

ANNUAL REPORT

Latin America

2025



**Special
Olympics**

Latin America

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President's Message



Claudia Echeverry
President and Regional Director
Special Olympics Latin America

Dear Special Olympics community and friends:

As I reflect on 2025, I feel a deep sense of pride in what we have built together as a Movement in Latin America. It has been a year of tangible progress, strategic partnerships, and shared leadership; but above all, it has been a year of people—athletes, families, volunteers, coaches, and partners—who demonstrate every day that inclusion is not an abstract aspiration, but a practice that transforms lives.

At Special Olympics Latin America, we understand that sport is a powerful tool for social change. Its true impact occurs when it becomes a platform for exercising rights, for full participation, and for recognizing the value and potential of every person with intellectual disabilities. This has been the spirit guiding our work throughout the year.

The Power of Sport: A Universal Language of Inclusion

The year 2025 was marked by milestones that reflect the maturity and reach of our Movement in the region. The participation of our athletes in the Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025, as well as the historic first Unified 3x3 Basketball World Cup in San Juan, Puerto Rico, demonstrated that Latin America not only participates, but leads with excellence, commitment, and heart. More than major sporting events, these were spaces where inclusion was truly experienced—sharing the court on equal terms.

Our impact, however, goes beyond major stages. In communities across the region, we strengthened local sports programs, expanded training for coaches and volunteers, and continued raising the standards of inclusive sport. Every local competition, every new club, and every certified coach represents an additional opportunity for a person with intellectual disability to find belonging, growth, and purpose.

The Broader Impact of Our Movement

Health continued to be one of our fundamental pillars. Through Healthy Athletes and training and awareness initiatives, we advanced toward more inclusive health systems that better understand the needs of our population. For thousands of athletes, these clinical screenings represented their first access point to basic healthcare services, reaffirming that well-being is a right, not a privilege.

Leadership—especially athlete leadership—held a central place in our agenda. We are witnessing a generation that not only competes, but also influences, represents, and transforms spaces at national, regional, and international levels. Their voice challenges prejudice and redefines what society means by ability, participation, and contribution.

We also strengthened our work with youth, schools, and families, convinced that sustainable inclusion is built from an early age. Programs such as Unified Schools, Young Athletes, and Family Forums instill values of respect and coexistence in educational communities across the region, shaping a generation that will grow up understanding diversity as a strength.

In the area of institutional relations, we made highly strategic progress. The signing of the cooperation agreement with UNESCO marks a turning point in our ability to influence public policy in inclusive education and sport. Likewise, our participation in multilateral spaces positions Special Olympics as a trusted technical partner and a regional leader in inclusion.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of our partners from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, nor without the tireless dedication of those who bring the Movement to life every day. To all of you, thank you for believing in and building alongside us.

We are approaching a historic moment: for the first time in 59 years, the Special Olympics World Summer Games will be held in Latin America, in Santiago, Chile, in 2027. This challenge inspires and calls us to action. These Games will be much more than a sporting event; they will be a platform to accelerate structural change and deepen impact for people with intellectual disabilities.

Let us continue opening minds and hearts. Let us keep proving that inclusion is possible when it is built with collaboration, conviction, and leadership.

The future is inclusive - and we are building it together.

Claudia Echeverry



Athlete's Message

Let's make the true legacy a generation that grows together, united through inclusive sport



Gonzalo Escobar Wernli
Special Olympics Chile

It is an honor and a pleasure to be here with you

My name is Gonzalo Escobar Wernli. I am from Santiago, Chile, and I come from a family where sports run in our blood. My grandfather and my mother have been my greatest role models, both as people and as athletes. My family is my driving force—they always support and motivate me in everything I do.

In my home, sport is not just an activity; it is part of our way of life. I love extreme sports, I swim, and my favorite sports are snowboarding and climbing.

I have the privilege of speaking to you not only as an athlete, but as President of the Regional Athlete Leadership Council for Special Olympics Latin America and as a member of the Organizing Committee for our upcoming World Games. I discovered Special Olympics while looking for a space where my abilities could shine

more than my limitations, and from that moment on, my life became a mountain full of learning. Special Olympics has given me unforgettable moments and experiences.

Before joining this Movement, the world sometimes felt small, as if there were places where I did not belong. Many times, I did not feel included. But when I joined Special Olympics, everything changed. I used to have many doubts and fears about how far I could go, but Special Olympics allowed me to express myself; sport gave me spaces to learn, to lead, to teach others, and to celebrate our achievements together.

I had the honor of representing my country for the first time at the X Games in Unified Snowboarding, held in 2020 in Aspen, Colorado, where I placed sixth alongside my Unified partner. In March 2025, I had the incredible opportunity to be part of the delegation representing Chile at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy, where I won the first medal of the event for Chile.

But my greatest achievement is knowing that I am an active, valuable, and necessary member of this society.

2025 was an unforgettable year for our region. Not only did we train—we competed, as we do every year. In 2025, we expanded Unified Schools, added more volunteers, held health fairs, and became global leaders through concrete actions:

We signed an agreement with UNESCO to promote inclusion throughout Latin America. This means that our fight for the right to education and sport now has the support of the most important organizations in the world.

Puerto Rico welcomed the world at the first Unified 3x3 Basketball World Cup. There, we demonstrated that Unified Sports is the language of true inclusion: people with and without disabilities playing together.

We brought our voice to schools and universities. In Chile, we visited Congress and the Senate twice, speaking with authorities to remind them that we have the right to study, to work, to access healthcare, and to be active citizens. We asked for their support and commitment to the upcoming World Games. We invited members of Congress to participate in a Unified table tennis experience, where Special Olympics athletes showcased and shared their incredible talent.

Dear athletes, families, coaches, volunteers, and Special Olympics team across Latin America, we are living a historic moment.

For the first time in 59 years, South America will host the Special Olympics World Summer Games.

We are working to make these Games unforgettable, but above all, to ensure they mark a turning point in the visibility of people with intellectual disabilities.

Let us continue showing that we are active and valuable members of society. Don't give up, because Santiago 2027 will be our platform to show the world what we are made of.

See you in Santiago 2027!

SPORTS



Each year, Special Olympics organizes thousands of sports competitions around the world—from local tournaments to major international events such as the Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025 and the Special Olympics Unified 3x3 Basketball World Cup San Juan 2025. Each of these events highlights the strengths and abilities of our athletes, helping to change existing perceptions about the talent and potential of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, while offering thousands of athletes, coaches, volunteers, and families the opportunity to enjoy a high-quality, inclusive sports celebration.

As a fundamental pillar of our organization and a key tool for social change, sport continues to be our top priority.

Developing these events and opportunities across all regions of the world requires strong partnerships and the preparation of thousands of volunteers at global, regional, and national levels, from coaches to Unified Partners.



Agreements and Partnerships

Throughout the year, Special Olympics Latin America offers competitions and training opportunities that raise the level and quality of sports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Partnerships with international organizations, such as the Ibero-American Sports Council, create a direct and meaningful impact in our communities.



Participation in Regional Assemblies

Invited to participate in the American Sports Summit as partners of the South American Sports Council, the Pan American Sports Council, and the Ibero-American Sports Council.

Additionally, we participated in the Summit of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPE), which promotes the role and value of sport and its relevance to public policy.



Through CIGEPE, UNESCO has a unique capacity to drive government action in the field of sport and physical education and to ensure the implementation of evidence-based policies and programs worldwide. (UNESCO)

New Agreements:

1. **Ibero-American Sports Council**

2. **Centro Caribe Sports**



Renewal of Agreements:

1. At the regional level

- Association of Pan American Sports Confederations
- South American Sports Council

2. At the national level

- 19 new agreements with sports federations
- 2 renewed agreements with sports federations



“Through this agreement between the Ibero-American Sports Council and Special Olympics Latin America, we aim to promote collaborative efforts with governments and national sports organizations to expand access to sports, health, education, and leadership opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We celebrate this collaboration as a key tool to advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”

Claudia Echeverry

**President and Regional Director
Special Olympics Latin America**



Uniting hearts and changing lives through basketball

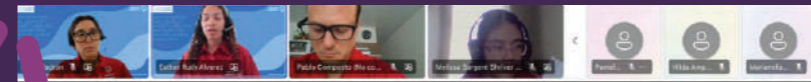
Special Olympics Argentina signed a cooperation agreement with the **Argentine Basketball Confederation** to promote basketball activities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout the country. Both organizations will collaborate on their respective sports calendars, which will include sports clinics, training sessions, and tournaments.



Special Olympics Venezuela and the Michael Phelps Foundation strengthen swimming coach training

Special Olympics Venezuela and the **Michael Phelps Foundation** joined forces to elevate the competitive level of swimming through a theoretical and practical workshop held at **Fundación Centro Eugenio Mendoza**, a partner of Special Olympics Venezuela.

The workshop included the participation of **25 coaches**, who benefited from the professional development of their knowledge and training techniques in swimming for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



INVITAR

Piensa que las personas con DID deben estar en todos los espacios. Cree que alguien con DID debería ser parte de tus proyectos.

INCLUIR

Piensa que las personas con DID pueden contribuir. Cree que alguien con DID hará contribuciones valiosas a tu trabajo.

EMPODERAR

Piensa que las personas con DID pueden contribuir. Cree que alguien con DID podría liderar tus proyectos.



High-Quality Inclusive Sport

Our goal is clear: to provide opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, and development through sport for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our Movement continues to grow and improve the range of opportunities for our participants through a wide variety of activities, training sessions, educational programs, and tournaments.

→ Expansion of Local Programs

- Creation of new local clubs (256 to date), 12% more than in 2024
- Increase in local competitions: more than 5,500 local competitions

→ Training

- More than 15,000 coaches certified in Unified Sports
- SOI online platform: 6,711 certifications and 1,571 new coaches
- ITF (International Tennis Federation) Academy: 3,553 trained coaches
- National Federations: 748 coaches certified by national federations

→ Webinars

- July webinar: Introduction to Baseball 5 with 115 participants;
- September webinar: Powerlifting with 106 participants

→ Growth of the Motor Activity Training Program (MATP)

- 581 new MATP athletes



Inclusion on the Field:

Special Olympics Chile participates in the AmeriCup Women's Tournament

For the first time, a Special Olympics Chile team participated in one of the most important women's basketball tournaments in the Americas. It was a historic and exciting experience to be part of the FIBA Women's AmeriCup 2025, the most prestigious women's basketball tournament on the continent, recently held in Santiago.



MATP Challenge Day brought together more than 150 Special Olympics athletes

More than 150 athletes from different parts of the country gathered at the National Sports Palace for the 12th edition of MATP Challenge Day, organized by Special Olympics Costa Rica. The Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) is focused on providing joy, challenges, and the benefits of sport to athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities whose disabilities prevent them from participating in official Special Olympics sports competitions.



In Nicaragua, World Down Syndrome Day was celebrated with an exciting athletics championship.



Argentina developed 16 inclusive football leagues simultaneously, increasing the visibility and participation of inclusive sport across the country.



3x3 basketball captured the interest and hearts of Special Olympics Brazil athletes, as demonstrated during the National Unified 3x3 Basketball Games.

The National Games, the country's largest inclusive sports celebration, continue to be the best opportunity to highlight the work of Special Olympics in the region and to prepare the delegations that will represent their countries in international events. Images from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and El Salvador show our athletes in action, standing out in their respective disciplines after rigorous training.



"It's my sport, and I love it. When I see the weights, I feel like a champion."

The transformative power of sport impacts not only our athletes, but also their families and communities. Yoandy Beltrán Delgado, a powerlifting athlete, has proudly represented Cuba in several international competitions and is a recognized hero in his community.



Sport opens doors and has allowed athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities to experience new opportunities and break existing stereotypes. This was the case for athletes from Special Olympics Mexico, who were invited to participate in the Genuine Cup soccer tournament, held in the United States.

Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025



Athletes from Special Olympics from all corners of the world gathered in the snowy peaks of Turin, Italy, to celebrate the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025! From March 8 to 15, our athletes competed in winter sports disciplines including speed skating, alpine skiing, figure skating, snowboarding, floorball, dance sport, and snowshoeing. The World Games also provided the perfect platform to share our message of inclusion beyond the field of play, such as at the Global Youth Leadership Summit, where Latin America was well represented.



Participation of Special Olympics Latin America

6 National Programs

Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, México, Uruguay y Venezuela

21 Coaches

66 Athletes and Unified Partners

11 Delegates, 5 Medical Staff

Sports



Alpine Skiing



Snowshoeing



Snowboarding



Floorball



Figure Skating



Speed Skating



Dance Sport



» Melissa de León and Pablo Composto, Athlete Leaders and Special Olympics Global Messengers, together with Dr. Tim Shriver and fellow Global Messengers during the Opening Ceremony of the Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025.



« Emanuelle "Manu" Dutra, Athlete Leader from Special Olympics Brazil and member of the Special Olympics International Board of Directors, addresses athletes and guests at the Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025.

The Future Begins with Us

The **2025 Global Youth Leadership Summit** brought together powerful agents of change—our Youth Leaders, composed of young people with and without intellectual disabilities—to share and learn how to design and implement inclusion projects in their schools and communities.

From Latin America, participants included **Cecilia, Luis, and Sofia** (Special Olympics Guatemala); **Verónica, Lauramaría, and Rafael** (Special Olympics Dominican Republic); and **Amy, Gaby, and Paola** (Special Olympics El Salvador).





Special Olympics Unified 3x3 Basketball World Cup San Juan 2025



San Juan, Puerto Rico, hosted the first **Special Olympics Unified 3x3 Basketball World Cup**, marking a historic milestone in its 57-year history. Following the model of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) World Cup, the event brought together men's and women's teams composed of Special Olympics athletes and Unified partners (players without intellectual disabilities) from each Special Olympics region around the world.

Over three days of intense and exciting competition, the world witnessed the very best of humanity - a display of teamwork, friendship, respect, and dignity that transcended barriers, languages, and prejudice.

27 delegations and 180 Athletes and Unified Partners participated in this event, with 19 men's teams and 17 women's teams, including the following delegations from Latin America:

Men's teams:
Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic

Women's teams:
Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, and Uruguay



The Special Olympics Unified 3x3 Basketball World Cup San Juan 2025 also featured the FIBA "Basketball for Good" workshop for coaches from around the world.



Latin America shines in the snow

Six Special Olympics delegations represented Latin America in competitions: Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Each member of each delegation had the opportunity to stand out, proudly representing their country and community. Latin America even earned the first medal awarded at the Games, thanks to Gonzalo Escobar from Special Olympics Chile!



The FIBA Foundation Mini Basketball Clinic is designed for boys and girls ages 5 to 12, with and without intellectual disabilities, introducing them to basketball through activities and games. Students from Víctor Pared Collazo School and Special Olympics Puerto Rico participated, along with sports legends and global ambassadors of the Movement such as Sam Perkins, Hamchetou Maiga Ba, and Ticha Penicheiro, together with our Global Messengers Pablo Composto and Melissa de León.

We received invaluable support from Lions Clubs International Foundation in showcasing our Motor Activity Training Program (MATP), designed for athletes with motor disabilities. Through MATP, athletes of all ages can enjoy the physical and social benefits of sport through activities adapted to their abilities.



Health



Inclusive Health in numbers:

- **73 Healthy Athletes events**
- Activation of more than **70% of** recently certified **Clinical Directors**
- Participation of **1,910 clinical volunteers** en las evaluaciones in the screenings mentioned
- **6,337 health** screenings across the different Healthy Athletes disciplines
- **946 non-urgent referrals;** 87% received follow-up care.
- **432 urgent referrals;** 94% received follow-up care.

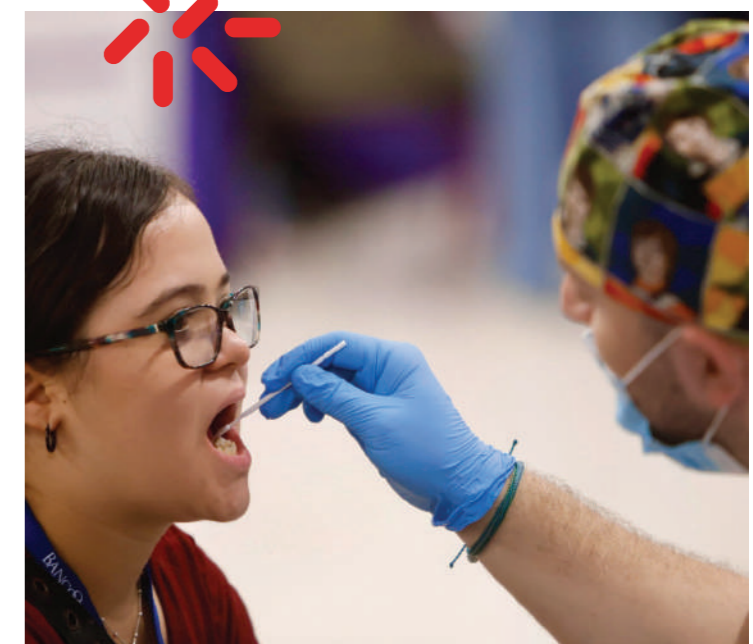


To perform on the field of play, an athlete must be in good health, both physically and emotionally. However, people with intellectual disabilities face significant barriers in accessing health services in their countries and communities.

The Special Olympics Health program continues to be one of our most important pillars, focused on the well-being of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through efforts aimed at creating a more inclusive healthcare system. This includes training health professionals and students, partnerships with universities

and faculties, and free health screenings through our flagship program, Healthy Athletes. These efforts are made possible thanks to the support of key partners from the public and private sectors and the volunteer work of health professionals.

But Inclusive Health is also practiced at home and on the playing field. Through learning and exchange spaces, families, caregivers, and athletes with intellectual disabilities become informed, trained, and raise awareness among others about self-care and well-being.





Healthy Athletes, the first step toward Inclusive Health, provides free health screenings to thousands of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout the year, across different health disciplines. For many individuals, this program represents their first clinical evaluation in areas such as vision, oral health, and hearing, among others, and may lead to medical follow-up that has improved - and even saved lives.

- **849 health professionals and 1,280 health sciences students** trained and sensitized in inclusive health.
- **37 Family and Health Forums**, addressing topics related to hygiene, health, and well-being, requested by athletes and family members.
- Activation of **60 Health Messengers** in the region.
- Fitness: **3,070 participants** in structured fitness activities (8 weeks or more).



Health, Inclusion, and Rights: One Shared Goal

On April 10, in Paraguay, a significant legacy of the IV Latin American Special Olympics Games Asunción 2024 was presented: the Advocacy Plan to improve access to the healthcare system for People with Disabilities. This launch was attended by distinguished authorities such as the Minister of the National Emergency Secretariat, the Minister of SENADIS, the Minister of Women, various officials representing the Ministry of Health, as well as delegations from the Ministry of Education, MITIC, the National Sports Secretariat, among others.



Understanding the Potential of Health Messengers

Special Olympics Brazil had the pleasure of organizing a **Health Messengers training**, a meaningful role for Special Olympics Athlete Leaders that allows them to act as educators and leaders on health and wellness topics for other audiences, primarily other people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The training, which benefited **10 Athlete Leaders and 10 mentors from different regions of Brazil**, was held in São Paulo and included the participation of **Healthy Athletes Clinical Directors and Dr. Gonzalo Larrabure, Director of Health at Special Olympics Latin America**.



Leadership



Special Olympics is showing the world a new kind of leadership, inspired by our athletes, highlighting the potential that lies within every person. Athlete Leadership, which emerges from our athletes' experiences on the field of play, is an area of Inclusive Leadership through which we challenge existing prejudices and expectations about what a person with intellectual disabilities can achieve.

We provide the tools and opportunities for our athletes to become leaders, both on and off the field of play, teaching them to succeed in meaningful roles.

Alongside Athlete Leadership, we also empower the next generation of leaders through our Youth Leadership program, focused on providing training and resources to Unified pairs of youths with and without intellectual disabilities, enabling them to develop and manage inclusion projects in their communities.

Finally, through Unified Leadership, we raise awareness and prepare industry and community leaders, demonstrating the potential of people with intellectual disabilities and the benefits of adopting a more inclusive work environment.

Leadership in numbers:

- **218 athletes** trained in leadership
 - Emotional management
 - Time management
 - Advocacy
 - Athlete representation
- **3 active strategic partnerships** (Potenciare, POETA, Inclúyeme)
 - Potenciare: Emotional training for athletes and development of an inclusion training program for staff alongside RALC
 - POETA: Implementation in 3 countries (Ecuador, Peru, and Chile) in technology and pre-employment skills training
 - Inclúyeme: "Development for Your Future" Summit with athlete leaders from 12 countries in the region
- **21 activities with partners**
- **11 programs** trained in Unified Leadership, providing meaningful roles for Athlete Leaders
- **20 athlete leaders trained as Unified Leadership facilitators**
- **105 external participants** trained in Unified
- **20 athletes participated** in regional/international visibility campaigns and initiatives:
 - Athlete Design Lab (5)
 - Coach Webinar Series (2)
 - Implementation Guide Interviews (3)
 - Badminton Stories (2)
 - Impact Story (2)
 - Women in Sports Webinars (4)
 - Visibility Drives Change (2)

Alliance for Digital Inclusion

The Trust for the Americas and Special Olympics Latin America announce a strategic alliance focused on enhancing digital inclusion and technology skills training for the populations served by both organizations across various countries in the region. The initiative will be implemented through the **POETA Social Franchise**, providing key tools to improve employment opportunities and participation in the digital world, reducing the digital divide and promoting the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in both digital and professional environments.



Special Olympics Brazil launches the book "The Voice of the Athlete Leader"

Special Olympics Brazil proudly announces the launch of the book **"The Voice of the Athlete Leader"**, a collection of 30 interviews with athletes, Unified partners, and mentors from Special Olympics Brazil. The conversations explore topics such as the impact of sport on the lives of athletes with intellectual disabilities, their personal experiences, their journeys in the workplace, and their understanding of inclusion and prejudice. The book was presented at the **Football Museum in São Paulo**.



Across the region, we continue preparing the Movement's leaders



26 participants from Special Olympics Honduras, Special Olympics Guatemala, and Special Olympics El Salvador completed the first Program Leadership Academy held in February, aimed at strengthening leadership skills among organizational staff.



17 leaders representing 14 programs in the region were trained in the third stage of the Leadership Academy, "Leading the Organization: Organizational Sustainability," held in Santiago, Chile. This final stage of a multi-year, three-module leadership development journey enabled participants to strengthen their self-leadership, team leadership, and organizational leadership skills, becoming more effective and sustainable professionals within the Movement.



Special Olympics Latin America organized the 2025 Regional Leadership Conference, "Voices of Inclusion" which brought together Movement leaders from across the region for a week of learning, planning, and strategy.



During the conference, the Regional Athlete Leadership Council (RALC) was present, participating in activities and presentations, including a session on the rights of persons with disabilities, where members shared their own experiences, achievements, and challenges.



The RALC also had the opportunity to share its vision within the strategic pillars, guiding the Movement in building a truly inclusive world.

Participants in "Voices of Inclusion" also received an important surprise: the premiere of the documentary "The Compass Within You" featuring five athletes from Special Olympics Guatemala, who shared their stories on health, education, family, work, and sport from an authentic and powerful perspective - raising awareness and encouraging audiences to take action to continue advancing inclusion in society.



Families, Youth, and Schools



Special Olympics seeks to create a truly inclusive world, where people are valued, respected, and included regardless of their differences; a world where diversity is celebrated as a strength of humanity.

To create these changes in attitudes at a global level, we must begin with youth and the family unit, pillars of the future of our Movement.

As part of the strategy to reach as many young people as possible, inclusive education and youth participation models have been developed, such as the Unified Schools program, designed to build

inclusive environments among young people with and without intellectual disabilities, so that they become youth leaders and agents of change in their communities.

To encourage family participation, initiatives have been created to strengthen the support network for families with members with intellectual disabilities, supporting them at every stage of the athlete's life and development through programs such as Young Athletes, Family Forums, and other resources that prepare, empower, and educate members of our Movement.

FAMILIAS



Global Family Leadership Council 2026 - 2028

Families have always been fundamental to the Special Olympics movement; however, their voices have often been underrepresented in organizational decision-making. This changed in early 2024 with the launch of the **Global Family Leadership Council**, a unified platform designed to give families a meaningful role in shaping programs, policies, and initiatives at the global level.

We are proud to announce the two representatives from Latin America on the Global Family Leadership Council 2026–2028: **Fabiana Rijo (Special Olympics Argentina)** and **Rafael Arce (Special Olympics Venezuela)**.



Implementation of 37 Family Forums in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Guatemala, and other programs. These sessions focused on positive parenting, healthy nutrition, hydration, and stress management, strengthening family participation and support for YA in school and community environments.



Regional training for family leaders, covering key topics such as rights advocacy, overcoming health barriers, creating parent support groups, and strengthening leadership skills. The sessions were attended by more than 110 family leaders.



YOUTH AND SCHOOLS

Youth, inclusion, and leadership: a commitment without borders

“At Special Olympics, youth do not just participate; they lead. This year we welcome the **Global Youth Leadership Council 2025–2027**, made up of 16 youths—eight Unified pairs, with and without intellectual disabilities - from eight countries representing the regions of Special Olympics. I am proud that among them are representatives from **Chile and Paraguay**, bringing the voice of Latin America to the global stage, especially now that Chile will host the upcoming **World Games 2027**.”
- **Claudia Echeverry**, President and Regional Director of Special Olympics Latin America



Unified Schools, an Innovative Solution for an Inclusive World

Unified Schools, Special Olympics’ flagship inclusive education program, was recognized by the **Zero Project Foundation** as an **“Innovative Solution”**, an award given to initiatives with strong potential for global scalability.



Education and inclusion: III Unified Indigenous Games

Special Olympics Brazil carried out important initiatives in Pesqueira, Pernambuco, to strengthen its commitment to the **Unified Champion Schools** program and reinforce inclusive education in Indigenous communities. These activities included a training session for 101 educators from the **Xukuru do Ororubá Indigenous Schools**, where topics such as promoting inclusion through the Inclusive **Youth Leadership and Young Athletes programs of Special Olympics** were addressed.

The **III Unified Indigenous Games of Xukuru do Ororubá** were also held, where more than 60 children, youth, and adults with and without intellectual disabilities from various Indigenous and municipal schools competed and practiced traditional Indigenous sports disciplines.



Significant progress in the growth of Young Athletes (YA) in the region: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Paraguay, and Puerto Rico

Total of 7,438 new Young Athletes in 2025

More than **100 storytelling videos focused on youth** from National Programs, showcasing the impact of our work in schools and youth leadership.



302 new Unified Champion Schools. Efforts are now focused on strengthening programming and ensuring the sustainability of these schools



Regional Virtual Youth Leadership Summit held in three sessions throughout the year. The first session took place on February 19 and 21, and the last on June 18, with **more than 100 young participants**.



Youth Leadership Summits held in Mexico and Colombia, training **more than 60 Unified youth leaders**, strengthening youth capacity and promoting an inclusive generation.



Virtual training for **adult mentors**, reached **more than 100 participants** through three virtual training sessions.



Government Relations



Through the transformative power of sport, Special Olympics changes lives and communities. Thanks to important partnerships with governments, sports and humanitarian organizations, and the private sector, Special Olympics achieves lasting change in society. Awareness campaigns, inclusive events, and public policy changes - these are all part of the legacy of inclusion through which Special Olympics seeks to create a truly dignified, fair, and equitable world.

As a global organization present in more than 200 nations around the world, and with nearly 60 years of experience, Special Olympics is a powerful reference in matters related to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the barriers they still face in health, community participation, education, and employment.

We continue working alongside governments and non-governmental organizations to advocate for the rights and opportunities of the population we serve.



Working together for inclusion

During this period, the Government Relations and Global Development Department strengthened key strategic partnerships at both regional and international levels. Among the main achievements is the signing of the **Collaboration Agreement between Special Olympics Latin America and UNESCO**, marking a milestone in strengthening inter-institutional cooperation to promote inclusive sport and education in alignment with the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Likewise, the **participation of Special Olympics Latin America on the Board of CAF (Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean)** positions the Movement as a strategic technical partner in the inclusion agenda in the region. Finally, participation in the **Global Disability Summit made it possible to showcase the impact and progress of the Global Coalition for Inclusion**, consolidating Special Olympics' leadership as a global reference in promoting inclusive public policies and building multilateral partnerships.



"We are proud to collaborate with UNESCO, which shares our vision of a world where diversity is valued and inclusion is lived in every social space. The signing of this agreement represents a strategic step to position the inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as a priority in the regional agenda for education and sport as human rights, and allows us to work together to strengthen the development of inclusive public policies, close digital gaps, and promote safe and accessible environments for people with intellectual disabilities."

- Claudia Echeverry, President and Regional Director, Special Olympics Latin America (SOLA)

Special Olympics Brazil participates in Acampamento Terra Livre 2025

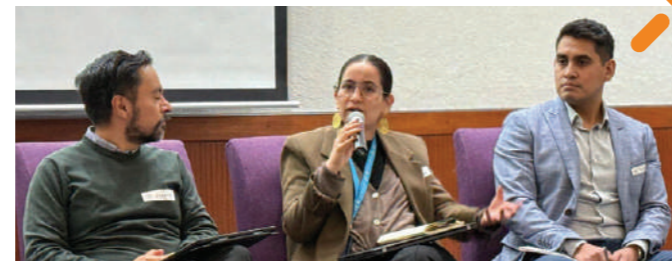
Representatives of Special Olympics Brazil participated in Acampamento Terra Livre 2025, the largest Indigenous mobilization gathering in the country, to secure the support of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and expand the Unified Schools program to more Indigenous communities. During the event, they also engaged with community leaders to better understand how inclusion processes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are being developed.



For sport free from discrimination

The Latin America Regional Consultation on a world of sport free from racism, racial discrimination, homophobia, and other forms of intolerance, organized by the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**, brings together governments and civil society organizations, sports federations, and other human rights institutions from Member States for important discussions on these issues.

Special Olympics Mexico was invited to participate by OHCHR, and **Rafael Palma** (from Special Olympics Mexico) served as a panelist in **“Regional, national, and local initiatives to combat racism and racial discrimination in and through sport.”** Manuel Palacios, Vice Minister of Sport of Colombia; Amet Ramírez of UNHCR; and Émilien Buffard of Sport Friendly were the other panelists.



Special Olympics participated in the **RIINNEE Forum (Ibero-American Intergovernmental Network for Cooperation in the Education of People with Special Educational Needs)** in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, **Bolivia**. In this important regional space, concrete initiatives were promoted, including a workshop on Unified Schools, where sport was highlighted as a powerful tool to strengthen inclusive education, promote youth leadership, and transform school culture through coexistence, respect, and participation of all students.

Special Olympics Puerto Rico signs agreement with Department of Education

The collaboration agreement between **Special Olympics Puerto Rico (SOPR)** and the **Department of Education of the Government of Puerto Rico (DE)** entered its fourth year of operation with the signing of a new agreement that continues the **Unified Champion Schools (UCS) program**. The agreement authorizes the UCS program to be implemented in **35 Department of Education** schools with resources from SOPR. The program includes sports, educational, and social activities for participating students with and without intellectual disabilities, aiming to teach the importance of inclusion within the school environment.



Roundtable on Inclusive Sport

The **National Council on Disability (CONADIS)** organized a roundtable with the participation of various sports sectors working with people with disabilities, including **Special Olympics Dominican Republic**. During the meeting, several articles of the **Disability Law** and the **Organic Law of Sports** were reviewed, with the goal of identifying opportunities for improvement and promoting a more inclusive legal framework. **Special Olympics Dominican Republic** actively participated in the discussion, sharing its experience in promoting sport for people with intellectual disabilities and advocating for legislation that guarantees equitable and continuous access to inclusive sports programs.



Opening Minds and Hearts



Special Olympics seeks to break down myths and prejudices about the potential of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through its program areas and collaborative work with partners from all sectors, Special Olympics opens minds and hearts, creating a world where people with and without intellectual disabilities can share experiences and support one another.

There is no more powerful ambassador for our Movement than our own athletes, and no experience as transformative as participating in a Special Olympics activity. In 2025, the voices of our athletes, together with the support of our partners and the general public, spread our message of respect and inclusion throughout the region.

Global Week of Inclusion: Wearing red for inclusion!

The Global Week of Inclusion was our way of celebrating 57 years of advocating for a truly inclusive world for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, both on and off the playing field. It was also a reminder of how far we still have to go, as Latin American societies, to become environments and communities that are dignified, fair, and equitable for all.

During our anniversary week, we invited everyone to wear red and show their support for Special Olympics National Programs. We highlighted the stories of our "Champions of Inclusion"-athletes and partners who demonstrated their commitment through social media, advertising campaigns, and public appearances. Even entire cities dressed in red, with iconic landmarks illuminated in this color to show the solidarity of governments, institutions, and companies with the dream of our founder, Eunice Kennedy Shriver - a world without taboos and prejudice toward people with intellectual disabilities. A world that chooses inclusion.



Activations with Partners

The participation of our partners - as volunteers in events or as hosts facilitating engagement opportunities with our athletes - is essential to continue spreading the message about the potential of a more inclusive world. This year, we received support from:

Avery Dennison



Franklin Covey



UPS



Toyota



Adidas



Rexona



Raising of the Special Olympics flag

As part of the Global Week of Inclusion, a flag-raising ceremony for Special Olympics was held in front of the City of Knowledge Foundation building in Panama. Special Olympics Panama athletes participated in the ceremony alongside Erika Ender, Global Ambassador of Special Olympics, as well as distinguished members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of the Panamanian government, including the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), Roberto José Arosemena Cervantes.



Anderson Varejão, new Special Olympics Brazil Ambassador

Special Olympics Brazil is proud to announce that Anderson Varejão, one of the most prominent names in Brazilian basketball, has accepted to become a Special Olympics Ambassador!. Varejão, an NBA player and ambassador for the Cleveland Cavaliers, has previously supported the Movement through the Cavaliers Community Foundation, which organized basketball clinics in Brazil last year. During his appointment as Ambassador, at an event held on April 2, the Cavaliers Community Foundation also announced a donation to support Special Olympics Brazil and continue strengthening basketball opportunities for athletes.

UPS and Special Olympics, committed to a truly inclusive future

As part of the engagement strategy with UPS to promote volunteerism and inclusion in the region, a webinar was held with the participation of more than 40 UPS employees. In this space, Athlete Leaders Pablo Composto (Special Olympics Argentina), Ruth Álvarez (Special Olympics Panama), and Melissa de León (Special Olympics Guatemala) shared their stories, experiences, and messages, highlighting the value of inclusion and the power of leadership among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It was an excellent opportunity to raise awareness and engage more people with Special Olympics!

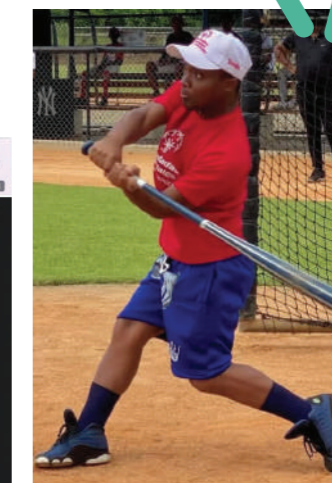


Major Leagues, Big Hearts: Special Olympics Dominican Republic visits the Yankees complex during Hope Week

During the celebration of Hope Week, an initiative organized by the New York Yankees, the Special Olympics Dominican Republic team participated in a special day at the team's training complex in the United States.

During the activity, athletes took part in a friendly softball tournament, where they showcased their skills in an inclusive environment filled with sports history. In addition to the on-field experience, the team had the opportunity to tour the facilities, interact with players and staff members, and participate in recreational and leisure activities.

This experience represents another step in strengthening partnerships and building inclusive environments within the international sports community.



***Special
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