



KNOWLEDGE BRIEF

SPORT FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

SUMMARY

- This knowledge brief explores the importance and relevance of Sport for Social Impact through the example of a policy initiative, Sports Action towards Harnessing the Aspirations of Youth (SAHAY) designed and developed by the Policy and Development Advisory Group (PDAG) in collaboration with the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of Jharkhand.
- The brief dives deep into how an initiative like SAHAY can play a significant role in the driving of sport as a tool for adolescent and youth development at the grassroots, by detaching them from the clutches of insurgency and associating them with public institutions in the area of sports. This in turn is expected to improve individual and collective outcomes in health, employment and gender parity, illustrating how sport works in a more holistic and comprehensive way when compared to other development tools.
- Within the larger context of Sustainable Development Goals and the overarching framework of Sport for Development, PDAG has engaged with multiple stakeholders over the last few years to design and implement multiple initiatives in order to promote grassroots sporting talent with a particular focus on women in sports.

INTRODUCTION

Sport at large has been seen as a pathway to a better life and a more integrated, inclusive and robust society. From breaking down social barriers, stereotypes and prejudices, to changing gender perceptions and dynamics, it has played a pivotal role in steering communities in a more equitable and democratic direction.

As conversations around Sport for Development (S4D) begin to gain momentum, the impact of sport on the youth and their overall well-being cannot be ignored. Global evidence has led to the adoption of the 2015 Kaza Resolution - Sport for Development and Peace Framework. It has proven to be a catalyst in the transformation of youth, especially those belonging to challenging socio-economic backgrounds and circumstances - in the areas of early and/or forced marriages, nutrition aspirational framework and identity development, and also increased engagement for those most at risk of leaving school.

Taking the impact of Sport for Development and Conflict Resolution forward, the Policy and Development Advisory Group (PDAG) has conceptualised and implemented its own flagship initiative - Sports Action towards Harnessing the Aspiration of the Youth (SAHAY), for the Government of Jharkhand (GoJ), thereby recognising the need for sport as a contributor to the holistic development of young people from some of the most remote and conflict-ridden regions of the state.

Along with it being a policy initiative that uses sport as a tool for development, conflict resolution and post conflict confidence building, it is also unique for two reasons -

- the initiative serves as the perfect platform to spot and harness young sporting talent in the hinterlands. Through sport and sporting culture, India has seen its marginalised and backward communities emerge as the epicentre of both male and female sporting talent, having produced some of the most prominent icons in recent times - Deepika Kumari, Nikki Pradhan and Salima Tete.
- it aims to provide an alternate productive avenue for the youth as opposed to the path of violence and conflict.



CONTEXT

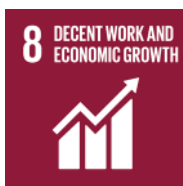
Post 1990, a number of organisations (UN in particular), used sport as an intervention tool to nurture development as well as peace across divided communities, classified as the 'Sport, Development and Peace' (SDP) sector. The United Nations declared 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education, with peace and development as one of its central themes.

In India, sport has been used as an intervention tool for development, but rarely as a post-conflict state building and conflict resolution tool. This very lacuna is what led PDAG to work in close collaboration with the Government of Jharkhand in order to develop SAHAY, a policy initiative under which sporting activities take place across 5 districts highly affected by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), also classified under the Aspirational Districts Programme of the Government of India namely, Paschimi Singhbhum, Seraikela Kharsawan, Khunti, Simdega and Gumla. These are also listed under the 112 most under-developed districts identified in the country.

This focus on conflict resolution is complemented by the initiative's proposed impact on development indicators for nutrition, gender and employment. It looks at creating a strong aspirational framework, contributing to identity development among women, including a sense of empowerment, accomplishment and agency which then results in better health outcomes and personal freedom. Given that Jharkhand is one of the most malnourished states in the country, identity development through sport is a unique way to improve the health of young women and girls who are the worst affected in regions of poverty and conflict.

Goal 8 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) states the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. According to UN's Office of Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP), "Stakeholders in sport that base their activities or work on the respect of human rights can spur to positively impact local and regional business when organising sporting events." Sport programmes can foster increased employability for women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, thus contributing to inclusive economic growth. Hence, with the growth of the sports industry as well as related sectors through initiatives like SAHAY, there will also be an upward movement in opportunities for economic growth and decent employment.

SPORT & SDGs



APPROACH

Keeping in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 to 'Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls', PDAG has been mindful to keep the SAHAY initiative leaning sharply towards grassroots campaigns against child marriage, human trafficking, out of school youth, distress migration, malnutrition and gender sensitivity - issues that in varying degrees negatively impact women and girls. In order to achieve this, PDAG has worked very closely with the Government of Jharkhand not just in the policy conceptualization and development phase, but also in launching and implementing this first-of-a-kind initiative in the state.

SAHAY focuses entirely on adolescents and young adults i.e. 14- 19 years, with an equal focus on participation of girls and boys in both teams and individual events across a three tier framework.

SAHAY engages in four sporting disciplines, popular in the grassroots, namely; hockey, football, volleyball and athletics (100m, 200m, 400m and Long Jump). With evidence directing governments across the globe to mandate sport in education curricula and within administrative frameworks at the most basic level, SAHAY spreads itself across a geographical area of 55 blocks and 660 panchayats. The implementation of the initiative involves a streamlined process right from the panchayat level where a selection committee is constituted in order to identify talented players (both boys and girls) across all four sporting disciplines as seen below:



Football - 16 players



Hockey - 16 players



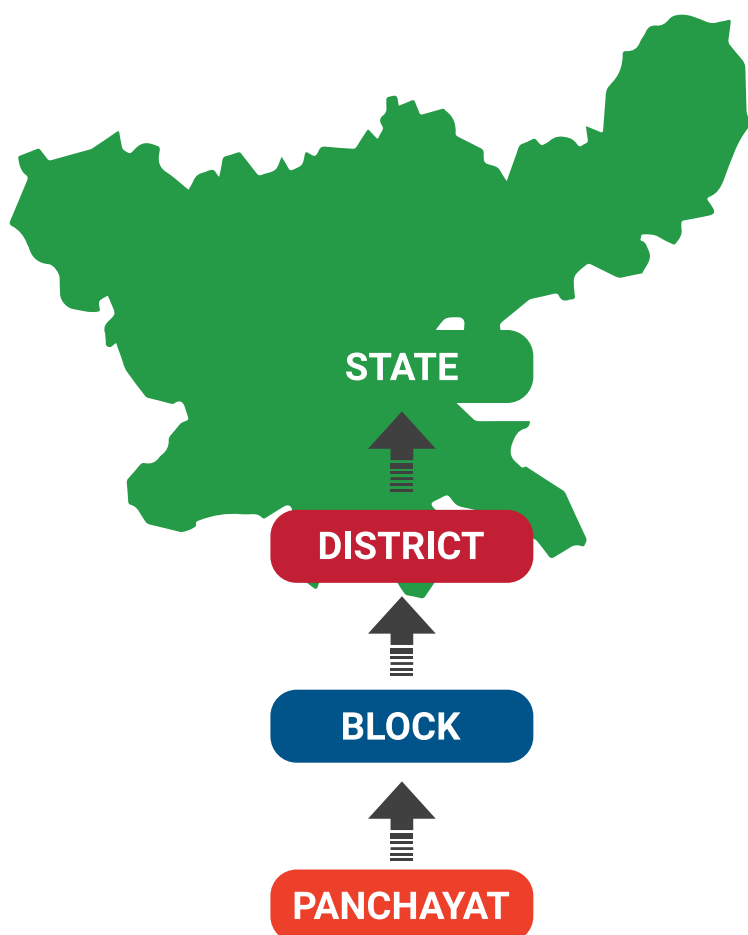
Volleyball - 8 players



Athletics - 3 in each category

After qualifying, these youth go on to represent the panchayat and ward level teams. The best players for each sport are selected through inter-panchayat competitions and proceed to form the pool of talent at the block level competitions. Through this 3 tiered process the initiative aims at promoting sporting talent from the grassroots level as well as the development of youth belonging to the most backward regions in India.

With the first phase expected to be completed in the next 6 months, SAHAY looks to impact 72000 young men and women across 5 core districts heavily impacted by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE). As an outcome, this initiative will also help the state government identify talent who could then be nurtured into national or international sports persons through scholarships at residential training institutes.



PDAG's ROLE IN SPORTS IN JHARKHAND

PDAG works closely with the state government at a programmatic as well as policy conceptualisation and implementation level, thereby playing a key role in the entire life-cycle of the initiative. Following are some of the ways in which PDAG has initiated as well as developed on the initiative as well as engaged key government stakeholders with regards to sport for development and conflict resolution in Jharkhand.

SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

PDAG advised the Directorate of Sport and Youth Affairs for building new grounds, renovating old infrastructure and fitting in old hockey fields with astro turfs. As a pilot project, PDAG coordinated with the District Commissioners of multiple districts and sports departments to develop multi-sport training turfs. Initially, this will be developed in Chaibasa district which will then be expanded across the state. Additionally through the Poto Ho Scheme, in association with the Department of Rural Development, a piece of land in each Panchayat has been identified which will be converted into a playground with changing rooms.

In order to strengthen the sport ecosystem in the state, PDAG has redesigned the Mukhyamantri Amantran Football Cup where it played a key advisory role in redesigning overall guidelines, registration guidelines, and match guidelines at every level, as well as establishing a monitoring mechanism. This change was aimed at engaging athletes aged between 18-40 years and resulted in the participation of over 1.4 lac players.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In order for an initiative like SAHAY to sustain and witness the longevity it deserves, it was important to go beyond the political and bureaucratic realms and engage with those involved with actual player scouting, interaction, training etc. To this end, PDAG had engaged various stakeholders and decision-makers at all levels- including federations and associations and local clubs. In addition, there has been an effort to generate greater opportunities for young girl players, by working closely with football and hockey associations to register more women and girl football and hockey clubs.

TECH FOR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

To have greater transparency and accountability within the current system and with the view of bringing all players on one single platform, PDAG has planned and designed a portal in order to have a holistic database of players' performances. This helps to track state sports activities at every level, by monitoring player performances, digitising the sports ecosystem at every level of the state etc.

JHARKHAND ON THE NATIONAL SPORTS MAP

PDAG in association with the Government of Jharkhand has worked towards the increase of the national football team's presence in Jharkhand with the view that this engagement will provide an opportunity for scouting of local talent as well as build a robust ecosystem around sport. This also gives the opportunity for the state to demonstrate its long-standing commitment to sports and the involvement of young women and girls in it. Under this drafted MOU, 3 national women's team camps will be hosted in Jharkhand.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) will help the state strengthen its sports centres, and the national football federation will host international matches in Jharkhand. The federation will also conduct programs for capacity building of coaches and other technical staff, along with the inclusion of a coach licensing program. In line with this, PDAG has also played an important role in designing a draft MOU which aims at increased coordination between the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and the Sports Department to consolidate the football ecosystem in the state. The MOU aims to ensure that appropriate measures are taken for player scouting, coach development, player exposure, increase in national team presence from Jharkhand as well as strengthening state sports centres.



GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORTS

UN's SDG 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life) emphasises the need for women to be at the forefront of social change. The youth- especially young women and girls are some of the most vulnerable and worst- hit in conflict zones and sadly, most governments have failed to nurture the aspirations of the impacted demographic. It is particularly important to note here that the nurturing of youth leaders or icons within effected communities plays an important role in providing an attractive and inspiring alternative to violence and conflict. With the compelling ethos and noble ambition of SDG 5.5 as a backdrop, SAHAY looks at bringing forth in a big way, the relevance of gender parity in the realm of sports

There is copious evidence that goes on to prove the correlation between sport and its impact on the lives of young women and girls. PDAG recently completed a study commissioned by Tribal Research Institute (TRI) titled, "Study of Tribal Women and Girls of Jharkhand in Sports - Extending Limits to Physical Expression, Establishing Identity, Honour and Economic Security".

The objectives of the study were to explore how Adivasi women in sport have broken structural, societal and patriarchal barriers to establish and assert their self-identities and whether sport can bring about socio-economic mobility in the lives of these women from marginalised Adivasi communities. Our team members interacted with 94 Adivasi sports women through Focussed Group Discussions and Personal Interviews at various sports academies across the state of Jharkhand.



They were at different stages of their careers and belonged to different parts of Jharkhand, some of which are classified as Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas. The study also examines whether such empowered sports women can open up possible ways of undoing the alienation inflicted upon the Adivasi communities and address the fundamental contradictions that have led them into a historical conflict with the state.

Taking the learnings from PDAG's extensive research output, the initiative seeks to enable grassroots campaigns at scale against significant societal issues that have plagued the lives of the youth. Along with a transformation in self-perception, SAHAY also aims at changing the perception of women among boys and young men and making sports more gender-sensitive. The initiative looks at utilising the impact of sports to help women escape from early and forced marriage and pregnancy, to live a more nourishing life through adequate access to nutrition during adolescence at training centres. SAHAY also highlights the practical aspects of everyday life with the promotion of professional development and increasing the access to opportunities to jobs in PSUs/ central and state government banks or as academy coaches.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

As sport makes its way into mainstream conversations around youth development in India and the world over, SAHAY seeks to encompass the larger socio-economic aspects that result in more holistic outcomes of sport for social impact endeavours within marginalised communities.

From gender equality to addressing youth and adolescent issues in remote, conflict ridden regions of the country, SAHAY seeks to chart a first ever state level policy action pathway leading to a better life and an aspiration centred journey for young people.



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