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STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION

**Special
Olympics**



COMMITTING TO INCLUSION

Annual Report

July 2022 – June 2023




Leadership Note

In 2021, Special Olympics and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) elevated their longstanding partnership by announcing the launch of the *Global Campaign for Inclusion*. Driven by the inherent right of persons with intellectual disabilities (ID) to experience self-worth and be accorded dignity, and empowered by a generous grant from SNF, the *Global Campaign for Inclusion* is an ambitious international vision of acceptance and inclusion for people with ID. Consisting of three interrelated strategies, the *Global Campaign for Inclusion* is designed to:

- Expand upon and continue to globalize the vision of *Play Unified: Learn Unified*, which brings sports-based, Unified programming into schools and community centers.
- Collaborate with social, political, and cultural thought leaders by means of the *Global Thought Leader Network* to integrate Special Olympics' message of inclusion into mainstream public discourse.
- Spearhead a global policy agenda—by convening the *Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion* to mobilize dozens of national governments, United Nations (UN) global partners, and foreign aid agencies—that ensures the financial commitment and political will to support and sustain inclusion through the Coalition members' respective nations.

Coinciding with the closing ceremony of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, the *Global Campaign for Inclusion* completed its second year of activation with notable achievements. Over the past year, we have expanded our global network of Unified Schools by over 84 percent across 21 countries and jurisdictions and have increased the number of coaches and teachers trained in Unified Sports® by over 83 percent. To date, *Play Unified: Learn Unified* has engaged over 406,000 students of all abilities, along with their families, friends, and members of their respective communities.



The *Global Thought Leader Network* amplified Special Olympics' messaging to new audiences in various media outlets and coordinated meetings with key stakeholders in education and inclusion around the globe. These contributions culminated alongside the successful kickstart of the *Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion* at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, where 14 countries were announced as the Coalition's inaugural members to support both politically and financially the Unified education of millions of youths with and without ID.

As Special Olympics continues to commit to the transformational elements of the *Global Campaign for Inclusion*, we want to express our deep appreciation to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. The strategies made possible by the SNF grant have galvanized individuals, educational institutions, national governments, and multilateral organizations to take active roles in making our vision of a truly inclusive world a reality. We are grateful for this opportunity to share with you our latest report—*Committing to Inclusion*—and through these words and photos to embody the powerful impact of SNF's partnership with Special Olympics.



David S. Evangelista

Regional President and Managing Director
Special Olympics Europe Eurasia



Special Olympics Hellas students learn about intellectual and developmental differences during a Unified activity

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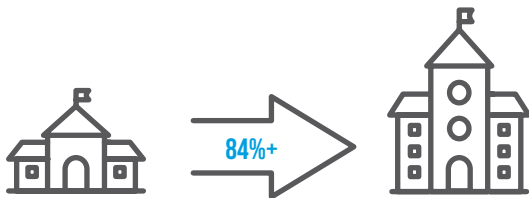
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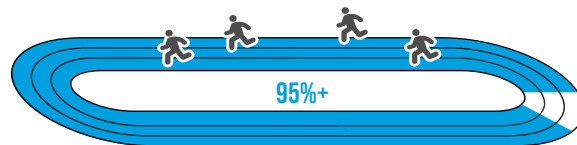
Snapshot: Global Campaign for Inclusion

Growth of 21 Programs: July 2022–June 2023



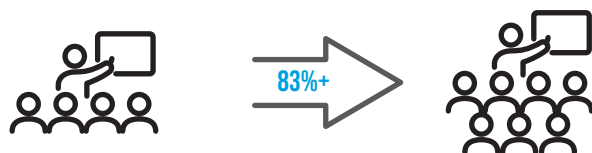
1,587 Total Unified Schools Recruited

(including more than 84 percent increase in the past year)



82,896 Total Unified Partners and Athletes Engaged

(including more than 95 percent increase in the past year)



11,010 Total Teachers and Coaches Trained

(including more than 83 percent increase in the past year)



406,863 Total Youth Engaged

(including more than 140 percent increase in the past year)

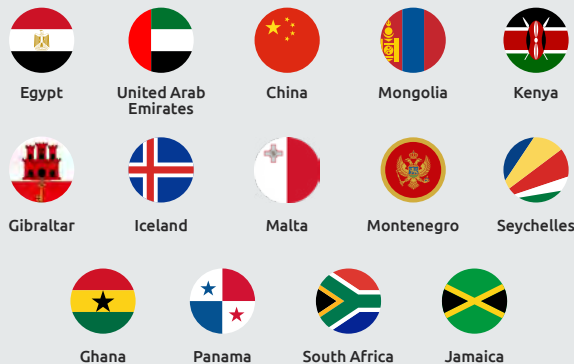
Highlights from the Past Year

Global Thought Leader Network



Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion

At the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, 14 national governments committed political and financial support for the expansion of Special Olympics Unified Schools and Unified Sports programs.





Special Olympics Caribbean collaborated with administrators and community members in its Unified Schools network to assist in the implementation of its countrywide Unified football program.



Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa organized multiple Unified events outside of the school setting, such as nutrition and cooking activities and indoor skiing.



Special Olympics Latin America deepened its relationship with government ministries, which allowed Programs to recruit Unified Schools in new regions of their respective countries.



Special Olympics Africa strengthened partnerships with nongovernmental organizations and hosted training workshops on Unified Sports for teachers and coaches.



Special Olympics Europe Eurasia established formal partnerships with universities' physical education departments to encourage new coaches to volunteer for Special Olympics events and trained hundreds of Youth Leaders on leading Unified Sports activities.



Special Olympics East Asia organized strategy meetings among its Unified Schools to plan their schedule of events and implemented a lecture tour to spread awareness of the benefits of Special Olympics programming.



Special Olympics Asia Pacific worked with local governments to host large-scale Unified Schools events and developed Youth Leaders in universities to plan inclusive projects.



Scan to watch an infographic video about these metrics!

Section 1

Play Unified: Learn Unified





A Special Olympics China athlete shows determination during a Unified activity

SECTION 1

Play Unified: *Learn Unified*



Special Olympics Montenegro Young Athletes navigate an obstacle course



Participants and spectators share in the fun at a Special Olympics El Salvador Unified Sports event

Play Unified: Learn Unified takes the theory of social inclusion for people of all abilities and puts it into practice. As a critical element of the *Global Campaign for Inclusion*, Play Unified: Learn Unified brings together people with and without ID through the formation of Unified Schools, where engagement in common interests such as sports, the arts, and community service breaks down societal barriers and stigmas associated with intellectual disability (ID).

When individuals focus on what unites them with other people, rather than what divides them, communities are formed. Unified Schools exemplify such communities, where people with and without ID are accepted and embraced for who they are. The steadfast support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) for Play Unified: Learn Unified has transformed hundreds of thousands of youths, teachers, coaches, and family members into ambassadors for inclusion who are positively impacting the lives of people in their communities every day.

Sustaining this idea of social inclusion fundamentally changes the lives of people of all abilities. When a community is involved with Play Unified: Learn Unified, everyone benefits. Friendships form, professional capacities develop, and people learn to be more tolerant and kinder to their neighbors, no matter how different they may seem.

Over the past year, the 21 Special Olympics Programs within the Play Unified: Learn Unified framework achieved the following:

- Strengthened Unified leadership
- Deepened government relationships
- Developed ambassadors for inclusion
- Grew community partnerships

The Special Olympics Programs that accomplished these outcomes are proud to share a few details about the strategies they employed to bolster inclusion.

Strengthening Unified Leadership



Special Olympics Egypt athletes and partners enjoy a day skiing at the Mall of Egypt

Play Unified: Learn Unified brings together students with and without ID—known as “athletes” and “partners.” The model encourages the students to play together; inevitably, they also learn from each other. Through these interpersonal connections, fostered during Play Unified: Learn Unified activities, Special Olympics Programs embolden Unified athletes and partners to identify the kinds of inclusive programming they want to see in their schools and neighborhoods. As the athletes and partners learn to advocate their own interests, they begin to develop leadership skills. Eventually, with the support of Special Olympics Programs, they become Unified leaders of inclusion in their own communities.



Special Olympics Egypt obtained support from community partners to hold multiple Unified events hosted by Special Olympics athletes and partners. At the Mall of Egypt's indoor ski center, 30 students of all abilities coordinated Unified activities that were available to the public and designed to spread awareness about Special Olympics. Additionally, Unified athletes and partners from Egypt trained with international basketball players from the African Basketball League to develop their own playing skills and technique.

Special Olympics Lebanon organized leadership opportunities for students at Unified Schools to educate their peers about nutrition. Students of all abilities planned and participated in Unified cooking activities with a focus on preparing healthy food dishes and discussing positive nutritional habits. During these interactive culinary activities, Special Olympics athletes and partners took the lead in sharing knowledge with their peers.



Special Olympics Mexico elevated the involvement of Special Olympics athletes in Unified activities from their traditional role as participants to a leadership role as facilitators. At several events throughout the country—including Unified Sports competitions, teacher workshops, and meetings with local organizations—Special Olympics Mexico athletes partnered with Program staff to share their perspectives on inclusion and to increase the visibility of people with ID in their communities.

Special Olympics Thailand developed Unified leadership programs with four universities throughout the country. These programs bring university students and Special Olympics Thailand athletes together to participate in workshops on inclusion. Following the workshops, the participants implement projects that promote acceptance of people with ID in their communities. These relationships between the university students and athletes are spreading awareness about Special Olympics Thailand and also prompting more people to join the movement for inclusion.



FACES OF INCLUSION

Special Olympics El Salvador



Gaby (left) and Amy (right) perform a traditional Salvadoran dance at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023

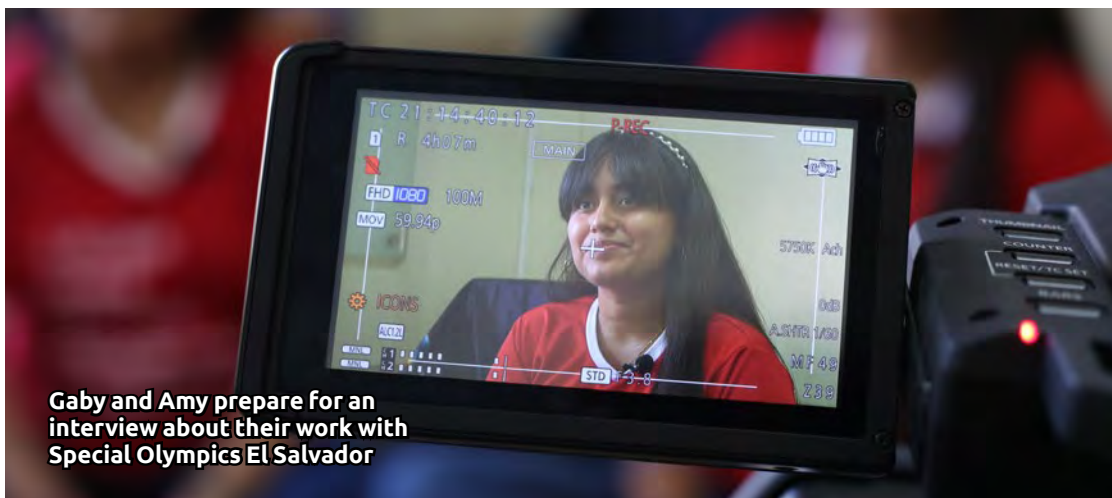


Scan to watch a Faces of Inclusion video about Gaby and Amy!

Hand in Hand for Inclusion: Gaby and Amy's Story

Even though they're not related, Gaby and Amy refer to each other as sisters. They met three years ago at a Unified Schools event, where Gaby was a Special Olympics El Salvador Athlete Leader and Amy was a Unified partner with the Scouts Association of El Salvador. After striking up a friendship, the duo paired up as colleagues and have consistently advocated inclusion in their country. Together, they spread the message of Special Olympics to schools, nongovernmental organizations, and government ministries in El Salvador.

Gaby and Amy's success as a Unified pair highlights the potential of giving young people with and without intellectual disabilities the chance to lead together. By co-hosting inclusive projects in their community and holding conversations with school and government officials about the importance of Unified Schools, Gaby and Amy are changing the perspectives of people around them. In doing so, they are actively creating welcoming spaces where people of all abilities can thrive and be accepted for who they are.



Gaby and Amy prepare for an interview about their work with Special Olympics El Salvador

Deepening Government Relationships



Special Olympics Senegal students show their love for inclusion at a Unified basketball game

Collaboration between Special Olympics Programs and their governments is critical to the growth and sustainability of Play Unified: Learn Unified. When governments invest politically and financially in Special Olympics programming, the relationship greatly benefits Programs in recruiting new Unified Schools, training teachers and coaches, and holding large-scale events in public spaces. This joint accountability between Special Olympics Programs and governments legitimizes the efforts for inclusion and helps more people of all abilities reach their full potential.



Special Olympics Brazil leveraged its relationships with government ministries to conduct multiple training sessions and Unified events throughout the country. A collaboration with the state of Pernambuco supported the implementation of inclusive projects in 25 Unified Schools. Each of these projects was led by a Special Olympics athlete and a Unified partner. Additionally, meetings with the Secretary of Education in Rio de Janeiro led to more teacher training, access to more Unified Schools, and the organization of a Unified festival that included students of all abilities from 80 schools in the state.

Special Olympics Pilipinas (Philippines) has established an entire network of collaboration among government ministries, schools, and community centers in Pasig City. These relationships support the growth of Special Olympics programming throughout the city, increasing the number of Unified Schools and Special Olympics athletes and strengthening the presence of inclusive clubs in community centers. The Program plans to use its success with Pasig City as a best practice model for developing more agreements with government ministries across the country.



Special Olympics Senegal worked with its Ministry of Education to evaluate project outcomes over the past year and then explored areas for improvement. They also met to discuss ways of recruiting more Unified Schools and increasing the visibility of people with ID in the community. One result of these conversations was a national Unified Sports event for 27 Unified Schools, implemented with the assistance of the Ministry of Education.

Special Olympics Serbia's cooperation with its Ministry of Youth and Sports supported the successful implementation of Unified Sports competitions in bocce, table tennis, and volleyball. Special Olympics Serbia athletes and partners have consistently been granted access to community spaces where they can practice and compete, and such competitions were promoted in Unified Schools around the country.



FACES OF INCLUSION

Special Olympics China



Unified partners and athletes laugh as they begin Jianyu's inclusive art activity



Scan to read this story on the Special Olympics website in both English and Chinese!

Discovering the Best Version of Myself: Jianyu's Story

My name is Jianyu, and I'm a 16-year-old student at the Puyang Special Education School in Henan, China. I'm also a Special Olympics Athlete Leader.

When I was three years old, I couldn't walk. But after starting school, with the guidance of my teachers, I began to train in sports. At home, my dad provided me with equipment such as dumbbells and barbells, and with my parents' support, I continued to train. Gradually, my body became healthier and stronger. With a healthy body, it was through my involvement with Special Olympics that my dreams took flight.

Three years ago, with the encouragement of my teacher, I participated in a National Special Olympics Day activity at my school. I competed in the standing long jump and 100-meter dash individual event. This was my first experience with Special Olympics, and I was interested in doing more. Last year, my school and another school, Kunwu Primary School, held a Unified Schools event. This was my first time participating in a Unified activity, and I was chosen to represent our school as a Special Olympics athlete and deliver a speech on stage. With the help of my teacher, I rehearsed repeatedly and successfully delivered my first-ever public speech.

During this Unified event, I met my Unified partner Xiaotian, who is 15 years old. He warmly addressed me as "brother." We completed four Unified activities, including a 30-meter shuttle run, a freestyle basketball shooting competition, a basketball dribbling relay, and a stepping-stone crossing. We had a great time and made plans to participate in more Unified events in the future.

A few months later, Xiaotian, my teacher, and I registered for the Special Olympics East Asia Youth Leadership Summit. For four evenings, Xiaotian and I attended the summit's virtual conference in my teacher's office, where Xiaotian helped me understand the content and interact with everyone on the message board. I learned about numerous inclusive activities and competitions that take place around the world every day. It was the first time I was exposed to the concept of Unified Leadership, which brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together to spread awareness about the power of inclusion in their communities. This summit not only broadened my horizons but also made me realize my potential as a Special Olympics Athlete Leader. I was inspired to expand my network to achieve great things.

I had an idea to organize a Unified activity beyond sports. My Unified partner Xiaotian and I wanted to hold an inclusive painting activity. With the support of my art teachers and principal, Xiaotian and I decided on our project. It would be students from both of our schools coming together to create a water extension painting on a large scroll canvas. With help from my teacher, I applied for a Youth Innovation Grant from Special Olympics to pay for the materials for the activity. We were so happy when my application was accepted!

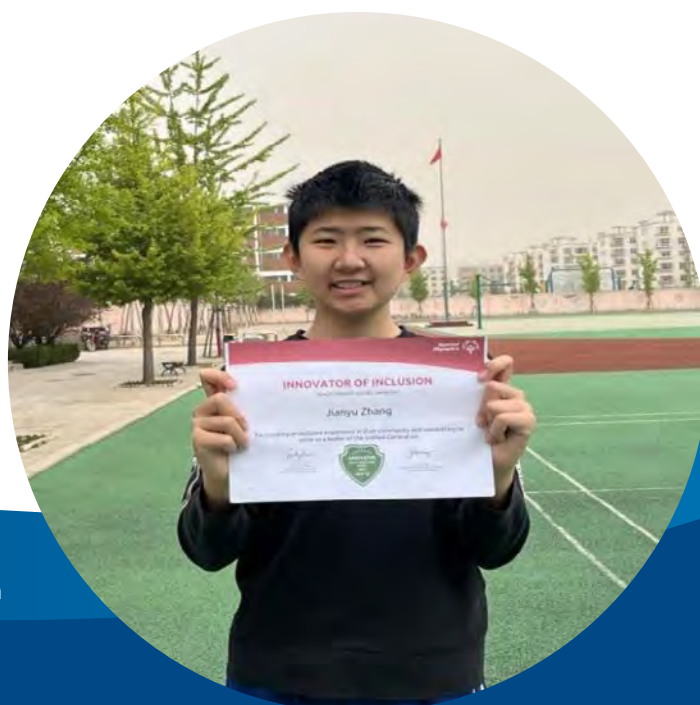




On the day of the activity, students with and without intellectual disabilities gathered in my school's art center. I explained to everyone the purpose of the Special Olympics Youth Innovation Project and the significance of the Unified art activity. My goal was to create an inclusive environment where individuals of all abilities could experience the joy of painting and appreciate the beauty of inclusion, while also increasing awareness and understanding of individuals with intellectual disabilities. With the cooperation of the school, Unified partners, teachers, classmates, volunteers, and parents, we successfully completed the activity.

After the event, many parents asked us about the next scheduled inclusive activity, hoping that their children who missed out on this occasion would have the chance to participate in the next one.

My Unified partner Xiaotian spoke to my teacher about the experience, saying, "I used to be unfamiliar with and even resistant to people with intellectual disabilities. However, after participating in Special Olympics Unified activities and pairing [with Jianyu], I realized that students with intellectual disabilities are no different from anyone else in our surroundings. They have their own aspirations and crave acknowledgment and respect, and they also possess leadership and charisma. Jianyu, who is even braver and more self-confident than I am, has transformed my narrow-mindedness and motivated me. I plan to stay involved in Special Olympics Unified activities in the future."



Jianyu proudly displays his leadership certificate from Special Olympics

Jianyu and his classmates are proud of their achievements at a Unified event



I'm happy that my successful project has planted the seed of inclusion in the hearts of people in my community. I felt so proud when I saw the smiles on the faces of everyone who participated.

In the future, my school plans to continue to work with Kunwu Primary School and other schools to organize Special Olympics events. This means my classmates and I will have more opportunities to participate in Unified activities and meet more Unified partners. I am grateful to Special Olympics for allowing me to discover a better version of myself, and I am determined to grow into an even more outstanding person!



Jianyu collaborates with classmates during his Unified art activity



Students' unique and Unified artwork is assembled for the inclusive art activity

Developing Ambassadors for Inclusion



Special Olympics Chile students follow one another in a Unified activity

The interactive and empowering elements of Play Unified: Learn Unified are creating effective ambassadors for inclusion at the community level. Students and coaches are introducing classmates and colleagues to Unified Sports, while teachers and family members are developing their capability to advocate Special Olympics programming and promote meaningful inclusion in many aspects of community life.



Special Olympics Bosnia and Herzegovina trained 120 Youth Leaders to conduct five Unified Sports—athletics, table tennis, volleyball, football, and basketball—thereby ensuring the sustainable practice of Special Olympics programming in their schools and communities. The training sessions also provided Youth Leaders with the resources to spread awareness of Special Olympics outside of educational spaces.

Special Olympics Chile reached nearly 500 classroom teachers, physical education teachers, and university students in a series of Unified Sports trainings. The sessions expanded the Program's network of Unified Schools and gave participants the capability to recruit more people to Special Olympics and design Unified activities in their own communities. One notable example of the success of these training courses occurred in the Academy of Languages and Professional Studies (AIEP) university system, where students organized a Unified Sports activity that attracted 100 Special Olympics athletes and partners.



Special Olympics Chinese Taipei onboarded new Unified Schools and introduced their teachers and staff to Special Olympics programming and inclusive opportunities for students of all abilities. The Program also implemented a lecture tour across Chinese Taipei to spread public awareness about the benefits of Unified Sports and inclusive education.

Special Olympics Jamaica added 15 more schools around the country to its Unified Schools network, which now boasts over 200 Special Olympics athletes and partners in its Unified football program. Additionally, Special Olympics Jamaica collaborated with school administrators and community members to assist in the startup and implementation of inclusive programming.



Special Olympics Kenya held workshops in three counties across the country, providing coaches and teachers with resources to recruit more Special Olympics athletes and conduct successful activities in schools and Special Olympics clubs. In these workshops, Special Olympics Kenya shared the mission of Special Olympics, educated coaches and teachers at new Unified Schools about Special Olympics programming, and presented best practices for organizing Unified Sports events.

FACES OF INCLUSION

Special Olympics Montenegro



Special Olympics Montenegro Young Athletes navigate their way through an obstacle course



Scan the QR code to read this story on the Special Olympics website in both English and Montenegrin!

Developing Young Athletes in Montenegro: Zana and Biljana's Story

If you spot Zana and Biljana at a local café in Golubovci, Montenegro, you might assume they are close friends catching up over coffee. And you won't be wrong—Zana and Biljana are indeed good friends who share stories and laughter and are comfortable with each other. But their bond goes beyond friendship. Zana and Biljana are co-teachers at the Star Garden kindergarten in Golubovci, and for the past two years they have been the driving force behind the Special Olympics Young Athletes program in their community.

The Young Athletes program brings together children ages 2 to 7, with and without intellectual disabilities, to learn basic sport skills and engage in team-building activities. The Young Athletes guidebook recommends that educators conduct program activities up to three times each week for about 45 minutes per session. Each training consists of a warm-up, skill development stations, a group game, and singing songs.

When Zana and Biljana first learned about the Young Athletes program while attending a Special Olympics Montenegro workshop in 2021, they realized they had discovered an opportunity to make a significant impact in their community. Star Garden has long collaborated with a nearby special center that provides education for individuals with intellectual disabilities, plus such services as physical and occupational therapy. The center's staff also assist some Star Garden students

who require therapy services. Sometimes the center staff come to Star Garden to offer these services and sometimes individual students go to the center, since it is just steps away. Zana and Biljana hoped the Young Athletes program could contribute to the well-being of their kindergarten students and at the same time promote inclusion between the two educational institutions.

Starting the program with their own class, Zana and Biljana initially encountered some hesitancy from parents and colleagues. "We organized a meeting with the parents to inform them about the Young Athletes program," said Biljana. "Some of them were unsure what the benefits [of the program] would be, and we had colleagues who were skeptical about it because it takes up time," she said.

Despite the misgivings expressed by some of the adults, Zana and Biljana persevered, noting that all their students were benefiting from the training and genuinely looked forward to it. Gradually, the Young Athletes program grew to include more sessions and was deemed a tremendous success—even by those adults who were at first reluctant to give it a try.

Still, Zana and Biljana knew they had not achieved the original goal they had envisioned at the Special Olympics workshop—the goal of inclusion. With that aim in mind, they shared their idea with the staff at the center and were excited by their interest in participating. Since then, the staff from the center have regularly brought their students to Star Garden to share the Young Athletes activities with Zana and Biljana's students; occasionally, the Star Garden students walk to the center for

Young Athletes in Golubovci show their glee during a training session with a parachute



a training with the children there. And just as Zana and Biljana had hoped, the lessons focus not only on motor development, cooperation, and following directions, but on accepting differences and appreciating everyone's abilities.

"We do sessions now almost every day because the students are begging to have a training. Or the parents ask for us to hold a session because their children are always talking about it at home," says Zana.

Zana and Biljana say the Young Athletes program has produced noticeable improvements in the behavior and teamwork among the students of all abilities in Golubovci. "[The students] play together and help each other if they are having a difficult time with an activity," says Zana. "We had a student who was nonverbal say his first words—

'yellow tape'—during a training session, because we have yellow tape to show the starting points for our different Young Athletes activities, and we always tell the children to start at the yellow tape. The teachers and parents were shocked and delighted to hear him speak," she said.

The Young Athletes program has also given Zana and Biljana more knowledge about how to help students with differing abilities to succeed. "As a result of our workshop with Special Olympics, we see the needs of our students more clearly," says Zana. "Young Athletes has helped us to recognize different behaviors of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to explain the importance of motor skills and socialization to parents," she says.

Zana and Biljana recommend that all kindergartens in Montenegro offer the Young Athletes program. They believe it helps students of all abilities learn how to cooperate with each other and develop their physical and communication skills.



Students at Star Garden participate in a Special Olympics Young Athletes activity that improves their balance

Zana (center) and Biljana (right) assemble their students after a Young Athletes activity



“The Young Athletes program leads to the improvement of many skills in your students that you can’t imagine when you first start. It leads to more self-confidence, concentration, and understanding,” says Biljana.

When asked what advice they would offer to a teacher trying the Young Athletes program for the first time, Zana and Biljana recommend arriving at each session with a high level of energy, holding training regularly, and being patient.

“Consistent communication during the training is very important,” explains Zana. “Don’t skip sessions and do encourage your students with applause and positive words. Positive results will come. . . . Young Athletes can lead to so many possibilities for your school!” she says.

The initiative of Zana and Biljana exemplifies the good that can occur when people see a need and strive to fill it. They are making a difference in their corner of the world. This is grassroots change at its finest.



Biljana (left) watches her students collaborate to control the parachute

Growing Community Partnerships



An enthusiastic contingent from Special Olympics Hellas shows its support for Play Unified: Learn Unified

The message of inclusion in Play Unified: Learn Unified is not limited to educational and governmental spaces. Using the work of Unified Schools as a foundation, Special Olympics Programs are also developing sustainable partnerships with community organizations, providing them with the tools to both assist and promote the benefits of Play Unified: Learn Unified by way of their own approaches and resources.



Special Olympics Bharat revived partnerships with the official handball and football academies in the state of Bihar, as well as with sports centers in Himachal Pradesh, all of which supported or hosted Unified Schools events. These successes occurred after the Daulatabad Stadium in the state of Haryana became the first government space in the country to be officially recognized as a priority site for Special Olympics activities. The opportunity to have access to that space encouraged more community organizations to become involved in the implementation of Play Unified: Learn Unified.

Special Olympics Hellas established formal agreements with several universities in Athens and Komotini. With a focus on physical education departments, these partnerships spread awareness about ID and provide Special Olympics Hellas with access to people who are knowledgeable about sports and exercise. These university-level people now assist with Unified events and conduct research on the benefits of inclusion.



Special Olympics Mongolia collaborated with four provinces in selecting Youth Leaders to attend national conferences on Special Olympics. Applying what they had learned at the conferences, the Youth Leaders then assisted the Program in reaching out to rural students in the town of Hujirt to spread awareness about ID and inclusion in education. Special Olympics Mongolia also organized a meeting among the administrators of five special education schools in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar to promote the benefits of Play Unified: Learn Unified and encourage involvement in Unified Schools.

Special Olympics Tanzania strengthened partnerships with two prominent nongovernmental organizations in the country: YES Tanzania and Access Challenge. These organizations provide resources and support to recruit more schools and community centers to join the Play Unified: Learn Unified network. The organizations also coordinate with local media to cover Unified events and to interview Special Olympics Tanzania about the work they're doing on behalf of inclusion.



FACES OF INCLUSION

Special Olympics Morocco



Smiling faces tell the story after
Special Olympics Morocco athletes
complete their run



Scan the QR code to read this story on the Special Olympics website in both English and French!

Running for Unified Schools: Special Olympics Morocco's Story

Marathons are inspiring for both participants and spectators. The challenge of a 42-kilometer course summons the potential of the human spirit and prompts people of all ages and abilities to come together in support of one goal—finishing the race.

The country of Morocco is home to many marathons, including an annual race in the iconic city of Marrakech that draws tens of thousands of runners from around the world. Events such as the Marrakech Marathon foster connections among people from all walks of life. Special Olympics Morocco recently partnered with the marathon's organizers to spread awareness of the transformative power of Unified Schools, which gather students with and without intellectual disabilities to play together and learn from one another.

Cheered on by over 1,000 supporters, 55 Special Olympics Morocco athletes and Unified partners ran a portion of the marathon together. Wearing Special Olympics apparel emblazoned with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation logo, the runners promoted Unified Schools and shared with spectators the joy of inclusion.

The Marrakech Marathon organizers provided medals for the Special Olympics Morocco runners to celebrate their achievements, validating the students' efforts. "Participating in the marathon

was hard but we had a good laugh all along and we managed to do it, thanks to our coaches," said Badr, a Special Olympics Morocco athlete. "During these moments, I feel good and free," shared Badr.

The marathon was the finale of a multiday cultural exchange that Special Olympics Morocco organized with its network of Unified Schools. Hundreds of Special Olympics Morocco athletes and partners traveled from the capital city of Rabat to Marrakech, where they were hosted by a local Unified School for a celebration of inclusion. Students of all abilities enjoyed a picnic, played sports together, and toured the historic city of Marrakech.



Special Olympics Morocco athletes and partners practice football techniques together



The students who traveled from Rabat viewed the cultural exchange as a positive experience. "As a student, I learned a lot about inclusion and being in the company of a [Special Olympics] athlete. It was rewarding," said Medhi, a Unified partner. "I made a lot of friends during our days in Marrakech. We were together all the time and we had a great time," Medhi added.

This event was the first time that Special Olympics Morocco partnered with the Marrakech Marathon. The Program hopes to build off this successful experience to plan and carry out future cultural exchanges.

"Thanks to the success of this marathon, our future ambition is to bring back even more athletes from several cities of Morocco and [let] them benefit from this special experience," said Aida, a project manager for Special Olympics Morocco. "We hope to also extend the [cultural exchange] to a full week so they can enjoy a visit to the city of Marrakech and have more time to form [personal connections] with other students," added Aida.

Showing the talents of people of all abilities in a public event such as the Marrakech Marathon contributes to the breakdown of stigma and discrimination toward people with intellectual disabilities. It also provides students with an experience they won't forget. "The trip was unforgettable; we played, sang, and danced. I was happy," said Badr.

Students from Special Olympics Morocco Unified Schools engage in a football match



Special Olympics Morocco athletes are proud of the medals they won at the Marrakech Marathon



Special Olympics Morocco athletes and partners share the road in the Marrakech Marathon



The crowd comes to its feet celebrating the accomplishments of a Special Olympics Morocco athlete



Special Olympics Morocco students offer encouragement as they run together

Section 2

Global Thought Leader Network





A Special Olympics Bharat athlete takes aim during a Unified bocce activity

SECTION 2

Global Thought Leader Network



Ambassador Dionyssios Kodellas (center), president of Special Olympics Hellas, Christina Lambropoulou (in white shirt), chief financial officer of SNF, and David Evangelista (with blue tie), regional president and managing director for Special Olympics Europe Eurasia, join the carriers of the Special Olympics World Games torch in Athens



Inclusion is on full display at a Special Olympics El Salvador event

Through the *Global Thought Leader Network* (GTLN), Special Olympics seeks to strengthen its position as a recognized authority on creating accessible and meaningful learning settings for all students. Simultaneously, Special Olympics aims to raise awareness of its capabilities as an effective and experienced implementation partner for promoting greater social inclusion in education systems around the world. In doing so, Special Olympics also seeks to expand its education programs in target markets, while increasing recognition of the organization as an essential contributor to the policymaking process.

Since its launch in July 2022, the GTLN has endeavored to elevate Special Olympics' important work in the education space through stakeholder engagement, media relations, and activations surrounding major milestones and events. The interconnected activities are supported by Special Olympics' consulting partner, FGS Global, which is providing communications strategy, messaging, and tactical support to implement the campaign.

These efforts have amplified messaging to new and important audiences and led to a number of fresh opportunities for Special Olympics, including media interviews and meetings with key stakeholders.

Coverage at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023

The GTLN's vital contributions recently culminated in the successful introduction of the *Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion*. On the sidelines of the 2023 World Games Berlin, the Coalition launched with 14 inaugural member countries spanning four continents, as well as institutional and multilateral members that include several United Nations (UN) entities. A highlight of this initial gathering was the strong endorsement of one of the multilateral members—Global Partnership for Education—whose Vice-Chair Dr. Susan Liautaud offered the keynote address.

To ensure the success of the launch, Special Olympics and FGS Global developed a comprehensive communications strategy, including shaping the announcement and other elements of the Inclusive Global Development Roundtable event, crafting messaging for Special Olympics leadership to emphasize the Coalition's rationale and impact, creating materials for media, formulating content for Special Olympics' website and social platforms, developing remarks and talking points for Special Olympics leadership, and engaging with international and German media outlets.

Special Olympics Hellas students and SNF employees share their excitement as the Special Olympics World Games torch is about to begin its journey from Athens to Berlin



External Activations

Following is a sample of recent activations by Special Olympics leadership. Each item has served to bolster Special Olympics' reputation as a thought leader for social inclusion in education.



[Transforming Education Summit, POLITICO Global Insider, September 2022](#)

On the sidelines of the United Nations Transforming Education Summit, Special Olympics International Board of Directors Chairman Dr. Timothy Shriver recorded an interview with POLITICO's Ryan Heath for use in the latter's Global Insider newsletter. Dr. Shriver asserted that the failure to educate children with ID is a problem of attitudes, not resources. He further maintained that, despite the progress being made, no government and no government leader has yet done enough to support inclusion.



[Dr. Timothy Shriver interview with the Center for Strategic and International Studies \(CSIS\), November 2022](#)

In a November 2022 interview on CSIS' The Truth of the Matter podcast, hosted by H. Andrew Schwartz, Dr. Shriver discussed the importance of social inclusion in the education of young people with intellectual disabilities. He also highlighted ways the United States can work to engage in foreign policy efforts on an international scale to further social inclusion in schools around the world.



[Activation Surrounding the International Day of Education, 24 January 2023](#)

To stimulate global political support for social inclusion in education, Special Olympics undertook a major activation surrounding the International Day of Education. Efforts included an institutional statement in support of increased funding for special education services, an op-ed by Dr. Timothy Shriver in Euronews, an article in Axios, and the activation of Special Olympics Global Ambassadors.



[Op-ed by Dr. Jacqueline Jodl in The Diplomatic Courier, January 2023](#)

Special Olympics Chief of Global Youth and Education Dr. Jacqueline Jodl penned an op-ed for The Diplomatic Courier on how greater social inclusion, including in education systems, can help combat the post-COVID loneliness crisis.



[MBZ Workshop, January 2023](#)

FGS Global led a session for Special Olympics Programs at the Global Center for Inclusion in Education workshop in Abu Dhabi. The session focused on best practices for communicating with current and prospective government partners on Unified education practices.



[Op-ed by Dr. Timothy Shriver in USA Today, March 2023](#)

In response to a controversy surrounding the LEGO Group's development of an inclusive toy line that includes characters with disabilities, Dr. Shriver wrote an op-ed on the importance of representing diverse and marginalized groups in toys. He also highlighted Special Olympics' drive to promote global inclusion.



[Risk mitigation and communications surrounding Special Olympics leadership visit to China, May 2023](#)

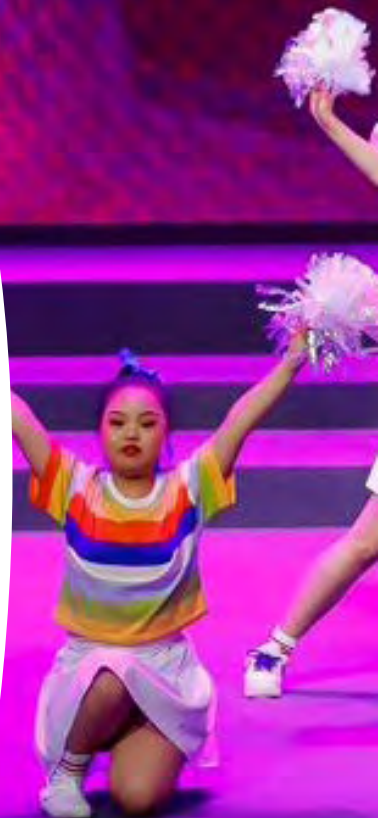
Ahead of and during Dr. Timothy Shriver's visit to China to meet with various stakeholders, Special Olympics worked with the FGS Global team to put in place a risk mitigation strategy in light of concerns surrounding the trip. The FGS team also developed talking points and messaging for Dr. Shriver's meetings and interviews.



[Engagement of the diplomatic community in Washington, D.C. \(ongoing\)](#)

Special Olympics hosted a screening of "As Far As They Can Run," a documentary on children with intellectual disabilities in Pakistan, in partnership with the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Washington, D.C. (January 2023). Special Olympics also co-hosted, with the UAE and German embassies, a portrayal of a "torch passing" (May 2023) to represent the journey of the Olympic torch from Abu Dhabi to Berlin; the event was covered in Jewish Insider and POLITICO. Attendees at both events included members of the media, U.S. government, and diplomatic community.

Cheerleaders of all abilities perform at a Special Olympics China event





| What's Next for the GTLN

Since the launch of the GTLN in June 2022, Special Olympics and FGS Global have learned a great deal about which tactics work and have the most impact, and where credibility gaps and challenges may remain.

Together, the organizations have laid the groundwork to maintain momentum, and they continue to position Special Olympics as a thought leader among key stakeholders.

Looking ahead to the second half of 2023, Special Olympics, in partnership with FGS, will continue driving the GTLN campaign forward. Priorities include:



Developing and hosting two major policy conferences in collaboration with the Brookings Institution and the University of Chicago, as well as engagements with the Commonwealth Club and the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Eleanor Roosevelt Dialogue.



Continuing to deepen engagement with Special Olympics Regional Presidents and Managing Directors—with a particular focus on Asia Pacific, Latin America, and Africa—to support thought leadership, country-level activations, and engagement with critical local stakeholders.



Providing greater visibility for research and publications emanating from the Global Center for Inclusion in Education and for experts affiliated with the Global Center.



Supporting efforts to expand the Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion and utilizing existing Coalition members' expertise and voices to serve as third-party validators of Special Olympics programming.

Section 3

Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion





Special Olympics Senegal students of all abilities play basketball together

SECTION 3

Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion



The Inclusive Global Development Roundtable conducts business at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023

In a shared commitment to advancing Unified education and development for youth of all abilities, in June 2023 Special Olympics successfully launched the Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion at the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, Germany. This achievement was made possible by a generous grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

The Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion is a multilateral endeavor that aims to secure the commitments of national governments to provide a meaningful level of domestic financing to expand the reach of Unified education for children and youth with intellectual disabilities. Toward this goal, the Coalition strives to strengthen the work of national government ministerial systems on Unified education and sport by helping them to bring together children and youth of all ability levels through Unified Sports programming and whole-school engagement.



Dr. Timothy Shriver, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Special Olympics International (second from left), joins Coalition Chairman Luis Gallegos (third from left) and other advocates and government leaders at a meeting of the Inclusive Global Development Roundtable held at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023

Forging Ahead for Inclusion

At its historic and celebratory gathering of the Inclusive Global Development Roundtable, the Coalition formally welcomed 14 national governments as the inaugural members committing to support the nation-based expansion of Special Olympics Unified Schools and Unified Sports programs. These national governments represent Egypt, United Arab Emirates, China, Mongolia, Kenya, Gibraltar, Iceland, Malta, Montenegro, Seychelles, Ghana, Panama, South Africa, and Jamaica.

In addition, the Coalition welcomed to the effort key leaders of global development, global philanthropy, and the corporate sector who

pledged to support the capacity building and programmatic expansion of the Coalition. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) joined the Coalition to ensure that inclusive education through sports is made available to all youth by extending increased gender equity and support to refugees and migrants. Emulating the leadership of SNF, the Lions Clubs International Foundation joined the Coalition as an inaugural member to activate its volunteers around the world to support youth of all abilities. The Swedish textile firm H&M Move also joined the effort to support country-specific activations in South Asia, helping to broaden the reach of the Coalition.



Coalition Operations

Over the past year, Special Olympics officials conducted a range of site visits involving leaders of national governments. The purpose of the visits and discussions was to explore opportunities for those governments to secure membership in the Coalition. Highlights included meetings with His Excellency Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, President of Egypt; Executive Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ma Zhaoxu, People's Republic of China; Pastor Dorcas Rigathi, Second Lady of the Republic of Kenya; the Honorable Fabian Picardo, Chief Minister of Gibraltar; and the Honorable Clifton Grima, Minister of Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation for Malta. In addition, targeted engagements with both UNFPA and UNHCR were conducted in New York City and Geneva, respectively, to provide orientation on the Coalition's aims, requirements, and work plans.

During the next several years, the work of the Special Olympics Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion will support inclusive education through sports programming in over 150,000 schools around the world and will positively impact the lives of 2,000,000 youth with and without intellectual disabilities. Following the strong Roundtable launch of the Coalition as part of the World Games Berlin experience, Special Olympics anticipates a spirited response from a range of additional national ministries. The Coalition has set for itself a challenging but doable goal of recruiting at least 30 national governments and securing a minimum of US\$100,000,000 in new funding.

Members of the Inclusive Global Development Roundtable join Dr. Timothy Shriver, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Special Olympics International (seated, center) and Special Olympics International Chief Executive Officer Mary Davis (standing, second from right) in a moment of playful celebration at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023



| What's Next for the Global Coalition

The 2023-2024 annual plan for the Global Leadership Coalition for Inclusion includes the formalization of national Coalition partnerships through targeted signing events, as well as ministerial-level orientation seminars led by Special Olympics athletes and their Unified peers without intellectual disabilities. As part of this focused implementation plan, the Coalition will also create the position of Special Olympics Coalition Envoy, enabling Special Olympics athletes to serve in a diplomatic capacity. The role of the envoys will be to strengthen ties with national governments and augment the visibility of the movement through sustained media engagement, public speaking opportunities, and community engagement.

The 2023-2024 term will also include a high-level convening to recruit more members into the Coalition and to generate interest among additional private sector and philanthropic partners in supporting the expansion of programming. As a follow-up to the official launch, Special Olympics will review and strengthen staffing to ensure sustainability of the Coalition's efforts to provide both support and stewardship to national governments, as well as to extend the necessary technical assistance to Special Olympics National Programs implementing Coalition initiatives.

Looking Ahead *Sustaining Inclusion*

As the Global Campaign for Inclusion enters its third year of implementation, Special Olympics is equipping the infrastructure that has been generated through the SNF grant to ensure the sustainability of Unified programming well into the future. Energized by the global display of inclusion that was broadcast from the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, the three major elements of the Global Campaign for Inclusion collectively look forward to further growth and success in the coming year.

The 21 Special Olympics Programs supported by SNF through Play Unified: Learn Unified are utilizing their now-established relationships with local and national governments and community organizations to encourage even greater commitment to inclusion. In tandem with the Unified Schools networks, this grassroots programming will continue to reach more people and entities in their respective communities. This intensive work is laying the groundwork for long-term sustainability of the Unified agenda.

The Global Thought Leader Network is preparing to host two major policy conferences in the United States; one convening will be held at the headquarters of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., while the other will take place at the University of Chicago. Meanwhile, the Global Coalition for Inclusion, bolstered by its 14 inaugural nations, is developing a strategic approach in which Special Olympics athletes will serve as diplomatic envoys to advocate additional commitments from other countries and sectors.

In closing, Special Olympics thanks SNF for its generous support of the Global Campaign for Inclusion. This sustained partnership is actively prompting all levels of society to accept differences and promote inclusion, and this work is making a difference. We look forward to elevating the message of acceptance and compassion for all people, regardless of their abilities, and we truly value the Stavros Niarchos Foundation's unshakeable commitment to inclusion.



