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Sport and Physical Activity Impact Framework for India



Sports and Society
Accelerator



**VICTORIA
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MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA



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S H O R T S U M M A R Y

Measuring the power of sport in India

How can organizations measure and enhance the contribution of sport and physical activity (SAPA) to socioeconomic development?

Intended for stakeholders who use SAPA as a scalable development tool, the SAPA Impact Framework for India is a contextualized, user-friendly tool that defines four domains of impact: health and well-being; education and lifelong learning; livelihoods and economic growth; and equality and social cohesion. It was piloted using a mixed-methods research design, collecting data from SAPA-based programmes across India. Practitioners are encouraged to apply the framework in context-appropriate ways and share feedback.

Findings indicate that regular participation in SAPA can enhance physical, mental and emotional well-being, and positively affect classroom engagement and the development of transferable skills. It can also challenge gender norms and offer pathways to socioeconomic mobility.

These findings from the pilot highlight the value of structured SAPA programmes and the importance of institutional support. They underline the need for continued advocacy, evidence-building and alignment with broader priorities, including the UNESCO Fit for Life agenda.

Nearly
1 in 2 Indian adults
fail to meet WHO
physical activity
guidelines



“Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed”



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Preface



What if every child in India could experience sport not just as play, but as a powerful engine for human development?



This question sits at the heart of this report—and at the heart of UNESCO’s global commitment to harness sport and physical activity (SAPA) as drivers of education, health, inclusion, and peace.

The **SAPA Impact Framework for India** is a structured tool designed to measure, understand, and strengthen the contribution of sport and physical activity to social and developmental outcomes for children and adults. It provides organizations, policymakers, and civil society groups with a practical way to integrate sports into broader development strategies and evaluate its impact systematically.

The framework offers a clear, evidence-based and participatory approach to measuring outcomes across four domains- i) health and wellbeing, ii) education and lifelong learning, iii) livelihoods and economic growth, and iv) equality and social cohesion. The Framework helps stakeholders design stronger programmes and generate evidence for advocacy and funding. It supports UNESCO’s Fit for Life initiative—a global programme that promotes sport and physical activity as tools for improving youth wellbeing, social inclusion, and sustainable development, alongside national efforts such as Fit India and *Khelo India*.

This report presents the framework and the mixed-methods pilot involving more than 2,000 students across 8 states, alongside parents, teachers, and alumni. The findings show how well-designed sports and physical activity interventions can strengthen physical and mental wellbeing, improve classroom engagement, build transferable life skills, and challenge restrictive gender norms.

This publication has been made possible by the dedication and collaboration of a wide ecosystem of partners across civil society, academia, and the children who play, whose collective commitment has shaped both the framework and the learning it contains.

As UNESCO, we see this framework as a shared platform for continued learning, policy dialogue, and scaled impact, so that the transformative power of sport and physical activity can be fully realized for young people across India and beyond.

Tim Curtis
Director and Representative,
UNESCO Regional Office for South Asia

Acknowledgements

The framework presented in this report is the outcome of sustained collaborative efforts among key stakeholders across India's sport and physical activity (SAPA) ecosystem. From the outset, the development of the framework was intentionally designed as a consultative process, with structured discussions and iterative feedback mechanisms embedded at each stage of its evolution and piloting. Collectively, the stakeholders sought to develop a unified language and approach for assessing the effectiveness of SAPA interventions.

The UNESCO Regional Office for South Asia and the Sports and Society Accelerator (SSA) gratefully acknowledge the Project Review Committee, which brought together a diverse group of practitioners, institutions and experts whose insights and experience were central to shaping the framework. Through a series of consultations, this group provided critical inputs that informed the framework's design, field testing and refinement. The organizations in the committee were: Pro Sport Development, Dani Sports

Foundation, Sportz Village Foundation, Magic Bus India Foundation, Dream a Dream, Naandi Foundation, International Sport and Culture Association, Anantapur Sports Academy, and Piramal Foundation for Education Leadership.

Victoria University provided scientific expertise and methodological guidance throughout the project. The Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), with the support of Dr Achyuta Samanta [Founder, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) and KISS], and Mr Dwiti Vikramaditya (Vice-President, International Relations, KIIT and KISS), played a pivotal role in facilitating the research and piloting the framework.

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1

Background and purpose

Sport is a powerful tool for social impact and development. There is strong and long-standing evidence that participation in sport and physical activity (SAPA) offers numerous benefits, encompassing physical, psychological, educational and social aspects (e.g. Andersen et al., 2019; Eather et al., 2023). Yet, we also know that there are structural inequities that erode sport's capacity to provide benefits evenly across a population (Spaaij et al., 2015). Global momentum recognizing the value of SAPA in development initiatives has increased, with the United Nations and governments and civil society organizations worldwide promoting SAPA as a highly valuable resource and context for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹

While multiple global frameworks and methodologies for assessing the impact of sport exist, they often lack contextual relevance and application. The SAPA landscape is still somewhat fragmented and siloed, including in India where SAPA approaches remain peripheral and small-scale compared to other development initiatives due to several challenges (UNESCO and Pro Sport Development, 2022). Sport is often perceived as a leisure activity rather than a critical development tool, leading to lower prioritization and funding.

The difficulty in measuring the impacts of SAPA poses a challenge in demonstrating its efficacy to policymakers and funders who favour immediately tangible and quantifiable

results. Additionally, SAPA initiatives struggle with integration into broader development policies, face limitations in scalability due to resource constraints, and require specialized skills that blend sports and development expertise. Cultural and social barriers, particularly in certain regions, further restrict the reach and effectiveness of these programmes. These challenges necessitate increased advocacy, better assessment and evaluation tools, and greater awareness of SAPA's multifaceted benefits to enhance its role in development (UNESCO and Pro Sport Development, 2022).

The SAPA Impact Framework for India, an initiative of the UNESCO Regional Office for South Asia and the Sports and Society Accelerator (SSA) – supported by Victoria University (VU) and the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) as academic and knowledge partners – aims to fill this gap by providing a contextualized, scalable and user-friendly tool for holistically measuring the impact of sport and physical activity in India. Using SAPA as a tool for socioeconomic change, the framework seeks to redefine how we understand, measure and communicate its impact. The framework is particularly geared towards enabling organizations

¹ See, for example, the Kazan Action Plan (UNESCO, 2017), which “marks the commitment to link sport policy development to the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations, as well as support to an overarching sport policy follow-up framework and five priority areas for international and national multi-stakeholder cooperation” (<https://www.unesco.org/en/kazan-action-plan>).

that use SAPA as a tool to foster social change and developmental outcomes to measure and enhance their impact more effectively. At the same time, it aims to spur and catalyse the increased adoption of SAPA interventions in the larger ecosystem of non-profit actors and government-run programmes focused on development goals in areas

such as health, education and gender equality. In sum, the purpose of this initiative is to develop and validate a SAPA Impact Framework and associated data collection tools; and, by piloting the framework, to create an evidence base that helps raise awareness of the positive impact of SAPA across various areas of development.

What is SAPA?



Unlike exercise, physical activity can be integrated into daily routines, making it accessible to a wider range of people.

Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure.² This encompasses a wide range of motions and activities, not limited to formal exercise or sport, but including everyday actions such as walking, climbing stairs, gardening, housework and active transportation, such as bicycling or walking to work. In the Indian context, this includes daily activities like working in the fields, or walking long distances to fetch water, forage, go to school, etc. The intensity of physical activity can vary from light (such as casual walking or stretching) to moderate (like brisk walking or dancing) to vigorous (such as running, swimming laps, competitive sports or farming activities).

Unlike structured exercise, which is planned and repetitive for the purpose of improving fitness, physical activity is more inclusive and can be integrated into daily routines and lifestyles, making it accessible to a wider range of people regardless of age, ability or fitness level. The emphasis is on movement and the expenditure of energy, recognizing that any amount of activity can contribute positively to overall health and well-being, and sets the stage for a wider array of social and developmental

outcomes. We note, however, that some activities, such as working in fields or walking long distances for essentials like water or education, can be overly strenuous and may cause chronic injuries that outweigh their benefits.

In this report, we consider physical activity through the lens of “sport for development” (S4D), a concept that leverages and encompasses the intentional use of sport to foster personal growth, social inclusion and community development (Coalter, 2013). Within this context, “sport is used as a generic term, comprising sport for all, physical play, recreation, dance, organized, casual, competitive, traditional, and indigenous sports and games in their diverse forms” (UNESCO, 2017). S4D initiatives aim to develop life skills such as teamwork, leadership and discipline, while also addressing broader social issues, including health awareness, gender equality and social inclusion. This approach extends beyond physical and competitive aspects, focusing on sport to create positive societal impacts, empower marginalized groups and

² World Health Organization, “Physical activity” (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>).

promote holistic well-being among individuals and communities. S4D aligns sport with developmental goals, making it a strategic tool for addressing various socioeconomic challenges.

SAPA, as this report sees it, integrates physical activity with the S4D concept and extends it in several ways:

- **Broader scope of activities**

Building on the inclusive definition of sport with S4D, SAPA encompasses a wider range of physical activities. This includes informal play, recreational activities, and various forms of physical exercise, such as yoga, that may not be classified as traditional games. This broader scope allows for more inclusive and accessible interventions, reaching a wider demographic.

- **Flexibility and adaptability**

SAPA's inclusive definition allows for more flexibility in programme design and implementation. This adaptability makes it easier to tailor interventions to specific community needs, cultural contexts and resource availability, enhancing the effectiveness of these programmes.

- **Emphasis on physical activity for health**

SAPA places a strong emphasis on the role of physical activity in promoting health and well-being. This goes beyond the competitive and skill-building aspects of sport, focusing on the physical benefits of activity, such as reducing the risk of chronic diseases, improving mental health and enhancing physical fitness. Additionally, SAPA's focus on physical activity aligns closely with public health objectives. This allows for easier integration of SAPA interventions

with broader health and well-being initiatives, such as campaigns to reduce obesity, improve mental health or increase overall physical activity levels in a population.

- **Greater accessibility and inclusion**

SAPA initiatives are designed to make them more accessible to populations that may be excluded from traditional sport, such as those with disabilities, older adults or those lacking sports skills. This inclusivity is crucial for reaching marginalized or underserved communities.

- **Enhanced community engagement**

SAPA interventions can be designed to encourage community participation and engagement in the implementation of activities. This bottom-up approach ensures that programmes are more attuned to the needs and interests of participants, leading to greater community buy-in and sustainability.

- **Focus on non-competitive elements**

SAPA emphasizes the non-competitive aspects of physical activity, including participation-focused play, movement for enjoyment, and health-oriented practices. This can potentially create a more welcoming and less intimidating environment for participants who may be put off by the competitive nature of sport.

Thus, SAPA aims to bring together all organizations harnessing the intrinsic value of sport and other physical activity to drive impact outcomes under a common terminology. This allows for easier identification of collaboration opportunities, knowledge sharing, and coordinated advocacy efforts to drive donor support for the ecosystem.

The Indian SAPA ecosystem

Over the past two decades, the Indian SAPA ecosystem has expanded significantly. This growth has been driven primarily by a wide range of civil society organizations working across geographies and contexts. They integrate SAPA into their programmes to advance diverse development outcomes, including education, life skills, health, gender equality, social inclusion and livelihoods.

This work is reinforced by increasing recognition from the central and state governments of the socioeconomic benefits of SAPA, creating a timely opportunity for alignment between policy and practice. National initiatives like Khelo India and Fit India acknowledge the potential of expanded access to SAPA to improve health, education and social outcomes. This is reflected in the National Sports Policy (NSP – Khelo Bharat Niti) 2025 (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2025), which aims to “promote social development and inclusion through sports” and includes Sports for Social Development as a key pillar, with a focus on reducing participation barriers for under-represented population groups, promoting indigenous sports and games, and advancing peace and international cooperation through sport.

Complementing this, the Draft National Youth Policy (Department of Youth Affairs, 2025) explicitly recognizes the role of sport and recreation, stating that “sports and recreation play a central role in holistic youth development by promoting physical fitness, emotional balance, creativity, and social cohesion”. The National Education Policy 2020 (MHRD, 2020) underscores this convergence by recognizing the pedagogical value of SAPA in holistic

learning. These policy developments represent a promising window that validates and enables the expanding work across the SAPA ecosystem.

This ecosystem is very diverse. Organizations are leveraging the transformative power of SAPA to address a wide range of social challenges, including gender equality and community cohesion. Such organizations adopt varied approaches. These range from providing direct access to SAPA as a stand-alone intervention to integrating SAPA with education programmes both within and beyond schools, and partnering with communities to train young people as coaches and facilitators to extend reach and impact.

These initiatives operate at multiple scales and across varied contexts. Some programmes operate at the national or multi-state level, reaching large numbers of adolescents and young people through structured, long-term interventions, while others are embedded within schools and community settings, integrating SAPA into formal and non-formal education systems. Many initiatives focus on training local youth to serve as coaches, facilitators and peer leaders, thereby strengthening community ownership and enabling sustained delivery. Others leverage SAPA to address specific social outcomes such as gender inclusion, life skills development, employability and social cohesion, often adapting programme design to local needs and contexts. Collectively, these efforts form a diverse and growing SAPA ecosystem that functions through partnerships with schools, communities and regional institutions, relying on locally anchored delivery models. This presents shared challenges alongside significant



Organizations are leveraging SAPA to address a wide range of social challenges, including gender equality.

opportunities for scale, collaboration and long-term impact.

In 2022, the UNESCO Regional Office for South Asia, in collaboration with Pro Sport Development (PSD), a Delhi-based S4D organization, published a study examining the state of the sport-for-society ecosystem in India. These insights were deepened by an ecosystem-wide survey conducted by SSA in 2023, which sought to better understand the systemic constraints and operational barriers faced by organizations across the sector.

Two interconnected challenges emerged as dominant themes across both studies: funding constraints and organizational capacity, limiting the general awareness about and attitude towards SAPA. Despite growing global and domestic evidence of the benefits of SAPA, it continues to be viewed as secondary to other social interventions, thereby constraining its integration into mainstream development discourse, research agendas and funding strategies.

Capacity-related challenges were particularly acute, extending to limitations in human resources, monitoring and evaluation, and research capabilities. Many organizations reported difficulties in demonstrating evidence of impact and progress, creating a cyclical challenge by which the lack of strong reporting undermines funding prospects and further restricts organizational growth. These issues are compounded by a broader lack of research output showcasing and communicating impact, and limited linkages with allied sectors, particularly the private sector and philanthropic actors.

The PSD–UNESCO survey highlighted that most funding for S4D organizations comes from private sector grants, followed closely by institutional grants

and individual donations. While the overall size of funding flowing into the sector requires further exploration, the scale and structure of corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding in sport is documented in the 2025 report *CSR and Sports in India – The First Decade*, published by SSA in collaboration with Pacta (2025). The report revealed that while sport-related CSR spending grew at an annual rate of 31 per cent between 2014/15 and 2022/23, which was better than overall CSR growth, it only accounted for about 1.4 per cent of total CSR expenditure. Even within this limited share, funding remained highly concentrated, with the top ten contributors accounting for nearly half of all CSR spending on sport.

When viewed alongside the heavy reliance on private sector funding, these findings underscore the relatively narrow and fragile funding base of the ecosystem. There are promising signs however, with spending on the “training to promote sport” segment in CSR going up to INR 5.26 billion in 2022/23, up 80 per cent from the previous year (SSA and Pacta, 2025). This points to a clear opportunity for expansion, diversification and innovation in financing models.

Closely linked to this issue is the equally pressing challenge of organizational capacity and personnel. Both surveys highlighted persistent gaps in access to qualified professionals, which directly affect programme quality, implementation efficiency, and the ability to conduct robust monitoring and evaluation. Approximately 60–70 per cent of respondents across the two surveys reported challenges in hiring suitably trained professionals, identifying the issue as relevant to their operations.



Funding constraints and organizational capacity limit the general awareness about and attitude towards SAPA.

These capacity constraints have cascading effects across the ecosystem. They limit organizations' ability to measure and document impact, a challenge reported by 67 per cent of respondents in both surveys, and severely restrict the production of research and evidence, which remains one of the most critical gaps identified by stakeholders. Put together, these challenges inhibit learning, reduce sector credibility and further constrain access to funding.

Importantly, organizations consistently emphasized that these challenges are not isolated to individual entities but are systemic in nature. Over 90 per cent of respondents in the SSA survey identified these issues as ecosystem-wide, requiring collective solutions rather than organization-specific interventions.

The SAPA Impact Framework for India aims to address these gaps by establishing a common language for outcomes and impact; and cutting

across organizational capacities and expertise to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning, and enable greater coherence within SAPA-based programming. The framework for India builds on a range of existing work on impact frameworks for sport and physical activity, especially by donor agencies, government departments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in countries where sport provision is already a public good. The framework has been developed by adopting and adapting conceptual elements from these frameworks as well as from contemporary scientific literature (e.g. Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020; Sambili-Gicheha et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2024; GIZ and German Sport University Cologne, 2022). It has been added to through consultations and co-creation with members from the Project Review Committee, furthering its iterative process and localized nature. References to existing frameworks and evidence can be found throughout this report.

2

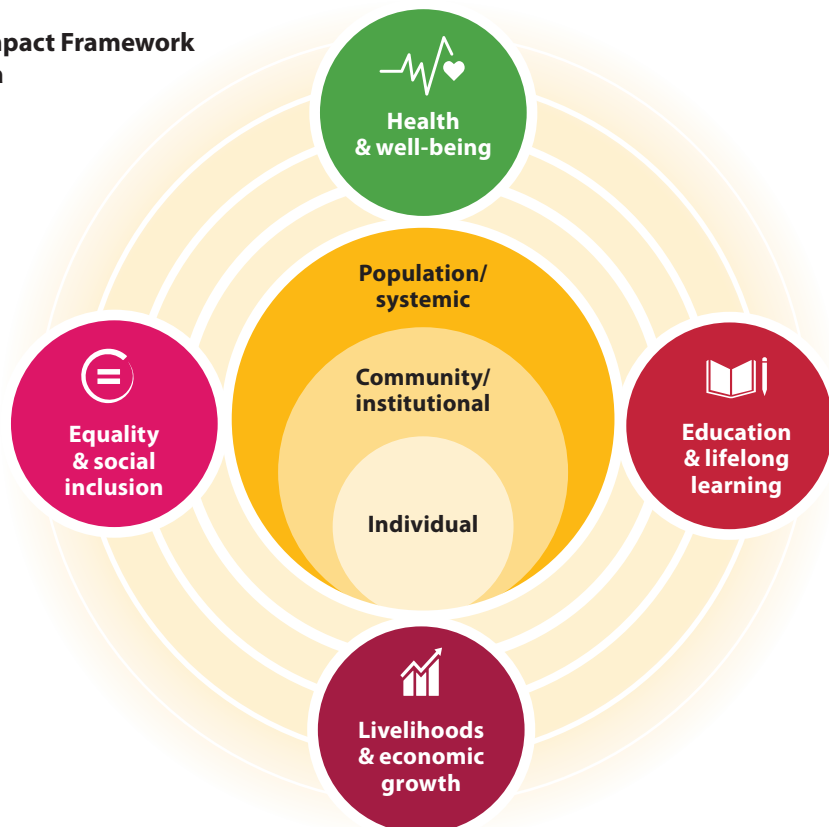
Sport and Physical Activity Impact Framework for India

The Sport and Physical Activity (SAPA) Impact Framework for India intends to offer a structured approach to understanding and measuring the broad social and developmental impacts of sport and physical activity. By providing a holistic mapping of how SAPA can affect both individual-level changes and community- and population-level outcomes, this framework supports the case for integrating SAPA into broader development policies and programmes. It is a call to action for stakeholders to leverage SAPA as a conduit for sustainable development and social inclusion. By defining clear domains and

levels of impact, this framework supports advocacy, funding allocation, programme design, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), and strategic planning.

The SAPA Impact Framework distinguishes four impact domains and three levels of impact. The domains are aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) impact areas defined in Main Policy Area II of the Kazan Action Plan: “Maximizing the contribution of sport to sustainable development and peace” (UNESCO, 2017). In practice, these domains and levels of impact are interconnected and can support and strengthen one another. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the framework.

FIGURE 1
SAPA Impact Framework for India



DIMENSION 1**HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

This dimension focuses on promoting the physical, mental and social aspects of a person's overall quality of life.

Examples include:

- Preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and promoting active lifestyles.
- Enhancing emotional resilience and mental health through participation.
- Strengthening social well-being by fostering connection and community engagement.

DIMENSION 2**EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING**

This dimension is concerned with developing relevant skills, including soft skills (i.e. social and life skills) and technical and vocational skills for employment, decent work, civic participation and entrepreneurship.

Examples include:

- Improved learning outcomes, including academic performance and cognitive skills.
- Development of life skills such as teamwork, leadership and problem-solving.
- Increased environmental awareness through sport-based sustainability initiatives.

DIMENSION 3**LIVELIHOODS & ECONOMIC GROWTH**

This dimension focuses on achieving higher levels of economic productivity by improving employment opportunities,

promoting decent work for all, fostering entrepreneurship, and reducing the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training.

Examples include:

- Employment generation across sectors (coaching, sports industry, events, fitness, etc.).
- Enabling social mobility through pathways in sport, entrepreneurship and allied fields.

DIMENSION 4**EQUALITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION**

This dimension concerns the provision of equal access to SAPA and the reduction of outcome inequalities, including the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

Examples include:

- Reducing gender disparities and empowering girls, women and marginalized groups.
- Increased access and inclusion in education for under-represented groups.
- Promoting safe spaces for dialogue, engagement and leadership development.

The framework evaluates the impact of SAPA in each dimension at three interconnected levels:

- **Micro (individual / participant) level:** personal growth, well-being and skill development through SAPA participation.
- **Meso (institutional / community) level:** strengthened social networks, inclusive spaces and collective well-being.

- **Macro (population) level:** policy influence, population health, economic contributions and sociocultural norms.

The toolkit includes a matrix of indicators that brings together measurable outcomes linked to the SAPA Impact Framework. It is included to show how each domain can be translated into a set of clear and measurable indicators that can be tracked over time. The data

collection instruments in Annexures A and B have been designed as practical tools that stakeholders can use to capture evidence comprehensively and robustly. Table 1 provides the full matrix of indicators across the four domains and three levels. Indicators are measured by percentage or by number of participants, depending on which quantification best tracks progress.

TABLE 1
Framework indicators matrix³

HEALTH & WELLBEING		Individual (micro) level		Institutional (meso) level		Population (macro) level	
Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source
Physical health % of participants with improvements in physical fitness	<i>Fitness Protocols and Guidelines for 5-18 Years</i> (Fit India Mission, 2020)	Institutional readiness Existence of a formal institutional policy on physical and mental well-being (for schools and non-school programmes)	Qualitative tools (Annexure B)	% of population sufficiently physically active	Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #1		
% of participants reporting improved physical health and energy through SAPA participation	Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B)	Alignment of SAPA programmes with the NCF-SE 2023 and the CBSE SQAAF (for schools)	NCF-SE (NCERT, 2023) CBSE SQAAF (CBSE, 2023)	% of population reporting that participating in SAPA has a positive impact on themselves, their family or their community	Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #2		
Mental health Specific mental health indicators, e.g. using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6 version) (to be measured pre- and post-intervention): During the past 30 days: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How often did you feel nervous? How often did you feel hopeless? How often did you feel restless or fidgety? How often did you feel so depressed that nothing could cheer you up? How often did you feel that everything was an effort? How often did you feel worthless? 	K6+ Self-report Measure (Kessler, 2003)	Internal mechanisms for tracking student / staff well-being (e.g. health records, PE monitoring) (for schools)	Qualitative tools (Annexure B)	% of population participating in SAPA once a week	Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #3		
		Existence of internal mechanisms for tracking participant well-being (e.g. attendance, referrals, well-being check-ins) (for non-school programmes)	Qualitative tools (Annexure B)	% of schools / institutions with scheduled physical education in the weekly timetable	NEP 2020 (MHRD, 2020) NCF-SE 2023 (NCERT, 2023)		
		Activities # of sports events organized annually (for schools) # of health and well-being events organized annually (for schools)	Qualitative tools (Annexure B) Qualitative tools (Annexure B)	% of institutions with a formal health and well-being policy	"Health promoting schools" (World Health Organization, 2026)		

Notes: CBSE SQAAF = Central Board of Secondary Education's School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework; MHRD = Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT = National Council of Educational Research and Training; NCF-SE = National Curriculum Framework – School Education; PE = physical education

³ For more information on key terms used in this report, please refer to the S4D glossary developed by the Sports and Society Accelerator with inputs from Playmakers (<https://sports-society.org/playmakers/>) – a collaborative of, by and for S4D organizations in India. The glossary is a repository of a broad spectrum of terms and concepts central to sport, physical activity and development. This resource was created to help contextualize knowledge and ideas within the S4D sector for the Indian context. See: <https://sports-society.org/glossary/>

Individual (micro) level		Institutional (meso) level		Population (macro) level	
Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source
Health knowledge and behaviours % of participants reporting improved knowledge of healthy behaviours and nutrition due to SAPA % of participants reporting that SAPA participation improved their self-efficacy and ability to deal with challenges % of participants reporting improved stress management and resilience due to SAPA participation	Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B)	% of students and staff undertaking regular physical exercise (for schools)	Qualitative tools (Annexure B)		
	Survey tool (Annexure A), with components adapted from the "Psychological well-being scale for adolescents" (BIEPS-J) (Gonzalez-Fuentes and Andrade Palos, 2016; UNESCO Office Montevideo and Regional Bureau for Science in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023); also adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #26	# of SAPA sessions / events with explicit health or well-being components (for non-school programmes) # of health awareness or well-being campaigns organized annually (for non-school programmes) # of active partnerships with health- or well-being-focused external organizations (for schools and non-school programmes)	Qualitative tools (Annexure B)		

Notes: CBSE SQAAF = Central Board of Secondary Education's School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework; MHRD = Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT = National Council of Educational Research and Training; NCF-SE = National Curriculum Framework – School Education; PE = physical education

Individual (micro) level		Institutional (meso) level		Population (macro) level	
Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source
<p>Psychosocial bonds (as indicators of social well-being)</p> <p>% of participants reporting increased support from family through SAPA participation</p>	<p>Survey tool (Annexure A), with components adapted from the “Psychological well-being scale for adolescents” (BIEPS-J) (Gonzalez-Fuentes and Andrade Palos, 2016; UNESCO Office Montevideo and Regional Bureau for Science in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023)</p>	<p>Staff / facilitator training and engagement</p> <p>% of PE / health educators who have received training in physical literacy and / or mental well-being in the past 12 months (for schools)</p> <p>% of school staff encouraging participation in physical activities (for schools)</p> <p>% of facilitators / educators trained in physical literacy or mental well-being in the past 12 months (for non-school programmes)</p> <p>% of facilitators promoting health and well-being practices within programme sessions (for non-school programmes)</p> <p>% of stakeholders / members speaking about physical activity contributing to their sense of overall well-being (for schools and non-school programmes)</p> <p>% of stakeholders / members actively encouraging the organization of physical activity within the institution (for schools and non-school programmes)</p>			

Notes: CBSE SQAAF = Central Board of Secondary Education’s School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework; MHRD = Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT = National Council of Educational Research and Training; NCF-SE = National Curriculum Framework – School Education; PE = physical education



EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

Individual (micro) level		Institutional (meso) level		Population (macro) level	
Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source
<p>Learning and life skills and behaviours</p> <p># of participants reporting that SAPA contributed to changes in their attitudes or behaviours related to education / study</p>	<p>Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B); expanded and adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #26</p>	<p>Integration and capacity</p> <p>The extent to which policies are in place for physical education within schools</p>	<p>NCF-SE 2023 (NCERT, 2023)</p>	<p># of higher education institutions offering training courses related to sport, physical education and physical activity</p>	<p>Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 2 indicator, S4.6</p>
<p># of participants reporting improved decision-making, goal-setting and personal effectiveness through SAPA participation</p> <p># of participants demonstrating increased ability to communicate well with others</p>	<p>Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B); expanded and adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #26; and from the modified version (MYES-S) of the short form Youth Experiences Survey for Sport (Kim et al., 2022)</p>	<p>Existence of SAPA-integrated life skills or socio-emotional learning modules (i.e. use of SAPA in lesson delivery beyond PE) (Yes / No)</p> <p># of facilitators trained in SAPA-linked education approaches</p> <p># of youth-led or peer-education sessions using SAPA to teach life skills (<i>for non-school programmes</i>)</p> <p># of partnerships with external education or training organizations for SAPA-based learning (<i>for non-school programmes</i>)</p>	<p>Existence of SAPA-integrated life skills or socio-emotional learning modules (i.e. use of SAPA in lesson delivery beyond PE) (Yes / No)</p> <p># of facilitators trained in SAPA-linked education approaches</p> <p># of youth-led or peer-education sessions using SAPA to teach life skills (<i>for non-school programmes</i>)</p> <p># of partnerships with external education or training organizations for SAPA-based learning (<i>for non-school programmes</i>)</p>	<p>% of youth participating in structured SAPA programmes who complete secondary education</p>	<p>Drawing on surveys like the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (PRS) and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)</p>

Notes: CBSE SQAAP = Central Board of Secondary Education’s School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework; MHRD = Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT = National Council of Educational Research and Training; NCF-SE = National Curriculum Framework – School Education; PE = physical education

Individual (micro) level		Institutional (meso) level		Population (macro) level	
Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source
Educational outcomes # of participants reporting increased interest in school or education	Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B)			% of schools reporting full / partial implementation of physical education guidelines as defined by the CBSE, the NCERT and the Ministry of Education under the NCF-SE and SQAAF	
Evidence of improved grades / school performance (for school or school-adjacent programmes) through SAPA participation	Student records from school, if accessible			% of youth demonstrating core life skills (e.g. teamwork, communication, resilience) as measured through national youth surveys including SAPA-related variables	
Where possible, seek to compare educational attitudes, behaviours and outcomes between those who participate in sport and physical activity and those who do not (through the survey)	Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B)				

Notes: CBSE SQAAF = Central Board of Secondary Education's School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework; MHRD = Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT = National Council of Educational Research and Training; NCF-SE = National Curriculum Framework – School Education; PE = physical education

LIVELIHOODS & ECONOMIC GROWTH

Individual (micro) level		Institutional (meso) level		Population (macro) level	
Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source
Employment opportunities / labour outcomes # of participants who report SAPA improved their confidence and gave them skills that are valuable for future employment opportunities	Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B)	# of internships, apprenticeships or work placements facilitated by the institution through SAPA # of vocational, upskilling and certification opportunities offered within the SAPA programme (e.g. referee training workshops, first aid certification, sports leadership courses)	Organization / programme records (partially available in Annexure D) and qualitative tools (Annexure B)	Economic value created through SAPA (through reduced healthcare costs and increased productivity)	Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #27
# of participants demonstrating change in their employment status	Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #25	# of external trainers / experts engaged to deliver employability-related SAPA sessions (where applicable)		% of workforce within the sport, fitness and active recreation sector	Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #8
% of participants with increased understanding of financial literacy (applicable to programmes where financial literacy is a key aspect of the intervention)	<i>Girls in Motion Playbook</i> (Women Win, 2020)	# of partnerships with external organizations / employers for SAPA-related opportunities (e.g. sport federations, local clubs, companies, skilling missions)		% of population that volunteers in sport	Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #9
% of participants reporting increased confidence and leadership in community contexts through SAPA participation	Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B)	# of participants referred to external job, training or education opportunities through the SAPA programme # of participants accessing direct SAPA-related job opportunities (e.g. coaching, refereeing) or even adjacent ones (working in the sports sector) (<i>track over time</i>) # of participants earning an income from SAPA-related roles (e.g. coaches, referees, progression in elite sport) (<i>track over time</i>)			

Notes: CBSE SQAAF = Central Board of Secondary Education’s School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework; MHRD = Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT = National Council of Educational Research and Training; NCF-SE = National Curriculum Framework – School Education; PE = physical education

II

EQUALITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Individual (micro) level		Institutional (meso) level		Population (macro) level	
Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source
% of participants reporting increased inclusive attitudes towards and interactions with diverse groups through SAPA participation	Survey tool (Annexure A) + qualitative tools (Annexure B); expanded and adapted from UNESCO, 2024	<p>Inclusive participation and representation</p> <p># of inclusive SAPA initiatives [e.g. represented by mixed-group (gender, ability, cultural) teams /programme delivery]</p> <p>% of girls / women participating in SAPA programmes (<i>track over time</i>)</p> <p>% of children / persons with disabilities participating in SAPA programmes (<i>track over time</i>)</p> <p>% of marginalized (in local /regional context) young people participating in SAPA programmes (<i>track over time</i>)</p> <p>% of marginalized groups (to be defined regionally) in SAPA leadership positions (e.g. coaches, administration, peer leaders) (<i>track over time</i>)</p> <p>The extent to which there are institutional policies and mechanisms ensuring access to SAPA-based economic opportunities for marginalized groups</p>	Qualitative tools (Annexure B)	% of women who participate in sport and exercise once a week	Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #5
% of participants reporting stronger cultural identity, self-pride and agency through SAPA participation	Survey tool (Annexure A); expanded and adapted from UNESCO, 2024	The extent to which SAPA organizations / programmes have adopted formal policies (with operational procedures) to safeguard children and prevent violence against women	Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #20	The likelihood that a person with disability will participate in sport, fitness and active recreation (leisure) once a week compared to the general population	Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #6

Notes: CBSE SQAAF = Central Board of Secondary Education's School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework; MHRD = Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT = National Council of Educational Research and Training; NCF-SE = National Curriculum Framework – School Education; PE = physical education

Individual (micro) level		Institutional (meso) level		Population (macro) level	
Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source	Example indicator	Source
% of participants reporting increased ability to challenge gender norms and speak up against discrimination	Survey tool (Annexure A); expanded and adapted from UNESCO, 2024	The extent to which SAPA organizations have adopted strategies for gender equality, cultural inclusion and / or inclusion of people with disabilities	Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, Category 1 indicator, #16		
% of participants reporting feeling safe in all SAPA spaces	Survey tool (Annexure A); expanded and adapted from UNESCO, 2024	Proportion of adequate infrastructure and materials for marginalized groups to participate in SAPA	Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, Category 2 indicator, S4.11		
		# of PE teachers / instructors attending awareness training (e.g. on gender, inclusion, safeguarding)	Qualitative tools (Annexure B)		

Notes: CBSE SQAAF = Central Board of Secondary Education's School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework; MHRD = Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT = National Council of Educational Research and Training; NCF-SE = National Curriculum Framework – School Education; PE = physical education

3

Pilot methodology and context



The focus of the SAPA Impact Framework’s pilot phase was school-going children aged 11 years and above.

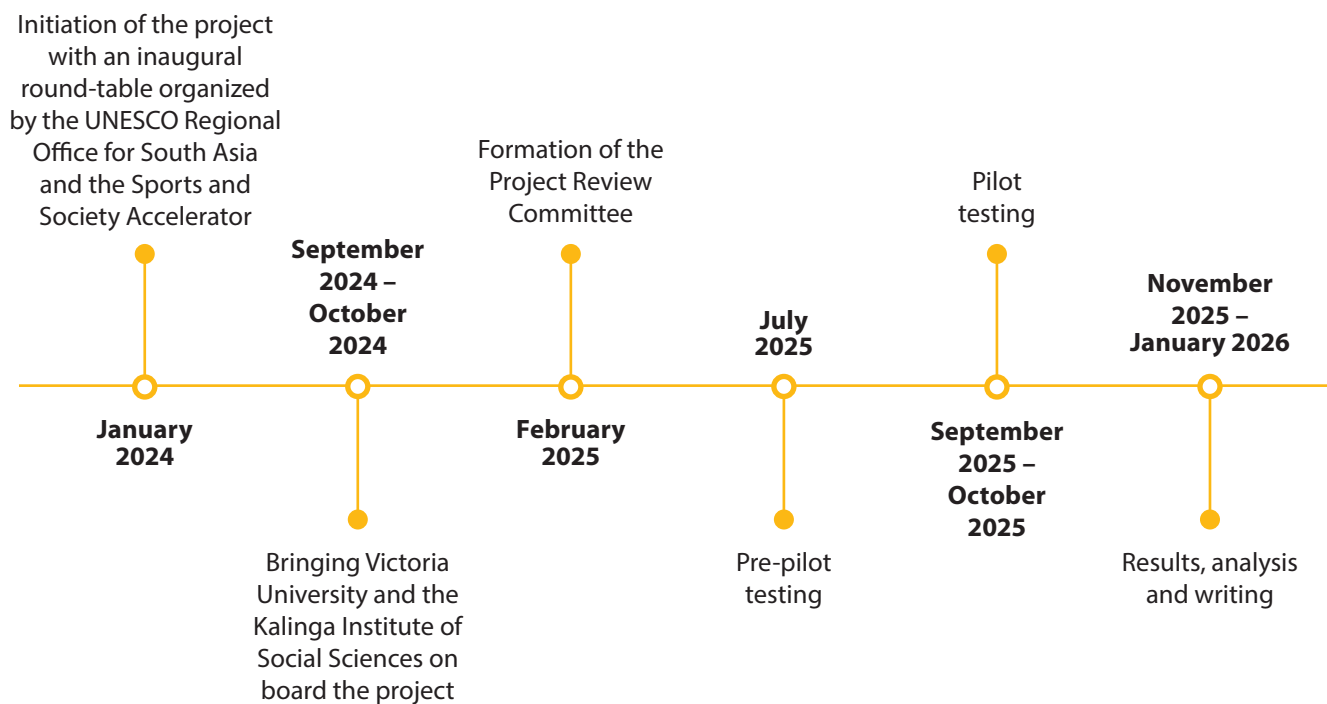
Once the four domains and the first draft of the indicators had been discussed with the Project Review Committee, the project team designed a pilot for the Sport and Physical Activity (SAPA) Impact Framework in India. The purpose of the pilot was to ensure that the framework fulfilled its objective: to serve as a useful measurement matrix for sport and physical activity in India. The aim was to validate whether the structure of micro, meso and macro indicators and the four domains were effective ways to understand and communicate the impact of SAPA. While the current pilot has not captured macro-level data, it addresses the other two levels adequately.

A mixed-methods research design was adopted to ensure that as many aspects as possible of the SAPA Impact Framework could be tested. A mixed-methods approach is appropriate for collating and integrating multiple sources of information examining the impact of SAPA (Jeanes et al., 2024; van der Roest et al., 2015). It allows analysts to gain both breadth (quantitative data) and depth (qualitative data), moving beyond descriptive statistics to capture why and how changes and outcomes occur. This pilot intentionally combined a quantitative instrument for measurement (i.e. the survey) with qualitative tools (focus group discussions and interviews) for meaning and context.

There is no conclusive best quantitative instrument to measure the impact of SAPA. Various instruments can measure particular aspects effectively (e.g. physical or psychosocial well-being), and they should be selected depending on the specific aspects to be measured (see, e.g. UNESCO Office Montevideo and Regional Bureau for Science in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023; MacDonald et al., 2024). The project team for this pilot reviewed several available quantitative measures. Initially, the team identified a standardized questionnaire, the modified version of the short-form Youth Experiences Survey for Sport (YES-S), as a potentially useful tool for quantitative assessment of SAPA. This questionnaire, the MYES-S, comprises some relevant measures for the health and well-being and the education and lifelong learning domains (Kim et al., 2022). However, despite modification, it was not apt for measuring the impact of SAPA holistically, and the team designed a survey tailored to the Indian context (see Annexure A).

As informed by discussion with the Project Review Committee, the focus of the SAPA Impact Framework’s pilot phase was school-going children aged 11 years and above, such that they could comprehend and respond to a survey that took about 15 minutes to complete. The survey was pre-tested with support from the Mrida Education and Welfare

FIGURE 2
Timeline of the development of the SAPA Impact Framework for India



Society,⁴ Madhya Pradesh, in July 2025. Students from Riverside Natural School, who come from adjoining villages, took the survey. Feedback from Mrida staff helped fine-tune the survey instrument and create an orientation for administering the tool (see Annexure C).

To supplement the quantitative data, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with other stakeholders in the sport ecosystem: teachers [both physical education (PE) and non-PE teachers], parents and officials. These qualitative tools can be found in Annexure B. While the parent interviews corresponded to the micro level of the framework, the teacher interviews sought to generate data on the meso, institutional level. Interviews with sport officials specifically focused on eliciting data relevant to the macro, population level of analysis. For the pilot conducted in 2025, no sport officials

were interviewed. Instead, the pilot focused on the micro and meso levels of impact of the SAPA Impact Framework.

Below, we provide brief profiles of the organizations where data collection for the pilot was undertaken. This contextual information is important for the interpretation of the pilot’s findings.

⁴ Mrida is a grassroots, sports-led development organization with over 9 years of hands-on experience working in Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh. It runs daily, structured football coaching programmes for tribal and rural children, rooted in long-term engagement rather than short-term projects. Mrida’s work spans residential schooling, football academies and village leagues, integrating sport with education and life skills. It has worked directly with over 1,000 children across villages, with a strong focus on girls. Several players have progressed to state- and national-level competitions. Its coaches work on the ground as trainers, mentors and educators, deeply embedded in the community. Mrida represents sustained, experiential expertise in using football for holistic development in underserved regions.

Context for participating organizations

Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences



Year of establishment
1993



Location
Bhubaneswar,
Odisha



Size
300+ full-time and part-time coaches, trainers and physical education teachers, supported by volunteers, including trained student volunteers



Participants and target groups
~40,000 Indigenous students (65 per cent female and majority first-generation learners)



Programme environment
Residential school with sport infrastructure



Disciplines offered
32 sports disciplines



Frequency of programmes
6 days/week. Hours vary according to sport

Established in 1993 with 125 students, the **Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)** represents a significant intervention at the intersection of education, social protection and Indigenous rights. KISS was founded to provide quality, holistic education to children from tribal communities facing intergenerational poverty, geographic isolation and limited access to formal schooling. The model views education as a means to expand dignity, agency and participation in wider society, rather than only as a pathway to employment.

KISS is one of the largest fully free, fully residential schools for Indigenous youth globally. It serves approximately 40,000 students across its main campus and satellite centres, with an alumni base of similar size. More than 65 per cent of current and past learners are girls, reflecting a deliberate focus

on correcting gendered barriers in education, mobility and opportunity. Students enrolled represent a wide array of sociocultural traditions, linguistic identities and historical experiences. The residential model ensures continuity of learning and safe environments for young people who might otherwise be denied access to quality education.

KISS evolved from a basic residential school into a comprehensive institutional ecosystem offering academic programmes, nutrition, healthcare, counselling, co-curricular learning and sociocultural engagement. Its premise is that the multiple deprivations experienced by tribal children cannot be addressed through instruction alone but require a social-protection framework embedded within schooling. This model has reduced risks of dropping out from school, child labour, and early

marriage and exclusion from education, especially for adolescent girls. Daily life at KISS integrates formal education with structured co-curricular exposure. Students engage in sport, vocational training, art, leadership activities and community service in addition to curricular learning. Cultural affirmation remains central, enabling learners to retain their identity while gaining access to broader opportunities.

Sport constitutes a defining feature of the institutional model. Rather than being positioned as recreational, sports are treated as pedagogical tools for discipline, resilience, teamwork and leadership. For many learners, structured sport serves as a protective factor against early marriage, unsafe labour and low self-confidence. Participation is mandatory across three domains – sport, vocational training and cultural programmes – ensuring daily structured engagement for all students. While a core objective is to ensure young people remain engaged in productive routines, the KISS leadership has a long-term ambition of training world-class athletes through early identification and systematic coaching. Over time, KISS has produced high-performing athletes in archery, football, athletics, rugby, kho kho and aquatic sports, many of whom have participated in national and international competitions.

The KISS model is supported by substantial infrastructure investments: world-class facilities and specialized coaching are available in over 30 sporting disciplines in KISS and its sister institution, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT). The schedule

for student-athletes is tightly organized, typically involving training from early morning through evening alongside academic classes. This structured routine is described as both developmental and protective, ensuring that students maintain focus and healthy lifestyles.

Robust support systems reinforce this model. Guaranteed access to free medical care through the Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) reduces fear of injury and financial risk for families. Academic support – including flexible examination schedules and compensatory classes – ensures academic progress is not compromised by competitive participation. Dedicated academic and research structures, including the School of Sports and Yogic Sciences, provide curriculum and knowledge support.

KISS is now formalizing discipline-specific academies of excellence with partners such as the Sports Authority of India, the Glenmark Aquatics Foundation and internationally recognized athletes. These academies embed sport science, nutrition, leadership, coaching and career pathways, broadening opportunities beyond elite play into professional domains such as physiotherapy, sport management and coaching.

Across three decades, KISS has demonstrated how a residential, fully financed educational model can simultaneously deliver academic inclusion, gender empowerment, social protection and pathways for mobility for Indigenous youth. Sport remains central to this institutional proposition, acting as both a catalyst for achievement and a mechanism for equitable development.

Anantapur Sports Academy



Year of establishment
2000



Location
Rural Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai districts, Andhra Pradesh



Size
275 personnel
(48 full-time staff, 227 volunteers) working across 120 community clubs



Participants and target groups
16,425 children;
9,636 girls (58.7%);
6,789 boys (41.3%);
aged 6–18 years;
rural communities



Programme environment
Schools / colleges, community centres, open grounds, indoor facilities



Disciplines offered
Archery, athletics, para-athletics, basketball, cricket, football, hockey, kabaddi, judo, softball, tennis, wheelchair tennis



Frequency of programmes
6 days/week;
9–10 hours/week

The **Anantapur Sports Academy (ASA)** works towards “leveraging the power of sport to achieve sustainable social change”⁵ among the marginalized children and youth of rural Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai districts in Andhra Pradesh. Its programmes integrate structured sport training with access to equipment, qualified coaches and safe infrastructure, while also contributing to the participants’ socio-educational development through life skills education, awareness sessions and holistic learning opportunities that strengthen their overall well-being. All programmes are offered free of cost and conducted regularly throughout the week.

ASA ensures robust and structured capacity building through mandatory training in child safeguarding and gender sensitization, annual professional development workshops, and role-specific upskilling. Every July, ASA conducts extensive workforce development workshops, including

orientation for new volunteers, refresher courses for existing staff, and reflective learning sessions. Staff are also encouraged to pursue personal development, such as upgrading technical licenses.

ASA effectively engages with children and youth across 10 sports through a pyramid programme model, which includes grassroots centres, development centres and the Anantapur Sports Village (ASV Residential Academy). The programmes follow a three-point formula to ensure the holistic development of children and youth: access, educate and empower. The programmes’ implementation is supported by qualified coaches and trained local youth, who are strengthened through professional development workshops (coaches and umpires / referees workshops), life skills

⁵ <https://anantapursportsacademy.in/about-us/mission-vision/>

curricula, safeguarding and gender-sensitization training, and pathways to coaching / refereeing licenses.

Starting from the grassroots in remote villages and progressing all the way up to the residential academy in the ASV, the programmes are designed and executed to aid the holistic development of children and youth, offering equitable opportunities to both girls and boys, and ultimately enhancing their employment prospects. The programmes also support ambitious and talented rural children

to succeed at higher levels in sport. Through sports leagues, mixed gender festivals, rural girls' athletics meets, schools outreach, and youth leadership initiatives, ASA ensures that sport becomes a platform for the physical, social and emotional development of children and youth. This community-led, inclusive approach not only nurtures sporting talent but also develops confident youth leaders who contribute to meaningful and sustainable change within their villages.

Dani Sports Foundation



Year of establishment
2017



Location

Urban, semi-urban, rural presence across 10 states (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Assam) through direct implementation and collaborations (with majority of work in semi-urban and rural areas)



Size

42 full-time employees and 26 fellows (Sports for Transformation fellowship) working across 3,500 schools and 2 elite sport academies



Participants and target groups

Impacting different age groups: children (6–14 years old), young athletes (13+ years old), teachers (25+ years old), community coaches and volunteers (25+ years old)



Programme environment

Government and low-cost private schools, community centres, village grounds, sport development centres, high-performance academies, online platforms



Disciplines offered

Physical education (leveraging sport-agnostic, fun, inclusive physical activities), football, table tennis, ultimate Frisbee, athletics, volleyball, kabaddi, kho kho, handball, archery, judo, wrestling, boxing



Frequency of programmes

Daily to twice weekly, depending on programme

The **Dani Sports Foundation** (DSF), officially registered as the ELMS Sports Foundation, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to transforming lives through sport. By expanding access

to play, fostering physical literacy and enhancing high-performance sport training, DSF aims to make a meaningful impact in India. DSF's grassroots programmes have reached over 600,000

children across nearly 3,500 schools in 10 states over the years, while its high-performance programmes have supported athletes who have collectively won 123 international and 757 national medals. As a member of the Sports, Physical Education, Fitness & Leisure Skills Council (SPEFL-SC) and a founding member of the SportsCom Industry Confederation, DSF is well-positioned to drive change.

DSF's programmes aim to impact school students, PE and other teachers, parents and community members, state officials, community coaches and volunteers, elite and intermediate athletes, and sport coaches and administrative leaders. It offers partially subsidized or sponsored programmes conducted daily, twice weekly or weekly, with continuous support for athletes, delivered through schools or colleges (playgrounds or indoor facilities), neighbourhood spaces, community centres, elite sport academies, and online platforms (for high-performance coaches and leaders).

DSF invests significantly in training staff and facilitators, and follows a comprehensive and multilayered capacity-building system aligned with international sport for development (S4D) standards. This includes training in core S4D principles for coaches, facilitators and teachers; sport-specific technical training for coaches; and mandatory safety, safeguarding and child-protection training for all staff, including administrative personnel. DSF also conducts periodic theme-based workshops for ongoing professional development.

DSF operates through two core verticals:

1 Physical literacy

Advancing sport for development through collaborative grassroots programmes in schools and communities. Flagship initiatives include:

- School Sports Program in Pune.
- Sports for Transformation fellowship.
- Large-scale collaborative programmes with the Pratham Education Foundation, the Ambuja Foundation, the Brahmaputra Volleyball League, and other impactful trusts and schools (like the Kapadvanj Kelawani Mandal and others).
- Chhalaang Fund, aiming to build a collaborative of philanthropic and impact-driven organizations in the sport for development domain.

2 High-performance programmes

Enabling elite athlete training, coach development and sport science integration. Key initiatives include:

- High-Performance Centre in Nadiad (in partnership with the Sports Authority of Gujarat).
- National Centre of Excellence in Rohtak (in partnership with the Sports Authority of India).
- Online certification programmes (in partnership with Loughborough University, United Kingdom and Abhinav Bindra Foundation) to build capacity among sport administrators and professionals.
- Individual athlete support programmes to nurture talented athletes.
- Impact evaluation and consulting for sport for development and sport development programmes.

Sportz Village Foundation



Year of establishment
2017



Location

Urban, semi-urban and rural presence across 15+ cities (including Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Akole, Nandurbar, Gurgaon, Noida, Dadri, Kota, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Sambalpur and Wardha) in 10 states



Size

120 full-time staff



Participants and target groups

85,000 children (50:50 gender ratio) annually, aged 6-18 years; socioeconomically disadvantaged groups



Programme environment

Schools, colleges and communities (playgrounds, indoor facilities)



Disciplines offered

Cricket, football, basketball, volleyball, kho kho, kabaddi, ultimate Frisbee, touch rugby, athletics



Frequency of programmes

3 days/week in schools

The **Sportz Village Foundation (SVF)** works to strengthen sport and physical education systems in schools across India, reaching underserved children in rural and urban settings. The organization aims to support under-represented and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities by ensuring equitable access to sport and physical education for children who may lack such opportunities. Using its structured curriculum, SVF enhances children's health, learning and socioemotional development, impacting over 350,000 children across over 1,200 schools. SVF also nurtures grassroots sporting talent through development and high-performance centres, engaging over 4,000 student-athletes across multiple disciplines.⁶

Driven by a mission of "building the world's largest youth sports platform that gets 100 million kids to play", SVF delivers free, school-based physical education programmes regularly during the week. Programmes focus on physical literacy, fitness and life skills development through structured, age-appropriate pedagogy.

SVF places strong emphasis on coach

capacity building, based on international best practices and a focus on gender-inclusive coaching and maintaining safe and inclusive environments for all young people. Continuous professional development (CPD) also involves refresher training, audits, performance reviews, mentoring, peer learning and access to structured resources (lesson plans, videos, WhatsApp-based content sharing).

SVF's major approach is life-skills through-sport programme that uses structured sport and physical activities to intentionally build social-emotional skills in children. Each session, led by student leaders, integrates sport with reflection, helping develop teamwork, communication, problem-solving, self-control, empathy, leadership and ethical decision-making. Their MILES programme, for example, aligns with school PE time and focuses on measurable behavioural outcomes alongside physical development, making sport a purposeful tool for holistic child development. The programme emphasizes fitness development through structured sports participation, targeted activities and robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) processes.

⁶ <https://sportzvillagefoundation.org/about-sportzvillage-foundation/>

4

Findings of the SAPA Impact Framework pilot process

Following a mixed-methods design, the pilot was divided into two parts: 1. a survey with students, and 2. qualitative interviews with parents, teachers and other stakeholders.

The data collection was carried out from September 2025 to November 2025. The quantitative survey was conducted with 2,030 students and alumni across states in India, namely: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The survey tool (Annexure A) was translated into Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu and Odia to make it suitable for all to complete.

The data collected as part of this piloting process have certain limitations. First, the study relies partly on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability and confirmation bias. Additionally, while most quantitative data were collected digitally via Google Forms, in some instances responses were captured using physical questionnaires and recorded in the digital system by trainers. Moreover, as a cross-sectional assessment, the study captures outcomes at a point in time and does not fully account for long-term or causal impacts of participation in sport and physical activity (SAPA). The sample is purposive and concentrated in specific institutional and regional contexts.

Variation in programme quality and intensity across sites means

that observed outcomes cannot be attributed uniformly to SAPA without further longitudinal validation. It is also important to note that this pilot study was conducted with sport for development (S4D) organizations that had ongoing programmes, and the quantitative respondents were students already participating in and well acquainted with SAPA initiatives; accordingly, the findings may not be fully representative of populations with limited or no prior exposure to structured sport programmes. These results should, therefore, be interpreted as emerging from the context of an engaged participant group; future comparative studies may help assess differential impacts across domains.

The quantitative questionnaire was divided into two sections:

1. demographic information, and

2. a set of statements pertaining to each of the four impact domains, to be answered using Likert scale responses. The data were analysed to understand the validity of the tools and, therefore, of the framework to measure impacts of SAPA. In this report, we provide overarching findings for all the domains without detailing the nuances of the dataset.

The **quantitative data** were cleaned and findings are presented below by way of tables and graphs.

TABLE 3
Scores allotted to Likert scale responses

Response	Score
Strongly agree	4
Agree	3
Do not know	0
Not applicable	0
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

The **qualitative interviews** were conducted with:

- 5 students (including Ph.D. scholars)
- 15 alumni (athletes and others)
- 50 parents
- 18 staff [including coaches, non-physical education (PE) teachers, and the sports director of the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)]

The basic demographic details of the 2,030 survey respondents are presented in Tables 4–7.

TABLE 4
Participating organizations

Organization	Location	No. of respondents
Anantapur Sports Academy	Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh	926
Dani Sports Foundation	Ambuja Nagar, Gujarat	42
	Bhatapara, Chhattisgarh	45
	Chandrapur, Maharashtra	38
	Darlaghat, Himachal Pradesh	19
	Kapadwanj, Gujarat	149
	Pune, Maharashtra	87
Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences	Bhubaneswar, Odisha	522
Sportz Village Foundation	Kota, Rajasthan; Sambalpur, Odisha; Noida, Uttar Pradesh	202
Total		2,030

TABLE 5
Age and gender composition of participants

Age group	Female	Male	Rather not say	No. of respondents
11–15 years	618	690	3	1,311
16–18 years	260	276		536
19–25 years	53	126		179
26 years and above	2	2		4
Total	933	1,094	3	2,030

TABLE 6
Educational profiles of participants

Education	No. of respondents
Primary school (Grades 1–5)	164
Middle school (Grades 6–8)	945
Secondary school (Grades 9–10)	477
Senior secondary school (Grades 11–12)	291
Graduation	153
Total	2,030

TABLE 7
Community profiles of participants

Community	No. of respondents
Scheduled tribe (ST)	714
Scheduled caste (SC)	204
Other backward classes (OBC)	621
Minority	100
General	321
Do not know / prefer not to say	70
Total	2,030



FIGURE 2
Have you participated in sport or physical activity in the past 12 months?

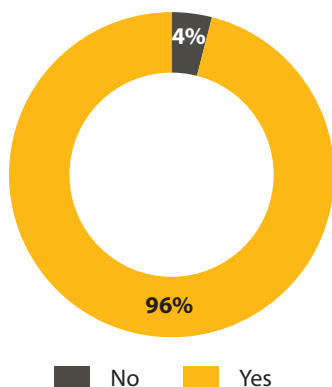


FIGURE 3
How long have you been involved in sport?

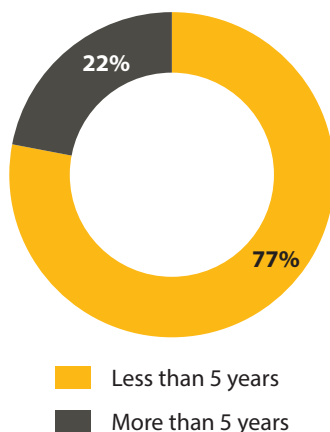
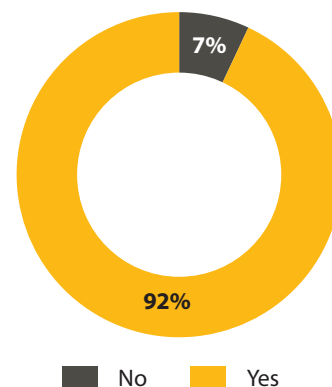


FIGURE 4
Do you have a place where you go and play?



Survey results by impact domain

Health and well-being

Table 8 gives an overall picture of the Likert scale ratings for the domain of health and well-being. The Likert scale

responses were allocated scores as per Table 3, and the percentage of responses against each option are included below against the statements.

TABLE 8
Likert scale ratings for statements on health and well-being (in percentage)

Statements on health and well-being	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable/ do not know
1. Participating in sport and physical activity has helped me... [feel good about myself]	7	1	57	35	1
2. ... [discover what I like]	6	2	52	38	2
3. ... [make friends I can trust]	6	2	52	39	1
4. ... [find people who can help me]	6	2	53	37	2
5. ... [build good relationships with people]	6	2	54	36	2
6. ... [admit my mistakes and do better]	6	2	50	39	2

Statements on health and well-being	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable/ do not know
7. ... [increase physical health and energy]	6	2	45	45	1
8. ... [reduce stress from family / academic pressures]	6	3	52	36	3
9. ... [feel supported by my family]	7	3	49	39	2
10. ... [adopt a healthy / nutritious diet for good health]	6	3	50	39	2

Across all health and well-being indicators, responses indicate consistently high agreement, with participants reporting positive effects of SAPA on self-confidence, social connectedness, emotional regulation and physical health. The strongest effects are observed in improved well-being, energy levels, stress reduction and supportive relationships, while disagreement remains minimal across all statements.

This finding is also reflected in the interview data, which provide more detailed examples of the impact of SAPA on health and well-being.

IMPACT ON PHYSICAL HEALTH

The findings from the survey resonated with all stakeholders – students, alumni, parents and teachers – who testified to significant improvements in students' physical health following regular participation in SAPA, which enhances overall fitness, stamina and nutritional awareness. Parents noted that their children appeared healthier and more energetic after joining KISS, for example.

The impact extends to managing specific health conditions. For example, at KISS, a Ph.D. scholar with a chronic disease found that regular yoga practice kept him healthy, while another KISS alumna and a current judo student both reported that regular physical activity helped manage period-related pain.

IMPACT ON MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

The benefits of SAPA extend to students' mental and emotional states. Structured physical exertion provides a powerful outlet for stress and a mechanism for building crucial psychological skills.

• Mental health outcomes

Two Ph.D. scholars cited yoga as a tool to “de-stress”, improve sleep and manage academic pressure. Non-PE teachers observed that students engaged in sport appeared calm. The link between physical activity and daily mood is tangible; one Ph.D. scholar from KISS noted that on days without exercise, her “whole day feels dull” and she gets “annoyed or angry easily”. Teachers from schools and colleges

“
Students who participate in dance or athletics express themselves better. They are more optimistic and emotionally resilient.”

Physical education teacher

also noted how physical activity helped combat aggression and attain emotional balance.

- **Improved focus and discipline**

Ph.D. scholars noted better concentration resulting from physical activity. A chess student described how the discipline of the game helped him improve his ability to recall information during exams.

- **Building resilience and overcoming trauma**

Sport serves as a tool for building resilience. One KISS alumna (a rugby player) described the sports field as her “best and biggest teacher”, stating that “winning and losing are all a part of the game but how you get up and show up the next day is what matters”. This complements a sentiment from another rugby player alumna, who articulated a core lesson as learning “to get up after every fall, literally and figuratively”. This resilience was poignantly illustrated by a mother whose sons lost their father.



Both of them saw a tragic moment in their life as the loss of their father at an early age....

Their mental condition has improved to a level. It will take time to come out of that trauma. But as they have got an opportunity in sports, they are using their challenge as their motivation.



By establishing a foundation of physical and mental health, the KISS model enables students to engage more fully and effectively with their academic pursuits.

Education and learning

Table 9 gives an overall picture of the Likert scale ratings for the domain of education and learning.

TABLE 9
Likert scale ratings for statements on education and learning (in percentage)

Statements on education and learning	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable/ do not know
1. Participating in sport and physical activity has helped me... [work hard in my studies]	6	3	63	27	1
2. ... [increase concentration and focus]	5	3	56	34	2
3. ... [find clarity when making decisions]	5	4	59	29	3
4. ... [set goals and achieve them]	5	3	53	37	2
5. ... [communicate actively with others]	5	3	57	32	2

Responses across contexts show strong and consistent agreement that participation in SAPA positively influences education and learning outcomes, particularly work ethic, concentration, goal-setting, decision-making and communication skills.

Quite like the survey results, in the interviews, too, teachers and coaches observed a correlation between physical activity and classroom engagement. Non-PE teachers noted that student-athletes were often more attentive, focused and participative.

Beyond concentration benefits, sport cultivates a range of transferable skills that are essential for life outside the playground. These “learning-adjacent” and other life skills empower students to navigate the demands of their education with greater efficiency and resilience.

- **Time management**

University-level non-PE teachers highlighted that student-athletes develop time management skills, learning to balance rigorous training schedules with their academic responsibilities.

- **Discipline and perseverance**

The discipline ingrained on the sports field – punctuality, adherence to rules, consistent effort – translates directly into improved study habits. School teachers observed that these students submitted assignments on time and, crucially, “don’t give up easily” when faced with academic challenges.

- **Collaborative learning**

The teamwork inherent in many sports fosters a culture of mutual support. Non-PE teachers noted that student-athletes form study groups to help one another catch up on missed lessons.

- **Leadership, decision-making and interpersonal skills**

These skills are particularly honed through team sports (like rugby) but also through individual sports (like judo). Athletes learn cooperation and communication, skills that are directly applicable to handling colleagues and superiors with confidence in professional settings. The ability to lead teams, maintain coordination, and take responsibility under pressure is built on the field. Students gain confidence and self-belief, and develop leadership abilities. One alumna, reflecting on her path to becoming a leader, shared her transformation from a shy, introverted person to someone who discovered her leadership qualities through group trainings, sporting events and tournaments.

While the majority view is positive, a contrasting opinion exists.

For example, one parent worried that “sports can spoil the life of my child” because “if he plays sports, he will not study”. This shows that while there is a general understanding of the positive relationship between SAPA and learning outcomes, there remains a divergence in how this is perceived.



“

The game needs a lot of decision-making at the right time. Same with life, you need to take the right decisions at the right time.

”

Chess coach

Livelihoods and economic growth

Table 10 gives an overall picture of the Likert scale ratings for the domain of livelihoods and economic growth.

TABLE 10
Likert scale ratings for statements on livelihoods and economic growth (in percentage)

Statements on livelihoods and economic growth	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable/ do not know
1. Participating in sport and physical activity has helped me... [get to know people who can provide valuable information / build a professional network]	5	3	61	21	9
2. ... [develop skills that are useful for future opportunities]	5	3	55	36	2
3. ... [become a better problem solver (working together with teammates/ making good use of time/ making quick decisions when work schedules change)]	5	2	62	29	2
4. ... [build confidence in unfamiliar / work environments]	5	3	57	31	4
5. ... [build confidence in leading community activities]	5	2	59	31	3

Survey responses indicate strong perceived economic and social mobility benefits from SAPA participation, with most respondents reporting gains in professional networks and employability-related skills. For younger participants, this also includes problem-solving, teamwork and confidence, especially in unfamiliar environments.

The interviews and focus group discussions show that, for some students, especially older ones, sport represents more than just a developmental activity; rather, it constitutes a pathway to economic independence and social mobility. In addition, parents widely view sport as a viable pathway to socioeconomic improvement.

They aspire for their children to go out to play, compete on higher levels and secure a prosperous future, hoping that they get better jobs through sport. The goal is for one's child to be able to "stand on their own feet and earn" and "make a name by playing". The interviews offered several examples of sport-enabled career pathways, especially within the KISS context (see Table 11 for examples).


The playground-to-profession pathways reported in Table 11 are specific to the ecosystem offered by KISS and the Government of Odisha. The only alumni interviewed for this study were from KISS and, while their narratives show the transformative potential of sport, similar infrastructure, resources, opportunities and recognition need to be made more widely available to replicate these success stories.


TABLE 11
From playground to profession: examples of sport-enabled careers from KISS

Sport	Alumnus's profession
Rugby	Junior Assistant, Department of School and Mass Education, Government of Odisha
Rugby	Civil Police, Home Department, Government of Odisha
Kho kho	Government job in the Department of School and Mass Education, Government of Odisha
Football	Constable, Home Department, Government of Odisha
Volleyball	Civil Police, Home Department, Government of Odisha



24 years old, female, Santal tribe, Mayurbhanj

 **Education:** Postgraduate

 **Occupation:** Junior Assistant, Department of Higher Education, Government of Odisha

 **Primary sport:** Rugby – international level

The respondent, a first-generation learner from her family, joined KISS in primary school and continued till she completed her postgraduate degree. She was actively involved in sport from the very beginning. She trained in rugby and played at national and international levels.

At KISS, she used to train almost daily under the supervision of her coaches and experts who visited KISS occasionally to train sportspersons, and at national training camps. She described the training grounds at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) and KISS as a “second classroom” – where she learned lessons of coordination, teamwork and respect for all.

She calls sport the most defining axis both in her professional and personal life. Relocating to Bhubaneswar at a young age was difficult for her initially, but the kind of exposure she got at KISS helped her discover her leadership qualities. She developed leadership skills over time through her engagement with sport, via group training, sporting events and tournaments (both nationally and globally).

Rugby also gave her the opportunity to witness different cultures, ways of living,

foods, languages, ways of dressing, etc. Today, she can easily adapt to any environment, work with any group of people or in any situation that she encounters. Rugby has also made her strong and tough; she can stand against any situation of life and face it with all her might. In her words,

“

irrespective of the number of times I fall, I know I am capable enough to stand and fight back and that is what I do.

”

Another advantage of her engagement with sport was the opportunity to find employment at the Department of Higher Education. It broke the myth that education and sport cannot go together. Although she is not engaged in professional sport or tournaments presently, she never misses an opportunity to guide younger athletes or advocate for the inclusion of sport in the education ecosystem.

Finally, every game she played for India as an international rugby player, every time she carried the Indian flag and sung the national anthem was her most cherished memory.

BUILDING LIVELIHOOD PATHWAYS FOR FAMILIES

As reported by the full-time athletes who were part of this study, the success of a single athlete often has a ripple effect, transforming the social and financial standing of a whole family. An international rugby player shared a powerful anecdote about her family, having previously struggled for meals, seeing her represent India on television for the first time. That moment, she said, “made all the hardship worth it”, marking a shift in their family’s circumstances and pride.

Another alumna, working as an assistant manager in a private firm, noted how she learned critical skills in her judo practice that are useful at work. Since she was not regular in her judo practice, the coach encouraged her to train with younger,

more skilled students. These juniors were helpful and gave her suggestions to improve her form.



So taking suggestions and learning from those who are junior.... Where I work now, in assistant manager role with lot of juniors in the team. If they have anything to say, I listen to them, take their suggestions and adapt. I feel, if I was rigid, I would not learn. This came from sports.



Equality and social cohesion

Table 12 gives an overall picture of the Likert scale ratings for the domain of equality and social cohesion.

TABLE 12
Likert scale ratings for statements on equality and social cohesion (in percentage)

Statements on equality and social cohesion	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable/ do not know
1. Participating in sport and physical activity has helped me... [make friends with people from different backgrounds (language, where they live or are from, gender, etc.)]	5	2	65	26	2
2. ... [interact and play with everyone regardless of caste, gender, class, region, religion, age, etc.]	5	3	55	36	2
3. ... [stay connected to my cultural identity]	5	2	58	30	5
4. ... [try new things, even if people say “this is not for girls” or “this is not for boys”]	30	4	57	1	1
5. ... [speak up when I see discrimination]	28	5	57	1	2
6. ... [feel proud of myself]	4	4	50	40	1
7. ... [feel safe in all the places where I play or exercise]	4	2	50	42	2



While sport can create opportunities for inclusion and empowerment, deeply entrenched gender norms and social hierarchies remain resistant to change.

The table shows high levels of agreement across most equality and social cohesion indicators, demonstrating SAPA's strong role in fostering inclusive friendship, cross-cultural interaction, cultural connectedness, pride and feelings of safety. However, two indicators stand out: 30 per cent of students disagreed that sport helped them break out of gender norms; and 28 per cent disagreed that it enabled them to speak up against discrimination. This suggests that, while sport can create opportunities for inclusion and empowerment – as reinforced by qualitative evidence – deeply entrenched gender norms and social hierarchies remain resistant to change. Similarly, the data highlights that speaking out against discrimination continues to be difficult, underscoring the need for more intentional, gender-transformative and safeguarding-oriented approaches within SAPA programmes to complement participation with agency and voice.

The interviews indicated how sport is instrumental in forging a unified identity. On the field, inherited distinctions of gender, tribe and background recede, replaced by a shared focus on teamwork, skill and mutual respect.



“It also helps them make friends and stay together as a group. In a residential school, where children of so many tribes study together, sports is definitely a unifying factor. On the field, everyone becomes one and plays with the spirit of a sports person.”

”
Alumnus, assistant teacher



Sports instil a sense of belonging. Students identify themselves as part of a team or school group – this motivates them to stay in school.



Non-PE school teacher, KISS

DISMANTLING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND EMPOWERING FEMALE STUDENTS

Participation in sport has proven to be a particularly effective instrument for challenging traditional gender norms and empowering young women. Testimonies from alumni, parents and coaches paint a vivid picture of this change. The career pathways mentioned above allow girls to delay marriages, become economically independent and support their families. This changes their status and authority within not just the family but also their communities.

- A father expressed his happiness at seeing his daughter, who was once hesitant, playing football confidently alongside boys in their village.
- International rugby alumni consistently spoke of breaking stereotypes by excelling in a physically demanding sport traditionally associated with men.
- One alumna, a kho kho player, is one of three daughters in a culture that values sons over daughters. She shared that her success in the field led her father to declare that she was worth “more than 100 sons”.
- Being able to travel beyond their villages / towns is attractive to all students, but prevailing gender norms

mean that the mobility offered by sport is especially valued by girls. The participation of girls in tournaments, such as a daughter going to a nearby city to compete, often marks a significant cultural shift:



“

I was so nervous and worried. In our community, girls of her age gets engaged and aren't allowed to leave home or neighbourhood. But I was happy, too, to see her living her dream and growing.

”

Parent from Kapadwanj, Gujarat

FOSTERING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

The collaborative and interdependent nature of team sport creates an ideal environment for building a cohesive community and developing essential social skills.

- **Bridging social divides**

Multiple alumni and teachers emphasized that the sports field creates a powerful

sense of unity. As one international rugby player stated powerfully, “On the field, there’s no caste, gender, or background – only effort and commitment”.

- **Developing social skills**

For students from remote and often isolated areas, sport provides a safe and structured context for social development. KISS alumni described how travelling for tournaments helped them overcome shyness, gain the confidence to “talk to strangers”, and learn to interact with people from diverse backgrounds.

- **Creating a support system**

The intense bonds forged through shared training, victories and defeats create a social safety net. One international rugby player captured this sentiment perfectly, stating that her teammates and coaches became her “family” and support system during difficult times.

Through these mechanisms, SAPA not only builds teams but also builds a resilient, inclusive community, equipping students with the social capital needed to transition into the economic sphere.

5

What we have learned and what comes next

Our learnings

This report synthesizes evidence from the Sport and Physical Activity (SAPA) Impact Framework's design and pilot phases along with broader ecosystem insights to deepen understanding of how SAPA functions as a tool for development in India. Several key learnings have emerged.

First, the evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, reinforces the understanding that SAPA produces multidimensional outcomes that extend beyond physical health. Across diverse contexts, participants consistently reported benefits for mental and emotional well-being, confidence, social connectedness, learning behaviours, employability-related skills, and inclusion. These outcomes align strongly with policy priorities articulated across sport, education, youth, health and social development frameworks, underscoring SAPA's relevance as a cross-cutting development intervention.

Second, the pilot affirms that the impact of SAPA is relational and cumulative rather than linear. Outcomes at the individual level, such as confidence, discipline, resilience or emotional regulation, are reinforced by meso-level environments that provide safe spaces, consistent mentorship, adequate infrastructure and peer support. In institutional settings, especially schools and residential education models, SAPA functions as both a pedagogical and protective mechanism, enabling

participation, retention and holistic development. These layered effects highlight the importance of viewing SAPA not as isolated activities, but as embedded systems of practice.

Third, piloting the framework revealed both the possibilities and the constraints of measurement. While it is feasible to capture participant-level outcomes using contextually adapted tools, doing so requires time, capacity and methodological clarity, resources that many organizations currently lack. The pilot surfaced familiar challenges around monitoring and evaluation, data literacy and research capacity, reinforcing earlier ecosystem-wide findings that weak measurement infrastructure continues to limit the visibility of, learning from, and funding for SAPA initiatives.

At the same time, the pilot demonstrated strong demand for a shared structure and language for articulating impact. Practitioners, educators and institutional stakeholders noted that having a coherent framework helped them reflect more systematically on what they aim to achieve through SAPA, how different outcomes connect, and where evidence is currently thin or absent. In this sense, the framework functioned not only as a measurement tool but also as a learning and sense-making device.

Finally, the findings reaffirm that SAPA's potential is shaped by intentionality. While participation alone

contributes positively, outcomes related to gender norms, agency, voice and social transformation are less automatic and require deliberate programme design, facilitation and safeguarding practices. This reinforces the need for SAPA to be accompanied by reflective pedagogy, trained facilitators and supportive institutional cultures if it is to contribute meaningfully to equity and inclusion goals.

Next steps

The SAPA Impact Framework is presented in this report as a work-in-progress, shaped through collaboration, testing and iterative learning. The pilot phase represents an important first step in validating its relevance and usability, but not a final or definitive model. This phase focused primarily on supporting impact reporting and progressive learning, strengthening how impact can be articulated and reflected upon, with a view to serving as a tool for funding or investment decision-making in the long term. As a pilot initiative, the framework's continued relevance and usefulness will depend on collective engagement across the SAPA ecosystem. Its evolution is envisioned as a shared process by

the conveners, the UNESCO Regional Office for South Asia, and the Sports and Society Accelerator (SSA). It is a framework that will be shaped by practitioners and researchers, alongside other stakeholders within the SAPA ecosystem.

Future phases of this work focus on opening the framework to wider use and learning. Organizations across the SAPA and broader development ecosystem, including those working across health, education, training, youth development, livelihoods and economic growth, are invited to engage with the framework and toolkit. In education and training contexts, in particular, such engagement is intended to support institutional ownership, capability building and sustained use over time, rather than one-off adoption. This can be done in ways that are appropriate to their context, scale and capacity, whether as a full measurement system, a planning and reflection aid, or a starting point for strengthening existing monitoring and evaluation practices. This is to support organizations to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning processes in ways that are proportionate and feasible.

Early feedback from the pilot also highlights the importance of flexibility and proportionality in the usability of the framework. Future pathways of engagement may, therefore, be supported through tiered modes of use, allowing organizations to adopt the framework at beginner, intermediate or advanced levels, engaging selected components or the full framework as appropriate. The long-term goal is also to have a tool that works for small-scale organizations and can be administered across contexts that have not yet been tested.



HOW DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS CAN ENGAGE WITH THE SAPA IMPACT FRAMEWORK

Practitioners

Use the framework as a flexible tool for learning and reflection. Testing it across programme types and contexts and sharing feedback will help strengthen monitoring, evaluation and adaptive practices.

Funders

Engage with the framework to interpret the impact of SAPA across domains, and share feedback on proportionate evidence use and learning-oriented reporting across the domains, levels and indicators.

Policymakers and international organizations

Explore how the framework, in

its advanced form, can inform planning, alignment and learning across SAPA-based programming within public systems, contributing to more coherent links between practice, evidence and policy objectives over time.

Academic institutions and researchers

Engage with emerging learnings to deepen evidence generation through longitudinal, comparative and context-sensitive research, addressing emerging questions around outcomes and scalability across diverse settings.

Equally important is continued dialogue with policymakers, funders, academic institutions and allied sectors, including for education, training, health, youth development, livelihoods and economic growth. This dialogue can be taken forward by systems change organizations in India such as SSA. As more actors engage with the framework, there is scope to strengthen alignment between SAPA practice, policy priorities and financing mechanisms, without prescribing uniform approaches or outcomes.

The pilot has helped surface several areas for further enquiry. These include understanding longer-term and population-level outcomes of SAPA, examining how different programme designs influence gender, agency and inclusion outcomes, and exploring how the impact of SAPA can be

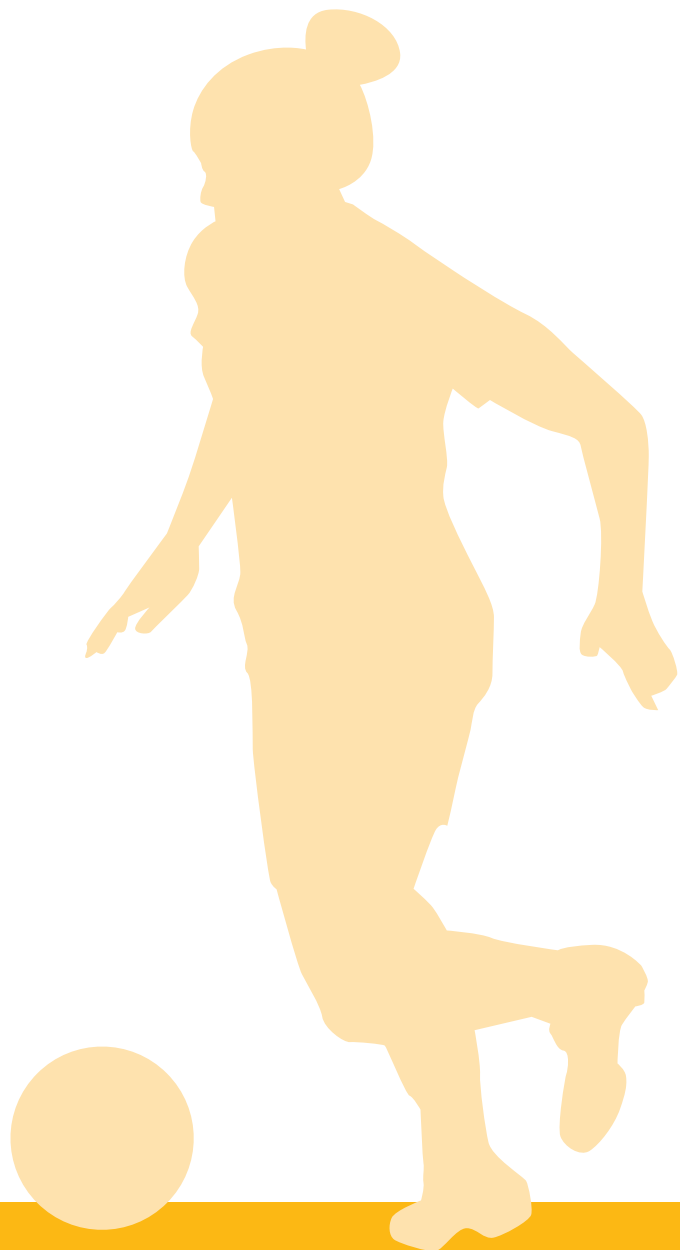
assessed across varied delivery settings and intensities. Addressing these questions will require longitudinal research, comparative studies and close collaborations between practitioners and academic institutions.

It could also be extended through further field testing to explore its applicability beyond programme-level use. Given its potential relevance at scale, there is scope to examine how the framework may inform policy-oriented use cases, including supporting planning, alignment and learning across SAPA-based programming in public systems, such as within states in India. This aligns with existing strategic support pathways of organizations such as the SAPA Centre at SSA, which work with multiple states in India to strengthen SAPA policy, action planning and implementation through evidence-

informed tools and frameworks. Such exploration would focus on understanding the conditions under which the framework could be adapted for broader adoption, and how it might contribute to evidence, policy and practice objectives.

The SAPA Impact Framework is intended to support a collective learning journey. By offering a common framework for understanding, capturing and articulating impact, it seeks to make SAPA more visible and credible within India's development landscape. This

report situates SAPA within its broader social and development context, synthesizing policy perspectives, ecosystem insights and empirical evidence from the pilot. Grounded in collaboration and contextual adaptation, the framework reflects the diversity of SAPA practice in India while offering a coherent structure for dialogue through evidence building and learning. Over time, its value will be shaped not only by the robustness of its design but also by how it is tested, questioned, refined and owned by the ecosystem.



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Annexure A



Survey tool: quantitative survey

Introduction

We want to hear about your experiences with sport and physical activity (SAPA)! Whether you play sport or prefer other ways to stay active, your insights will help us understand and help improve programmes and opportunities for people like you. There are no right or wrong answers – we're genuinely interested in your perspective. Your responses are completely confidential and anonymous. Take your time and answer honestly. Thanks for sharing your insights with us!

BLOCK 1



DEMOGRAPHICS & PARTICIPATION IN SAPA

1 Gender. I am...

- Male
 - Female
 - Transgender
 - Rather not say
-

2 Age. I am...

(Please mention the year completed)

- 11-15 years
 - 16-18 years
 - 19-25 years
 - 26 and above
-

3 Category. I belong to...

- General
- Scheduled caste (SC)
- Scheduled tribe (ST)
- Other backward class (OBC)
- Minorities (Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, Jain)
- Don't know / rather not say
- Other

4 Home location. I live in...*(This refers to where you grew up or where your family stays)*

- Urban
- Rural

5 Current location. I live in...*(This refers to the place where you are currently living, for school, college, work or any other reason)*

- Same as home location
- Urban
- Rural

6 Education. My highest level of education is...*(If you are currently studying, please select the grade / year completed)*

- Primary school (Grades 1–5)
- Middle school (Grades 6–8)
- Secondary school (Grades 9–10)
- Senior secondary school (Grades 11–12)

7 If you are currently studying, please answer the following:*Type of institution management (please select one)*

- Government
- Government-aided
- Private

8 Are you paying for your education?

- Paying full fee
- Paying nominal fee / partially
- Not paying (on scholarship / sponsorship or enrolled in a no-fee institution)

9 If you are currently studying, please answer the following:*Type of education institution (please select one)*

- Regular day school / college
- Residential school / hostel-based
- Open schooling or distance / correspondence education

10 Have you participated in sport and physical activity in the last 12 months?
For this survey, please consider sport and physical activity that lasted for at least 30 to 45 minutes. This can include any organized or purposeful activity done for fun, fitness, recreation or training

- Yes
 - No
-

11 When was the last time you played or did physical activity for at least 30 to 45 minutes in one day?
(Please select one of the following)

- Within the last 15 days
 - In the last 1 month
 - 1 to 3 months ago
 - 3 to 6 months ago
 - 6 to 12 months ago
 - More than 12 months ago
-

12 How long have you been involved in sport or physical activity?
(Please select one of the following)

- Less than 1 year
 - 1 year
 - 2 years
 - 3 years
 - 4 years
 - 5 years
 - More than 5 years
-

13 Where do you usually play sports or engage in physical activity?
(Please select all that apply)

- School / college
 - Neighbourhood
 - Home (like yard or rooftop)
 - Paid facility (club / coaching centre / stadium)
 - Community centre
 - Workplace / as part of a job
-

14 What is the purpose of your engagement in sport and physical activity?

(Please select all that apply)

- For fun and recreation
 - Part of class / curriculum
 - For training / skill improvement
 - Part of my occupation
 - Physical well-being and fitness
 - For opportunities to travel, explore
 - Medically prescribed
 - Other *(specify)* _____
-

15 What kind of sport or physical activity do you engage in the most?

(Please select one option that is the most suitable. You may list the name of a discipline or activity in the "other" option)

- Team-based sports (e.g. cricket, football, rugby)
 - Individual sports (e.g. athletics, badminton)
 - Traditional games (e.g. kabaddi, kho kho, gilli danda)
 - Martial arts
 - Dance or movement-based activities
 - Yoga or meditation
 - Fitness / gym or workouts
 - Other *(specify the discipline)* _____
-

16 In a usual week, how many days do you play or do physical activity for at least 30 to 45 minutes at a stretch?

(Please select one of the following)

- 1 day a week
 - 2 days a week
 - 3 days a week
 - 4 days a week
 - 5 days a week
 - 6 days a week
 - 7 days a week
-

17 Do you have access to a playground?

(Please select one of the following)

Yes

No

18 Do you have access to equipment (e.g. bats, rackets, balls, net, etc.)

(Please select one of the following)

Yes

No

19 Who do you usually do sport or physical activities with?

(Please select all that apply)

With classmates and other school students

With friends or neighbours

With family

With a coach / trainer / instructor

By myself

BLOCK 2



HEALTH & WELL-BEING

20 Participating in sport and physical activity has helped me...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable	Don't know
1. Feel good about myself						
2. Find out what I'm good at doing and what I like to do						
3. Have friends whom I trust						
4. Find people who can help me if I need it						
5. Get along with people						
6. Accept my mistakes and try to do better						
7. Increase my physical health and energy						
8. Manage stress from family / academic pressure						
9. Feel supported by my family						
10. Improve my knowledge of a healthy / nutritional diet for good health						

BLOCK 3



EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

21 Participating in sport and physical activity has helped me...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable	Don't know
1. Work harder in my studies						
2. Improve my education / concentration and focus						
3. Find clarity when I need to make a decision						
4. Learn to set and achieve goals						
5. Learn to communicate proactively with others						

BLOCK 4



LIVELIHOODS & ECONOMIC GROWTH

22 Participating in sport and physical activity has helped me...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable	Don't know
1. Build professional connections						
2. Develop skills that are valuable for my future opportunities						
3. Solve problems better (fixing problems with teammates / managing my time better / thinking fast when plans change)						
4. Feel more confident in unfamiliar / work situations						
5. Feel more confident in leading community activities						

BLOCK 5



EQUALITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

23 Participating in sport and physical activity has helped me...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable	Don't know
1. Make friends who are different from me in some way (language, place they live or come from, gender, etc.)						
2. Interact and play with everyone irrespective of who they are (gender, class, region, religion, age, etc.)						
3. Stay connected to my cultural identity						
4. Try new things even when people say "that's not for girls" or "that's not for boys"						
5. Speak up when I see someone being treated unfairly because of who they are						
6. Feel proud of who I am						
7. Feel safe in all the places where I play or exercise						

Annexure B



Qualitative tools: questionnaires

1 Questionnaire for parents – (individual)

No. of children	1	2	3	4
Age				
Gender				
Institution				
Sport / activity				
Duration (months/ years) <i>This refers to the duration of regular involvement in sport and physical activity, inside or outside school</i>				

1. Did you observe any changes in your child's health and well-being after they started playing? Can you specify the changes (stamina, strength, posture or general fitness / general well-being)? (They can answer separately for each child.)
2. Describe a moment when you saw your child feeling happy, proud or challenged after playing a sport. (To measure mood, confidence or social interactions.)
3. Do you notice the effect of sport and physical activity (SAPA) on your child's learning, concentration, commitment to academics? (Discipline, time management or academic performance.)
4. Are there any skills or values you think your child has learned from sport that go beyond the playground? (Teamwork, leadership, inclusivity or respect for others.) Can you explain further what skills and how did you notice this? Can you give an example?
5. One wish / aspiration you may have for your child's future with sport.
6. Any incidents that are related to your child / children's sport activity that are memorable and that you'd like to narrate?

7. Has your child's involvement in sport influenced your family's habits (e.g. physical activity, nutrition, time management)?
 8. Are there financial or logistical challenges (e.g. equipment, transport) that affect your child's participation?
 9. Do children of all genders / abilities participate equally in these activities? If not, what barriers exist? What support would be needed to overcome these barriers?
-

2 Questionnaire for teachers (non-PE) – (institutional)

- Your age and gender.
 - Subject(s) taught and level / class.
 - Years of teaching experience.
 - What changes do you see in students who regularly participate in sports:
 - » Academics.
 - » Life skills – communication, discipline.
 - » Values – composure, teamwork, etc.
 - » Mental and physical health.
 - » Any other observations.
 - Any remarkable incidents related to SAPA that you can narrate from your teaching experience that show the impact of sport?
 - Have you received any inputs / training / resources to integrate sport and physical activity into your curriculum or teaching?
 - Are there enough resources and infrastructure in your institution to promote playing and exercising among children?
-

3 Questionnaire for PE teachers – (institutional)

- Years of teaching experience.
- What motivates you to work in this field?
- What changes have you observed in students' physical health or fitness due to regular engagement with SAPA? Does your school formally track or assess any outcomes related to SAPA, such as fitness levels and / or participation? If so, how?
- Have you noticed changes in students' mood, behaviour or mental well-being linked to SAPA? Can you describe them?
- What life skills or values do students seem to develop through SAPA (e.g. teamwork, discipline, leadership)?
- How does SAPA affect peer relationships across gender, background or ability in your school?
- What barriers – such as time, facilities or social norms – prevent children from accessing SAPA regularly in your school?
- Can you describe a moment when SAPA made a noticeable difference in a student's life?

- Are there any school-level policies, schedules or practices that make it easier to provide regular SAPA sessions? Can you describe these?
 - Do you feel you have received sufficient training and support to deliver meaningful SAPA experiences for your students? What kinds of additional support or capacity building would be helpful?
 - How would you describe your school's infrastructure (such as space, equipment or play areas) and its ability to support regular SAPA for all students?
-

4 Questionnaire for sport officials – (institutional)

- What trends are you seeing in children and youth participation in sport or physical activity in your state?
 - What outcomes beyond athletic success have been observed from sport-based programmes (e.g. health, education, inclusion)?
 - How is SAPA currently integrated into public education or health systems?
 - What challenges do you face in scaling sport-based programmes across districts or the state?
 - Can you share an example where a sport-based initiative led to meaningful change in a child, school or community?
 - Have you seen any recent sector-wide developments (such as new policies, capacity-building initiatives, or innovations) that are helping strengthen the SAPA ecosystem in your state?
 - Have SAPA-based programmes helped foster new partnerships – for example, between government departments, civil society or the private sector?
 - What do you think is needed to institutionalize SAPA more deeply and sustainably across your state?
-

5 Questionnaire for alumni – (individual + meso)

- Age.
- Education level / occupation.
- Current location and home location.
- What is your preferred form of engagement with SAPA?
- What is the usual duration of this engagement?
- Where do you usually play?
- Currently playing (sport, duration, frequency)? E.g. badminton for 1 hour on weekends / gym 5 days a week, etc.
- What role has sport played in your life?
- Has it helped you to feel better about your body and yourself, in staying healthy, in making new friends and talking to strangers, during puberty, in adjusting to new situations? Can you describe how?

- Has playing sport had an impact on how you interacted with people different from you, including persons of the opposite sex?
 - Has sport helped you in earning money, connecting to people and building your personality?
 - What skills or values have you learned from sport? (Teamwork, leadership, inclusivity or respect for others, among other options.)
 - Should sport be a regular part of all children's lives? Why or why not?
 - Have you noticed any changes or patterns in sport since you first started playing – related to infrastructure (the condition of playgrounds / stadiums / equipment available to play, how coaches interact with students over the years, what kind of opportunities are available, etc.). Anything that you appreciate or what to change?
 - Any memorable incidents related to your sport activity that you'd like to narrate.
 - How do you feel when you don't play any sport for 7 days or more?
 - Have you been inspired by anyone who plays sports? Who and why?
 - Would you like to continue playing sports when you grow older? Why or why not?
 - Did you continue playing or working out after you finished your education? Why or why not?
 - Looking back, what systemic gaps (e.g. caste / gender bias, coach quality) limited your or others' sports potential?
 - Did any life skills you learned as part of playing help you in other walks of life? Can you give an example?
-

Annexure C



Practical guidance for using the framework and the tools

The quantitative and qualitative tools developed to support the implementation of the SAPA Impact Framework are freely available to all organizations that seek to collect and communicate evidence of the long-term impacts of SAPA interventions. They are intended to strengthen organizations' capacity to build a strong evidence base and draw robust conclusions, which rests on our ability to effectively measure change over time (MacDonald et al., 2024). We encourage users to combine the quantitative and qualitative tools to ensure both breadth (measurement, i.e. percentages / numbers) and depth (i.e. lived experience stories, organizational case studies) of the data collected. This practical guidance document outlines how one can administer the four sets of questionnaires and interview guides (Annexures A and B) effectively and ethically.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

1 Individual SAPA impact questionnaire

- For children, adolescents and young adults (programme participants).
 - Includes quantitative, multiple-choice questions.
 - Online or paper-based (for paper-based, the data need to be entered into the online form for integrated analysis).
-

2 Organizational profile questionnaire

- For the organization's leadership / programme team.
 - Describes programme structure, reach and delivery.
 - The form only needs to be filled once per organization.
-

3 Qualitative interview guides (open-ended)

- For parents, teachers (PE and non-PE), alumni (of programmes / schools) and state officials (and other stakeholders forming the ecosystem around a programme).
 - Designed for one-on-one or small group interviews, or written responses.
-

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES

Before you begin the process:

- Familiarize yourself and your team with the format and content of the qualitative tools.
- Pilot the forms with two or three respondents before full administration, if possible.
- Ensure that consent and confidentiality are explained clearly to all participants.

Please clearly explain to each participant that they are being invited because of their involvement in sport, as student, coach, alumni, faculty member or part of a community that benefits from physical activity programmes. Their experience and voice are important in shaping how sport can make a difference in people's lives.

- **Voluntariness and freedom to withdraw**

Please ensure that participation is completely voluntary. They can say no at any time during the study. There will be no negative consequences for choosing not to take part.

- **Data handling and confidentiality**

Please ensure data are stored securely and only accessible to authorized research team members. Where relevant, please make sure that data are de-identified.

- **Risks**

The risks associated with this tool are minimal, as it can be adapted to meet contextual needs.

INSTRUCTIONS BY TOOL

Individual questionnaire (quantitative survey)

The aim of this questionnaire is a short quantitative measure of the SAPA impact areas. It has two sections: the first is on demographic data and the kind of activity engaged in; and the second is a series of statements with responses recorded using a Likert scale.

Who to administer it to

- Young participants aged 11–24 years who are part of your SAPA programmes.
- This form can be considered for usage at any stage of a programme – baseline, mid-line and endline.
- Both currently active and less active participants are welcome.

How to administer

- Use either paper forms or a digital version.
- The form can be filled independently or with support from a facilitator.
- Any of the questions, especially those relating to the Likert scale, can be dropped from the questionnaire, depending on the context and goals of the programme.

- Please make sure to clarify questions if needed, especially questions that ask for personal reflections. Depending on the age of the responding students, it is useful to read the question aloud, ensure that they understand what is being asked, then encourage them to think and choose the most suitable option.
- Although the questions are quantitative in nature, they require some explanation and, at times, even discussion before they are understood. *Facilitators are requested to note the questions that require explanation or spark a discussion and, if possible, also note the main points of the discussion.*

Estimated time: 10-15 minutes (per participant).

Annexure D



Organizational profile questionnaire

Who fills it: Programme manager, coordinator or leadership team member.

Purpose: To understand your programme's scale, scope, delivery and areas of impact.

How to administer

- Fill out one copy per organization.
- Digital or paper format.

Estimated time: 15 minutes.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDES

These are flexible and should be used to capture stories and deeper insights from key stakeholders. These have been created to help craft impact-based case studies, adding depth to the data and numbers reported in the quantitative survey. The facilitator is encouraged to use the questions as guidance. Go through the questions beforehand and have a free-flowing conversation with the individual concerned, and take detailed notes. Please feel free to ask additional questions if required.

Please avoid influencing the answers of the individual being interviewed and let them express their views freely. Allow the participants to stop the interview or the recording at any point if they so wish.

Recording the interviews. Make sure to confirm that participants are comfortable with you audio-recording the interview before doing so. Get an explicit permission to audio record before you start the actual interview process, by asking "Do I have your permission to record this interview?" and ensuring that the answer is recorded. Then begin the interview.

If you are taking notes, be sure to make detailed notes right after the interview to ensure that you do not miss or forget any details.

1 Parents

- Ask about changes they observe in their child's health, confidence or learning.
- Please look to conduct one-on-one or small group discussions. (The latter is helpful for assessing community-level impact.)
- Use the prompts to guide the conversation (you can also take written responses).

2 Teachers (non-PE and PE) (only applicable if the programme is school-based)

- Gather insights from both general and PE teachers, in personalized interview settings.
 - Questions explore classroom behaviour, life skills, mood and inclusion.
 - The questions with teachers explore not individual stories but also the trends that they notice between players and non-players or among children before and after they start playing.
-

3 Alumni (of the programme, or of the educational institution, if school-based)

- Share reflections on the long-term impact of SAPA in their lives.
 - Ask about current involvement and aspirations.
-

4 Sport officials

- Focus on system-level trends, and integration of SAPA into policy and practice.
- Useful for organizations collaborating with state institutions.

Estimated time per interview: 20–30 minutes.

Recording format: Notes or audio. You can choose to report on this however you would like.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION

- Be inclusive and respectful of all identities and experiences.
 - Allow participants time to reflect before answering.
 - Provide privacy and a distraction-free space, especially for individual forms.
 - Support younger participants (below 12 years old) by reading out questions if needed.
 - Record responses accurately, especially in open-ended interviews.
-

DATA HANDLING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- All responses must be treated as confidential and stored securely.
 - Do not include personal names or identifying information in open-ended responses.
 - Anonymize data before sharing with the research team (if applicable).
-

FURTHER FEEDBACK

You are encouraged to share:

- Observations on how participants responded to the forms.
- Any confusing or unclear questions.
- Suggestions to improve wording, format or accessibility.

Sport and Physical Activity Impact Framework for India

How can sport and physical activity (SAPA) be effectively measured and integrated as a driver of social change?

This report introduces the SAPA Impact Framework for India, a practical toolkit for organizations and civil society to embed SAPA within development programmes.

Piloted using mixed-methods research with 2,030 students and key stakeholders, the framework demonstrates positive impacts across health and well-being, education, livelihoods and social cohesion. Findings show improved mental health, learning outcomes, gender equity and life skills, informing evidence-based advocacy, funding and programme design aligned with UNESCO's Fit for Life agenda.



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