



BEFORE



AFTER

Small Farmers Equipped for Self-Sufficiency

Supporting Community, Church Agriculture in the Balkans

In Kosovo and Metohija, IOCC focuses on agricultural development: helping the local Orthodox Church expand facilities to purchase and process local harvests, and helping farmers increase productivity – two parts of a holistic approach to improving quality of life here.

Dejan, a husband and father of three, lives in Gračanica and has a family background in agriculture. He set out with the traditional approach to breeding pigs, but struggled. “Simply put,” he said, “I did the best I could, and it was not enough. I invested all I had in my pig-breeding program, but I couldn’t make a profit.”

While doing seasonal work at the Gračanica monastery, Dejan connected with IOCC and partner Agrolink. Their conversations inspired him to try something new. “I got the answer I needed,” he

His Grace Bishop Teodosije of the Diocese of Raška-Prizren once walked an empty hillside in Kosovo, where a multiyear program cofunded by IOCC has helped expand the Church’s agricultural production. Thanks to His Grace’s vision, the hillside is now home to new facilities, including a grain mill and an animal-feed production line – making the Church a reliable market for local farmers, who can sell their harvests or have them processed at Gračanica monastery.

said: “To buy less animal feed and produce more on my own land.”

Livestock feed is typically the largest expense breeders have, so growing it can cut costs. IOCC and Agrolink organized trainings and supplied seeds, and Dejan was the first in his community to sow forage peas and soybeans. When he started using this home-grown feed, his pigs’ health improved; improvement continued the following year, and he added more animals to his herd.

In just two years, Dejan grew his productive land from 8 hectares to 27 and tripled his herd of reproducing pigs from 5 to 15. He now sells about 300 piglets a year, increasing his income dramatically. His animals are also healthier, and Dejan produces more while spending less. He sells surplus harvest to the Church for processing

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

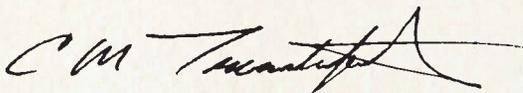
Great Lent is a time of reflection, and with all that our world has experienced recently, that reflection is both important and necessary. As we take our Lenten journey together, we remember what awaits us at its end – the celebration of Christ’s glorious Resurrection and the joy of Pascha, which brings with it hope that our world needs now more than ever.

Throughout the past year, you have shared that hope with so many. Your faithful support has been vital to IOCC’s ability to keep programs running amid the added complications of the pandemic.

In this issue of *News & Needs*, you will see just how much hope you have brought to people around the world. From an Alabama man whose home was damaged by a hurricane, to a Syrian boy overcoming speech and learning disabilities, and to a Balkan farmer struggling to support his family – your gifts are making a profound difference.

Each story reminds us that in the midst of adversity, hope is always ahead – just as the light of Pascha awaits us at the end of Great Lent.

Wishing you and your family a blessed Lent and joyful Resurrection,



Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO



His Grace Bishop Teodosije is seen here visiting the construction site as one of the new structures takes shape.

continued from cover

— a safe and sustainable market for the community.

While Dejan successfully pioneered new approaches to traditional farming, his neighbors saw value in the change and followed his lead. Even amid the COVID-19 pandemic, this shift has allowed more farmers to grow their production and income. With the Church’s increased ability to purchase and process grain— another outcome of IOCC programming— sustainable improvements continue in Gračanica.

“I want to thank you all for your support,” said Dejan. “Most of all, I want to thank you for [support from an] Orthodox organization, which gives us a sense that we are not alone. This means the most to us.”

With IOCC training, Dejan has grown his productive land and tripled the size of his herd of pigs, dramatically increasing his income.



Helping Gamal Speak with Confidence

Overcoming Anxiety and Obstacles to Find Self-Assurance

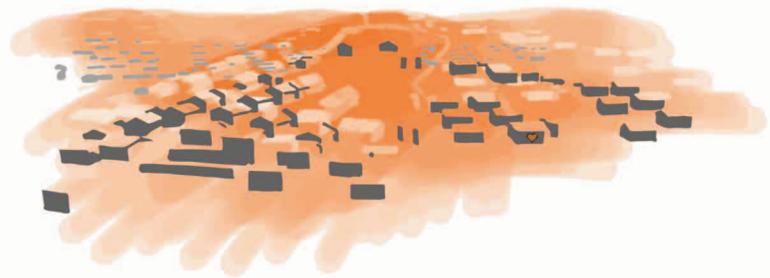
Gamal (not his real name) and his family fled from Syria to Jordan when he was 3. By age 10, his family knew he had serious speech difficulties. However, they were unable to afford the help he needed, especially as a bad hand injury kept his father from finding employment.

In addition to his pronunciation issues, Gamal suffered from several learning disabilities. These were attributed to the traumatic events his family survived in Syria and their struggle to make a new life in Jordan.

Gamal developed low self-esteem—often making him too embarrassed to go into shops for simple purchases without the help of a friend. He suffered severe anxiety at school, causing him to often refuse to take part in class activities, and he was a frequent target of bullying. Gamal’s life, however, was about to change.



GAMAL'S STORY



Gamal gained newfound confidence through IOCC-supported speech therapy sessions. To watch a short video about Gamal's experience, visit iocc.org/gamal.

Through an IOCC program supported by the US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), clinic staff from IOCC's partner the Institute for Family Health (IFH) told Gamal's family about IOCC's services.

Gamal was referred to a local IFH clinic, where an assessment confirmed that he needed speech therapy and special education. After a series of rehabilitation sessions, Gamal can now produce all the sounds of his native language with age-appropriate fluency. His self-esteem and schoolwork have improved, and his confidence has risen. Today, Gamal has overcome his severe anxiety and can at last experience the peace of mind that comes with newfound self-assurance.

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.

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.

iocc.org



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
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US Hurricane Response Update

Your Emergency Gifts at Work

The summer of 2020 brought another record hurricane season—both Laura and Sally lashed the US Gulf Coast, disrupting the lives of tens of thousands. Homes and businesses were destroyed as the back-to-back hurricanes left devastated communities in their wake. With enhanced safety protocols necessitated by the pandemic, IOCC arrived on the scene to help our neighbors in need.

In Foley, Alabama, for example, an IOCC-led team helped homeowner Nicholas, who lives with a physical disability and has a heart condition. Working with AmeriCorps NCCC volunteers,

together we spent two days clearing his property, removing several huge pecan trees and repairing a fence damaged by the storm. As a thank you, Nicholas treated the entire team to pizza.

That effort was just part of our overall response. From September through December, IOCC led four volunteer teams, working on 69 sites that were hit by Laura in late August and 11 more that were stricken by Sally in early September. In all, more than 110 volunteers worked over 5,300 hours to help our neighbors in the southern states make the first steps toward recovery.

Thousands of homes and businesses along the Gulf Coast were damaged in Hurricanes Laura and Sally. With your support IOCC responded, helping Nicholas (left) and others like him.

ServX-Treme

Summer 2021 Youth Conferences
Hands-on learning, fellowship, service
July 17-23 | July 24-30
 Minneapolis, MN

Apply as a participant or advisor by May 17
 Learn more at ioccc.org/servx

GREAT LENT
Learn more at ioccc.org/lent