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KAZAKHSTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Inclusive Education Gets a Chance

USAID helps a local organization to expand the access to education for disabled children



Veronika Kolesnikova waits with her classmates before the first day at the new school for hearing-impaired students Photo: Counterpart

A USAID-supported campaign ensured that children with hearing or speaking disorders can receive a quality education in Kazakhstan.

Thanks to a USAID-supported advocacy campaign, Kazakhstan's children with special needs have access to education.

Across Kazakhstan, children with disabilities are often left outside the mainstream education system. The government does not budget resources to address the needs of these children. Trained specialists are also hard to find, and few children with disabilities receive education to prepare for full, productive life.

With funding from USAID, the *Center for Social Adaptation of Children* and Counterpart International organized an advocacy campaign to expand access to education for children with disabilities.

As part of the campaign, titled "Yes to an Inclusive Education," the two organizations prepared a proposal for the Republican Budget Commission that illustrated how education programs for children with disabilities could be started. The organizers prepared detailed calculations of the budget needed and recommendations on improving inclusiveness in the educational process, such as the need for specialized professionals - psychologists, sign-language specialists, speech therapists, and exercise physiologists - to work with children with disabilities. The organizers of the campaign submitted their proposal to parliament deputies, representatives of the leading political party, and various ministry officials.

As a result, the Ministry of Education, together with the Ministry of Finance, made a decision to include funding for education of children with disabilities in the 2010-2011 national and local budgets. Such step ensured that cities across the country will have resources to provide education for special needs students.

The USAID-funded campaign also worked with the Astana and Kyzylorda city administrations to address the needs of children with disabilities.

Now Astana City has a training center for children with hearing disorders, and Kyzylorda City operates a school for children with speech disorders. Both of these facilities provide full range of support services for children with disabilities in addition to comprehensive education.