



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

NEWS&NEEDS

SPRING 2016



WFP/Melisse Awoker

ETHIOPIA DROUGHT THREATENS SURVIVAL OF 10 MILLION PEOPLE

Ethiopia is in the grip of the worst drought in 30 years. More than 10 million people face severe hunger and loss of livestock across the dry and barren plains of western Ethiopia. Lule, a mother of ten children, lost 25 of her cattle because of the drought, and struggles to save her remaining two. Tilahun, a 53-year-old cow herder and father of nine children, is at risk of losing his two newborn calves. The cows in his small herd have stopped giving milk due to lack of water and grazing grasses.

IOCC, an ACT Alliance member, is providing much needed water and feed for livestock, the only source of income for many rural families in the drought-stricken country. Working with church partner, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter Church Aid Commission, IOCC has installed five large capacity water tanks in the country's hard hit Amhara region and is trucking in water to keep storage tanks filled.

The arrival of water is desperately needed to spare the small herd of cattle owned by Shiferaw, 75. "I don't remember this kind of drought in my living memory," he recalled. The poor harvest of teff, a nutritious staple grain in the Ethiopian diet, has also severely cut Shiferaw's income and a valuable source of food for his wife and three children. The lack of rain for two straight growing seasons in regions which normally feed 80 percent of the country has caused widespread crop failure and the death of over 400,000 livestock.

Inside News & Needs

Giving Families in Bosnia	
Tools for a Better Future	pg. 2
From The Executive Director ..	pg. 2
Emergency Medical Aid Fills Critical	
Gap in Care for Syrians	pg. 3
New Jobs Boost Incomes	
and Hope in Gaza	pg. 3
Spiritual Reflection	pg. 4

FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

Dear IOCC friends,

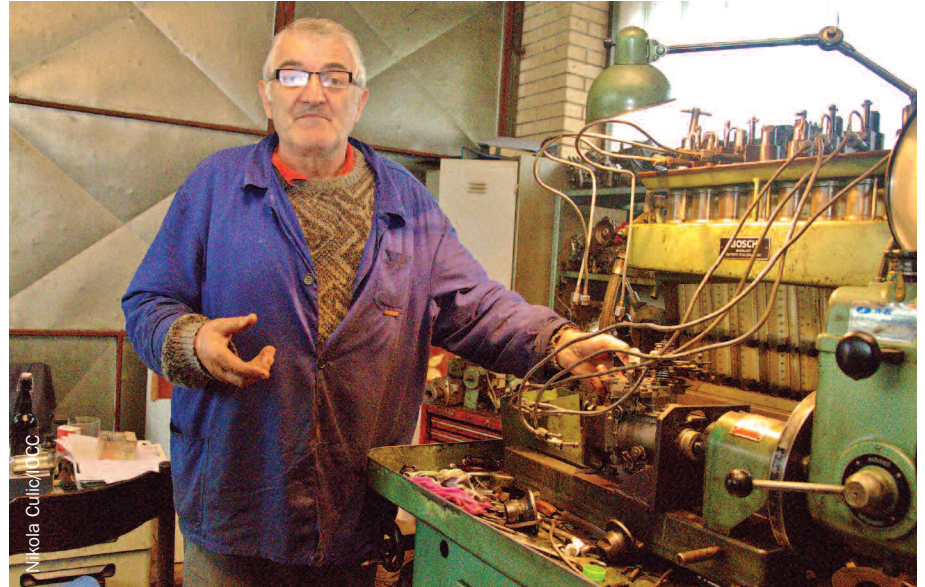
Twenty-three years ago my first assignment at IOCC was delivering humanitarian aid to families in the war-torn regions of the former Yugoslavia. I saw firsthand the devastating impact of war and international sanctions. I saw destruction, death, and despair. I also saw resilience, fortitude, faith and love. I saw people emerge out of darkness with new strength and hope to rebuild their lives. IOCC programs helped them rebuild their homes and provided loans for farm equipment, seedlings, refrigerators, ovens, and other items to jump start their new businesses creating jobs and opportunity in a post-war economy.

Over the years my work at IOCC has taken me to many places in response to war and natural disasters, like the devastating drought in Ethiopia that threatens the lives of 10 million people. The refugee and migrant crises in Europe and the Middle East are challenging us every day. Gaza's families face poverty, rising unemployment and a daily struggle to secure the most basic life necessities. In war-torn Syria, thousands of sick and injured people suffer without the treatment and lifesaving medicine they need because of a healthcare system in near ruin.

Amidst all this darkness, your love is casting a light of hope back into the lives of our brothers and sisters in need. With your support, IOCC is providing critical assistance, medical care, water, and income-earning opportunities for families in Syria, Ethiopia, the Balkans and the Holy Land. Thank you for shining your light of compassion on those in need.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

GIVING FAMILIES IN BOSNIA
TOOLS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

It's been 20 years since the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, but the memories are still fresh for Mile, 63. He and his family fled from their home in Croatia to Bosnia in 1995 when their village came under attack. He lost everything except his skills as a machinist. He took work wherever he could find it, but the pay barely kept the displaced family fed and sheltered. Relying on his skills and a determination to provide for his wife and two sons, Mile turned to IOCC's microcredit program for help. He used the small loan to buy an old auto repair garage and converted it into a machine shop. Over the years, the thriving business has provided Mile with an income and the means to build a two-bedroom family home next to the shop.

Since 2002, IOCC has helped nurture the entrepreneurial spirit of more than 5,500 enterprising people like Mile with small loans averaging \$1,700 to help them start and grow their businesses. Their success – creating 2,022 jobs that support more than 35,000 people – has helped lift many families out of poverty in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. The sustainability of IOCC's microcredit program continues to offer new opportunities to entrepreneurs wishing to build businesses in agriculture, services, trade and small-scale production.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian relief 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.



Published four times a year by IOCC, News & Needs is edited by Mark Hodde and Rada Tierney.



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IOCC is a member of

actalliance

EMERGENCY MEDICAL AID FILLS CRITICAL GAP IN CARE FOR SYRIANS



DERD/IOCC

Plans for a peaceful retirement were shattered for Mohammad, 65, on the day his neighborhood in Homs, Syria, came under attack, killing his wife and severely injuring him. Mohammad was rushed to a local public hospital where an overworked healthcare staff closed his wounds, but missed a piece of shrapnel embedded in his face. The widower's health worsened, but he couldn't afford surgery to remove the shrapnel. "It was getting more and more painful each day," he recalled. "It affected my face muscles badly and eventually prevented me from opening my mouth."

Less than half of Syria's hospitals are still functioning due to the fierce, five-year conflict. IOCC is working with the Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (DERD), the humanitarian arm of

the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, to address the critical need for medical assistance in Syria. Lifesaving and disability-preventing surgeries are being provided for thousands of Syrian war victims like Mohammad, and Ali, 11, who required emergency surgery to remove shrapnel embedded in his skull from an explosion near his home in Homs. IOCC is also providing medical support for the care of expectant mothers, medicine for the treatment of cancer and chronic illnesses, as well as equipping local hospitals with specialized medical equipment needed to carry out lifesaving treatments.

NEW JOBS BOOST INCOMES AND HOPE IN GAZA

Growing up in the Gaza Strip, Sami, 24, was fueled by a dream to ease the suffering of others. He pursued that dream by graduating from nursing school with honors. Harsh reality quickly followed as he failed to find a nursing job and a way to support his wife and two young daughters. Nine years of living under a strict blockade has crippled Gaza's economy. The lack of jobs has created widespread poverty and overwhelmed community service agencies. More than 80 percent of Gazans rely on assistance to survive.

IOCC is working to reduce unemployment by creating short-term job opportunities for Gaza's educated workforce. The program pairs 210 university graduates with jobs at 30 organizations that serve the education, health, agricultural, and community rehabilitation needs of Gaza's people. Sami now works as a nurse at community health center treating children with malnutrition and teaching parents about good nutrition. The job gives Sami the opportunity he has hoped for since his own childhood. "Having a job that matches my field of study and generates an income to support my family while I serve the community is a great feeling."



IOCC

THE RESURRECTION

In the image of the crucified Christ who “takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), the Church also receives the tragic and sinful experiences and failures of man, for it is the Body of the Crucified Lord. In order to save the world, the Church must pass through the reality of death. As St. Paul says, death takes place within us (the Apostles), so that life can begin inside you (i.e., the Corinthians and members of the Church) (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6-12). This is what the real saints do. Without this identification with the tragic destiny of the world, there is no salvation of the world.

The great truth that modern ignominious treatments of death ignore is that fear of death is conquered by taking upon oneself the death of others, so that they might live. To live truly means to die and then live. Fearless with regard to death are those who die daily by sacrificing for others. If the spiritual fathers do not die, everlasting life cannot be born in their beloved ones (for example, spiritual children). The Lord said, “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).

It is out of the Eucharistic perspective that St. John the Theologian proclaims: “He who does not love abides in death” (1 John 3:14). Sanctity cannot exist outside of the “other” because the other serves as the “terminal” or “reference” of holiness. This ontology of love leading to communion justifies the centrality of the Resurrection in the economy of salvation.



Icon courtesy of St. Isaac of Syria Skete – Skete.com

Bishop Maxim

*Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America
Diocese of Western America*

Volunteer for an IOCC Orthodox Action Team

Join the over 700 volunteers who have already helped rebuild homes and lives across the US.

Sign up to participate on an IOCC Orthodox Action Team. Become God's hands in service to your fellow man.

iocc.org/actionteam



PARTNERS IN COMPASSION

As little as 33¢ a day
can make a difference!

Join IOCC's Partners in Compassion monthly giving program and help ensure that we respond quickly and effectively to people in need.

iocc.org/monthly