

## **Social workers in Afghanistan and Iran co-support children**

Following the visit of the IFSW delegation to Afghanistan in January 2023 and the Afghanistan Social Workers Professional Organization (ASO) delegation to Iran in September 2023, a comprehensive work program has been established by ASO and the Iran Association of Social Workers (IrASW). This initiative is grounded in a bilateral MoU aimed at enhancing social work, social structures, and social services in both countries, with a particular focus on Afghanistan, where the field of social work is still developing.

One of the key areas under the terms of the memorandum is Co-Supporting children with diverse needs on both sides of the border. To follow this area, a working group has been formed.

The working group is consisting of some members of the two associations while takes temporary members from different entities based on the condition of each child.

Some successful cases of this working group are explained below:

1. A 12-year-old Afghan girl with intellectual disabilities and without any documentation who got deported to Afghanistan while her family were still in Iran: The girl was identified during IFSW visit to a children's home in Afghanistan, the family whereabouts was found by IrASW, national Afghan ID card and passport were obtained for her by advocacies and supports of ASO and the Iranian visa was issued through advocacy of IrASW with the Iranian consulate in Herat, Afghanistan. Costs of documentation and transportation to Iran was covered by private donation of IFSW secretary general.

Entities of ministry of labor and social affairs, national statistics and information authority of Afghanistan, governor of Herat, UNICEF, UNHCR and ICRC of both Iran and Afghanistan and the consulate of Iran in Herat were involved.

The child successfully reunited with her family after almost 2 years of separation.

2. An 18-year-old Iranian boy with intellectual disabilities who was deported to Afghanistan and lived in a children's home for some years: The Iranian identity of the boy was confirmed by the Iranian consulate in Herat after advocacy by the ASO. The whereabouts of his family was found by IrASW and the documents were issued and transportation arranged by the Iranian consulate in Herat.

3. A sister 18 and two brothers 16 and 13 who were living in a children's home in Iran, but their passports and residency documents were lost: Afghan national ID was issued with the advocacy and supports of the ASO in Afghanistan in absentia, the passports were issued in the Afghanistan embassy in Tehran and residence permits were reissued by Iranian immigration police with advocacy of IrASW. The oldest brother got a scholarship from an international college located in Armenia and now is studying in that country. Armenian Association of Social Workers is keeping an eye on this child, supporting him with any needed means.

Currently the working group is working on another case of 3 brothers with Iranian mother and Afghan father without documentation who the oldest brother has been deported to Afghanistan and stays in a children's home and the two younger brothers are in Iran hoping to be reunified with their brother.

The working group continues to work on this case and other shared child protection cases whenever needed.