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During the past year, the Cambodian government and Special Olympics, with U.S. support, have been recruiting more than 1,000 people with intellectual disabilities in the nation's rural areas to compete in Special Olympics Cambodia. This unique program offers specialized training to improve athletes' health, discover new strengths and skills, experience teamwork and success, and possibly even represent Cambodia in the Special Olympics World Games.

This is just one example of a program launched by posts in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) to promote the rights of people with disabilities and include them in all aspects of society. Another example: In July, the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok hosted a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that also gave the Thai Special Olympics Team a festive send-off as they headed to the 2015 World Games in Los Angeles.

Along with partners in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), EAP has worked to raise the status of people with disabilities across the region. Through engagement with civil society groups, disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and international exchange programs, EAP has promoted the rights of some of the world's most vulnerable people.

EAP has engaged on the issue in Mongolia, for example. After interacting with female sitting-volleyball players from Mongolia who were participating in a SportsUnited visitors program to the United States, ECA Program Officer Ann Cody said the "visitors were positively struck by the warm greetings and acceptance they received from Americans, starting with their

Opening Spread: Twelve sitting-volleyball coaches and athletes traveled from Mongolia to Oklahoma City through the Department's Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative for a two-week sports exchange program featuring sitting-volleyball clinics and school tours.

State Department photo