

Northeast Asia Regional Program



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A passionate and influential advocate for democracy and gender equality in Mongolia, Oyungerel Tsedevdamba has served as an advisor on human rights and public participation to Mongolian President Elbegdorj Tsakhia as well as Prime Minister Tsakhia Elbegdorj and members of parliament. She founded and is actively engaged with several human rights organizations, currently serving as president of the 65,000-member strong Democratic Women's Union of Mongolia, which promotes women's political engagement. A popular speaker, she has also published several best-selling books. On her fellowship, she explored campaign financing; environmental conservation and protection; regional law enforcement and judicial systems; and met with local and national women leaders and politicians.

Ms. Tsedevdamba's fellowship took her from the nation's capital to Native American reservations, Dinosaur National Park in Utah, and to Boston and points in between. Her program consisted of meetings with members of Congress, police officers, water protection agencies, and those committed to women's empowerment. Meetings with the Environmental Protection Agency and the New Mexico Water Quality Commission showed Ms. Tsedevdamba that maintaining clean water involves basic strategies of enacting clear boundaries and establishing measures of accountability. Meetings with law enforcement officials at Dinosaur National Park; Bloomington, Indiana; and Boston revealed that Mongolia's police are trying to take ownership of too many issues, which has led to concentrated power and overall ineffectiveness.

Meeting with Governor Christie of New Jersey provided Ms. Tsedevdamba with the opportunity to discuss challenges in leadership with a leading political figure. Ms. Tsedevdamba thoroughly enjoyed the exchange and received pragmatic advice regarding the way forward for her party and her run for Parliament in 2012. The Federal Elections Commission provided eye-opening insight into campaign financing, a topic that then became a theme of her program. She met with North Carolina Treasurer Janet Cowell about state campaign financing, and challenges she faced in her campaign as a woman politician, and discussed similar topics with former Missouri State Senator and USA Fellow Rachel Storch.

Highlights of Ms. Tsedevdamba's fellowship were meetings with two pueblos of Native Americans just outside Santa Fe in New Mexico. She gained valuable insight into how the tribes protect their land and water resources. Over the course of these meetings a deeper level of understanding was forged when Ms. Tsedevdamba and the groups discovered a connection that ran deeper than that of a "typical" fellowship meeting. In a discussion with Dino Chavarria, Assistant Director of the Office of Environmental Affairs for Santa Clara Pueblo, the singing of native songs of both Mr. Chavarria and Ms. Tsedevdamba's people were shared, and both were surprised to find the similarities among the songs – a true demonstration of the commonality amongst peoples that highlighted Mr. Chavarria's day and Ms. Tsedevdamba's fellowship.

Ms. Tsedevdamba plans to forge several partnerships with the law enforcement, women's rights, and environmental organizations with whom she met as part of her program. She plans to write a book based on her fellowship findings and recently agreed to write a weekly column for a women's website in Mongolia. Ms. Tsedevdamba will conduct a series of educational lectures on the topic of women's leadership, as well as pursue new initiatives in the areas of law enforcement, water protection, election financing, and national park creation and protection. Finally, Ms. Tsedevdamba plans to become an active member of the EF network in Mongolia.

Leaders bettering the world around them.