

IOCC report

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In 1992, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) was formed by the Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), the predecessor to the modern-day Assembly, along with lay leaders Mr. Charles R. Ajalat, Mr. Andrew A. Athens, and Mr. John G. Rangos Sr. Throughout the years, IOCC has continued to address the needs of the world's most vulnerable people and communities in the midst of historic upheaval.

Long-Term Solutions for Battling Hunger:

1 in 8 people goes to bed hungry each night. In some countries where IOCC works, 1 in 3 children is underweight. Delivering food is a temporary solution to hunger. A more permanent and sustainable solution is giving people the means to produce more food for themselves. Sound agriculture practices are at the heart of the solution to hunger. IOCC works with local organizations and responders who help communities develop better farming and animal husbandry practices.

Assistant to refugees:

IOCC continues its multifaceted response to the Syrian refugee crisis with work in Jordan, Lebanon, Greece, Syria, and Romania, as well as work with Church partner GOPA-DERD to help those internally displaced within Syria. Since 2012, IOCC has assisted millions of Syrians through emergency relief and shelter, water, healthcare, education, nutrition, and psychosocial support. IOCC provided food, shelter, and medical care for refugee families who are in need.

Economic opportunities:

IOCC has helped agricultural cooperatives and small businesses throughout Greece with machinery, equipment, and business mentoring—improving productivity and profitability, and helping over 1,500 families. Aiming to help co-op members maximize their abilities, IOCC has supported professional development by connecting select members (as well as new businesses) with experienced executives who volunteer to support other businesspeople. Serving both Jordanians and Syrian refugees, IOCC has organized vocational training for adults in skills including electrical wiring, e-marketing, auto mechanics, and cooking. After training, some participants have received grants to start their own businesses; others may attend job fairs (some specifically serving people with disabilities) or participate in job coaching through IOCC's Livelihood Resource Center. Refugee and low-income families often don't have kitchens equipped to cook or the means to purchase nutritious ingredients. IOCC created an award-winning community kitchen program, training local Lebanese and Syrian refugee women to prepare food together in large quantities. A small stipend helps the women support their families, and IOCC delivers hundreds of hot meals weekly to families in need.

Education:

Before civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, nearly every child was enrolled in primary school. By 2013, about 1.8 million Syrian children were out of school. One in four schools have been damaged, destroyed or occupied as shelter by families who lost their homes. IOCC has been in Syria working to preserve education for children—providing school uniforms and rehabilitating damaged schools. School kits packed with notebooks, pencils and other supplies have also been distributed to more than 40,000 Syrian children.

The influx of Syrian refugee children into Lebanon has severely strained the country's ability to educate so many new students in its existing schools. IOCC is rehabilitating 110 public schools in disrepair to improve the learning environment for the local children and their Syrian classmates. Plumbing, electrical systems and playgrounds are being upgraded to meet safety standards, while classrooms are getting new paint, windows and doors. IOCC is also providing tuition support for Assyrian refugee children driven from their homes in a raid of minority Christian villages in northern Syria.

In Uganda AIDS pandemic compounded by two decades of civil war and economic upheaval have left an entire generation of children orphaned and uneducated. IOCC, with support from St. Nektarios Education Fund, built three new schools to give Uganda's youth better access to an education — gaining the knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges.

In the USA children living in poverty seldom have the benefit of books to read at home so they're behind many of their classmates. Most never catch up. IOCC has provided more than 900,000 new elementary and secondary textbooks

worth \$40 million to after school, tutoring and Head Start programs. The books have been given to children in underserved areas of more than 20 states.

Emergency response:

More than 10.2 million people in southern and eastern regions of Ethiopia are currently in need of emergency food assistance due to drought. IOCC is providing water, sanitation and hygiene resources as well as feed for livestock, a primary source of income and food for many rural families and subsistence farmers.

Even as families across Greece face unemployment and an uncertain future as incomes, pensions, social, and health benefits have been slashed, they have received nearly 1 million migrants and refugees to their shores. IOCC has responded to the needs of the migrants by providing hot meals, water, hygiene kits, dignity kits for women and by repairing reception centers to provide access to clean bathrooms and showers.

More than 7.6 million people have been displaced from their homes in Syria — many families have had to move more than once. IOCC has provided emergency relief to more than 2.7 million people inside Syria with food parcels, infant care kits, clothing, mattresses, blankets and bedding.

Emotional and Spiritual Care - Frontliners:

Each Frontliner is a professional trained to care for others: some are priests or chaplains, counselors, social workers, or therapists; others are medical professionals, EMTs, or emergency response managers. As a group, Frontliners are well equipped to support both people facing trauma and the first responders and emergency workers serving them. In addition to their professional education, all Frontliners receive specific training with IOCC in disaster chaplaincy and response.

While they focus on emotional and spiritual care, Frontliners may also support IOCC's emergency action teams responding immediately after a disaster, or later during long-term recovery efforts.

Health:

IOCC has literally been saving lives in Greece. The country's failing economy and government cutbacks have driven the public healthcare system to the brink of collapse. The most basic yet essential supplies are severely lacking – surgical gloves, syringes, vials for blood samples, suture needles, etc. More than \$18 million in medical supplies and equipment have been delivered thus far. The supplies have gone to public hospitals in greater Athens, Thessaloniki, central and northern Greece, the Peloponnese, Crete and the Ionian and Aegean islands. Free clinics throughout the country serving thousands of children, families and elderly without an income or access to Greece's national health system have also received supplies.

IOCC has been working in Ethiopia since 2003 in close cooperation with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Ethiopians have benefited from groundbreaking community health programs that combat HIV/AIDS, help treat and prevent podoconiosis (podo) and give mobility and hope to the disabled. Podo is a form of elephantiasis (leg swelling) triggered by an abnormal reaction to irritant mineral particles found in volcanic soils. People who live and work barefoot in silica-rich soils are at high risk. In Ethiopia, 3 million people suffer from podo and another 38 million are at risk. People afflicted with podo often face social stigma and isolation. And podo victims suffer from swelling to the point that walking and playing becomes too painful. Adults can't work or care for their families. Simple things like washing your feet and wearing shoes can prevent it. IOCC has helped more than 300,000 children and adults who are afflicted with or at risk of podo in Ethiopia with treatment to ease their suffering or prevention through foot hygiene classes and shoe distributions. There are eleven (11) podo clinics in Ethiopia operated by IOCC. Prevention education is taught here so residents know how to properly wash their feet. They also receive soap and a wash basin so they can clean their feet at home. Working with researchers, IOCC is at the forefront of the worldwide effort to prevent and treat people with podo. Malnutrition carries serious consequences for a young child, particularly those under the age of five, including stunted physical growth, vision impairment, delayed brain development and often, death. Thousands of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon face this deadly threat every day. In cooperation with UNICEF, IOCC is working to curb the threat. IOCC is now training public health staff in Lebanon's healthcare centers to carry on this important work in child nutrition. In addition, IOCC awareness campaign has taught more than 13,000 new and expectant mothers about the health benefits of breastfeeding and appropriate infant nutrition.

In Syria, the country's civil war has caused many serious problems, including a critically weakened healthcare system. Displaced Syrians now find it very difficult to afford medical treatment to stay healthy, and in far too many cases, they can't even get treatment needed to survive. Many of the country's pharmaceutical factories have been destroyed. The UN reports estimate two-thirds of the public hospitals have been damaged or destroyed. And more than 15,000 doctors and medical staff have been forced to flee in order to escape the war. That doesn't leave much healthcare for the Syrians who need it. Women and their newborn children are especially at risk because child deliveries frequently occur in unsafe conditions (poor sanitation as well dangers from the raging war). IOCC is able to help meet the medical needs of families with:

- Medical supplies to hospitals in Hama, Hasakeh, Aleppo, Damascus, Dara'a, Lattakia, Swaida and Tartous.
- The costs of minor surgical procedures and related medicines covered for patients when possible.

- Family hygiene kits distributions to help overcome crowded conditions and lack of water which have led to a sharp rise in scabies (contagious skin disease marked by itching and small raised red spots, caused by the itch mite) and waterborne intestinal infections.
- Trauma counseling to help adults and children deal with the stress and trauma of war. Adults attend workshops on stress management and building self-esteem. For children, art and music therapy help them express feelings and quiet the nightmares.

Water and Sanitation:

IOCC is making an impact in Cameroon, Syria, and many other areas around the world in desperate need of conditions that meet the most basic living standards. The clean water we all need to survive — to drink, to bathe, to grow food without risking disease — is an essential human necessity. Here's what IOCC is accomplishing:

- Installing new wells and rebuilding damaged water and sewer lines
- Building and repairing safe and sanitary school bathrooms
- Implementing lifesaving water purification systems
- Teaching the right way to wash hands after using the bathroom and before eating and preparing food
- Training the people who benefit from installed wells, water and sewer lines and rainwater harvesting systems to keep those systems functioning and do minor repairs with existing or donated tools.

St. Vladimir has been participating in IOCC programs by collecting money for Soupier Bowl Sunday, the event that helps to feed the hungry, making Great Lent collection, and IOCC Sunday collection. We sent \$717 to IOCC in 2020. By making 30 school kits, we helped children to go to school in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for what we received a thank you letter.