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MACEDONIA

SUCCESS STORY

This Future Scientist Is Going Places

Mentorship project supports talented Roma teen



Photo: USAID/Teresa Albor

Eliza Osmanova, right, with her mentor Suzana Trajkova in Skopje, Macedonia.

“I feel safe knowing there’s always someone in the school who I can turn to, who advises and encourages me. I share all my ups and downs with her. She’s always there for me,” said Eliza Osmanova of her mentor Suzana Trajkova.

Telling Our Story
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Eliza is good at science — so good in fact, that the 16-year-old traveled from her native Macedonia to the International Conference for Young Scientists in Stuttgart, Germany.

“I can’t describe how I felt when I found out that I would be a member of one of the 22 teams of young scientists from 15 different countries around the world,” says Eliza Osmanova, one of about 250 Roma students — commonly referred to as Gypsies — receiving financial assistance and school-based mentoring in 57 high schools across Macedonia through the USAID-funded Education Program.

“Many Roma students would not be able to go to school were it not for these scholarships. And, even if we did manage to go, we would not be as successful without the assistance of our mentors,” says Eliza.

Designed to help Roma students stay in school and improve their performance, the program provides support from pre-school to college. At the secondary school level, the program provides textbooks, supplementary learning materials, transportation, food, clothing and more, as needed. Best of all, students receive one-on-one mentoring on a daily basis.

Aside from the 250 secondary school participants, over 200 pre-school, 600 primary school, and 60 university students benefit from the program. The program is young, but in its first year 94 percent of all secondary school freshmen in the program successfully completed the school year.

For Eliza, the mentoring has been crucial. Her mentor, Suzana Trajkova, has worked hard to boost Eliza’s self-confidence and bring out her natural abilities in math and science. “Her self-esteem has really improved. I’ve noticed a real change for the better in the way she communicates with her teachers and her peers,” says Trajkova, beaming with pride. Eliza is equally positive about her mentor. “I feel safe knowing there’s always someone in the school who I can turn to, who advises and encourages me. I share all my ups and downs with her. She’s always there for me.”