

## **Central Asia: Feb/Mar '10**

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Education proposals aired at IWPR events to be incorporated into parliamentary report.

Recommendations made during IWPR round tables on children's education will be included in a parliamentary commission report on how Kyrgyz laws on the rights of minors are being implemented.

In the latest IWPR round table in January – attended by Education Minister Abdylda Musaev – there was discussion of proposals to introduce school boards to ensure transparency and accountability of funds accumulated from parents' contributions

Members of the parliament, representatives of school administrations, parents and NGOs and took part in the January 25-26 meeting.

The aim was to raise pressing issues in children's education and to allow a dialogue between interested parties, and the results may feed into parliament's work on the subject.

The event was the culmination of a series of such meetings across the country, in Talas and Tyupe in northern Kyrgyzstan and in the southern city of Jalalabad.

According to Guljamal Sultanalieva, who heads a temporary commission looking into how Kyrgyz laws on children's rights are being implemented, recommendations aired during the IWPR round tables will be included in the commission's report and may subsequently be submitted to parliament for discussion.

"We will discuss recommendations proposed at the round tables by representatives of the schools and by rights defenders with legal experts in the parliament," Sultanalieva said.

"Recommendations aired will be definitely included in our report and possibly in [proposed] legislation."

Issues raised during public discussion included the difficulty of getting a school place for children of internal labour migrants from impoverished southern regions who have settled around the capital, Bishkek, because they lack a resident permit.

There was also discussion of the systematic absence from schools of pupils who help out in family-run businesses in the agriculture or tourism sectors.

The head of the League for Protecting Children's Rights, a public foundation, Nazgul Turdubekova, said the authorities were taking note of the issues raised at the round tables.

"The most important thing that we want to change is the attitude of government bodies to this issue. It was very telling that the [education] minister took part in [the January] round table. This is a good sign as previously we were ignored," she said.

Kalicha Umuralieva, a consultant for the public foundation Our Right, said she was pleased the minister backed proposals for boards of governors at the January round table, "It was good to see bureaucrats recognising civil society."

Musaev told the event, "I am glad to see that we are moving from mutual reproaches and accusations towards constructive cooperation."

**Dina Tokbaeva is IWPR's Kyrgyz editor in Bishkek.**

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