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New USAID Program Assists Primary Students with Disabilities

USAID today launched a new program to increase opportunities for primary school students with disabilities in Macedonia by enhancing their skills. The program “Equal Access for Equal Opportunities” will promote the use of assistive technology as a tool for improving the quality of education of students with disabilities in the regular school environment.

“Technology can be a powerful tool in overcoming disabilities and encouraging integration of people who have so much to offer” said Mrs. Solveig Reeker. “Education systems need to use technology to embrace the abilities that a person has and not create new barriers.”

“This project will help make it possible for students with special needs to follow the regular process of instruction which will foster their inclusion and integration in the mainstream education system” said Michael Fritz, USAID Mission Director. “In the long run, the Equal Access for Equal Opportunities project will contribute to increased competitiveness of persons with disabilities in the labor market.”

The association Open the Windows will implement this two-year program, targeting one fourth of the schools in Macedonia that have students with disabilities. They will assess the needs of students with disabilities in primary schools, provide assistive devices and train teachers at the schools in how to use assistive technology.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

For more information about the program, please visit www.openthewindows.org. **The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993.** USAID is implementing projects that create jobs, reduce corruption, and prepare Macedonian students for the workforce. These initiatives improve the quality of life and support Macedonia’s transition to a stable and prosperous democracy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.