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KAZAKHSTAN

SUCCESS STORY

New Methods Keep the Disease at Bay

An advocacy campaign has enabled a disabled boy to start receiving education



Temirlan Bakhytzhano and his mother are happy that the boy is mastering vital life skills like reading and writing. Photo: Counterpart

A USAID-supported campaign has persuaded the Kostanai City government to address the needs of blind students.

Like most 10 year olds, Temirlan Bakhytzhano is an active, smiling boy. He is curious about the world, enjoys playing with his family and friends, and has limitless potential.

However, Temirlan cannot see, and in Kazakhstan this can put him at a disadvantage when it comes to receiving a quality education. Kazakhstan's ministry of education invests very little in education of special needs students, and very few teachers specialize in working with visually impaired students. As a result, many children like Temirlan are often left behind.

Fortunately for Temirlan, a USAID-funded initiative has made sure that his educational needs were not forgotten. Temirlan and his parents were among 300 families in the cities of Kostanai and Astana that benefitted from the Whole World at Your Fingertips Campaign, funded by USAID and implemented by the Raduga (Rainbow) nongovernmental organization and Counterpart International.

Raduga and Counterpart conducted an analysis of the national legislation as it pertains to visually-impaired children and recommended introducing the Braille system at schools. With funding from USAID, Raduga also provided 300 families with training and materials on the rights of the visually-impaired children and the advocacy skills so that these families can protect the rights of their children more effectively.

The USAID-funded campaign has made a world of difference for Temirlan. Before the campaign the boy was not receiving education at all, because there were no specialized schools or teachers in the Kostanai City for the visually-impaired children. The USAID-supported campaign persuaded the Kostanai City Department of Education to introduce home-schooling requirement for children with visual impairments. Temirlan now receives home schooling with a qualified specialist. The boy has already learned to read the Braille alphabet and is beginning to study the same curriculum that other children of his age follow.

Thanks to the USAID-funded campaign, Temirlan and other Kostanai children who are visually impaired no longer have their education limited by their disability.