



New member in EDSA: Georgia

A warm welcome to the Georgian Down Syndrome Association, the newest member of EDSA. At the annual meeting in Madrid we could welcome two representatives of this organisation, who gave us a detailed report on their work and the situation of people with DS in Georgia. Here you will find a description of the organisation and its activities.

Foundation GDSA in 2017

The Georgian Down Syndrome Association, a public organization, was founded on January 16, 2017, by parents and an adult with Down syndrome.

Over the years, parents, together or individually, have helped raise public awareness about Down Syndrome by lobbying for various legislative initiatives in government agencies. Voluntarily supported parents in Tbilisi and the regions formed self-help groups with their participation, disseminated information, and more.

Digital Database

Over the years, a fairly large database has been created across the country about individuals with Down Syndrome and their families and other supporters. Using this database, our association is able to send reminders to individuals with Down syndrome via email and text message regarding the immunisations and exams that are mandated by the medical protocol. The association has its representative office in the Adjara region.

The association covers more than 800 families throughout Georgia.

Our Association has 24-hour psycho-emotional and informational support for parents

of children with Down syndrome.

2325 parents are members of the parents' club of the association.

In 2019-2023, over 4,000 parents benefited from free counseling.

It should be noted that the association advocates not only for people with Down Syndrome, but also works in this area on the issues of people with disabilities in general.

The association has 5 program directions:

1. Independent living support program for individuals with down syndrome
2. Support program for families of individuals with down syndrome
3. Health and Social Protection program
4. Training and development program
5. Public relations program

Some interesting projects:

Babale is among the leading locations in Georgia where individuals with intellectual disabilities gain income, develop an income-generating experience, and become accustomed to living independently. First of all, existence of this enterprise encourages other businesses to create inclusive environment and decrease the level of unemployment. <https://downsyndrome.ge/en/babale>

Gigo's fund Gigo Shiukashvili, a young guy with Down syndrome, and the founders of the Georgian Down Syndrome Association established "Gigo's Fund" in 2018.

The main goal of the fund is: To protecting and care for people with Down syndrome across all of their life phases through access to quality healthcare and timely developmental support. <https://downsyndrome.ge/en/gigos-fund>

Program Seven Plus

The Georgian Down Syndrome Association, with the support of the European Foundation, has created a new program called "Seven Plus" with the objective of transforming adolescents with Down syndrome (ages 7 to 18) into dignified and equal members of society. <https://downsyndrome.ge/en/7-plus>

The main activities of the organization are based on the experience gained in practice and the needs are seen, which should be brought into a unified system in order to ultimately protect the rights of people with Down Syndrome from birth to throughout life.

The main achievement of the association is that it is considered to be a strong organization working on Down Syndrome in the Caucasus region. In addition, it is currently the founder of the social enterprise "Babale" and "Gigo Foundation". In addition, trust in the Association is high, both from the public and business sectors, as well as from donor organizations.

The representatives of Down Syndrome Association of Georgia are members of the Prime Minister's Advisory Council, Public Defender's Council, Tbilisi City Hall Advisory Council, Inclusive Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Committee of the Ministry of Health, Employment Committee, Biopsychosocial Assessment Committee, Services Development Committee, Decentralization Committee, Deinstitutionalization Committee. We participate in the creation of state strategies and action plans. In advocacy of the state budget.

Babale, Gigo's fund and Program Seven Plus

"**Babale**" is among the leading locations in Georgia where individuals with intellectual disabilities gain income, develop an income-generating experience, and become accustomed to living independently. First of all, existence of this enterprise encourages other businesses to create inclusive environment and decrease the level of unemployment

In Babale, three workshop spaces are located: ceramics, woodworking, and sewing/printing.

Individuals of diverse preferences can discover a wide array of appealing items inside the realm of Babale, suitable for personal use within a domestic setting, professional utilisation within an office environment, or as thoughtful presents for others.

Babale cultivates practical competencies via an intentionally structured experience-driven curriculum commencing with the art stage at the age of 12, progressing through a pre-professional phase, an apprenticeship, and finally a supported employment phase.

Babale's principal aim is to promote professional development opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome while providing financial support to sustain the organization's initiatives.

Gigo's Fund

Gigo Shiukashvili, a young guy with Down syndrome, and the founders of the Georgian Down Syndrome Association established "Gigo's Fund" in 2018.

The main goal of the fund is:

To protecting and care for people with Down syndrome across all of their life phases through access to quality healthcare and timely developmental support.

At the present time, the "Gigos Fund" is sustained monetarily by the contributions made by people in addition to those made by private businesses.

To achieve the mission, the fund works in two directions:

- Health care of persons with Down syndrome
- Support of development of persons with Down syndrome

Since it was founded, the fund has been able to provide financial assistance to more than 300 individuals with Down syndrome

Program Seven Plus

The Georgian Down Syndrome Association, with the support of the European Foundation, has created a new program called "Seven Plus" with the objective of transforming adolescents with Down syndrome (ages 7 to 18) into dignified and equal members of society. The project methodology is based on contemporary methods and international best practices.

Our objective is to make the program a state initiative. Currently, the program is suspended due to a paucity of funding.