



## SUCCESS STORY

### Books ensure continued education for children with disabilities in Tajikistan



*Third-grade student, Umarjon, and his teacher, Firuza Abdullaeva, work closely together to ensure Umarjon continues to read if he cannot participate in class due to his illness.*



*Fourth-grade student Mehrona (in front) performs a national Tajik dance at a school event dedicated to Literacy Day.*

Third-grade student Umarjon from School #5 in the Bobojon Gafurov district in Sughd suffers from a serious disease that often prevents him from attending class. The children's books provided by the USAID Read with Me project to Umarjon's school have been vital to supporting his uninterrupted education.

"When Umarjon moves or sits for too long, he struggles with physical pain and tires quickly. To help calm him and overcome his pain, I read to him from the donated books delivered by his teacher," says Umarjon's mother Sitara.

Umarjon says that reading books makes him very happy. "I like when my teacher brings colorful and interesting books, especially when I am feeling sad. I enjoy reading and discussing the stories with my Mom and teachers," says Umarjon.

Istambonu Khidirova is the school librarian at Umarjon's school. She received training from the USAID Read with Me project and now facilitates in-class and out-of-school reading activities for teachers, students, and parents. Both Umarjon's teacher, Firuza Abdullaeva and Istambonu noted, "We see Umarjon's reading progress and his motivation to read more books. Sometimes he even participates in school activities, which is a great achievement for everyone."

Similarly, Mehrona from School #62 in Istaravshan in Sughd is a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student with disabilities who benefited from USAID Read with Me interventions focused on inclusive education. Worried about her daughter's orthopedic impairment, Mehrona's mother kept her at home rather than learning at school.

Mehrona's teacher, Dilrabo Mirsharopova, benefited from USAID Read with Me modern pedagogy trainings and understood that regardless of her physical challenges, Mehrona would benefit from high-quality inclusive instruction and interventions. Seeing Mehrona's potential, Dilrabo brought several books to Mehrona's home that were donated by the Read with Me project. Mehrona enjoyed these books so much that she soon began visiting the school library herself and began attending classes not long after. Dilrabo's involvement enabled Mehrona to succeed in the core

curriculum and ultimately become the best student in the class.

“Books are the reason I love going to school,” says Mehrna, proudly. “I already read 35 of the USAID Read with Me books and want to read all of the books in our library by the end of the year. I like participating in class and out of school activities, and even join in dancing and games. Everyone liked my dancing performance.”