
Advocacy toolkit case studies

IMPROVING ACCESS TO HIV TREATMENT IN RUSSIA

THEMES:

HIV
Stigma and discrimination

ADVOCACY APPROACHES:

Mobilising people and campaigning
Working in alliances and coalitions

All across Russia, life-enhancing medicines called antiretrovirals (ARVs) were being purchased by government agencies but not delivered to people living with HIV, who were the ones who most needed them. This frustrated one of Tearfund's partners whose work focuses on help and support for people living with HIV.

The partner discovered that a key issue was that people could only receive medical assistance, including ARVs, in their town of permanent residence. Unfortunately, official documentation showing the permanent residence could only be obtained if a person owned a property in the town, or if they were registered at the property with their family or friends. This severely limited access to ARVs for those who moved away from their home towns to find employment, those with rented or insecure housing, and groups such as recently released prisoners and migrants, all of which are groups with whom Tearfund's partner works.

This caused so much concern that the partner began a campaign, along with other like-minded organisations, to overturn the requirement to demonstrate permanent residency, by mobilising people to write letters and emails, sign petitions and even hold street marches. Their compassion and care for people living with HIV was evident, and the campaign complemented the core of their organisational ethos.

As a result of the campaign, the Minister for Health in Russia issued a decree, stating that because the AIDS epidemic was still on the rise, several measures needed to be taken, one of which was that ARVs would be available to all people who are eligible, regardless of where they live.

Now, Tearfund's partner seeks to ensure that the decree is implemented, so that people living with HIV are able to benefit from vital treatment because ARVs are available to everyone who needs them, without bureaucratic obstacles.