



*Senayt used funds received through an IOCC program to open a coffee shop to support her family.*



## Achieving Self-Sufficiency in Ethiopia

### A DISPLACED MOTHER AND HER CHILDREN FIND STABILITY

Senayt, a 27-year-old mother of two, lives in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. Her struggle began in 2021, when her husband was called back into the military. Since then, she has lost all contact with him—and isn't sure if he's even alive.

Senayt relocated to a new city in order to live with her aunt and receive what little support her family could offer. "As a displaced person, I couldn't find anything to feed my kids at home and was in a very difficult situation. Life was terrible to my family," she said.

All that changed, however, when Senayt discovered she was eligible for aid through an IOCC program. She was skeptical at first because she'd heard that some organizations promised

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From the  
**EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR**



*Dear friend,*

During Great Lent, the pillars of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving bring us closer to God and help us on our spiritual journey. We are incredibly grateful that you have chosen to give alms—in many forms—to IOCC.

It is your financial generosity, prayers and faith, and your time volunteering at local parishes and on the ground after emergencies that are truly the backbone of IOCC. In this issue, I am glad to share with you the stories of Senayt in Ethiopia, Father Penes in Romania, and May in Lebanon. These are just three of the people whose lives have been touched when you chose to put your faith in action through IOCC.

In Matthew 25:40, Christ says, “*Most certainly I tell you, because you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.*” We will not forget our brothers and sisters in their time of need. With your help, we will continue to serve families and communities here in the US and around the world.

As we continue our journey through Great Lent, we are pleased to offer you resources that will make your pilgrimage more meaningful. You’ll find them at [iocc.org/lent25](http://iocc.org/lent25).

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director & CEO

*cover story continued*

help, but didn’t deliver. IOCC, however, was able to offer her cash support through a health and livelihood program offered in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

Senayt used the money to start her own coffee shop, one that celebrates Ethiopian culture. Not only can she support her family, but the shop is so successful that she says, “I’m also thinking about expanding my business to include food... I’m thankful for the support from IOCC.” So far, the program has provided more than 1,290 households with cash support, trained 58 health professionals in cholera management, and helped more than 14,000 people receive access to primary healthcare.

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## Finding Community in the Kitchen

### NOURISHING BODY AND SPIRIT IN LEBANON

May, age 54, has faced the challenges of poverty throughout her life. She lives in the Tripoli region of northern Lebanon.

With little money or education, May often had to rely on external assistance for financial support. She not only needed to buy her own medicine, but she was also supporting her sister, who has diabetes.

Then one day, May found work in a community kitchen through IOCC that provides food assistance, mental health services, and opportunities to earn income.

The hours are long. The job can be strenuous. But it has given May a sense of dignity and purpose. It has helped her build a network of friends from a variety of backgrounds. And her \$200 monthly income enables her to buy medicine for herself and her sister.

“As soon as I get paid,” May said, “I buy the medications. I was unemployed for years, so now I am grateful for this opportunity which is helping me earn money and be part of such a kind group of ladies.”

The community kitchen where May works provides hot nutritious meals to 600 refugees and Lebanese individuals (120 families) in the area. This project is part of IOCC’s broader humanitarian effort to continue helping Lebanese families struggling amid a deepening socioeconomic crisis, and to assist refugees from Syria and neighboring countries.



*May helps provide meals to 120 families while earning income that allows her to afford important medications.*

## HOW WOULD IT FEEL TO CHANGE A LIFE EVERY MONTH?

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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.

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# Fighting Human Trafficking in Romania

## PROVIDING VITAL EDUCATION TO STUDENTS

When Father Penes, along with other local priests, attended one of IOCC’s anti-trafficking workshops, he grew increasingly concerned about children from his rural village in Romania. He knew many of them could be easy prey for human traffickers, especially when they headed off to high school in a neighboring large city.

So, Father Penes began organizing small educational meetings in his church, alerting young people to the signs of human trafficking and showing them how to stay safe. Encouraged by the response, he applied for a grant from IOCC to start a larger anti-trafficking education program in the Prahova region. It was a natural extension of IOCC’s anti-trafficking effort, in partnership with Federation Filantropia and Romania’s National Agency Against Human Traffic, which began

in 2022, shortly after Ukrainian refugees began flooding into Romania.

With IOCC’s support, Father Penes was able to organize more sessions at local elementary and middle schools, along with his parish, reaching more than 300 young people. The students listened and took the information to heart, knowing they would soon leave their village to attend high school. After one of Father Penes’ sessions, one girl admitted, “I didn’t know how dangerous it could be.”

And today, even though he is keenly aware of the dangers facing young people, Father Penes is confident these information sessions are making a difference and helping them to make safe, smart decisions.