



St Gregory's Foundation

Helping vulnerable children and families in Russia
and Georgia

Winter news 2018



Natasha with her baby Matvei and Nikita (in the middle)

Natasha's story

Natasha is one of the first of the orphanage-leavers who came to Sunflower in 2007. She helped other mothers attend Sunflower classes, for example by helping them wake up on time and not drink alcohol the day before a class. Many of her friends' children grew up in her arms because the parents either had to work or found themselves dependent on alcohol.

Natasha was typical of orphanage graduates from the 1990s and 2000s. These young people kept themselves apart and stayed in their own community. They are kind people; sensitive and sympathetic to others' suffering, but vulnerable and outwardly unattractive, dressed in men's clothes so as to blend in with the crowd and not attract unwanted attention from those around them. They often found themselves in risky situations, which led them to be victims of crime. Natasha herself had

also experienced a lot. She was a seamstress by profession and had always worked at the same place, without any official employment status "because the boss was nice and asked me not to fill in the Government paperwork".

Natasha encountered difficulties with money when she fell ill (without sick pay) or when she used what money she had left to bail out her friends from police custody or to buy her friends' children things like clothes and food. She had somewhere to live: a 14 square..page.2

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Registered charity no. 1002469

Patrons: HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and GB

Natasha's story continued

metre room, but a fellow tenant stopped her from living there, saying she was scared of Natasha because she was from a children's home. Natasha was forced to live with friends. When we managed to get her back into her own accommodation, the other tenant made her life unbearable and she went back to living with friends.

After that, there was a period when Natasha disappeared and broke off contact with Sunflower. At the same time Natasha began to use alcohol. When Sunflower offered support she said that she would sort herself out and did not want them to see her in her current condition. As soon as her condition changed, she got in touch via social media and spoke to the Sunflower team face-to-face. With time she stopped helping her friends so actively. She suffered from her lack of family – “there's no point”. One day she phoned straight from the hospital's maternity ward and said that in a week's time she would come to Sunflower with her son Nikita and her husband Alexei. He also came from among the 'secretive orphans', and as a child had been removed from an alcoholic family. He had become homeless despite having living parents.

It was difficult for both Natasha and Alexei to build a family as neither of them had grown up in a family. Natasha was decidedly optimistic in overcoming her difficulties, regularly attending classes and going to summer camps. She also had the strength to

return to her previous accommodation and live there with her family. However, the conflicts between the other tenant and Alexei became worse.

The police did not respond to their calls and requests for help. At that point, Natasha turned to the services of a local parent-child support centre. The service put her on the housing waiting list, but this required her to divorce her husband and be deemed a lone parent. The arguments were so convincing that Natasha, without consulting her husband, filed for divorce. When he appeared in court he knew nothing. They divorced and Alexei left the family, resenting Natasha. It took her a number of years to rebuild their relationship.

Natasha and her husband have now been living together for two years in a rented room in a hostel. The husband is in work and Nikita attends nursery school. Natasha is looking after her two-month old son Matvei. He was born without all of his fingers on the left hand. During the first trimester, ultrasound scans revealed an underdeveloped foetus and the doctors recommended a termination. Natasha refused. Her decision surprised the other mothers at Sunflower because among the orphanage graduates it was seen as unacceptable behaviour “you don't live with a child like that in the family”. Natasha is attentive and gentle with her baby and Nikita. She says “I'm changing a lot. I'm becoming kinder and more patient”.

Give 60 young orphanage - leavers a Happy New Year!

Together with our partner Sunflower we're helping young people like Natasha and Alexei to overcome paralysing anxiety and distress which might otherwise be self-medicated with alcohol or drugs.

We are giving them the skills and the emotional maturity they need to hold down a job and avoid homelessness.

We're helping them to understand and manage their feelings about their traumatic childhood and develop confidence so they can take a full part in their community. And it turns out, they are capable of remarkable compassion and have a hidden potential to

overcome difficulties. They make us proud. Without your support we would have not been to continue this work.

It costs **£7** to provide a home visit for a young person who is struggling after leaving the orphanage system. **£20** will provide individual counselling and group support for one orphan for a month.

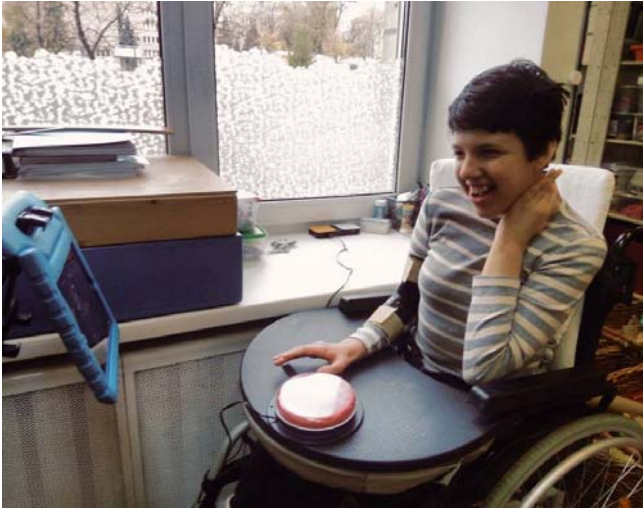
Please support our Christmas Appeal

www.stgregorysfoundation.org.uk/st-gregorys-christmas-appeal-for-orphans/

To donate by post see page 7.

A-tech brings progress for 30 disabled children

We all remember that great feeling when we finally managed to do something we had tried to learn and achieve for a long time. We felt victorious and were keen to do even more. For disabled children and teenagers who benefit from our A-tech project even a little progress they make with the support of our colleagues can be a total game-changer and a turning point towards fulfilment and independence in their lives.



Elya is 19 and above all she enjoys communication, music and reading but her severe communication and developmental disorders make it hard for her to concentrate and take part in various activities. Elya has classic obsessive hand gestures, mainly around her head, face and hair as a result of her condition. Elya moves around in a wheelchair; she underwent spinal surgery several years ago for severe scoliosis and it is difficult for her to change her posture.

Elya joined our group at “Communication Space” in Moscow last September. She is quite developed as an adult and needs to have greater independence to keep interacting with her parents, teachers and peers. The main task for our colleagues was to free Elya’s hands, so they designed and made tailored plastic elbow orthoses for Elya to feel and explore objects, textures and materials. Orthoses also help in the most vital of things – Elya learned to eat on her own, thanks to fixings which help to hold the spoon in her hand.

She can now choose what to listen to and play her favourite songs. Various devices help in a different

way - a large red switch controls programmes on the iPad, a Bluetooth switch connects another button to the iPad via a wireless connection. The plastic elbow orthosis helps Elya to manage with involuntary hand movements on the face, and a laptop stand instead of a table allows her to work more easily.

“Elya is happy! We will definitely build the same ‘structure’ at home” says her mother, Inna. “For many years we had a big problem with leaving the house and traveling - each time with much stress and frustration. Now thanks to her sessions, Elya has learnt to manage and even have fun in the process. After the sessions Elya is still animatedly sharing her overwhelming emotions with us”.



Maxim is nearly 4 years old and he started sessions with the specialists at Dinamika just a month ago. Maxim has cerebral palsy and is unable to sit down unassisted and hardly crawls but he is a smart boy and has huge support from his parents. Their journey to A-tech started 4 years ago as it took a long time for Maxim’s parents to accept his disability. Long tired from many years of various rehabilitation, he changed a lot when he joined our group at A-tech. He is now joining his peers with ease and joy and has begun to eat unassisted which never happened at home. But the main progress Maxim made was learning to sit unassisted just after a few sessions with our specialist at A-tech. “And he also learned to wash and dress himself 70% of the time” says his Mum. “We are happy that we are on the right track!”

One more young lad is saved off the streets

Teenagers living on the streets in Tbilisi are one of the most vulnerable groups in society: They are marginalised, unprotected and deprived of essential things like shelter, food and social security. On the streets they are at risk of exploitation, of health problems and getting in trouble with the police.

There are only a few services in Tbilisi to help them and our partner Mkurnali works hard to particularly target those teenagers who are at risk of imprisonment. Thanks to the legal programme which costs £190 a week and is funded by St Gregory's, Mkurnali helps them avoid homelessness or prison, gives them stability and assists them in finding suitable training and jobs.

Some of Mkurnali's residents, once saved off the streets are now assisting Nino Chubabria, Mkurnali's director, to help reach out to more young lads like themselves. Here is one story Nino told us:

"Luka was about 11-12 years old, a good looking boy in a clean clothes, not really "a child working on the street" type. Jemal spotted him on the streets and it seemed Luka wanted to find work there. It was obvious that the streets are no place for him. Our assistant Jemal has been helping to feed and help teenagers living rough so he is aware of new faces there and asked Luka to tell us what forced him to come out in the streets.

Luka told me that he had 5 siblings, that his father died six months ago. His mother was sick and unable to work, his elder sister and brother were studying hard and they couldn't afford to work, since they had a lot to study. As for him, he was quick at doing his homework and had more free time, so he decided to get a little money on the street and help out his mother.

Other Mkurnali residents were also in the room. One of them, whose name is also Jemal, said: "Luka, look. Streets are bad, not only will you make no money out there, but a lot of bad things happen on the streets. Do you know how many bad people we have seen there?" He then added: "And we've seen beating, fights, humiliation, even imprisonment," – he continued. "We feel sorry that you have had to do this. Do not quit studying, we will help you. If "Mkurnali" does not have the funds, we will save some from our salaries and provide you with products every month. You can't get more than that by yourself". Everyone looked to me for approval.

I got the phone number of Luka's mother and called her. I told her everything and offered her the chance to come with us to buy the products for her family. She happily agreed. We sat in my car and went to the *Carrefour* supermarket where we bought products for 2 weeks and then we drove her home. We

promised to help them for as long as we could. Luka also promised us to study hard and that he would never work on the streets".

We thank all our supporters who made it possible for us and Mkurnali to do this work and help Mkurnali's residents to build a stable adult life.

*There are many more teenagers still living rough who need our help. As little as **£6** will feed a homeless teenager for three days. **£25** will help a teenager get the legal help they need.*

If you would like to contribute, please find more details on page 7.



Nino (to the right) with Luka's family

Treasurer's Report: Eddy Quah

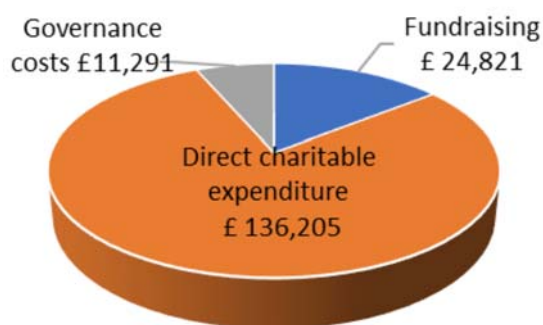


In 2017, St. Gregory's Foundation approved changing the reporting period to end in December instead of January. Despite a shorter period (of 11 months) due to the switchover, total income improved compared to the previous year (Feb'16 - Jan'17). Income from Individual Donors, Trusts, Foundations and Corporates improved by 16%. With a Cash Outflow which increased by a lower rate of 3%; our Net Cash Movement deficit narrowed down to £34k compared to £48k in the previous year.

Donations and Gifts, including collections from fund raising events are integral to the success and financial stability of the charity. Together with that, our Trustees and supporters have also constantly engaged with local communities to raise funds for projects to ensure the charity's success. Both our Fundraising Dinner and Christmas Cards sales were success stories which we hope will be repeated in the next year. Our reserved funds grew by £17k and halved the Net Funds movement deficit to £17,448. To ensure the financial sustainability of the charity, it is important for our Cash Inflow to complement the Cash Outflow, and this is where your generosity and commitment have enabled us to continue to provide help and assistance to our beneficiaries, without dipping too much into our Reserves.

Income and expenditure for 2017		
What we received	Year to 31 st Dec 17, £	Year to 31 st Jan 2017, £
Donations	125,536 (legacy 2,000)	102,947 (legacies 14,361)
Trading income	1,942	1,728
Investment income	10,729	14,709
Total income	138,207	119,384
What we spent	Year to 31 st Dec 17, £	Year to 31 st Jan 2017, £
Fundraising	24,821	12,170
Direct charitable expenditure	136,205	146,755
Governance costs	11,291	8,913
Total spent	172,317	167,838
Gains/(losses) on investment assets	16,662	50,230
Net movement in funds		1,776
Surplus		
Deficit	(17,448)	
Fund balances at		
As originally reported	458,395	456,619
Prior year adjustment		0
As restated		458,395
Fund balances at 31/1/17	440,947	458,395

What we spent



I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our supporters and donors for your continued support to St. Gregory's Foundation. Your contribution has made a difference for many in Russia and Georgia, and is much appreciated.

Kitty Stidworthy has resigned



We are saddened to tell you that one of our longest-standing directors, Kitty Stidworthy has resigned from her post as an SGF director last October. Apart from teaching Russian at every level and, as Kitty Hunter Blair, a career as a professional translator and writer, Kitty has been a committed supporter of St. Gregory's since it was founded, and an active director. She highly praises our Russian partners "All our partners are remarkable for their skills, dedication and good humour. We are most grateful for all her time given to St Gregory's !

Kondopoga Parish overcomes a difficulty

The news came out of the blue for Father Lev and his helpers in the middle of the summer camp run. The Commission sent by the local social services decided that the Parish has no right to feed children from own kitchen because it is not licenced (it is impossible for a church parish to get such a licence). Over the last few years the summer camp run by the Parish remains the only place in Kondopoga where children from very poor families are looked after in a safe and friendly environment, given food every day through summer and helped to get prepared for a new school term.

Kondopoga sadly remains one of the poorest regions with a high unemployment rate and a growing number of people addicted to alcohol. Father Lev and his helpers at the Parish told us that most of children came to them because they suffer from neglect by their alcoholic parents, but in some cases the families simply struggle because of poorly paid work, illness or the absence of one parent, in particular if they have several children.



The Commission were unmoved by the fact that the children were not going to be fed by anybody apart from the Parish. In the meantime numbers were going up, and these were all children in real need; there were 40 of them rather than 30 as planned.

So as not to leave the children without food the Parish had to redouble their efforts and finally they succeeded in finding a company that had a permit to supply take-away hot dishes such as soup and main courses. In this way the Parish managed to satisfy the demands of the Commission. The Parish's cooks made dairy dishes, salads

and desserts, to supplement whatever was produced by the licensed canteen.

It is not easy working in this tough climate, but Father Lev and his helpers are keen to continue their work. They already have children who are lined up for next year's camp. **It costs £22 to sponsor a child's place at the camp and any help is much appreciated.**

Russian Christmas Bazaar



Are you still looking for Christmas presents? You can get some excellent ideas and enjoy pre-Christmas atmosphere at Russian Christmas Bazaar, organised by the Parish of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

Russian Christmas Bazaar

(Russian Orthodox Church, Ecumenical Patriarchate)

on

Saturday 8 December

from 12 - 4pm

**at Saint Mary Abbot's Church Hall, Vicarage Gate
W8, off Kensington Church street**

Don't miss your chance to buy traditional Russian presents, unusual gifts, books, linen, antiques and St Gregory's Christmas cards!

And of course:



**Delicious Russian Food
including Borsch, Cakes,
Pirozhky, Tea**



How your donations help

£10 will provide a dinner for a week for one teenager sleeping rough at Tbilisi streets.

£27 will fund a group session for autistic and gravely disabled children with top-class communication specialists.

£57 will provide life changing support and therapy for one "orphan" for three months.

Keep in touch

I want to become a member of The St Gregory's Foundation and receive the newsletter by post. I enclose a donation of £30 (waged)/£20 (unwaged; students).

Please send me news by email

Find us on Facebook and Twitter:



facebook.com/SaintGregs



Twitter.com/SaintGregsFound

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Make a one-off donation

Donate online at stgregorysfoundation.org.uk, call **0203 372 4992** or send a cheque payable to **St Gregory's Foundation** to

Eddy Quah, Treasurer, St Gregory's Foundation,
c/o 4 Bushy Court, 20 Upper Teddington Road
Hampton Wick, Surrey, KT1 4DU

Make a regular donation

Donate online at stgregorysfoundation.org.uk, call **0203 3724992** or return this standing order form

To the manager _____ Bank,

_____ (address)

Acc. No: _____

Sort code: _____

Please pay into the account of: The St Gregory's Foundation, Royal Bank of Scotland, 50/52A White Ladies Road, Bristol, BF8 2NH (sort code 16-12-53, account no.12348109) the sum of £____ starting on ____/____/____ (date) and thereafter on the same day monthly/quarterly/annually (Delete as appropriate). This replaces an

existing order in favour of St Gregory's Foundation.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Don't forget to *giftaid it*

If you are a UK tax payer, we would be grateful if you could Gift Aid your donation. This will allow us to reclaim 25p for every £1 you donate.

I wish to Gift Aid my donation of £_____ to St Gregory's Foundation (single donation)

I wish to Gift Aid my donation of £_____ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to St Gregory's Foundation (multiple donation)

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Title _____ First Name or initial (s) _____

Surname _____ Full home address _____

_____ Post code _____ Date _____

What do we do?

The St Gregory's Foundation works in Russia and Georgia to tackle the social problems facing children, teenagers, parents and carers. We help local partners build up their knowledge, and skills to deliver best possible support to vulnerable people, creating opportunities for them to fulfil their potential. Our work makes disadvantaged children and families active participants in improving their own lives and encourages the sharing of experience, learning and bringing together the foremost local specialists.

Contact details:

Please send donations to:

Eddy Quah, Treasurer

c/o 4 Bushy Court,
20 Upper Teddington Road,
Hampton Wick,
Surrey KT1 4DU

For more information or
volunteer opportunities contact:

Julia Ashmore,

Executive Secretary

By post: the address as above
Tel: 0203372 4992
Julia-sgf@outlook.com

SGF Directors:

Mr Nicholas Kolarz, Chair
Cecuk@aol.com

Miss Vivian Wright
vmwright@waitrose.com

Mr Hamish McArthur
H.McArthur@grenbas.co.uk

Mrs Tania Illingworth
Tania.illingworth@gmail.com

Mrs Jane Jones
janejones.emrys@btinternet.com

Dr Tamara Dragadze
DRAGADZEUK@aol.com

Mr Sebastian Coventry
Coventry@btinternet.com

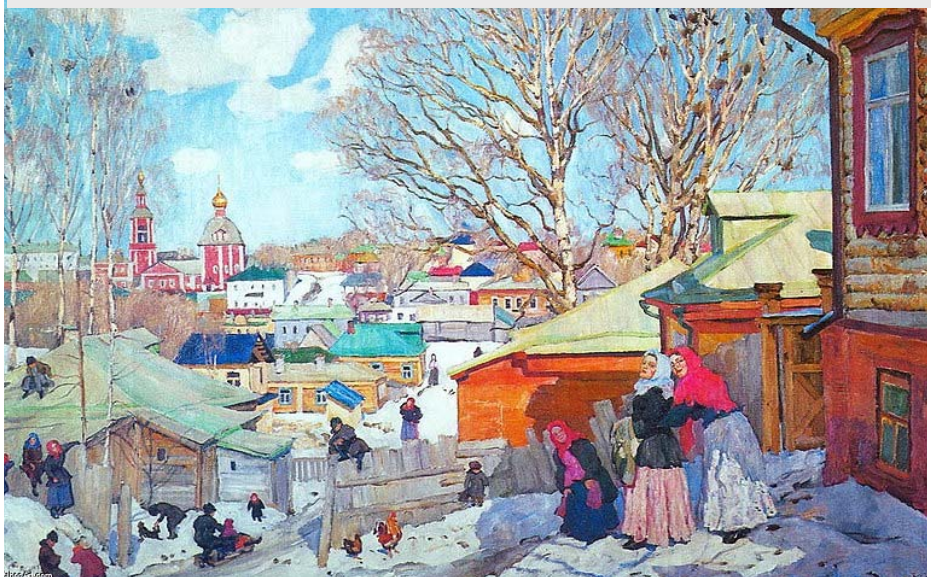
Follow us on:



St Gregory's Christmas Cards

Don't miss the chance to buy our Christmas cards with both English and Russian greetings—all the proceeds will go to our projects. You can buy cards online via www.stgregorysfoundation.org.uk or choose your cards below and send your order and a cheque payable to St Gregory's Foundation to:

Mrs Jane Jones, "Emrys" Kilmorey Park Road, Chester, CH2 3QT.



Provincial Russia (above)	10 per pack	£5 per pack
Nativity Icon	10 per pack	£5 per pack
Georgian Mother of God	10 per pack	£4 per pack
Russian Winter	10 per pack	£4 per pack
UK postage	£3 for the first pack and 30p for each subsequent pack	



Read our new stories on www.stgregorysfoundation.org.uk