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STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION

**Special
Olympics**



FORGING AHEAD for Inclusion

Annual Report

July 2021–June 2022




Leadership Note

In 2018 Special Olympics and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) launched *Play Unified: Learn Unified*—a landmark partnership that brought our transformative, sports-based, inclusive programming into schools across more than a dozen countries and jurisdictions worldwide. Inspired by the progress achieved, in 2021 Special Olympics and SNF devised an ambitious international vision of acceptance and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities (ID), naming it the *Global Campaign for Inclusion*. Comprising three interrelated strategies, the *Global Campaign for Inclusion* is designed to:

- Expand upon and continue to globalize *Play Unified: Learn Unified*.
- Collaborate with thought leaders to bring our vision of inclusivity beyond schools and into mainstream public discourse.
- Engage key decision makers to commit to sustained action in ensuring the rights of students with ID.

In the first full activation year of the *Global Campaign for Inclusion*, we have already reached and even surpassed many of our initial goals. We have scaled our *Play Unified: Learn Unified* programming to include nine additional countries, establishing **860 new Unified Schools** and reaching over **169,000 students**—along with their families, friends, and members of their respective communities. Simultaneously, we have engaged more than **15,000 people** across ten events, involving Special Olympics Programs both online and in-person in sustained dialogues about Unified Schools, social-emotional learning, and inclusive leaders in education.

In a matter of months, these conversations have produced a domino effect, inspiring further engagement and action from our *Global Thought Leader Network*, whose members have forged ahead to write multiple op-eds that spread our message of inclusion far and wide. Furthermore, we are mobilizing forward-thinking government bodies across the world to begin the exciting process of convening a *Global Leadership Coalition for Education and Inclusion*. Together, we are developing promising partnerships and shifting policy agendas, laying the groundwork globally for long-term financial and political investments in inclusive education.



With the generous grant from SNF, the *Global Campaign for Inclusion* is successfully nurturing leaders of all ages around the world to be advocates of inclusion both within their schools and throughout their broader communities. In bringing our message of inclusion into public spaces, we are engaging not only students with and without disabilities, but also educators, young people, industry and government representatives, and community members—all of whom stand to benefit from a more inclusive society.

As Special Olympics continues to implement all facets of the *Global Campaign for Inclusion*, we want to express our deep gratitude to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation for its continued partnership. Empowered by the grant from SNF, young people and their communities are taking active roles in making our vision of an inclusive world a reality. And, as we celebrate our successes to date, it is abundantly evident that our present investment in inclusive education has the power to usher in a future where differences are accepted and embraced, and where youth of all abilities can thrive.

With excitement and pride, we share with you our latest report entitled *Forging Ahead for Inclusion*. The term “forging ahead” is defined as “advancing with increased speed,” which strikes us as an apt description of the intensity of the work that is underway. *Forging Ahead for Inclusion* details where we have been and where we are headed. It also illustrates the remarkable progress made thus far in enabling young people with ID to benefit from SNF’s continued generosity and unwavering belief in the vision of Special Olympics.



David S. Evangelista

Regional President and Managing Director
Special Olympics Europe Eurasia



Special Olympics Bosnia and Herzegovina students smile after a Unified football session

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Looking Ahead



Special Olympics China students compete in a Unified curling event



Global Snapshot of 21 Programs

July 2021–June 2022



**Partners and
Athletes Engaged**

42,413



**Teachers and
Coaches Trained**

6,009



**Unified Schools
Newly Recruited**

860



Youth Engaged

169,484

Section I

Expanding Play Unified: Learn Unified





Special Olympics Bharat Youth Leaders participate in a teambuilding exercise

SECTION I

Expanding Play Unified: *Learn Unified*



Special Olympics China students come together during a large-scale Unified event

Play Unified: Learn Unified has forged an international team of Youth Leaders, educators, community organizers, and coaches who are bringing the power of social inclusion to schools and communities around the world. Through this powerful global network, Special Olympics has expanded programming and is achieving far-reaching impact in 21 countries and jurisdictions on multiple continents.

The key indicators of success for Play Unified: Learn Unified include the total number of countries, Unified Schools, athletes, partners, teachers, coaches, and youth engaged across Special Olympics Programs. The effectiveness of Play Unified: Learn Unified is clear: Special Olympics programming has transformed thousands of schools into communities of

acceptance for hundreds of thousands of students both with and without ID, as well as having equipped thousands of teachers and coaches to become lifelong implementers of inclusion.

Over the course of the past year, Play Unified: Learn Unified achieved the following:

- Reached new communities.
- Developed leaders of inclusion at all levels of education.
- Promoted inclusion in public spaces.
- Established sustainability through government partnerships.

The following discussion summarizes the contributions of the 21 Special Olympics Programs toward each of these accomplishments.



A Unified running group in Special Olympics Kenya trains for the upcoming Unified marathon

Reaching New Communities



Students and staff at a newly recruited Unified School smile at a Special Olympics Jamaica event

Special Olympics Programs are spreading the message of inclusion to previously untapped communities across the world. From introducing young people to Unified experiences to activating programming among cultural minority groups, Play Unified: Learn Unified is expanding to

areas ranging from rural locales to indigenous communities to refugee camps, providing youth with and without ID—as well as their family and community members—some of their first opportunities to play together, work together, and learn from each other.



Special Olympics Bosnia and Herzegovina focused efforts on rural areas that typically receive fewer resources than other regions of the country. This year, for the first time, one primary school in a village near the city of Tuzla began providing inclusive education services and Unified Sports to its students, many of whom are members of the Roma minority population. By organizing widespread Unified events and competitions, Special Olympics Bosnia and Herzegovina is not only connecting people of all abilities but also boldly bringing individuals of diverse cultures and backgrounds together under the banner of inclusion.



Special Olympics Brazil celebrated the expansion of Play Unified: Learn Unified to the city of Pesqueira in the northeastern state of Pernambuco. After conducting a cultural exchange with the Xucuru indigenous community in the state, Special Olympics Brazil and the mayor and chief of the Xucuru people reached an understanding about the importance of inclusive practices and committed to integrate Unified Schools programming into schools across the region. So far, 36 indigenous schools have welcomed the introduction of Unified Schools and begun implementing Special Olympics programming.



Special Olympics Jamaica hosted a Unified football tournament to celebrate the activation of its first-ever Unified Schools network. Approximately 80 participants and 100 spectators from five Unified Schools in the Manchester region competed in the event, and local media highlighted the occasion in news broadcasts. As a result of generating increased interest in Unified Schools activities in the community, Play Unified: Learn Unified expanded to a second region, St. Catherine Parish, adding five more Unified Schools to its network. The principals, students, and coaches at all of these Unified Schools were provided with jerseys and banners to help spread awareness in their respective communities.



Special Olympics Senegal, excited about its first full year of participation in Play Unified: Learn Unified, engaged new communities and established 27 Unified Schools across the country. Special Olympics Senegal also utilized the country's strong collectivist culture to involve family members of people with ID in Unified activities, which helped with spreading awareness about Special Olympics programming in the community. Building on this early success, Special Olympics Senegal is now engaged in discussions with the country's Ministry of Education and is poised to receive national support to establish additional Unified Schools.

Faces of Inclusion



Athletes and partners in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp gather after a Unified football match

A Refugee Camp Paves the Way for Inclusion: Special Olympics Tanzania's Story

In many ways, the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in western Tanzania is quite different from other communities in the Play Unified: Learn Unified network. Still, the positive impact of Special Olympics programming is much the same.

Nyarugusu was founded in 1996, during the First Congo War, to accommodate people from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) who were fleeing violence and persecution. The camp was

also a haven for Burundian refugees during that country's civil unrest in 2015. Today, over 130,000 refugees from the DRC and Burundi, forced to leave their countries of origin due to lasting conflict, call Nyarugusu home.

Dependent on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Tanzanian government, and other donors for many of its services, Nyarugusu has limited

independent resources and facilities. These constraints naturally provide challenges to implementing Special Olympics programming. Despite these limitations, Nyarugusu has been highly successful in promoting Play Unified: Learn Unified in the community.

In the past year, the collaboration between Nyarugusu and Special Olympics Tanzania led to the establishment of seven Unified Schools. This Unified Schools network currently boasts 263 athletes, 134 partners, and 34 teachers from the Congolese and Burundian populations. Members of the community and Special Olympics Tanzania are already inspired by Nyarugusu's success.

"Play Unified: Learn Unified has [quickly] changed the negative attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities in the camp's schools," says Boniface Bernard Akembe, a program coordinator with Special Olympics Tanzania. "[Play Unified: Learn Unified] has stimulated the community's love of learning and playing in an inclusive context," he adds.



Special Olympics athletes and teachers in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp participate in a Unified activity



Unified Schools in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp face off in a Unified football match

Since the implementation of Play Unified: Learn Unified, the people of Nyarugusu have noticed a significant decrease in the isolation of people with intellectual disabilities in schools and in the community. Athletes, partners, and teachers in Nyarugusu have also shared their stories and cooperated with others in local, national, and international Special Olympics events. These experiences provide Unified Schools with best practices for building the skills of students and teachers, as well as ideas for spreading awareness about inclusion in the community.

Play Unified: Learn Unified also offers students in the camp the opportunity to interact deeply with individuals whom they likely would not otherwise encounter, let alone befriend. A Unified Schools network in a community such as Nyarugusu, with its unique multicultural makeup and sizeable number of people with intellectual disabilities, allows youth to break through age-old barriers of language, culture, and stigma.

Wilondja, a 13-year-old Special Olympics partner in Nyarugusu who enjoys participating in Unified activities such as football and races, says Play Unified: Learn Unified has led to new friendships among people of all abilities.

“ I didn’t have enough experience with children with intellectual disabilities before [Play Unified: Learn Unified]. Through this project, I’ve learned that persons with intellectual disabilities have the right to play with persons without intellectual disabilities and create friendships together. ”

- Wilondja

The support of Play Unified: Learn Unified in Nyarugusu energizes people with intellectual disabilities. Ebinda, a 17-year-old Special Olympics athlete, has a goal of using the skills gained from Unified Schools programming and collaboration with Special Olympics Tanzania to teach communities the importance of educating people with intellectual disabilities. Unified Schools also provide Ebinda and other students with continuous social interaction involving people who aren’t family members or other people with intellectual disabilities.

“ When I play Unified Sports®, I make new friends and we get to know each other very well. I’m happy that people with intellectual disabilities feel included in the community and play with other children. ”

- Ebinda

Surprisingly—or perhaps not, given the known impact of Special Olympics programming—the establishment of Play Unified: Learn Unified in Nyarugusu has even changed the mindsets of teachers in the community who have experience working with people with intellectual disabilities. In Nyarugusu, for example, the inclusive nature of Play Unified: Learn Unified changed the perspective of Akili Baguma Yohana, a special needs teacher with 10 years of experience, about the best way to work with students.

“ Play Unified: Learn Unified has changed my mentality because I once thought that children with intellectual disabilities could not play with children without intellectual disabilities. I no longer think this way. Since participating in [Play Unified: Learn Unified], I have noticed the youth change their mentality and behavior with regard to inclusion. ”

- Akili Baguma Yohana



Special Olympics Tanzania teachers and supporters gather after a Unified Schools training



Developing Leaders of Inclusion at All Levels of Education



Youth Leaders brainstorm ideas during a Special Olympics Montenegro training session on project management

The interactive and empowering elements of Play Unified: Learn Unified are guiding students, teachers, and coaches to become leaders of inclusion in their communities. By participating

in training opportunities and joining various advocacy platforms, people at all levels of education are spreading the power of inclusion both inside and outside the classroom.



Special Olympics Kenya harnessed interest from a diverse range of community members as well as partnerships with sports, media, and educational institutions to organize multiple leadership and collaboration opportunities for supporters. Coaches and teachers from Unified Schools participated in training sessions on inclusive programming and enjoyed a two-day badminton coach training facilitated by representatives from the Badminton World Federation. Special Olympics Kenya not only strengthened relations with a governing sports body but also worked closely with local media outlets to spread awareness of the importance of inclusion. In a one-day orientation course, 25 sports journalists participated with Special Olympics athletes in a joint Unified football training session and learned about the mission and philosophy of Special Olympics and the importance of promoting Unified Sports. Additionally, Special Olympics Kenya recruited and trained new volunteers—the backbone of Play Unified: Learn Unified activities. At the University of Nairobi-Kikuyu campus, 45 students completed training to volunteer in Unified activities, ensuring the continuation of Special Olympics Kenya's operations.



Special Olympics Lebanon encouraged and facilitated youth leadership development. At a new Unified School in the city of Sidon, secondary school youth were charged with undertaking youth-led inclusive projects. These students seized the initiative, implemented an awareness session for students and teachers, and collected testimonials from students about their thoughts on Special Olympics and inclusion. At the Special Olympics Virtual Global Youth Leadership Summit, a Unified pair shared their experience of being Youth Leaders in their community. This was a notable achievement, as they showcased their goals and experiences to thousands of supporters across the globe.

Special Olympics Lebanon celebrates the recruitment of new Youth Leaders at a Unified School



Developing Leaders of Inclusion at All Levels of Education



Teachers participate in a floorball match at a Special Olympics Mongolia Unified Schools training

Special Olympics Mongolia implemented a Unified Sports training for 15 physical education teachers from five Unified Schools in the Ulaanbaatar region. The participants were educated on the use of the equipment typically used in Unified Sports, as well as the rules of floorball, and left prepared to implement Unified Sports activities in their respective schools. Special Olympics Mongolia also nurtured a relationship with the country's jiu jitsu federation, culminating in the creation of numerous new leadership and competition opportunities for Special Olympics athletes. Inspired by a Special Olympics seminar, the secretary general of the Mongolian Jiu Jitsu Federation advocated that the jiu jitsu national championships include a category dedicated to Special Olympics athletes. Under the guidance of a Special Olympics coach, 12 athletes competed in the event, and the sport has been officially added to Special Olympics Mongolia's repertoire.



Two Special Olympics Montenegro Youth Leaders at a Unified Schools training session present their ideas for improving inclusion in their community

Special Olympics Montenegro's implementation of the Young Athletes program serves as a model for other countries on the benefits of consistent promotion of inclusion among youth in kindergarten and early childhood programs. Kindergarten teachers in Unified Schools have routinely conducted 45-to-60-minute Unified training sessions two times per week. Program coordinators and teachers made a joint effort to distribute promotional t-shirts for students and teachers to use during the training sessions. Additionally, 30 Youth Leaders with and without ID from five Unified Schools participated in a project management training session, where they planned various projects aimed at improving the social inclusion of people with ID in their schools and communities.

Faces of Inclusion



Chutipol captures fond memories of his participation in the Youth Activation program with athletes from the Lampang Special Education Center

Developing Changemakers for Inclusion: Special Olympics Thailand's Story

For the past few years, Special Olympics Thailand has partnered with local universities to offer Youth Activation programs. Through these programs, university students implement projects that advocate for inclusion in schools, assist people with intellectual disabilities, and promote acceptance.

When the partnership process started, participants in Special Olympics Thailand's Youth Activation

program consisted solely of university students studying special education and physical education, and many of their "activations" consisted of sports- and play-related programs. Over the past year, however, Special Olympics Thailand has spread the message of inclusion to students who may not otherwise have an opportunity to engage with people with intellectual disabilities, bringing in new and diverse ideas for youth engagement.

Recently, Special Olympics Thailand invited students from the Business Computer Science department of Lampang Rajabhat University to participate in the Youth Activation program. Many of these students have no previous experience working with Special Olympics or people with intellectual disabilities, and they express doubts about their ability to meaningfully contribute to the Youth Activation program.

Tossapol Tansakul, national coordinator for Special Olympics Thailand's Building Communities program, understands the university students' concerns but assures them that if they give the program a chance, they will be successful. Mr. Tansakul tells the prospective Youth Leaders that any form of community engagement can change the lives of people both with and without intellectual disabilities. He convinces the students that "anyone with any talent and skill can become a part of Special Olympics and work together to help our athletes."

Through coordination with the Business Computer Science department, 27 students from Lampang Rajabhat University have joined the Youth Activation program as Youth Leaders. Over the past few months, they've applied their academic skills to create a set of 2-D animation learning tools via digital multimedia—an innovative learning development device for the over 60 people with ID who attend the nearby Lampang Special Education Center. The Youth Activation program provides many of the Youth Leaders, such as Chutipol, with their first experiences in working with and learning about the challenges people with intellectual disabilities face in Thai society.

"I [had] never joined any Special Olympics Thailand Program before [the Youth Activation program]. I [had] no experience interacting with any people with ID," says Chutipol.

Chutipol and the other Youth Leaders use learning development tools to teach students with intellectual disabilities life skills that help them become more independent and socially adaptive. These multimedia tools—which cover



Mr. Tossapol Tansakul poses with a Special Olympics Young Athlete at the Lampang Special Education Center

issues such as safeguarding, morality, self-care and personal hygiene, social roles, and self-sufficiency—are artfully and cleverly designed to encourage students with intellectual disabilities to develop an interest in spending more time learning. Using color, movement, and sound, the tools capture the attention of the students who attend the Center—most of whom are between 5 and 20 years old—and help them focus on their learning tasks.

Naphasin Duangprapha, deputy director of Lampang Special Education Center, notes that these tools have the potential not only to help people with intellectual disabilities integrate more into society but also to help others recognize the full humanity and dignity of people with intellectual disabilities.

"Each and every person with disabilities can develop and improve their abilities, given the chance to learn. Therefore, [every] learning opportunity, however small, can and will help people with disabilities. All of our students here have the same right to be served and educated as [do] any other students in the country," says Mr. Duangprapha.

“The experiences and reflection that they gain from joining the Youth Activation program will help towards their career and personal goals.”

The implementation of Special Olympics Thailand's Youth Activation program also benefits the lives of the participating Youth Leaders. Thanks to the program, Youth Leaders are becoming more aware and accepting of people with intellectual disabilities, and the experience of providing hands-on support bolsters their confidence in their ability to participate in inclusion advocacy.

“The most significant lesson that I have learnt is about how to include people with intellectual disabilities in our society. . . . All the children with intellectual disabilities that we have met, each of them has very different . . . need[s] and social character[s]. We have to develop different motivation[s] for each person. It is challenging but also fun,” says Youth Leader Chutipol.

News of the program's success at Lampang Rajabhat University has spread to other areas of the country. Six different universities across Thailand are now on board and have committed to undertake similar projects this year. Special

Olympics Thailand hopes its enthusiasm will help promote further expansion to other universities, addressing the goal of having Youth Activation programs and their message of inclusion be sustainably passed down from university senior students to new students each year.

The Youth Activation program meaningfully improves the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and provides university students with hands-on, problem-solving experiences that cannot be found in the classroom. Furthermore, Mr. Tansakul believes that these students are the next generation that will become society's leaders, and they will be aware of the needs of people with intellectual disabilities in society.

He adds, “The experiences and reflection that they gain from joining the Youth Activation program will help towards their career and personal goals. Having the new generation's understanding of people with intellectual disabilities will create more acceptance in society in the future.”



Mr. Naphasin Duangrapha shares gardening techniques with a student at the Lampang Special Education Center

Promoting Inclusion in Public Spaces



Special Olympics Bharat Youth Leaders, gathered around Chairperson for Special Olympics Bharat Dr. Mallika Nadda, are excited to volunteer in their community

Special Olympics Programs are taking full advantage of the return to in-person activities by spreading awareness through events beyond the classroom. The extension of Special Olympics activities to public spaces is ensuring not only the visibility of people with ID but also their

meaningful inclusion. These activities bring together people from all levels of social standing and highlight the talents of people with ID, helping them to rightfully be embraced and celebrated in society.



Special Olympics Bharat has involved Unified Schools in the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative—a yearlong series of events led by the government of India to celebrate 75 years of independence. Notably, on World Health Day, Special Olympics Bharat offered free health screenings to over 90,000 people with ID. The screenings were assisted by over 7,000 volunteers of all abilities, and the event received coverage from the media.



Special Olympics Chile embraced community events as opportunities to promote inclusion. During the final rounds of the Chile Open tennis tournament, Special Olympics athletes spread awareness about Play Unified: Learn Unified to attendees. Connecting through their mutual love of sports, the athletes also discussed the value of inclusion with numerous tennis stars at the tournament. Special Olympics Chile also collaborated with members of the Chilean Basketball Federation to organize its first Special Olympics basketball tournament, in which 58 athletes participated. Additionally, Special Olympics Chile formed relationships with private entities and coordinated a workshop with trainers from a fitness club franchise to encourage gyms to become environments of inclusion and engage more people with intellectual disabilities.



Special Olympics Mexico welcomed an initiative in the city of Puebla in which a Unified School held a weeklong event for inclusion, broadcasting it nationally. The hybrid event—which brought together community members, teachers, and youth of all abilities from across the country—included training sessions, a leadership forum, and Unified activities. Special Olympics Mexico also formed an alliance with the Mechatronics department of the University of Monterrey to hold Unified activities for students and athletes around the usage of autonomous robot technology, which provided exposure to Special Olympics programming for people on the campus and introduced some students with ID to the higher education environment.



Special Olympics Pilipinas promoted Play Unified: Learn Unified to the country's next generation of leaders. A Special Olympics Pilipinas athlete and volunteer contributed to the storytelling project of the Ateneo Special Education Society, which is an inclusive organization in Quezon City run by university students. The duo shared their experiences in Special Olympics, and their stories were published across the organization's social media outlets. Special Olympics Pilipinas also co-organized a virtual fundraiser with PHAROS, the student organization of the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Asia and the Pacific. The two-day event consisted of information sessions about Special Olympics, followed by Zumba dancing and group games led by Youth Leaders.

Faces of Inclusion



Special Olympics El Salvador athletes and partners enjoy a Unified basketball game at a public festival

Celebrating Inclusion in the Community: Special Olympics El Salvador's Story

In San Salvador, El Salvador, a series of community events are attracting the interest of the public. Hundreds of participants, volunteers, and spectators are coming together in public spaces to enjoy recreational activities and meet new people. These events create moments of joy and education within the community, especially as the purpose of the events becomes clear to newcomers: to celebrate Special Olympics athletes in public spaces. Over the past six months, Special Olympics El Salvador has held four sports festivals, all open to the public, where Special Olympics El Salvador athletes showcase their broad range of skills and lead participants in Unified activities.

At these dedicated events for Unified Sports and activities, Special Olympics El Salvador athletes and their supporters celebrate the talents of people of all abilities. Furthermore, people with and without intellectual disabilities work closely together toward a common goal on the playing field, learning from each other in the process. Through sharing such collaborative experiences, Special Olympics athletes are gaining confidence and becoming more empowered to advocate for themselves. Meanwhile, members of the community are introduced to Special Olympics programming and the message of inclusion in an interactive and welcoming setting.

Paola Salguero Flores, a project coordinator for Special Olympics El Salvador, says the idea for the festivals began with a desire to involve people with intellectual disabilities in public spaces, such as community venues, that are traditionally occupied by people without intellectual disabilities.

“[The festivals] allow us to carry the message of inclusion to help others understand intellectual disabilities and show it’s not impossible for this population to have the same opportunities, participate in all aspects of life, and develop their capacities to the fullest,” says Paola.

To date, each of the festivals has centered around a unique activity as its theme, including a variety of sports as well as dancing. To set up each event, Special Olympics El Salvador draws on its local relationships to secure resources, gather volunteers, and recruit spectators for the events. To ensure enough space for all the festivals, Special Olympics El Salvador collaborated with the office of San Salvador’s mayor to secure a large public bike path as event space. Special Olympics El Salvador also partners with a public high school to use its facilities, allowing athletes and partners to participate in a variety of sports.

Special Olympics athletes say the public festivals allow them to share their stories and skills with new people. Jennifer, an athlete from San

Salvador, attended a festival focused on dance and aerobics. She loved the festival and hopes more such events can be held in the community.

“My favorite part of the festival was that I felt happy and relaxed,” says Jennifer. “I love dancing and meeting new people . . . and I like that people outside [Special Olympics] got involved because they were attracted to the cause and what we shared.”

In addition to generating support for Unified Schools by local organizations, the events spread awareness of the importance of inclusion to people who previously never interacted with people with intellectual disabilities. Rodrigo, a coach at a local football club, had his first experience participating in a Special Olympics event through volunteering at one of the festivals. He shares that the experience was special, and it ultimately inspired him to be more involved with Special Olympics El Salvador.

“I saw how natural the interactions between Special Olympics athletes and partners were in the sports activities, and it made everyone feel so good. The experience was so fun and full of laughs, hugs, and sincere competition that [it] really hits you and makes you want to do more to help in the inclusion of all these athletes,” says Rodrigo.



Rodrigo (front row, second from left) celebrates with Special Olympics El Salvador athletes and partners after volunteering at a public festival



Staff member Paola (right) poses with a Special Olympics El Salvador athlete at a public festival's awards ceremony

Through these festivals, Special Olympics El Salvador has seen immense improvements in the self-esteem and socialization skills of athletes. Special Olympics El Salvador plans to continue to organize these festivals in collaboration with more athletes, partners, and supporters. With the participation of local organizations and schools, as well as through reaching new people to join the movement for inclusion, Special Olympics El Salvador hopes to expand its impact to as many people as possible. Most importantly, Special Olympics El Salvador is happy its initiative has created spaces where all people feel welcomed.

"My favorite part of the festivals has been seeing the coexistence of people with and without intellectual disabilities. . . . I'm thrilled to have helped create this inclusive space," says Paola.

"I'm thrilled to have helped create this inclusive space."



Jennifer (front row, center) joins her Unified dance team at a public festival in El Salvador



A Special Olympics El Salvador partner and athlete embrace inclusion during a public festival

Establishing Sustainability Through Government Partnerships



Students in Special Olympics Chinese-Taipei circle up during a Unified activity

When Special Olympics Programs establish relationships with local and national government ministries, abstract notions of inclusion become sustainable practices and achievements. Government partnerships not only encourage Programs to propel their members to their greatest potential but also

create joint accountability between Programs and government ministries to ensure that goals are being addressed. Through collaborations with special education agencies, education and sports ministries, and other institutions, these partnerships help guarantee the success of Play Unified: Learn Unified for years to come.



Special Olympics China utilized its connection with the China Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and Their Relatives (CAPIDR), which is a government entity involved with the recruitment of Unified Schools. This year, CAPIDR and Special Olympics China jointly recruited 142 Unified Schools in over ten provinces and cities across the country. The partnership also organized a two-day Unified Schools training, in which 90 teachers from 40 schools participated.



Special Olympics Chinese-Taipei collaborates regularly with its partners in the special education departments of Keelung City and Chiayi County. The partnerships have strengthened the reach of Unified Schools programming in new locales and have provided a mutually beneficial relationship for information exchange. The successful recruitment of 39 Unified Schools, assisted by this partnership, inspired the Accton Cultural and Education Foundation to provide continuous and generous financial support to fund Unified activities. The Foundation also invited Special Olympics Chinese-Taipei to organize two speaking events for its employees about inclusion and people with ID.



Special Olympics Egypt's relationships with two government ministries have increased the quality and quantity of Play Unified: Learn Unified activities throughout the country. First, the partnership with the Ministry of Social Solidarity has increased the collaboration between Special Olympics Egypt and various organizations that focus on people with ID and other marginalized populations. These organizations gathered with Special Olympics Egypt in multiple awareness events that were made possible by the resources, such as venue space, developed through Special Olympics Egypt's second partnership—this one with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Together, these two partnerships have allowed Special Olympics Egypt to spread its message of inclusion to a variety of groups and in multiple governorates across the country.



Special Olympics Morocco formed a partnership with the Regional Academy of Education in Rabat, the capital city of Morocco, with several objectives in mind: to organize more Unified events and recruit Youth Leaders, to facilitate idea exchanges between Special Olympics Morocco and the academy, to train more teachers, and to more frequently utilize facilities for activities. This fruitful partnership has precipitated an expansion of possibilities and resources available to Special Olympics Morocco. Most recently, the partnership has enabled Special Olympics Morocco to organize two large-scale Unified events with a combined 260 Unified pairs, 16 coaches, and 13 teachers, as well as to provide and distribute sports equipment to Unified Schools.



Special Olympics Serbia's successful cooperation with the country's Ministry of Youth and Sports led to the implementation of 15 Unified Sports competitions over the past six months in bocce, volleyball, and table tennis. Over 250 athletes and partners engaged in these events. Over the past year, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has also supported Special Olympics Serbia in its recruitment of ten new Unified Schools, and the two partners continue to work together to reach additional school communities across the country.

Faces of Inclusion



1st Junior High School of Vrilissia celebrates the end of a school year with a Unified activity

Using Government Partnerships to Achieve Inclusion: Special Olympics Hellas's Story

On a beautiful spring day, students at the 1st Junior High School of Vrilissia in Athens, Greece, gathered in the front schoolyard to celebrate the end of a successful school year. The students were different from each other in both age and ability—some were students with intellectual disabilities and others weren't—but that didn't matter. They exchanged handmade treats, laughed and chatted easily with each other, and celebrated friendships made throughout the year.

Similar scenes can be found at an increasing number of schools across Greece. Since 2018, Special Olympics Hellas has initiated Unified Schools programming in consultation with the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs to foster the social inclusion of youth with intellectual disabilities in school communities. With over three years of evidence that Unified Schools programming has produced a powerful impact on local communities—including people both with and without intellectual disabilities—

Special Olympics Hellas and the Ministry further strengthened their partnership and signed a Memorandum of Cooperation that has elevated Special Olympics activities. With the official support of the Ministry, teachers, students, and administrators are receiving more robust and institutional support to implement inclusion in education.

Charalampos Papaioannou, the head of the Directorate of Special Education for the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, collaborates with Special Olympics Hellas in numerous meetings and discussions to ensure that programming initiatives are primed for success.

“[We] support the educational programming of Special Olympics Hellas . . . to empower social inclusion of persons with disabilities, supporting their families and sensitizing the educational community,” says Mr. Papaioannou.

Through this government partnership, teachers have yearlong access to e-seminars related to Special Olympics and its philosophy, sports-for-all and its benefits, and the creation of Unified teams and inclusion. According to Georgia Kollileka, a teacher at 1st Junior High School of Vrilissia, these resources are crucial for teachers to effectively implement inclusion.

“It is well known that the educator’s role is not limited to mere knowledge transmission but, mainly, [and] taking as a starting point the students’ specific needs, it becomes consultative, cooperative, and supportive. I strongly believe that teachers, through their participation in these educational seminars, can dive into the sheer meaning of empathy, understanding, and acceptance. This way, they will be able to more effectively [help] students with learning difficulties, and they will ingrain these values in the students so that they can gradually accept . . . the inclusion of people with disabilities, [in] the school environment at first and [in] society later on,” says Mrs. Kollileka.

Furthermore, teachers can attend the e-seminars during their scheduled work hours and receive a certificate for their completion. Through this series of educational seminars supported by both Special Olympics Hellas and the Ministry, more teachers are becoming equipped with the knowledge and tools to teach students the value and importance of inclusion. The Ministry also benefits from the official partnership. By collaborating with Special Olympics, the Ministry has access to programming that can be implemented throughout the country without expense to the Ministry itself. Additionally, the Special Olympics resources can be used by the Ministry to showcase its capabilities to various audiences and stakeholders beyond Special Olympics Hellas’s network.



Ambassador Dionyssios Kodellas (left), president of Special Olympics Hellas, and Niki Kerameus, Greece’s minister of education and religious affairs, celebrate the start of the official partnership among educational institutions throughout Greece

As made evident by the e-seminars, the resources created by this partnership are not just for promoting inclusion on the playing field. The Ministry has integrated inclusive coursework curated by Special Olympics into the school curriculum as a course option in participating schools. Teachers who take the e-courses can share their knowledge with students, who in turn receive course credit for their participation. In effect, this policy removes invisible barriers that previously prevented educators from incorporating inclusion into their classrooms and kept students from learning more about Special Olympics programming.

As somewhat of a capstone for the partnership, starting next school year the entire country will celebrate the first annual National Special Olympics Day by holding Unified events. This initiative will amplify the message of inclusion and spread awareness of its importance. Artemis Vassilikopoulou, the national director of Special Olympics Hellas, expresses why she looks forward to a time when the intent of the Memorandum of Cooperation is fully realized.

“ We will be able to achieve the maximum results as we will address even more educators and even more students on a long-term basis with the support of the Ministry. Moreover, if, from an early age, children receive the appropriate education and become aware that the world belongs to everyone and that respect and dignity are owed to everyone, then . . . marginalization and bullying incidents will keep diminishing and . . . eventually they will be erased. ”

- Artemis Vassilikopoulou

The partnership between Special Olympics Hellas and the Ministry serves as a model of a sustainable partnership that is already having an impressive impact. The partnership will remove barriers to inclusion and dramatically enable the expansion of Unified Schools across Greece. As Mr. Papaioannou notes,

“ We are certain that this collaboration will change the foundations of not only the educational community but also society as a whole as concerns their attitude [toward] and acceptance of persons with disabilities. ”

- Charalampos Papaioannou



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Ambassador Kodellas (left) and Minister Kerameus sign the Memorandum of Cooperation between Special Olympics Hellas and the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs



Section 2

Implementing the Global Thought Leader Network





Special Olympics El Salvador athletes and partners enjoy their time together at a Unified workshop

SECTION 2

Implementing the Global Thought Leader Network



Special Olympics Egypt students and supporters are all smiles during an awareness session at a Unified School

Through the *Global Thought Leader Network* (GTLN), Special Olympics intends to position itself in the forefront of shaping world opinion about one of the most urgent issues of our time: the exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities from education and consequently from the broader society. By unleashing the energy and capability of Special Olympics athletes and their supporters, so they can be seen and their power can be experienced by government leaders around the world, Special Olympics will transform communities across the globe.

As the Network has begun to take root, Special Olympics is focusing its efforts on three interconnected areas: external activation, demonstrating impact through research, and engaging media of all types. *Forging Ahead for Inclusion* will address each of these areas in turn and will conclude by outlining the latest strategy of the GTLN, which has been developed in partnership with an external consultant, FGS Global.



Special Olympics Brazil staff and supporters celebrate the launch of "Be a Part of This Story," the Program's self-published book on inclusion

External Activation by Special Olympics



Dr. Timothy Shriver, chairman of Special Olympics, speaks at the Milken Institute Global Conference in October 2021

This section describes a sampling of recent presentations delivered by Special Olympics leadership at national and international assemblies, as well as published writings that significantly bolster Special Olympics' reputation as a thought leader in inclusive policy and practice, especially related to education.



Milken Institute Global Conference, October 2021

At this conference sponsored by the Milken Institute, Dr. Timothy Shriver, chairman of the Special Olympics Board of Directors, participated in a panel that discussed the important role of service in deepening people's abilities to connect with one another and their communities. Dr. Shriver also discussed the importance of social-emotional learning, which is integral to Unified Schools, and what Special Olympics athletes and volunteers can teach us about the power of service. This conference attracted over 2,000 participants from more than 70 countries.



American School Counselor Association ASCA@Home Conference, November 2021

The American School Counselor Association hosted a conference at which Dr. Shriver gave a keynote address discussing the impact of social-emotional learning and the strong implementation partnership that Special Olympics Unified Schools can provide. Dr. Shriver also spoke about the vital role school counselors play in developing social-emotional skills and supporting students. Dr. Shriver's keynote was heard by over 1,600 participants.



"It's Time to Start Using Social Media for Good," November 2021

In this article, Dr. Timothy Shriver reinforces Special Olympics' reputation as a global thought leader by reflecting on mental health and the divisiveness, often reflected in social media, that contributes to declining mental health. He approaches the topic by focusing on social-emotional learning and lessons he has learned from Special Olympics athletes.



"Opinion: If Only Today's Divisive Politicians Could Learn from Bob Dole," December 2021

In this opinion piece, Dr. Shriver aims to capture the attention of government leaders, policymakers, and influencers by offering insightful comments on the life and career of the late U.S. Senator Bob Dole. He also uses his analysis to underscore the importance of unity.



***American Association of School Administrators
National Conference on Education, February 2022***

AASA, The School Superintendents Association, invited Dr. Shriver to deliver the keynote address at its annual National Conference on Education. Dr. Shriver spoke about the capacity of social-emotional learning and Unified Schools to transform the landscape of schools nationwide. This conference was attended by approximately 3,500 individuals.



World Early Childhood Development Forum, March 2022

Dr. Shriver was invited to deliver a keynote address at the World Early Childhood Development Forum in Abu Dhabi. The forum focused on the importance of early childhood intervention and education. Dr. Shriver's remarks highlighted the tremendous efforts of Unified Schools and the Young Athletes initiative in delivering incredibly impactful interventions that yield a high return on investment in some of the most vulnerable individuals worldwide, young children with ID.



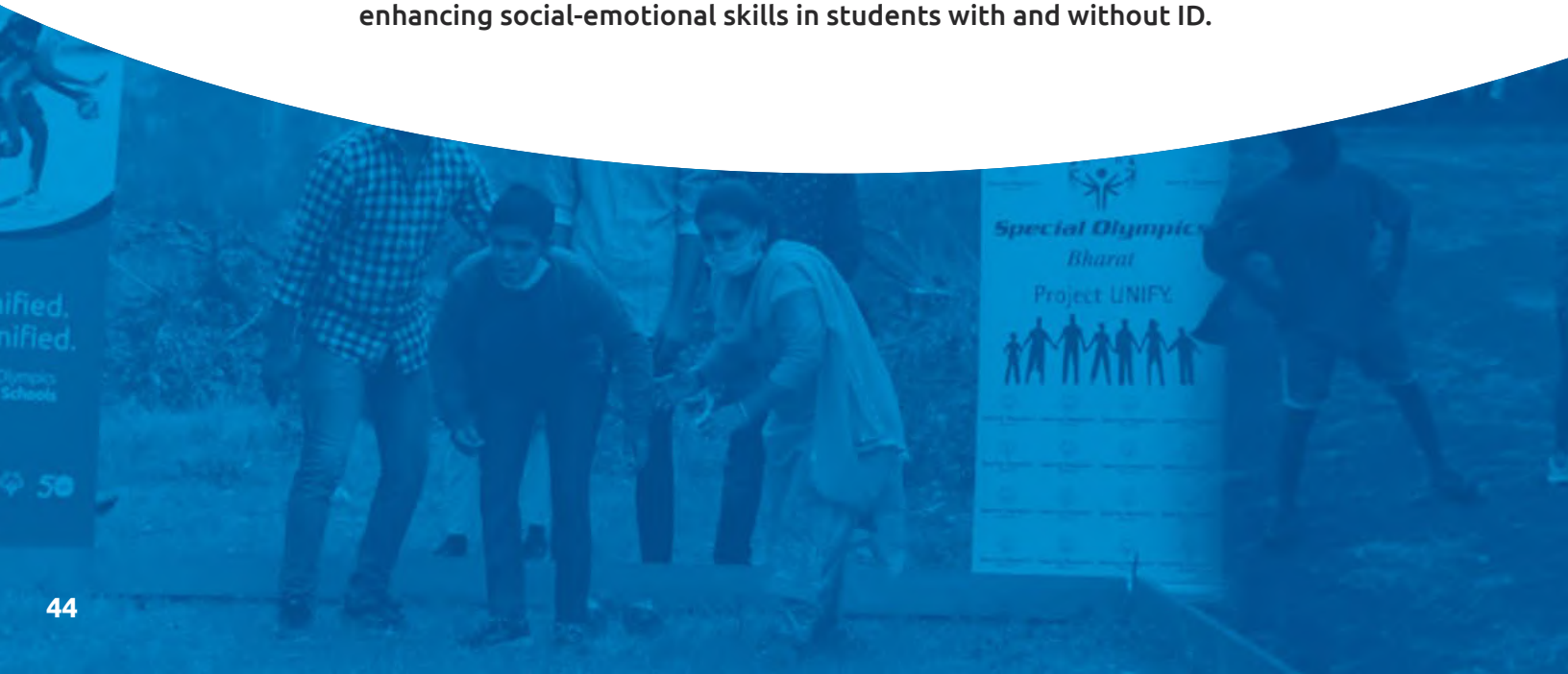
International Parliamentary Network for Education, April 2022

The International Parliamentary Network for Education convened a policy roundtable of approximately 120 individuals from around the world, including policymakers and influencers, elected officials, and government leaders. At this gathering, Dr. Shriver led a discussion on the importance of access to education, inclusion in education, and social-emotional development in education, especially for some of the world's most deserving learners, students with ID.



Testimony to U.S. Congress, April 2022

Dr. Shriver testified to the Congress of the United States of America on the function and benefits of social-emotional learning in schools. His testimony bolstered Special Olympics' reputation as a thought leader by highlighting its role as an implementation partner with other organizations. Dr. Shriver also spoke to the research results demonstrating that the Unified Schools model has proved to be highly effective at enhancing social-emotional skills in students with and without ID.





V Forum of the Americas: Sport for Development and Peace, April 2022

This forum gathered individuals from around the world who are associated with groups, such as UNESCO, that are audience targets of the GTLN. The conference included Dr. Shriver's keynote address about the impact of Special Olympics in driving development and peace through sport and with a particularly vulnerable population, people with ID.



"It's Time to Change Our Culture of Bullying," April 2022

In this piece of writing, Dr. Shriver contributes to an important conversation taking place among educators, parents, and others about bullying in schools. This discussion is highly relevant to Special Olympics, given that the Unified Schools model has been shown to significantly reduce bullying.



"Perspective: All That Is," May 2022

In this opinion piece, Dr. Shriver shares his ideas about divisiveness in society and politics—a topic that is on the minds of many thought leaders throughout the world. He outlines the importance of reframing how we view others who are different from us in belief or background. His aspirations and efforts towards a more united society encompass work that Special Olympics actively promotes through Unified Schools.



Demonstrating Impact Through Research



Special Olympics Chile celebrates the conclusion of a large-scale Unified football event






One of the strategic priorities of the Global Thought Leader Network is to demonstrate Special Olympics' impact through research. This segment of the report outlines the materials Special Olympics has developed to that end.

Research Infographics

Special Olympics has produced several materials to present the impact of its programs, as evidenced by research. In the first phase of Play Unified: Learn Unified, Special Olympics executed a research study that evaluated the impact of implementing the Unified Schools model in four diverse country settings: Special Olympics China, Special Olympics Bharat, Special Olympics Hellas, and Special Olympics Kenya.

The findings of this research reveal the significant impact that the Unified Schools model has in three important educational areas: improving attitudes and behaviors towards people with intellectual disability (which in turn removes a significant barrier to accessing quality education), improving social-emotional learning of all students, and improving school climate. Ancillary data provide evidence of decreased bullying in Unified Schools and the admiration that parents and caregivers of individuals with ID have for Unified Schools programming.

To share these transformative data in a succinct format, Special Olympics developed five one-page infographics. Following are links to the English versions of the infographics.

-  **Global infographic:** illustrates the most impressive data from all four research sites evidencing the impact of Unified Schools
-  **Mainland China infographic:** illustrates the most impressive data from Special Olympics China evidencing the impact of Unified Schools
-  **Greece infographic:** illustrates the most impressive data from Special Olympics Hellas evidencing the impact of Unified Schools
-  **India infographic:** illustrates the most impressive data from Special Olympics Bharat evidencing the impact of Unified Schools
-  **Kenya infographic:** illustrates the most impressive data from Special Olympics Kenya evidencing the impact of Unified Schools

These infographics were developed with several audiences in mind. Not only do they offer insights for researchers and educators, but they are also accessible to a broad, general audience. The accessibility of these infographics makes them certain to generate attention from students with and without ID, their parents, educators, researchers, thought leaders, and policymakers alike.

That accessibility also extends to language translations. The Global Infographic has been translated into seven languages, while each country-specific infographic has been translated into that country's official language. This language accessibility expands the audience of individuals who can engage with the research globally. It also facilitates the local dissemination of the research within the various countries, a concept that is addressed again in the next segment of this report.

Research, Policy, and Practice Briefs

To amplify the content of the infographics, Special Olympics developed four country-specific research briefs that explain the study and results in greater detail. These research briefs were constructed to target an academic audience, who constitute an important segment of the thought leader community Special Olympics aims to reach. Academics set and fulfill research agendas that can have important implications for the development and implementation of inclusive policies and practices at the local and country levels. These four research briefs are currently being translated into local languages to support local dissemination.

To complement the infographics and research briefs that present the data from Phase 1 (June 2018–June 2021) of Play Unified: Learn Unified, Special Olympics—through its Global Center for Inclusion in Education located in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates—has developed a series of policy, research, and practice briefs. These briefs discuss Play Unified: Learn Unified in terms of its impact data, best practices, and implications for inclusive policy development. The Global Center briefs are listed and linked below. They can also be accessed on the Youth and Schools webpage of the Special Olympics website, under Global Center for Inclusion in Education.



Research Brief 101, “Sport as a Bridge and Connector Among Youth” by Jacqueline Jodl and Louis Lauria



Policy Brief 102, “United Arab Emirates: Policy Best Practices for Building Inclusive Education Systems” by Timothy Shriver and Ayman Wahab



Research Brief 103, “Social Inclusion of Students with Intellectual Disabilities: Global Evidence from Special Olympics Unified Schools” by Michelle Yin and Jacqueline Jodl



Case Study 104, “Forging a Path to Inclusion: The Inspiring Account of Romania’s Unified Champion Schools” by Cristian Ispas and Mihai Arsenie



Research Brief 105, “The Academic and Social-Emotional Impacts of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools” by Andrea Cahn, Jacqueline Jodl, Michelle Yin, and Ashlyn Smith

With materials in hand that had been tailored to share Special Olympics’ impact data with both general and academic audiences, Special Olympics took the next step, combining that impact data with storytelling initiatives that captivate media, so that Special Olympics’ impact could be extended even further. That work is outlined in the following section.



Special Olympics China is proud to be part of the Unified Schools network

Communicating Impact Through the Media



A Special Olympics Lebanon staffer leads a discussion about inclusion at a Unified School

To further leverage the power of the Unified Schools impact data, Special Olympics has combined its data with storytelling. This approach was constructed to ensure Special Olympics' impact will garner the media

engagement it needs and deserves on an ongoing basis. This media engagement contributes to Special Olympics' standing as a global thought leader that shapes public discourse.

Faces of Inclusion

Faces of Inclusion is the storytelling initiative Special Olympics has launched to showcase compelling stories that bring the programming impact data to life. Faces of Inclusion segments, released monthly, feature personal impact stories from all 21 countries participating in Strategy 1 (which is, to expand Play Unified: Learn Unified) of the *Global Campaign for Inclusion* for the purpose of scaling Unified Schools programming globally. Faces of Inclusion features athletes, coaches, families, and other community members whose experiences “make real” what the research tells us—that Special Olympics Unified Schools, with their inclusive policies and practices, meaningfully change the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in all corners of the world. Harnessing this impact to galvanize positive attitudes and behaviors among the public at large will transform individuals with and without ID, their families, their communities, and governments. Selected Faces of Inclusion stories are linked below.



Faces of Inclusion: Stories of Impact from Play Unified: Learn Unified



Changing Mindsets in Jamaica: Cecil's Journey



Giving Students a Voice in Mongolia: A Unified School's Story



Advocating for Inclusion in Lebanon: Tali's Story

Examples of Media Engagement

To ensure that the impact data from Unified Schools and the impact stories from Faces of Inclusion are disseminated to large audiences and leverage publicity for thought leadership gains, Special Olympics headquarters and regional staff work with local, national, and international media. The media engagement received to date featuring programmatic impact data and Faces of Inclusion stories has been amplified and complemented by the media engagement garnered from the speaking and writing thought leadership activations discussed earlier in this report.

Featured Media Engagement: 2022 Special Olympics Malta Invitational Games

In June, the Republic of Malta hosted the first international competition of Special Olympics since the start of COVID-19, hosting close to 1,000 athletes from around the world. In addition to sport competitions, the games featured Healthy Athletes screenings along with academic forums and presentations—all of which further Special Olympics' influence as a global thought leader.

Highlighting the impressive work happening in the Republic of Malta, David Evangelista, Special Olympics regional president and managing director for Europe Eurasia, wrote a powerful piece published in *Times of Malta*, [linked here](#). In the article, David outlines that the Republic of Malta has long witnessed “the richness that comes in diversity and bringing cultures together . . . [in] culinary arts . . . language . . . social policy and so much more.” That history made Malta the “most fitting location to celebrate a movement of inclusion that stands to offer a counternarrative to a world increasingly fractured, divided and othered.”

Additional examples of media engagement are listed and linked below.



“SNF Awards \$8.5 Million to Special Olympics for Inclusion Efforts”



“Schools Against Discrimination: How Special Olympics Movement Is Bringing Wind of Change”



Senegal Local Television Station Story on Special Olympics Unified Schools Workshop



“All-Round Joy at Staging of Unified Sports Football Rally”

In addition to the examples listed above, Special Olympics headquarters and regional staff are continuing to work with country Programs to maximize the engagement of local, national, and international media with the published infographics and briefs.

Strategizing for Scale



Students in Special Olympics Egypt socialize at a Unified Schools activity



A swimmer supports inclusion at a Unified event

To ensure that Special Olympics' external activations and communications plans are fully leveraging its thought leadership potential, Special Olympics hired an external consultant to develop an overarching strategy for the GTLN. This overarching strategy will maximize Dr. Shriver's ongoing external activations, as well as the thought leadership assets Special Olympics continues to develop in research and storytelling.

Special Olympics hired [FGS Global](#) as an external partner for the GTLN. FGS Global is charged with developing a strategy for identifying the levers that will energize decisionmakers and funders essential to the growth of Unified Schools worldwide. FGS Global will shape the messaging work of the GTLN with this goal in mind: to successfully position Special Olympics as a

recognized leader in the global battle to eliminate the exclusionary treatment of people with ID, in schools and in society at large. Logically, as Special Olympics transforms communities that were once exclusive to now become inclusive, that work will simultaneously provide keys to solving another pressing issue—the greater divisiveness and separation of peoples around the world—a crisis whose urgency is evidenced by the growing call to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The final deliverable of this work will be an implementation plan that Special Olympics can use to scale and maximize the impact of its thought leadership work for the duration of the GTLN. The rest of this section outlines FGS Global's approach to developing that plan.

Implementation Plan

Three-Step Approach

FGS Global began by identifying a key insight: that the success of the GTLN will be determined, in part, by how well Special Olympics can align with what outside audiences care about. By maximizing that alignment, Special Olympics can close its relevance gap. FGS Global also recognized how well conversations about the unique contributions of people with ID intersect with broader conversations that are relevant to some of Special Olympics' key thought leader targets, including topics such as mental health, social and emotional learning, tribalism/online hate, and sport as a development tool. FGS Global concluded that closing the relevance gap requires that Special Olympics position the organization in a larger conversation, take a point of view, and then commit to changing the debate. In this way, Special Olympics will move from organization-centric messaging to a socially and politically relevant approach.

To develop and implement a strategy that incorporates these key insights, FGS Global devised a three-step approach that, once complete, will bring Special Olympics to its culminating move: executing the implementation plan. The following discussion outlines this three-step approach.

1

Step 1: Map the relevant conversations

FGS Global mapped conversations relevant to Special Olympics—specifically, the trends around education and social policy that recognize the unique contributions of people with ID. To map these conversations, FGS Global adopted the combined approach of coupling desk research with in-depth interviews of external stakeholders who could further contextualize the conversations.

2

Step 2: Identify the highest priority conversation

Once FGS Global had outlined the initial conversations that are relevant for Special Olympics to join through the GTLN, the Special Olympics team determined that the highest priority conversation to join is the one about access to education, especially in developing countries. Entry to this conversation will include leveraging Special Olympics' relevance in related conversations, such as building inclusive economies through inclusive work, improving mental health of young people, and others.

Now that Special Olympics has identified the conversation that it most wants to join through the GTLN, FGS Global is studying that particular conversation in greater detail. The goal of FGS Global is to map external stakeholders and potential advocates in the conversation, as well as pinpoint which organizations are convening gatherings relevant to the conversation.



Members of a Unified football team in Special Olympics Jamaica celebrate during a Unified Sports competition

3

Step 3: Develop and test the campaign and implementation plan

In this final step, FGS Global will develop a narrative and messaging about Special Olympics' relevance to the top-priority conversation: access to education in developing countries. FGS Global will then stress test the narrative and messaging with policy influencers in Washington, D.C., employing an online discussion platform called Caucus. This audience will be a helpful proxy for similar policy influencer groups around the world.

Next, FGS Global will develop an implementation plan centered around how Special Olympics can successfully join the identified conversation, so that Special Olympics can move the needle on inclusion in education and align with Special Olympics' overall brand positioning. This implementation plan will outline how to enter the debate in an effective way, premised on Special Olympics' point of view. As part of this work, FGS Global will also outline recommendations on potential content, platforms, and partners, as well as provide guidance on how to utilize Special Olympics' existing assets, voices, and relationships. The implementation plan will bring Special Olympics to the final stage outlined by FGS Global: execution.

In summary, the Global Thought Leader Network has delivered an ongoing series of external activations by means of presentations and writings and has maximized their effectiveness by harnessing a wide range of media. Simultaneously, the GTLN has been actively conducting research and disseminating findings on the impact of the Unified Schools model. In addition, the Network has engaged an external partner, FGS Global, to develop an overarching strategy to ensure that the thought leadership efforts achieve the greatest possible benefit. The Looking Ahead section at the end of this report provides more details about how Special Olympics will continue to execute this strategy moving forward.

Section 3

*Launching the
Global Leadership
Coalition for
Education and
Inclusion*





Unified teams representing Special Olympics Bosnia and Herzegovina participate in European Basketball Week

SECTION 3

Launching the Global Leadership Coalition for Education and Inclusion



Dr. Timothy Shriver (center), chairman of Special Olympics, meets with (left to right) Sven Albrecht, national director of Special Olympics Germany; Christiane Krajewski, board chair, Special Olympics Germany ; Angela Merkel, former chancellor of Germany; Nyasha Dera, Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger and Special Olympics International board member; and Shawn Ferguson, senior vice president for Government Relations and chief of staff, office of the chairman for Special Olympics International



David S. Evangelista, regional president and managing director for Special Olympics Europe Eurasia, meets with Helena Dalli (center), commissioner of equality of the European Commission, along with Dr. Lydia Abela, first lady of the Republic of Malta and president of Special Olympics Malta, at the European Commission

Special Olympics, bolstered by a generous grant from SNF, has embarked on an ambitious mission: to galvanize leaders, policymakers, and aid agencies from countries around the world to embrace inclusion, as demonstrated by their political and financial commitments to scaling Special Olympics' highly effective Unified Schools model and other similar inclusive policies and practices. This section of *Forging Ahead for Inclusion* outlines the steps that have been taken thus far to move this mission from aspiration to reality.

As part of a shared commitment to scale the impact and reach of the Play Unified: Learn Unified platform, Special Olympics and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation are developing the first-ever *Global Leadership Coalition for Education and Inclusion*, which aims to mobilize national governments, the international development sector, and global philanthropy to protect and fully realize the rights of children and youth with ID. In pursuit of its mission, the Coalition is implementing a concerted strategy to generate commitments from the international development sector to finance the expansion of Play Unified: Learn Unified and in doing so to strengthen the capacity of the Special Olympics movement at local and national levels.

The work of the Coalition will amplify the ability of the Play Unified: Learn Unified initiative to

transform the education sector and the wider community. The Coalition's goal is to mobilize a minimum of 30 national governments and to generate commitments of US\$100 million to propel the movement of Special Olympics forward over the next decade. Employing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD) as a collaborative platform for action, Special Olympics is in the process of creating cooperative agreements between Special Olympics Programs and countries' respective government ministries (education, sport, health, social welfare, etc.) to facilitate financing, growth, and alignment with national and regional government strategies.

Special Olympics has been active over the past nine months in positioning the Coalition for maximum visibility, impact, and scale. Together with SNF and the global community, Special Olympics has planned the launch of the Coalition to take place at a specially designed Global Summit for Inclusion to be held in conjunction with the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023. Convened under the leadership of Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, the Global Summit for Inclusion will bring together the inaugural group of nations who will make public commitments to finance the national expansion of Play Unified: Learn Unified as part of a larger commitment to full implementation of the ratified UN-CRPD.

Launching the Global Leadership Coalition for Education and Inclusion



David S. Evangelista (right), regional president and managing director for Special Olympics Europe Eurasia, meets with Robert Abela, prime minister of the Republic of Malta

In addition to national and regional government representatives, Special Olympics intends to position key UN global partners to both bolster and support the Coalition's effort, including but not limited to the leadership of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In addition, Special Olympics will prioritize the engagement and financing capabilities of key foreign aid agencies to support the effort across low-to-middle-income nations. These agencies include GiZ (Germany), FCDO (United Kingdom), NORAD (Norway), USAID (United States of America), Irish Aid (Ireland), KOICA (Korea), and others.

Through ongoing collaboration across the Special Olympics network, the Coalition has identified a list of target nations that will form its inaugural group. In addition, Special Olympics has mobilized and formalized a dedicated internal working group on the building and implementation of the Coalition, as well as an external Global Advisory Group that will help position, amplify, and strengthen the Coalition's impact. This Global Advisory Group comprises global development

experts; leaders from the diplomatic community; noteworthy academic professors from Harvard University; and a cross section of education, development, and civil society experts who have become a core part of the strategy's implementation and vision. To formalize the structure of the Global Leadership Coalition for Education and Inclusion, Special Olympics plans to nominate two preeminent co-chairs in concert with SNF, as well as nominate two accomplished Special Olympics athletes to ensure that the voices of young people with ID are positioned for increased visibility and impact.

Over the past six months, as part of the Coalition's initial implementation phase, Special Olympics' extensive consultations with national governments and regional government bodies have been met with considerable receptivity. That momentum is building as the partnership moves into the second half of 2022. Special Olympics has used a range of key events to drive the membership of the Coalition, including the Special Olympics Malta Invitational Games 2022, the Special Olympics Germany National Games 2022, and key consultations with the European Union, UNICEF, and the International Parliamentarian Network for Education (IPNED).



David S. Evangelista (far left), regional president and managing director for Special Olympics Europe Eurasia, meets with (left to right) Annie Risso, national director of Special Olympics Gibraltar; Fabian Picardo, chief minister of Gibraltar; Francis Mauro, athlete leader for Special Olympics Gibraltar; and Gonzalo Ramos, manager of organizational development and regional support for Special Olympics Europe Eurasia

Section 4

Looking Ahead





A Special Olympics Senegal athlete beams with pride after a Unified event in the community

SECTION 4

Looking Ahead



Special Olympics Bharat keeps students enthused and engaged

As the first full year of the Global Campaign for Inclusion concludes, Special Olympics is thrilled to continue to expand its grassroots programming, elevate voices of inclusion, and engage national governments in the journey toward an inclusive future. With the backing of a grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the impact of the Global Campaign for Inclusion will reverberate throughout schools, communities, and institutions around the world. Moreover, with

its all-encompassing goal of a better future for people of all abilities, the Global Campaign for Inclusion has the potential to categorically shift the collective direction of education and global development policy well into the future. Indeed, as *Forging Ahead for Inclusion* has made clear, the effects of the brand of inclusion amplified by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation have already begun to do just that.

Expanding the Impact

The growth of the global Unified Schools network proves that the welcoming nature of Play Unified: Learn Unified appeals to a universal audience. As more schools embrace inclusion, Play Unified: Learn Unified will continue to provide students, educators, and supporters with training to develop leadership skills and a platform to celebrate each other's differences. Additionally, the expansion of Play Unified: Learn Unified has been accelerated by the launch of the Global Thought Leader Network and the progress achieved toward convening the Global Leadership Coalition for Education and Inclusion. These components ensure that inclusion is being established as an ever-pertinent social and political objective in discourse and policy. Significantly, this work is changing mindsets toward intellectual disabilities, enabling Special Olympics to engage new communities in implementing inclusive practices and expanding Unified Schools.



A Special Olympics Lebanon athlete takes a leap during a Unified Schools training session

Shaping Public Understanding

A movement without advocates and followers goes nowhere. Special Olympics is dedicated to identifying and supporting the voices of those who understand the mission of inclusion, especially in education, and are willing to use their myriad platforms to spread the message worldwide.

In particular, the stakeholders in the Global Thought Leader Network are energized to move beyond the launch of the research phase and on to strategy execution as they position themselves at the center of the international debate on inclusion in education. Backed by evidence-based knowledge from global programmatic work, Special Olympics has crafted compelling narratives with a strong potential for galvanizing leaders, policymakers, and aid agencies from countries around the world to embrace inclusion. As the Global Thought Leader Network begins executing the strategy developed in partnership with FGS Global, Special Olympics will also support the following external activations of thought leadership:

Dr. Timothy Shriver will be speaking at the Show Up for Teachers Conference in Utah, USA.

Dr. Timothy Shriver is leading a series of Instagram live videos in which he discusses pressing issues in education with American educators.

Special Olympics country Programs in all four research sites are continuing to work with media to further disseminate their research findings.

Achieving Sustainability

With the momentum generated from the successful launch of the Global Campaign for Inclusion, Special Olympics is primed to further establish the structures and partnerships that will engender and safeguard the sustainability of programming well into the future.

The Global Leadership Coalition for Education and Inclusion is preparing to implement its plans for a considerable expansion. A series of important consultations has been scheduled with additional national governments, with foreign aid agencies in the Nordic countries, and across a range of diplomatic missions from New York, Geneva, and Singapore. Special Olympics will also be holding direct partnership discussions with Germany in October 2022, both to advance the planning of the Global Summit for Inclusion and to formulate preliminary thoughts around a national project cooperation agreement that will position the Coalition's work as a key legacy of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.

In closing, Special Olympics extends its sincere gratitude to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation for its sustained commitment to and financial support of the Global Campaign for Inclusion. The combined efforts of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and Special Olympics are driving this movement to permeate all levels of society and to cultivate communities where differences are valued and inclusion is the norm—transforming lives in the process. As the second year of the Global Campaign for Inclusion begins, Special Olympics is eager to demonstrate how the groundwork laid thus far will further the creation of a society in which *all* young people are encouraged to use their voices to shape a brighter, more inclusive, and more just world.



FORGING AHEAD for inclusion

Annual Report

July 2021–June 2022