
Advocacy toolkit case studies

IMPROVING FOSTERING IN CENTRAL ASIA

THEME: Children and education

ADVOCACY APPROACHES: Building relationships
Government officials: lobbying
Working in alliances and coalitions

After the former Soviet Union collapsed, family breakdown led to large numbers of orphans and vulnerable children in Central Asia. One of Tearfund's partners there runs a crisis centre for such children, pending either a return home or a foster family placement. Over many years, the partner developed relationships with the local government to ensure children were placed in suitable foster families. At the time they were doing this, fostering was a new concept in Central Asia and many people questioned what they were doing. But the partner had a clear vision for change, and longed for the day when every child, if unable to live with their natural family, could find a new place in a foster family rather than ending up in residential care. They also knew that their government had signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gave them reason to believe that there would be backing for a new national law.

The breakthrough came when a local authority social worker put the partner in contact with the national government's ministry responsible for children and families. The partner then formed a network, together with other organisations interested in fostering, which lobbied the ministry until a national law was passed, governing everything to do with fostering. Now they work to implement the law by ensuring that children are always found a suitable home, with formal agreements made between all involved, setting out when and how the child is going to be integrated back home or moved into a foster family. Without their clear vision for change, it might not have been so straightforward.