

Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat

## The SO Bharat Youth Leadership Summit 2022

*Typed Tales – listening to learn*



A session on Typed Tales conducted during the Summit refreshed and re-energized the participants with a new approach to 'listening to learn' from the Athletes through fun way. Access to colourful animations if virtual, while that to colour pens and clay if physical brought to the surface, thoughts buried deep inside. A fun element by drawing your partner 'without lifting the pencil' and speaking simple words that would weave into an intriguing story was captured within the session. This session was led by Gayatri Pore, supported by an inclusive core team and overseen by Saloni Mhapsekar who was virtually linked in Berlin, Germany.

For a recap, back in January 2020, Gayatri Pore, Saloni Mhapsekar and Kritika Sharma, SO Bharat Youth leaders started a project 'Typed Tales' that positioned the athletes at the center of the universe in a safe-space listening to their needs through stories. They researched, built, and designed to help athletes express themselves better

Furthermore, sessions on Inclusive Youth leadership, Unified event planning along with Unified Sports experiences and Panel discussions outlined the fourth edition of the SO Bharat National Youth leadership Summit, conducted from 9-12 November 2022 at the YMCA, New Delhi. Over 150 Youth leaders with and without

Intellectual Disability and their mentors from 17 States of India and 14 Schools of the Delhi NCR converged at the venue, sharing their Special Olympics experiences and changes.

In the words of **Dr Mallika Nadda, Chairperson**, Special Olympics Bharat said: “The Youth are an integral part of the society and have the ability to drive change. In conjunction with the UN-Sustainable Development Goals, it is time to reach out to them and facilitate their effective engagement and leadership in making this world a better place. To enable the youth and to leverage the unique power that they hold, support is required from different stakeholders of the society. This Summit has brought together guests from diverse backgrounds outlining each one’s ability and relevance to drive **the Inclusion Revolution**. It provided a platform for the youth from all over India to highlight and share their experiences of the work being done through the Special Olympics **Unified Champion School** programming. We have our endeavors strongly steered towards educational institutions to build communities of acceptance, bringing about Inclusion of Persons with intellectual Disability.”

### ***The SO Bharat National Educator Advisory Committee***



How inclusive is Inclusive Education, on ground; how would Special Olympics become an urgent catalyst to Inclusion, how do we realistically nurture a unified generation; these are few of the questions deliberated within the National Educator Advisory Committee, a forum that was formed as part of the Special Olympics Unified Champion School Programming supported by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the U.A.E., Ruler of Abu Dhabi, and Supreme Commander of the U.A.E. Armed Forces, spreading across 12 states of India. The Committee met during the Summit and held its first in-person meeting at the YMCA, after having been formed at the Virtual National Youth Leadership Summit held in 2021.

The Committee is composed of experts representing a range of backgrounds like Education Professionals, Media, Research, Policy making, Sports etc.

## ***Unified Anchors – Steering the Summit through planned and unplanned twists and turns***



Siddhant Nath (fondly called Sid), Athlete leader attentively kept making the last-minute changes that came about in his script as he anchored the Summit with his Unified buddy, Shubham. He made it a point to address the weaknesses he observed, during the Summit at a review meeting that took place shortly after. Sid also was part of the Team that planned the fitness sessions every morning, along with his partners, Rithik, Advait and Smriti. Like him all the other Unified anchors received a similar experience of planning and executing sessions inclusively and also gaining an experience of overcoming unexpected challenges. Each day was anchored by a different pair (Youth with and the other without an Intellectual Disability) who worked and planned their scripts together, learning from each other and forming a definite view of an improved approach in future.

Says Shubham, a youth leader without Intellectual Disability, “My experience at this Summit was very different from an online event. I was a part of the core organizing committee for the first time and was delegated key roles. I have gained confidence in crowd-management, technology-support and

over all to multi-task. Anchoring was also a new experience for me and that too with a person with an Intellectual Disability. Working with Sid was a pleasure and a great amount of learning for me.”

## **Special Olympics Bharat Athletes at the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon**



50 Special Olympics Athletes from Delhi NCR along with their buddies ran 2.5 km at the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon held on 16 October. They showcased their participation at the upcoming Special Olympics World Summer Games to be held in Berlin in June 2023, joining about 25,000+ runners from all over the world on the Sunday morning at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The SO Bharat leadership including Dr Mallika Nadda, Chairperson and Air Cmde LK Sharma, Executive Director enthusiastically converged at the event to cheer up the runners. The Champions with Disability category was flagged off at 7:25am

The spirit of inclusivity took over the atmosphere at the event with the Great Delhi Run. It witnessed thousands of participants running for the causes they believed in and wanted to support by bringing them under the spotlight through the race. The #RangDeDilli spirit which was resonated unconditionally by all runners showcased the power of sport to spread joy and bring down barriers to promote togetherness.

## SO Bharat to partner with Xaxti Riders in Goa



On their return from the Cycling NCC (National Coaching Camp) held in Jharkhand in September 2022, the Athletes from Goa, were gifted five cycles by the Xaxti Riders. Xaxti Riders is a cycling club that promotes safe and regular cycling. The club decided to celebrate their fifth anniversary by committing to nurture cycling talent amongst persons with Intellectual Disability. They are in discussion with Mr Victor R Vaz, National Sports Director, SO Bharat, to develop cyclists across the special schools in Goa, through a structured 4-year plan and would soon enter an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) for the same. "We will work together with Xaxti Riders to train young talent from Goa who will eventually represent India at the Special Olympics World Games in cycling," said Mr Vaz [Read More](#)

## Keeping the Virtual and the Physical Sports field ablaze

The support of ESPN continues to keep the Athletes occupied in their respective hometowns through participation in the SO Bharat Virtual Unified Competition 2022. The event that commenced on 15 October 2022 is underway, featuring Basketball, Volleyball and Badminton with participation from 20 States. Unified Basketball competitions concluded on 18 November 2022, conducting 37 matches in the Round Robin format witnessing participation of 240 Athletes & Unified partners (128 Male and 112 Female Athletes). The teams were assessed across three drills, namely, dribbling (zigzag), speed dribbling (bounces) and chest pass. While dribbling measured action in 30 seconds, five chances assessed the chest pass of the Athletes.



The competitions continue to keep the thrill of sports on, as the focus now shifts to volleyball, which is estimated to continue for about three weeks, followed by Badminton that would take about the same time, bringing the event to a close in mid- January 2023.

## The Maharashtra State Chapter inks a partnership that commits accessible fitness for all



To mark their 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a commitment to build inclusion via sports, SOHFIT by Sohrab Khushrushahi has joined hands with the Special Olympics Movement. The MoU between SOHFIT and Special Olympics Bharat, Maharashtra (SOB Maharashtra) opened doors for the coaches of SOBharat

Maharashtra to learn methods and movements from SOHFIT via specially crafted programs by Coach Sohrab Khushrushahi. Apart from this, SOHFIT has also committed to creating inclusive opportunities with their community and the special athletes from SOB Maharashtra over the coming year, leveraging the experiences and expertise of the SO Bharat Coaches.

The collaboration between SO Bharat Maharashtra and SOHFIT would enhance the fitness levels as well as make 'fitness' accessible to a cross section of the SOB Maharashtra athletes by making it easy and equipment-free. Supported by Hasbro, the collaboration will create a platform for training and interactive sessions between SOB Maharashtra and the SOHFIT Coaches, to begin with & gradually expanding to more state chapters of SO Bharat. In the words of Ms Sandra Vaz, Area Director, SO Bharat- Maharashtra, *"SOHFIT trains without equipment; this concept will be beneficial to our schools as most do not have the funds to buy equipment. We are happy to sign an MoU with SOHFIT and work with a joint vision of scaling up the fitness of the athletes and their performance consequently".*

*"When I interacted with the coaches and athletes from the program, I realised that this could be a perfect platform for SOHFIT to share its goal for being inclusive. I look forward to engaging with the coaches and children over the course of our planned interactive sessions."* said Mr Khushrushahi

SOHFIT stepped into the National arena as it led a session on fitness on the last day of the National Youth leadership Summit held at the YMCA in New Delhi. Sohrab Khushrushahi addressed a Panel that followed, on the topic "Sports as a tool for heightening Inclusion in Educational Institutions"





## Enhancing the football experience with the Mumbai City FC

Mumbai City FC and Special Olympics Bharat Maharashtra have come together for a strategic partnership that will see the two entities extend support towards creating inclusiveness via sports for persons with Intellectual Disabilities.

The partnership kicked-off from the 15th of October 2022, where Special Olympics Bharat Maharashtra athletes were mascots for the first Indian Super League game in Mumbai between Mumbai City FC and Odisha FC.



The SO Bharat Maharashtra athletes walked out with Mumbai City FC players as they took to the field at the Mumbai Football Arena which is housed within the Andheri Sports Complex.

Kardarp Chandra, CEO of Mumbai City FC expressed his jubilation on the strategic partnership as he said, *"Sports is the perfect way to improve inclusivity and SO Bharat Maharashtra have done a commendable job at doing so. The expertise of their coaches will help us further understand the barriers one has to overcome to participate in the sport they love. I am sure the knowledge base of our coaches in return will help the SO Bharat Maharashtra coaches improve the technical skill of their athletes."*

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