



February 16, 2004

## Extending Mobility and Hope to Disabled Georgians

Tbilisi -- On February 18, 2004, US-government sponsored Counterpart International's *Community & Humanitarian Assistance Program* (CHAP) and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) will start distribution of 250 brand new state-of-the-art wheelchairs donated by LDS and the Wheelchair Foundation (USA), valued at nearly \$20 thousand to disabled people of Shida Kartli and Kakheti regions and Tbilisi. Public wheelchair distributions are organized and will be conducted in close cooperation with local Health Care and Social Welfare Departments and non-governmental partner organizations: *Invalid's Club* (Gori) and *Regi* (*Sagarejo*) charitable foundations.

"Georgian disabled need about 1,200 wheelchairs at present. During Soviet times, 100% of disabled were getting wheelchairs every two years. Since 1998, our department was unable to sponsor a single wheelchair, however this year we are planning to buy 283 wheelchairs for the most needy. You can imagine that we cannot cover all needs," comments the current situation in Georgia Head of Department for Disabled Temur Jorjoliani.

Sergey Khomchenko, Counterpart's Regional Director in Caucasus says: "I have participated in Counterpart's wheelchair distributions in several countries. Giving mobility to the people who are unable to merely cross the room to see the sun is one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Our personnel do not count early mornings or late nights spent on the way to recipients in the remote villages, because they consider the project as one of major highlights of their service to people."

Counterpart worked closely with Steve and Char Peterson, volunteers from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to get wheelchairs to Georgia. It is only one in a row of joint projects that brought 56 LDS-donated containers with clothing, newborn kits, hygienic supplies, books, and medical commodities to the country, which suffers from the protracted socio-economic crises. Thousands of internally displaced and lonely retired people, disabled and orphans benefited from these projects.

One of the donors, the world's largest wheelchair relief agency, The Wheelchair Foundation, is well on its way to reaching the goal of delivering one million wheelchairs before the end of 2005. More than 200,000 wheelchairs in 118 countries have enabled recipients to move, forever releasing them from a bedridden existence.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides humanitarian assistance to all nationalities and religions by relieving suffering and helping people help themselves. This help is made possible by the generous donations of material resources, funds, and volunteer service like that provided by Steve and Char Peterson. Over 100 million tons of goods have been provided to 154 countries since 1985.

Counterpart International is a non-profit international organization established in 1965, which has implemented a number of dynamic programs in more than 60 countries throughout the world. Since 1995, CHAP has imported into Georgia over 650 forty-foot containers of humanitarian assistance valued at about \$110 million. With a distribution network of almost 800 beneficiary organizations, CHAP has become the industry leader among US Government-funded humanitarian aid programs in Georgia. For more information about Counterpart International's *Community & Humanitarian Assistance Program* please visit our web site at [www.counterpart.org](http://www.counterpart.org) or our office at Razmadze Street #15, Tbilisi, Georgia.



Counterpart International's *Community & Humanitarian Assistance Program* is funded by the US Government, by and through the United States Department of State (<http://www.state.gov>), and administered by Counterpart International