



GLOBAL STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 - 2020

***Special
Olympics***



**“SPORT HAS THE
POWER TO CHANGE
THE WORLD.**
It has the power to inspire, it
has the power to unite people
in a way that little else does...
**Sport can create hope,
where once there was only
despair...** It laughs in the face
of all types of discrimination.”

Nelson Mandela
Revolutionary, politician, philanthropist,
former President of South Africa





INTRODUCTION

In 1962, Eunice Kennedy Shriver made what at the time was a revolutionary statement when she invited a group of young people with intellectual disabilities to her home to participate in sports. This began a social revolution that continues to this day.

These young people came from local institutions, where they spent their days idle at best, ignored and abused at worst. The idea that these children could participate, much less excel, in sports like “normal” kids was a fringe idea in its time, rejected by most child development experts, doctors, and social workers.

Yet, that gathering grew into today’s Special Olympics, a worldwide movement of millions of athletes, families, and volunteers. Through the courage and abilities of its athletes, Special Olympics has proven time and time again that people with intellectual disabilities can excel, not just in sports, but in all aspects of life. Today, there are Special Olympics athletes who are gainfully employed, own their homes, pay their taxes, marry their loved ones and raise children of their own. Despite these gains, millions of people with intellectual disabilities in countries

around the world remain marginalized. Special Olympics strives to reach individuals with and without disabilities, empowering them to speak out, contribute, and create opportunities in their communities for people of all abilities.

As Special Olympics moves forward, it remains a sports organization at its core, but not simply for sport’s sake. Sport is the movement’s stage, where Special Olympics athletes showcase their abilities, not their disabilities, for the world to see.

Sport is the movement’s message to the world that people with intellectual disabilities will no longer be denied education, health care, social inclusion, and all the other opportunities that communities offer their citizens. And sport is the movement’s invitation to all to join, to play, and to say to others that they believe in inclusion, respect, and dignity for everyone.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

OUR MOVEMENT TODAY

Our Mission is as relevant today as it was almost 50 years ago when Special Olympics was founded.

Sport is still the primary way Special Olympics achieves change, supported by work in health which has become critical to our mission. A lot of progress has been made in recent years. Through the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the World Health Organization (WHO) World Report on Disability, the international community has made great strides forward to change the view of people with disabilities from objects of pity to integral members of society.

Special Olympics has made a big contribution to this change. Through providing opportunities for almost 5 million athletes in 170 countries, Special Olympics actively promotes the UNCRPD principle of “full and effective participation and inclusion in society” by:

ATHLETES SERVED

5 MILLION



COUNTRIES

170



- **Enabling athletes to master skills that increase confidence and ability to succeed in life**
- **Highlighting and addressing massive disparities in access to sport, schooling and health care for people with ID**
- **Increasing families’ knowledge and expectations of what athletes can achieve**
- **Changing attitudes to create inclusion in schools, communities and society at large**

However, despite progress, people with ID still face stigma, discrimination, social isolation and injustice every day of their lives. They are routinely ignored or excluded by society, and in many cultures little or no value is placed on their worth or abilities. Many athletes live in poverty, especially in countries with weak economies and poor social welfare systems.

“What do you mean?
What differences?
**WE ARE ALL HUMAN --
THIS IS WHAT MATTERS.**”

Unified Sports partner in Lebanon



OUR MOVEMENT TODAY

At the core, Special Olympics is a sports organization that uses the power of sport as a catalyst for social change. Through sport, we challenge society. By highlighting how the needs of people with ID are not being met, we expose inequity and exclusion. By drawing attention to the gifts of people with ID, we break down misperceptions and tackle negative attitudes.

The **focus for Special Olympics** therefore needs to be on both providing a **high quality sports experience** and **engaging key influencers and communities** in ways that help create **positive attitudes** and bring about permanent **change towards inclusion of people with ID.**





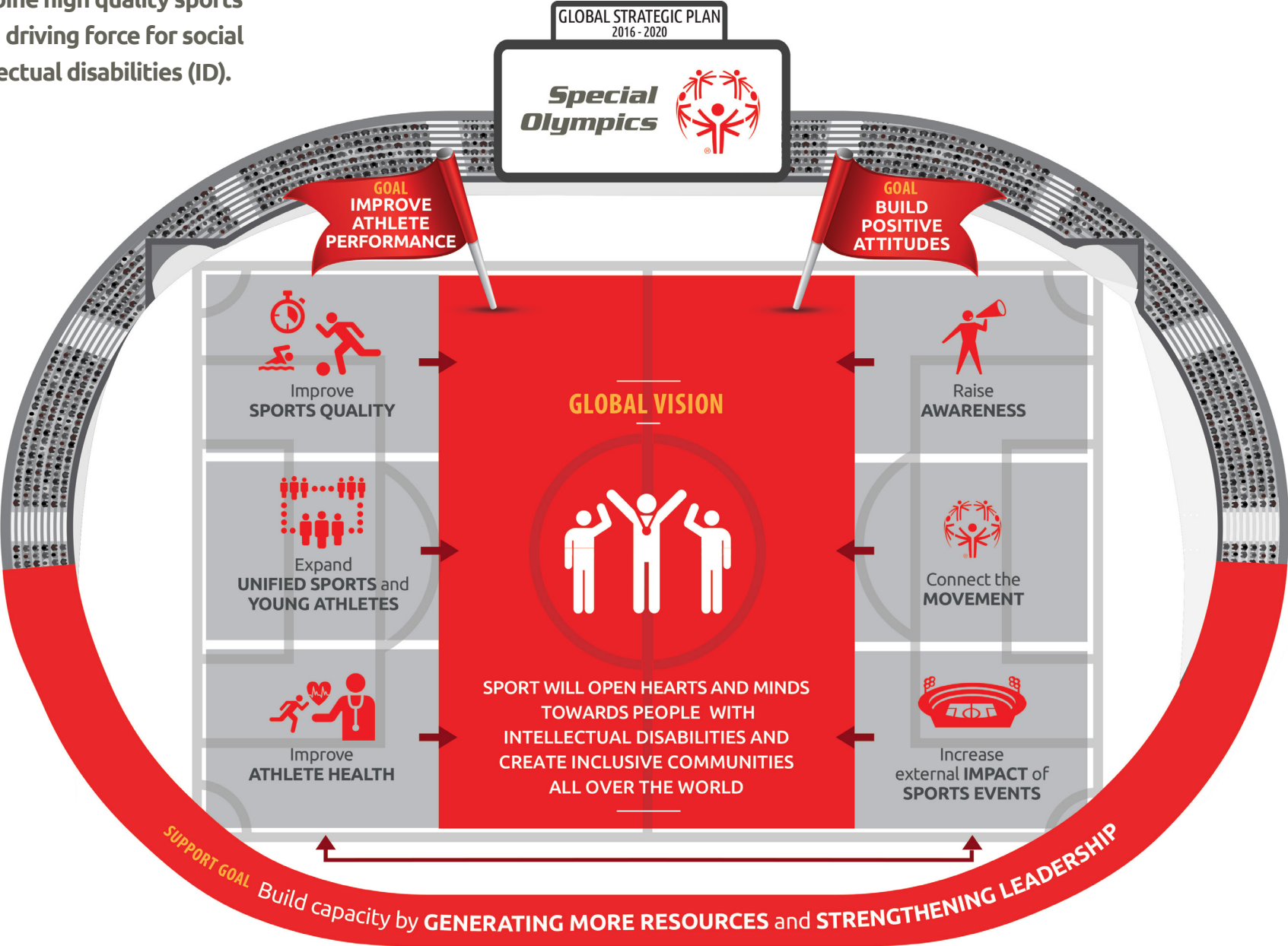
Our vision is that sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities all over the world.

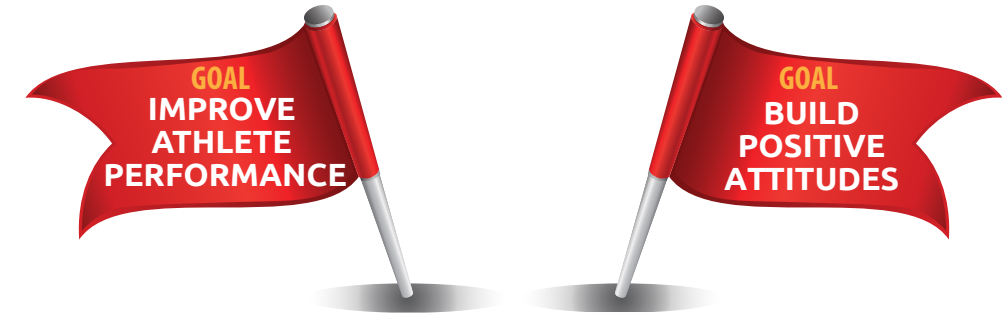
Special Olympics will strive for this vision by providing better quality sports opportunities, supported by health initiatives. At the same time, we will step up efforts to use our work to 'tell the world' about the talents and abilities of people with ID. According to research, over half of people who have personal contact with someone with intellectual disabilities are more accepting and positive. When we combine high quality sports with a wider audience, and connect more people with our athletes, it changes attitudes.

What Special Olympics ultimately seeks is to be a driving force for social inclusion.

For us, this means people with ID are welcomed in their communities and join with others to learn, work, compete and play with the same rights and opportunities as others. To do all of this, we need Special Olympics athletes, families, volunteers and supporters to reach out to others in their communities, encouraging millions of new people to experience how Special Olympics brings out the best in everyone.

Special Olympics aims to combine high quality sports with a wide audience, and be a driving force for social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities (ID).





Special Olympics
has two major five-year goals.
They are completely connected,
and reaching both goals is
crucial to achieving our vision.



GOAL 1

IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ATHLETES TO PERFORM AT THEIR BEST

Special Olympics will improve the quality of programs, and broaden access to them. This means strengthening our focus on sports programming, supported by our health work, so that athletes are fit and healthy, master skills, build confidence and self-reliance and perform at their best on and off the field.

As we do this, Special Olympics will use its expertise to be a leader on how to achieve inclusion in and through sport, and improve access to the effective programs we have.

Athletes will have increased, year-round opportunities to participate, and improved quality will help us attract new athletes. Special Olympics will also seek targeted growth, especially in places where our presence is low.



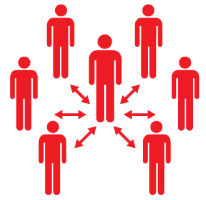
GOAL 2

BUILD POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Attitude change must be a deliberate outcome of Special Olympics. We create change from others engaging with and witnessing our athletes as they participate in sports. It is essential that Special Olympics continuously works to improve awareness of what people with ID can achieve.

We need people to see our athletes competing, and athletes leading the way as the face and voice of our movement; that is what opens hearts and minds and ultimately promotes inclusion in friendships, communities, health services, schools and workplaces.

To achieve our major goals, an important *support goal* underpins this plan.



SUPPORT GOAL

BUILD CAPACITY BY IMPROVING RESOURCES AND LEADERSHIP

Securing adequate resources is vital to the success of Special Olympics over the next five years. The aim is to align existing and new partners with our strategies, and combine increased resources with dynamic leadership to deliver the best possible impact for people with ID.

In addition, we will integrate athletes, families and young people as we implement every aspect of this plan, especially in leadership roles, to ensure success.

ATHLETES



If we want the world to be inclusive, Special Olympics athletes can and should contribute in ways beyond the sports field. This means involving athletes as volunteers, as coaches, as officials, as fundraisers, as staff, as Board Members. It means developing more athlete leaders, and ensuring they are actively engaged in meaningful roles at all levels. When we do that we will learn from our athletes, and they in turn will teach the world the true meaning of inclusion.

FAMILIES



The families of Special Olympics athletes are critical to this plan. They understand the meaning and benefits of inclusion, and provide a critical voice we need to move our priorities forward. Special Olympics needs to engage more family members in new ways, for example becoming volunteers, supporting home exercise, helping to raise more resources, and telling their stories.

YOUTH



Young people with and without ID are important because they are the future of Special Olympics. They also are more open to inclusion – they understand and embrace it. They bring the creativity and energy we need to change the world. To be successful, Special Olympics needs to create systems for engaging young people beyond youth to lifetime involvement. We also need to reach young people in new ways and engage them in our vision and goals.



STRATEGY A IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SPORTS PROGRAMMING

- Focus on quality in schools/disability service organizations, universities/colleges and at the community level through Special Olympics 'clubs' and mainstream sports clubs
- Strengthen coaching to develop fit, skillful athletes who are prepared to compete and improve performance
- Promote a year-round approach that includes more training and local competitions
- Establish partnerships at all levels to support sports programming



STRATEGY B

INCREASE INCLUSION THROUGH UNIFIED SPORTS AND YOUNG ATHLETES, PARTICULARLY IN SCHOOLS, AND THROUGH EXPANDING TO NEW AREAS

- Increase access to Unified Sports for all age groups but especially in schools
- Create flexible ways to expand the Special Olympics Young Athletes program
- Continue to grow, especially in developing countries where access to programs is low



STRATEGY C

GROW OUR HEALTH PROGRAM TO SUPPORT ATHLETE PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND SOCIETY

- Help athletes, families and coaches to improve athletes' fitness and general health through expansion of our Healthy Athletes and Healthy Communities initiatives
- Work with governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and the private sector to encourage them to provide better healthcare for people with ID



STRATEGY D

IMPROVE EXTERNAL AWARENESS THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS, CELEBRITIES & GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

- Work with media, social media, governments, the international development community and celebrities to promote the Special Olympics mission
- Highlight athletes' talents, and use athlete leaders as the voice of our movement
- Adapt our message to ensure that far more people hear about, take part in or watch our activities from local communities to the global stage



STRATEGY E

CONNECT THE MOVEMENT SO WE HARNESS OUR POWER AND SPEAK WITH A COLLECTIVE VOICE

- Use the latest technology to gather data on Special Olympics members – athletes, families, volunteers, etc. – so we can improve communication and coordination
- Share messages so that members can communicate externally in a consistent way
- Create opportunities for athletes and families to tell their stories and challenge their communities to see people with ID differently and appreciate their talents



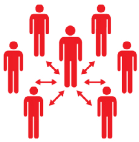
STRATEGY F

MAXIMIZE EXTERNAL IMPACT OF GAMES & COMPETITIONS TO SHOWCASE ATHLETES' ABILITIES

- Improve how Games and competitions are run to deliver a great athlete experience
- From world to local levels, promote Games and competitions as the primary Special Olympics vehicles to highlight athlete abilities and develop positive attitudes
- Attract bigger live and virtual audiences to witness and experience the transformative power and joy of sport



SUPPORT GOAL



To **BUILD CAPACITY** Special Olympics will:

GENERATE MORE RESOURCES

- Increase corporate partnerships, refine and expand digital fundraising, and enhance our global development work, in particular through partnerships
- Improve collaborative fundraising across the movement

STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP,
INCLUDING **ATHLETE LEADERSHIP**

- Continue to develop athlete, youth and Program leaders using both dedicated and inclusive approaches, and improve Program quality
- Ensure athlete and youth leaders get opportunities to lead at every level

Time to Act!

While Special Olympics has made a tremendous impact, we clearly have much more to do if the 200 million people with intellectual disabilities in the world are to be fully included in their communities.

Ours is an urgent mission, and we must continue to provide opportunities that enable everyone to embrace people with ID as full members of society. When we do that, we show the world that there are millions of different abilities, not disabilities.



“COME JOIN US AT
SPECIAL OLYMPICS.
See if you can walk away with
your heart unchanged.”

John Franklin Stephens
Special Olympics athlete

“ People with intellectual disabilities have been living in the shadows but they are not forgotten. Together, we can create solutions to end the cycle of poverty and exclusion.

**WE MUST BE INCLUSIVE,
WE MUST ENCOURAGE
PARTICIPATION AND WE
MUST EMPOWER.”**

Aung San Suu Kyi

Nobel Peace Prize laureate,
Leader, National League for Democracy, Myanmar