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### Fast Facts

**Country:** Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan

**Duration:** August 2004 to July 2007

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNICEF

**Other Implementing Partners:** National ministries; civil society; JICA

**Budget:** \$2,160,000

**Key Words:** Children; family care

## BACKGROUND

In the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the traditional Soviet-era response to children living in difficult situations was to place these children in state-run institutions. At the same time, the post-independence situation in these countries had led to growing poverty, and without any alternative system of care in place, institutionalization of children became a more common practice among parents facing homelessness, unemployment, single

parenthood, alcoholism or drug addiction. Conditions in these institutions tended to be grim, lacking support in emotional and psychological development, and with long lasting negative effects on the children. Therefore, to protect the rights of children who would otherwise be institutionalized, the practice of institutional care needed to be replaced with family-centred child care, based on the competence of professional social workers and community-based support systems for families and individuals in need.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project aimed to decrease institutionalization of children in Central Asia through promoting alternative family and child-focused care arrangements. To this end, the project (i) promoted alternative forms of care, such as guardianship, domestic adoption and foster care; (ii) supported the establishment of social work centres and the creation of a cadre of social workers at

the community level; (ii) emphasized the reintegration of institutionalized children into family settings; (iii) raised the public's awareness on the rights and needs of children accommodated in state-run institutions; and (iv) consulted families that were at risk of institutionalizing their children.

### BENEFICIARIES

The project benefited children, families and social workers in Central Asia. About 1,600 children were reintegrated into full-time family care, and social workers received capacity-building training to upgrade

their skills. Moreover, at-risk children and families benefited from the establishment of social work centres and day cares.