



Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa 2020 | **Annual Report**

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



Content Overview

01

About Special Olympics MENA
Message from Athlete Leader
Message from the Leadership
Key Figures 2020

08

Sports and Athletes
Success of the Games
Unified Sports and Coaches

28

Healthy Communities, despite all odds
Virtual Health Activities, safe at home 2020
The role of Health Messengers

44

Athlete Leadership
Unified Champion Schools
A Unified Generation: Lead to Include

18

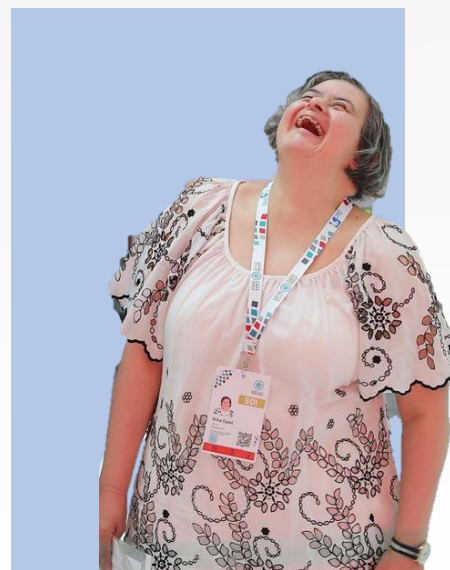
Beyond Sports in MENA
Young Athletes
Siblings in Focus

66

Media Relations
Communications and Marketing
Community of Change Agents

86

Our Partnerships
Our Team
Disclaimer of Image Usage



Disclaimer: All photographs added without athletes or any individuals wearing face masks or following WHO guidelines, are captured prior to 2020 or from the safety of individuals' home.

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



Message from Athlete Leader

"Special Olympics Egypt and Special Olympics MENA helped me to find my voice and become more confident. Being an Athlete Leader has always been a dream of mine, and today, I am proud to represent the Special Olympics MENA Athlete Leadership Input Council globally. At a young age, I knew that even my parents refused to tell anyone that I had a disability, to avoid society's lack of acceptance. At a life-changing moment, I noticed one of my friends was hit and bullied because he lives with a disability. Since that day, I became determined to show the world that we are capable of. Today, I am an athlete leader, I am always learning, and I work at Unilever. I lead a team of 25 people with intellectual disabilities at work. Society always portrays us as weak, so I want to show the world that we are strong. When people tell us that we are incapable of achieving 1, 2, 3, and 4, I will achieve all those and number 5 to prove them wrong. We can be heroes in everything if we are given the chance."

Youssef Ramadan

**Elected by Athlete Leaders, as Global
Athlete Input Council (GALC)
Representative on behalf of Special
Olympics MENA (Term 2021 – 2024)**





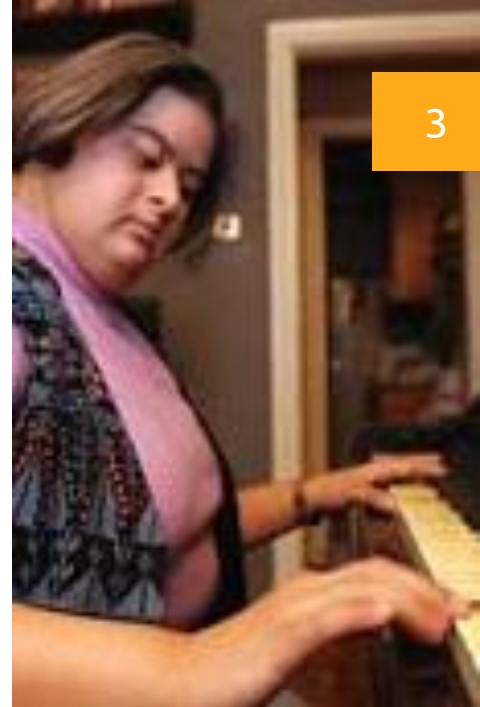
Message from the Leadership

Since 1999, we have been building the Legacy of first-ers with successful regional Games, national competition and creative initiatives that prioritize the inclusion of athletes with intellectual disabilities. In 2019, we made history, hosting the award-winning, most Unified World Games in the history of Special Olympics welcoming 7000+ athletes from 200+ countries to the UAE. We learnt, that we are only just getting started. In 2020, we put rising Africa on global map with the first-ever Special Olympics Pan-African Games, organized by the collaboration of two regions. In 2021, our team shifted our programming to virtual activities as athletes embraced digital tools to keep connected from the safety of their homes. As a region, we are heavily led by our athletes, their decisions, their heartfelt passion towards the movement of inclusion. My team and I am honored to lead the inclusion revolution with our athletes, the north star to the Special Olympics movement in Middle East/ North Africa.

Ayman Abdel Wahab
President & Managing Director
Special Olympics MENA

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa





A note of Gratitude to Dina Galal, the exemplary leader

Athlete | Advocate for Inclusion | Author

Dina Galal began her journey with Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa in 2004, and since then Dina led the way to the inclusion revolution in Middle East/ North Africa in every aspect. She played strong on the fields as a short put athlete, stunned the world with her creative expression, enabled the community to understand determination and became author to her own autobiography, a tale of resilience and success. Till date, Dina Galal has changed many lives and for her presence in all our lives, we are utterly grateful.

From: Dina's Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa Team/ Colleagues/ Family



In 1968, when Eunice Kennedy Shriver founded Special Olympics, she took a historic stand against the injustices faced by people with intellectual disabilities (ID). Fifty-three years later, just as Eunice Kennedy Shriver did in 1968, Special Olympics Middle East / North Africa (SO MENA) is setting a stake in the ground and altering the course of history. Our groundbreaking programs encompass year-round sports competition, access to health care, unified opportunities in schools and initiatives beyond sports in communities across 22 countries in the region, namely; **Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia.**



Our Focus Areas



Sports and Unified
Activities



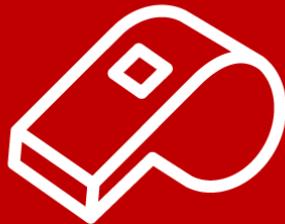
Unified Champion
Schools



Youth Engagement
and Leadership



Athlete
Leadership



Coaches



Health
Programs



Families and
Siblings



Volunteers



Young Athletes

Key Figures: 2019 - 2020

208K+

Athletes

22

Countries

10K+

Coaches

22K+

Health Screenings

2.2K+

Youth Leaders

4K+

Young Athletes

28K+

Volunteers

420+Unified
Schools**2K+**Trained Clinical
Directors**1000+**Athlete
Leaders

Leaders are committed to enhance inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in Middle East/ North Africa



Since 1999, Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa has been grateful to receive immense supported by leaders that driven to build and serve more diverse and inclusive communities consistently. Due to the history of the Games the region has organized such as Regional Games held in Egypt (1999), Morocco (2000), Lebanon (2002) and Tunisia (2004), Dubai, UAE (2006), and more up till 2018 Regional Games in Abu Dhabi 2018, the region has gained loyal friendship with the most prominent leaders and decision-makers of Middle East/ North Africa.

Sports and Athletes



Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa





Every day, our athletes train to achieve their best in local and national competitions. Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa has been hosting regional Games since 1999, unifying the region. Offering 30+ Olympics style sport including and not limited to Badminton, speedball, equestrian, sailing, volleyball, floorball and more, the athletes learn the rules of the Game and acceptance of victory on the field locally, and regionally, before they debut at the Special Olympics World Games.



Stories of our Athletes

10



Rima Abu Zahra, Special Olympics Jordan

The 20-year-old Ice Skater Rima's terrific athletic abilities were discovered by the Special Olympics Jordan program. Since being identified as a multi-talented athlete and joining Special Olympics Jordan in 2012, Rima Abu Zahra trained heavily to excel in diverse sports: roller-skating, ice-skating, swimming athletics, and more! Rima won many medals at her first athletic debut at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Los Angeles in 2015 and since then, Rima's inspirational story is dotted with celebratory achievements. She is grateful to her family and siblings for being her biggest cheerleaders.



Elissa Harik, Special Olympics Lebanon

Elissa Harik is a 26-years-old swimming athlete from Special Olympics Lebanon. With her determination and the help of her parents and Sesobel (an NGO social service for the welfare of children in Lebanon), she is overcoming all challenges to excel in various fields. In 2014 she participated in SOMENA Special Games, held in Egypt where she won her first gold medal and with a journey of success, in 2019 she fulfilled her latest achievement winning a gold medal during SOI World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi. Moreover, she's training to become a professional photographer.



2020 Key Sports Highlight: Huge Success of the First-ever Special Olympics Cross Country Skiing Virtual Training

The 3-day training was held from 7-10 December, with the participation of 150 coaches from 8 MENA countries: UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Oman, Lebanon, and Sudan. It was led by SO MENA and organized via Zoom by SO UAE. Only 3 of Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa countries get snow! Yet, the training was the first to be introduced in preparation for Kazan 2022, to launch a new winter sport to our current 6-sports participation in Winter Games.

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



2019-2020

Unified Sports

Bringing together PEOPLE, of all abilities to experience joy together.

12



2020: Key Trends in Unified Sports



Shift to Virtual

The pandemic forced the sports facilities to close shut, but the virtual sports activities increased.



Training Seminars

Virtual sports training seminars and refreshers on basics of Special Olympics sports, were key topics discussed welcoming thousands of participants.



Local Virtual Activities

Local programs enhanced the use of virtual tools and continued to meet via virtual sessions to train for Unified Sports!



Increased School Activities

As students used virtual tools for education, so did the school Coaches and educators, to learn more about Unified Sports virtually.

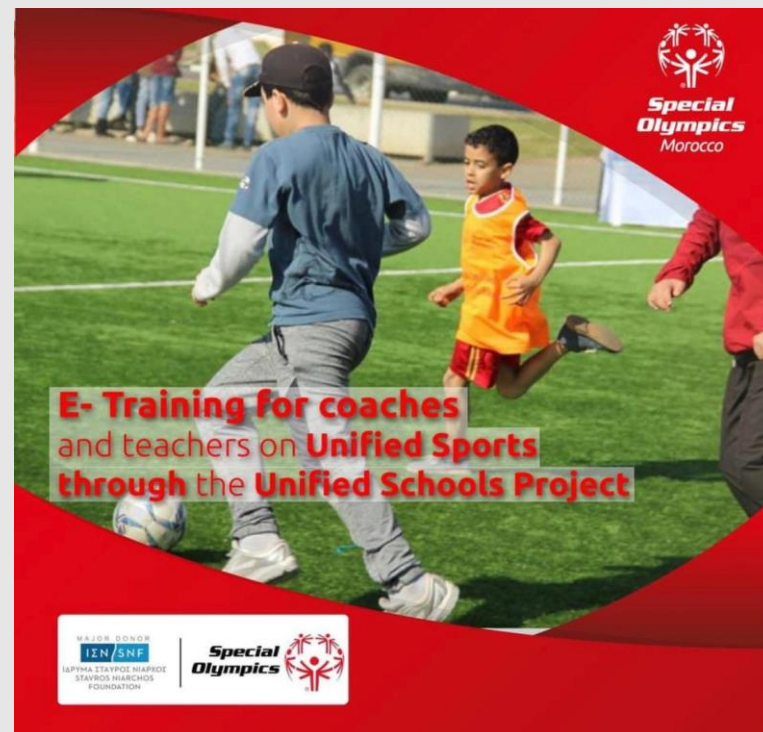
2020 Local Program Virtual Activities Highlights

14



60 Million steps towards inclusion: Special Olympics UAE gets the world moving with the Step Unified Challenge

People from across the world joined to step it up with Special Olympics UAE through the program's latest **Step Unified** challenge. Sponsored by the Bin Azeed Group, the ten-day long, challenge began on the 19th of August 2020. Special Olympics UAE broke their own record with 60 Mn steps in 10 days! The contribution of every participant also resulted in 100 athletes of Special Olympics UAE receiving training bags and sports equipment to use at home.



E-training virtual session to train Teachers and Coaches on Unified Sports

Special Olympics Morocco held an E-Training virtual session/ Stay Active to train teachers, coaches from Unified Schools and parents of students with and without ID on ideas and virtual Unified Sports activities that can be activated during the Covid-19 lockdown times to keep students fit and active and connected with their school peers. 40 coaches and teachers participated in the training.



Unified Sports Story in spotlight 2019: Regional Floorball Cup

In December 2019, Special Olympics MENA inaugurated the first-ever Regional Floorball Cup in Egypt. 11 unified, male and female teams from SO Egypt, SO Jordan, SO KSA, SO Kuwait, SO UAE and SO Morocco competed at the regional floorball cup. The event was commenced by Ayman Abdel Wahab, President and Managing Director of SO MENA and many participants from the local and regional community attended including the Global Ambassador to Special Olympics and renowned Egyptian celebrity and philanthropist, Hussein Fahmy.



Coaches



The driving force to our success in Sports: **Coaches**

Ben McBride, Special Olympics UAE Football Coach, Regularly Welcomes Hundreds of Athletes to Virtual Training Sessions



Mohammed Mounir from Special Olympics Morocco

How the Coach's lifetime commitment to promote tolerance and acceptance is changing the worldview of athletes with intellectual disabilities.



When Mohamed Mounir began his journey with **Special Olympics Morocco** as a **swimming** coach 14 years ago, he had already recognized the field of empowering people with disabilities as his true calling by working as a special needs educator. To bring a sustainable change and build a future where everyone is accepted equally, Mohammed brought the values of tolerance and acceptance to his home and his family first.

Special Olympics MENA believes in the influence and power of our coaches to build athletes from the playgrounds into leaders, advocates and champions of the inclusion revolution. We acknowledge that our work in the local communities is successful because of the coaches who choose sport as their method of bringing about true change and building a Unified Generation.



“To me, life means Badminton and Special Olympics”

18

**Watch a video about the
talented Coach from SO Iran!**



**Learn more about the
Coach here**



**Click to play a video
about Ahmadreza**

"I truly hope that everyone can learn from the Special Olympics athletes, and if we embrace the qualities of our athletes into our daily lives, we can build a world of justice, equality, and happiness."

- AHMADREZA NASIRI, SPECIAL OLYMPICS IRAN, BADMINTON COACH

Training our Coaches



Under the leadership of Emad Mohy, Director Sports and Training, and Sherif El Fouly, Director Games and Competitions, multiple training sessions are held for Coaches throughout the year. During the pandemic, few of the many success stories included the Coaches Training in May 2020 that welcomed over 200 coaches and trainers to attend virtually, the Swimming Coaches Virtual Training that welcomed 1000+ Participants co-hosted by Special Olympics MENA and Special Olympics UAE, as well as SO MENA Regional Virtual Coaches' Training on individual basketball skills, gathering 100 coaches from 15 MENA countries, virtually from 28th to 30th September 2020.

16+ Virtual trainings for Coaches held in 2020, with sessions having included up to 5000+ participants

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



2018-2020

Success of the Games





Special Olympics MENA Regional Games, Abu Dhabi UAE, 2018

The 2018 Special Olympics Middle-East / North Africa (MENA) 9th Regional Games took place in the United Arab Emirates as the region's largest multi-sports event for athletes with intellectual disabilities of 2018 from 14-23 March 2018. Nearly 1,800 athletes with intellectual disabilities participated in the Games from a total of 31 countries, including 22 countries from MENA to compete in 16 sports. The Regional Games also included Special Olympics MENA Healthy Athletes Program, Families Health Forum, Young Athletes Demonstration, and a Youth Leadership Summit.

Special Olympics World Games

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2019

Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, the Special Olympics World Games held in Abu Dhabi was the most Unified Games to ever take place that celebrated the incredible power of inclusion. Through the power of sports, the movement of inclusion grew stronger and as the world joined forces in Abu Dhabi to drive the inclusion revolution, no stone was left unturned to showcase the capabilities and determination of the athletes of Special Olympics to the world.



7000 Athletes



200 Countries



20,000 Volunteers



Winners of the Chaillot Humanitarian Awards

The Chaillot Prize is awarded to organizations for projects that support human rights awareness in the Gulf. The prize is named after the Palais de Chaillot in Paris where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on December 10, 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly. For the first time ever in history, the UAE won two awards, Special Olympics World Games 2019 becoming one of the recognized awardees.

For hosting the world's largest humanitarian event in 2019, the Higher Committee of the Special Olympics World Games 2019 proudly accepted the award for promoting inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics MENA and Africa Pan-African Games 2020, 📍 Cairo, Egypt

The Legacy of First-Evers

The first ever Special Olympics Pan African Games took place in Cairo, from 23rd to 31st January 2020 and were the only Olympic-style Games to happen in 2020 across the world. Under the auspices of HE Abdel Fattah El Sisi, the Egyptian President, the Games were a joint event hosted by the Special Olympics Middle East / North Africa and Africa regions, marking the first time that two Special Olympics regions have joined forces to create a combined Games.



“We stunned the world by hosting the first ever World Games in the Middle East in Abu Dhabi in March 2019, and we continue to achieve the impossible. We are re-writing history with a series of firsts: the first ever Pan African Games, the first Games with 50% female participation and the first ever unity of two regions”, said Ayman Wahab, Regional President and Managing Director of Middle East / North Africa (MENA).

The Games invited **800 delegation participants from 42 countries** to participate in a series of sports and non-sports events. The series of **first-ers** does not end there; for the first time in the history of Special Olympics, the Games boasted an unprecedented **50% female participation rate**.

The Games have included 4 sports (two individual sports & two team sports), in addition to non-sports events including; Young Athletes Demonstration, MENA Youth Leadership Summit, Motor Activity Training Program (MATP), Healthy Athletes, Families Exhibition, Sight-seeing Excursions and Unified Sports Experiences

The Games' legacy will live on, not only in **Egypt**, but will also be extended with **Rwanda's** commitment to host the second African Games, in addition to serving as a best-practice of how two Special Olympics regions can join forces to deliver unique Games.

Read the Full Report of the Pan-African Games 2020 here.

Pan-African Games January 2020





Health for All

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



Health Programs at Middle East/ North Africa



Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa brings the opportunity for every member of the community to advocate for Inclusive Health. The right to equal healthcare is not defined by a different ability and that is why, through our **Healthy Communities program, Community Awareness Sessions, Family Health Forums, Community FIT Clubs, Fitness Programs and Healthy Athlete Program**, we extend our community support to enable inclusive healthcare systems that integrate inclusion. In 2019, Special Olympics MENA observed a rapid increase in Health activities especially first-time initiative was taken by local programs.

2019 – Stories in spotlight

A Rapid Increase in Activities

28



Special Olympics Kuwait organized the first Healthy Athletes Special Smiles screening event in October 2019. The screening was led by the Clinical Director, Dr Youssef El Awadi, trained at the Special Olympics World Games in March 2019. With his leadership, Special Olympics Kuwait succeeded in the first 30 Special Smiles screenings at Special Olympics Kuwait and aims to achieve a total of 100 as a key milestone for Healthy Athletes in Kuwait.



For the first time ever in Fes, Morocco, a Healthy Hearing Discipline for 142 athletes and Opening Eyes Screening for 149 athletes was implemented by Special Olympics Morocco. The Ministry of Health of Morocco supported the activities and provided local clinical volunteers. Through our various disciplines, we ensure healthcare for everyone is Inclusive.

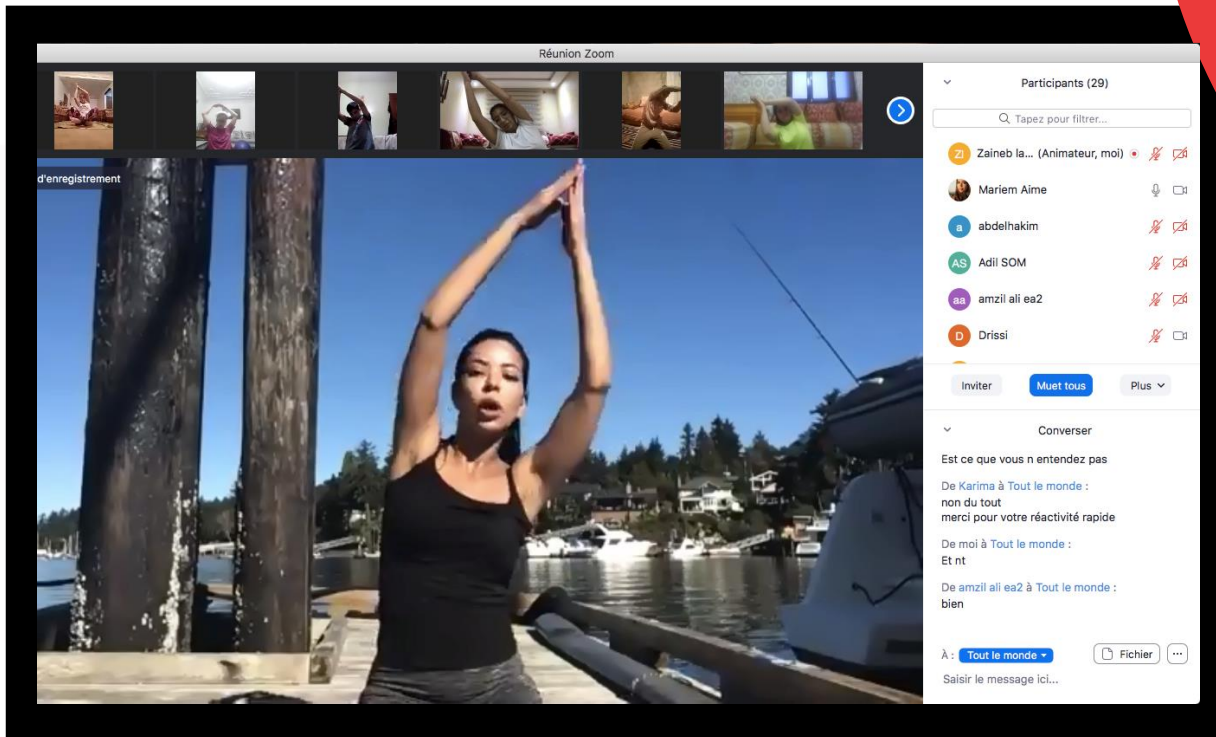
2020

Inclusive Health Amid the Global Pandemic



Healthy, Fit, Active and Safe at Home in 2020

When the Global Pandemic hit the communities in 2020, the responsibility of building a healthy community grew in multifold. Special Olympics MENA Health team tackled the challenges, launching a series of virtual engagements to keep the community of Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa, healthy, fit and active from the safety of their homes.



An Overview 2019-2020

As the quarantine forced training facilities into closure, the Special Olympics MENA community became increasingly active to embrace the digital realm, and successfully championed the movement of inclusion, in virtual space too. Only between April and May, 10 virtual sessions in Health, Fitness and Wellness category successfully engaged attendees, their families and the wider community from SO MENA. Continuing a winning streak of series of virtual, interactive, engaging sessions, many successful live events marked their debut during this time in result of online-only activities. Athletes, families, coaches and staff are invited through emails and social media. The efforts of the Special Olympics MENA team have come to fruition as the community in MENA regularly participated in the initiatives and found joy through curfews and lockdowns because of the creative, remarkable, online sessions.

Virtual Yoga and Stress Management



Click to play Special Olympics MENA International Day of Yoga Video

Special Olympics MENA team launched the first Special Olympics virtual yoga class at Zoom and Facebook Live, led by expert yoga instructor, Hana Amin in April 2020. Soon, the yoga sessions grew as athletes took more interest and attendance from all programs in the region increased. Overall, there was an increase of 200% in the attendance over a total of 15 sessions, and the efforts of Hana Amin were appreciated by a session on International Day of Yoga. The greatest validation of the success of the initiative took form through a cross-regional collaboration between Special Olympics Africa and Special Olympics MENA to welcome athletes, families, community members and attendees to attend a cross-regional session in the Global Stress Release awareness week with over 70 participants joining from both regions, online.

Nutrition and Healthy Diets

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa

**“Boost
your Energy
in Ramadan”**

NUTRITION DO'S & DON'TS

Wednesday 6th May at 3pm
(Cairo time)

With Dina Shoheib
Registered Dietitian,
Masters of Applied Nutrition

@somena
LIVE

Meeting ID: 9444 5444 991
Password: 744764



Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa

**“MAINTAIN A HEALTHY
LIFESTYLE
IN RAMADAN”**

WEDNESDAY 13th OF MAY, 3 PM
(CAIRO TIME)

WITH
DR. AMAL HADDAD

CLINICAL NUTRITION CONSULTANT

@somena
LIVE

Meeting ID: 92782169993
Password: 719450



During the month of Ramadan and as athletes stay indoors for a long period of time, lower levels of energy can be experienced. To boost energy and combat low productivity, Special Olympics MENA invited all the athletes and families to join a live nutrition session with Registered Dietitian, **Dina Shoheib**, and Dr. Amal Haddad, **Clinical Nutrition Consultant**, to learn Do's and Don'ts of nutrition during the month of fasting amid current situation. Dina shared insightful tips with 30+ participants via Zoom and Facebook Live session on the 6th of May 2020. Special Olympics MENA continues to harness the power of digital and increase engagement of Special Olympics community via virtual tools.

Fitness Activities at Home

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa

LIVE AEROBICS DANCE
with Coach Sirine El Khalidi

Tuesday 12th May
at **3 pm** (Cairo time)



@somena LIVE

Meeting ID: 96130740588
Password: 351332

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa

**Virtual
Fitness Session**

Wednesday 24th June at 2 pm
(Cairo time)

Coach Mohamed Ayman
"Honda"

Physical & Mental Strength
Coach @Hitegypt

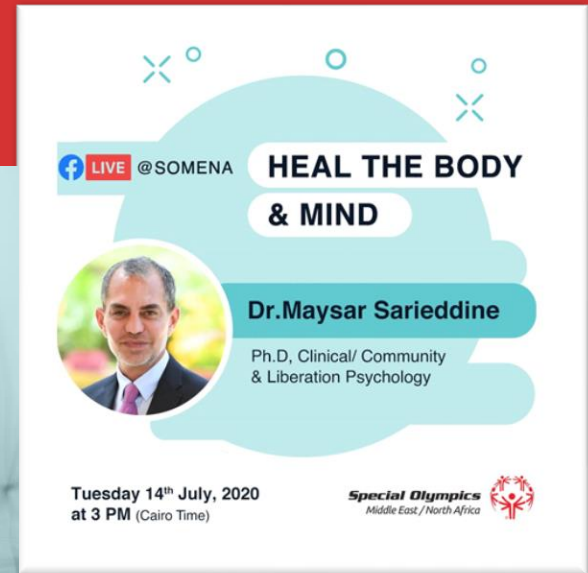


@somena LIVE

Meeting ID: 995 2300 3745
Password: 881762

Regional virtual fitness session, by the Physical & Mental Strength Coach Mohamed Ayman who is part from HIT fitness entity and who was very enthusiastic and had great vibes in the session to grab everyone's attention welcomed 60+ athletes to each of two virtual sessions held in 2020 and Coach Sirine El Khalidi led Live Aerobics Dance session virtually. The Aerobics session was similar to fitness moves with music in the background and fun for athletes. Over 40 athlete participated in each Live Aerobics session.

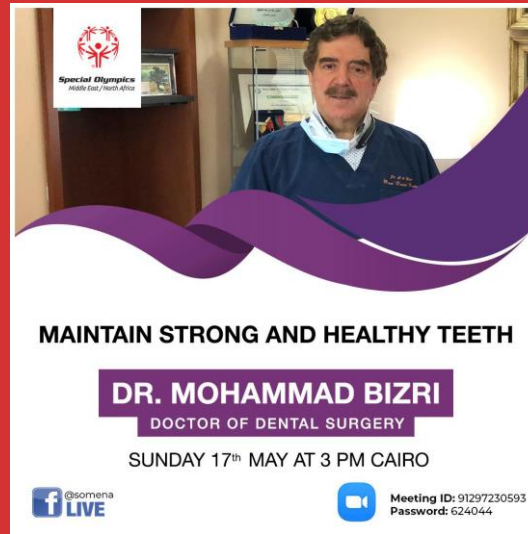
Mindfulness and Breathwork



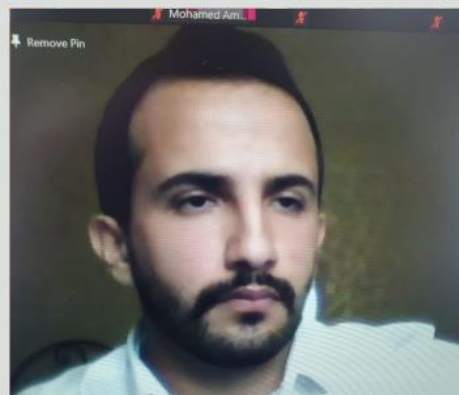
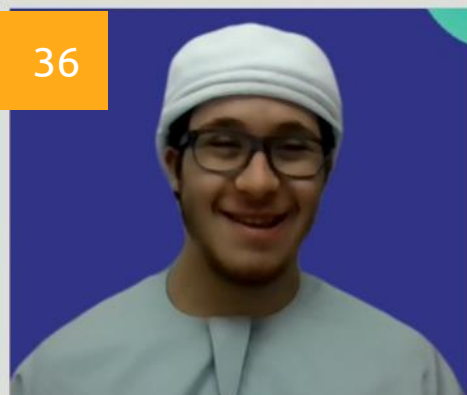
A regional virtual event on awareness of Mind and Body was organized by Dr Maysar Sarieddine. Dr. Maysar Sarieddine is a loyal supporter to the movement in MENA and regularly shares his talent and wisdom with the athletes. He holds a Ph.D. Community and Liberation Psychology. The session included different breathing techniques and tips on developing a more positive attitude, welcoming 60+ athletes. Another regional session was led by the Transformational Coach & Meditation & Breathing Instructor, Fouad Sabet, which was very interesting and relieving to the athletes at this time as COVID-19 globally increased stress levels.

Success Stories: Oral Hygiene

35



In a success story from Special Olympics Lebanon, Dr. Mohammad Bizri, renowned Doctor of Dental Surgery noticed a 23-year-old, Special Olympics Athletics and Basketball athlete, Malak Njouli, at the Healthy Athletes program Special Smiles screening. He immediately understood that Malak was hiding her teeth and even refraining from smiling! Dr. Mohammad Haseeb Al-Bizri has been a part of the Special Olympics Lebanon Healthy Communities for 3 years. He has proactively supported the movement of inclusion in Lebanon and always shows keen interest to change the lives of athletes through his skill. With the support of the Healthy Communities Coordinator, Miss Amina Al Masri, Dr. Mohammad Bizri convinced his dental clinic colleagues to transform Malak's life and replenish her beautiful smile. After two successful screenings at the Bizri Dental Clinic in Saida, Malak was found smiling with joy! During the Pandemic, Dr. Mohammad Bizri channeled his energy and efforts towards Special Olympics community once again and joined forces with Special Olympics MENA to deliver a virtual session on oral health.



36

Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa (MENA) Health and Youth Engagement team successfully host 1st Unified Schools Integrating Health & Fitness Virtual Event

On 21st of November 2020, Special Olympics MENA launched the first ***Unified Schools Integrating Health and Fitness Regional Virtual Session*** on 21st of November 2020. The event welcomed all participants: Special Olympics MENA programs' athletes, Youth from schools, stakeholders of schools, and families of athletes. Farrah Ragai, Youth Engagement Manager, Special Olympics MENA kicked-off the event by introducing Unified Schools and Unified Champion Schools (UCS). Leila El Shenawy, Health Program Manager at Special Olympics MENA introduced the health programs, their benefits, and the impact of embracing healthy activities within schools. Athletes, experts, educators, Unified partners, and students from Special Olympics MENA programs such as SO UAE, SO Lebanon, SO Morocco and SO Egypt, also shared the success stories of introducing Unified Activities in educational institutions and promoting healthy lifestyles. Over 95 participants attended the virtual event, producing a remarkable result for bringing both inclusive education and inclusive health activities into limelight.

Success stories: Local Programs Virtual Activities

37



Athletes from Special Olympics Kuwait were the first of MENA to share messages of gratitude, positivity and strength amid the current situation. The athletes shared their gratitude for health workers through notes of gratitude, and also shared preventive measures during COVID-19 through videos. All programs in MENA were highly engaged through virtual tools during this time and encouraged to explore their talents and leadership skills for sharing hope with their peers, friends, family and community. The initiatives taken by Special Olympics Kuwait prove the success of MENA in creating a unified force that led with love during challenging times.



Special Olympics Lebanon 1st Virtual Healthy Communities Workshop Special Olympics Lebanon became one of the 45 Special Olympics Healthy Communities in September 2019. Shortly after the achievement of the key milestone, the program successfully kicked-off their activities with the 1st Virtual Healthy Communities Workshop for the Special Olympics Lebanon community. In 2020, the 1st virtual workshop welcomed 89 participants: athletes, athletes' families, and students from different universities of Lebanon, attended the virtual session via Zoom, to build healthy communities despite the health conditions across the world.

Life-changing Story in Spotlight: Health Programs

38



"I am scared, terrified and I don't want to do it .. it makes me dizzy ", were his words when asked to go through the first Healthy Athletes Opening Eyes Screening event held in Fès, Morocco. Behind those smiling eyes were shivers, shakes and many rejections. However, Special Olympics Morocco Opening Eyes Clinical Director, Dr. Salma Doudi, supported the athlete. With her patience and through care, she was able to convince Mahdy to overcome his fears and empower him with vision care glasses. Mahdy is a Basketball Athlete. For the first time ever in Fes, Morocco, a Healthy Hearing Discipline for 142 athletes and Opening Eyes Screening for 149 athletes was implemented that led to this life-changing moment for the athlete.

Watch video case studies of Special Olympics MENA work towards equal healthcare for all



Global Handwashing Day

[Click to Learn More](#)



World Wellness Week

[Click to play video](#)



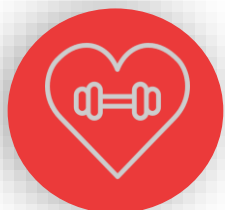
The Journey to Self-Love

[Click to play session video](#)



Practice Yoga with Us

[Click to take a Yoga Class](#)



Take part in Fitness session

[Click to play video](#)



Joy in Healthy Living

[Click to play video](#)

First three Programs of SO MENA awarded the Healthy Communities Recognition!

40



Special Olympics
Jordan



Special Olympics
Lebanon



Special Olympics
Egypt

In 2020, three programs in MENA were awarded the recognition of Healthy Communities by Special Olympics Health, made possible by the Golisano Foundation . Special Olympics Lebanon, Special Olympics Jordan and Special Olympics Egypt were awarded as they elevated their health work to broaden their athletes' ability to access year-round quality health care, wellness, and fitness opportunities within their community, train the healthcare workforce to be more inclusive of people with intellectual disabilities (ID), and create inclusive health system changes through partnerships and advocacy. It is a matter of great pride and honor for Special Olympics MENA that Special Olympics Lebanon received the recognition in their 2nd year of running the Healthy Communities program, and Special Olympics Jordan and Egypt received the recognition in their 3rd year executing the program.



SOMENA Athlete Leadership Input Council & Health Messengers Training

Special Olympics has sharpened the focus on its mission, moving from an organization for people with intellectual disabilities to a social inclusion movement from and led by Special Olympics athletes. To join this global effort, Special Olympics MENA organized its first regional Athlete Leaders Input Council meeting and Health Messengers Training from 24- 28 October 2019 in Cairo, Egypt. Athlete leaders from 7 programs in Middle East/North Africa participated and discussed crucial topics important to the Special Olympics movement and provided input for the future strategic plan. They also received training to serve as Health Messengers within their communities. During the lockdown and curfews forced by the Pandemic, SO MENA organized a total of 13 Athlete Leaders as Health Messengers virtual trainings and sessions.

The Power of Athlete-Led Engagements: Athlete Leadership



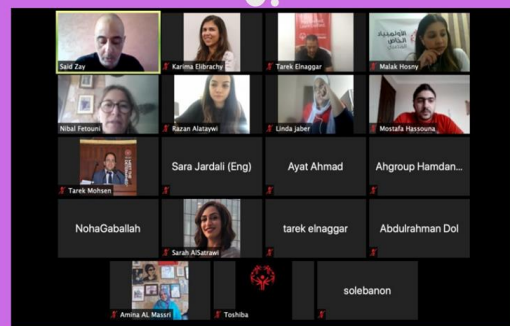
Regional Athlete Leaders Input Council (RALIC) Virtual Events



Special Olympics has sharpened the focus on its mission, moving from an organization for people with intellectual disabilities to a social inclusion movement from and led by Special Olympics athletes. To join this global effort, Special Olympics MENA organized its regional Athlete leaders input council meeting and Health Messengers Training from **24- 28 October 2019**, Cairo, Egypt. Athlete leaders from 7 programs participated and discussed crucial topics important to our movement and provide input to the next strategic plan. From 2019 to 2020, a total of 7 Athlete Leadership Input Council Meetings were organized.

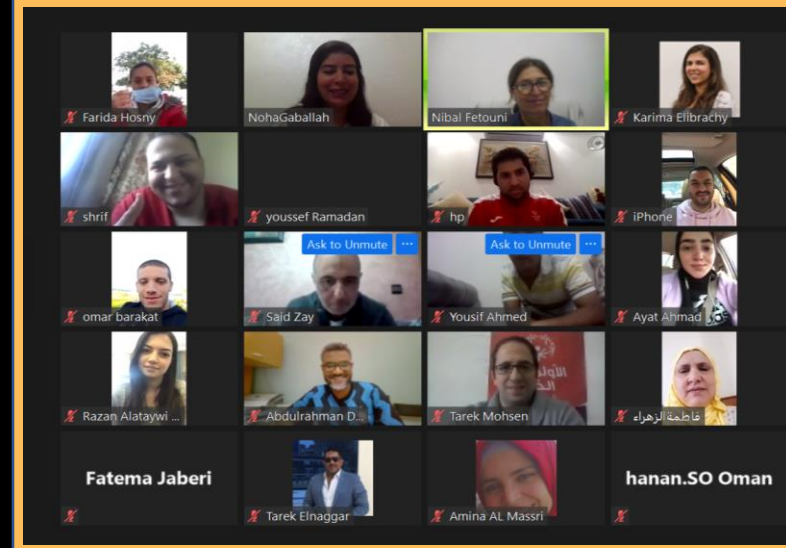


Highlights of 2020: 1st Special Olympics MENA Athlete Leaders Mentors' Meeting



The **1st Special Olympics MENA Athlete Leaders Mentors' Meeting** was held for three hours on the **30th of September 2020**. To activate the roles of the mentors, listen to their feedback about their experience, way to implement Unified Leadership Concept,, define needed resources, identify the challenges they face, and plan the way forward, 13 mentors from 8 programs joined the virtual meeting. The participating programs included Special Olympics Egypt, Special Olympics Lebanon, Special Olympics Oman, Special Olympics Kuwait, Special Olympics Jordan, Special Olympics Morocco, Special Olympics Syria, and Special Olympics UAE.

Highlights of 2020: Special Olympics MENA holds 2nd Regional Athlete Leaders Input Council and Health Messengers Training virtually



From the 2nd to 5th of June, Special Olympics MENA successfully completed the 2nd Athlete Leaders Input Council and Health Messengers Training as an online event via Zoom. Up to 50 participants attended the event including 20 Athlete Leaders who are also Health Messengers and 15 mentors from 10 programs: SO UAE, SO Kuwait, SO Bahrain, SO Oman, SO Egypt, SO Tunisia, SO Jordan, SO Lebanon, SO Morocco and SO Syria. Programs were selected because they have a local ALIC. The Athlete Leaders shared their recommendations on building the momentum of the movement during this challenging time. Topics discussed included the Special Olympics Strategic Plan 2021-2024. Key representatives of the community also joined the event to deliver online health related sessions, workshops and classes for the Athlete Leaders

The First-ever Election of Athlete Leadership in Special Olympics History

Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa Athlete Leaders set a high benchmark for athlete decision-making skills with the first-ever nomination and election process fully led by Athlete Leaders. Athlete leaders identified characteristics and qualities they would ideally have in the representative of the region and for the regional representation position for Global Athlete Leadership Council (GALC). After careful review of the profiles set by the Athlete Leaders, the SO MENA initiatives team matched 1 profile each with sub-regions: Middle East, Gulf & North Africa to have a fair representation of the region.

Three Athlete Leaders were selected: Youssef Ramadan representing SO Egypt, Ahmed Antar representing SO Lebanon and Omar Al Shami representing SO UAE. The 3 nominees were asked to prepare presentation or video to present to the RALIC group as part of their election campaign and then positions were recognized as per the number of votes!

On 27th November 2020, during the bi-monthly Regional Athlete Leadership Input Council (RALIC), Virtual Meeting, a panel discussion took place where Athlete Leaders interviewed 3 winners of the GALIC (1) and RALIC (2) for term 2021 – 2024. The meeting was initiated by Dr. Maysar Saredine's session who shared valuable recommendations with Athlete Leaders on how social and emotional wellness during lockdown. After the powerful panel discussion between Athlete Leaders and winners, the 2021-2024 strategic plan of Special Olympics was presented to Athlete Leaders.



Youssef Ramadan



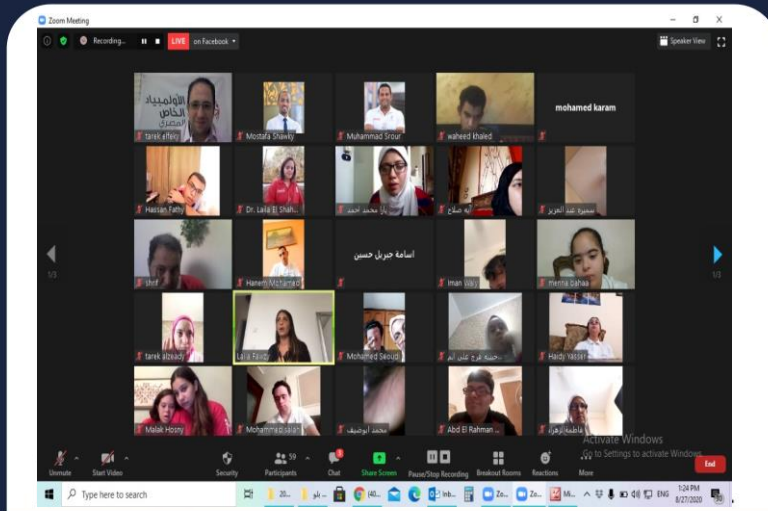
Ahmad Antar



Omar al Shami

Local Athlete Input Councils Virtual (ALIC) Activities

46



SPECIAL OLYMPICS EGYPT

Athlete Leadership Input Council Online Meeting

As the world adapts to tech-enabled tools that foster communication, Athlete Leaders from Special Olympics Egypt initiated the first virtual forum via Zoom. On 6th of April 2020, 65 Athlete Leaders, 18 mentors and 6 external speakers from 7 governorates met to discuss important topics such as health, nutrition, strategic planning, Unified leadership, leadership skills and precautions during COVID-19 as a team. They also discussed Special Olympics Strategic plan 2021- 2024.



Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



Unified Champion Schools

Inclusion begins at
the playground



Bringing Unified Schools Program to all Institutes

In 2019, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Project, *Learn Unified: Play Unified* kicked-off in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) with Special Olympics Egypt and Special Olympics Morocco. The MENA programs lead the path to foster the movement of inclusion through expanding Unified schools across their countries. Till date, SO Egypt have implemented the Special Olympics Unified Schools program in 111 schools and Special Olympics Morocco have achieved impact in 115 schools. In MENA, the exemplary work of Unified Schools is also providing a strong foundation of success stories building a path to Unified Champion Schools (UCS).



The Rise of Unified Champion Schools

As a legacy commitment of the UAE, the spark ignited by the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi in 2019, led to a pledge to ensure 100% public schools in UAE implement Unified Champion Schools (UCS) program. Today, Special Olympics UAE has activated whole school engagement, youth leadership and unified sports in numerous schools in the country, already achieving the UCS status for more than 9 schools.

Story in spotlight from Unified Schools

“Until four years old, no school accepted my son, Ali, into any programs. Ali never wanted to go to school, he hated it. Then, Special Olympics came along with the Unified Schools program in Morocco with support from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. I will always remember the day he finished football practice at a local Unified School. We were on our way home and he started crying and begging me to take him back. As he learned to accept his difference, the welcome he received was truly heartwarming. I’m very thankful for the efforts of the Special Olympics Morocco team and the support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Unified Schools has brought out happiness, courage and power to my son’s life, and for that, I will forever be grateful.”

- Imane Berrada, parent of Ali, Special Olympics Unified Schools participant.



Youth of Unified Schools engage virtually during the Pandemic

Youth Leaders from Special Olympics Unified Schools connected with Youth Athletes via virtual tools in Lebanon. In an exemplary video shared by Special Olympics Lebanon (SOL), Yasmine Harb, 16-year-old Youth Leader from Makassed Islamic School in Saida, connected with the 18-year-old, SOL Youth Athlete, Sarah Hedek. Both share their views of the current situation and discuss the activities they enjoy from or at home. Yasmine said, "Through Special Olympics, I had the opportunity to connect with Sarah and engage in a fitness activity with her that both of us enjoyed. I am grateful to have the opportunity to interact with beautiful, ambitious, athletes through SOL schools initiatives". Similarly, Youth Athlete Sarah Hedek, who usually enjoys roller skating, swimming, reading stories, and cooking, chooses to contentedly remain energetic at home during the current situation, and make new friends virtually.



Click to play video



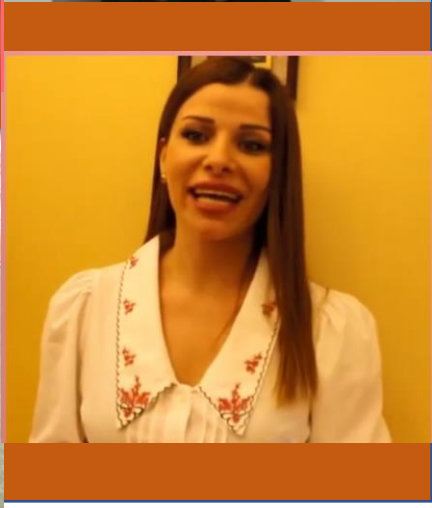
Sarah Hedek



Yasmine Harb



52



اليوم العالمي للمعلمين ٢٠٢٠

الأولمبياد
الخاص
الشرق الأوسط / شمال إفريقيا



Click to play video

World Teachers Day 2020

In observance of World Teachers Day, Special Olympics Middle East North/Africa celebrates the educators, teachers, and trainers who empower students with and without intellectual disabilities, every day. Over 20 educators from more than 7 programs participated in the World Teachers Day Celebration by sharing messages about the importance of inclusion in education and schools.

The future of Inclusive Education: His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, leads global expansion of Unified Champion Schools

In 2020, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, committed \$25 million USD to bring Unified Champion Schools for inclusion in education to six countries: Argentina, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Romania, and Rwanda. These countries will help lead the expansion of Unified Champion Schools (UCS) within their country. These countries will also play a critical role leading and developing adaptable UCS models in their respective regions, establishing standard practices that will connect a worldwide community of inclusive young leaders with and without intellectual disabilities (ID). No success is overnight. For two decades, Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa (SO MENA) has built strong foundations to become the catalyst that empowers national commitments to strengthen the movement of Special Olympics in the region. SO MENA had humble beginnings for its grand vision of a Unified Generation with 210 athletes from 13 countries at the first SO MENA Regional Games held in Egypt in 1999. With year-on-year exponential growth of the movement in MENA, in 2018, 2000+ athletes from 33 countries competed at the 9th SO MENA Regional Games in Abu Dhabi. This led to the award-winning, most inclusive, Special Olympics World Games held in Abu Dhabi in 2019 that successfully engaged 7,000 athletes from 200 countries. Over 20 years of continuous hard work in the region, blazed the trail to the ground-breaking commitment pioneered by the UAE.





SPECIAL OLYMPICS
LEAD TO INCLUDE



54

Lead to Include 2020

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa Youth Leadership

Special Olympics MENA youth leaders are playing a catalytic role in bringing together the leaders of tomorrow in support of a better, unified world. Through youth leadership and innovation opportunities, we are building a Unified Generation.



14,700+ Youth are engaged with the movement. Youth with and without intellectual disabilities regularly meet through local and regional summits to learn, grow and innovate.



Lead to Include Summit 2020

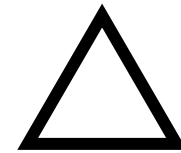


January 2020, held at 1st Ever Special Olympics, Pan-African Games 2020



Click to watch the full highlights of the Special Olympics
Middle/ East North Africa Regional Lead to Include Summit 2020

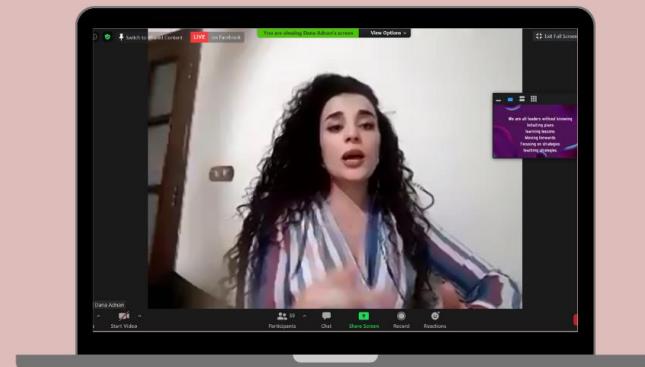
Youth rose from the ashes to Lead to Include in Lebanon



▲ 9 – 11 September 2020

The tragedy that unfolded in the first week of August 2020 in Beirut did not sway the unbreakable, positive spirit of Lebanon's youth. From the 9-10th of September 2020, with restless energy to foster inclusive change, and the fierce desire to uplift the mood of the youth with and without ID after the devastating Port episode, the Youth Leaders of Special Olympics Lebanon bounced back in an innovative way. They organized the 1st Virtual Youth Leadership Summit virtually via Zoom and Facebook Live. The program design welcomed youth with and without intellectual disabilities in an inclusive environment to break down barriers to develop all attendees' abilities and skills through speaker sessions and interactive discussions. On average, 66 participants and 10 mentors participated in the summit, the youth specially showed their keenness to adapt the Unified Leadership model and committed to equally encourage all their peers to do so.

Special Olympics Lebanon 1st Virtual Youth Leadership Summit



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
LEAD TO INCLUDE



Lead to Include Virtual Summit Egypt 2020

From 16 to 17 September 2020, **57 Youth Leaders, 17 Athlete Leaders and 11 Adult Mentors** from Special Olympics Egypt joined together for the first ever Digital Youth Leadership Summit to discuss six topics: Respect and acceptance, social integration, leadership skills and communication, volunteerism, innovation, and partnerships with community institutions. Following this Digital Youth Leadership Summit, a second Summit will occur for Youth Leaders and include participation of larger numbers of young people from different governorates of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

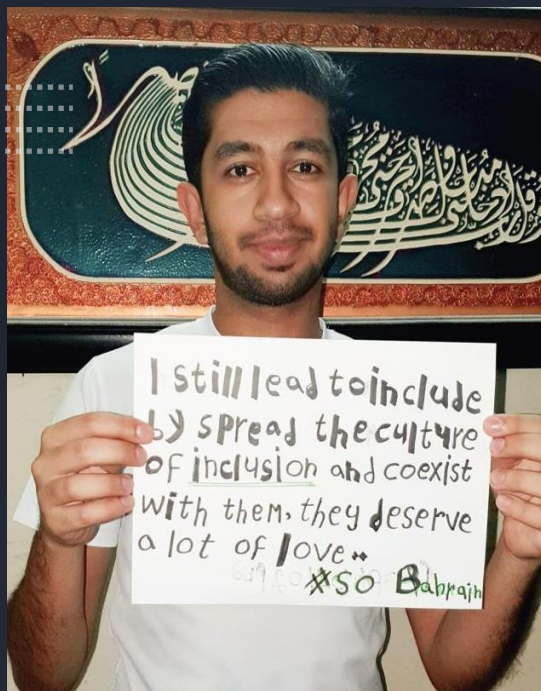


SPECIAL OLYMPICS
LEAD TO INCLUDE



Heidi Hazem leading a conversation at the Special Olympics Egypt Digital Youth Leadership Summit.





Results of 2020 survey to engage with Youth that Lead to Include from Home

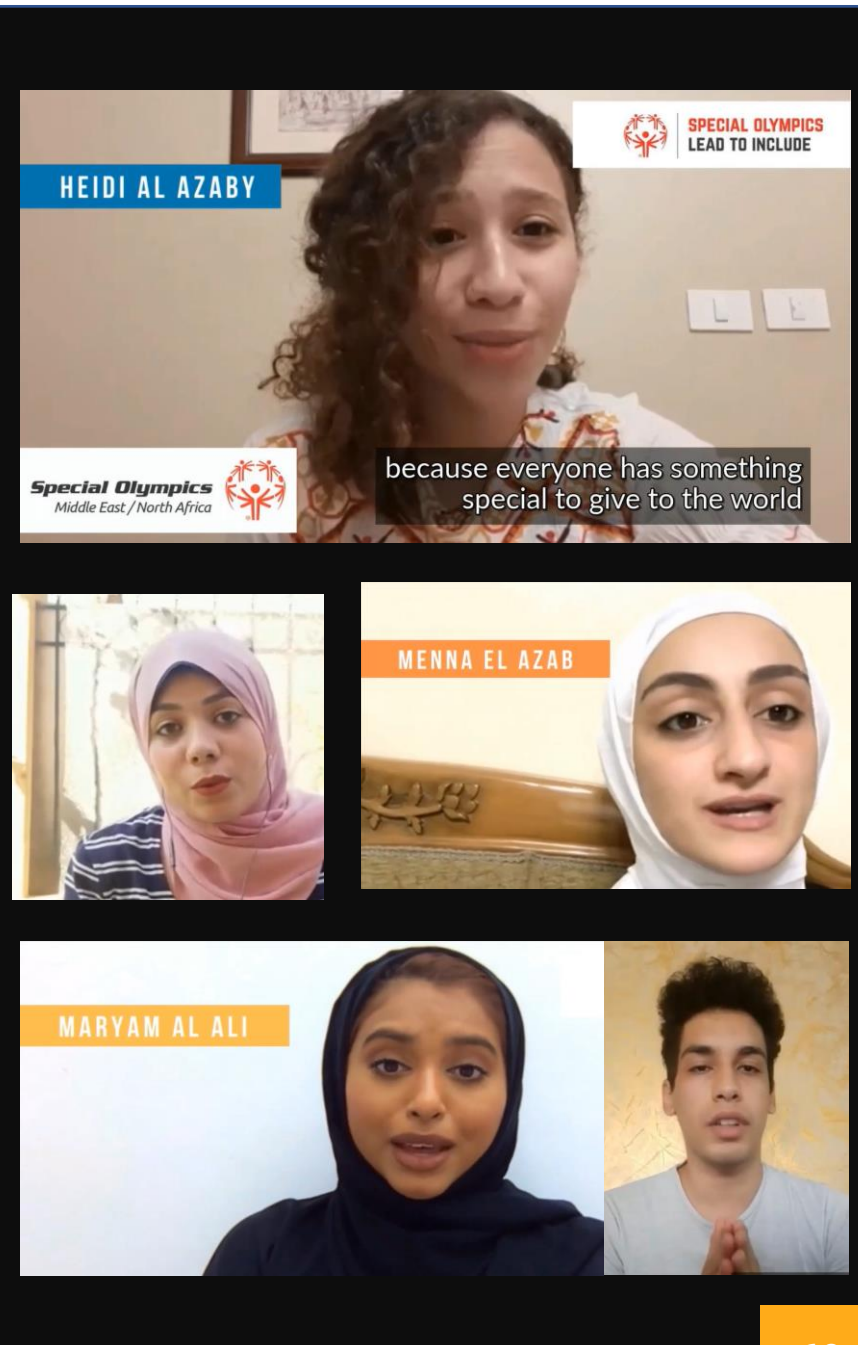
Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa, engaged with youth through a survey. Youth aged between 14 to 25 from Special Olympics Egypt, Palestine, Sudan, Bahrain, Morocco, Kuwait, UAE, Lebanon, Oman and Syria, responded. Over 70% of the 42 respondents confirmed to be mainly using Facebook, social media platform, to stay connected currently and over 45% of the respondents confirmed that they were actively participating in fitness activities or workouts from home. In ideas shared for keeping the community active from home, the youth responded with a large appetite towards exchange of knowledge and learning to stay; key topics of learning interest include fitness, project management and youth leadership. The survey findings proved the grit and zeal of the youth of Middle East/North Africa to remain productive, active and informed during the lockdown period, Youth athletes also shared photos of why and how they continue to Lead to Include, with creative action points such as “I still lead to include by posting about inclusion on social media.” By Special Olympics Sudan athlete, Sadig Taj Alsir.

International Youth Day 2020 Lead to Include



**Click to play Special Olympics
MENA International Youth Day
2020 Video**

Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa celebrated International Youth Day (IYD) on the 12th of August 2020. The aim of IYD 2020 is to enable the engagement of youth and making local, national and global institutions more inclusive for the purpose of strengthening their capacity to achieve global action, aligned to the vision of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Youth from MENA shared their video messages highlighting the importance of inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. With 6-weeks preparation time for creation of high-quality videos of Youth Volunteers from the safety of their homes, the result was a compelling video of Youth encouraging everyone to Lead to Include!










2nd Podcast

We welcome Special Olympics Egypt Health here, to learn about the role of health programs at Special Olympics



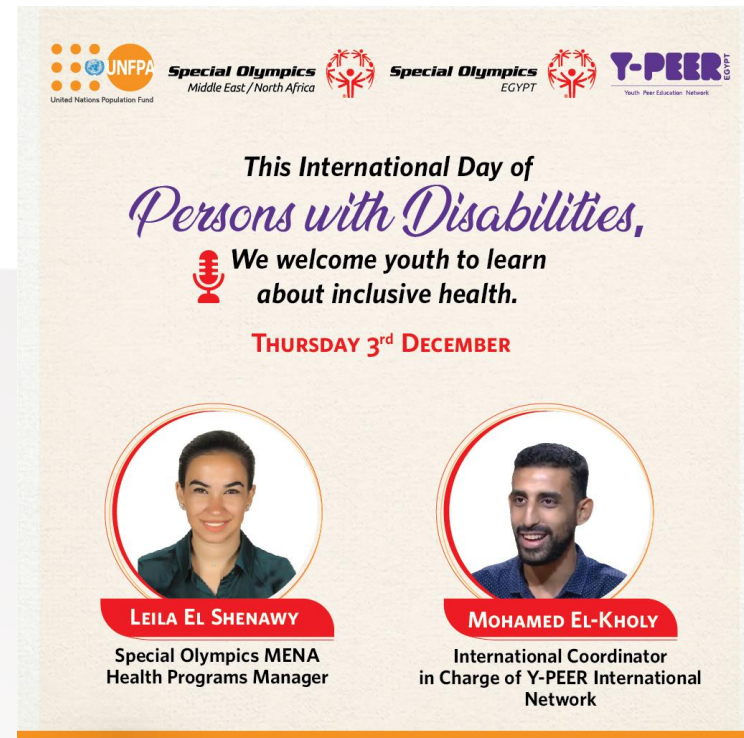
YASMINE ABDEL AZIZ
Special Olympics Egypt Health Messenger







MOHAMED EL-KHOLY
International Coordinator in Charge of Y-PEER International Network



Click to play Podcast





This International Day of Persons with Disabilities,

We welcome youth to learn about inclusive health.

THURSDAY 3rd DECEMBER



LEILA EL SHENAWY
Special Olympics MENA Health Programs Manager



MOHAMED EL-KHOLY
International Coordinator in Charge of Y-PEER International Network



Click to play Podcast

International Day of Persons with Disabilities, in collaboration with UNFPA ASRO, UNFPA Egypt and Y-Peer Podcasts Platform

UNFPA Arab States Regional Office (ASRO) partnered with Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa (MENA) to empower the youth in the region to lead to include and integrate people of all abilities into the communities, equally. Through the partnership of both regional offices, in collaboration with Special Olympics Egypt and UNFPA Egypt, on UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3rd December 2020, the importance of equality in healthcare was shared with the youth via Y-Peer podcasts.

Story in spotlight: Youth Leaders Lead to Include from home

Youth Leader Mohammed Hachicho has been a part of the Special Olympics Lebanon youth for two years. During the pandemic, the 17-year-old created a banner using his craftsmanship and creativity skills, and hammer, nails and wood for tools. He feels strongly about inclusion of youth with intellectual disabilities and said "My masterpiece took about a week from start to finish, but what inspired me to do this job is similarity in concept to the work for inclusion. Inclusion takes time, it is a process. Everything must be properly planned for and executed for it to contribute towards inclusion just as any stage that I went through. It also requires someone that puts in effort from their heart."



Lead to Include 2020 Statistics in a Glance

63

300+

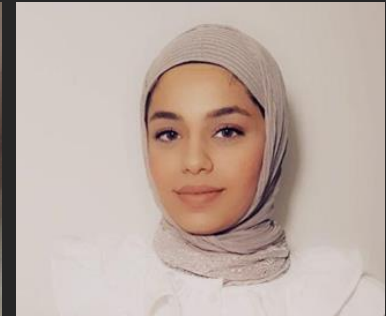
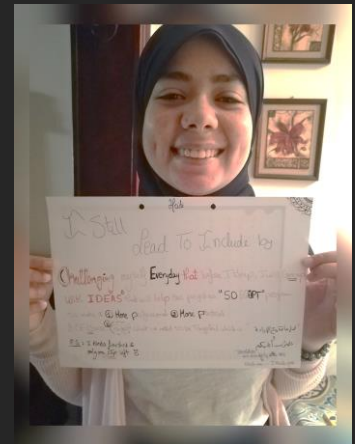
Youth with and without intellectual disabilities engaged from home with Lead to Include activities

2

National Virtual Lead to Include summits successfully organized

2

Global observances celebrated engaging youth with and without intellectual disabilities



Beyond Sports in Middle East/ North Africa

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



Learn Unified. Play Unified. Talent Show: From Morocco to Mexico with the power of virtual

65



Through the Play Unified. Learn Unified. Project made possible by Starvos Niarchos Foundation, Special Olympics Morocco and Special Olympics Mexico joined forces in the first-of-its-kind cross-regional collaboration to enable the athletes to celebrate their talents. During the quarantine due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, face-to-face activities have been canceled or postponed until further notice. However, Special Olympics Morocco and Special Olympics Mexico did not accept the circumstances as a challenge, but rather an opportunity to activate the Unified School Leaders by closing the distance between them, virtually via Zoom and Facebook Live. Two Hosts presented the ten Unified Pairs in four different languages while three phenomenal judges scored the entries of the participants in painting, dance, music, singing, recitals, and art.

"I loved showing my peers from Mexico how we play the Moroccan music. Thank you, Special Olympics, for the opportunity.", Yahya Bentaleb, who played Moroccan instrument that wowed the judges.

Special Olympics UAE Unified Robotics, first-time hosted outside the U.S.

66



In 2019, The inaugural Unified Robotics season organized by Special Olympics UAE culminated in a final competition on the 16th of November 2019. A total of 37 unified teams from 21 schools around the United Arab Emirates participated in the competition. As a truly unified effort, 200 students with and without intellectual challenges, aged 3 to 16 years, worked together to create sports-related robotics solutions over six weeks. By 2020 edition of the Unified Robotics, the program had grown with a sharp increase and despite COVID-19, the program continued being held via virtual tools. As the world shifts to virtual, inclusion and diversity in STEM becomes imperative to prepare the athletes for an inclusive future.

Design Thinking and Recycling Workshop



During the 2nd Special Olympics MENA Athlete Leadership Input Council Meeting, all Athlete Leaders participated in a Design Thinking and Recycling Workshop. Co-created with Ehab Mokhtar, Chief Designer, Architect, and Managing Director at IDIA Design, the workshop encouraged athlete leaders to get creative from home, stay engaged in purposeful activity, and reutilize waste to recycle. By reusing material at their homes such as cardboard, empty toilet rolls, old shoe boxes, etc., the Athlete Leaders learned how to reduce waste and create designs for robots that can serve the community. All participants were recognized for their efforts and winners announced in three categories: Most Creative Use of Materials, Most Inventive Robot Ideas, and Great Robot Names.



Watch a video about the workshop here

Click to play video



About our Young Athletes Program





69

Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa is home to 4000+ Young Athletes aged 2- to 7-year-old who are learning consistently about the power of their capabilities. Through sports and non-sports activities, Young Athletes program engages parents and their children to learn about the possibilities of a healthy, active lifestyle, with Special Olympics. During the lockdown forced by the Pandemic, aiming to continue practicing at home, SO Young Athletes backpacks projects were created to support families running Young Athletes programs at home and to allow educators and coaches to share materials with families. The main components of a Young Athletes Backpack Kits comprise of mini Young Athletes Program equipment kit, printed resources for activities from home and a children's books. Three Special Olympics MENA programs, SO Egypt, SO Lebanon and SO UAE benefitted from the backpacks project supported by Metlife. In 2020, the Sports division also held a virtual training seminar for Coaches on Young Athletes program.





Siblings In Focus

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



SOMENA Siblings Workshop to empower siblings



Special Olympics Middle East and North Africa is harnessing the passion of siblings of individuals with intellectual disabilities to create a positive impact in local communities. SOMENA met with Siblings to listen to them and share with them information defined following their request. A survey is launched prior to any meeting with siblings to collect their expectations and challenges they face in their day-to-day life. Based on the data collected speakers are invited. Training focus on developing life skills, addressing siblings fears and challenges, leading a healthy lifestyle, knowing rights and duties of people with ID. With the key goal for all the programs involved build local input siblings councils, Special Olympics MENA is empowering siblings will model what a true Unified Generation looks like by publicly advocating about their siblings and paving the way for an inclusive future.

Siblings Workshops 2019 To 2020



We were the first region to officially activate siblings. Till date, SO MENA has conducted three successful Siblings Workshops. The first Siblings workshop took place in December 2018 in Cairo, Egypt, sponsored by MetLife, aimed for participants to identify local impact projects that will help all stakeholders, including athletes, young athletes, coaches, staff and families foster the movement of inclusion and a second one was organized the following year, November 2019 following the high impact of the 1st one. In the second encounter we invited initiatives managers to attend, listen, assist and transfer the experience locally. Due to Covid virtual workshop was organized in 2020. The siblings' network leaders will inspire other siblings to actively join Special Olympics.

1st SO Kuwait Virtual Siblings Workshop



For the first time ever, during the Pandemic, Special Olympics Kuwait convened with the siblings of athletes in collaboration with Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa in August 2020 to activate sibling's roles locally, develop athletes' and siblings' skills in leadership through training sessions. 10 athletes welcomed their siblings to attend the sessions building up to a participation of total 20 members.





Media Relations

Led by Mohamed Shahat, the Media Advisor at Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa for 10 years, the Arabic press has developed great interest to action the inclusion revolution in Middle East/ North Africa. Specially during the pandemic, the positive sentiment that the stories from Special Olympics MENA progress highlighted added hope and positivity for the media. The regular outstanding coverage is a result of strong partnerships with the Official News Agencies for all regional countries, in addition to continuous engagement of 200+ media representatives in Special Olympics activities over 10+ years.



**In picture: Mohamed Shahat,
Media Advisor at SO MENA**



وكالة أنباء الإمارات
Emirates News Agency



Achieving Earned Arabic Media Coverage with minimum 150+ clippings published regularly

210 news clippings regionwide on 3-day training virtually held from 7-10 December, with the participation of 150 coaches from 8 MENA countries in preparation of Kazan Games to learn cross-country skiing.

Regional Athlete Leaders' Health Messenger Training: **167 news clippings** in key news outlets published regionwide in a span of less than a week!



مصر تشارك في الدورة التدريبية الأولى "للاعبين القادة كممثلين الصحة للأولمبياد الخاص"

الخميس 17/ديسمبر/2020 - 02:09 م



Increasing English Language Media Readership

Executing region-wide media strategy to enhance media coverage for English readers of MENA, earned opportunities scored in Gulf's renowned daily newspaper and Egypt's key online publication as part of increased effort towards sharing the message to Choose to Include with English readers.

Ahmed Antar: 'I dream of a world of inclusion'

"When I was just a year old, my parents noticed that I walked on tiptoes, was falling whenever I walked, and was simply not developing like other children. They spent years running from one doctor to another. Most of them pessimistically told my parents that I would die soon, due to the increased electrical activity in my brain.

I did not understand a single word at the first school I was enrolled in. My parents then moved me to Dar El Enaya Association, where people with intellectual disabilities are better taken care of. I developed greatly there. At the age of 13, I discovered my love for technology and learning. Today, I am proudly studying telephone maintenance and photography at an institute.

But despite excellent educationally, I always struggled to be part of society. I am a normal human being, just like everyone else but unfortunately, that is not how I am always treated. I was bullied all the time. I have a friend that I will never forget. He used to tell me that I will become a barber. I cannot say it is an insult, it is a job after all, but my dreams have always been much bigger. Another friend hit me all the time, just because he was physi-

cally fit and much stronger than me. In 2011, I joined the Scouts in Lebanon, which helped me greatly. Then in 2016, I was lucky to get introduced to Special Olympics (SO) Lebanon where I compete in basketball and football, and was nominated as an Athlete Leader. A month ago, I was proudly elected by my peers from across the MENA region as the Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa Athlete Leadership Input Council (RALIC) President for the year

2020/2021.

I dream of a world where every single school has inclusion for people with disabilities, and I hope I can work toward this aspiration in my new role. I also dream to travel abroad and become a famous YouTuber. Given my new role as RALIC president, I am excited to also utilize this channel to promote social inclusion."

*Ahmad Antar: Special Olympics MENA Athlete Leader, aspiring YouTuber, and Special Olympics Lebanon Basketball and Football Athlete



Khaleej Times

Khaleej Times

Meet Special Olympians' favourite football coach

4 Dec 2020 | Ismail Sebugwaawo | ismail@khaleejtimes.com

If there's anything Ben McBride loves more than football, that is bringing out the best in athletes of determination. As a volunteer football coach for Special Olympics UAE, he has made it a mission to connect people of determination with the rest of the community through sports.

The power of football and sports should never be underestimated in an individual's development, the 42-year-old British expat said.

"We have observed amazing changes in the athletes with intellectual disabilities, through

their love and participation in sports," McBride told Khaleej Times.

The team would have weekly football sessions, until the Covid-19 pandemic brought the world to a halt, he said. But even with athletes at home and physical training facilities' operations on pause, McBride makes sure he and his athletes would get the training they need for competitions.

"I reach out to the parents and siblings of athletes via WhatsApp to ensure that the families are



SPORTS IDOL: Ben McBride with kids of determination, future sports champs.

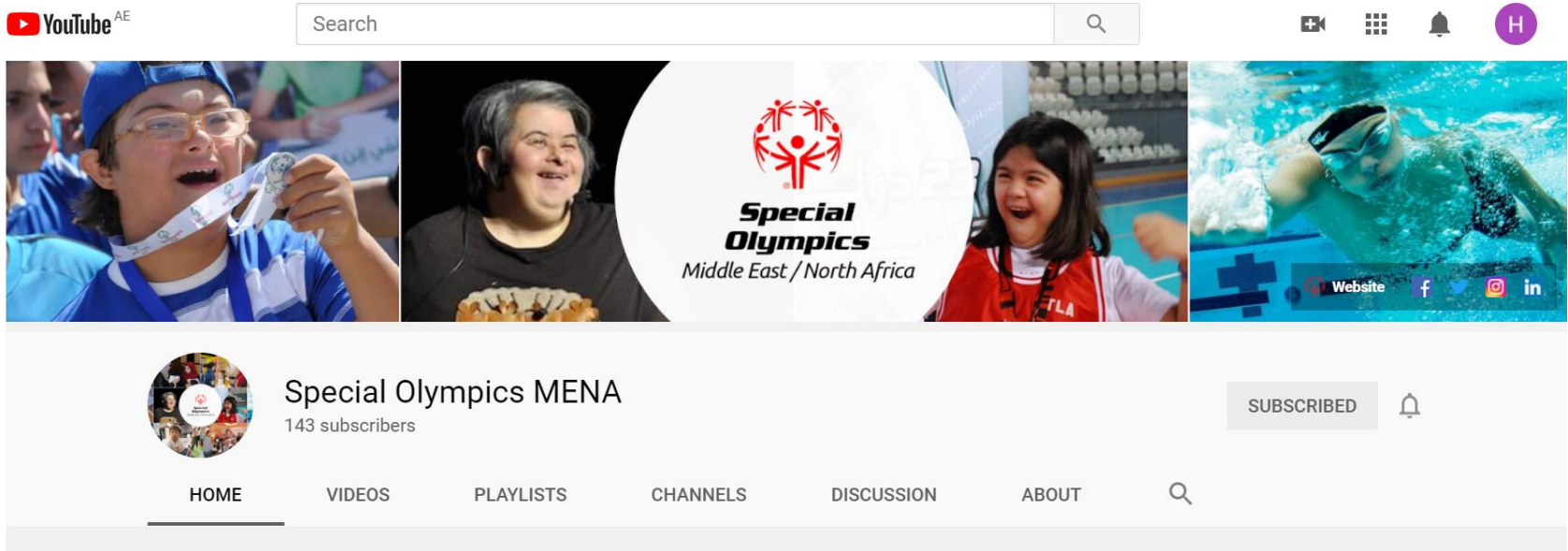
Creating an uplifting atmosphere for the athletes at home," he said. "Then, I launched virtual trainings for the athletes."

Click to link

egypt
today
The Magazine Of Egypt

Earned Print Coverage in Gulf-wide daily news paper secured in collaboration with SO UAE: 89,000+ people reached by circulation of newspaper.

YouTube Re-Launch: Timeless Video Content



Unified Leadership (Arabic)

The re-launch of the YouTube channel in 2020 led to an amplification of video content. Encouraging programs to actively share their on-going impact and activities through video, the channel was successfully reactivated to persuade programs to utilize video content as a key source of story-telling.

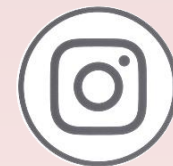
Communications & Marketing 2020

Given the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the team has utilized a range of diversified and creative tactics to support with raising awareness, building positive attitudes of the community towards people with ID, increasing unified commitment towards staying healthy, and engaging regional programs and other stakeholders to the movement.

Key platforms utilized were Facebook & Instagram, in addition to limited usage of Twitter, LinkedIn & YouTube.



Reach: 14.6 M
Engagement: 600k
Page Likes: +3,381
(+6.5%)



Reach: 1.9M
(3.4M impressions)
Engagement: 160k
Page Follows: +2,001
(+89%)

Tactics

80

1

LIVE WITH AN EXPERT SERIES

- Introduction of ongoing live sessions with experts, in partnership with health team.
- 20+ Sessions conducted via zoom for regional programs, and further communicated via Facebook Live.



2

#ACTIVEATHOME

- 22 MENA programs encouraged to share stories of their athletes being healthy and active at home, following the global quarantine. Athletes and SO community encouraged to #StayHealthy and #ActiveAtHome
- Key activities communicated: handwashing, home exercises, yoga and Covid-19 precautions.



3

STORYTELLING

- Introduction of weekly unique hand sketch (cartoonized) storytelling approach to portray success stories of different stakeholders (athletes, coaches, volunteers, siblings, etc).
- Launch of HONY style regional stories



Tactics (Cont.)

81

4 VIRTUAL SESSIONS & SUMMITS

- Pre and post communications for ongoing sessions and summits, along with Facebook livestreaming where relevant.
- **Key activities:** first-ever virtual youth summits for Lebanon and Egypt programs, yoga sessions, psychological wellbeing sessions, Healthy Communities summit, etc.

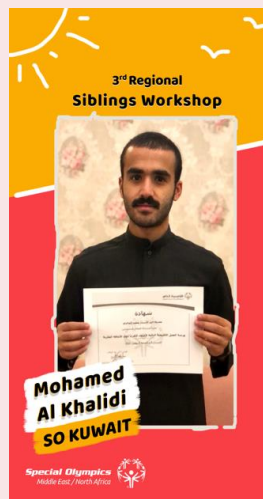


5 EDUCATE, ENGAGE & MOTIVATE

- Ongoing utilization of educational, engagement and motivational posts on social media to promote endorsement of inclusion
- Engagement of SO MENA programs
- Athletes and SO community encouraged to #StayHealthy and to support inclusion.
- **Activities communicated:** healthy sleeping tips, expressing admiration for people with ID, self-care, handwashing tips, bingo challenge, among others.

6 RECOGNIZE & THANK KEY ENDORSERS

- New direction to recognize and thank key regional SO movement endorsers
- **Key Events:** Regional Siblings Workshop, International Volunteer Day, Regional Athlete Leaders' Input Council, International Youth Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities speaking opportunity with P&G, among others.



7 ENHANCE PARTNERSHIPS

- Enhance partnerships to increase reach.
- Two podcasts co-created as part of and SO MENA/UNFPA partnership, with the support of Y-Peer.
- Communicating free SO MENA live sessions (as part of regional events) on KWT events platform
- Recycling workshop for athlete Leaders in partnership with IDIA design & Zeina Tissues.



Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa Partnerships

82

Special Olympics
Middle East / North Africa



Special Olympics
United Arab Emirates





Special Olympics
United Arab Emirates

learn to cycle

Al Ain
Location: Al Ain Zoo
Day: Mondays
Dates: 12-November 2, 2020
Times: 6:00-6:45 PM
Open to all PoD and Siblings ages 12 years+

العين
الموقع: حديقة الحيوانات بالعين
اليوم: الإثنين
التاريخ: 12 أكتوبر إلى 2 نوفمبر
الوقت: 6:45 – 6:00
مفتوح للأعمار 12 وما فوق



Abu Dhabi
Location: Al Hudayriyat Island
Day: Tuesdays
Dates: October 13- November 3, 2020
Times: 6:00-6:45 PM
Open to all PoD and Siblings ages 12 years+

أبوظبي
الموقع: جزيرة الحديريات
اليوم: الثلاثاء
التاريخ: 13 أكتوبر إلى 3 نوفمبر
الوقت: 6:45 – 6:00
مفتوح للأعمار 12 وما فوق

#BEUNIFIED

كلنا معاً



Special Olympics
United Arab Emirates

Greatest Minds Think Alike Differently

Unified Robotics Program is designed for children who are different to show them what they are capable of



ROBOTICS. FOR ALL.

Special Olympics MENA and Special Olympics UAE, Unified Robotics and Unified Cycling Partners

Special Olympics MENA has secured a donation from First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) to be fully directed towards SO UAE unified activities that promote inclusion among youth, primarily towards unified cycling and unified robotics for the remainder of 2020. Previously, FAB has been an avid gold sponsor of the SO World Games Abu Dhabi 2019.

Special Olympics Middle East/ North Africa Partnerships



Special Olympics MENA Partnership with IDIA Designs and Zeina Tissues



The 2nd Special Olympics MENA Regional Athlete Leadership Input Council Meeting was held virtually and attended by 20 Athlete Leaders from 10 programs. During the virtual meeting, all Athlete Leaders participated in a Design Thinking and Recycling Workshop. Co-created with Ehab Mokhtar, Chief Designer, Architect, and Managing Director at IDIA Design, in partnership with Zeina tissues group, the workshop encouraged athlete leaders to get creative from home, stay engaged in purposeful activity, and reutilize waste to recycle.



Click to play video and learn more

Community

Change Agents leading the Inclusion Revolution with us!



Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa values every community member who joins us to empower Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa athletes. Over 22 years of success would not have been possible without the **Families of our Athletes, Siblings of the Athletes, the Coaches of the Athletes, Trainers, Educators, Health Professionals, Clinical Directors, and Volunteers** who build towards the same goal as us every day: a world that welcomes everyone equally.



Pan-African Games 2020 Partners

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Pan-African Games 2020 Healthy Athletes Partners

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Partnerships 2020

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Meet Our Team



Ayman Abdel Wahab
Regional President and
Managing Director



Nibal Fetouni
Director, Initiatives



Emad Mohy
Director,
Sports and Training



Sherif El Fouly
Director, Games and
Competitions



Dina Galal
Administration Team



Maha Yacoub
Senior Manager,
Budget and HR



Nahla Shaker
Assistant Manager
Administration



Mohamed El Shahat
Consultant, Senior
Media Advisor

Meet Our Team



Farrah Ragai
Manager, Schools and
Youth Engagement



Karima Elibrachy
Senior Manager,
Communications &
Partnerships



Noha Gaballah
Manager, Branding and
Athlete Leadership



Raghda Mostafa
Manager, Grants and
Accreditation



Samira El Adawy
Coordinator,
Youth Leadership



Leila El Shenawy
Manager, Health
Programs



Hafsa Qadeer
Manager,
Communications &
Partnerships



Mohamed Gaballah
Administration Team

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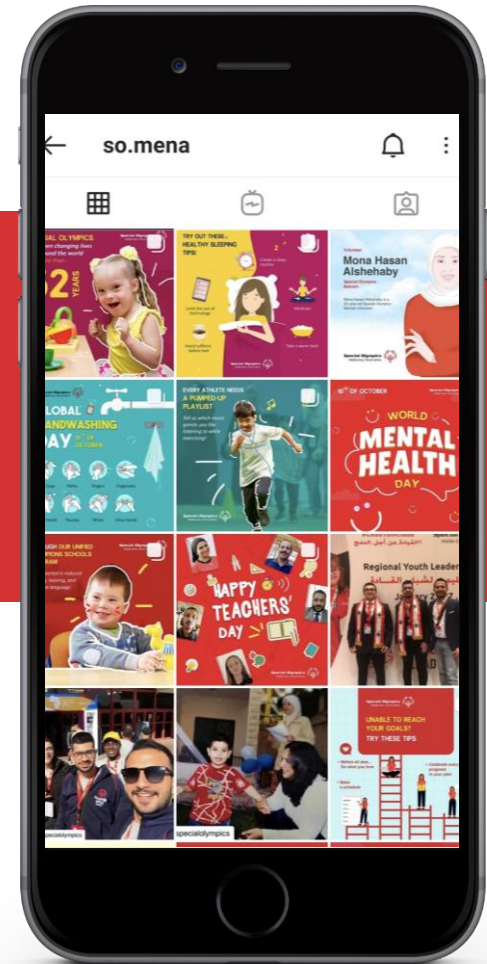
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We continue to build a Legacy of First-Evers!

Stay tuned as the Inclusion Revolution
takes over Middle East/North Africa!



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Any photos that display athletes or people without World Health Organization guidelines are pictures captured prior to the pandemic: COVID-19.

Special Olympics
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