work we do has a lasting impact, beyond any given emergency. You'll see that reflected in this issue's articles.

If you'd like to learn more about the Foundation and how it works, please take a moment to visit iocc.org/foundation.

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we will weather this storm!

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO



Solar dryers like this one provide a way for Georgians to grow their incomes by selling dried goods year round.

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For example, Revaz, now in his 60s, has been displaced from his home for more than 25 years. He cited the adage about teaching a man to fish. "After so many years living in the settlement, nobody taught us how to fish," Revaz said. "They were just bringing fish. But IOCC's approach to teach fishing is just a great idea."

The program's other component, funded by the IOCC Foundation, provides solar-powered produce dryers and teaches participants how to use them. Dried fruits and vegetables – kiwis, persimmons, oranges, and sweet and chili peppers – fetch much higher prices than fresh items and can be stored to sell year-round.

That's an exciting prospect for Mariam, who lives in temporary housing with her husband and their four children. Her husband, an internally displaced man from Abkhazia, takes short-term construction jobs when they're available, but his income is sporadic. So Mariam is eager to dry fruits and sell them at market. "Someone in heaven," she said, "decided to help me and my family."

And while the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily paused in-person trainings during spring, farmers still sowed seeds in their greenhouses and fields, while IOCC staff and consultants advised via phone, photos, and video chat on diseases, pests, and how to address them.

IOCC's long-term projects continue to be a driving force in equipping self-employed farmers to build their enterprises, harnessing the sun to bring a new day for their homeland.



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IOCC Foundation Funds Creative Projects in Challenging Times

Grants Foster Long-Term Resilience

Since 2004, the IOCC Foundation has funded innovative projects across several countries where IOCC works, both supporting existing programs and establishing new programs and strategic initiatives.

The strategic element is important here. Foundation funding allows IOCC to implement inventive approaches and to help programs adapt to shifting contexts. A Foundation-funded project might deploy a new technology (like solar dryers in Georgia) or expand into a new kind of assistance (like menstrual health management in Uganda), helping IOCC grow its reach. That demonstrated success strengthens IOCC's own position when seeking larger grants or pursuing collaboration.

The flexibility provided by the Foundation is more important than ever in the current context, which is being reshaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. No place is untouched by the ongoing health crisis, so IOCC is adapting accordingly.

In Ethiopia, IOCC has long focused on health, particularly combatting podoconiosis. A new Foundation initiative is building water infrastructure in a remote area where residents



One Foundation-funded health and nutrition initiative equipped young people in rural Uganda for healthful lives. Skills to manage menstrual health, including sewing washable sanitary pads, help young women improve their school attendance and success.

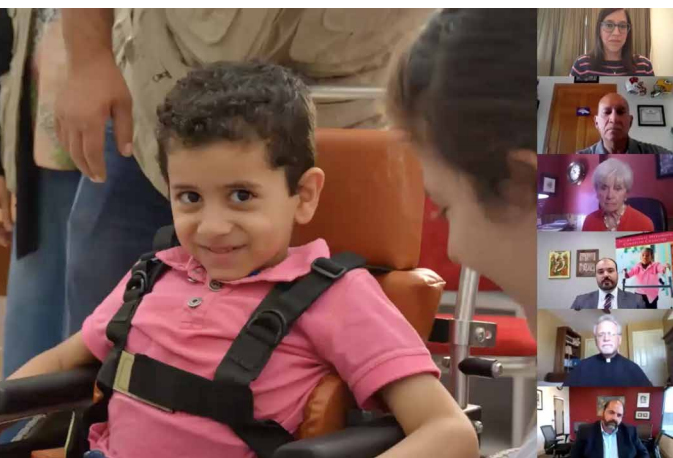
have had no safe source for drinking, let alone handwashing – now essential for slowing COVID-19. There is sufficient local groundwater, but it's easily contaminated by animals and waste. By capping a spring and creating a reservoir, plus building access points, handwashing and laundry stations, and troughs for livestock (the area's main source of income), this project is mitigating the pandemic threat while improving residents' long-term health and resilience against disasters like drought.

In Uganda, where millions already face challenges around health and food security, Foundation funding is helping the Uganda Orthodox Medical Bureau face the COVID-19 pandemic by providing personal protective equipment and other hygiene materials, training staff, and improving communication systems – aiming to prevent the virus's spread and protect health workers as they serve those who are ill.

These are just two current projects funded by the IOCC Foundation, guided by some of the most urgent needs of the moment. Ultimately, Foundation gifts help ensure the long-term impact of IOCC's global work. To learn more, visit iocc.org/foundation.

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.



A moment from the Denver No-Show Event. Keynote speaker Dimitrije Djukic shared a story about Dia (left), who received a customized wheelchair from IOCC. Pictured (right, top to bottom) are Outreach Manager Christina Meares; Development Officer Nick Kasemeotes; IOCC board member and Denver Metropolitan Committee chair Elaine Cladis; Manager of Middle East Programs Dimitrije Djukic; Fr. Louis Christopoulos; spiritual advisor to the committee; and Executive Director and CEO Dean Triantafilou.

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IOCC Events Go Virtual, Meet Success

Pandemic Measures Call for Creative Solutions

The COVID-19 pandemic took on strength in the US just as IOCC was preparing for spring fundraising, but that hasn't stopped dedicated volunteers' efforts to share IOCC with others.

Working to keep all supporters and staff safe, and in careful observance of health-safety measures put in place by Orthodox hierarchs and local authorities across the country, IOCC has adjusted the format of many fundraising events, moving from in-person to online gatherings.

The IOCC Cleveland Metropolitan Committee set the precedent in May with an online "no-show" event in place of the usual annual banquet. Since then, local volunteers have worked closely with IOCC staff to create engaging digital programs complete with keynotes from IOCC operations staff, messages from local volunteers, and live Q&A sessions with senior IOCC leadership. The Denver Metropolitan Committee also shifted to a no-show format, and a Virtual 5K—in which participants run on their own but on the same day to raise money for IOCC—took place in June.

"It was incredibly exciting to see everyone pull together, raising money in a new way to keep the work going," said Elaine Cladis, IOCC board member and Denver committee chair. "We're so thankful for everyone's support."

Moving events online allows wider attendance that isn't limited by geography, so supporters can join a virtual IOCC event from anywhere in the world. As the fall event season approaches, supporters are encouraged to watch for IOCC happenings across the country, which will be publicized at iocc.org/events and on IOCC's social media channels.