



## Helping Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Georgia

*IOCC provided personal protective equipment and training for staff at a Church-run eldercare home in the country of Georgia, helping lower the risk of COVID-19.*

### *A Successful Effort and a First-Time Partnership for IOCC*

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose unprecedented challenges, but it also brings opportunities for innovation and partnership—including the beginning of IOCC’s partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO).

After its first two successful collaborations beginning in early 2020, IOCC and the WHO are now working on a third project which is focused on educating communities in western Georgia about COVID-19 protocols.

Even during the hardest days of the pandemic, the vital work of daily life had to continue. Farmers market workers, long-haul truck drivers, faith-community leaders, staff at eldercare facilities, and taxi drivers were at risk of exposure to the virus.

A series of educational workshops aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19 was launched to reach these essential workers and local faith leaders—who in turn could educate their own communities. Training sessions were developed and conducted by the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti regional representative of Georgia’s National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, with content developed in cooperation with the WHO country office.

Working with these partners, IOCC held virus-prevention workshops in several key locations across western Georgia. More than 85 truck drivers and 30 farmers market workers received personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning and disinfection supplies, and informational fliers.

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

Summer has arrived, a time when many of us pause to relax a bit. This year, especially, we hope that you will have a chance to spend more time with loved ones. We should remember, though, that in some places, summer's arrival also marks the beginning of natural disaster season.

While IOCC plans and prepares to help those affected by possible emergencies, we also work to strengthen our existing programs. By providing vital immediate aid in disasters, and focusing on projects with long-term impact, we can help to build resilience and strengthen communities around the world.

In this *News & Needs*, you'll see the results of some of those projects: from educating student refugees in Syria to keeping essential workers safe in the country of Georgia. You can also read about an important construction project at an Orthodox school in Uganda.

I am so grateful for the strong support our donors have shown this year. Your generosity has helped IOCC keep programs running through the pandemic. That means a great deal to me, and to all of us at IOCC. I wish you a blessed summer, and I look forward to reporting to you again in the fall.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director & CEO



*Orthodox priests in Georgia attended IOCC workshops on preventing COVID-19.*

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In addition, training was provided to 80 taxi drivers, 40 staff members at an Orthodox Church-run nursing home, and 50 faith leaders from different religions. All of them also received PPE to help them continue their vital work during the pandemic.

Since completing their sessions, these essential workers and faith leaders are better equipped to keep themselves and others safe. They are also using what they've learned to influence and educate their own communities—helping to continue to slow the spread of COVID-19.

*Taxi drivers and nursing home staff received training and equipment to help keep themselves and others healthy.*



# Helping a Refugee Realize His Dream

## *Bringing Education to Children Fleeing Conflict*

The Syrian crisis began over 10 years ago. Since its onset, the people of Syria and Iraqi refugees living in Syria have continued to face unrest and hardship. The ongoing conflict and displacement—many have been displaced multiple times—mean that children continue to miss the opportunity to attend school.

That was the dilemma facing Maher (pseudonym used), a 14-year-old Iraqi boy whose family left his war-torn homeland for Syria in 2007. When the Syrian conflict broke out, Maher's father returned to Iraq, leaving Maher, his two siblings, and their mother. Suddenly, the family's situation became even more difficult.



*Specialized courses and tuition assistance help displaced and refugee students in Syria complete their education.*

"When my father left us," Maher told IOCC, "we suffered a lot. Our financial situation is grim. I would love to complete my education and receive a university degree." Finishing his education would open up new opportunities for Maher's future.

Fortunately for Maher—and his siblings—IOCC provides tuition assistance to hundreds of Iraqi refugee and Syrian students enrolled in schools across Syria, with support from the US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. In addition, IOCC and Church partner the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East's Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development have organized courses to prep students for certification exams.

"I was so happy when they allowed me to register," Maher said. "I was in desperate need of these classes, and my family is not able to afford such support." He was particularly excited to take classes that helped him fill in the gaps in his science and math education.

Now in ninth grade, Maher is working hard to prepare for his ninth-grade certificate exams. His fondest wish is to complete high school and enroll in a university. With his determination, and help from IOCC and our partners, he has a chance to realize that wish.

**NEW**


# Prayer Journal

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ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL  
 ORTHODOX BISHOPS  
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*New sanitation facilities at a boarding school in Uganda will help ensure students have a safe, healthful learning environment.*



## Bringing New Meaning to “a Healthy Education”

### *IOCC Helps Improve Conditions at a Ugandan School*

IOCC programs offer educational opportunities, small business micro-loans and mentoring, disaster relief, healthcare, food assistance, and other types of aid to people in need around the world. That aid can come in many forms—and while not all are glamorous—they are all essential.

Health—including water and sanitation—is a core area of focus for IOCC. And while toilets may not be what people get excited about when they think of humanitarian programs, a recent project in Uganda is just one example of how “unglamorous” aid can have an important and far-reaching impact.

For several years, IOCC has been working with the Uganda Orthodox Church (UOC) to improve access to educational opportunities, especially in rural Uganda. IOCC, in partnership with the St. Nektarios Education Fund, has helped build and update three schools run by the UOC in Butembe, Gulu, and Lwemiyaga.



**Tools for resilience in adversity**  
**[iocc.org/CareCompass](http://iocc.org/CareCompass)**

IOCC is currently engaged in a multiyear program with the UOC and the St. Nektarios Education Fund at St. Michael the Archangel Secondary School in Gulu. It began after an IOCC assessment determined that deteriorating sanitary facilities were threatening the health and safety of staff and students.

Building a new sanitary block was an urgent priority, along with demolishing old toilets and disinfecting the site—especially since St. Michael is a boarding school, and these communal facilities are the only ones available. The COVID-19 pandemic increased that urgency, as good sanitation is crucial to preventing infectious diseases, keeping students healthy so they can continue learning.

As with all IOCC projects, this one began with consultations with all those involved to ensure the project will have lasting impact and ownership in the local community. In this case, that included school officials, the UOC, and the parent-teacher association. In addition, IOCC brought in professional engineers to ensure that the project met the highest standards set by the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports.

Construction is now underway. Groundbreaking and excavation have been completed, as has the masonry work of the large-volume septic tank. Soon, the new sanitary block will help students learn in a healthier environment—and prepare to pursue their dreams, learn valuable skills, or even attend college.

This strong focus on health programs in Uganda continues to be a crucial component to improving the health and quality of life for rural communities.