

# Emergency Preparedness and Response

While IOCC's work has spanned operations in more than 60 countries and myriad program areas, its work today is focused on five core competencies: emergency preparedness and response, WASH, sustainable livelihoods, food security and agriculture, and health. IOCC continues to serve communities where we work in other program areas, as needs and local priorities indicate, but our core work and depth of expertise and experience reside in these five key sectors. IOCC works with and through local partners, including the local Orthodox Church's development agency and other local NGOs. Capacity building for these partners is an integral part of IOCC projects. IOCC helps local communities address the needs they prioritize for themselves and aims to leave behind local structures better able to manage the developmental challenges communities face.

## Ukraine Response

With its history of working in Eastern Europe since the 1990s, strong partner relations across the region (particularly within the network of the Orthodox Church), and a portfolio of humanitarian response in Romania, Ukraine, and the western Balkans, IOCC was uniquely positioned to respond to the Ukraine conflict when it began in 2022. IOCC's key priorities are (1) humanitarian support for people in Ukraine, including emergency supplies and shelter, (2) assistance for refugees in neighboring countries and for the families and institutions hosting them, and (3) providing psychosocial and protection services, especially for women and children. Regional response now covers Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine itself.

Initial programs met immediate needs and have shifted as circumstances changed over time.

Activities include rehabilitation of shelter facilities and hundreds of houses and apartments in Ukraine; distributions of food, water, medicine, household appliances, and essential supplies; and training for clergy and social workers in self-care and counseling in crisis situations and the prevention of human trafficking.

In Romania, IOCC has also provided grocery vouchers for refugees and host families, transport for refugees from the border to safe accommodation, and transport for refugees staying with host families to essential shopping and services. In Poland, IOCC established 26 online learning rooms in accommodation centers so school-age students could continue their education remotely. In addition, IOCC has assisted Ukrainian refugees through its ongoing programs in Georgia and Greece.



## COVID-19 Response



During the COVID-19 pandemic, all IOCC projects were evaluated for COVID-19 risk factors, and appropriate modifications made. Baltimore HQ shifted to run largely remotely, and each country program adjusted work routines for staff to both comply with local COVID-19 protocols and ensure safety.

Where possible, direct response components were added to existing projects, and IOCC opened new projects focused exclusively on pandemic response. These included awareness-raising projects among



In **Georgia**, IOCC has worked to raise awareness among essential workers and faith leaders of various religions in throughout the country about prevention measures to combat the disease's spread. Working with local health authorities and funded by the World Health Organization (WHO), the project has provided training to 85 long-haul truck drivers, 30 farmers' market workers, 40 staff members at a Church-run nursing home, and 80 taxi drivers. By May 2022, IOCC had trained almost 700 faith leaders and over 100 ethnic minority community group leaders on COVID-19 risks and prevention. Participants learned about COVID-19 mitigation, the benefits of vaccination, and ways to address common questions and concerns in their communities. IOCC also provided personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning and disinfecting supplies to the trainees, and produced and distributed COVID-19 prevention and awareness flyers to all project sites.

vulnerable populations with whom IOCC worked; providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to staff, partners, and community members; and serving as an information resource for those seeking additional information, testing, or treatment.

In **Ethiopia**, IOCC procured and distributed PPE and hygiene materials and supplies to partner staff and community members, and provided COVID-19 prevention messaging approved by the World Health Organization and government of Ethiopia. More than 1,200 community members benefitted in the Baso Degago district, plus several thousand in the Were Babo District of the Amhara region.



In **Uganda**, IOCC responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in 17 districts, including Kampala, through its partnership with the Uganda Orthodox Medical Bureau, to conduct awareness building and information campaigns; to procure and distribute PPE, disinfectant, and other hygiene materials, including to health facilities; and to provide training for frontline health personnel. In all 65 parishes of the Uganda Orthodox Church, IOCC funding supported the procurement and distribution of PPE and hygiene supplies to establish compliance with Government of Uganda protocols, allowing for the reopening of houses of worship. Both projects also carried out mass dissemination of WHO- and Government of Uganda approved COVID-19 health messaging. Approximately 70,000 women, men, and children benefitted from the two projects.

## Ethiopia



In response to the humanitarian crisis in Tigray, IOCC has received UNOCHA funding for an emergency nutrition project in the Northern Afar region, beginning in January 2023. IOCC is screening for and treating moderate to severe acute malnutrition, conducting community outreach to conflict-affected communities, and promoting effective infant and young child feeding practices in emergencies (IYCF-E). The project applies Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) and IYCF-E approaches to reduce morbidity and mortality caused by malnutrition among children under 5 years of age, pregnant and lactating women, and vulnerable populations, including chronically ill individuals and persons with disabilities. IOCC has implemented similar activities serving thousands of children and pregnant and lactating women in the Amhara region, including treating malnutrition and delivering high-value supplementary food rations.

Beginning in 2020, IOCC worked with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to support families and communities across northern Ethiopia affected by the Tigray conflict, providing food assistance, hygiene items, blankets, and other nonfood household items to help families rebuild assets lost during displacement and fighting.

To combat the effects of ongoing drought, in 2021 and 2022 IOCC supplied emergency nutritional support via three-month rations of high-nutritional-value food to more than 1,600 people, including children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women. In 2022, the rehabilitation of two boreholes in Amhara

provided access to potable water for 25,000 people. In 2019, IOCC capped natural springs and built distribution points and cattle troughs—improving access to safe, sustainable water and reducing the risk of both water-borne diseases and COVID-19 as the pandemic took hold. More than 4,000 individuals benefitted from this.

Between 2011 and 2015, IOCC implemented numerous emergency WASH-related projects, including assistance for drought-affected communities, internally displaced people, and refugees in Ethiopia. Drought response in 2015 included improving access to water for over 20,000 people through the construction of reservoirs, rainwater-harvesting structures, and water distribution points. In 2015, IOCC delivered 2 million liters of water via truck for livestock consumption and installed 5 five-thousand-liter water-storage tanks in Amhara.

In 2011–2015, IOCC provided emergency services for Somali and South Sudanese refugees hosted in Ethiopia’s southern and western camps. Through this programming, 26,000 Somali refugees gained access to potable water, hygiene kits, and improved latrines; more than 4,000 South Sudanese refugee households received nonfood items and improved latrines, and over 1,000 unaccompanied children, youth, pregnant women, and elderly persons received psychosocial support. Some 41,000 refugees and members of host communities gained access to potable water, and IOCC built and equipped a school for 500 Somali teens.

## Syria



In Syria as elsewhere, IOCC works with partners, including the local Orthodox Church's development agency (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Department of Development and Ecumenical Relations) and other area NGOs. IOCC has trained more than 4,300 volunteers to provide rapid emergency response to vulnerable communities, including training in risk-management and disaster preparedness, mitigation, and management.

Since 2012, IOCC's emergency response program has reached over 4,400,000 vulnerable people, including internally displaced persons (IDPs). Activities have included services for maternal and children's health, childhood nutrition, protection services, and psychosocial support. IOCC has provided food, nonfood emergency items, and shelter assistance in the form of rent support to over 1.1 million of the most vulnerable Syrians and Iraqi refugees in Damascus, Rural

Damascus, Aleppo, Daraa, Homs, Lattakia, Tartous, Swaida, and Al-Hasakeh governorates. IOCC also provides psychosocial support to Syrians in need and Iraqi refugees in these communities through counseling sessions, awareness building sessions, and referrals. Additionally, protection services, counseling, case management, and referrals are provided for vulnerable community members in target communities, including women and children.

Cases are referred for medical, legal, and psychosocial support at nearby service providers whom IOCC has identified and which have agreed to receive cases from IOCC's client base.

IOCC has conducted psychosocial support, child protection and GBV awareness programs, and has provided protection services, including counseling, case management, and referrals to service providers. IOCC has also provided awareness sessions for parents and caregivers on supporting children affected by trauma and where to receive specialized support. Services are provided at centers called family safe spaces, as well as by a mobile team based in each center that supports surrounding communities.

Emergency education support has been provided to over 31,500 children, as well as remedial classes for children whose educational progress has been impacted by the conflict.

## Jordan

IOCC works to assist Jordanians and refugees of any nationality through innovative cash programming in Jordan. Since 2015, IOCC has provided cash assistance to nearly 23,000 refugees and vulnerable Jordanians. Whether distributing prepaid cards to help cover seasonal winter expenses, providing funds to meet urgent needs in the midst of a global pandemic, or covering rent so families can stay in their homes and focus on other pressing needs, IOCC's cash assistance programming ensures that families' basic needs are met. In response to displacement, IOCC has also rehabilitated rented homes, ensuring that refugees and vulnerable host community members have safe, weather-resistant housing in exchange for reduced rent and secure tenancy. Since 2015, IOCC has rehabilitated shelters for more than 1,600 people.



## Bosnia and Herzegovina

Working with the Orthodox Church, the local Red Cross, and others, IOCC has provided emergency relief, including household appliances, hygiene kits, school kits, shoes, and bedding to internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants from the Middle East, and local residents in need. After historic flooding in 2014, IOCC helped the affected population recover by providing household appliances, as well as by repairing classrooms at two schools.

As many displaced families returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1998 on, IOCC helped foster economic development. IOCC rebuilt hundreds of homes, repaired nearly 100 miles of high- and low-voltage electricity supply lines for 1,500 households, repaired two water-supply systems for 500 households, and repaired schools. In addition, IOCC assisted returnee families with transportation of their belongings and by providing them with 650 pieces of new agricultural equipment, 350 plastic greenhouses,



and 300 head of livestock. In order to revive and strengthen civil society in the country, IOCC established NGO resource centers and organized national and regional NGO fairs, community action teams, youth community action teams, and 110 high-school student councils throughout the country.

## Georgia



In June 2015, flooding caused significant destruction in the city of Tbilisi, badly damaging houses and causing at least 20 deaths. IOCC was one of the first organizations to respond, assisting affected families sheltering in col-

lective centers through cash distributions. In cooperation with the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate and the Tbilisi mayor's office, IOCC reached more than 50 flood-affected families with cash assistance.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, IOCC and its local partners provided food and emergency relief supplies across the country. IOCC also supported the agricultural sector to assist farmers affected by the conflict and economic turmoil that ensued. Following the crisis, IOCC's intervention grew to include microcredit loans and a school feeding program.

IOCC disbursed over \$3.5 million worth of credit in the Guria, Samegrelo, and Samtskhe Javakheti regions to almost 2,000 borrowers. Loans ranged from \$500 to over \$5,000 for both small businesses and farmers. The school feeding program in the early 2000s reached 28,000 students with food and messaging on nutrition and hygiene.

**THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**, IOCC continued its projects around the world while taking steps to protect staff, partners, and beneficiaries. All projects are continuously evaluated for multiple risk factors, and appropriate modifications made. IOCC ensures that all staff and beneficiaries receive information about COVID-19, including testing locations, and integrates this information into ongoing projects, as indicated by local health authorities.

## Greece



In 2021, devastating fires on Evia burned 133,000 acres, about one-third of the island. IOCC directly implemented an extensive fire relief program designed for damaged houses, fire-affected small businesses, resin collectors, and livestock farmers, as well as health centers in the fire-affected municipalities of Limni-Mantoudi-Agia Anna and Istiaia-Aidipsos.

Overall, IOCC directly assisted about 600 families with home-equipment vouchers, monthly supermarket vouchers, animal feed, technical equipment for businesses, and one ambulance each for the Mantoudi

health center and the Istiaia health center. IOCC supplied home-equipment vouchers so homeowners could repair and refurbish fire-damaged houses and provided technical equipment to ruined businesses so they could resume production. Livestock farmers in fire-affected villages received approximately 1,000 tons of animal feed. In Attica, which was affected by fires around the same time, IOCC provided home equipment vouchers to more than 50 fire-affected households.

In 2018, IOCC offered emergency assistance and provisions, including cash vouchers to families who had lost their homes and livelihoods in East Attica due to destructive fast-moving fires. The aid allowed families to restock basic home items (furniture, kitchenware) and ensured that their children had the supplies they needed for school.

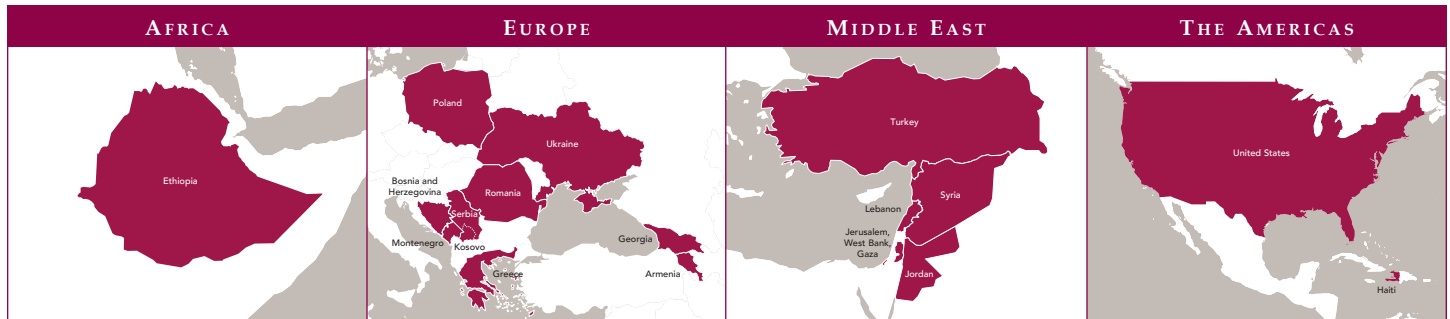
Between 2015 and 2017, IOCC helped more than 250,000 refugees in Greece with over \$3 million in aid, including emergency food supplies, winterization materials, water and sanitation infrastructure in camps, education, and psychosocial services. IOCC provided support on several islands and the mainland to refugees in camps and community settings. Education services included both formal support, such as tutoring in math and life-skills, and helping youth adjust to their new setting through Greek language and culture lessons. IOCC provided winter clothing to refugees and ensured shelters on Greek islands were appropriately winterized.

## Lebanon

IOCC responded immediately after the Beirut port explosion of 2020, deploying nurses and psychosocial support officers to affected areas. In the following days, teams went door-to-door in heavily damaged neighborhoods, conducting needs assessments and distributing emergency hygiene supplies. In addition to providing hot meals to nearly 6,000 people for 3–6 months and hygiene and dignity kits to almost 30,000 people, IOCC completed extensive repairs to buildings: over 545 homes, more than 125 small businesses, 5 schools, 2 Sunday schools, and 7 primary health centers. IOCC also rehabilitated Rosaire Hospital and supported procurement of medical equipment for St. George Hospital to resume operations.



# Active Worldwide Programs



- Ethiopia
- Armenia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Georgia
- Greece
- Montenegro
- Poland
- Romania
- Serbia including Kosovo
- Ukraine
- Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Turkey
- Haiti
- United States



● Emergency Preparedness & Response .....	150,044
● Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene (WASH).....	40,362
● Sustainable Livelihoods.....	2,869
● Food Security & Agriculture.....	129,203
● Health .....	607,594
● Other (Education, Nonfood Items, Shelter, Protection) .....	2,917

## IN 2023, IOCC SERVED 932,989 PEOPLE WORLDWIDE

*IOCC was established in 1992 and is the official humanitarian organization of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. IOCC provides emergency relief and development assistance to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church and local NGO and community partners. Its global operations are managed from its headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland, in the United States, with field offices in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, East Africa, and the US. Since its founding, IOCC has distributed more than \$800 million worth of aid in over 60 countries around the world, and has extensive experience implementing programs in partnership with United States government agencies (USAID, BHA, PRM) and the United Nations (UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, OCHA), as well as with European and international donors.*



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