

## Opportunities and Challenges in Training Special Athletes during COVID -19

An initiative of Special Olympics Bharat in Collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India

6 May 2020, New Delhi: To address challenges and opportunities for the Special Athletes during the Covid 19 lockdown period Special Olympics Bharat conducted a series of Webinars from 1-6 May 2020 in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India. All six days addressed a different topic presented by experts from specific fields. With an average attendance of over 300 from Bangladesh, Bahrain, India, Pakistan, Nepal, UAE, USA, Singapore & Sri Lanka the Webinars were successful in spreading awareness and enhancing sensitization across a diverse population.

The Sessions:

1 May 2020- Intellectual Disability- Dr Amitav Mishra- General Secretary, SO Bharat

2 May 2020- Unified Sports- Mr Victor R Vaz - National Sports Director, SO Bharat

3 May 2020 - Health-Dr Reena R Kumar - Regional Clinical Adviser- Special Smiles, SOAP

4 May 2020- Inclusion- Mr Dipak Natali - President & Managing Director, SOAP

5 May 2020 - Mental Health - Ms Chitra Shah - Director, Satya Special School, Puducherry (Area Director - SO Bharat Puducherry)

6 May 2020 - Creating Resources for Athletes- Ms Mukta Narain Thind - National Director- Organization Development SO Bharat

Air Marshal Denzil Keelor, Founder Trustee & CEO of Special Olympics Bharat said: “This is a celebration of a new initiative. It has shown us a different perspective of staying connected, promoting Inclusion and strengthening the essence of the Special Olympics movement”.

While the experts drew attention to ‘Intellectual Disabilities’, Health Challenges, Unified Sports, Inclusion and resources available for the Special Athletes, few Athlete leaders from different states of India expressed their thoughts on the ongoing crisis, exhibiting confidence that substantiates their successful journey through sports

The Special Olympics goal is to create a world where people follow the leadership and voice of Special Olympics athletes toward an inclusive way of life where everyone’s gifts are valued. The Athlete leaders are Special Athletes who have and continue to participate in sports while also demonstrating additional leadership skills and a potential to assume significant roles beyond the sports field too. The Athlete Leadership program creates opportunities for people with Id to develop and demonstrate their abilities and voices in various leadership roles.

In the words of Mr Satish Pillai, Chairman SO Bharat: I would like to thank the Sports Authority of India for supporting this initiative. Going digital through the Webinars has connected us with a large audience from all over the world, drawing their attention towards an Inclusive perspective and the

significant role of sports in achieving it. We attempt to continue keeping the Athletes, Coaches and everyone engaged and spread awareness about the abilities of people with Special Needs.

The Special Olympics Resources created especially for the current times, along with the phenomenal initiatives of the Govt of India, supporting sports, is motivating us to bring a transformation in our procedures and embrace the change