



**PRESS RELEASE**

**Lions Clubs International Foundation and Lions work with USAID to Improve Educational Opportunities for the Visually Impaired in Macedonia (FYROM)**

Oak Brook, Ill., USA, January 5, 2015—Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) and Lions Clubs of Macedonia (FYROM), in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), have launched a 30-month initiative to increase the quality and accessibility of educational services for children with visual impairments.

LCIF and USAID are each providing US\$250,000 to support this project, which will be implemented by South East European University (SEEU) and local Lions, in collaboration with the National Union of the Blind, the National Ophthalmological Society, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health.

This project is the result of the Lions Clubs International (LCI) partnership with USAID that began in June 2012. The LCI-USAID partnership will engage local Lions club members to provide vision screenings for preschool and school-aged children and promote literacy by producing educational and recreational reading materials in Braille and large print. Lions also will participate in the recording of audio books and work to promote inclusive education for children with visual impairments.

“This project has energized the Lions Clubs of Macedonia,” said LCI International President Joe Preston at the kick-off event in Tetovo. “It has given them new focus and purpose. It is a perfect example of what partners can accomplish when they come together to address a common need.”

"Access to a quality education is a universal human right," said James Stein, USAID Mission Director. "Currently, less than one percent of visually impaired Macedonian children are able to read Braille. And for those who can, the scope of Braille texts available is still remarkably narrow. How can these children learn if they cannot read? How can they learn to read without books?"

Representatives from LCIF, USAID, Lions Clubs of Macedonia and other partners were on hand to launch the project at SEEU in November.

###



## PRESS RELEASE

### About Lions Clubs International

Lions Clubs International is the largest service club organization in the world. Our 1.35 million members in more than 46,000 clubs are serving communities in more than 200 countries and geographical areas around the globe. Since 1917, Lions clubs have aided the blind and visually impaired, championed youth initiatives and strengthened local communities through hands-on service and humanitarian projects. For more information about Lions Clubs International, visit [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org).

### About Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF)

LCIF is the charitable arm of Lions Clubs International, the world's largest service club organization with more than 1.35 million men and women members in more than 200 countries and geographical areas worldwide. Since 1968, LCIF supports Lions by providing grant funding for their local and global humanitarian efforts, including preventing avoidable blindness on a global scale for more than 20 years through LCIF's SightFirst program. To date, Lions are investing US\$415 million in SightFirst's local capacity building efforts and have helped restore sight to millions worldwide. Learn more at [www.lcif.org](http://www.lcif.org).

### About USAID Macedonia

The American people, through USAID, have invested over \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID works with the people of Macedonia to create jobs, strengthen democratic institutions and practices, enhance integrated education, and prepare 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.

### LCIF Media Contact

[Cassandra Bannon](mailto:Cassandra.Bannon@lcif.org)

630.468.7030

Communications Specialist