

# Keeping Children Active During COVID-19 Lockdown

A Sportz Village Foundation Position Paper





The world is facing an unprecedented situation due to COVID 19, a “black-swan” event that has affected life in an unforeseen manner. The situation has ensured “lockdowns” in many countries, forcing people to adopt new social behaviors and reevaluate their economic activities. Among the many implications - is the abrupt closure of schools and social spaces that, thus far, enabled children and adolescents to participate in physical activity and sport. This paper attempts to highlight the importance of access to sport for children (especially from disadvantaged backgrounds) – and offers a framework for educators and development experts to engage children through physical activity (during and after the lockdown) – when norms of isolation, social distancing and personal hygiene may continue to influence our schooling system.

To play is a natural impulse of all children, and their chosen way to engage in a social context by bonding with their friends and peers. Depriving children of physical activity could result in at best, lower levels of physical dexterity & fitness, and at worst, psychological or emotional dysfunction. In times of the outbreak, access to trusted sources of information, adoption of hygiene practices and maintaining higher immunity levels (that result mainly from physical well-being) are key conditions to keep the spread of infection at bay. The complete absence of physical activity & sport – both structured and unstructured - can prove to be catastrophic and leave our children highly vulnerable.



One of the ways (currently being tried) to engage children in physical activity during the outbreak – is through online content and video - conferencing based sessions. This could work very well for children and households that have existing internet access. But, what about the large majority of children in our country that are dependent on the public schooling system, and come from low income communities? Leave alone online access, some of these children have been left struggling for even basic needs due to the loss of livelihoods of their parents. Moreover, even after schools reopen post lockdown (period), the need for social distancing may continue to hamper children’s engagement with sport.

These issues require us to reimagine some of the key elements & practices of sports education in schools and communities to ensure equitable participation to the extent possible. The following artifacts offer an appropriate framework and structure to implement sports education interventions through the outbreak:

**ARTIFACT 1: FRAMEWORK FOR ‘COVID-PROOFING SPORTS EDUCATION**



## ARTIFACT 2: STRUCTURE FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

	Pre - COVID 19 (In-School)	During Lockdown (At-home)	Post - Lockdown - Recovery Period (In-School)
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Supervised by designated trainer</li> <li>→ Structured physical education curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Supervised by parent/ designated trainer</li> <li>→ Modified home-based curriculum delivered through:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ App or WhatsApp (Video)</li> <li>◆ Phone-call or Radio (Audio)/ TV</li> <li>◆ Workbook or Activity Sheets (Printed)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Supervised by designated trainer</li> <li>→ Structured curriculum modified for no/low contact drills and games in smaller groups to ensure “1m gap”</li> <li>→ Reinforcement of hygiene practices in age-specific formats</li> <li>→ Supplemented by home sessions in case of reduced playtime in schools</li> </ul>
Training of Trainers (focus areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Classroom and on-ground delivery of structured curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Delivery of in-home curriculum and supervision of distance or virtual learning activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Classroom and on-ground delivery of modified “low-contact” curriculum</li> <li>→ COVID-19 related hygiene practices and protocols</li> <li>→ Community health and WASH-related issues</li> </ul>
Events/ Camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ As per calendar of events outlined by school management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Home-based task oriented</li> <li>→ Digital awareness drives in child-friendly formats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ As per calendar of events declared by school management with focus on no/low-contact sports</li> <li>→ Awareness camps for children/ parents related to community health and WASH-related issues</li> </ul>

<p>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation (focus areas)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Improvement in fitness levels</li> <li>→ Improvement in social-emotional learning</li> <li>→ Improvement in attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Age-wise coverage of children</li> <li>→ Participation levels</li> <li>→ Qualitative feedback from children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Improvement in fitness levels</li> <li>→ Improvement in social-emotional learning</li> <li>→ Improvement in attendance</li> <li>→ Improvement in awareness of hygiene-related issues</li> </ul>
<p>Stakeholder Participation: 1. Parent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Encourage children to go to school</li> <li>→ Attend select events / meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Support children to use the home-based curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Encourage children to go to school</li> <li>→ Attend select events / meetings as well as awareness camps</li> </ul>
<p>2. School Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Support program delivery in school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Coordinate for program delivery at- home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Support program delivery in school</li> <li>→ Support conduct of awareness camps and events</li> </ul>
<p>3. CSR Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Overall program sponsorship aligning with larger CSR goals/ vision</li> <li>→ Ongoing program support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Sponsorship for pilot programs to validate the effectiveness of alternate delivery models</li> <li>→ Enabling collaboration and aligning with other programs for the same beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Sponsorship for modified programs aligning with larger CSR goals/vision</li> <li>→ Enabling collaboration and aligning with other programs for the same beneficiaries</li> </ul>

As a young country with almost 600 million individuals under the age of 21 and about 150 million children in the public-school system<sup>2</sup>, ensuring access to transformation tools such as sports education is highly critical. Since the local administration and educators are likely to be stretched for some time, the situation demands new courageous ideas from civil society organizations who can go beyond the limits imposed by the Outbreak. We believe, that by following some of the practical measures outlined in this document (many of which are in line with the Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools released by UNICEF), we can ensure that children continue to enjoy sporting activities and stay healthy. Having said, that we invite individuals and organizations to contribute their ideas and resources to this endeavor. We believe that we have a grave responsibility to help millions of children find their way through this crisis and emerge with sufficient strength and ability to thrive in the post COVID-19 world.

## References

1. [https://censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_And\\_You/age\\_structure\\_and\\_marital\\_status.aspx](https://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/age_structure_and_marital_status.aspx)
2. [http://udise.in/Downloads/Publications/Documents/Flash\\_Statistics\\_on\\_School\\_Education-2016-17.pdf](http://udise.in/Downloads/Publications/Documents/Flash_Statistics_on_School_Education-2016-17.pdf)

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