

# A Healthy Approach towards Sustainable Development through Sports and Sports Participation: A Narrative Review Study

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**Abstract-** Protecting the sustainability of our mother earth is one of the most challenging and burning issues in the present world. The way the world is losing its strength and natural existence, if the days continue to pass in the same routine, then it is not so far that, one day, we will not be able to leave anything for our future generation. The future generation will feel the crisis for survival on this planet. The year of 2015 United Nations took the initiative in their general assembly meeting to protect the earth from this global crisis and took the initiative to establish appropriate policies with the help of other associate nations. The policy is framed as sustainable development goals. In this paper, the researcher tries to find out the current momentum of sports policies and the role of sports and sports participation to establish and achieve the sustainable development goal for better lives. For this purpose, the researcher finds out several literature reviews and went through the studies that directly and indirectly meet the needs and are related to the SDGs. At the same time, several reports and policy agendas of different national and international organizations are also considered to analyze the current scenario and upcoming road map toward SDGs. Several reviews are found which are directly linking sports with Human Rights, health and well-being, education, environment, and the effect of sports on the economy of the country. After investigating thorough literature, the published reports, researchers have come to the conclusion that sports play a very crucial role in encouraging people to achieve the sustainable development goals.

## What is Sustainable Development Goals?

The sustainable development goal is one of the biggest policies ever for the globe that has been initiated by the United Nations towards an integrated approach that takes environmental issues along with social and economic development into its consideration. In the year of 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission which is also known as the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This organization basically works to help and direct the nations of the world towards the goal of sustainable development on above mentions burning issues.

Today, there are almost 179 developing countries in the world looking forward to ways of meeting their future development needs. Sustainable development for the future or for the next generation has become a global priority as societies recognize the need to balance economic growth with social progress along with environmental preservation. In this challenging scenario with the increasing threat of climate change and other devastating issues, a concrete effort must be made to ensure positive development today by keeping in mind that it should not negatively affect our future generations. If we look upon the definition of sustainable development then sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

If we look behind to know about the origin of this kind of initiative or the approach to save our world then we found that In the middle of the 20th century, our planet was first time viewed from space. From space, it was visible that a small and delicate ball was dominated not by human activity and structure but by a pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, hills, and soils. It's also found that the inability of the civilization is continuing to fit their activities with that pattern of the ball. With time, a continuous harmful changing process of the planet is running forward and people are playing the pioneer role for these devastating changes. If we look at the history of sustainable development issues then it is traced back to the 1970s, a time when fears about the environment began to gain attention on a global measure. It all started with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972. During this conference, world leaders and environmentalists came together to discuss the irresistible issues related to pollution, resource depletion, and the overall impact of human activities on the planet. At this conference, the concept of sustainable development began to take shape. In the year of 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development published a seminal report called "Our Common Future," which sought to address the urgent need for development that meets the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the first Human Environment Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972, The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) also known as the 'Earth Summit', was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3-14 June 1992. Where from 179 countries so many political leaders, diplomats, scientists, representatives of the media, and NGOs actively participated, and the agenda was focused on the impact of human socio-economic activities on the environment. The conference concluded with the words that the thought of sustainable development was an attainable goal for all the people of the world, irrespective of whether they were at the local, national, regional, or international level. It also recognized that integrating

and balancing economic, social, and environmental concerns in meeting our needs is vital for sustaining human life on the planet and that such a collective approach is possible.

After 22 years of Earth Summit, the historic UN General Assembly Summit was held in Paris in September 2015, in this summit the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the UN's 193 member states. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets were formulated are part of this agenda. 17 goals that are taken into consideration of priority are Eliminate Poverty, Erase Hunger, Establish Good Health and Well-Being, Provide Quality Education, Enforce Gender Equality, Improve Clean Water and Sanitation, Grow Affordable and Clean Energy, Create Decent Work and Economic Growth, Increase Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, Reduce Inequality, Mobilize Sustainable Cities and Communities, Influence Responsible Consumption and Production, Organize Climate Action, Develop Life Below Water, Advance Life On Land, Guarantee Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution and Build Partnerships for the Goals.

### Why Sports is important? Relation between sports and SDG-

Games and sports play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development by addressing various social, economic, and environmental aspects. If we talk about the major strategies to attain the SDG through games and sports then we must look at the strategies made by the United Nations in the year 2022. The country realizes the value and the strength of sports especially football to promote awareness about Sustainable Development Goals.

On December 2021, The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), unveiled and starts its own sustainability strategy called "Strength through Unity" focusing on human rights and environmental issues which directly related with adopted sustainable development goals.

On 6 July 2022, the first day of the UEFA Women's EURO championship 2022, United Nations launched a strategy called "Football for the Goals." A new initiative has been taken to provide a platform for the global football community to take part in football and as a campaigner, they will promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The power of football was not only used to raise awareness and promotion of the SDGs but also to achieve behavioral change and sustainable practices in the football industry. Stakeholders associated with Football are invited to join the FFTG program and become active members of change by promising to adopt the principles of sustainable development and human rights parallel with the development of sustainable business practices and act as SDG active agents.

In this program, the stakeholders from the football arena are ranged from local, national, or international associations, players from the clubs, different associations, organized fan groups, as well as media and commercial partners. Members of "Football for the Goals" pledge to sustain the following values and principles in all aspects of their business dealings in sports in relation to sustainable development. They gave special emphasis on

1. Sustainability policies and practices.
2. Implementing and promoting the SDGs.
3. A human rights-based approach includes addressing issues of discrimination and avoiding discriminatory practices.
4. Equality and equity, including gender.
5. Climate action

Members are advised to increase awareness of the SDGs through amplification and support by utilizing their visibility and outreach capabilities through tournaments, players, corporate sectors, media, and fan groups. The responsibility imposed on the stakeholders to work on SDG commitments, increase public understanding about SDGs, and show how any business model in the sports sector can be incorporated with sustainable practices in connection with economic growth.

UEFA aims to rally the European football ecosystem to gather around a common agenda and create effective collaborations. At the heart of European football, UEFA operates there working wheel with its members (55 member associations) while leagues and clubs play an active role in organizing games and competitions. By working together with its stakeholders, UEFA utilized and shared love of football as a platform for cooperation, bringing people together around the positive ideals of the game. This is underpinned by the popularity of football, which enables UEFA to amplify the sustainable message to a global audience. After a study, statistical data reveal the growth of football and its popularity in the globe which act as a big platform to promote the aim and principles of the sustainable development goals. The planning of UEFA becomes enormously successful. Data interpreted the scenarios of the successes as follows:

• Football Players Across Member Associations	-	18.5 millions
• Coaches Across Member Associations	-	1.2 millions
• Euro 2020 Cumulative Global Audience	-	5.2 billions
• Followers On UEFA Social Media Channels	-	300 millions
• Reach Of UEFA Online Campaign Sign For An Equal Game	-	877 millions
• Audience Of UEFA Documentary Outraged	-	15 millions
• Football Social Responsibility Projects Financed By UEFA Since 2016	-	321
• Number Of European Football Fans Think UEFA Has A Role To Play In The Area Of Sustainability	-	70%

"To highlight the applicability of the commitments framed in FFTG, the Football Association of Norway launched a pilot project demonstrating how their national teams, grassroots football, leagues, and its media partner will work together to support the

Sustainable Development Goals. They show how it will work closely with the UN to share the results with those who are interested in joining FFTG.”

### **Three pillars of sustainability, the relation between three pillars of Sustainability and Sports.**

Nelson Mandela, The former president of South Africa, who is also called the father of modern South Africa, says that “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite the people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sports can create hope where once there was only despair.”

Considering the views and the words of Sir Mandela, we can add that Sport is a platform where cultures and values exchange and explore. Sport is one of the few collective disciplines that bring together individuals from all social and ethnic backgrounds. Sports are particularly effective as a tool for peace-building, especially as it is often considered a neutral arena or space without religious or specific cultural connection.

Policies regarding respect towards human rights, sports are considered as all about the people, a common desire that brings together individuals of different ages, backgrounds, nationalities, and abilities. The separations and discrimination that affect our societies inevitably play out on and around people, but at the same time; the sport can be a powerful vehicle for overcoming them. Everyone involved in sports should be treated with dignity, respect, and equal rights and opportunities with freedom and justice. This means that Sports is a community that welcomes everyone, with equal access in a safe and secure environment. Each individual should be able to be involved in Sports as their self needs. And the value of sports towards healthy lifestyles, both physically and mentally, should be emphasized which is one of the most important goals from the listed goals of Sustainable Development.

There basically we found three pillars of SDGs which are Social, Economy, and Environment. We can construct these three pillars separately through different types of resources. In the social aspect, we emphasized on Standards of living, Education, Employment, and Equal Opportunities. Whereas economic issues are connected with growth, profit, cost savings research & development, and financial capital, etc. Another pillar is environment which is raised by the support of natural resources, pollution prevention, and biodiversity.

In connection with all these pillars and their in-build material, sports, and games play a strong and measurable role to shape the structure of sustainable development. Here are some strategic roles that games and sports play in sustainable development in respect of each individual goal:

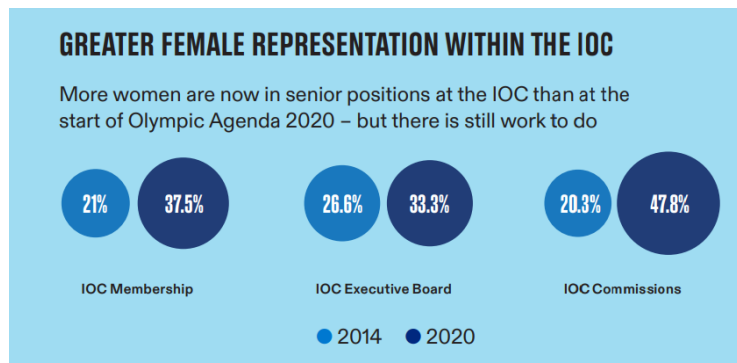
### **Role of Games and Sports for Sustainable Development:**

**Health and well-being:-** Regular participation in physical activity enhances health and well-being for all people, regardless of their ages. Research evidence shows that, worldwide the fourth most important risk factor for mortality is inactivity. The Sustainable Development Agenda places a high priority on the value of healthy lives. Activities in sports and physical education can serve as highly compelling environments for inviting people to engage in more physical activity, At the same time it helps to lower premature mortality from non-communicable diseases and related healthcare expenses. The prevention and treatment of substance misuse, as well as better psychological and social health, are all associated with participation in physical education, physical activity, and sport. Regular engagement promotes children's and teenagers' healthy development, including their cognitive and psychological growth.

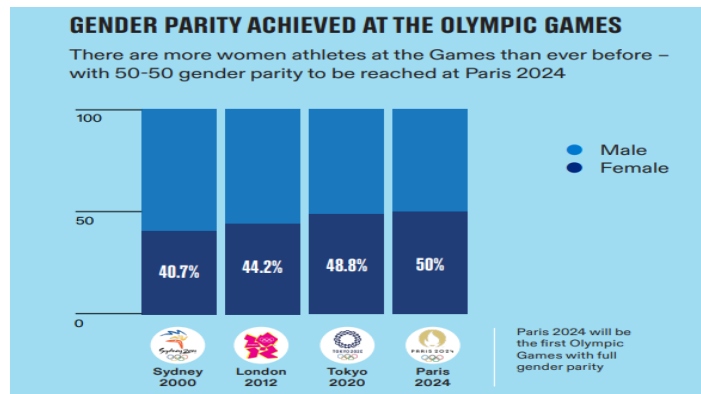
Organized and well-planned physical activity programs and sports events can both offer a platform for community health through messaging the empowerment and engaging a variety of people in a common arena to lead to better health and well-being. Regular sports help combat sedentary lifestyles and obesity, as well as other health issues. Games and sports encourage an active lifestyle and reduce the burden on health systems.

Physical inactivity is responsible for up to 8% of deaths and non-communicable diseases. (WHO Report), data also reveal that people who are insufficiently physically active have a 20% to 30% increased risk of all-cause mortality compared to those who engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity most days of the week.

**Social Inclusion and equality:-** It stated in the report of IOC-Marketing-report-Tokyo-2020 that” During more than two weeks of thrilling competition full of drama, excitement, passion, and inspiration, the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 more than lived up to their motto, as athletes from every corner of the globe – and billions of fans watching around the world – were United by Emotion.” Total number of events-339, total sports-33, and the total number of athletes- 11259 where male participants 52 percent and female participants was 48, which justifies the equality as far as gender is concerned. From all over the globe 205 National Olympic Committees including the IOC Refugee Olympic Team participated with all their diverse culture and traditions. 2020 Summer Olympic Games, this mega event was finally able to create a single stage where athletes from all over the world get together. Every day it saws a bond between people, harmony in diversity, a symbol of peace, and the power of sport itself, which are included in the objectives of SDG. Games and sports bring people together from different backgrounds and foster social inclusion. Players learn to work together as a team, respect each other’s differences, and build empathy and understanding. Games and sports foster social cohesion and contribute to the building of inclusive communities. Sports can help women and girls demonstrate their talents and achievements to society by emphasizing their skills and abilities. As a result Self-worth and confidence consequently get opportunities to increase. The sport also provides possibilities for social connection and companionship, which can help male teammates become more aware of gender norms and benefit both individuals and groups in terms of social and psychological well-being.



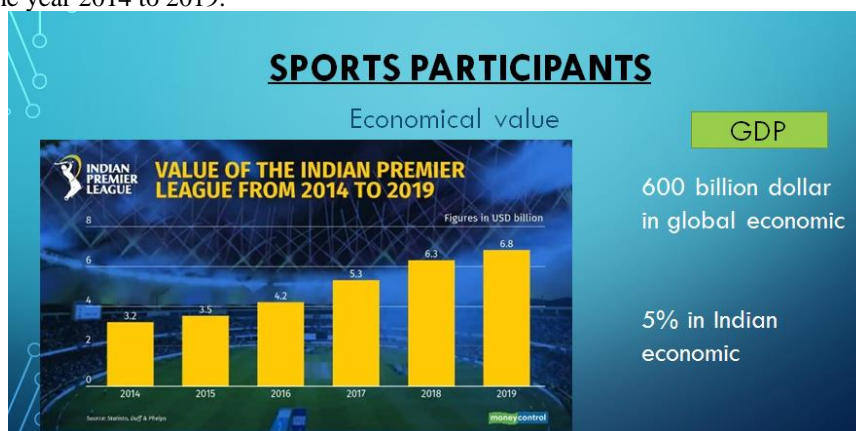
Source - Olympic agenda 2020 highlights (illustration - 1)



Source - Olympic agenda 2020 highlights (illustration - 2)

**Education & Skills Development:-** Games & Sports provide opportunities for education & skills development. Games & Sports teach important life skills like discipline, teamwork & perseverance, leadership & fair play. These life skills are transferable to other areas of life such as education, employment & community engagement. The International Olympic Committee takes the initiative to introduce the Olympic Values Education Programme. One of the goals of the Olympic Movement is to build a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sports practiced without discrimination of any kind and Olympic spirit. The Olympic Education program is run by IOC with the assistance of the Olympic Studies Centre, the Olympic World Library, the teaching resources of The Olympic Museum, and the YOG Education Programme at Youth Sporting Events, etc.

**Economic Growth:-** The 21st century has seen continued growth and evolution in the sports industry, with the rise of digital technology and social media providing new ways for sports organizations to engage with fans and generate revenue. The development of new technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, is also opening up new opportunities for sports organizations to enhance the fan experience and create new revenue streams. The sports industry generates employment and contributes to economic growth. There are many job opportunities are scattered in the sports industry from professional athletes & coaches to event organizers & broadcasters to sports equipment manufacturers. Hosting major sporting events can also stimulate local economies through tourism and infrastructure development. The report shows that the biggest or mega cricket tournament in the world called the Indian premier league rapidly increasing his net worth year by year. Data shows that it reaches 3.2 billion to 6.8 billion dollar from the year 2014 to 2019.



GDP contribution and Economic growth of Indian premier league

Source- online (illustration - 3)

**Environmental Awareness and Conservation:**

Games and sports can also be used to promote environmental awareness and awareness of sustainable practices. For example, eco-friendly sport events can be used to reduce waste, promote renewable energy sources, and raise awareness of climate change.

The sustainability concept of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games conferred with the motto called “be better, together.” The eco-friendly management system was adopted for the planet and for the people throughout the entire program of the Olympic. Special Emphasis was put on the environment aspects. Eco-friendly management system was adopted for the transformation of the world. Committee planned to work on climate change, resource management, natural environment and bio diversity, Human Rights labor and fair business practices, involvement, corporation and communication to establish the sustainable development through sports. Zero wasting, zero carbon, use and recycle, city with nature this all initiative was taken. The IOC is now a carbon-neutral organization, and has committed to becoming a climate-positive organization by 2024.

**Peace building and Conflict Resolution:** - Sports and culture can also help to bridge cultural and social divides and foster peace and understanding. Games and culture can be used to promote dialogue and collaboration, as well as friendly competition, to break down barriers and promote peace between communities and nations. Athletes and sports organizations can also use games and culture to promote peace and conflict resolution. For example, international tournaments and sports mediation initiatives can be used to facilitate dialogue and foster peaceful relations between nations.

**Social Changes:** - As athletes and sports organizations, they have a great deal of influence over society and can use their platforms to promote social and environmental causes. This can inspire change and influence public opinion. By promoting sustainable practices and promoting social justice issues, sports and culture can help drive positive social change. Sport frequently creates safe spaces at the neighborhood and community levels, where people can come together to pursue shared objectives and interests, acquire the principles of respect, tolerance, and fair play, and enhance their social skills. Sport, as a unifying factor and shared interest, has the power to unite people from diverse cultural and political backgrounds. When there is unrest or conflict.

### CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, we can say that despite of many challenges, the massive positive power and passion of sport will continue to bring people together, promoting a more inclusive and peaceful world through achieving its universal values and principles. Historical evidence supports that, sport played an important role in all societies and acted as a strong communication platform that can be used to acknowledge the diversity of culture and promote peace throughout the globe. Sports is, and will be continue as one of the most cost-effective and versatile tools to promote and achieve the sustainable development goal.

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