



ASIA
PACIFIC



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ASIA PACIFIC

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Along the way we realized, physical isolation was not the issue. Everyone understood why we needed to be apart – to keep everyone safe, so we can meet again.

Minimizing social isolation was key and we had a busy year, from conducting competitions through exciting virtual games and training sessions online, capacity building with earnest conversations happening in break-out groups, meaningful mass activities through #1000cranesforinclusion, the countless check-ins and also deploying volunteers to befriend our athletes regularly. For all of the above, we made sure to include our athletes, to ensure they were mindfully engaged.

It finally made us understand what our athletes felt and experienced every day of their lives.

This is why the movement has to go beyond what Special Olympics Asia Pacific can do within. It involves the larger community outside of our immediate sphere of influence.

People and society have to step up and acknowledge that much more can be done for marginalised groups both systematically and individually. The lines drawn between those with and without intellectual disability, have to be blurred and hopefully eventually eradicated.


When can Children play together, Youth dance in unison and Sportsmen race to the finish, regardless of their ability level?

That's why we believe in all things Unified and invite the larger community to join us and experience the movement.

But I hope the embracing goes both ways, that it is not just the movement continuously seeking and reaching out for these opportunities. In this report I've also included the myriad of ways in which you can be part of our family.

May the world one day look up to our athletes, celebrate them for their strength, their courage, how they can find joy in the littlest and embrace them – so we may all not be isolated.

DIPAK NATALI
PRESIDENT & MANAGING DIRECTOR
SPECIAL OLYMPICS ASIA PACIFIC



It was in February this year that everything changed. Fresh out strategy planning and finalizing our work plans, our energies and ambitions high yet there was an undercurrent of uncertainty. Was this a pandemic or an isolated occurrence far from home?

When the clusters started breaking out we knew there had to be a change in game plan, with no room for hesitation. We had to keep our athletes, volunteers and staff safe.

Being a grassroots-led organisation, the community that had kept the movement going is of priority, but how then can we ensure our relevance, stand firm on our focus of bringing our athletes out of isolation if Isolation had to be enforced?



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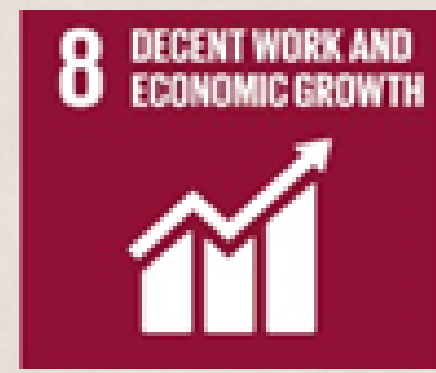
Achieving an inclusive world for all, driven by the power of sport, through which people with intellectual disabilities live an active, healthy and fulfilling life

This will enable people with ID to achieve their full potential and enjoy the same rights as anyone else and respect by wider society,

Then we will create inclusive mindsets which in turn improve organizations, policies and social norms to create more inclusive environments

If we provide high quality sports opportunities, improve health, share the achievements, gifts and leadership skills of people with ID, and create opportunities for people with and without ID to interact through and beyond sports

SPECIAL OLYMPICS AND THE UN SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS



OUTCOMES

People with ID improve physical well-being, skills, fitness and health

People with ID, teammates, families, volunteers and others improve social and emotional well-being

People without disabilities behave more inclusively

Organizations are more inclusive through the work of Special Olympics and influence of athletes



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SPECIAL OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPIC ARE TWO SEPARATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS RECOGNIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC).

WHO WE SERVE

Special Olympics welcomes all people with intellectual disabilities (ages 2 and older) of all ability levels.

Paralympics welcomes athletes mainly with physical disabilities who have to qualify according to sport-specific performance standards.

SPORTING PHILOSOPHY

Equal ability groupings are the foundation for Special Olympics sports, allowing athletes to compete within their own ability levels. Excellence is personal achievement, a reflection of reaching one's maximum potential.

Athletes go through a stringent qualification process that meets certain sports specific performance standards.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Special Olympics is a community-based grassroots movement for people with intellectual disabilities, combining Sports, Healthcare & Community Inclusion.

Paralympics is run by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), mainly for athletes with a physical disability.



THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS DIFFERENCE



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SPORTS

Who would have thought a Summer backyard gathering in the 1960s would grow to a sporting movement serving over close to 6.8 million people with intellectual disabilities across 200 countries globally.

2020 was the year the world caught a glimpse and finally understood the isolation faced by the people with intellectual disabilities.

However our goal of leveraging on the power of sport to bringing them outdoors, help them get active, gain confidence and interact with the community hasn't changed.

Everyone learnt to adapt despite our challenges. Being resilient and creative – activities started sprouting organically online – and these values we've learnt from our athletes.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS THAILAND HOSTS VIRTUAL GAMES

Special Olympics Thailand organized its first Virtual Games, enabling 864 athletes to experience the joy of sports from the safety of their homes and schools.

Athletes with intellectual disabilities took part in activities related to athletics, bocce, football, badminton, table-tennis, and aerobic dance. Athletes with profound and multiple disabilities also had the chance to take part in the Motor Activity Training Program (MATP). The highlights of the event was set to One Chance which was written specially for occasion.



WATCH VIDEO HERE

SPECIAL OLYMPICS VICTORIA LAUNCHES VIRTUAL CHALLENGE

Special Olympics Victoria held a virtual challenge from 23 November to 6 December across seven sporting categories to encourage athletes to keep fit at home. The event was supported by National Australia Bank (NAB), Gallagher Australia and the Law Enforcement Touch Run, Victoria, Australia.

Participants could take part in the challenge at their own pace and to repeat activities on different days to try and beat their own score. They were also encouraged to share their results to receive an exclusive Virtual Challenge kit including a limited edition hat, water bottle, sweatband and certificate.

LET'S GET VIRTUAL



SO BHARAT HOLDS VIRTUAL DANCE SPORT COMPETITION

Special Olympics Bharat presented 57 awards from a pool of 396 entries received across 21 states in India. The winners were professionally assessed based on their Choreography Execution, Athleticism & Presentation. The competition was held across three dancing categories, namely, Street Dance, Performing Arts & Specialty. The participants were allowed to perform a solo, duo or team routine with a specific duration.

THE RACE FOR INCLUSION

Special Olympics Pakistan held the Lakson Investments 5th SOP Unified Marathon at Moin Khan Academy on 5th February which coincided with Kashmir Solidarity Day. In its bid to promote inclusion and raise awareness of the movement, the race was opened to the public with options for the participants to take part in the 21km half marathon, the 5k and 10k run as well as the 1km Unified Walk.



VIEW ALBUM HERE

SPORTS

COACHING FOR SUCCESS

Coaches are the cornerstone to our movement. They also come from various backgrounds, have different levels of coaching competencies and there may be others that never had experience interacting with people with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics welcomes everybody with an interest in sports coaching, and offers a comprehensive coach development pathway with multiple learning opportunities to equip coaches with the required knowledge and skills to be prepared to take on a role as a leader, mentor, and a friend.

Some of our athletes have also been identified and nominated by their coaches to be assistant coaches. This empowers them with a valuable skill and to take on the responsibility to guide fellow athletes.

SO VIETNAM & FWD VIETNAM ORGANISES YOUNG ATHLETES ACTIVITY



Watch on YouTube



WATCH VIDEO HERE

SO BHARAT ATHLETES LEARN & LEAD

Special Olympics Bharat held a series of learning sessions to empower athletes to take charge of leading the movement.

A Coach Assistant training, supported by Herbalife Nutrition reached out to 130 athletes, coaches, state area directors and officials with the objective of training the athletes to assume the role of a coach. Every state was advised to identify two coaches and four athletes who will advance to a sport-specific training. They will be under the guidance of the State Coaches who have been identified to mentor to prepare them to take on the responsibility of guiding fellow athletes.

GFA DONATES SPORTS EQUIPMENT TO SO GUAM

Special Olympics Guam got a recent boost to their softball program with a donation from Guam Football Association that will allow athletes access to quality equipment.

The equipment was collected through a community donation drive held earlier this year, which saw many donating hundreds of softball equipment – bats, helmets, balls, gloves, and cleats, among other equipment – to Special Olympics Guam for its softball program.

SO SINGAPORE SHINES AT PLAY INCLUSIVE 2020



On 7 November 2020, over 100 students from mainstream and special education needs schools came together to play and have fun in the finale event of Play Inclusive 2020.

Together with 24 participants onsite, Singapore's Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Mr Eric Chua, kickstarted the blended event (physical and digital) at Toa Payoh ActiveSG Sport Hall. Other participants joined the event via zoom.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT

- Sign up as a Coach or Unified Partner
- Volunteer at our events
- Cheer for our Athletes at your local events
- Donate equipment or event space for us to host our activities



ACCESS OUR LEARNING PORTAL HERE

BELONGING IS HAVING YOUR VOICE HEARD

WILLIE VAIRA, COACH, SPECIAL OLYMPICS PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The first time I encountered a child with intellectual disabilities, I wasn't sure how to interact with her. We were at a football workshop conducted by Special Olympics Papua New Guinea back in 2013. The child, who has Down Syndrome, refused to play but pointed at the ball and kept repeating, "soccer, soccer, soccer".

I witnessed how the coaches patiently coaxed her out of her shell, using sports to help her gain confidence. By the end of the workshop, she was running around playing with the other children, with a wide smile on her face. There were children, with and without intellectual disabilities, playing together happily without inhibitions. In fact, it was impossible to tell them apart.

I was convinced at that moment, of the unifying power of sports. It marked the start of my journey as a volunteer coach with the Special Olympics, and it's been impossible to look back since.

I've seen how the movement has changed lives. Raphael Ottoase is one of our Special Olympics athletes in Papua New Guinea.



He has been living in a disability home and for years, he hardly got any visits from his family. When he got involved in Special Olympics initiatives, which included sports and leadership development, he became a whole new person. He started smiling and laughing a lot more and wasn't afraid to speak up.

For the first time in his life, he felt empowered. At the ripe old age of 52, Raphael made his very first trip out of Papua New Guinea to Singapore, to represent the country in a leadership conference. The experience was life-changing. It changed his family's perception too, helping them realize that Raphael was capable of so much more than they imagined.

Raphael, like so many other athletes, has put Papua New Guinea on the world map.

In 2015, we sent a team to the Special Olympics World Summer Games held in Los Angeles, and made our country proud by bringing home medals in athletics. In 2019, our athletes went to the World Games in Abu Dhabi and delivered a clean sweep of medals in shot put, among other achievements. It is absolutely amazing to witness what our athletes are capable of, when given the opportunity to shine.

For many of these athletes, it is their first time competing and representing their country on the global stage.

The exposure and confidence gained are transformative for all of us. To be honest, I've never travelled before being a part of the movement. Since 2013, I have been exposed to so many people from all over the world who are doing their bit to promote inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities, and it's humbling to know I'm part of this global community.

We have a long road ahead of us. Companies need to be more inclusive, hire more people with intellectual disabilities, and fund organizations like ours so that we can do more for our athletes.

SPORTS

Parents need to change their mindsets, expose their children with disabilities to experiences, and not hide them at home in shame.

More volunteers need to come forward, to be guardians, mentors and coaches to our athletes. The public needs to open their hearts and minds, to interact with our athletes and befriend them.

It is my hope that we will one day see a truly inclusive world, where people do not just tolerate but accept unconditionally. To borrow a quote, "Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard."

"There were children, with and without intellectual disabilities, playing together happily without inhibitions."

– Willie Vaira



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HEALTH

People with intellectual disabilities have a higher prevalence of health conditions and earlier onset of chronic disease. They die 16 years prematurely because of undiagnosed and untreated conditions.

This means up to 200 million people or between 1 and 3% of the global population are denied or do not have access to quality health services. Our goal here at Special Olympics is to improve the health status and increase access to quality health care and health resources for people with intellectual disabilities.

With the pandemic this health crisis has impacted the lives of many, especially the athletes as they cope with the need to improve hygiene, stay healthy, while facing the fear and uncertainty of the situation.

As such our programming focused on health education for athletes – both physical and mental– engaging clinical directors and health messengers to continue keeping the community safe.



NEW SO HEALTH AMBASSADORS FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Through a series of theory and practical sessions, Special Olympics Clinical Director Dr Andrew Ame and his team has trained eight new athlete leaders to take on Health Ambassadors roles for the Healthy Community Program. They are scheduled to visit selected villages in Central Province and settlements on the outskirts of Port Moresby through this year.



WATCH VIDEO HERE

The Healthy Communities team reached out to a total of 21 villages and communities of which nearly 1600 were identified as people with some form of intellectual disabilities. Many of which have never seen a doctor since they were born.

Through the Special Olympics partnership with the National Department of Health's Port Moresby General Hospital (POMGen), a pathway has been created for people with intellectual disabilities to have direct and better access to medical and specialist care at the country's biggest referral hospital.

HEALTH IN FOCUS



SO BANGLADESH CONFERRED HEALTHY COMMUNITIES STATUS

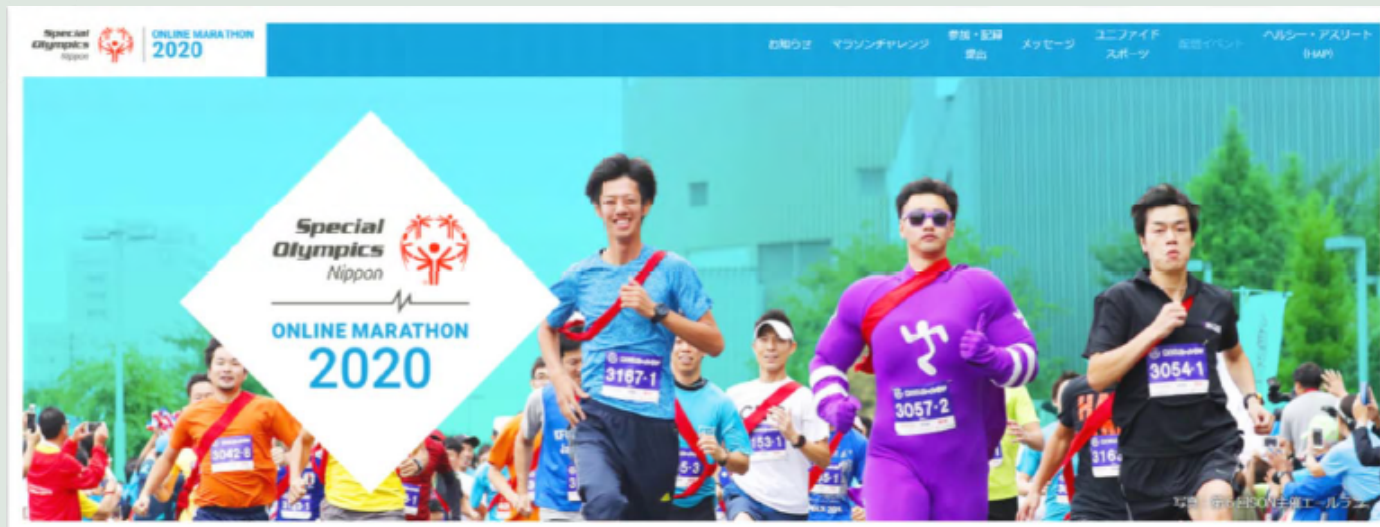
SO Bangladesh has been recognized as a Healthy Community, making it one of 45 locations worldwide to receive the distinction that denotes a year-round focus on advancing the health of people with intellectual disabilities

This recognition is awarded to Programs that have 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.



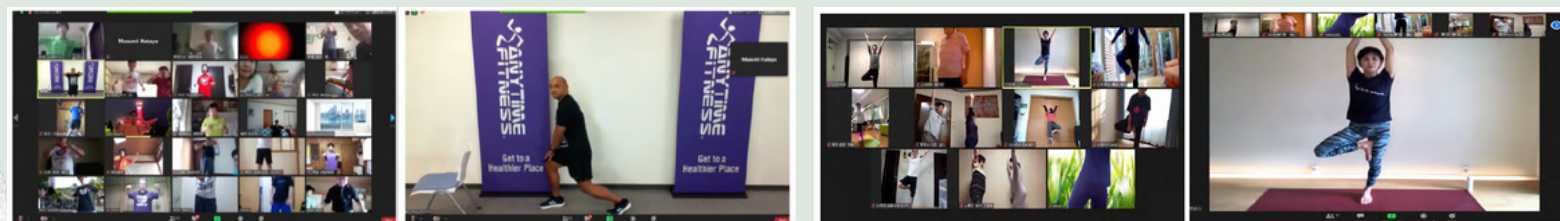
SPECIAL OLYMPICS NIPPON LAUNCHES HEALTHY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

Special Olympics Nippon ran a close to three-month long initiative starting October 2020 where they invited athletes, volunteers and the public to "run" around Japan and then the world - the former goal was hit just ten days from launch day.



The Healthy Communities outreach also shared educational materials on health, wellness and fitness including Covid-19 education materials, sharing instructions with the public on how to identify symptoms with prevention tips alongside guides on handwashing. A month-long Health Challenge Calendar was announced in November.

In partnership with Anytime Fitness, there were also online fitness programs held alongside an online Yoga webinar to engage athletes, family and volunteers.



HEALTH IN FOCUS

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT

If you are a healthcare professional:

- Reach out to your local Special Olympics office to see how you can support them
- Volunteer at our health screenings
- Advocate for healthcare access for people with intellectual disabilities
- Become a clinical director



FIND OUT MORE HERE

- Get online training through our Online Learning Portal



FIND OUT MORE HERE

If you are a part of a healthcare system, service provider or organization do consider:

- Sign MOUs to officially provide access and training to healthcare professionals to care for people with intellectual disabilities
- Influence policy change and improve healthcare systems
- Provide in-kind donations of healthcare supplies or facilities eg: Inclusive Gyms, Fitness Equipment, Vaccinations



FIND OUT MORE HERE



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Engaging families is core to Special Olympics Health as we believe that family members are best poised to identify the health needs of people with intellectual disabilities.

With adequate training they are able to support delivery of programming and play an important role as advocates for increasing awareness and inclusion.

Through our work in the Family Health Forums, Special Olympics reaches out to family members and caregivers – giving them a platform to engage with and learn from healthcare professionals, community leaders and service providers.

Topics covered include hygiene, fitness alongside tips on hydration and nutrition, first aid and identifying risks at home as well as emotional wellness and mental health was a key area of focus as many athletes and their family members remain home bound.

There were also topics covered in these session including common health ailments faced by people with intellectual disabilities like diabetes prevention and management.

FAMILY

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ASIA PACIFIC FAMILY INPUT COUNCIL MEETING

A council meeting was held in early October to thank families for their contribution and the valuable role they play in the movement.

With the pandemic situation in mind families were encouraged to support the fitness of their family members with intellectual disabilities by exercising together – introducing them to Fit 5

The purpose and tole of the Family Input Council was also announced and discussions were health with all members.

Topics discussed include: How can family members support each other to deal with Covid-19; How can families help to support athletes that have left school; as well as discussions on how to support coaches and engage siblings better.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT

- Don't isolate yourself. Step up and advocate for your family and siblings by sharing your stories of impact
- Invite your friends and neighbors to cheer for our Athletes at your local events
- Sign up as a Coach or Unified Partner
- Volunteer at our events

COURAGE WAS OUR ONLY OPTION

MUNIZA HAFIZ, MOTHER OF ABDUL MANNAN, SPECIAL OLYMPICS PAKISTAN

FAMILY

The festival of Eid brings me painful memories. It was during Eid, two years ago, that I faced the most excruciating hurdle of my life. I lost three of my closest and dearest – my husband, father-in-law and younger son – to a house fire. I went from having a big, happy family to being all alone; but I had no time to mourn because my elder son needed me more than ever.

My story began more than 10 years ago when I moved from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan to join the Karachi School of Arts to pursue Design. After that, I worked as a designer and researcher. I was passionate about my job and wanted to marry someone who shared my passion. That's when I met Danish, a fellow designer. He was my soulmate. In 2010, we got married.

When our first child Abdul Mannan was born, we realized that he was hyperactive compared to his peers. We got complaints from his teachers about his behaviour. We consulted a doctor who told us that Mannan had developmental difficulties accompanied by a mild case of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).



I decided to take a course in early education as a Montessori Director, hoping that the training would enable me to help my son. The course helped me to understand the personality of children with ADHD and ways to handle and take care of them.

But just when things started to feel normal, my life turned topsy turvy. I will never forget the nightmare from 2 years ago, on the special occasion of Eid. We decided to eat out as our house was being fumigated. When we came home, my husband went downstairs to switch the generator on. While he was filling it with petrol, I heard a loud blast.

As I ran down the stairs, my heart sank. The entire scene felt surreal. The fire spread so quickly that it engulfed our home within minutes. My father-in-law and children couldn't escape in time.

Tears seared my cheeks and I was shaking as I rushed all of them to the nearest hospital. In the air was the nauseating smell of burnt flesh and clothes. At the hospital, the staff were not equipped to handle their severe injuries and refused to take them in. I had to then rush them to a larger hospital, the Liaquat National Hospital, where they admitted my sons but couldn't find beds for my father-in-law and husband. I had to take them to a third hospital.

I kept a vigil by my sons' beds while my sister-in-law took care of my husband and father-in-law. She gave me daily updates about their condition. We prayed day and night, but we just couldn't catch a break. The hospital was not properly equipped with the right facilities and my husband had to be moved to yet another hospital.

By this time, both my sons had to be put on ventilators to help them breathe. The next day, I got the news that my husband had started vomiting and had trouble breathing. I prayed constantly for the recovery of my family, hoping against all hope.

Then, the inevitable happened. My father-in-law passed away. Before he died, he had asked me several times if I thought he would survive and I nodded, hoping that he would. A day later, I lost my younger son, followed by the death of my husband.

It felt like my heart was being ripped apart. These were the people closest to me. I couldn't even begin to describe my sense of loss. But I had no time to weep, I had to pick myself up, not just for myself, but for Mannan. I had lost everyone, I wasn't ready to lose him too. I tried everything in my power to help him recover. It was a long journey that stretched up to a year.

He underwent a major operation and went through countless follow-up treatments. His physical recovery was slow, but that was just the first of our battles. I had to fight to get him into a good school, but none of the schools accepted him. They always complained about how difficult he was to handle.

COURAGE WAS OUR ONLY OPTION

MUNIZA HAFIZ, MOTHER OF ABDUL MANNAN, SPECIAL OLYMPICS PAKISTAN

FAMILY



I was so desperate to get him a place that I even requested that the schools take me in as his caregiver as I was already a Montessori Director. But all I heard was no, no, no. By this point, I was drained and exhausted from going door to door to schools that gave us nothing but rejection.

Then a friend recommended Special Olympics Pakistan to me. I thought it might be a good idea to get Mannan into sports so he could positively channel his energy.

I enrolled him in the Dewa Academy for children with disabilities. There, he joined the Special Olympics Young Athletes program, catered to children aged 2 to 7 to improve their motor and cognitive skills. Within weeks, he was a changed boy. I could not believe the transformation in Mannan. From meek and withdrawn, he became cheerful and outgoing.

I am so grateful to each and everyone who has been part of this journey for Mannan. Not only did sports help him overcome his hyper-activeness, the faculty members and coaches also helped him develop his personality, gave him attention and focused on developing his skills which helped Mannan build his confidence. All my son needed was love and attention and he got that unconditionally through the Special Olympics movement. For the first time, no one asked me to take him back. He was celebrated for who he was.

As a single mother, things get tough because I have to run this show myself. It takes a village to raise a child, and I'm grateful that my mother, mother-in-law & my sister-in-law offer their support as much as they can. And I am truly thankful for our Special Olympics family, who has embraced us without question.

It's been a challenge, but life often sets us down paths we never meant to wander down and we have to make the best of the journey. Existing on this planet, fighting this fight, pushing through these painful but sometimes beautiful days is often about being brave, not perfect. And for Mannan and I, courage was our only option.

"For the first time, no one asked me to take him back. He was celebrated for who he was."

- MUNIZA HAFIZ



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INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Imagine a world where everyone is valued, heard, respected, empowered, accepted and included - in our community, schools, at work and play.

Age is never a barrier when it comes to making that a reality. Here at Special Olympics we position Youth at the forefront as advocates championing social change.

As a grassroots-led movement we are majorly powered by Youth as they make up half of our volunteer population.

We empower youth with and without intellectual disabilities by engaging them in leadership development opportunities that allow them to grow and develop as advocates for inclusion.



"Children with disabilities are always at an increased risk of being bullied. Children who are bullied can experience negative physical, social, emotional, academic, and mental health issues. In the long term, victims might experience depression, anxiety, and other serious mental health. This reality is unacceptable, school should be a safe environment for students to grow and learn to their full potential, not where they are made to feel bad about themselves."

- Laura Đoan Trang Huynh Phan
Youth Leader, Special Olympics Vietnam



**LEARN MORE ABOUT
LAURA & PATRICKS'
ANTI-BULLYING APP
HERE**

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

People with intellectual disabilities are often isolated, bound and held back by societal limitations. More often they are told what they cannot achieve rather than what they can. As such, many are unable to achieve their leadership potential not by their lack of ability but by the lack of understanding and opportunities.

Here at Special Olympics we want to rise above these challenges and change the attitudes, behaviors and low expectations that society has placed upon them - hence we believe in all things unified to make this shift a reality.

By inviting the world to our movement - by playing sports together, having activities in schools together, by thriving and becoming leaders together - we will create a world that is inclusive for everyone.

Having both the Regional Youth Input Council (RYIC) and Regional Athlete Input Council (RAIC) work together is one way we strive to achieve this inclusive equilibrium where youth with and without intellectual disabilities are brought together to create a working forum - drawing on their lived experiences, surfacing needs, providing keen insights, to steer the various programs while motivating athletes and youth in the region.

Leaders are also equipped with skills and opportunities to serve and lead. They are empowered to be both role models and serve as ambassadors to the community.



WATCH VIDEO HERE

""The biggest challenge for intellectually disabled people is the social attitude. Please don't pity us. We need moral and social support."

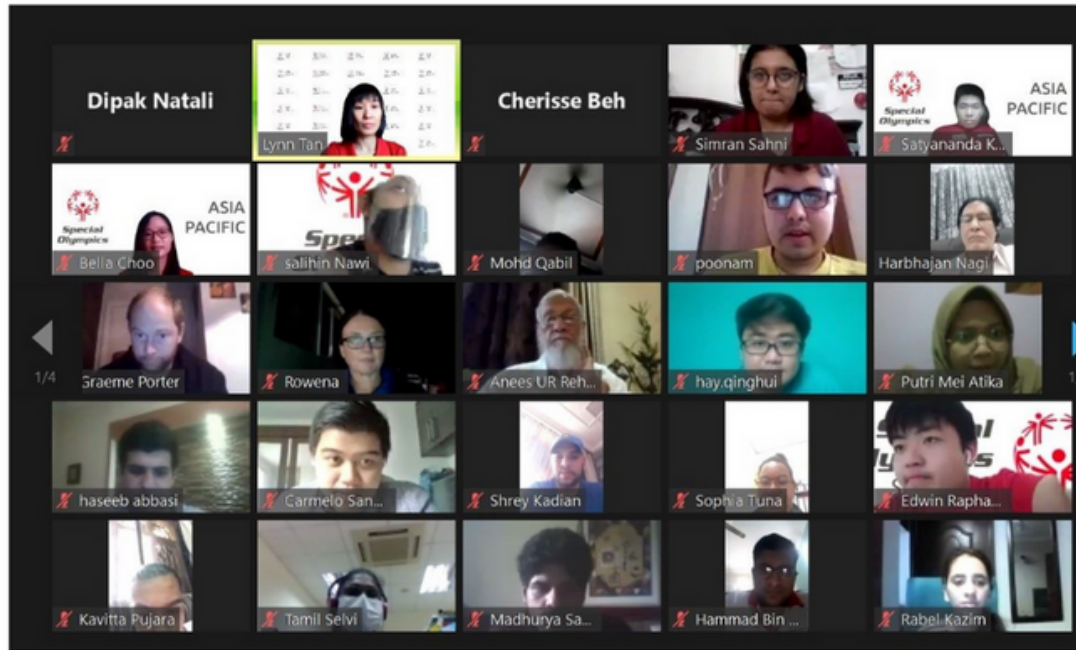
- Haseeb Abbasi, SO Pakistan Athlete Leader, RAIC member, Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger, Owner of Squeezy the Juice Bar



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
LEAD TO INCLUDE

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ASIA PACIFIC ATHLETE & YOUTH LEADERSHIP WEBINAR

160 individuals with and without intellectual disabilities from the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Region participated in a Regional webinar to learn more about Athlete and Youth Leadership across their Region. During this webinar, attendees learned more about Special Olympics Athlete Leadership, Youth Leadership, and Unified Leadership. Individuals also listened to Special Olympics Athlete and Youth Leaders share their experiences with Special Olympics and how they are leading the future of inclusion. From the webinar, 98 percent of attendees said the information presented was relevant to their Special Olympics Program and will support the growth the Unified Generation.



"It was an amazing opportunity for me to share about the 'How To' webinar series that the Regional Athlete and Youth Input Councils is pioneering together. As we worked together, we learnt about Inclusive management and execution. I'm proud to have both councils exemplify inclusive leadership. Through these webinars, I have grown much closer to the SOAP family during this pandemic."

Simran Sahni
Co-Chair, Regional Youth Input Council
Special Olympics Bharat (India)

"Online or offline, inclusive collaboration still goes strong. These webinar series really helps everyone to keep connected! The Regional webinar showed us that many people are interested in collaborating, this really motivates us to go even further."

Satyananda Kusuma
Co-Chair, Regional Youth Input Council
Special Olympics Indonesia

"Working on the Regional webinar has been a great experience especially as I am currently embracing the new normal. Youth and Athlete Leadership in general has been one of the things that we are looking for. We are the leaders that can lead change in the community."

Dacki Sandiego
Co-Chair, Regional Athlete Input Council
Special Olympics Philippines

"It is so awesome to be a part of the Athlete Input Council because we are all working together with the Youth Input Council towards our goals on how we can make Special Olympics more inclusive place for all."

Grace Payne
Co-Chair, Regional Athlete Input Council
Special Olympics New Zealand

Best Practices in Youth Leadership: Advocacy beyond Special Olympics

Carmelo (Dacki) Sandiego
Co-Chair
Special Olympics Regional Athlete Input Council 2020-21



WATCH WEBINAR HERE

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

#1000CRANESFORINCLUSION



WATCH VIDEO HERE

#1000CranesForInclusion – conceived by youths with and without intellectual disabilities – was built on their hopes for an inclusive world. What started off just as a mini afternoon-tea activation to engage a legion of 50-plus youth trapped indoors with boundless creativity and time on their hands took flight and we saw the global community rallying together to take part, helping us hit our target many times over – hitting 9.6 million social media impressions, 2.2 million social media accounts reached, with thousands of cranes and counting.

It was the second of a series of "How to" Webinars organised by the Regional Youth and Athlete Input Councils (RYIC and RAIC), where the taught participants how to fold an origami crane.



Through a series of hands-on activities, these skills-based webinars aim to build a community of youth leaders and strengthen mental well-being during this COVID-19 pandemic.



1080 Cranes forming 'Distanced by Covid 19, yet United by Hope' by Aravind Eye Hospital, Puducherry, India. Over at Alternative Inclusive Centre for Education that supports abandoned children and children of incarcerated parents also churned by 93 cranes by 54 students.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT

- Sign up as a youth volunteer with your local program
- Take part in our online webinars and activities
- Step up and advocate for people with intellectual disabilities

"Cranes symbolize peace, happiness, contentment and comfort.

So what better symbol than a crane to show the world that we are all comfortable in our space, and that we want to include everyone in this common space"

*– Dr ChitraShah,
Area Director, SO Bharat, Puducherry*

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

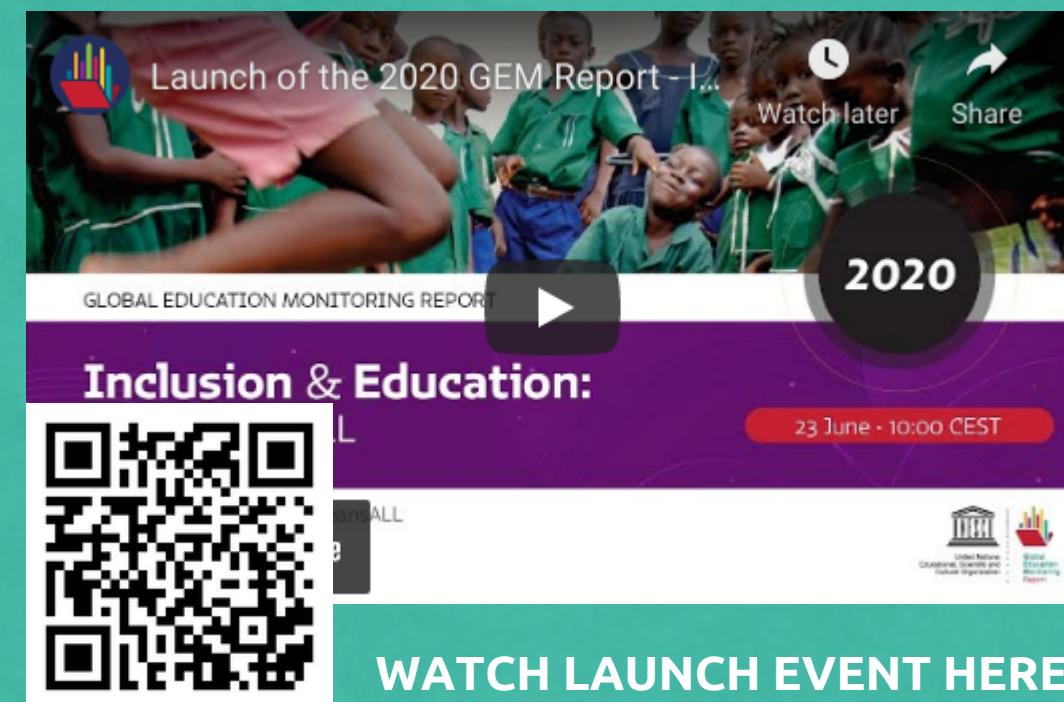
SSIGM BRINA MAXINO AWARDED UNESCO GEM CHAMPION FOR EDUCATION & INCLUSION



Special Olympics Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger Brina Maxino is among the 10 global inclusion champions appointed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization alongside their global launch of the UNESCO GEM Report 2020.

She is the only recipient from the Asia Pacific region, alongside teachers, education policy makers and community leaders from around the globe.

The report calls for countries to concentrate on those being left behind from the education process because of their context or ability. It also aims to widen the understanding of inclusive education to include all learners with examples of policies which have been implemented in countries where inclusion is being achieved.



MICROSOFT SUPPORTS YOUTH LEADERS IN DEVELOPING MOBILITY APP



With support from Microsoft, athlete leader Grace Payne and youth leader Jack Green from SO New Zealand are developing an app that connects athletes with transportation to help them get to sports training easily so they can be self-reliant, stay engaged with their friends and teammates, and attend the events that are most important to them.

YES, I CAN

SHREY KADIAN, CHAIRPERSON SO BHARAT NATIONAL ATHLETE INPUT COUNCIL;
RAIC MEMBER; GLOBAL ATHLETE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER

I did not speak until I was 7. According to my parents, I spoke only a few words when I was a toddler; but after that, I just stopped talking.

My parents enrolled me in a play group. Back then, I couldn't sit still and often fought with the other children. The teachers could not control my aggressive and hyperactive behaviour. For a long time, my parents thought that this was normal. They had no one to turn to for help on how to handle children with intellectual disabilities.

But things got out of control. There were frequent complaints about me from teachers and other parents. I would injure other children. I would also come home with bruises and bite marks from fighting with others.

Mum turned down a Government job offer so that she could spend more time with me. Often, she would take me to parks and let me play with a ball. Helping me expend my energy reduced my aggression. Mum also spent a lot of effort teaching me simple tasks like buttoning my shirt and tying my shoelaces. It was difficult for me, but Mum taught me never to give up.



People called me pagal (lunatic in Hindi). Some acquaintances told Mum to place me in a hospital for people with mental disorders. They said things to her like, "Why invest energy in disciplining and guiding him? He will never improve." Even my own father questioned why my mother was doing so much for me. Close relatives stopped inviting us for parties and gatherings. They just didn't know how to deal with my behavior.

My parents took me to see a doctor. At the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, I was found to have lower than normal IQ. I was referred to the Mata Bhagwanti Chadha Niketan, a school for children with disabilities in Noida. Through the school, I found out about Special Olympics in India. I was started on various sports programs so that I would channel my energy in a constructive and meaningful way.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Since I joined Special Olympics Bharat in 2008 at the age of 13, I have tried cricket, cycling, and softball. I was given the opportunity to take part in various local competitions. As I got more medals, I became a local hero in my school. It felt nice to be celebrated for my abilities. It boosted my confidence.

Soon, my sports journey went beyond the borders of India. In 2013, I represented the country in cricket at the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Regional Games in Australia and took home a silver medal. I was also vice-captain of the softball team that represented India at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Los Angeles in 2015.

Beyond the sports field, I have been part of the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Athlete Input Council since 2017, lending my voice to advocate for people with intellectual disabilities.

I've also been on the global stage to voice my ideas on how to promote a more inclusive world at events such as the Special Olympics Youth Summit in Shanghai, the Global Athlete Congress in Santa Domingo, and the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Special Olympics movement in Chicago in 2018. Back home, I have helped to train and inspire other athletes, both with and without intellectual disabilities in football and cricket.

Sports has changed my life. Training has taught me discipline, independence and given me the confidence to speak up for myself and for others with intellectual disabilities.

It is ironic that I used to not speak a word. Today, I want the world to know my story, and to realize that people with intellectual disabilities are not to be avoided or discriminated against. I believe that if we persist, we can overcome all odds and change the world. My personal mantra is "Yes, I can!"

***"IT FELT NICE TO BE
CELEBRATED FOR MY
ABILITIES. IT BOOSTED
MY CONFIDENCE."***

- SHREY KADIAN



**READ SHREY'S
THOUGHTS ON THE
PANDEMIC &
LOCKDOWN**



ASIA
PACIFIC

LEADERSHIP & CAPACITY BUILDING

This year has been a test for many leaders. Our decisions have had to be swift, responsive, and most of the time it has forced us to step out of our comfort zone.

Everything came to a standstill early March, while the team was working on development plans and gearing to meet up with the National Program leaders and athletes at the Regional Leadership Conference.

Offline activities were halted but the movement came around, rose to the challenge and adapted quickly to a virtual environment. We realized the need to increase capacity and capability to cope with what's ahead.

We've had to rethink, relook, and reimagine many of our processes – from competition delivery, training and outreach, our operations and even the way we communicate.

From April to June, we ran a series of regional webinars across our pillars of work, sports, health, initiatives, marketing communications and organization development.

Right after, we split into regions and proceeded with strategic planning training. All these going alongside initiatives that sought to strengthen our capabilities like workshops on media training and aligned the regional team with project management certification.

Bringing things virtual allowed us to invite more people than we previously had into the conversation. By breaking down the physical barriers we had the chance increase our frequency to connect and have deeper dialogues, to learn from one another, to diagnose and reflect, and to collectively set the direction of the future of the movement in Asia Pacific – bringing out the best in our athletes and for our athletes.

VIRTUAL REGIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

We broke tradition and held the Regional Leadership Conference virtually in October. The session shared our new strategic plan, adopted the Open Space methodology to facilitate open conversations across topics that mattered to the movement.

The event also served to highlight the growth mindset and the movement's willingness to embrace fresh ideas, approaches and views – that our shared passion for inclusion remains undeterred.

"We are an organisation that faces adversity every day and have proven we can rise above even the toughest of challenges."

- Mary Davis, CEO, Special Olympics International

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

By bringing to light the issues faced by people with intellectual disabilities, and to share about our work and impact of the movement, we hope to help people understand the challenges and discrimination faced by one of the world's most socially isolated, under-served and stigmatized populations.

We believe that this is best done by empowering our athletes and people of the movement to advocate for themselves – that's why we relaunched Humanrace.asia an exclusive first-person insight into the daily lives and unique perspectives of athletes, coaches, family members, and volunteers who work with people with intellectual disabilities.

The team also launched our first year-long campaign in early May, #MyNormal – a public awareness and fundraising initiative, in conjunction with Giving Tuesday Now.

By creating campaigns to help drive awareness, we hope to change status quo and transform mind-sets with the goal of getting people to get out of their comfort zone to support a cause that is meaningful.

We hope that the world will get to understand the transformative power and joy of sports, realize the value of people with intellectual disabilities, reduce the stigma and societal limitations placed upon them and help them break their norm.

"In times of Covid or not, please continue sharing. It helps me put a name and a face to the worldwide group. I really enjoyed watching these and get tips for myself! If they can find joy in their daily continuous struggles, then it encourages me to be more joyous."

- Rena Ong, Donor

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

HELP CHANGE #MYNORMAL



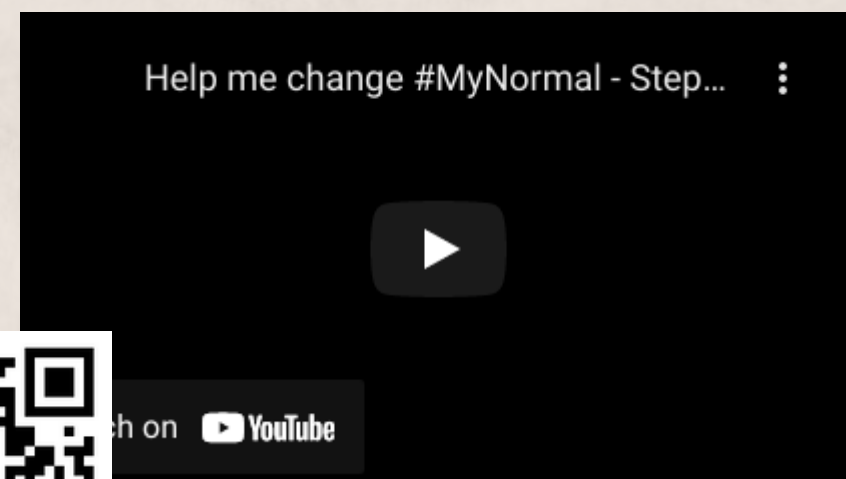
WATCH VIDEO HERE

Phase 1 of the campaign focused on educating the public on the social isolation faced by people with intellectual disabilities.

Coronavirus lockdowns around the world continue to mentally stress the stay-at-home population; but for people with intellectual disabilities across the region, social isolation has been a norm they have had to live with most of their lives.

“Launching the #MyNormal campaign puts the spotlight on all the abnormal feelings society is experiencing such as social isolation, loneliness, and the mental stress of not being able to go to work, and missing out on outings with friends and families. It draws comparison to the everyday experiences of people with intellectual disabilities who have been ignored, bullied, ridiculed and marginalized all their lives,” says Dipak Natali, President and Managing Director of Special Olympics Asia Pacific.

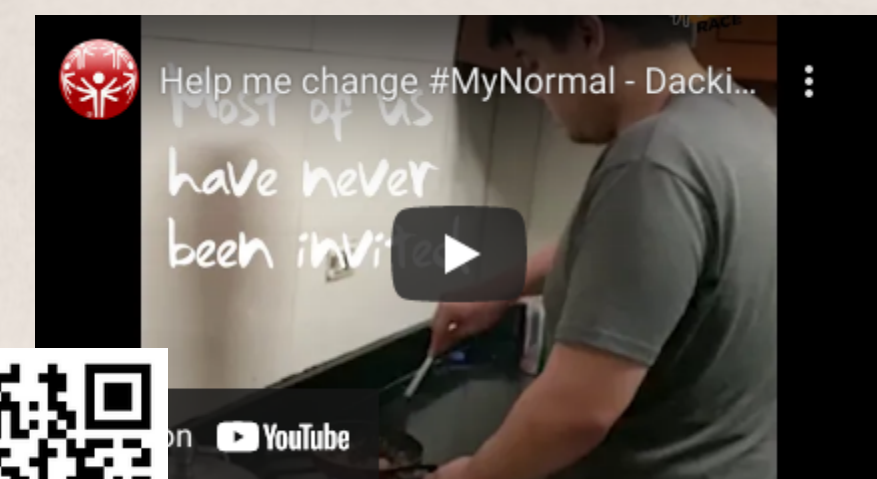
The campaign was fronted by athlete leaders Haseeb Abbasi, Stephanie Handojo and Dacki Sandiego who shared with us snippets of their daily lives while advocating to change the normal of PWIDs.



WATCH VIDEO HERE



WATCH VIDEO HERE



WATCH VIDEO HERE

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

BREAKING LIMITS: NOTHING WILL STOP THEIR SHINE

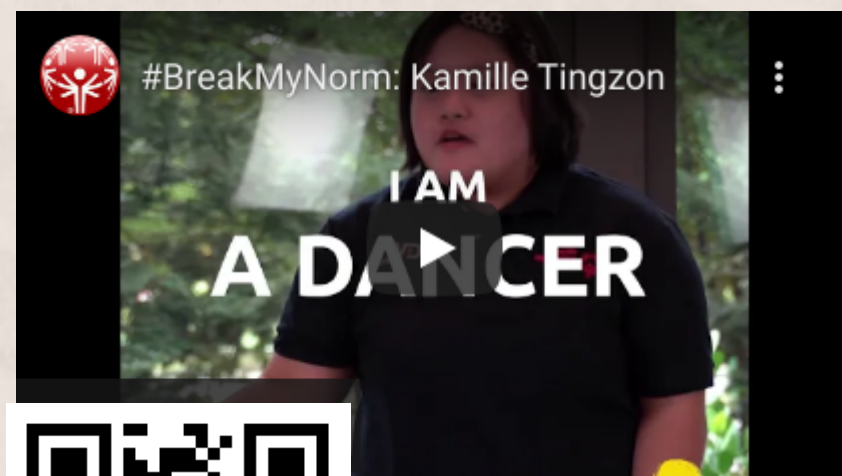
You can't get a job. You can't be a leader. You're no fun. These are what people with intellectual disabilities are told all their lives. Their norm is that of exclusion, isolation and low expectations.

Phase Three of #MyNormal Campaign shows how Special Olympics Asia Pacific athletes have shattered those stereotypes, proving every day that there are no limits.

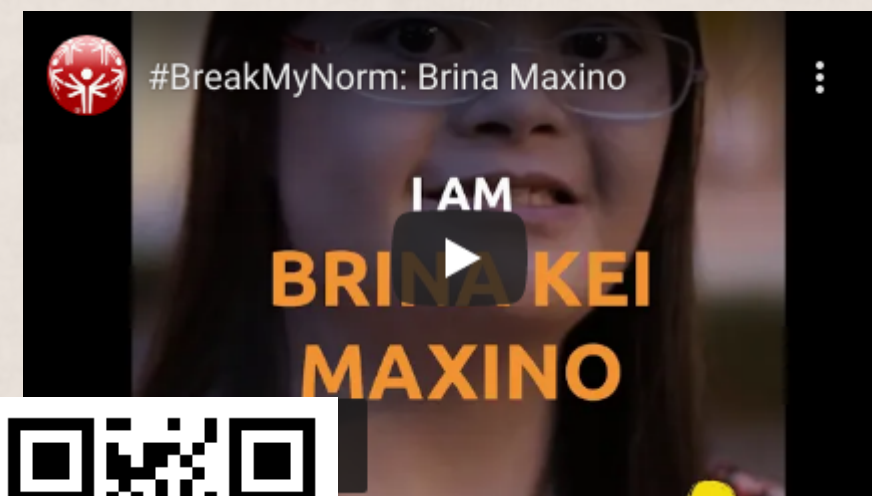
The earlier phases of #MyNormal focused on educating the public on the issues of isolation faced by people with intellectual disabilities, followed by #1000CranesForInclusion – conceived by youths with and without intellectual disabilities as they share their hope for an inclusive world.



WATCH VIDEO HERE



WATCH VIDEO HERE



WATCH VIDEO HERE

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT

- Take part in our campaign and share our posts
- Get our updates and sign up for our newsletters
- Volunteer your skills, eg: Photographer, Design, Outreach, Fundraising



OUR SUPPORTERS





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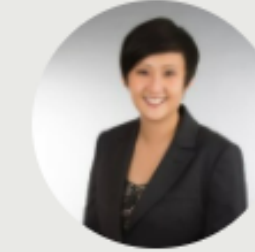
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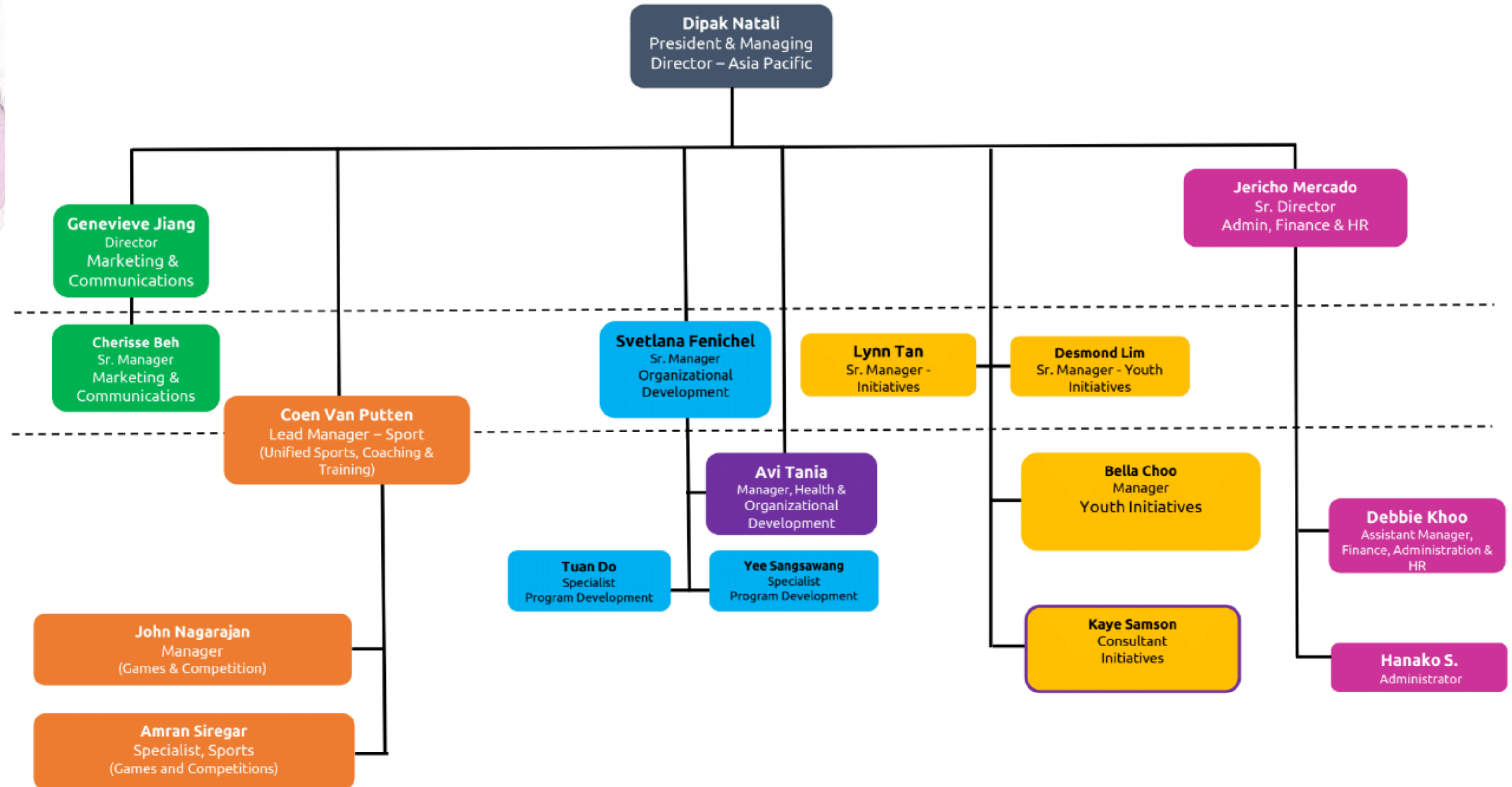
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