



SUCCESS STORY

Shaping the next generation of Tajikistan's writers



Fourth-grade students are delighted to see their favorite writer, Azizi Azis, at their school sharing his experiences with reading and writing.



Teacher Gulfiza Sadikowna from School #8 in Khujand is very proud of her students for their work on reading, especially Lailo who is proudly showing her two recently published stories.

Fourth-grade student Lailo Kuzibaeva from School #8 in Khujand, Tajikistan has already published two short stories and won the first round of a book competition. She always dreamed of meeting her favorite writer Azizi Aziz, who wrote many famous books and inspired her to write short stories. She enjoys reading his books and others that were printed and donated to her school by the USAID Read with Me project.

Lailo's teacher was also trained by the Read with Me project to focus on reading with comprehension over fluency, and mentored in modern instructional methods to teach analytical reading skills. "Before we used to read books without understanding the meaning, but now our teachers help us understand what the stories we read are about," says Lailo. "At the end of each week, we have a small exam in class where we ask each other questions about the books we read."

When Lailo started to read the books by Aziz she was inspired to write her own stories and wanted to share her stories with her classmates. "When I wrote my first story, it was magic. I can't explain this feeling, it was like the words were flowing out onto the paper," recalls Lailo.

In recognition of Lailo's hard work, the Read with Me project invited Aziz, who serves as one of the project's mentors for authors, to visit Lailo and her class. The students were excited to meet with the famous children's books author who motivated them to continue their reading and writing. Students asked him different questions about his creative process and life as a famous writer.

"I heard about Lailo and I was very happy that she writes stories and draws very well too. I travelled to Khujand specifically to meet her. But when I visited her class, I met so many other interesting and talented children, and we had a very interesting conversation on imagination, reading, and

writing. These kinds of initiatives with young readers are very important and motivate children to read more and be creative,” says Aziz.

Lailo’s teacher, Gulfiza Sadikowna, a national trainer for the Read with Me project, noted that the secret to her students’ success is the transformation of her traditional approach to modern reading instruction and techniques, which she learned through USAID trainings.

For example, after completing the training, Gulfiza launched a library in class to ensure all students have access to the books whenever they want, to be used for in-class and out-of-school activities to strengthen their reading skills. “I use a special ‘magic notebook’ that students use to record books they borrow. Students write down the book’s title and author, and update how many pages they have read. This motivates students to read more and progress in their learning. I am thankful to the USAID Read with Me project for donating so many interesting books and arranging reading events with their favorite writer,” says Gulfiza.