

# CHAMPIONS

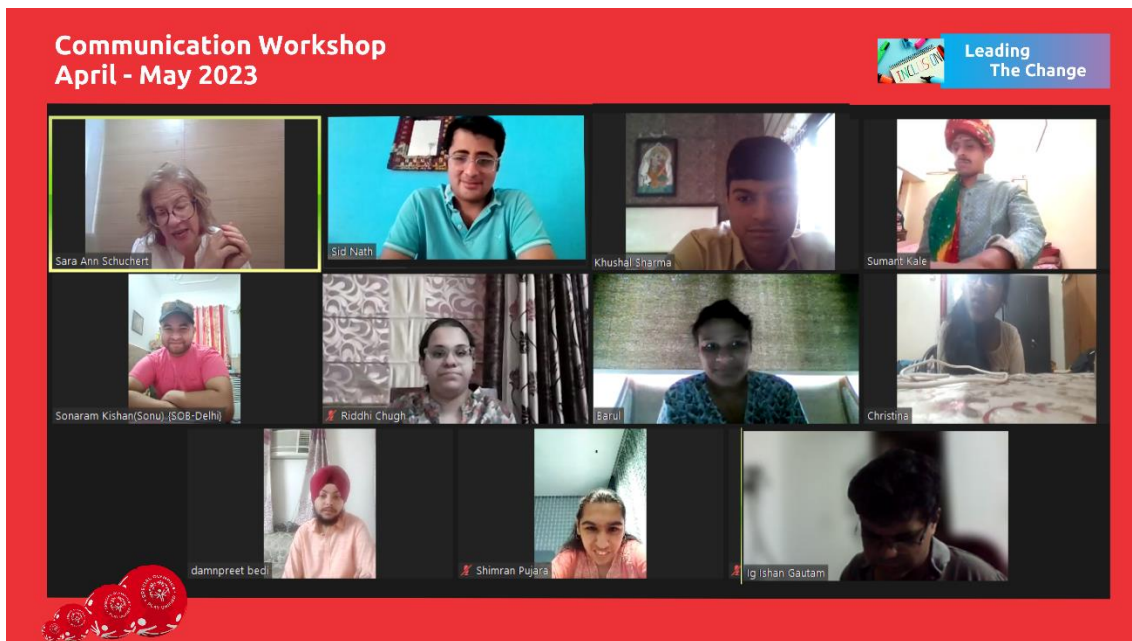
SPECIAL OLYMPICS BHARAT NEWSLETTER MAY 2023

## NEWSLETTER MAY 2023

Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat

### Adding Dignity to Speech

GunOcean's insights and enthusiasm, Sumant's dedication, Chirstina's quiet understanding and Yashika's great blossoming are a few observations made in the past nine weeks, that have brought joy to many of us. This was through a Communication Workshop designed and led by I to Eye Communications and supported by Macquarie. The sessions were planned for a virtual delivery from 2 April 2023 for nine weeks training ten SO Bharat Athletes, each supported by a family member, coach, or a youth leader.



This was the fourth batch that underwent the training, the same having started during the pandemic. The training addressed aspects of communications that we often take for granted but are critical to effective and strategic communication. The difference in the words and visage as the social circle changes, adding dignity to speech are the lessons learnt. Not just communications but, a change in demeanour was conspicuous as we joined together for the closing of the Session on 27 May 2023. It was especially intriguing to see Siddhant Nath lead the coordination on behalf of SO Bharat. “ I liked that we were able to get new Athletes to join the workshop. We will have more Athlete leaders this way. I also noticed some drawbacks, like, a frequent change of timing on the part of the trainees, but, more due to many activities happening on the side. It was good overall” – Siddhant Nath, Athlete leader and an SO Bharat national office colleague.

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“I was happy to see Gunocean excited about the classes. He was very vocal & would talk his heart out with the trainer. His communication and confidence have gone up”- Ms Damanpreet Bedi, Parent of Gunocean, Table Tennis Athlete from Delhi

## Building Capacity to support the schools to champion Inclusion

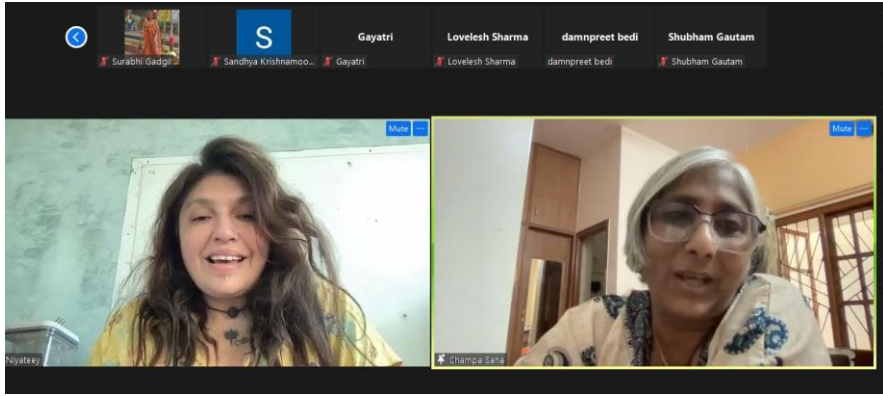


A Two- day Unified Coaches training for 25 Coaches from 21 Schools was held at the Frank Anthony Public School, New Delhi, supported by . Theory and practical sessions were conducted addressing the curiosity and clarifications of the trainees with a gripping delivery session that witnessed participation of twenty Athletes from 4-5 schools. A recreational team building activity was conducted through minor games, followed by Baggo. The three models of Unified sports were conducted with passing the ball activity in the recreational model, Football in player development and a competition in Basketball. The trainees were divided into performers and observers. The Q&A that followed, demonstrated interest amongst the coaches to execute the same in their respective schools. Mr Vikram Rawat, Area Director SO Bharat Delhi and his team would follow up to ensure a meaningful delivery of the training as well as expanding their Coaches cadre. The training was led by Ms Sulekha Rana, Director Sports (and an expert in Unified sports) and assisted by Mr Suresh Kumar, Manager Sports, SO Bharat

## The Family café celebrates two years on World Family Day

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The World Family Day was truly special as it nearly overlapped with Mother’s Day which was a day later. A new member, Ms Niyateey Shah joined the group talking about her journey with her son Prithvi Shah. Prithvi is a passionate baker and a powerlifter from the state of Uttrakhand, having recently joined SO Bharat “I took time to accept that my child has special needs. Through our journey together I never realised when I started to depend so much on him. He pushes himself to see a smile on my face. In fact, it is Prithvi who makes me feel special. He means the world to me.” The family café continued with a recap of the Master sessions, for the families to reach out to the experts whenever required.

## The fast-approaching Berlin Games 2023 expose different colours of Inclusion

### VFS Global



Issuing visa is a process that needs no special mention, excepting, this time on, when a three-day ‘Visa-at-your-doorstep’ set-up was organised by the VFS (Visa Facilitation Services) during the third National Coaching Camp, at the Amity University. The clock seemed irrelevant as the officials furiously kept processing the required facilitation that fulfilled one of the primary objectives of the Camp. The

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opportunity had the officials interact with the Athletes, in the natural flow of things. 282 visa application submissions were completed as the VFS Global organised mobile biometric kits and the team worked 20 hours a day for three days.

"It was an honour and privilege to be part of the sporting journey of these athletes from the Special Olympics Bharat. As an organisation which was conceptualised and launched in India and was one of the earliest 'Made in India' companies, we always strive towards promoting efforts which help people in representing our country and making us proud. We wish these athletes all the very best for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023," said Prabuddha Sen, Chief Operating Officer-South Asia, VFS Global.

"We are overwhelmed by the dedicated service rendered by VFS Global officials at the Special Olympics Bharat sports camp held recently in preparation of the Berlin games. The time and patience with which they ensured that all the delegates' visa process was completed is unprecedented and we would like to express our sincere gratitude to them. We feel proud to have esteemed institutions such as VFS Global in joining us in our endeavours of promoting inclusion of persons with Intellectual Disabilities," said Dr. Mallika Nadda, Chairperson, Special Olympics Bharat.

To acknowledge their efforts, all VFS Global team members were facilitated by Dr. Nadda at the Amity University campus on 28 April 2023.

## Driving each day with Passion



Mr Satbir with the Athletes and the Coach

A typical day in the life of Mr Satbir Singh Sahota begins with a thought of cycling, which is his expertise combined with a passion for bringing the best in an Athlete. His presence is pinned right from the cycle coming out of the box, getting assembled, rolling, and getting packed back as well. With the Berlin Games coming up in June 2023, he planned rigorous training of four athletes in June 2022. They are Indu Prakash & Kedar Narayan from Jamshedpur, Neel Yadav from Haryana & SMS from Karnataka. Supporting him is Coach Narendran Hansdah, who

has been associated with SO Bharat since 2019. His association with TATA Steel goes back 30 years. For this initiative they took no time to consent to provide their world-class facilities at the JRD TATA Sports complex to the four probables, for sports and accommodation, a pick-up van and free medical facilities included. The team has been residing at the facility since June 2022

Despite fighting cancer since 2008, Mr Satbir, maintains his focus on training the Athletes year after year, enabling each one to bring out the Champion in them. "Seeing an athlete progress, to whatever extent, makes me feel rewarded. This feeling has overcome me several times. Sports is the way. It has transformed many lives right in front of me, but there is a lot more ground to be covered, and sports has the power to do that." Mr Satbir is an international Cyclist Ex National Champion for more than ten years,

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represented India at Asian Games and, a qualified cycling coach and physical trainer. He has been a trainer with SO Bharat since 2006.

**Brave in the Attempt-** *an account by Ms Dilpreet Sekhon, parent of the Athlete Prabhroop*



I am travelling to Berlin for the World Games for the same reasons which took me to Abu Dhabi in 2019. My son Prabhroop Sekhon, Prabh (as he is fondly called) participated in neither. My husband, and I cheered for him both times, just as we did when he participated in roller skating at the 2015 LA World Games, winning two gold medals. We know that Prabh would not be participating in the Berlin Games, still we had him participate in two National Camps leading to Berlin 2023, for him to get another chance to swim and make friends. I recall him being slightly confused in Abu Dhabi, in 2019, not understanding why he was not being asked to get into the pool! For my son, participating in sports is what counts. He may not understand 'participation' or even a 'medal' but loves to get into the pool, make new friends and travel to new places.

My life is an intriguing journey of girlish dreams, love, struggles, shocks, anxiety, hope, and joy. That my son 'has autism' was told to us in a monotone that shook our very soul, dictating our onward journey. Prabhroop was non-verbal. My husband and I spent sleepless nights worrying about him. literally. He was the cutest child I had ever seen.

When we had Prabh go for his first skating session, he slept through the night, and so did we. In so many years. We in fact checked him up to see that all was fine with him in the morning. He looked so comfortable. Sports calmed him like nothing else. I felt that it was my mistake that I only focussed on his education and assessed him on his disinclination towards it. Books say so much, there is a lot of guidance there, but nothing worked for my child the way sports did.

It is difficult to explain the spark that I saw in his eyes when he returned from sports sessions. We take him to camps not for him to win, but to give him the experience. The pandemic affected him, he showed signs of lagging but even then, the word 'Sports' did the magic. On zoom, during one of the virtual sessions during the lockdown, someone mentioned SPORTS. He heard the word and said,

YES I want to play

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## Inked by the Heart- overwhelmed by the memory



SI issue September 2015



Vaibhav is on the left . Pic 2015

Vaibhav Raghunandan, is a freelance journalist, whose association with SO Bharat goes back nearly 10 years. He cycles, runs, swims, and plays football on a regular basis. He has played Hockey at the national level. "I cannot imagine not being involved with sport in some way or the other. I can handle work/life stressors, interpersonal conflicts, and my mental health, much better if I am playing sports" – says he

Vaibhav had SO Bharat go numb with excitement when Sports Illustrated (India) carried a cover feature on the Athletes from the LA World Games 2015.

According to him, Sports Illustrated had a section in its magazine titled 'Faces in the Crowd'. It was regarded as a somewhat unglamorous section, and listed upcoming high achievers in age group sports at the district, state, and national level. As the junior most member of the SI team then, Vaibhav handled that section having him dig for offbeat sports/events and athletes to feature. Scouring through papers, message boards and sports federation websites he stumbled upon "*this kid*" called Ranveer Saini, who won three golds in golf. The story imprinted and the pen began to roll. '*Special Olympics Bharat became an easy sell*' to the editorial team.

"The details are a little hazy now, but I remember it being a mixed event with bocce and football being played. The number of athletes staggered me, and a subsequent conversation with Air Marshal Keelor really struck home. Just listening to the way everyone at the National office spoke about Special Olympics, the impact it made on athletes, some of my own research and then just seeing the involvement of the people within the organisation, convinced me that this was a story that needed to be told. It was really the social impact that drove me towards the feature more than anything else." Continuing to recall a few more memories he said, "A couple of the kids who really struck out to me

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were these two skaters, Shams Ul Haq from Hyderabad, and Siddharth Saxena from Delhi. If I remember correctly, they medalled at the Los Angeles Games. Shams, I remember, had a hearing deficiency, which was worked-on at the Los Angeles Games. I believe the 'Healthy Hearing Program' at the Games had helped him with a customised hearing aid kit. It really symbolises that the Games are more than just about competition and sport.

“I have been very lucky in my professional career, stumbling on to stories that have often changed the way I view the world, and live in it. My SO (Special Olympics) story is the perfect example of that” , signs off Vaibhav

## PARTNERS IN INCLUSION



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