

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF FIRST STEP 1998 – 2008



The First Step (TFS) was founded in 1998 in response to the horrendous living conditions of disabled orphans living in the state-run Kaspi Institution in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia. Ten years later, we are proud to have grown and accomplished so much to help these children lead meaningful lives through better living conditions and proper care. Their lives are enriched thanks to our charitable work and the selfless donations of our worldwide donors. Today, these children's eyes are filled with hope instead of despair as they reach for their personal potential as constructive members of society.

MUCH TO BE PROUD OF... AND STILL MUCH TO DO

The staff and Trustees of First Step and Next Step, its Irish sister organisation felt there was much to be happy about because many great things have been achieved for children and young adults with intellectual disability.



*Nino Zhvania - TFS co-founder;
Ketik Melikadze - TFS Director*

of our donors from around the world, everyone involved with TFS are enormously grateful to each and every supporter.

As we celebrate our 10th Anniversary, there are three groups to whom we are particularly grateful.

On 10 February the co-founder of TFS Nino Kadagidze Zhvania and Des MacMahon, Chairman of Next Step Trustees welcomed the charity's many supporters to a celebration at the National Museum of Georgia. Among the distinguished guests attending this event were the First Lady, Sandra Elisabeth Roelofs, Vice Speaker of the Parliament, Gigi Tsereteli and Deputy Minister of Health Nikoloz Pruidze.

A film was shown outlining the work of the organisation over the past ten years. None of what was achieved would have been possible without the steadfast and consistent support of the Government of Georgia, individuals and businesses in Georgia.

There is no doubt that none of this would have happened without the unwavering help



*Des MacMahon - Chair TNS Trustees;
Sandra Elisabeth Roelofs - First Lady*

St Michael's House, Ireland's leading service provider for children and adults with disability has been our guiding light. At all times they have been there to advise, to provide training and they have never said "No" when asked for help.

The ladies who run the charity's Christmas lunch in Dublin, since 2000 they have raised more than half a million Euro which has made many of our programmes possible.

*Maggie Zhiznevskaya - Orakim invest;
Erez Raz - Orakim invest;
Esber Emborg - Honorary Consul of Kingdom of Denmark;
Gigi Tsereteli - Deputy Chairman of Parliament;
Devi Ovashvili - Ska Capital Partner*

Irish Aid has been our partner since 2005 and their support has allowed us to pioneer many vital new programmes.

TFS co-founder awarded Philanthropist of the Year

In December 2008, the charity's co-founder Jane Corboy was awarded International Philanthropist of the year by The Community Foundation for Ireland in recognition of the achievements of First Step during the last 10 years. Jane said "that she accepted this award on behalf of all the wonderful people, who have worked for children and supported the charity over the years, without whose help we would not be where we are today".

*Tina Roche - Chief Executive,
The Community Foundation for Ireland;
Jane Corboy - co-founder of First Step*



Milestones achieved 1998-2008

1998

The First Step Foundation founded to create pilot services for children and young adults with intellectual and physical disability.

Government of Georgia assigned two hectares of land in the suburbs of Tbilisi for a rehabilitation centre for children with intellectual and physical disability.

1999

The 30 sickest children were removed from Kaspi Orphanage to a Paediatric Hospital in Tbilisi. Many of them could not walk, many were near to death.



Nika on floor eating at Kaspi Institution in 1997



TFS Village

2000

With loving care these 30 children made a miraculous recovery and in September of that year six children started attending School.

Construction started on the first residential cottage in the First Step Village.

2002

First cottage in the TFS village is completed and 12 children move to their new home.

2003

Integrated Education is started in School no 10 in Tbilisi. This was a first for Georgia.

In Zugdidi, the St Lazarus Day Care Centre was opened serving 20 children and their families.

TFS Social work services become involved in the State Deinstitutionalisation programme. 15 children who lived in Kaspi for five years or more are returned to their families.



Integrated class in Tbilisi



Day Care Center's children at playground

2004

Second residential cottage in the TFS village is completed for a further 12 children from Kaspi.

2005

Due to the work and commitment of the TFS Social work Team, 5 children with disability were not abandoned by their families.

Day Care Centre is opened in the TFS Village for 30 children with medium to profound disability. Prior to the opening of this centre, there were no educational possibilities available for children with this level of disability.

St Michael's House in Dublin hosts five day Study visit to their services for leading Georgian policy makers. This visit leads to significant new initiatives by the Georgian Government subsequently.



Children at Kaspi Institution



TFS trainers in Dublin

Remaining children and young adults are provided with food and heating during the cold Georgian winter.

2 psychologists, a social worker and a special teacher take Part in an eight week Trainers of Trainers programme with St Michael's House in Dublin.

TFS Patron and former President of Ireland Mary Robinson visited TFS village in October 2006

Jane Corboy - TFS co-founder;
Donal O'connell - Irish Aid;
Nino Zhvania - TFS co-founder;
Mary Robinson - TFS Patron and
Former President of Ireland;
Keti Melikadze - TFS Director



2007

TFS Trainers create training manuals adapted to the Georgian reality and start training seminars for TFS caregivers and special teachers.

The Government of Georgia makes the Kodjori Home available for the re-housing of the remaining children and young adults from Kaspi. Reconstruction work starts in Kodjori and TFS professional Team recruit caregivers and start their training.

TFS occupational therapist Rusiko Lortkipanidze has a two week Training programme with St Michael's House in Dublin.

Home based care programme is started with funding from Irish Aid. This was a pilot project for Georgia whereby a full time care giver is provided for a family with a profoundly disabled child.



Kodjori before renovation and after



Keso and TFS staff member Tamila



Children from Kaspi moved to renovated Kodjori Institution

2008

25 children from Kaspi are moved to their new home at Kodjori

With help from Irish Aid, TFS start their Empowerment of Parents programme. Many parents with a disabled child felt isolated, this programme proved so successful that the parents are now starting their own independent association.

UNICEF request TFS to run training programmes for caregivers in state run institutions. In November, the last remaining 15 young adults leave Kaspi.. This brings an end to the Kaspi era.

2009

4 Young adults who left Kaspi in 1999 and who were the first residents of the TFS village move to a flat in the suburbs of Tbilisi. This new programme entitled Semi Independent living is a first for Georgia and is funded by Irish Aid.



Beka, Giorgi and Giorgi in the flat

CHILDRENS' CELEBRATION

The 10th Anniversary celebration of First Step would not have been complete without a party for our children, their families and the TFS staff. This event was organised at the Marriot Courtyard Hotel on 13th February and we were honoured by presence of the Minister of Health of Georgia, Mr Alexandre Kvitashvili.



Mariam Kovziridze and Niniko Arakeliani



Gigi Tsereteli-Deputy Chairman of Parliament;
Nino Zhvania - TFS co-founder

TFS Children's Event at the
Courtyard Marriott Ballroom

The event included an exhibition of the children's paintings, a wonderful concert was given with some of our children and young adults participating, and actors from the popular TV show Ana - Bana gave a rousing performance which had everyone up dancing. The children loved their McDonalds "Happy Meal" and they were delighted that many of their paintings were sold.



TFS Children's Orchestra at the Courtyard Marriott Ballroom



Aleksander Kvitashvili - Georgian Minister
of Labor, Health and Social Affairs



David Kipiani - HR Manager-Tbilisi Marriott Hotel & Courtyard by Marriott;
Igael Porecki - General Manager-Tbilisi Marriott Hotel & Courtyard by Marriott;
Maia Tsereteli - Courtyard Hotel Manager

THE FIRST STEP 10TH ANNIVERSARY IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY:

Orakim Invest;
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Georgian National Museum;
Georgianevents;
Winery Company "Pheasant's Tears";
TV Programme "Ana-Bana";
Macdonald's

Thank you very much
for your kind support



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Can you help? Help us to give more children a better life.....
We would be most grateful for any assistance you can give towards our work
Don't forget a little money goes a long way in Georgia.
Whatever you can spare, we can use. Do contact us and help a child

The Next Step - Children of the Caucasus
Reg Charity No in Ireland: CHY 13956

5 Clanwilliam Square, Dublin 2, Ireland
Email: des.macmahon@santos.ie
Tel.: (353) 1 6619911
<http://www.nextstepchildren.org>

The Next Step - Children of the Caucasus
Reg Charity in England and Wales: No 1109599

40 Uverdale Road, London SW10 0SR, United Kingdom
Email: janecorboy@tfs.com
Tel.: (44) (0)207 352 7071
<http://www.nextstepchildren.org>

The First Step (TFS) 74a Chavchavadze ave., Room 504, Tbilisi, 0162, Georgia
Tel.: (995 32) 25 25 19; 23 01 40 Fax: (995 32) 25 25 19 Email: tfs@tfs.ge www.nextstepchildren.org