

National Sports Policy and Role of CSR in Sports Funding

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INTRODUCTION

Sports development in India has gained increasing attention due to its potential to foster national pride, youth empowerment, and health consciousness. The National Sports Policy, introduced in various forms since 1984 and revised in 2001 and beyond, aims to promote a sporting culture and enhance performance in national and international arenas. However, the effective implementation of this policy often faces financial limitations. In recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a crucial supplementary funding channel to support the sports ecosystem. The National Sports Policy, 1984, marked a significant step in India's journey towards structured sports development. Laid in both houses of parliament in August 1984, the policy aimed to raise the standard of sports in the country.

OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY

- 1] Infrastructure development: Emphasized the development of sports infrastructure.
- 2] Integrating Sports with Education: Advocated for the integrated of physical education and sports into the school curriculum, a concept later formalized in the National Education Policy, 1986.
- 3] Promoting Mass Participation: Stressed the importance of basic sports infrastructure to ensure community participation in sports.
- 4] Establishment of Sports Authority of India (SAI): Led to the creation of the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in the same year 1984, to implement policy and athlete development programs. SAI was formed to promote and manage sports and athletes effectively.
- 5] Regular review: Included provisions for reviewing the policy's progress every five years to determine future action.
- 6] The National Sports Policy, 1984, and subsequent policies aimed at building upon its foundation, underscore India's evolving approach to sports,

aiming to foster a strong sporting culture and achieve excellence on the global stage.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encompasses various initiatives, including charitable contributions, volunteer work, ethical practices, environmental stewardship, and social programs. It requires businesses to look beyond mere profits generation and to engage in such as minimizing environmental damage, backing charitable initiatives, or adopting fair labor practices. While the Indian Government officially acknowledges the role of CSR in the sports arena, corporate contributions to this sector have remained quite limited over the years.

HISTORY OF CSR IN INDIA

1] Ancient and Pre-Colonial Period (Before 1800s): CSR in India has roots in ancient traditions. Philanthropy was ingrained in Indian culture through *dharma* (duty) and *daan* (charity), kings, landlords and wealthy merchants would build temples, wells *dharamshalas* (rest houses) and support education and public welfare. Giving was seen as moral and religious responsibility.

2] Colonial Period (1800s-1947)
During British rule, industrialists like Tata, Birla and Godrej started focusing on social welfare. Jamshedji Tata is often called the "Father of Indian Industry" and emphasized education, healthcare, and rural development. Philanthropy was motivated by Gandhian principles of trusteeship the belief that wealth must be used for the benefit of society.

3] Post-Independence Era (1947-1990):
Companies supported the government's development agenda through voluntary contributions.

CSR was not regulated – it was voluntary and mostly unstructured.

4] Liberalization Period (1991-2013):

With economic liberalization in 1991, India saw the rise of Private enterprises.

There was a shift from traditional charity to strategic CSR, with companies liking CSR to brand image and sustainability.

Many large Indian firms started establishing CSR foundations and institutional mechanisms (e.g. Infosys Foundation, Reliance Foundation)

5] Legal Mandate Era (2013-Present)

A landmark development occurred with the Companies Act, 2013, making India the first country to legally mandate CSR.

Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 requires companies with:

A] Net worth > 500 crore, or

B] Turnover > 1000 crore, or

C] Net profit > 5 crore to spend at least 2% of their average net profit of the last 3 years on CSR activities.

D] CSR activities must be in accordance with Schedule VII, which includes education, poverty alleviation, gender equality, health, environment, sports etc.

E] The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) monitors compliance through annual reports.

RECENT TRENDS (2020s Onwards)

1] CSR is now seen as a tool for Nation- Building.

2] There is increased investment in areas like sports (especially, Olympic training), skilling education, climate action, and women empowerment.

3] Government programs like Khelo India and Fit India Movement are now often supported through CSR.

4] During COVID-19, CSR played a critical role in funding relief efforts and healthcare infrastructure.

PROCESS OF CSR FUNDING IN SPORTS

* CSR Budget Allocation: - Eligible companies calculate 2% of average net profit over the last 3 financial years.

* CSR Policy Creation: - The company's board frames a CSR Policy with areas of focus including sports, if selected.

* Implementation Approach: - CSR funds can be spent directly, or through: - Company's own foundation (e.g. Reliance Foundation) Registered NGO or Trust- Partnership with Government schemes like Khelo India.

* Project Selection: - Sports-related projects like: - Setting up academics or training centers- sponsoring athletes or tournaments- proving sports infrastructure supporting rural or women's sports.

* Monitoring & Reporting: - Companies must disclose CSR spending and project outcomes in their annual CSR report to Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA).

ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY

CSR sports funding supports key goals of the National Sports Policy: -

- Talent identification and training
- Infrastructure development
- Rural and women's sports
- Olympic preparation
- Inclusivity (Paralympic support)

TYPES OF SPORTS FUNDED: -

- Olympics & Paralympic Sports
- Athletics and Track Events
- Wrestling, Boxing, Archery
- Football, Hockey
- Rural & School-Level Sports

TOP COMPANIES FUNDING SPORTS THROUGH CSR IN INDIA

SR. NO.	COMPANIES	CSR SPORTS INITIATIVE	FOCUS AREA IMPACT
1	Reliance Industries	Reliance Foundation Youth Sports	Grassroots schools/ college sports, football leagues, athletics talent hunt and Indian Premier League (IPL)
2	Tata Group (Tata Steel, Tata Trust)	Tata Archery Academy, Tata Athletics Academy	Archery, athletics training, scholarships, Olympic preparation
3	ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation)	Sports Scholarships & Sponsorships	Supports, athletes in athletics, wrestling, shooting, etc.

4	Hero Motor Corporation	Sponsorship of Hockey India	Supports Indian hockey through events and player training.
5	Adani Group	Adani Sports line	Runs Grava Hai initiatives to support Olympic and Paralympic athletes
6	Infosys	Infosys Foundation Scholarship and Support	Includes support to sports events and para-athletes
7	Mahindra Group	Mahindra United World College & Sports grants	Promoting sports among youth, including football and racing.

CONCLUSION

CSR funding plays a complementary role to government expenditure in building India's sports ecosystem. With legal backing and structured implementation, CSR in sports not only fulfills corporate accountability but also contributes to national development goals. These activities, outlined in Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013.