

**Sports and Society  
Accelerator**

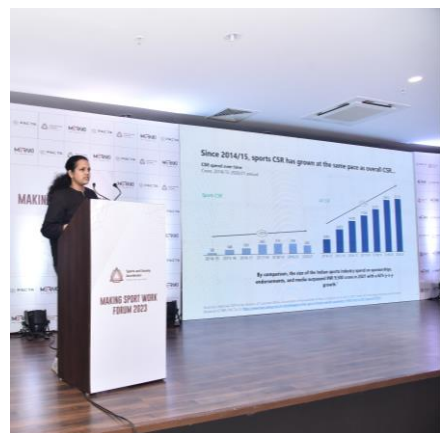
Building India's Sports Stack

# MAKING SPORT WORK FORUM 2023

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



We are happy to share the recap of the Making Sport Work Forum 2023 – organized in collaboration with Meraki Sport & Entertainment and research partner Pacta – which focused on the significance of sports in society and its potential for corporate social responsibility (CSR).



Desh Gaurav Sekhri, Co-Founder, Sports and Society Accelerator, in welcoming the participants stressed the importance of physical activity for society. He spoke about the SSA-convened Playmakers Collaborative and the upcoming Active India Innovation Lab, which takes a preventive healthcare approach through physical activity. He further spoke of the need to focus on critical activities in the access and participation space.

Next was a presentation of the Pacta-SSA research report, by Nivedita Krishna (Pacta) and Kanishka Bhattacharya (Sports and Society Accelerator), revealing that sports as a CSR category receives the lowest funds. The report highlights how data shows that it was less than 1% of cumulative CSR from 2014-21, and only a few companies contribute to sports CSR, with their giving not always being strategic.



The report also highlights the need for strategic CSR funding and shares several emerging models and approaches that Indian companies can choose from based on their strategic priorities, needs, and capacities. The report was launched by Tahsin Zahid (CEO, Sports, Physical Education, Fitness & Leisure Sector Skill Council), Nandan Kamath (Co-Founder, Sports and Society Accelerator), Nivedita, and Kanishka.



The launch was followed by a conversation between Kiran Khalap and Rahul Dravid moderated by Toshan Patil (Co-Founder, Meraki Sport & Entertainment), highlighting how brands can play a significant role in corporate boardrooms and strengthen India's social economic fabric. Rahul shared his experiences spanning over three decades in professional sports and how he witnessed the changing landscape of sports in India and globally. He discussed the growth of sport and infrastructure, which has increased participation, leading to a healthier lifestyle, and building confidence and communication skills. He also highlighted how sports can play a crucial role in women's empowerment and rural development. Kiran shared insights based on his vast experience of working with brands wherein he emphasised how brands that thrive are those that are purpose-driven, and those that will connect with consumers and community are the ones that will look to have a tangible impact on society.



Finally, we had the roundtable discussion, which was moderated by Ajit Ravindran (Co-Founder, Meraki Sport & Entertainment) and Nandan, with an introductory address by Tahsin. He spoke of the vast potential of CSR in the sports sector, speaking to a roundtable from diverse backgrounds, including CSR donors, beneficiaries, researchers, and policymakers. Tahsin also shared his pertinent insight on how the creation of role models indicated that CSR impact assessment should not be limited to the direct impact on the beneficiaries alone but also the ripple effects that it creates on the entire ecosystem was referred to during the course of the roundtable by several participants.



The roundtable had representatives from the following organizations- Hindustan Zinc, Infosys Foundation, ASK Asset and Wealth Management, Tata Trusts, JSW Sports, HCL Foundation, BPCL, IndusInd Bank, Piramal Foundation, GoSports Foundation, Omidyar Network India, Sportz Village Foundation, ELMS Foundation, Brahmaputra Volleyball League, Pro Sport Development, Lakshyaa and Rugby India.

At the roundtable, the sports sector was identified as a highly promising avenue for developing skills and generating livelihood opportunities. The discussion centred on the challenges that limit access to sports and hinder continuity beyond the elite level, such as affordability and availability of resources. The importance of creating role models and leaders partnering with issues such as child marriage and hygiene, and broadening exposure by travelling and meeting people from diverse communities were emphasised.

Various interactions among the participants also showcased the importance of sport as a great brand-building tool and the positive impact sport plays in instilling pride amongst key custodians of the brand.





The participants acknowledged the difficulty of measuring the outcomes of CSR and the pressing need for policy-led interventions in sports. It was agreed that the path to effectively implementing CSR in sports would require at least 15-20 years of sustained effort. Capacity building, transitioning from philanthropy to value creation, and conducting impact assessments were identified as critical factors in making CSR in sports a success. The roundtable also discussed the intersectionality of sport and its potential for rehabilitation and physical education as part of the curriculum.



Nikhil Pant (Lakshyaa), who summarized the discussion, called for the formulation of a CSR Sport Policy, which would provide a much-needed roadmap to guide the integration of CSR into the sports industry.

In summary, the discussions underscored the immense potential of CSR in sports and the need for a sustained effort to fully harness its benefits. Overall, the Forum also emphasised how the intersection of sports and CSR can benefit society in multiple ways, such as promoting physical activity, building infrastructure, increasing participation, creating role models and empowering communities. The deliberations also underscored the need for recognizing the right to play as a fundamental right, strategic CSR funding towards critical activities and the opportunities that CSR teams present to strengthen India's social economic fabric.

We hope this Forum recap is useful and inspires stakeholders to further explore this sector. We will continue to engage key stakeholders such as yourself on such topics.

You can read the full Pacta-SSA report on sports CSR here: <https://bit.ly/sportscsr>



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