

# Special Olympics Healthy Athletes: Health Issues in Developing Countries

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## Objectives

- Discuss the rationale for, and nature of, the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® program.
- Describe health disparities experienced by people with intellectual disabilities.
- Understand how these health disparities differ in developed and developing countries.



## Introduction

People with intellectual disabilities have poorer health, more specialized health care needs, and greater difficulty accessing health care services and doctors compared to the general public. Special Olympics International designed the Healthy Athletes® program to:

- Provide athletes with health screenings and referrals for follow-up care when needed,
- Provide training for healthcare providers in working with patients with intellectual disabilities.
- Provide the basis for improved programs & policies.

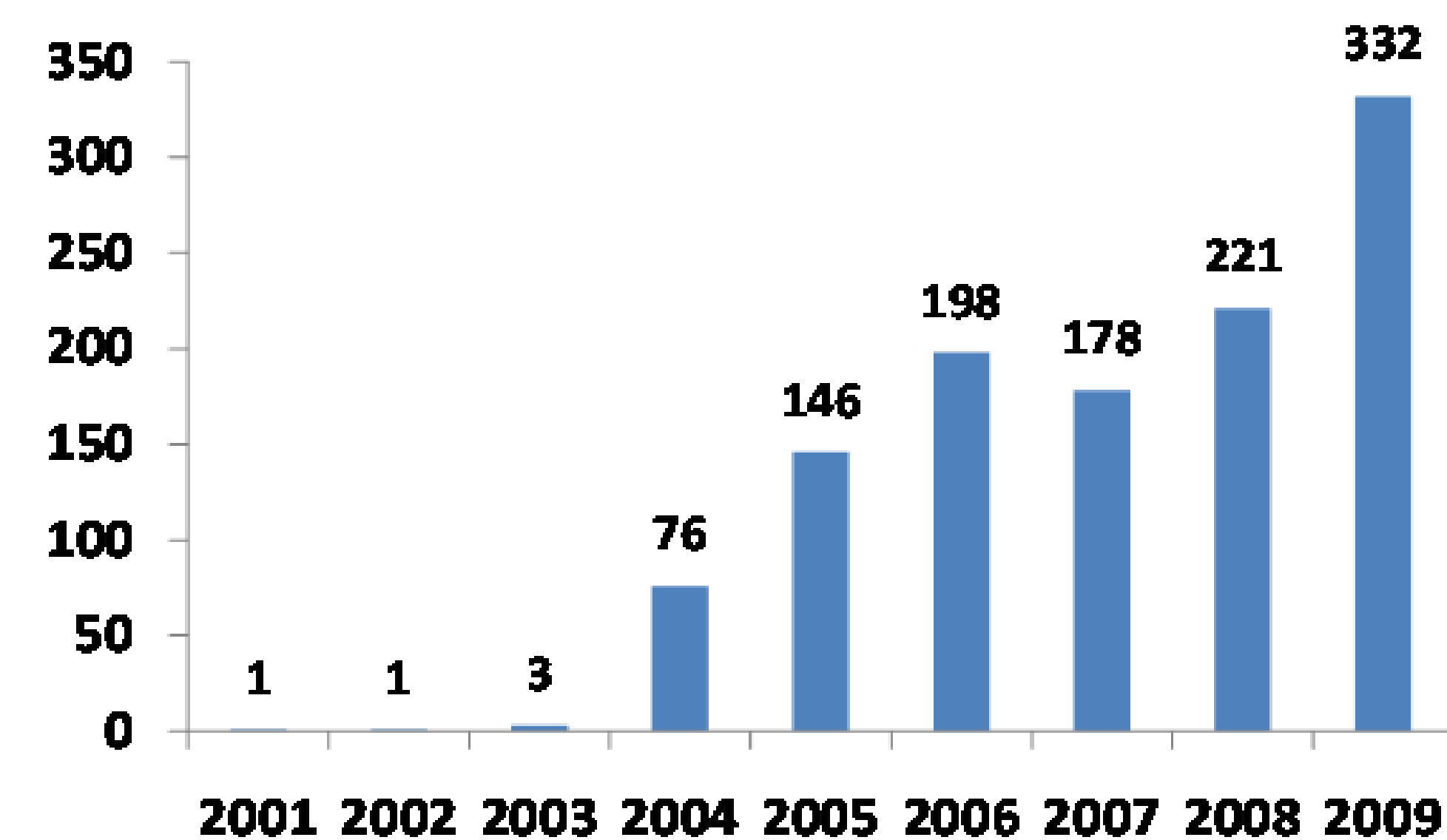
Healthy Athletes spans seven areas - Fit Feet (podiatry), FUNfitness (physical therapy), Health Promotion (nutrition, bone health, healthy behaviors), Healthy Hearing (audiology), MedFest (sports physicals), Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes (vision), and Special Smiles (dental). Since 1997, Healthy Athletes screenings have occurred in 102 countries including 73 developing countries. More than 1,000,000 screenings have been conducted, 85,000 eyeglasses have been distributed, and 90,000 healthcare professionals have been trained.

## Methods

As Healthy Athletes continues to expand, questions have been raised about how the program should be run in developing countries compared to developed countries.

Data from Healthy Athletes screenings have been aggregated into the world's largest database on the health of people with intellectual disabilities. To examine the differing health problems in developing and developed countries, data from 66,537 screenings were analyzed.

## Capacity Grants to Developing Countries



## Discussion

Health disparities exist everywhere for people with intellectual disabilities, but problems in developing countries are different from those in developed countries. Currently, Special Olympics is building partnerships with organizations to help adapt Healthy Athletes protocols to local contexts in the developing world.

### Global Partnerships:

- Lions Clubs International
- United National Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- Essilor International
- The Safilo Group
- HealthOne Global

### National Partnerships:

- Hue College of Medicine and Pharmacy – Vietnam
- Fundacion Abrazar – Colombia
- Walmart Foundation - USA
- National University of El Salvador Dental School
- Wenzhou Medical College – China
- Apollo Medical Group – Bharat
- R.I.P.A.S. Hospital – Brunei
- PT Bersaudara – Indonesia

### Grants:

- 1156 Capacity Grants have been awarded to developing countries
- Community-Based Health Promotion Grants have been awarded to Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa, and Romania.
- Program Development Grants have been awarded to Romania and Turkey.

In addition to building new partnerships and awarding grants, Special Olympics currently is exploring other ways to enhance the fit of Healthy Athletes in the developing world.

Health Condition	Percent
Mouth Pain	14.7%
Untreated Tooth Decay	38.6%
Urgent Dental Referral	13.8%
Gait Abnormalities	54.4%
Bone deformation (feet)	22.9%
Skin/Nail Conditions	51.8%
Never Had an Eye Exam	11.0%
Failed Hearing Test	25.7%
Low Bone Density	18.7%

