

Sports for Sustainable Development in India

Dr. Ravi Raj Atrey

"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair..." –

Nelson Mandela

Abstract: Sport has been widely recognized as a powerful tool for advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) worldwide. The United Nations has emphasized sport's role in promoting social progress, tolerance, and empowerment, benefiting diverse areas like health, education, and community inclusion. India's Government, alongside corporate and non-governmental sectors, actively supports initiatives that leverage sport for development, targeting issues such as gender equality, peace, and environmental awareness. Key government schemes, such as the Khelo India and TOPS programs, foster grassroots participation and elite training, with support from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Sports Authority of India. This article proposes rebranding "Sport for Development and Peace" (SDP) as "Sport for Sustainable Development" (S4SD) to underscore sport's unique capacity to promote ecological, social, and economic sustainability. By embedding the SDGs within sports governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects, sport can continue as an impactful vehicle for global partnerships and sustainable progress. This recognition of sport as an effective tool for SDGs underscores its capacity to influence global values of equality, diversity, and ecological responsibility.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sport Governance, Sport for Development & Peace, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sport for Sustainable Development (S4SD)

1. Introduction

Upon analyzing the achievement against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it has been observed by the United Nations that the sport has played a pivotal role in enhancing all the eight MDGs, this fact was also recognized by various resolutions of the UN General Assembly. In resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", adopted in 2015, sport's role in advancing social progress was further acknowledged. It has also been recognized that the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives (United Nations, 2016). Further, harnessing this tremendous potential of sport, the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) is involved in bringing people together through sport and supporting sport for peace initiatives through mega sport events to grass - roots activities.

It has now been widely recognized how sports influences the development process and helps achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Government of India, various State Governments, Corporate Houses, NGOs and many other relevant organizations have taken multiple focused initiatives to accelerate development process through sports. Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) has now been an old acronym and practice. In this article, we will try to understand how sport plays an important role in realizing various Sustainable Development Goals, what initiatives have been taken by the Government of India, what is the sport governance in India, how Corporates contribute to the Sports for Sustainable Development in India.

Sport as a science has established itself its impacts on human by studying the areas of physiology, sport psychology, anatomy, sports biomechanics, biochemistry, and

kinesiology. Now this is the time when studies are to be focused on the role of sport in various areas of sustainable development and how in a scientific manner sport has potential to accelerate process of sustainable development in multiple areas being a cross - cutting intervention issue. Accordingly, it is now insisted to replace the term "Sport for Development & Peace (SDP)" with this new term coined in this article "Sport for Sustainable Development (S4SD)".

The Sports Governance in India

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India is the nodal Ministry in India for sports related matters in India, there are two dedicated departments in the Ministry, viz. the Department of Youth Affairs and the Department of Sports. The dedicated Department of Sports within the Ministry has been functional to specifically focus on the Sports Administration in the country. Currently, Shri Mansukh Mandaviya is the Hon'ble Cabinet Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports; Smt. Raksha Nikhil Khadse is Hon'ble Minister of State. Further, key governance and institutional structures are presented below.

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) was set up in 1984 under the Department of Sports. SAI has been entrusted with the twin objectives of promoting sports and achieving sporting excellence at the national and international level. SAI play a significant role in shaping India's sports development by providing training to elite athletes. It also operates multiple schemes for the identification and development of young talent in sports. These schemes are implemented through various regional centres and training centres of SAI located at Bengaluru, Kolkata, Gandhinagar, Kandiveli (Mumbai), Bhopal, Sonapat, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Guwahati and Imphal along with Academic Wings located at NS NIS, Patiala and the LNCPE, Thiruvananthapuram (SAI, 2024).

SAI Training Centres Scheme (STCS) is aimed at grooming junior level sports persons in the age group of 10 - 18 years who have been scouted from grassroots. to establish and run

SAI Centres, the State Governments provide all the infrastructure facilities, with SAI providing Boarding & Lodging to the selected trainees, scientific training/equipment support and minor current repairs of the infrastructure.

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) was launched in 2014 with objective to improve India's performance at Olympics and Paralympics. It was revamped in April 2018 to establish a technical support team for managing the TOPS athletes and providing holistic support. Scheme extends requisite support to probable athletes identified for Olympic Games and Paralympic Games including foreign training, international competition, equipment and coaching camp besides monthly stipend. TOPS Elite Athletes' Identification Committee identifies the elite athletes who could achieve the Olympic podium. A Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) has also been established to assist the athletes who are selected under the TOP Scheme and to debate, discuss and decide the processes and methods so that the athlete receives best assistance. The MOC also focuses on selection, exclusion and retention of athletes, coaches, training institutes that can receive TOPS assistance.

Khelo India Scheme was launched in year 2017. It was introduced to revive the sports culture in India at the grass - root level in country by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation. The Khelo India programme is further divided in 12 verticals viz – State level Khelo India Centres, annual sports competitions, talent search and development, utilization and creation/ upgradation of sports, support to national/ regional / state sport academies, physical fitness of school children, sports for women, promotion of sports amongst differently - able people, sports for peace and development, and promotion of rural and indigenous/ tribal games.

National Sports University was set up in 2018. Honble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, laid the foundation stone for the University's 325 acre campus at Imphal West, Manupur in 2018. Four schools have been envisaged in the University viz. - School of Sports Science and Sports Medicine, School of Sports Management and Technology, School of Sports Education, and School of Interdisciplinary Studies. This is first one of its kind university to promote sports education in the areas of sports sciences, sports technology, sports management, and sports coaching. The University will also function as the national training centre for selected sports disciplines by adopting the best international practices.

National Anti Doping Agency, India is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India. NADA India implements the anti - doping program in India and works towards promoting clean sport practices in sports across the country. The key areas of functioning include dope - sample collection, results management, adjudication, anti - doping education & awareness, research and intelligence & investigation. NADA India upholds the values of ethics & integrity in sports and is committed to creating a dope - free sporting environment.

FIT INDIA Movement was launched in 2019 by Hon'ble Prime Minister with a view to make fitness an integral part of our daily lives. The mission of the Movement is to bring about behavioral changes and move towards a more physically active lifestyle. Towards achieving this mission, Fit India proposes to undertake various initiatives and conduct events to achieve the objectives like - to promote fitness as easy, fun and free, spread awareness on fitness and various physical activities that promote fitness through focused campaigns, encourage indigenous sports, make fitness reach every school, college/university, panchayat/village, etc. and to create a platform for citizens of India to share information, drive awareness and encourage sharing of personal fitness stories.

National Centre of Excellence (NOEs) were established by the Sports Authority of India across the country to impart specialized training to promising athletes by providing state of the art infrastructure and playing facilities, sports science backup, individualized diet prescribed by trained nutritionists and overall supervision under the best coaches, qualified support staff and High Performance Directors. National Centres of Excellence operate as regular coaching camps for the best available talent in India and provide concurrent layers of prospective sports persons, giving a wider choice of talent and continuity for selection to National Teams and provide alternative second and third options too. NCoE is capable of accommodating elite to development athletes.

The National Centre of Sports Sciences and Research (NCSSR) aims to support high level research, education and innovation with respect to high performance of elite athletes. The scheme of NCSSR besides setting up of NCSSR, focuses on creation of support to Sports Sciences Departments in Universities and Sports Medicine Departments in Medical Colleges/ Institutes/ Hospitals.

A ministry - recognized National Sports Federation of India (NSFOI) represents each Olympic and non - Olympic sport—the only major exception being the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which is not an NSFOI. For each sport, India has a separate governing body. These include the All India Football Federation for football, National Rifle Association of India for shooting, and Boxing Federation of India for boxing.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is responsible for the Indian contingent's participation in the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games (outdoor, indoor and beach), South Asian Games, Lusofonia Games, World Games and Military World Games. The selection of the national teams is done by the respective national federations and then recommended to the IOA for official sponsorship for participation in those games. The Paralympic Committee of India is responsible for the Indian participation in the Paralympic Games and Asian Para Games. The All India Sports Council for the Deaf is responsible for India's participation in the Deaflympics Games, and the Special Olympics Bharat is responsible for India's participation in the Special Olympics. The Association of Indian Universities is responsible for India participating in the Universiade Games, while the School Games Federation of

India is responsible for India's participation in the Gymnasiade Games.

India as a host of global sport events

India has hosted several international sporting events, including the 1951 and 1982 Asian Games; the 1987, 1995, and 2016 South Asian Games; the 2010 Commonwealth Games; the 2014 Lusofonia Games; the 1987, 1996, 2011, 2016, 2021, 2023 Men's Cricket world cups; and the 1978, 1997, 2013, and 2016 Women's Cricket World Cups. India has hosted editions of the SAFF Championship in 1999, 2011, 2015, 2023; SAFF Women's Championship in 2016, and junior FIFA world cups including the 2017 FIFA U - 17 World Cup, 2022 FIFA U - 17 Women's World Cup of football. India will host the 2026 T20, 2031 ODI Cricket World Cup, and 2025 Women's World Cup of Cricket (Wikipedia, 2024). Various important sport events are also lined - up in the upcoming years, like the India is expected to host the 2036 Olympic Games. Hosting of global sports events not only boosts the economy, it also helps in cultural exchange, promotion of tourism, infrastructure development, and other associated socio - economic developments.

The Sports Industry in India

In year 2022, the Indian sports industry crossed INR 14, 000 crore mark for the first time in spending. This spending includes the sports sponsorship, media spends and endorsements. Among these, sports sponsorship, which covers spends on - ground, team and franchises, recorded a massive increase of 105% from 2021 to reach INR 5, 907 crore (Moniz, 2023). So far as sports business in India is concerned, according to a media article it was estimated that it will hit US \$ 100 billion 2027 (Khosla, 2022). Sports also play an important role in maximising Trade, Tourism and Investment Opportunities in general. It connects Indian sport to Indian diplomatic and trade networks to unlock the potential of global markets for Indian businesses.

CSR Spent in Sports in India

As per a media report share of sports in CSR spend is one percent whereas it was 31 percent in education, 21 percent in health. Sports CSR grew at a CAGR of 27 per cent between 2014/15 and 2020/21, reaching INR 242 Crores in 2021/22, but it still comprised a small share of overall CSR and was concentrated in a few States. The Top 5 States together received 40 per cent of Sports CSR, and only a handful of companies consistently supported sports CSR across multiple years. Allocation to Sports CSR activities was marginal, and the sources of funds were very concentrated, with the Top 10 companies accounting for 50 per cent of total sports CSR in 2020/21 (CSR Mandate, 2023).

Looking at some of the companies' best CSR interventions in Sports, Central Coalfields Ltd. won the National CSR Awards in the Category of contribution to national priority area of Sports consecutively in 2019 and 2020. Aditya Biral Insurance Brokers Ltd. was recognised as honourable mention in the National CSR Awards 2020. IndusInd Bank Ltd. and India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd. were also recognised for their contributions in sports in 2019. Other companies contributing to Sports from their CSR projects are Hero MotoCorp Ltd., Jhajar Power Ltd., Transport Corporation of India Ltd., Reliance Industries

Ltd., Jindal Steel and Power Ltd., Tata Steel Ltd., and Hindustan Zinc Ltd. to name a few among many others.

Contribution of Sports to the Sustainable Development Goals

The role of sport in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been remarkable. With the overarching aspiration of bringing people and the planet closer together and leaving no one behind, the 2030 Agenda is a unique opportunity to inspire global action for development worldwide, including in the field of Sport for Development and Peace. Sport has proven to be a cost - effective and flexible tool for promoting peace and development objectives. Lets see how sport affects many other Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well - being for all at all ages - A number of studies conducted by the World Health Organization have highlighted that physical exercise can stimulate positive mental health and cognitive development. Physical exercise has been linked to improvements in self - esteem and self - confidence, as well as positive effects for people struggling with depression and anxiety. It has been observed that the regular participation in sport and physical activities provides various social and health benefits. Apart from a direct impact on physical fitness, it also influences healthy lifestyle among youths and children, helping them remain active and combat non - communicable diseases.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning - Children and young people benefit tremendously from physical activity. Combined with a school curriculum, physical activities and sport are necessary for a comprehensive education. Sport provides lifelong learning and alternative education for children who cannot attend school as per the United Nations.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - Sport in its most basic form always encourages balanced participation and has the capacity to promote gender equality. Women and girls may be empowered and benefit from the positive impact that sport has on health and psychosocial conditions. Most importantly, female participation in sports also challenges stereotypes and social roles commonly associated with women and hence serving as a massive social revolution tool. According to the UN, sports can help women and girls demonstrate their talents and achievements to society by emphasizing their skills and abilities. This, in turn, improves self - esteem and self - confidence in women participants. Sport also offers opportunities for social interaction and friendship, which can raise awareness of gender roles among male counterparts and convey social and psychological benefits to both individuals and groups.

Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable - Sport contributes to making cities and communities more inclusive. Taking one example of aiming to promote the inclusion of differently - able people and align the city infrastructures accordingly. It is also a great example of how sport can foster social development by changing perceptions about differently - able people and

providing. It outlines the contribution of sport to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Sport clubs, foundations, community trusts, sport associations and leagues etc. play an important role in informing, inspiring, encouraging and supporting sport's contributions to the SDGs.

Goal 13: Take Urgent Action to combat Climate Change and its impact - The climate crisis and sports have important correlations, there are multiple studies to understand the relationship between sport and climate change. As discussed earlier, there is need for shift in approach from the 'Sport for Development & Peace' to 'Sport for Sustainable Development'. Sport as a tool to promote environmental sustainability can have multi - fold impacts. It has been articulated in many policies and frameworks including the Sustainable Development Goals.

Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies – Sports have been used as an important tool for the prevention of conflict and the promotion of long - lasting peace and cordial relationships among the nations. Sport carry its universal components to transcend cultures, in its contribution towards peace, sport often provides safe environments at the grassroots and community levels, at which participants are brought together in the pursuit of common goals and interests, learn values of respect, tolerance and fair play, and develop social competencies. In times of conflict or instability, sporting activities can provide participants with a sense of normalcy. Sport also promotes the building of peaceful, inclusive and equitable communities (United Nations, 2020)

Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development – Contribution of sport to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development is vital. The presence and diversity of sport and sport organizations on local, national, regional and international levels can provide effective networks for partnerships for Sustainable Development. Sport serves as links between different sectors to address a range of issues, pool resources and create synergies. According to the EFDN, "the global reach, unmatched popularity, wide appeal, universal character and value - based foundation of sport, as well as its particular association with youth, make it a versatile means of implementation". By involving and bringing together Governments, Private Sector, Corporates, NGOs, Sport organizations, academia and the media, Sport has potential to strengthen multi - stakeholder networks and partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Conclusion & Recommendations

We have now seen how sport has potential to play an important role in promoting and accelerating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We have also observed that the sports system often faces several challenges to the fulfillment of its potential to influence the sustainable development at the fullest, hence it is recommended that promotion the adoption of good governance, integrity and transparency is prerequisite in sports governance and administration. It is also essentially important to place the

SDGs at the core of all relevant organizations in the sports eco - system.

Sport by its innate nature, promotes increasing access and participation, and as the development community agrees that it is the primary development indicator which is the basis for all other developmental aspects, sports become an important tool in realizing, promoting and accelerating multiple SDGs. Further, as we all understand that the vast positive power and passion of sport brings people together, promotes a more inclusive and peaceful world through its universal values and principles, it has potential to influence the value systems and living patterns of people.

There are very few countries which focus on sports as a tool for international diplomacy. Australia is one of them, its sports diplomacy policy had a vision to strengthen Australian sports and opportunities for athletes globally and unlock their potential to support national interests (Govt. of Australia, nd.). Sports Diplomacy today has become a buzz word and a fashionable concept in the international studies. Sport diplomacy in its capacity to support and facilitate the skillful management of relationships between countries means to focus on particular sets of activities and dynamics. Overall, each of these relates to the pursuit of foreign policy goals of specific actors including the image management and nation - branding, conflict reconciliation, alliance politics and political messaging (Brand, 2023). It is also recommended that India also focuses its foreign diplomacy based on sports.

Sport has potential to promote equality and diversity and empowerment of disadvantaged groups and ensuring non - discrimination against women, differently - able, age, sex, race, ethnicity, origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or economic or other status. The popularity of sports as well as the positive attitude it carries in the eyes of people, makes it a most suitable tool for tackling inequalities in areas and populations that are difficult to reach and hence becomes a powerful tool for building rapport with those communities. It can also tackle prejudice and intolerance by promoting tolerance and pro - social behavior. Sport also helps in climate related consideration by generating awareness, making sports industry environment - friendly etc. It is also recommended to incorporate inclusive and sustainable components at the core of all sport - related policies and programmes.

In the country like India, where it is mandatory for the eligible companies to spend two percent of their average net profit on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in accordance with the Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013, and given the fact that in recent years only one percent of CSR spent has been focused on sports, it is recommended that corporate are encouraged on the one hand to increasingly adopt sports related projects as part of their CSR interventions, and on the other hand such policies and eco - system is created which promotes incorporating ecological, inclusive and sustainable considerations in all CSR projects particularly the sports related CSR projects should be targeted on building peace, harmony, equality, promotion of diversity, awareness on climate change,

incorporation of environment friendly practices in sports event and sports industry.

In summary we can say that Sport's role and potential in relation to the Sustainable Development Goal is remarkable and pre-requisite. On 6 April, we celebrate the International Day of Sport for Development, through this article, it is recommended to the United Nations to use the term "Sport for Sustainable Development" and promote sports further to accelerate multiple SDGs. In summary, we conclude that the sport is one of the most effective and versatile tools to promote universal values and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. All the stakeholders in sport ecosystem are expected to amplify the message of equality and respect for diversity, access and participation, ecological considerations, peace and prosperity only than we may visualize the world of our dreams.

(Views expressed, analysis and recommendations presented in this paper are Author's personal).

References

- [1] Brand, A. (2023). Sport Diplomacy. In K. M. - N. Francis Onditi, *The Palgrave Handbook of Diplomatic Thought and Practice in the Digital Age*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- [2] CSR Mandate. (2023). *CSR and Sports in India – Emerging Trends and Implications*.
- [3] Govt. of Australia. (nd.). *Sports Diplomacy 2030*. Govt. of Australia.
- [4] Khosla, V. (2022). India's sports business to hit \$100 billion in 5 years: Report. *Mint*.
- [5] Moniz, C. (2023). Indian sports industry records 49% growth in 2022 to reach Rs 14, 209 crore; sponsorship grows 105% to reach Rs 5, 907 crore. *Financial Express*.
- [6] SAI. (2024). *About SAI*. New Delhi: Sports Authority of India.
- [7] United Nations. (2020). *Peace & Sports: be Part of What Matters - 2020 Report of the United Nations Secretary - General on Sport as enabler for development and peace*. New York: United Nations.
- [8] United Nations. (2016). *The Role of Sport in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals*.
- [9] Wikipedia. (2024). *Sport in India*.
- [10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sport_in_India#cite_note-28
- [11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sports_science
- [12] <https://fitindia.gov.in/>
- [13] <https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/sport-others/paris-olympics-review-india-government-tops-scheme-funding-restructure-9642152/>
- [14] <https://khelnow.com/athletics/explainer-what-is-govt-of-indias-tops-scheme-how-have-athletes-benefitted-from-it>
- [15] <https://kheloindia.gov.in/>
- [16] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-28214-0_7
- [17] <https://nadaindia.yas.gov.in/home-new/>
- [18] <https://sportsauthorityofindia.gov.in/sai/ncoe>
- [19] <https://sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in/sai/public/assets/ncssr/ncssr.pdf>
- [20] <https://sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in/sai/target-olympic-podium>
- [21] <https://www.csrmandate.org/csr-and-sports-in-india-emerging-trends-and-implications>
- [22] <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/sports-diplomacy-2030-plan-on-a-page.pdf>
- [23] <https://www.efdn.org/sport-addressing-sdg-goal-11/>
- [24] <https://www.efdn.org/sport-addressing-sdg-goal-17/>
- [25] <https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijpesmes&volume=18&issue=1&article=008&type=pdf>
- [26] <https://www.nsu.ac.in/about-nsu>
- [27] <https://www.topendsports.com/resources/technology/index.htm>
- [28] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2020/09/Peace-and-Sport.pdf>
- [29] <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/role-sport-achieving-sustainable-development-goals>

Author Profile



Ravi Raj Atrey is a distinguished scholar and versatile professional with extensive expertise in Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Development, Sustainability and ESG. He holds a Doctorate in Corporate Social Responsibility and has earned Master's degrees in Economics, Business Administration, International Law & Diplomacy, Social Work, and International Humanitarian & Human Rights Laws. He has over two decades of experience across various sectors, including Ministries, Civil Society Organizations, Academic Institutions, Corporates, and Consulting Firms. Presently, Dr. Atrey is the Chief Programme Executive, School of Business Environment, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Govt. of India). He has authored / co-authored some of the notable books -

- Ready Reckoner of CSR in India (2024)
- Embracing ESG in India: A compilation of Case Studies of Torch Bearers, Promoters, and Initiators of Change (2024)
- Social - Work Methods in CSR Implementation (2024)
- Demystifying ESG: A Comprehensive Guide for Environmental - Social - Governance Integration and Practice (2023)
- Benchmarking ESG & CSR: A Compendium of Best Practices in Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India (2022)
- Exploring Corporate Social Responsibility: Fundamentals & Implementation (two editions 2017 & 2020)