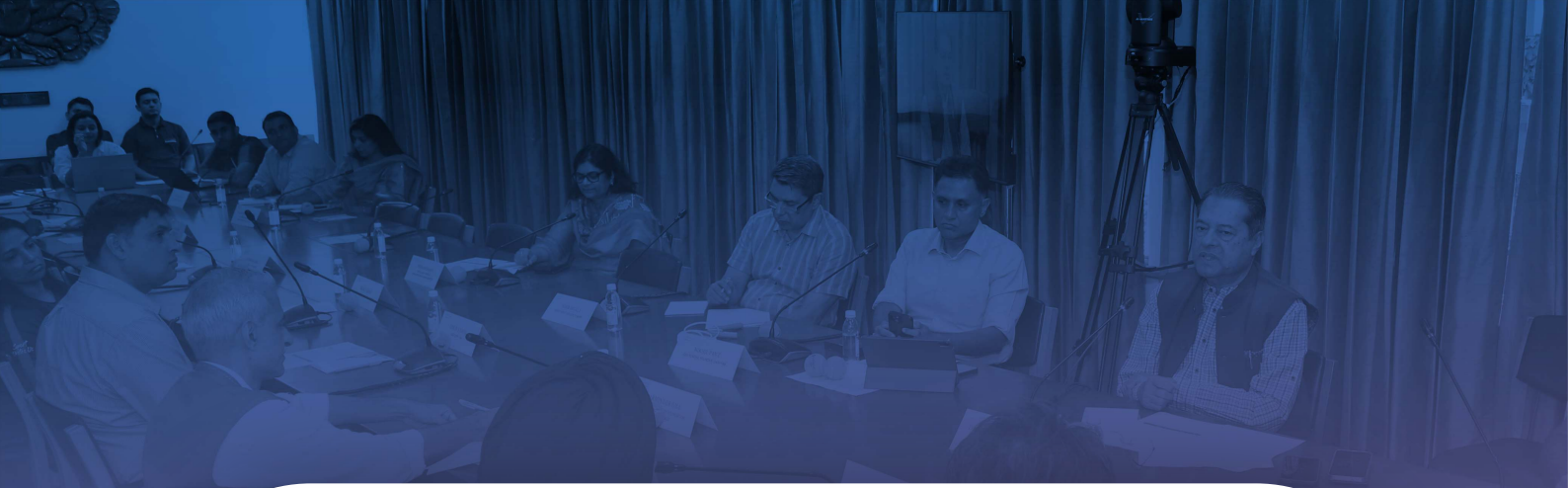




#SportForChange ROUND TABLE

Game-Changing CSR: The Power of Sports in Shaping a *Viksit Bharat*

Delhi Edition

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Report



Reimagining CSR in Sports for a *Viksit Bharat*

Sports in India have long been viewed as extracurricular – an activity beyond the classroom, beyond policy, beyond development. Yet, in the vision of a *Viksit Bharat*, there lies a larger opportunity: to position sports as both a vertical and horizontal force within Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – a tool that strengthens education, health, inclusion and community well-being.

This idea took centre stage at the 1st edition of the #SportForChange Round Table, “Game-Changing CSR: The Power of Sports in Shaping a *Viksit Bharat*”, jointly hosted by Sportz Village Foundation and Lakshyaa. The event convened leaders from government, corporate foundations and the sporting ecosystem to deliberate on how CSR policy and corporate engagement can unlock the transformative potential of sports in nation-building.



Setting the Context: The Opportunity in Front of Us

Despite India's annual CSR expenditure crossing ₹35,000 crores, sports receive only about 1.5–2% of the total spend. The round table focused on exploring how this share could be scaled significantly – both as a standalone vertical and as a horizontal enabler across other CSR domains like education, health and youth empowerment.



Participants agreed that the time is ripe to place sports at the centre of CSR strategy – with a framework that measures social impact, encourages policy evolution and mobilizes collective investment from diverse sectors.

Expanding the Definition of Sports in CSR Policy

A key deliberation centred on the understanding and presentation of Clause (vii) of the Schedule VII under the Companies Act, which cites 'Training to promote rural sports, nationally recognized sports, Paralympic sports and Olympic sports' as a permissible CSR activity. However, the application of this clause is limited in nature and largely yields action in "rural sports."



Leaders emphasized the urgent need to broaden this to include “sports for all, physical activity and physical literacy,” thereby encompassing programs that promote participation, wellness and development, not just elite performance.

This shift, participants noted, would allow corporates to meaningfully support community sports, school fitness and grassroots engagement – extending the benefits of sport to every child, irrespective of geography or gender.

Insights and Perspectives from the Round Table

1. Policymakers and Government Representatives

Dr. Bhaskar Chatterjee, architect of India's CSR framework, provided historical context and emphasized the moral imperative of CSR funds – “to serve those in need, not those already served.” He proposed a **“menu of choices”** for corporates to invest in – from sports infrastructure, training and coaching, to sports psychology, medicine, research and advocacy. This, he said, would allow each organization to find its own purpose-driven entry point into sports development.

Col.N.S. Johal, representing the Sports Authority of India (TOPS), highlighted how sports at the grassroots go far beyond medals – they teach equality, inclusion and discipline. He called for CSR to view sports as a vehicle for social transformation and national character-building.



2. Corporate Funders

Corporate leaders from HCL Foundation, Casio, Cadence, LatentView Analytics and Decathlon shared their successful CSR models.

- HCL Foundation runs an expansive Sports for Change program through 13 partners, empowering children in public schools and urban slums.
- Casio India, though not a sports brand, allocates 50% of its CSR budget to sports, demonstrating how non-traditional sectors can lead by example.

Corporates unanimously stressed the need for transparency, measurable impact, and long-term sustainability, calling for standardized reporting and frameworks such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) to quantify outcomes beyond medals.



3. Implementing Agencies and Foundations

Representatives from Sportz Village Foundation, UNESCO, Pro Sport Development and other grassroots organizations shared field realities and impact stories.

They highlighted the role of sports in promoting gender equality, health awareness and community bonding, and the importance of building psychologically safe environments for young athletes, especially girls.

Speakers also emphasized that strong impact requires ecosystem collaboration – among implementing agencies, local administrators and sports associations – to ensure that CSR funding translates into tangible lasting infrastructure and opportunity.



4. Experts and Advocates

Sports psychologists and educators drew attention to systemic challenges – including the high dropout rate by ages 13–14, lack of early-age competitions, and the absence of sports infrastructure standards in school design.

Experts also urged the creation of a National Fitness Index for Children and more India-specific research on the social and health impact of sports, to build evidence that can drive stronger investment narratives.



Emerging Frameworks and Pathways

The “Hybrid” or “Mix and Match” Model:

Participants proposed a blended approach where corporates could fund infrastructure (vertical investment) while also integrating sports into education, health and inclusion programs (horizontal impact).

This model promotes community ownership, ensuring that facilities remain active and maintained beyond CSR cycles – through participative mechanisms like “pay-to-play” or local management.

Measuring What Matters:

Participants agreed on the need for robust frameworks to measure social impact – from fitness levels and attendance rates to life skills, confidence and community participation. Developing such quantifiable outcomes would help corporates evaluate ROI and justify sustained investments.

Beyond Medals: Building a Sporting Culture

A strong consensus emerged around reframing the purpose of sports – from medal tally to mass participation. Grassroots sports, participants agreed, must prioritize every child's right to play, not just nurture champions.

Engaging parents and communities was identified as a critical factor – from mothers participating in community sports to schools embedding physical education as a life skill. Sports, they concluded, must move from the periphery to the mainstream of India's developmental agenda.



The Road Ahead: From Dialogue to Action

The Round Table concluded with a commitment to compile these insights into a Policy Recommendation Document, to be presented to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and leading corporate forums.

This document will advocate for:

- Broadening CSR policy language on sports under Schedule VII.
- Defining measurable frameworks for social and developmental impact.
- Encouraging hybrid, sustainable models of funding.
- Fostering corporate – community – government partnerships for scalability.



Closing Note: A Shared Vision for a Sporting Nation

The #SportForChange Round Table marked the beginning of a collective journey to elevate sports as a pillar of India's CSR and national development framework.

As India marches toward *Viksit Bharat*, sports can serve as both a mirror and a mechanism of progress – shaping healthier citizens, inclusive communities and a stronger, more resilient nation.





**“When we invest in sports,
we don't just create athletes; we build
character, confidence and community.
That is the true spirit of CSR.”**

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