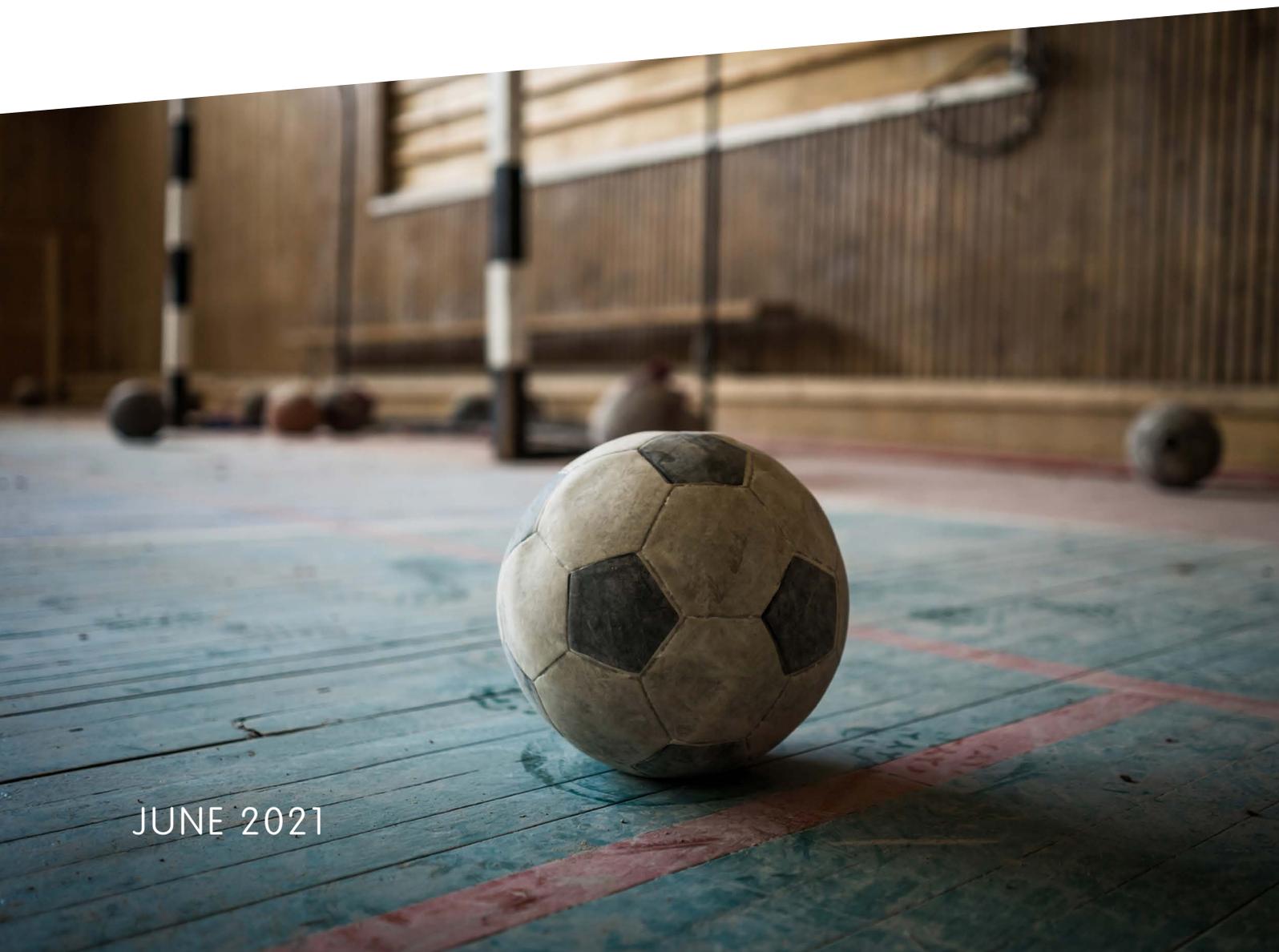




*Safeguarding Sport*

# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GRASSROOTS SPORTS

EXPERIENCES FROM A CONSTANTLY CHANGING AND  
CHALLENGING SCENARIO



JUNE 2021

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# ABSTRACT

Grassroots sports, the local implementation of a variety of sporting types, are the backbone and feedstock of all of the major sporting venues and organisations throughout the world. The ongoing pandemic is hitting grassroots sports hard, exacerbating inequalities with regard to access to sports activities, both on the ground and online. This multicentric collective case study presents an in-depth exploration of the social impact of COVID-19, learning from the experience of four grassroots sports organisations in Australia, India, South Africa, and Spain. The case study recounts experiences from a constantly changing and challenging scenario and provides examples of what these grassroots sports organisations have done to navigate, recover and even thrive out of their national emergencies amidst a global pandemic. The study exposed a real diversity of actions with differential outcomes for people from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Practical implications for grassroots programmes during times of unprecedented challenge and notable turning points are highlighted. Compliance with policies and strict protocols has, perhaps, forever, changed how children, young people, and adults engage in grassroots sports.

# AUTHOR

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# KEY WORDS

COVID-19  
grassroots sports  
sport  
pandemic

*The opinions expressed in this document are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS).*

## 01

## FOREWORD

From the beginning of human civilisation, communities fought disease and promoted health at the population level. In recent years, the topic of public health has received intense attention from the international community, yet COVID-19 still managed to sweep us off our feet with the impact of a hard football tackle. The COVID-19 outbreak has taken the world by surprise and has upended all areas of life. Sport is no exception.

Grassroots sport, the bedrock of communities, provides a diverse mix of opportunities for people of all backgrounds and abilities. As a conveyor belt for both sport for life and professional sport, grassroots sport creates immense value. It plays a vital role in social cohesion, develops employability skills and is increasingly being recognised as a tool to encourage a more active and healthier lifestyle.

However, grassroots sport has been in limbo throughout 2020 due to the devastating impact of the pandemic, which put sports organisations and community clubs across the globe in a dynamically changing situation with unpredictable spill overs. All levels of the pyramid of sport, the whole sports eco-system, have been affected. The most vulnerable minor leagues and grassroots sport supported by the work of volunteers and relying on sponsorship from the many small and medium-size businesses have had to admit that the pandemic was having a significant impact; that this is no ordinary time.

Grassroots sports organisations faced a ubiquitous paradox: as they attempted to bring people together to engage with their local communities, they had to also ensure adequate separation to prevent transmission of COVID-19. The pandemic became a tax to the survival of grassroots sport at a time when a healthy lifestyle and the right to practice physical activity was more important than ever.

Despite the negative impacts that the pandemic has had on grassroots sport, the crisis presents opportunities in disguise. It has served to highlight the key role played by sports in society and this can now be better recognised and valued. The economic and social gap between elite and grassroots sport ought to be addressed. As such, it is clear that grassroots sport needs more significant support.

In recent decades, much work has indeed been undertaken, led by the World Health Organization, to better prepare and protect health systems during mass gatherings, including major sporting events. A set of key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19 related threats and a COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation checklist was rapidly developed in 2020 to offer guidance to major sporting event organisers. Now an important effort is underway to expand the scope of these activities to also protect the basis of the pyramid of sport.

In this report, we recount how four diverse grassroots organisations located in the global south and the global north have managed their response to the pandemic. Good practices and lessons learned enable the exchange of experience and can be retained as restrictions imposed on the practice of grassroots sport and physical activity are eased. Good practices that emerged centre around the swift adaptation of activities and programmatic innovation. In this context, the report is of value to grassroots sports organisations, umbrella organisations, national associations, and networks, bringing together grassroots bodies but also national sports federations who have oversight on grassroots sports.

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## 02

## INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 will be etched in public memory as the year the world found itself amid an unprecedented public health crisis. On 31 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus first reported in Wuhan in China in December 2019, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. With its precipitous expansion to other countries, the WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterised as a pandemic on 11 March 2020<sup>1</sup>.

It is not hyperbole to claim that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on people's lives around the world in a variety of domains, including the whole sports ecosystem. To safeguard the health of athletes, spectators and others involved, most elite and major sporting events at international, regional, and national levels were cancelled or postponed. This led to the disruption of the work of governing bodies, organisers, teams and athletes, and the non-stop live sports content we have come to expect. Owners, broadcasters, and sponsors were left with little choice but to swiftly navigate the impacts and implications of event cancellations and modifications.

While many efforts were put in place to assess and mitigate risks associated with the resumption of elite sports, particularly under the leadership of WHO<sup>2</sup>, less attention has been given comparatively to the protection of grassroots sports during the pandemic. It would be futile not to acknowledge that all levels of the pyramid of sport were affected by COVID-19, including the most vulnerable minor leagues and grassroots sports, often supported by the work of volunteers, donations and sponsorship from the many small and medium-size business jeopardised by the economic consequences of the pandemic. For the purposes of this study, grassroots sports are considered as all those sporting activities organised and non-organised practised regularly at non-professional level for health, educational or social purposes (Baumann, 2016).

Grassroots sports organisations are the bedrock of affordable sports activities for people of all ages. In realising the importance of sport at the grassroots level, governments are increasingly improving access to sport and quality of life for their citizens. Sports activities are crucial for mental and physical health, and the suspension of

sport at the grassroots level impacts many social benefits of sport. Grassroots sports play a vital role in cementing social cohesion, building bridges between communities, contributing to the empowerment of women and young people, and supporting health, education, and social inclusion objectives, as recognised by the Declaration of the 2030 Agenda.

Grassroots sports can also help individuals and societies soften the adverse effects of a crisis through mechanisms that can contribute to people's health, education, and general wellbeing. Therefore, besides its disastrous short and mid-term health impact (including inactivity, mental health risks linked to loneliness and anxiety), the pandemic will also have extraordinary long-term consequences on people's daily lives, health, and generally on societies.

In this context, we explore how grassroots organisations assessed and mitigated the risks associated with the pandemic to protect the fabric of their associations which play a key role in allowing its members to take part in affordable physical activities and to enjoy sport regularly. Moreover, considering the non-profit nature of grassroots sports and minimal resources, we should consider the tools which can be provided to those managing grassroots sports, such as passionate volunteers, educators, and coaches, to mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 or any future pandemics.

In February 2020, WHO established the COVID-19 Mass Gatherings Cell within its Health Emergencies Programme (WHE)<sup>3</sup>. The Cell is responsible for coordinating and overseeing WHO's work on mass gatherings in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The main functions that the WHO COVID-19 Mass Gatherings Cell has carried out so far are as follows:

1. Advisory: assistance to WHO's senior management, UN Crisis Management Team (under Pillar 9), the COVID-19 Incident Management Support Team (IMST), and other UN agencies about decision-making processes related to the COVID-19 pandemic, by bringing the mass gatherings perspective;

<sup>1</sup> See [WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020](#)

<sup>2</sup> See: [Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of the current COVID-19 outbreak \(who.int\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> See: [WHO Health Emergencies Programme](#) and [Coronavirus \(who.int\)](#)

2. Scientific and normative: collection and review of existing information and data to guide the development, publication and dissemination of technical guidance, tools, messages, advocacy material and other information products targeted to different audiences, including the release of interviews to media outlets;
3. Coordination and networking: establishment and management of roundtables of academic institutions, sports/leisure/religious/other relevant associations and federations, and additional expertise involved in the organisation of mass gatherings; and
4. Technical support: provision of technical guidance to Member States, WHO Regional and Country Offices, and other relevant stakeholders in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating mass gatherings.

The ICSS has joined from the early stages, the WHO COVID-19 Mass Gatherings Expert Group and provided technical contributions in support of the development of WHO tools<sup>4</sup> aimed at protecting major sporting competitions and tournaments in the context of the pandemic (who.int).

The ICSS carried out this multicentric collective case study thanks to the support, and under the guidance of the WHO COVID-19 Mass Gatherings Cell and took a deep dive into the impact of COVID-19 on four different grassroots sports organisations functioning at the national and local levels. Spain and South Africa represent some of the hardest-hit countries during the initial stages of the outbreak. At the time of the preparation of this report, India was buckling under a second wave of the pandemic which hit the country like a tsunami compared to a much less impactful first wave. Australia remains diving in and out of snap lockdowns whilst borders remain closed in a move that has seen the virus almost eliminated from the country.

The state of emergency declared in Spain in March 2020 entailed confining most of the population to their homes during the height of the first wave of infections. Parks remained closed and activity such as running, and biking were restricted to individuals doing it alone. Children under the age of fourteen were for the first time allowed one hour of supervised outdoor activity per day between 9am and 9pm, staying within one kilometre of their home.

In South Africa recreational parks and fitness centres closed during lockdown and the country later grappled with the challenge to get people back to practicing sports in the safest way, balancing the protection of their health

while curbing the societal transmission of the virus. Initially only non-contact professional sports could resume at the expense of grassroots sports, likened to throwing a single lifejacket to a sinking ship with hundreds of people on board.

In India lockdown restrictions introduced to curb the spread of COVID-19 resulted in a shutdown of community sport and physical activity and as social distancing measures increased, so too did concerns surrounding risks of social isolation. Gyms, sports clubs, parks, and beaches became out of reach with school-going children the worst affected. Due to the lockdown, there was no distinction between school time and play time for children even though the WHO recommends a minimum of 60 minutes of playtime for growing children daily<sup>5</sup> (WHO, 2019).

The impact of COVID-19 on grassroots sports in Australia has been dramatic with lockdown preventing millions of Australians from participating in the sports they love. The nation found their mental health under unprecedented pressure, with everyday life turned upside down in almost every way. Community sports came to a standstill with the closure of clubs, fitness centres, public swimming pools and state parks.

The aim of the case study is to collate lessons learned and develop a legacy for future events at the grassroots sports level. This will enable peer-to-peer learning of new capacities and best practices implemented at the national or local levels. It will furthermore benefit grassroots sports overall by contributing to their resilience. Grassroots sports provide access to a larger part of the population thereby enhancing the health of society. A better understanding of how grassroots sports is part of the overall health process is gained in this study. The case study considers, inter alia, the following aspects:

1. The general policy framework related to sports in the COVID-19 context in the selected country as defined by national authorities and major sporting bodies;
2. The specific position of grassroots sports (within and outside the school system) in the selected countries within the framework of the above-mentioned policy frameworks;
3. Relevant policies or positions adopted by major national or local sports associations and NGOs working with sport at grassroots levels; and
4. The specific prevention and information policies and measures adopted by the four cases at the national or local level, particularly regarding impacts and key takeaways.

<sup>4</sup> See [Considerations for sports federations/sports event organizers when planning mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19: interim guidance \(who.int\)](#) and [WHO mass gathering COVID-19 risk assessment tool – Generic events](#)

<sup>5</sup> See: [To grow up healthy, children need to sit less and play more \(who.int\)](#)

## 03

## METHODOLOGY

Case studies permit in-depth, multi-faceted analysis of a specific setting, a particular event, situation, organisation, or social unit, allowing complex experiences to be revealed. Multiple case or collective studies use information from different cases to formulate the case (Creswell, 2006). A multicentric collective case study was conducted examining four grassroots sports organisations to uncover differences.

Grassroots sports are community-driven sports activities performed at a local level for recreational purposes. Within this context, criteria were developed to inform the selection of the cases. Case selection plays a pivotal role in case study research. To pare down the list of potential case studies and to ensure that a representative sample is included, the following selection criteria were applied:

- Location and region, representing two countries in the Global South and two countries in the Global North across four different continents;
- Type of organisation including Sport for Development;
- Size of organisation in terms of outreach and membership numbers;
- Data availability, including COVID-19 frameworks and policies;
- Continuation of sports activity during times of pandemic restriction;
- Continuation of sports in the context of Public Health and Social Measures (PHSM);-
- Use of technology to innovate;
- Link to Physical Education (PE) programmes or schools; and
- Socioeconomic makeup.

The backbone of every research project is the collection of data - collecting, measuring, and analysing accurate insights for examination using standard validated techniques. Case study design supports the use of multiple data sources such as interviews, survey questionnaires, open-source information, and audio-visual material. For this research, primary data was collected through consultations with the WHO COVID-19 Mass Gathering Expert Group; an online questionnaire<sup>6</sup> and individual semi-structured online key informant interviews<sup>7</sup> were held

in April and May 2021. Secondary data collected included national and local COVID-19 policies as well as guidance, frameworks and policies developed and published by the sports organisations themselves. It furthermore includes audio-visual material published to the social media accounts of the four selected organisations. The scope of the study is limited to events in 2020.

An online questionnaire<sup>8</sup> with 17 questions collected data to understand what kind of grassroots sports organisation and what type of activities the cases represent to determine whether there were issues specific to different activities, organisation types or nations. It furthermore collected information pertaining to financial implications. Lastly, it collected any recommendations by the organisations on how grassroots sports can address and mitigate current and future challenges posed by COVID-19 to society and youth.

A key informant schedule and interview guide were developed and shared with the informants. The WHO mass gathering template<sup>9</sup> was used to inform the interview themes. The questionnaire, as well as interview themes included capturing views on measures introduced and policy responses to COVID-19. Informants were asked to reflect on the key takeaways and lessons learned during their COVID-19 contingency planning. The necessary consent was obtained from informants, and procedures explained before each of the interviews was recorded.

A qualitative content analysis approach was used to analyse data to understand public health awareness among targeted participants as well as mitigation strategies, including campaigns and providing of information. The case study seeks to stimulate broader interest in how COVID-19 has impacted sport at the grassroots level and how the grassroots level has organised itself to protect its mission, particularly also for the good of youth and children.

<sup>6</sup> See Addendum B

<sup>7</sup> Key informant interviews involve interviewing a select group of individuals who are likely to provide needed information, ideas, and insights on a particular subject. See Addendum C

<sup>8</sup> Data collected through MS Forms.

<sup>9</sup> See Addendum A Mass Gatherings COVID-19 Case study template - WHO

## 04

## THE CASES

The four cases that have been the geographical focus of this study include AusCycling in Australia, Pro Sport Development (PSD) in India, Grassroot Soccer South Africa (GRS SA), and Dragones de Lavapiés (Dragones) in Spain.

### AusCycling, Australia<sup>10</sup>

AusCycling, the national administrative body for cycling in Australia, represents approximately 60,000 members across Mountain Bike, BMX, and BMX Freestyle, Cyclo-Cross, Para-Cycling, eSports, Road, Track and Lifestyle (recreational and commuter) riding throughout Australia. The organisation is inclusive and encourages everyone to ride. Their tagline speaks for itself: 'Let's ride together'.

Australian cycling experienced a watershed year in 2020. After years of division between many cycling disciplines, there was a concerted effort to unify cycling, and in November Cycling Australia joined AusCycling and completed a strategic reimagining that led to the merger of 18 boards with 130 directors and 11 CEOs to one Board with 12 Directors and a single Chief Executive. This dramatic overhaul of structure, strategy and governance was three years in the making.<sup>11</sup> Cycling represents a vast community, and a significant demographic participates in the sport and takes a strong interest in it. About 3.43 million Australians<sup>12</sup> ride bikes for transport or recreation in a typical week.

### Pro Sport Development (PSD), India<sup>13</sup>

Established in 2013, Pro Sport Development (PSD) is an award-winning<sup>14</sup> social enterprise dedicated to leveraging physical activity and sport to aid in the holistic development of young people across 12 states in India. The majority of participants are between 11- 16 years old although PSD participants can range from 6 to 20 years old. The enterprise has reached 10,694 children to date, of which 51% are girls and 49% boys. PSD sports-based development programmes are designed to improve physical health and wellbeing, and social and cognitive development. The programme improves physical literacy and communication skills, boosts self-esteem,

and promotes gender equality. PSD uses a multi-activity, multi-sports approach, including fun games and activities based on various fundamental movement skills such as hopping, running, zigzagging, and throwing as well as different sporting disciplines including football<sup>15</sup>, cricket, volleyball, netball, kho-kho<sup>16</sup>, handball, badminton, basketball, rugby, and table tennis.

PSD sports-based interventions at the grassroots primarily involve young people from underprivileged and marginalised backgrounds, focusing on working with girls and delivering programmes in mixed-gender groups. They work directly with trainers, institutions, and schools to facilitate and advocate sport for development programmes. PSD aims to promote a sporting culture among the youth that is inclusive, sustainable, and engaging, especially for marginalised sections of society, who find it harder to gain access to sport. PSD's programmes contribute towards UN Sustainable Development Goals: 3 - Good Health and Well Being; 4 - Quality Education; and 5 - Gender Equality.

PSD also conducts training workshops for sports coaches, PE teachers and community trainers to provide them with the appropriate and relevant tools to constructively deliver sports programmes to children and youth. The workshops are designed to strengthen the facilitators' knowledge and improve their ability to provide sports-based sessions effectively. In addition to hosting these workshops, PSD assists institutions and their facilitators design age and ability appropriate sports and physical education (PE) curricula, ensuring that sports programmes delivered to children and youth are done so in a structured, goal-oriented, and progressive manner to maximise their learning potential.

A PSD Community Sports Programme (CSP) in Bhubaneswar, the capital city of the State of Odisha, which involves activities with children who attend under-resourced schools in various slum settlements - is the focus of this case study. Since September 2015, PSD has delivered the community programme to 2,445 children in Bhubaneswar.

<sup>10</sup> See: [AusCycling | Home Page](#)

<sup>11</sup> See: [AusCycling: Inside Australia's biggest sporting merger \(companydirectors.com.au\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> Figures by the National Cycling Participation Survey, a standardised survey that has been repeated every two years since 2011. See [Home | Austroroads](#)

<sup>13</sup> See: [Pro Sport Development](#)

<sup>14</sup> The International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Sport and Active Society presented an award to Pro Sport Development (PSD) for their outstanding work in the area of sports for all in 2018.

<sup>15</sup> India and Spain use the word football, South Africa refers to the same sport as soccer.

<sup>16</sup> Tag team game invented in India.

## Grassroot Soccer South Africa (GRS SA), South Africa<sup>17</sup>

Grassroot Soccer established in 2002, is an adolescent health organisation that leverages the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilise youth in developing countries to overcome their most significant health challenges, live healthier, more productive lives, and be agents for change in their communities. Activities are divided into two areas, namely global activities, and in-country activities. Since 2002, GRS has reached over 2 million young people in 50 countries with life-saving HIV<sup>18</sup> prevention and sexual and reproductive health information and services. Grassroot Soccer South Africa (GRS SA) was founded in 2006 and is uniquely positioned to address the adolescent health gap, combining the appeal of soccer with a rigorous, evidence-based approach. In addition to three core sites in Alexandra, Khayelitsha and Soweto, GRS SA works with 12 implementing partners across eight provinces in South Africa to deliver SKILLZ programmes.

GRS SA designed a curriculum and sport-based teaching model to build resiliency, targeting over 220,000 12–19-year-old boys and girls, to date, in the country. Adolescents in South Africa are reminded daily of the devastation caused by the HIV AIDS<sup>19</sup> epidemic, and many endure chronic hardship. In South Africa, girls' status is inferior to boys' across almost all domains; girls have less social and economic power, and face disproportionate risks rooted in systemic gender inequality. These rigid gender norms and behaviours influence girls' health outcomes around HIV and sexual and reproductive health-related issues, including early and unintended pregnancy, STIs, gender-based violence, and maternal conditions. GRS furthermore partners with Special Olympics in South Africa to deliver the SKILLZ for Life program to improve the health and well-being of adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

GRS programmes, while addressing acute health issues such as HIV, malaria, gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health, also focus on determinants of health such as education and employment to ensure adolescents stay on positive health trajectories well into adulthood. The multi-faceted nature of the organisation's approach puts them in a unique position to work with a wide variety of trusted local partners, and they have established relationships at multiple levels of South Africa's government. A formal Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Basic Education ensures delivery of their programmes at schools.<sup>20</sup>

All participants in GRS programmes are matched with role models (Caring Coaches), participate in physical activity, and learn essential life skills. Many participants who completed the programme later become GRS Caring Coaches, helping the next generation of adolescents. In turn, these Caring Coaches gain valuable work experience, learning opportunities, financial literacy, employability skills, and personal growth. For many Caring Coaches, the experience of being a role model to younger members of their community is transformative and life changing.

## Dragones de Lavapiés (Dragones), Madrid Spain<sup>21</sup>

Dragones de Lavapiés (Dragones) is a grassroots football club in Lavapiés, a multicultural neighbourhood in Madrid, Spain, featuring a sizeable immigrant population. The club's purpose is to empower children through play, build community, grow global citizens, and to experience solidarity. Dragones believe that sport can educate and empower children facing adversity, helping them develop essential life skills and lifelong learning. Sports can only do this if delivered safely and in a supportive environment. A group of parents launched this neighbourhood initiative to ensure that the children could have their own football club and a safe space to participate in sport.

Dragones prioritise co-ed sports through almost two hundred 5–16-year-olds training and playing in 12 teams. Participants are exposed to values such as solidarity, social inclusion, community, respect for difference and gender equality promoted through dialogue, sport, and competition. Practicing helps children forget about daily struggles and enable an easy opportunity to meet others. The multiple nationalities and origins of Dragones players and coaches reflect the melting pot of cultures living in harmony in Lavapiés. Playing football together is the best way to break ethnic, social, and economic barriers and create solidarity. A sense of belonging and social cohesion could prevent future conflicts.

Dragones play football with a global conscience. Sport has the potential to contribute to development outcomes beyond the playing field, recognised by the club who is committed to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Their key purpose is to work collaboratively to stimulate positive change in the lives of individuals and their community through the intentional use of football and physical activity.

<sup>17</sup> See: [South Africa - Grassroot Soccer - Grassroot Soccer](#)

<sup>18</sup> Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is an infection that attacks the body's immune system, specifically the white blood cells called CD4 cells. See: [HIV/AIDS \(who.int\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> Someone with a CD4 count below 200 is described as having AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). See: [HIV/AIDS \(who.int\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> It has to be noted that PE was removed as a standalone subject during education reform in South Africa and was reduced to a learning outcome of a new learning area titled, Life Orientation. See: [DBE gets moving on Physical Education](#)

<sup>21</sup> See: [Dragones de Lavapiés – Fútbol en el barrio por los Global Goals \(wordpress.com\)](#)

# 05

## FINDINGS

### AusCycling

In mid-March 2020, as state and territory governments started imposing lockdowns including border restrictions to combat COVID-19, the impact on AusCycling was felt immediately. Events, races, and activities stopped, and membership stagnated before rebounding again. The organisation was placed in a high state of hibernation, and staff continued to work from home as the focus became one of survival.

The development of online content was resource- and time-intensive. Filming, editing, and sharing videos on various online platforms on a daily basis can be an onerous task.

*"What we tried to do was to keep the content going. We were limited in what we could do working from our homes, but we produced something new every day to stay engaged. Virtually and in real life. Content was not as professionally shot and edited, but it still conveyed great info."*

As the unfolding COVID-19 crisis challenged grassroots sports activities, supporting clubs and members as best as possible became the focus.

*"We utilised online platforms to do training and development and to find really interesting ways around coaching - teaching skills, providing skills to people in a really simple sense. It was not a transactional engagement, but we empowered people with information."*

Planning for a future recovery whilst working through the enormous workload required by the merger of 18 cycling boards to transition into AusCycling was no mean feat. The creation of AusCycling came at a fascinating strategic time in the context of the pandemic. The economic fallout from the pandemic had been intense. Still, one of the most critical outcomes from all of the disruption caused by COVID-19 had been the reinforcement of how central to Australian life cycling is.



INDOOR CYCLING UTILISING APPS © AUSCYCLING

*"Lots of people wanted to get onto bikes. It was quite nice weather in Australia and lots of people wanted to be out in outdoor settings."*

After succumbing to the digitisation of play for years, children were rediscovering the joy of the outdoors on their bikes. However, people of all ages were also able to enjoy the gamification of cycling at times when it was not possible to ride in the outdoors.

*"It created community and motivated people to become part of a bigger community. You do your ride, there is a leader board, and everybody is doing their part towards the bigger, greater total as a sum. Australia is large and as a group people became part of something interesting to do. There was nothing else to look forward to at the time. Mass gatherings were cancelled, people were not training for marathons or other gatherings or any other events of a competitive nature. This motivated people."*



The non-contact nature of cycling generally allows riders to maintain a distance of greater than 1.5m whilst riding to ensure safety and good sightlines.

*“Cycling has been different to other sport. People were able to get out and do it. Or did it inside with the gamification of it. With technology, they were able to do this.”*

While race membership levels remained lower, recreational member numbers had increased considerably in 2020. AusCycling responded to the questionnaire by confirming that the overall number of participants decreased during lockdowns, however it has increased dramatically since there has been easing of restrictions.

*“The value of membership is not tangible. There are probably many angry people who wanted membership fees to be refunded, who assumed that ‘online’ meant ‘free’. AusCycling did not reimburse any membership fees. People seem to think they should get anything from Facebook, and it should be free, anything from a website, and it should be free. AusCycling actually provided these for free, but they did not refund people as they needed to finance the organisation to keep it going.”*

Whilst the sport has seen various restrictions that have required a much greater level of virtual engagement, over time, as the restrictions have eased, most of the delivery has gone back to normal. Restarting cycling was not easy, with people resisting gathering when they were able to.

*“AusCycling tried to do as much as possible virtually. Then the next step that we took with people was to come together in small groups locally. Then clubs were pushed to start to do the same to ease back into normality. However, even though there was a quick snap back, a lot of people still felt uncomfortable with regard to resuming life as before the pandemic. Maybe because they were in high-risk groups, they did not even want to meet with medium-sized groups of 10-20 people. One needs to keep activities going to help people snap out.”*

The deafening silence across sports venues worldwide may sound the death knell to some careers and events. The Australian Government provided their support during the crisis via JobKeeper and cashflow stimulus initiatives, which improved the AusCycling net profit over the previous year and pre-pandemic. This support also allowed AusCycling to maintain its workforce.

With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the cancellation or postponement of all National Championship and Series events based on a risk assessment from March 2020, cycling moved indoors. COVID-19 lockdowns forced AusCycling to move quickly to find new ways to provide services to their members to keep them physically active and engaged. Victoria, a state in south-eastern Australia, experienced a 112-day, 16-week, complete lockdown with people being able to leave their homes only for essential purposes and only for one hour a day. The rest of the country had fewer cases and went through a 12-week lockdown whilst being fielded from strict curfews<sup>22</sup>.

Some of the key actions and innovations during this period include:

- Online Coaching courses which saw hundreds of new and existing participants take part in courses which resulted in dramatic increases in the number of accredited coaches (from 300 in 2018 to exceeding 1,000 accredited coaches in 2020,
- Online Commissaire courses made courses more accessible to those in regional and remote areas of Australia to become accredited (Commissaires are trained officials who volunteer their time to ensure cycling competition is safe and fair),
- Teaching of cycling skills and tips during lockdown from members of the Australian Cycling Team via AusCycling social media channels and opportunities to ride with team members online,

<sup>22</sup> See [COVID-19: a chronology of state and territory government announcements \(up until 30 June 2020\) – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://aph.gov.au) for chronologies of state and territory government announcements



- Online content pieces to support members during the lockdown, such as training programs, educational components, and online courses,
- eSport National Road Series racing on Zwift - an app for cyclists, runners, and triathletes that makes indoor training fun - where over the course of 7 events, over 200,000 viewers watched the sport transform in new and exciting ways,
- eSport also expanded to the junior ranks with the conduct of the National Junior Racing Series on RGT – an indoor cycling simulator. The series saw junior riders from across the country take part in a four-race series which were live-streamed and provided excitement for riders and supporters,
- Development of regulations for eSport races,
- The Tour of Australia and J19 Time Trial Series on Fulgaz - an app that combines real-world terrain and cutting-edge coaching knowledge to help cyclists achieve their goals - which allowed riders to take on five iconic courses in Australia,
- The hosting of the first-ever National Virtual Track Challenge with athletes from around the country able to race against the clock at their home velodrome while having their times equalised for track and other environment-specific conditions,
- Increased range of member benefits via the Member Benefits Portal and the introduction of digital membership cards will improve the speed with which members receive their cards,
- A 'Return to Racing' campaign was launched as soon as restrictions started to ease, which saw new enthusiasm for racing and overall race membership numbers increased by 78% compared to 2019. Since the return to racing, member numbers have swelled back to usual levels despite having suffered a substantial drop during the pandemic, and
- The 'Bring a Mate' trial racing membership launched in late 2019 proved successful in the 'Return to Racing' campaign, with temporary memberships up by 53% in the months of July, August and September 2020 from 2019.

AusCycling, committed to caring for the health and wellbeing of their cycling community, developed a COVID-19 response strategy that addressed the needs of its coaches and members while complying with the regulations issued by the Australian Government. The COVID-19 response strategy is communicated to its membership through a comprehensive COVID-19 Resource Centre<sup>23</sup> on the AusCycling website with links to state, territory and national Government and Department of Health regulations, the Australian Coaching Council, the Outdoor Council of Australia, and the Australian Institute of Sport's COVID-19 Guidelines for Community Sport. AusCycling information includes a statement 'AusCycling Position on International Activities' and the comprehensive 'AusCycling Guide for Conducting Events in a COVID-19 Environment: a guide to support organiser in conducting events in a COVID safe manner' developed to support clubs and event organisers to conduct events of all sizes in the COVID-19 environment.

<sup>23</sup> See: [AusCycling | COVID-19 Resource Centre](#)

## Pro Sport Development, India

As an organisation that delivers all of its activities at facilities of partner organisations, primarily community-based schools, the impact of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, restrictions, closures, and the economic fallout presented a significant challenge to PSD.

*"We are reliant on school facilities for the delivery of our programmes including playgrounds and classrooms. The first lockdown was in March 2020. It took PSD some time to adjust to the new normal."*

In the few weeks after the lockdown was imposed, PSD was unable to deliver any programming to its participants, including through online mediums. This was in part due to a lack of online access to participants but also a lack of capacity of trainers to deliver programming online. In addition, there was a lack of digital resources to utilise.

*"We had to upscale our trainers and coaches; prepare content online for engagement with the children; and started to reinvent the wheel. We experienced a language barrier since the majority of content available online from different platforms were all in English. The trainers and coaches could not use English content, and they had to come up with their own curriculum."*

Governments are obligated to take effective steps to keep citizens safe during a public health crisis and are responsible for providing information necessary for the protection of people. During the onset of the pandemic, the information provided was generic, and the Community Sports Programme by PSD in Bhubaneswar came to a complete standstill.

*"The guidance provided by state and central government on sports was generic. Whilst they mentioned gatherings of up to 100 people could take place, nothing was mentioned with regard to a school context. Because guidance did not cover practising sport at schools, access to facilities remained closed."*

PSD followed state and central government guidelines to ensure that their program participants and staff stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and swiftly adapted by also writing their own COVID-19 protocol in the event they were able to mobilise children on the ground. However, they never had the opportunity to do so and started to engage online.



COMMUNITY SPORTS PROGRAMME © PRO SPORT DEVELOPMENT

PSD took on the challenges that came their way and innovated to deliver the Community Sports Programme virtually through a series of visual instructions to boost participants' soft skills and engage them in physical activities at home. Whilst physical interaction is a key characteristic of sport, it is not a prerequisite since sport and physical exercise can also be practiced socially distant from others while maintaining the same benefits.

*"We also focused on community sports and skills development, building soft skills and values through a multi-sport approach as part of our new online programmes. Each cohort also completed six Leadership sessions on Google Meet. We managed to pivot the sessions to the best of our ability given the restrictions, even though numbers dropped."*

During a pandemic, it is normal to feel anxiety and sadness. In addition to the skills development programme, PSD provided various tools and fun activities to children to help them find calmness and quiet their fear. When they initially piloted online programming for four months from April to July 2020, PSD focussed on 3 physical activities - yoga, general fitness routines and fun games.

*"Zoom activities were fun and entertaining with yoga and games focused on in-house activities, because kids had so much anxiety, their whole lives were turned upside down and they needed to have fun."*

PSD PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS TAKING PART IN REGULAR YOGA SESSIONS, FITNESS ROUTINES AND FUN ACTIVITIES AT HOME IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH LOCKDOWNS AND THE PANDEMIC © PRO SPORT DEVELOPMENT





PSD DISTRIBUTING HYGIENE KITS TO CHILDREN © PRO SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Determined to continue to help the children in Bhubaneswar, PSD quickly came up with series of online fitness, yoga and fun games videos to motivate and engage its participants to stay safe, (mentally) healthy and fit at home.

In the questionnaire, PSD reported that the frequency and level of activity delivered to their programme participants had decreased since the onset of COVID-19. Before COVID-19, PSD provided one to two sessions of sports-based activities to each participant weekly, with each session lasting between 45-60 minutes. These activities were complemented with summer sports camps and periodic sports tournaments and competitions that the children participated in. However, once PSD provided online activities to its participants, the frequency of sessions was once a week, with each session lasting 20-40 minutes, depending on the type of activity and level of effort by each participant. PSD found it a challenge to monitor online participation effectively, as participants took up the weekly sessions as per their suitable time and convenience.

COVID-19 relief was provided in Bhubaneswar, with PSD distributing pamphlets educating children about hand hygiene, wearing of masks and physical distancing during times of pandemic. Hygiene and sanitary kits distributed to 2,902 children and their families through 10 partner schools in Bhubaneswar included 5,804 masks, 8,496 soap bars, 19,660 sanitary pads, 12 soap dispensers and 75 litres of liquid soap. It was during the delivery of relief that PSD was able to gain access to the contact details of all of their participants.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has severely restricted PSD physical interactions, it has also opened up the avenue of renewing links and maintaining contact via the internet. Technology has, thus, become a catalyst for PSD in spreading education and virtually interacting with people across the globe. A virtual exchange of students was

organised by PSD and Urban Initiatives<sup>24</sup>. This Chicago-based sport-for-development organisation works with marginalised youth in the city to mould them to become community leaders. The exchange aimed to facilitate cross-cultural interactions, expose the children to other cultures, enhance their communication skills and present technology as an alternative source of learning and interaction.

Throughout 2020, PSD was able to participate in exciting initiatives in the sport for development sector, including:

- Co-producing a sport-based gender equality online resource with The Commonwealth and the Martha Farrell Foundation in response to COVID-19<sup>25</sup>,
- Designing a digital literacy curriculum with PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia) part of the Beyond Running and Chasing initiative<sup>26</sup>,
- Participating in a virtual #worldwalkingday organised by TAFISA, The Association For International Sport for All<sup>27</sup>,
- Leading the coalition-building and evaluation phases of Laureus' Model City Delhi initiative<sup>28</sup>,
- Undertaking a scoping study on understanding the sport for development sector in South and South-East Asia<sup>29</sup>, and
- Creating a collection of untold stories of rural female footballers in India as part of #FootballPeople weeks 2020 in collaboration with FARE network<sup>30</sup>.

Staff working at PSD include coaches and coordinator directly involved in programme delivery and monitoring and administrative and programme staff supported by volunteers engaged in specific projects and functions within the enterprise. PSD reported in the questionnaire that engagement of volunteers decreased since the onset of COVID-19, that there was a freeze in the increment of salaries of all staff, and that the expected increase of the paid staff did not occur.

PSD's income was affected; however, they managed to generate sufficient revenue to maintain their paid staff and fund their (reduced) programming. PSD's ability to maintain its income during this challenging period was made possible primarily due to its social enterprise model, which generates income not only through institutional grants and funding and individual donations but also from service contracts.

<sup>24</sup> See: [Facebook](#)

<sup>25</sup> See: [Gender Equality through Sport | The Commonwealth](#)

<sup>26</sup> See: [Facebook](#)

<sup>27</sup> See: [Pro Sport Development - Celebrating #worldwalkingday organised by TAFISA! | Facebook](#)

<sup>28</sup> See: [Facebook](#)

<sup>29</sup> See: [S&SEAsia\\_ScopingStudyReport\\_Final.pdf - Google Drive](#)

<sup>30</sup> The Fare network is an umbrella organisation that brings together individuals, informal groups and organisations driven to combat inequality in football and use the sport as a means for social change. See: [Facebook](#)

Though the percentage of institutional grants, funding, and individual donations - especially for on-ground programming - decreased significantly in 2020, PSD income through service contracts has increased and cross-subsidised other programmatic areas of the organisation. PSD has benefitted from funds from various sources, which have helped support their participants through the crisis. These have included crowdfunding campaigns, individual donations and private institutional grants that have been utilised to provide their participants from slum communities with hygiene kits, COVID-19 related informational material along with informative material on basic physical activities to keep fit at home during the lockdown. PSD also had some short-term savings, which they relied on to overcome the financial strains on their operations during the first three months of the national lockdown. The programmes provided to their participants are free of charge, except for a very nominal contribution primarily to ensure they take ownership of the programme. This nominal contribution was waived in light of COVID-19.

### Grassroot Soccer South Africa

In 2019 over 82,359 adolescents accessed critical sexual and reproductive health services through GRS global activities with over 1.3 million youth reached with health and life skills programming. GRS continues to work with young people where the need is highest and reached 18,210 South African orphans and vulnerable children and youth with HIV and gender-based violence prevention mixed-sex programs in 2019. As an organisation that does more than 90% of programming in groups and through schools or clinics, the impact of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, restrictions, closures, and economic fallout presented a significant challenge to GRS SA project implementation.

*“At the onset of the pandemic, everything was closed in South Africa, and a curfew put in place which made life very difficult. Everybody was stuck at home. We also saw our offices shut down, and things were disturbed, and we had to respond quickly.”*

GRS SA has rapidly modified its methodology and impact model to provide sustained sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) support to youth, particularly for adolescent girls and young women in the context of COVID-19. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, African adolescents were already nine times more likely to die from preventable causes than adolescents in high income countries. Among many factors, they face a triad of three critical health issues: HIV/AIDS, lack of family planning knowledge and access, and gender-based violence.<sup>31</sup>

*“We found a way to shift programming online. We responded very quickly and developed a multiple-channel approach to reach the young people who are part of our programme by setting up communication on WhatsApp groups, setting up one-way SMS’s messaging so that they could at least get messages from GRS and the most ambitious, setting up a call centre by converting the spaces they have into a call centre.”*

GRS is deeply embedded in the communities where they work, they have a large network of partners across Africa who are embedded locally and regionally, and they are well-positioned to be a stabilising force for adolescents. GRS SA adapted its implementation process for virtual and remote delivery to continue to provide lifesaving COVID-19 information, along with sustained SRHR and psychosocial support through three programme innovations including physical activity:

1. Outbound Call Centre managed by caring coaches and social workers.

*“Part of the process included that we would provide psychosocial support. We developed a risk assessment tool for young people run by the in-house social worker. If a social worker identifies that the young person needs counselling, they will set up the connections to make sure the child will have access to the services they need and that the partners can do this remotely or over the phone and support young people during this time.”*

2. A multi-channel approach including one-way text messaging, WhatsApp group messaging and phone calls.

*“In addition to the COVID Curriculum, GRS also delivered our own programme, which included sex education, HIV education and related topics. It was not easy as the main access to kids in South Africa is via the schools. The South African government worked very hard to ensure all kids go to school. If one really wants to reach young people, then it is via school. GRS had to adapt and spend a lot of time collecting contact details and phoning young people. It*

<sup>31</sup> See: [Grassroot Soccer Annual Report](#)

3. SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE, an open-source curriculum developed in April 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic in communities that GRS supports. Over 600 organizations have downloaded this curriculum and the feedback is very positive.

*"We developed a Sport for development COVID-19 curriculum based on WHO guidelines. It was basically four sessions that focussed on the key things that the South African government and other governments were trying to make sure people do – social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands and all of those principles in place to ensure safety. The call centre would therefore deliver the curriculum to the children, talk about COVID, what it means, how they ought to behave, how their lives will change, etcetera."*

The SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE sport-based tool<sup>32</sup> was provided to coaches, educators, and parents to easily facilitate fun, simple, and effective sessions with young people and connect young people online.

*"The coaches are also young people from those very same communities experiencing the very same things. They were suddenly in a position where they couldn't see kids face-to-face and had to change their entire approach to how they reach, engage and keep the programme fun and engaging for young people online or over a phone where they cannot see you. It was very difficult to do, to set up and to start."*

The curriculum is based on WHO Public Health guidelines<sup>33</sup> and aims to increase comprehensive knowledge on COVID-19 whilst promoting healthy behaviours, providing skills for mental wellbeing during stressful times, and dispelling an infodemic of false information spreading about COVID-19. The sport-based curriculum was designed as a way for coaches, educators, and parents to easily facilitate fun, simple, and effective sessions with young people ages 9 and older which include five-minute warm up which consists of an active energizer, such as a game, dance, song, stretch, or run. Knowledge is POWER! GRS SA recommends to their members to learn more about COVID-19 from the World Health Organization by sending a message that says "hi" to +41798931892. The COVID-19 Response Curriculum Overview can be viewed as a video on the [Grassroot Soccer Youtube Channel](#).



SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE © GRASSROOT SOCCER

## SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE

The wider GRS group established a COVID-19 resource centre on their website<sup>34</sup> with links to Grassroot Soccer resources on COVID-19 and their response and relevant external resources such as official guidance on the coronavirus outbreak by WHO. Version 1.0 of the SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE was published in seven languages<sup>35</sup> in April 2020. A blog post provides insight on how Grassroot Soccer is responding to COVID-19 by working to enhance its programmes. Other resources available include 'Voices of Youth - Toolkit for Young People to Spread Awareness and Take Action on COVID-19', Monitoring and Evaluation Survey, Curriculum facilitation tips and video overviews of the curriculum, and a 'Remote SKILLZ Implementation Guide' that provides guidance for GRS partners to deliver their SKILLZ programmes through creative and non-traditional methods. These methods include one on one conversations with participants to provide support, create graphic novels and comics, prepare and present radio segments, create home-based activity packets, facilitate remote competitions and energisers, and connect participants to relevant and trusted hotlines and all other key platforms for accurate information, e.g., Boost<sup>36</sup>.



SKILLZ COVID-19 CURRICULUM © GRASSROOT SOCCER

<sup>32</sup> See: [GRS SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE Curriculum V 2.0 ENGLISH \(grassrootsoccer.org\)](#)

<sup>33</sup> See page 3 [GRS SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE Curriculum V 2.0 ENGLISH \(grassrootsoccer.org\)](#)

<sup>34</sup> See [Resources: COVID-19 - Grassroot Soccer - Grassroot Soccer](#)

<sup>35</sup> Afan-Oromo, Amharic, Chichewa, French, KiSwahili, Portuguese and Spanish.

<sup>36</sup> Boost is a mobile phone app and website designed to support the ongoing learning and work of community health workers across southern Africa. See: [Boost - a new mobile resource for community health workers \(avert.org\)](#).

REMOTE SKILLZ IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE © GRASSROOT SOCCER



The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic call for urgent responses to support grassroots sport organisations. How this support is designed is critical. Support by the South African Government contributed to GRA SA resilience during the crisis.

*“We received a lot of support from the Department of Education as GRS supports their young people. They were open to talking with GRS to reach young people during lockdown. Many mechanisms, support, and response from Government were in place. It was interesting to go through this and watch the Government response.”*

Targeted financial support packages form the basis for ensuring a sustainable recovery during and after crises such as the pandemic. The South African Ministry of Sport, Arts and Culture provided financial relief through the COVID-19 Relief Fund to small businesses.

*“There were a lot of different things that the Government did like relief for small businesses. It is important to keep small business open with lots of subsidising. It was not all rosy, but a lot was done.”*

Government communication to deliver information during a prolonged crisis was also demonstrated as crucial for receiving information and raising awareness about the disease contributing to the resilience demonstrated by GRS SA.

*“The Government used the available media very well in talking about COVID. On social media for example whenever the President was booked to speak on TV about COVID, it was called The Family Meeting. The Family Meeting would set out guidelines of where the country stood with regard to COVID, and measures were put in place.”*

GRS SA continued reaching vulnerable adolescents and young people with much needed sport-based health and life skills programming and achieved their targeted impact for 2020. However, due to reduced funding levels and COVID-19 restrictions, GRS SA reached fewer participants than intended and also had fewer volunteers assigned to its programme team. The services offered in 2020 ranged from 757 HIV tests to 1106 SRHR services, including STI Screening, PreP, GBV, VMMC and Psycho-social support. While COVID-19 has changed our lives, one thing remains constant: women and girls’ health priorities do not pause for a pandemic. Amidst COVID-19, the barriers between women and girls and their ability to make their own health decisions have only increased. GRS SA neither charges membership fees nor officially have access to reserves to overcome challenges. As an affiliate of the global organisation GRS Inc., GRS SA has the additional support to cover shortfalls and support the implementation of programmes. Flexible funding from partners during COVID-19 was a game-changer, helping GRS to adapt and innovate rapidly.

*“In the background, a lot of funders were open to changes as they were experiencing the same changes. They were happy to shift funding to some core payments, such as paying the young coaches for as long as possible. We shifted funding from restricted programmes to where the needs were experienced. We had a lot of support from funders.”*

Continued support and flexibility in funding staff time, operational costs, research, and innovation contributed significantly to long-term sustainability and resilience. Funding and flexibility allowed GRS SA to improve cost recovery, ensure continuity of impact via their coaches and proactively integrate learnings and innovations to support their mission and broader organisational outcomes. This support strengthened GRS SA’s ability to adapt to the evolving pandemic landscape and corresponding health and government guidelines.

GRS SA reported a positive response to their remote programming adaptations based on feedback from youth, parents, and key stakeholders and demonstrated in their routine monitoring and evaluation.

## Dragones de Lavapiés, Spain

Sport and physical activity play an essential role in the lives of children living in the Lavapiés neighbourhood in Madrid. To uphold broader public health objectives, the Spanish Government imposed limits on sports activities and settings to limit social contact and reduce transmission at the onset of the pandemic. Dragones reacted swiftly and efficiently and developed their own COVID-19 safety protocol, which allowed them to consider the risks and encourage joined sports activity outdoors even during periods of harsh restrictions.

Dragones realised that sports activities at home would only stress out children and families living in small, dark, and crowded spaces and developed activity programmes for a Summer Camp, safely powering up in a COVID-19 environment.

*“We could not do anything about the sports. We could not organise any activities for the kids to do at home as it would stress out people living in small spaces.”*

During July 2020, one hundred boys and girls divided into groups of five followed a Summer Camp Programme of visits to museums, sports, and outings to nature every morning, from Monday to Friday. The club taught children the importance of hygiene, reinforced the wearing of masks and regularly took their temperatures.

*“In the beginning, we paid a lot of attention to cleanliness (hygiene) and bought a lot of hand sanitisers, thermometers and implemented all the protocol. We stopped doing this in the last months as kids were already doing these at school and Dragones trusted that parents would not go out with sick kids to activities.”*

Initially, the parade of masked children caused surprise in the streets of the neighbourhood, and the trainers and coaches were all nervous, although with the confidence that it was their duty to the children, which also included their own.

*“In June-July we started with 100 kids going to the fields and people would stare as no one else moved around in groups. We divided the group in five people with one trainer and one teacher, and the groups moved to museums, to training areas. People in museums were looking at us with fear and they were not welcoming whilst people in sport centres looked at us with smiling faces.”*



CHILDREN WALKING IN GROUPS OF FIVE IN THE OUTDOORS AS PART OF THEIR SUMMER CAMP ACTIVITIES © DRAGONES DE LAVAPIÉS

In the first weeks of the Summer Camp, Dragones received a donation of 16 bicycles which transformed the way adolescents could move around the city, attend training sessions, and interact. The bicycles have allowed them to regain independence and self-esteem, and they went ahead to establish a cycling group.

*Reading up about diseases we realised that open air activity was the best. For these kids open air was the best and the Local Government started writing protocols in June. This was very important for Dragones. Dragones started writing our own protocol based on this. Not one out of 100 kids were ill by December, and we felt that this was an experiment that we passed.”*



DONATION OF 16 BICYCLES © DRAGONES DE LAVAPIÉS

CRAFTING ACTIVITY BY DRAGONES MEMBERS © DRAGONES DE LAVAPIÉS



Reactivating face-to-face communication, socialisation, playing, reading, crafting, and breathing outdoors were the objectives after months of confinement in high-stress situations. None of the children tested COVID-19 positive throughout their participation.

*“Our numbers increased in September as schools did not do any activities. It was challenging for schools. Dragones took all the desks, tables, chairs to the Plaza and that is where we did all our activities such as craft instead of sport. This was a necessity, even though in a bit of a kamikaze way. We reached the most disempowered. We helped many other people who were not in such a terrible situation, but all types of people wanted activity.”*

The Dragones narrative can be quoted from a poignant blog posting: “This article is not just a thank you for your support, it is an invitation to deconfine and break down barriers. Under the shade of the trees, creating a nest and not a cage is how Tagore, the Bengali poet, Nobel laureate in 1913, organised his school, his Shanti Niketan, a place of learning in the open air, without spatial or ideological confines, without nationalist or religious barriers, promoting cultural exchange, human values and also environmental” (Dragones de Lavapiés, 2020).

Dragones reacted quickly and efficiently to support its members and the entire neighbourhood when lockdown restrictions were imposed - they immediately realised the importance of establishing a food bank, and the action drew a large number of volunteers and donations from within the community. Reading also contributed to a positive experience, and the exchange of books quickly led to establishing a book library.

Entrepreneurial orientation proved to have been an effective response by this small community-based sports club to manage a crisis such as the COVID-19. Dragones

*“Poor people from poor rural areas come to live in the Lavapiés neighbourhood, and now all live in very small spaces and crowded rooms. Thinking of the circumstances for small children and how they will survive and get fed during COVID, prompted Dragones to feed them. Dragone's response was a bit kamikaze. We thought it was the only thing to do. They were not able to leave their houses.”*



FOODBANK ESTABLISHED BY DRAGONES © DRAGONES DE LAVAPIÉS

not only promoted health through the continued public practice of physical activity during the lockdown, but they also went a step further by generating change in the Lavapiés community, which had an important impact on the wellbeing of their members.

*“During the lockdown we couldn't do sport, but we could share books. Books had to go four days without getting touched. We decided to reduce that to four hours and being optimistic. We felt that was the solution that we needed. It was an example of starting a book club and now we have a large library of books. It was also about sharing things and understanding what children and people in the city centres needed. Dragones thrived here.”*

Dragones staff are volunteers and part-time staff hired through various projects. COVID-19 has had a paradoxical effect on the operations of the Dragones, including their membership numbers which increased from 250 pre-pandemic to 320 during the pandemic. They have had to nearly double their number of volunteers whilst the number of paid staff remained the same. They neither benefitted from any COVID-19 pandemic mitigation opportunities such as community emergency funds or support from the local government nor did they have any financial reserves upon which they could draw to overcome economic challenges imposed by COVID-19. Their membership fees stayed the same as it was already voluntary and low at EUR 10 per month.

## 06

## DISCUSSION

Grassroots sports seeks to increase the number of people who engage in sport, encourage mass participation in activities, and ensure that everyone experiences the benefits of physical activity regardless of age, background, or ability. According to the European Union, grassroots sports, in particular, plays an essential role in promoting the social inclusion of people with fewer opportunities and calls for increased support to low-income families to ensure affordable sports and leisure activities to the children of low-income families (European Parliament, 2021). Practising sport addresses a wide range of personal and social developmental goals by promoting values such as fair play, fairness, teamwork, tolerance, mutual respect, community, and solidarity (UNESCO).

As demonstrated by AusCycling, PSD, GRS SA, and Dragones, grassroots sports organisations play an essential role in communities, often also supporting the most vulnerable members of society. The COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered and intensified existing societal inequalities. In Bhubaneswar, the vast majority of young PSD members are underprivileged and living in slum settlements. These 11–16-year-olds participate in PSD activities at community-based schools where PSD strives to institutionalise their programme. GRS SA delivers their programmes in Football for Hope centres<sup>37</sup> and, like PSD, also at schools. The 9–18-year-old participants mostly live in informal settlements under very precarious conditions, posing severe threats to their health, safety, and security. Dragones make use of facilities lent by the city council as well as open-air public spaces. The 5–18-year-old migrant children playing football for Dragones are at risk of social exclusion and lives in small spaces and crowded rooms. Contrary to PSD, GRS SA and Dragones, whose members are children and youth, AusCycling membership peak at around the age of 40 with a focus on participation-based activities and another smaller peak at around 17 years of age with most 17–25-year-olds participating in competition-based activity.

The majority of GRS SA and Dragones participants are from families who participate in the informal economic

sector to generate income. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), COVID-19 exacerbates the principal vulnerabilities of poor workers in the informal economy. Restrictions on the movement of people and downscaling of economic activities to contain the virus are having a strong impact on informal enterprises and are likely to lead to a surge in unemployment (ILO, 2020).

The pandemic has spotlighted the importance of community sports organisations to their local areas, with many individuals and families relying on them for help and support. In this regard, AusCycling, PSD, GRS SA and Dragones responded swiftly to COVID-19 lockdown conditions to provide food parcels, hygiene kits, information pamphlets, and other essentials to their members.

During the first national lockdown, the closure of South Africa's schools halted a national feeding programme providing meals to 9 million impoverished children in the country. Children participating in GRS SA programmes receive healthy snacks and a beverage during training sessions. When the programme moved online, this was replaced by a care pack including food and sanitary products. Lockdown restrictions prohibited GRS SA from reaching the children physically, but upon completion of the SKILLZ Programme, children and their families could visit allocated supermarkets to receive their care packs during a time when South Africa was home to one of the world's most stringent lockdowns.

In India, PSD responded to poverty relief for their ultra-vulnerable community living in slums. They distributed hygiene kits<sup>38</sup> and all-important COVID-19 information pamphlets as soon as schools reopened, and they could reach not only their members but all children attending their partnership schools. At this point, sports activity was still prohibited from taking place within school premises.

<sup>37</sup> Football for Hope is a 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa™ Legacy Programme.

<sup>38</sup> Videos of Hygiene Kit Distribution See: [Gender Equality through Sport | The Commonwealth](#) and [PSD-ITF Covid-19 Relief Efforts for the Participants and their Families in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. - YouTube](#)

Dragones too recognised that many of their members were in situations of extreme economic hardship and needed assistance to ensure minimum sustenance during the lockdown. They established a food bank with community members joining the initiative to donate and deliver food when Madrid remained the European epicentre of the coronavirus crisis. Food distribution became a priority as most food banks in Madrid before the pandemic were managed by older people now considered at high risk for severe illness and death. The young members' knowledge helped Dragones take fast action in knitting networks in the community to respond to the neighbourhood needs.

The situation in Australia was different. Cycling represents a vast community, and a significant demographic participates in the sport and takes a strong interest in it. AusCycling is well placed, with COVID-19 leading to an extraordinary surge in bike sales and participation.

When Australians could not travel due to internal border controls, AusCycling members took to their bikes, outdoors as well as indoors. AusCycling has seen a much greater level of virtual engagement compared to PSD and GRS SA.

Lockdown has undoubtedly served to highlight our reliance on virtual means of staying in touch. Critically, it has also sharpened the issue of digital exclusion, which demonstrates the deep inequalities that run through the social fabric of, especially, the Global South. On the one hand, COVID-19 worsened the impact of digital exclusion for the participants of PSD and GRS SA, while networks of digital technologies took grassroots sports participation in Australia to the next level with eSport participation.

As people hunkered down at home and looked for new ways to live, work, learn, and play, competitive eSport emerged more robust than it has ever been. A significant achievement for cycling in Australia during the pandemic was the conduct of the first eSport National Road Series on Zwift, and eSport also expanded to the junior ranks with the conduct of the National Junior Racing Series on RGT. Access to the internet ensures that Australia is well placed to make the most of this discipline's growth for its membership.

In the slum communities of India, families often only have access to one shared smartphone among family members. Lockdown at first meant the consumption of a lot of data and long hours of screen time for children when they engaged in online schooling. Lifting lockdown restrictions then meant that parents started to return to work, taking their phones with them. This left a gap as children had limited access to the internet, and participation in online

sports programming moved down the list of priorities. Not having a complete database of participant contact details further complicated online programming at first.

South Africa has amongst the most expensive mobile data in Africa and a crippling systemic electricity problem. Gadgets and the internet connectivity to enable them to function, are heavily dependent on electricity supply. Therefore, the infrequent electricity supply and unreliable internet impacted adversely on participants in South Africa.

In contrast to PSD, GRS SA and Dragones, AusCycling members are age inclusive and live across Australia, representing the entire socioeconomic spectrum. AusCycling emphasises that grassroots sports seek to increase the number of people who engage in sport and also looks to ensure that everyone experiences the benefits of physical activity regardless of age, background, or ability. Countries with limited cases of COVID-19, such as Australia, has experienced a smoother return to grassroots sports activity. The provision of clear health guidelines and the creation of clear stages and associated action plans supports the return to sport.

The social organisation of sport and how individuals and groups behave is a core aspect of why governments develop and implement grassroots sports policy. Local government too supports grassroots sports, primarily through the provision of various facilities as well as the provision of outreach and community sport development programs such as the Community Sports Programme ran by PSD in Bhubaneswar. The health benefits of sports and physical activity and their crucial role in tackling obesity and other non-communicable diseases have been underlined in national policy worldwide. Within the last few decades, governments have focused on improving sport-for-all and youth sport policies. These initiatives ensure community involvement.

Issues that are fundamental to the beneficial social contribution of grassroots sports include the economic dimension and sustainable financing. All four cases persuaded their sponsors to continue with their support and identified new funding opportunities. PSD, GRS SA and Dragones reduced expenditure in line with reduced activity, and AusCycling persuaded members to keep paying membership fees.

Grassroots sports across the globe, however, is facing an uncertain future due to ongoing concerns regarding COVID-19. During this challenging time, grassroots sports organisations have had to adapt to support the health and wellbeing of their staff, volunteers, participants, and their local communities, as demonstrated in the various actions by the cases informing this study. The four cases developed pandemic response strategies that addressed the needs of their participants and coaches while complying with the regulations and recommendations issued by their governments and national public health agencies.

With youth participants, there are competing risks that must be acknowledged within any specific setting. Sport participation, physical activity and competition have physical and mental health benefits for children, but this must be balanced against the potential contribution of youth sports to COVID-19 viral transmission and community spread. This point is demonstrated by Dragones, which after doing a risk assessment and taking into consideration the stressful impact of the pandemic in addition to a real danger of screen addiction, decided to continue with outdoors team sports activities for their young participants.

According to GRS SA, adolescence is a simultaneously exciting and tricky time. The adolescent brain is still developing, causing them to be more likely to engage in risky behaviours and less likely to consider the

consequences. Their programs leverage the universal appeal of soccer as the platform to reach adolescents during this critical time. Using soccer, they engage with adolescents in making healthy decisions through a three C approach: Curriculum (SKILLZ soccer-based health curriculum), Coaches (Caring adults and mentors), and Culture (Vital conversation, safe spaces, inspiration, and fun). Grassroots sports present a unique opportunity in the lives of adolescents to improve their health and to develop social capital. The halting of opportunities to play soccer can have a significant detrimental effect on the mental and physical wellbeing of adolescents, as well as impact resources embedded in social networks.

Robust political leadership on the central and local government levels during the pandemic is needed to protect grassroots sports in the short term and ensure their future sustainability. The cases demonstrate that grassroots sports constitute a complex and vulnerable ecosystem of volunteers, local authorities, community, and access to participants and facilities. By creating and delivering high-quality programmes, ecosystems, and safe spaces, grassroots sports organisations in vulnerable communities enable marginalised young people to realise their potential through improved education, health awareness and building of life skills through sport.

## 07

## GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Globally, grassroots sports organisations are in the same COVID-19 storm, but whilst some are in the same boat, others are holding onto life rafts. COVID-19 provided a unique opportunity to examine four grassroots sports experiences across four continents, review support, observe innovation, and share lessons learned. Sports organisations and clubs at the grassroots level remain a leading sports delivery system for providing accessible and affordable sports programs. Swift, bold, and innovative action by the four cases led to continuous programme delivery in the face of adversity. Notwithstanding the myriad of negative impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on grassroots sports, the crisis presents opportunities. It has served to highlight the key role played by grassroots sports in society.

- Virtual spaces as means of engagement became key when governments started to impose lockdown restrictions to contain the spread of the virus.
- The importance of policies and processes for online and virtual participation came to the spotlight.
- Grassroots sports-based methodology and implementation can be adapted for virtual or remote delivery, including telephone, TV, radio, SMS, WhatsApp, and Facebook, depending on youth connectivity levels, to provide lifesaving COVID-19 information along with sustained psychosocial support and access to services for vulnerable youth.
- Moving forward, cases indicated that a long-term integration of online programme delivery and other innovations within their regular offer to reflect beneficiaries' needs and desires while considering the accessibility of digital platforms among their target beneficiaries would be a useful compromise.
- COVID-19 revealed a need to bridge the digital divide. The pandemic has exposed inequalities in our societies and the associated limitations contingent on internet availability. Lack of internet access means it is essential to consider other modifications and modes of delivery during periods of crisis.
- It is critical to consider the local context and culture to support modification to programme delivery.
- The role of schools in facilitating programmes by community clubs should not be underestimated since it provides an accepted route to encouraging more children to play and can facilitate engaging large numbers of children at a time. A restructured sports curriculum is key for grassroots sports organisations that link their programmes to schools or school activities.
- In the wake of the pandemic, people involve themselves much more with eSports. eSports has shown to be a rapidly evolving alternative to maintain the sportsmanship and passion that grassroots sports bring to the general population and offer an alternative way for competition.
- Sport at the grassroots level can be part of the solution to bringing communities back together, helping to repair the damage COVID-19 brought to our social fabric, and keeping people fit and healthy.
- For some, grassroots sports are a very important group within the sporting ecosystem, which unfortunately was overlooked before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Grassroots and community sports clubs can help maintain social connections even when there is no sport going on. This can include phoning members to check in on their wellbeing or establishing side activities such as book clubs.

- Sports volunteers can be redeployed to support the COVID-19 response.
- Grassroots sports has a crucial role to play to address several health and social challenges that have been highlighted due to the onset of COVID-19.
  - \* COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of keeping physically fit, as co-morbidities mainly in the form of non-communicable diseases have increased the chances of the adverse impact of COVID-19. Grassroots sports not only engages young populations in structured and frequent physical activity but ensure that they develop lifelong habits that keep them physically fit as they go into adulthood.
  - \* The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the inequalities, discrimination and lack of access faced by several individuals and communities in society. Grassroots sports can be an excellent avenue to address many of these issues and link sport with the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals outlined by the United Nations. Moreover, grassroots sports can equip young people with relevant life skills to utilise beyond the sports field.
  - \* The COVID-19 pandemic and the various lockdowns have brought to light the issues of mental health and wellbeing affecting a vast proportion of our population, especially among the youth segments. Grassroots sports can assist in tackling these issues, improving mental health and wellbeing, and developing social networks of support.
- Sports practice in open spaces can help grassroots sports recover the emotional stability of young participants in vulnerable situations. The paradox of sport means that the largest pool of players (grassroots sports) has access to the smallest number of resources.
- In the post-pandemic world, governments along with key stakeholders of sport should look at serving the bottom of the sporting pyramid, focusing on grassroots sports and physical activity. Ease of access to sport must be ensured.
- The solidarity shown by individuals and grassroots sport organisations during the pandemic must continue well beyond, as for any transformation to take place to reimagine sport, stakeholders must collaborate and work together towards this change.
- The pandemic has laid bare existing challenges which hampered grassroots sports' response, including vulnerable business models.
- Clear public health guidelines on national and local government level contributed significantly to the speed with which grassroots sports organisations could act in creating their own protocol and guidelines for different levels of activity.

# 08

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) wishes to thank all the persons and organisations who have contributed to this report, an endeavour led by Ms. Magda de Lange, Head of Research and Strategic Studies at the ICSS.

We wish to thank first of all the World Health Organization for having funded this study through the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund and for the general guidance provided across the drafting process, particularly the following WHO officials:

- Dr Maurizio Barbeschi, Senior Adviser to the Executive Director, Health Emergencies Programme, World Health Organization, for the inspiration given to our efforts,
- Dr Albis Francesco Gabrielli, Medical Officer, Health Emergencies Programme, World Health Organization, for his support in the development of this case,
- Ms Amaia Artazcoz Glaria, Technical Officer, Health Emergencies Programme, World Health Organization, for providing technical supervision and instructions,
- Dr Maria Borodina, Consultant, Health Emergencies Programme, World Health Organization, for reviewing the findings and outcomes of the case study,
- Ms Amsalework Bekele, Administrative Officer, Health Emergencies Programme, World Health Organization, for the kind guidance on the various administrative elements.

Our gratitude also goes to the organisations who have accepted to be considered as case studies and for sharing their knowledge and experience. We wish to thank in particular Mr Kipp Kaufmann - AusCycling, Mr Suheil Tandon - Pro Sport Development, Mr Mbulelo Malotana and Mr Sikhumbuzo Mnculwane - Grassroot Soccer South Africa and Ms Dolores Galindo - Dragones de Lavapiés.

A special thank goes to ICSS Special Advisor Mr Michael Hopmeier, President, Unconventional Concepts, for the scientific review and to ICSS associates Ms Sukriti Bhardwaj, Project Assistant, and Mr Hugo Sitri, Intern.

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# ADDENDUM A



## Mass Gatherings COVID-19 Case study template-WHO

12 November 2020

This “successes and gaps” case study template may be used by organizers of sports, religious, entertainment, political, or other events to conduct a review of a mass gathering, with the aim of capturing practices related to holding/modifying/postponing/cancelling mass gatherings during the public health response to the COVID-19 outbreak at the international, national and local level.

In view of the current pandemic of COVID-19, the World Health Organization (WHO) has developed various risk assessment tools for mass gatherings (MG). These WHO tools and risk assessments developed by other public health authorities can be used by host countries and event organizers to identify and measure the specific risk of COVID-19 for an event, thus allowing host countries and event organizers to make evidence-based decisions. It is recommended that any decisions made in relation to mass gatherings are based on a risk assessment process; the WHO risk assessment tools referenced earlier are comprised of three pillars: risk evaluation, risk mitigation and risk communication.

MG event organizers can choose to write one or multiple case studies to highlight specific aspects of mass gathering planning and delivery they identified as strengths and weaknesses during the COVID-19 response. The aim of the collection of these case studies are to collate lessons learned and develop a legacy for future MGs.

MG event organizers are encouraged to share these case studies with other countries, WHO, event organisers, local Public Health authorities and other relevant stakeholders to enable peer-to-peer learning of best practices or new capacities implemented at the international, national and local levels.

The MG organizers are kindly recommended to follow the Case Study Template below and structure their case analyses as followed: Measures successfully implemented; Measures not successfully implemented; Impacts; Key Takeaways; and Gaps.

### Measures successfully implemented:

<Describe the measures successfully implemented to overcome any challenges or issues associated with COVID-19 when planning the mass gathering. Are there any best practices you would recommend? Did the MG organizers develop new capacities, policies, or training as part of the MG preparedness and response planning (e.g., MG risk assessment approaches and/or tools, new policies for coordination with local public health authorities, new communication strategies on public health awareness etc)?>

### Impacts:

:<Describe the key impact(s) or achievement(s) of your COVID-19 contingency planning that were successfully implemented for the MG event.>

### Key Takeaways:

<What were the positive key takeaways and best practices from your MG planning?>

1. <Describe the key takeaway 1>
2. <Describe the key takeaway 2>
3. <Describe the key takeaway 3>

### Measures not successfully implemented:

<Describe any measures that were not successful. Did any of these measures include a lack of using a risk-based approach in decision making? Did these measures result in negative outcomes for the mass gathering? Describe any preventive or response measures taken with limited or no coordination with public health authorities in the hosting country/region/city etc.>

### Impacts:

<Describe the key impact(s) or areas of your COVID-19 contingency planning that were not successfully implemented for the MG event or contributed to situations that negatively influenced the MG event.>

### Key Takeaways:

<What were the negative key takeaways and lessons learned from your MG planning?>

1. <Describe the key takeaway 1>
2. <Describe the key takeaway 2>
3. <Describe the key takeaway 3>

### Gap(s):

<Describe any gap(s) or instances where the implementation of mitigation/preparedness measures did not achieve expected effect, missed measures that were not implemented, and any unexpected situation(s) that placed negative pressure on the event or the organizers.>

## Evaluation: The specific aspects of mass gathering planning and delivery during COVID-19 pandemic.

The Key Case Study (below) evaluation is structured in line with the WHO MG Risk Assessment Tools. The thematic topics under consideration for a case study include: Risk evaluation, Risk

Mitigation (Understanding COVID-19, the country situation and the mass gathering; Stakeholder and partner coordination; Command and control; Event COVID-19 safety, preparedness and response plans; Communicating with Staff, Participants, Spectators, Media, and Stakeholders; Public health awareness

of COVID-19 before, during, and after the event; Surge capacity; Event Specific mitigation measures; Event Specific mitigation measures), Risk communication Strategy, Resumption of MG activities, Financial, and Legacy.

It is not necessary to provide input to all thematic topics below, authors may choose a single topic or a selection of topics to cover when drafting a case study of their mass gathering.

Topic	Key Case Study Evaluation
Risk Evaluation:	
<p><b>Overall key COVID-19 risk for MG</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe what kind of risk assessment tools were used by event organisers.</li> <li>✓ Describe the time periods when risk assessment for holding MG were performed and re-assessed throughout the pandemic phases.</li> <li>✓ Describe how the MG was influenced by the pandemic from the perspective of the different target groups (participants, spectators, staff, media). For example, was the MG modified in some way (i.e., cancellation/postponement/ shortened event duration/ decreased number of venues/ limited number of different participants)?</li> <li>✓ Was the decision on postponement/cancellation/ modification/resumption of MG based on risk-assessment and event taken place based on a risk-assessment or risk-approach?</li> <li>✓ Describe the time period when MG took place throughout the pandemic phases (WHO definitions for pandemic phases include: no cases, sporadic cases, clusters of cases, community transmission).</li> <li>✓ Describe how the modification of event context influenced the overall risk score (e.g. event modification from indoors to outdoors, modification from open-space events to designated seating events, shortened duration, implemented restrictions on social ceremonies and side gatherings associated with MG etc.).</li> <li>✓ Describe how the modification of event operations influenced the overall risk score (e.g. restriction of presence of participants or attendees from dedicated territories, including areas with community transmission or limitations on international participants; decreased number of participants or attendees; only essential staff allowed on-site, decreased number of event venues, of transportations, etc).</li> </ul>

## Risk mitigation measures:

### Understanding COVID-19, the country situation, and the mass gathering

- ✓ Did event organizers develop COVID-19 Contingency Plans using different scenarios of pandemic phases and community transmission level for the MG?
- ✓ Describe how the scenario settings for planned and implemented mitigation measures may have changed during different pandemic phases and with the implementation of different public health and social measures (PHSM) in the host country/city.
- ✓ Describe how the MG planning was influenced by the implementation of mitigation measures from the perspective of the different target groups (participants, spectators, staff, media). For example, established health screening, decreased number of event staff to essential only, requirement for self-isolation before event admittance etc.)
- ✓ Describe how the host country/city COVID-19 contextual situation correlated with the implementation of public health and social measures (PHSM) in relation to the MG. For example, were restrictions or mask mandates implemented that would influence the MG planning?
- ✓ Were there any situations where international or local teams or individual players refused to participate in the MG because of reported high transmission rates of COVID-19 in the host country/city and/or unsatisfactory implementation of public health and social measures (PHSM) and mitigation measures for the event?
- ✓ Describe how international and local travel restrictions impacted on MG planning and delivery.
- ✓ Describe the quarantine measures established on arrival to, and on departure from, the host country/city and how they impacted on the number of imported and exported COVID-19 cases associated with MG. Describe how the travel restrictions or quarantine measures influenced international participation for the MG.
- ✓ Describe the testing policy established on arrival to, and on departure from, the host country/city or the MG and how it impacted on the number of imported and exported COVID-19 positive cases associated with MG.
- ✓ Describe any case of event participant/team disqualification caused by travel restriction measures applied to these persons at the points of entry (no-show force majeure).
- ✓ Describe the measures in place to prevent transmission in closed-communities or "bubbles". Such measures may include increased hand hygiene, increased diagnostic testing, physical distancing etc. Were these measures considered successful in maintaining no or minimal, controlled levels of COVID-19 within the closed-community?including areas with community transmission or limitations on international participants; decreased number of participants or attendees; only essential staff allowed on-site, decreased number of event venues, of transportations, etc).

### Stakeholder and partner coordination

- ✓ Describe any key challenges or best practices in coordination between event organizers and the public health sector in the planning of this MG during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ Describe any formal or official collaboration or dialogue between event organizers and public health authorities leading up to and during the MG (e.g. establishing of inter-sectoral Medical Task Force or Round table, early planning for resumption of MG activities, re-opening of venues for attendees or spectators, evidence-based decision making on safe venue capacity after re-opening, capacity allocation, e.g. testing policy, etc).
- ✓ Describe key challenges or best practices in establishing contact tracing in cases associated with MG.
- ✓ Describe key challenges or best practices in coordination between event organizers and the security sector during the planning of this MG.
- ✓ Describe key challenges or best practices in relation to public transportation policy that influenced the MG.
- ✓ Describe key challenges or best practices in regards to mitigation measures for crowd management in the context of COVID-19 (e.g. implemented staggered arrival and departure, electronic entry control systems, spectators allocation etc).
- ✓ Describe any event organizers and/or interagency training exercises (e.g., drill, table-top, etc...) that occurred prior to the MG.

### Command and control

- ✓ Describe key challenges or best practices concerning inter-sectoral coordination, command and control of decision-making processes to cancel/postpone/re-start the MG (please mention the decision body in charge of taking the critical decisions on the event).
- ✓ Describe the level of decision-making independence of event organizers from the relevant public health authorities (e.g. decisions on scope of mitigation measures, on modification of event, on resumption of activities, on self-isolation and quarantine, on testing policy etc).
- ✓ Was the establishment of a new position (function) such as a COVID-19 MG Coordinator/Officer in the structure of event organisers essential in building the communication, reporting and surveillance system for MG delivery operations?
- ✓ Describe key challenges or best practices in the collection and use of personal data to enable contact tracing and assess personal risk profiles for event target groups (participants, staff, spectators, media).
- ✓ Describe any event regulations or policies which resulted in the unnecessary or inappropriate disqualification of event participants (e.g. testing decisions for athletes).
- ✓ Describe any situations of non-compliance to event regulations that resulted to disqualification of participants (e.g. athletes).
- ✓ Describe event regulations or policies which resulted in the refusal of attendee/spectator admittance to the venue (e.g. non-compliance behaviour on mask wearing or following physical distancing, requirement to present a negative PCR test, etc.).
- ✓ Provide event policy examples on how potential conflicts between MG organizers and spectators were managed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe practices used for data collection and identify key information pillars to be used further to develop MG lessons-learned (e.g. event rules, regulations, COVID-19 testing policies, sanitation protocols, missed protocols and tools, etc.) and templates to enable sharing data with counterparts.</li> <li>✓ Describe the most challenging problems for event organizers currently and the influence these issues place on successfully holding an MG (e.g. the COVID-19 testing requirements before, during and after the sporting event, disqualification of PCR positive athletes, federation procedures to replace the PCR positive disqualified athletes, reporting protocols in case of COVID-19 positive event participants of different target groups, established health-checks protocols etc).</li> <li>✓ Describe identified key-learnings and best practices from this pandemic for further trainings needs (e.g. developments of table-top scenarios).</li> <li>✓ Describe the use of technology in the modification and delivery of the event, and use of artificial intelligence (AI) for decision-making in the context of pandemic.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Event COVID-19 safety, preparedness and response plans</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe any cases where insufficient local public health response planning or lack of local health capacities/infrastructure influenced MG planning.</li> <li>✓ Describe potential challenges for other event organiser's Operational Functions (not Medical Function) in the context of mass gatherings operations during COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>✓ Describe established surveillance and situational awareness systems in place for the MG event during pandemic.</li> <li>✓ Describe key challenges and best practices for the implementation of infection prevention and control measures through all event venues.</li> <li>✓ Describe key challenges and best practices in laboratory testing policy for different event target groups that was implemented (availability of tests, processing time, tests validity, false negative and false positive results, re-testing, costs, requirement for "immunity passport" to participants, spectators).</li> <li>✓ Describe key challenges and best practices for contact tracing of COVID-19 cases associated with MG (online applications, hard forms, use of and sharing of personal data etc).</li> <li>✓ Describe the modifications of venue infrastructure and venue operations aimed to limit the virus transmission. Where these modifications believed to be successful in limiting transmission? How was this measured?</li> <li>✓ Describe new policies or capacities developed for MG planning that can be applicable for future disease outbreaks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communicating with Staff, Participants, Spectators, Media, and Stakeholders</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe developed strategies for dissemination of risk communication messages to the different target groups for the MG.</li> <li>✓ Describe key challenges faced by organizers to influence event participant behaviour for better commitment/ compliance of PHSM to limit COVID-19 transmission in the host country/city/venue (e.g. following physical distancing, staggered arrival, designated seating in venues, one-way movement, avoiding crowding and public transportation options, wearing masks, enhanced hand hygiene, respect restriction on side gatherings or sizes of gatherings etc.).</li> <li>✓ Describe the communication strategies that were developed and applied to facilitate the process of taking personal risk-based decision to attend MG by vulnerable persons, including event participants.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe the mobile applications or other technologies that were developed and used for COVID-19 response, their purposes, scope of functions, feedback options, planned data analysis.</li> <li>✓ Describe examples on how WHO, country or other develop infographic posters and flyers on basic preventive measures were used to communicate risks at community level.</li> <li>✓ Describe the development and dissemination of communication products developed by MG organizers (infographics, videos, training materials etc.) to communicate to event participants and community.</li> <li>✓ Describe the communication channels targeting event participants on actions required to perform in case of a person's contact with a COVID-19 case associated with MG (during and after the event).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public health awareness of COVID-19 before, during, and after the event</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe any methodology, models, applications, questionnaires etc. used to measure the level of public health awareness of COVID-19 among targeted event participants. Was this information used to inform policies for the MG?</li> <li>✓ Describe any methodology, applications, questionnaires etc. used to measure the level of commitment to public health and social measures among targeted event participants (e.g. resulted into change of personal behaviour) and potential concerns of noncompliance.</li> <li>✓ Describe how noncompliance was addressed by event organizers.</li> <li>✓ Describe the role of celebrities, trusted officials, and/or leaders in PH awareness of COVID-19 during the pandemic.</li> <li>✓ Describe examples of development and implementation by MG organizers of projects to raise public health awareness (e.g., such projects may be done in collaboration with WHO and other stakeholders).</li> <li>✓ Describe the event specific health promotion strategies used during the pandemic (e.g. enhancing the importance of seasonal influenza vaccination campaigns, information of COVID-19 vaccines research, information on vulnerable (at-risk) population, on the importance of physical activity during self-isolation and movement restrictions pandemic periods, etc.).</li> <li>✓ Describe any long-lasting effects of personal behaviour changes during the pandemic and impact on the host city community safety and behaviour culture.</li> <li>✓ Describe practices used for data collection and identify key information pillars to be used further to develop MG lessons-learned (e.g. event rules, regulations, COVID-19 testing policies, sanitation protocols, missed protocols and tools, etc.) and templates to enable sharing data with counterparts.</li> <li>✓ Describe the most challenging problems for event organizers currently and the influence these issues place on successfully holding an MG (e.g. the COVID-19 testing requirements before, during and after the sporting event, disqualification of PCR positive athletes, federation procedures to replace the PCR positive disqualified athletes, reporting protocols in case of COVID-19 positive event participants of different target groups, established health-checks protocols etc).</li> <li>✓ Describe identified key-learnings and best practices from this pandemic for further trainings needs (e.g. developments of table-top scenarios).</li> <li>✓ Describe the use of technology in the modification and delivery of the event, and use of artificial intelligence (AI) for decision-making in the context of pandemic.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Surge Capacity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe key challenges and best practices in relation to the availability and sufficiency of PPE (personal protective equipment) for targeted MG event staff (healthcare personnel, first-line non-medical personnel, participants) and spectators, if applicable, during different phases of pandemic response. Give examples, if any, of how PPE use by event staff impacted on virus transmission associated with the MG. Provide examples of how limited availability of PPE was addressed by event organizers.</li> <li>✓ Describe key challenges with event staff sufficiency, especially health care personnel.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Event Specific mitigation measures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Describe the effectiveness of implemented health screening procedures (for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19) and its cost effectiveness to decrease the risk of virus transmission associated with MG (e.g. temperature control, visual screening, pre-event health questionnaire, contact tracing, requirement to present a PCR test result before event admittance, etc).</li> <li>✓ Describe the COVID-19 testing policy (including the types of tests required – PCR, antigen, etc.) that was applied, and its impact on MG operations (e.g. athletes disqualifications, cases of teams technically defeated as a result of a no-show to the event because of players testing positive, examples of late cancellation of the event in the critical phase, delays to the event due to testing delays, issues with refusal to test, issues with false positives etc.).</li> <li>✓ Describe the MG event policy for participants (e.g. athletes, performers) testing positive with no symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (e.g. permission to participate in training sessions, competition activities and performances, isolation and transportation options, the frequency of testing/re-testing, direct contact tracing). Give examples, if any, of a policy, which resulted into a conflict of interests and participants discrimination.</li> <li>✓ Describe advanced health-check programmes implemented by sport federations or event organisers for event participants (e.g. athletes, religious MG attendees), which were considered high value/successful. Are such programmes considered for a further scientific research in collaboration with medical professional societies and associations (e.g. American Heart Association (AHA), European Respiratory Society (ERS), professional sports associations etc.)?</li> <li>✓ Describe implemented advanced health-check programs which should be included as an industry standard for pandemic legacy.</li> <li>✓ Describe policies relevant to hotel allocation that were considered successful in contributing to limiting interactions between event participants aimed to control virus transmission.</li> <li>✓ Describe implemented "bubble" concepts aimed to create a controlled safe space for MG event participants and limit interactions with external contacts.</li> <li>✓ Describe MG event mobility concepts to limit interactions between event participants.</li> <li>✓ Describe the methodology used to calculate the venue's capacity for spectators/fans for safe resumptions of venue's operations.</li> <li>✓ Describe the specific mitigation measures which should be included as an industry standard.</li> <li>✓ Describe any developed criteria that were used to refuse participation of any participants (based on personal health risks, e.g. the age, underlying health conditions, health-check results, or PCR tests results etc.).</li> </ul>

## Risk Communication Strategy

- ✓ Describe risk communication strategies to fight the infodemic (including misinformation and disinformation) in the context of COVID-19.
- ✓ Describe how risk communication strategies have changed over the course of the pandemic and/or throughout the course of the planning stages for the MG.

## Resumption of MG activities

### Criteria

- ✓ Describe the criteria for resumption of MG activities and the basis for decision-making to resume the MG:
  - Was it based on a specific pandemic phase?
  - Was it based on the epidemiological situation?
  - Was it based on host country/area contextual situation?
  - Was it based on easing of PHSMs and other restrictions?
  - Was it based on continuous risk assessments and implementation of mitigation measures?
  - Was it based on evidence-based criteria for safe resumption during pandemic time?
  - Did a component of the decision to resume the MG include financial justifications?
  - Did a component of the decision to resume the MG include political considerations?
  - Did a component of the decision to resume the MG include pressure from MG stakeholders or counterparts?
  - Did a component of the decision to resume the MG include pressure from community?
- ✓ Were criteria decided beforehand with set benchmarks or were decisions made in real time?

## Financial

### Budgeting

- ✓ Describe the financial burden related to the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures. What was the most burdensome measure? What was the least cost-effective measure to implement?
- ✓ Was the COVID-19 Event Contingency Plan financed with regular funds allotted for force-majeure situations or did MG organizers need significant financial support from other counterparts (e.g. sponsors, government)?
- ✓ Describe how financial decisions were made compared to social, political and public health decisions?
- ✓ Could these short-term investments made during COVID-19 pandemic produce a long-term benefit in terms of enhanced cleaning standards for venues, modified health screening procedures for event participants, increased personal responsibility of targeted participants for their health, increased compliance to basic preventive measures and behaviour changes (thus benefit to legacy)?
- ✓ Describe there any challenges and best practices related to the budgeting of the MG.

## Legacy

### Criteria

- ✓ Describe examples of how a risk-assessment approach for MGs based on the three major steps of risk evaluation, risk mitigation and risk communication, could bring short-term, medium-term and long-term benefits to involved communities, such as:
  - improvements in the public health system of the host country (e.g. infrastructure, PPE, IPC standards in healthcare facilities),
  - development of training materials for targeted MG event participants groups,
  - scientific research on new testing, vaccines, health screening programmes in the context of pandemic,
  - multi-sectoral information sharing and collaboration,
  - improvements in personal health behaviours,
  - "bubble" concept,
  - new Industry Standards,
  - fight with infodemic,
  - enhanced inter-sectoral coordination and establishment of decision-making bodies, e.g. medical task force, inter-sectoral round tables etc.,
  - host's ability to safely deliver future mass gatherings.

### References:

<Insert references >

### Acknowledgements:

<Insert acknowledgements of the individuals and institutions who contributed to this success story, both in terms of response, technical/financial/material support, or drafting of this success story>

## ADDENDUM B

### Profile and activity matrix

	AUSCYCLING	PSD INDIA	GRS SA	DRAGONES
<b>PROFILE</b>				
<b>Type of Grassroots Sports Organisations</b>	National Sport Organisation in Australia.	Social enterprise in India with a local Community Sports Programme in the slum areas of Bhubaneswar, Odisha.	International Sport-based adolescent health organisation with regional representation in South Africa.	Local football club in the Lavapiés neighbourhood of Madrid, Spain.
<b>Demographics</b>	Age and gender inclusive with a peak at age 40 and a smaller peak at age 17.	11–16-year-olds. Gender inclusive with a focus on girls.	9–18-year-olds. Gender inclusive.	5–18-year-olds. Gender inclusive with a focus on girls.
<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>	Inclusive.	Low with participation in the informal economic sector.	Low with participation in the informal economic sector.	Low with participation in the informal economic sector.
<b>COVID-19</b>				
<b>Outbreak and lockdowns 2020</b>	Limited number of cases. Cases contained through snap lockdowns.	Higher outbreak. Slower government action which resulted in a lockdown.	Lower outbreak. Government enforced a hard lockdown touted to be one of the strictest in the world.	Hard hit with Madrid the European epicentre of the crisis. Strict lockdown with curfews that prevented children under the age of 14 from leaving their homes for seven weeks.
<b>Impact on membership</b>	At first decreased then increased to level out. Membership fees stayed the same.	Decreased significantly. Waived nominal membership contribution.	Decreased. Does not charge a membership fee.	Paradoxical effect with significant increase in participants. Membership fees stayed the same.

<b>Financial Impact</b>	<p>The Australian Government provided support via JobKeeper and cashflow stimulus initiatives, which improved AusCycling net profit over the previous year and pre-pandemic.</p> <p>This support also allowed AusCycling to maintain its workforce.</p>	<p>A social enterprise model helped PSD overcome financial challenges.</p> <p>PSD income through service contracts increased and cross-subsidised other programmatic areas.</p> <p>Institutional grants, funding, and individual donations decreased.</p> <p>Utilised short-term savings to overcome financial strains during first three months of lockdown.</p>	<p>Reduced funding levels meant fewer participants were reached.</p> <p>Do not officially have access to reserves.</p> <p>As an affiliate of the global organisation GRS Inc., GRS SA has the additional support to cover shortfalls.</p> <p>Flexible funding from partners during COVID-19 was a game-changer.</p>	<p>Entrepreneurial orientation proved to have been an effective response. Did not benefit from any COVID-19 pandemic mitigation opportunities such as community emergency funds or support from the local government.</p> <p>Did not have any financial reserves upon which they could draw to overcome economic challenges imposed by COVID-19.</p> <p>Support came from within the community as well as other grassroots organisations.</p>
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## ACTIONS TAKEN

<b>Support provided to community during COVID-19 lockdown</b>	COVID-19 information through social media.	Hygiene kits and COVID-19 information pamphlets.	Care packs including food and sanitary products.	Established a food bank.
<b>Membership database</b>	Established a centralised online database as a result of a mega-merger during lockdown.	<p>Incomplete database complicated online programming.</p> <p>Reliant on schools for access to participants.</p> <p>Setting up of WhatsApp Groups to reach children.</p> <p>Obtained contact details thorough the delivery of hygiene packs one schools started reopening.</p>	<p>Incomplete database complicated online programming.</p> <p>Reliant on schools for access to participants.</p> <p>Established a multi-channel approach including one-way text messaging, WhatsApp group messaging and phone calls.</p>	Used WhatsApp groups to communicate with participants as well as in person networks.
<b>Connectivity</b>	Networks of digital technologies took grassroots sports participation in Australia to the next level with eSport participation.	<p>COVID-19 worsened the impact of digital exclusion.</p> <p>Families often share a single smartphone and rely on mobile data for connectivity.</p>	<p>COVID-19 worsened the impact of digital exclusion.</p> <p>Expensive mobile data and a crippling systemic electricity problem impacted activity.</p>	Focussed on activity on the ground instead of online programming activity.

<p><b>Online Activity</b></p>	<p>eSports activities on ZWIFT, RGT and FULGAZ.</p> <p>Coaching courses.</p> <p>Commissaire courses.</p> <p>Teaching of cycling skills by members of the Australian Cycling Team.</p> <p>Content pieces to support members.</p>	<p>Fun, simple, and effective sessions including yoga.</p> <p>Sport-based gender equality resources.</p> <p>Designing a digital literacy curriculum.</p> <p>Soft skills development.</p> <p>Leadership courses.</p> <p>Participating in a virtual #worldwalkingday</p>	<p>Fun, simple, and effective sessions including an open-source curriculum to address the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Psychosocial support.</p>	<p>None, due to concerns about screen addiction during the pandemic with a plethora on the ground activity as soon as restrictions lifted.</p>
<p><b>On the Ground Activity</b></p>	<p>The non-contact nature of cycling generally allows riders to maintain a distance of greater than 1.5m whilst riding to ensure safety and good sightlines. Members cycled as soon as they were allowed to.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Various sports activities including football and cycling.</p> <p>Visited Museums, parks and took excursions into nature settings.</p> <p>Established a book club.</p> <p>Engaged in craft and gardening activities.</p>

# ADDENDUM C

## Questionnaire and Responses

The Impact of COVID-19 on Grassroots Sport –Experiences from a constantly changing and challenging scenario

**1** Could you please share the following details?

- Your first name and surname
- Your position
- The name of your organisation, association, or club

<b>PSD</b>	Suheil F. Tandon Director-Founder Pro Sport Development
<b>GRS SA</b>	Sikhumbuzo Mnculwane Business Development Manager Grassroot Soccer South Africa (GRS)
<b>AusCycling</b>	Kipp Kaufmann General Manager - Events & Racing AusCycling
<b>Dragones</b>	Dolores Galindo Fontán Communication Manager CDE Dragones de Lavapiés

### Type of Organisation or Club

**2** For which type of grassroots sports organisation or club are you responding?

<b>PSD</b>	I am responding on behalf of Pro Sport Development (PSD). PSD is a social enterprise that works at the grassroots with children and young people, using sport as a tool for their holistic development. PSD's sports-based interventions at the grassroots primarily work with young people from underprivileged and marginalised backgrounds, with a focus on working with girls and delivering programs in mixed-gender groups.
<b>GRS SA</b>	Grassroot Soccer is a sport-based adolescent health organization, operating as a non-profit entity in South Africa. Founded in 2006 as a registered local Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) with a local Board of Directors, GRS is headquartered in Johannesburg and maintains a large satellite office in Cape Town and permanent SKILLZ centres in Alexandra and Khayelitsha as key programme delivery sites.
<b>AusCycling</b>	National Sport Organisation
<b>Dragones</b>	A grassroots football club

## The Impact of COVID-19 on Grassroots Sport –Experiences from a constantly changing and challenging scenario

### 3 Which of the following facility(s) do you use for your activities?

- A facility rented short-term by your organisation.
- A facility rented long-term by your organisation.
- A facility owned by your organisation.
- A public space.
- Other.

<b>PSD</b>	Other. Facilities of partner organisations, primarily community-based schools, where our programs are delivered.
<b>GRS SA</b>	Other. GRS usually operates in a combination of facilities: within South Africa, GRS operates Football for Hope centres that are owned by the organization and provides programmes at schools based on a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Basic Education.
<b>AusCycling</b>	A Public Space
<b>Dragones</b>	Other. 1 facility rented long-term; 2 facilities lent by the city council.

### 4 Which sport(s) or activities do your organisation provide?

<b>PSD</b>	PSD primarily uses a multi-activity, multi-sports approach to achieve various developmental outcomes with children and young people. These include fun games and activities based on various fundamental movement skills (such as hopping, running, zig-zagging, throwing, etc.) as well as different sporting disciplines. The sporting disciplines that PSD utilises within its programming includes Football, Cricket, Volleyball, Netball, Kho-Kho, Handball, Badminton, Basketball, Rugby and Table Tennis.
<b>GRS SA</b>	Grassroot Soccer South Africa (GRS) is an adolescent health organisation that uses the power of football to educate, inspire, and mobilise young people to live healthier lives and be agents for change in their communities. GRS brings experience in youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), combination HIV prevention, and treatment adherence, OVC support, family planning/reproductive health, positive youth development (PYD), and community mobilization.
<b>AusCycling</b>	Cycling coaching, participation, events
<b>Dragones</b>	Football for boys, girls and also adults (mostly mothers and parents) and fitness for women.

## Impact of COVID-19 on your Organisation or Club

### 5 How has the number of participants or members changed since the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions placed on grassroots sport?

<b>PSD</b>	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of PSD's planned projects and programs scheduled to start in April 2020 (start of the new academic year in Odisha, India) were postponed due to the lockdown, accompanying restrictions and subsequent closure of schools. Hence, we decided to take forward programming with children part of ongoing projects and as many children and young people as we could from previous program cohorts as well as existing partner schools. In the academic year 2019-20, we worked with a total of 1,664 young people of which 51% were girls. In the ongoing academic year of 2020-21 (impacted due to COVID-19), we are working with 659 young people of which 49% are girls. It should be noted that all programming delivered till now in the academic year 2020-21 has been through online mediums, rather than in-person instruction as was the case in the academic year 2019-20. This is because schools across India continue to be closed, other than for a limited number of students giving exams for 10th and 12th grades, and PSD accesses children and young people for its programming from schools.
<b>GRS SA</b>	GRS continued reaching vulnerable adolescents and young people with much needed sport-based health and life skills programming and achieve targeted impact for 2020. Due to reduced funding levels and covid restrictions GRS SA reached fewer participants than previously reached.
<b>AusCycling</b>	The overall number of participants decreased during lockdowns however it has increased dramatically since there has been easing of restrictions.
<b>Dragones</b>	COVID-19 had a paradoxical effect on our participant's number: it grew from 250 to 320. We were aware of the housing problems of our players and the psychological impact of the lockdown in small dark places, with too many people, plus the anxiety of not having economic support and the illness, so we started sooner than anyone writing and signing COVID-19 protocols, assuming the responsibility of implementing them safely.

### 6 How has the level of activity your organisation delivered changed since the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions placed on grassroots sport?

<b>PSD</b>	The frequency and level of activity delivered by PSD to its program participants has decreased since the onset of COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, PSD used to deliver 1-2 sessions of sports-based programming to each participant weekly, with each session lasting between 45-60 minutes. Moreover, this was complemented with summer sports camps as well as periodic sports tournaments and competitions that the children used to take part in. In the few weeks right after lockdown was imposed due to COVID-19, PSD was unable to deliver any programming to its participants, including
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	<p>including through online mediums, due to a variety of reasons such as lack of online access to participants, lack of capacity of trainers to deliver programming online as well as lack of digital resources to utilise. However, once PSD was able to provide online programming to its participants, the frequency of sessions have been once a week, with each session lasting 20-40 minutes, depending on the type of activity and level of effort by each participant. But, it should be noted that PSD has been unable to effectively monitor the online programming, as the weekly sessions are taken up by participants as per their suitable time and convenience.</p>
<b>GRS SA</b>	<p>As an organisation that does 90%+ of programming in groups and through schools or clinics, the impact of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, restrictions, closures, and economic fall out present a significant challenge to GRS project implementation. GRS has rapidly adapted its methodology and impact model to provide sustained SRHR support to youth, particularly for AGYW, in the new context of COVID-19. GRS adapted its implementation process for virtual/remote delivery in South Africa to continue to provide life-saving COVID-19 information, along with sustained SRHR and psychosocial support through three programme innovations: 1) Outbound Call Centre managed by Caring Coaches and Social Workers; 2) One-way SMS platform; 3) Multi-channel approach (including WhatsApp/SMS and phone calls). Additionally, in April 2020, GRS developed SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE, an open-source curriculum to address the COVID-19 pandemic in communities that GRS supports.</p>
<b>AusCycling</b>	<p>The sport has seen a variety of restrictions which have required a much greater level of virtual engagement however over time as the restrictions have eased most of the delivery has gone back to usual.</p>
<b>Dragones</b>	<p>During the lockdown we created a food bank and many families joined us in delivering food and supporting economically the initiative. Then we started delivering books too. In July we created a Summer Camp for 100 kids for 5 weeks. In September we started with our regular trainings but more kids and adults joined us because we were offering safe open air activities and also because other football organizations were not sure of what to do and didn't start.</p>

**7** Which kind of staff serves your organisation? E.g. paid staff, volunteers, full-time staff, part-time staff, administrators, coaches, ambassadors.

<b>PSD</b>	<p>We have a mix of staff working at PSD. These include coaches and coordinators who are directly involved in program delivery and monitoring as well as administrative and program staff who manage projects, reporting, documentation, finance, research, evaluations and communications. These core staff are supported by consultants, interns and volunteers who are engaged in specific projects and/or functions within the organisation. Most of these staff are full-time staff, however, we also have a few part-time staff. The entire team at PSD is overseen by the Director, who is supported by the Governing Board. The bulk of our programming and administration is handled by paid, full-time staff who form the core of the organisation's workforce, whereas volunteering roles support these core staff in specific aspects of PSD's work.</p>
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<b>GRS SA</b>	GRS has 27 paid South African staff and 57 Coaches who support our organisational mission and programmes.
<b>AusCycling</b>	Paid Staff, Volunteers (coaches, administrators, officials)
<b>Dragones</b>	Our staff are volunteers and part-time staff hired through projects.

**8** How has the number of volunteers servicing your organisation changed since the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions placed on grassroots sport?

<b>PSD</b>	The number of volunteers servicing PSD's programs have been marginal as compared to paid staff, even before COVID-19. However, we utilise a larger number of volunteers for specific aspects of our work, including events and tournaments. Even with this background, PSD's engagement of volunteers has decreased since the onset of COVID-19. We have had one intern during this period who has assisted our research and evaluation work remotely through online mediums. Other than this, we have had no volunteers assisting us in specific components of our work, including events and tournaments, which we usually organise regularly.
<b>GRS SA</b>	Due to fewer targets and changes in programming approach, GRS has fewer volunteers assigned to its program team.
<b>AusCycling</b>	The number of volunteers has stayed the same throughout the onset of COVID-19.
<b>Dragones</b>	We have to almost double them: 24 volunteers and 6 part-time staff hired by us or by partner organizations.

**9** How has the number of paid staff working for your organisation changed since the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions placed on grassroots sport?

<b>PSD</b>	At PSD, we have not reduced any paid staff since the onset of COVID-19. We have also not reduced salaries of staff during this period, however, there has been a freeze in the increment of salaries of all staff. But, having said this, at PSD we had expected to increase the number of paid staff working with us in 2020-21, which has not happened due to the postponement of various projects and programs. This means that our paid staff strength has remained constant in the past year, rather than the planned increase before the onset of COVID-19.
<b>GRS SA</b>	Since the first lockdown in South Africa, a total of 8 staff members have been retrenched nationally. Since then, GRS has since welcomed 20 new staff including through new USAID-funded programs.
<b>AusCycling</b>	There has been no change. This is a result of the government stimulus.
<b>Dragones</b>	It remained the same.

## Impact of covid-19 on the finances of your organisation or club

**10** How has your organisation or club coped with the impacts on income since the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions placed on grassroots sport?

<b>PSD</b>	PSD's income has been affected due to the onset of COVID-19, however, we have managed to generate sufficient income in order to maintain our paid staff and fund our (reduced) programming. Our projected income for financial year 2020-21 has decreased slightly from financial year 2019-20, but not more than 10%. PSD's ability to maintain its income during this challenging period has been made possible primarily due to our social enterprise model, which generates income not only through institutional grants and funding and individual donations, but also from service contracts. Though the percentage of institutional grants and funding as well as individual donations, especially for on-ground programming, has decreased significantly this past year, our income through service contracts has increased and cross-subsidized other programmatic areas of our organisation.
<b>GRS SA</b>	GRS's overall business model has not changed significantly in response to COVID-19. However, our implementation model has been adapted for remote/virtual delivery of SKILLZ curricula in order to continue to reach youth despite COVID-19, nation-wide lockdown, and ongoing restrictions.
<b>AusCycling</b>	Initially, significant work was done to have virtual opportunities for participants and engagement through these mediums. This has now reduced and we have worked through re-engagement.
<b>Dragones</b>	We were already working with very little money. As we pioneered the food bank we were able to channel solidarity from all the neighbourhood. We were able to help our players families, our refugees coaches and many other families in the community too. Together with "Teatro del Barrio" and "Micro for Sahara" we delivered 60.000 euros in food help till June. In September many families that joined us to play were middle class so they could pay the voluntary fee. We continue working with little money.

**11** Have you benefitted from any COVID-19 pandemic mitigation opportunities such as community emergency funds, support from local government, international funding or any other support schemes? Could you please share details?

<b>PSD</b>	Yes, PSD has benefitted from funds from various sources which have helped support our participants through the crisis. These have included crowdfunding campaigns, individual donations and private institutional grants that have been utilised to provide our participants from slum communities with hygiene kits and COVID-19 related informational material, along with informational material on basic physical activities to keep fit at home during the lockdown. These funds in response to COVID-19 enabled PSD to distribute hygiene kits including masks, soap, sanitary pads and information pamphlets to 2,902 children (45% girls) with the support of 10 partner schools. including through online mediums, due to a variety of reasons such as lack of online access to participants, lack of capacity of trainers to deliver programming online as well as lack of digital resources to
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	utilise. However, once PSD was able to provide online programming to its participants, the frequency of sessions have been once a week, with each session lasting 20-40 minutes, depending on the type of activity and level of effort by each participant. But, it should be noted that PSD has been unable to effectively monitor the online programming, as the weekly sessions are taken up by participants as per their suitable time and convenience.
<b>GRS SA</b>	Flexible funding from partners (including Nike, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, and MAC) during COVID-19 was a game changer, supporting GRS to rapidly adapt and innovate, including development of a COVID-19 curriculum, remote delivery implementation guidelines for programmes, and providing urgently needed psychosocial support for Coaches and staff during the pandemic. Continued support and flexibility in funding staff time, operational costs, research, innovation, and curriculum development, and adaptable youth-centred delivery models and communication contribute significantly to long-term sustainability and resilience by allowing GRS to improve cost recovery, ensure continuity of impact via our Coaches and proactively integrate learnings and innovations to support our mission and broader organisational outcomes. This support gives GRS the ability to adapt with the evolving pandemic landscape and corresponding health and government guidelines.
<b>AusCycling</b>	Yes - these have included club funding (\$2000), event funding (200,000+), staff support for salaries (staff wages), and emergency funding (200,000)
<b>Dragones</b>	No.

12

Does your organisation or club have any financial reserves upon which you can draw to overcome financial challenges imposed by COVID-19?

<b>PSD</b>	PSD had some short-term savings which we relied on to overcome the financial strains on our operations, especially in the three months right after the lockdown was imposed due to COVID-19. But, PSD does not have any longer term financial reserves that it can rely on.
<b>GRS SA</b>	GRS SA does not officially have reserves to access to overcome challenges. However, an affiliate of the global organisation GRS Inc., GRS SA has the additional support when needed to cover shortfalls and support implementation of programs.
<b>AusCycling</b>	Yes there have been a number of government initiatives to provide funding to overcome the challenges.
<b>Dragones</b>	No, no financial reserves just trust and tightened community bonds.

13

Since the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions placed on grassroots sport, have you taken any of the following actions to reduce costs for your participants or members?

- Extended the current membership.
- Refunded or reduced membership fees.
- Cancelled membership fees.
- Other. Could you please share details?

<b>PSD</b>	Other. The programs provided to our participants are free of charge, except for a very nominal contribution primarily to ensure they take ownership of the program. This nominal contribution was also waived in light of COVID-19.
<b>GRS SA</b>	Other. GRS does not charge any type of membership fee for participants.
<b>AusCycling</b>	Other. None
<b>Dragones</b>	they were already voluntary and low: 10 euros per month

**14** Since the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions placed on grassroots sport, have you taken any of the following actions to reduce expenditure of the organisation?

- Dismissed staff.
- Temporarily closed facilities.
- Temporarily ceased providing services.
- Other. Could you please share details?

<b>PSD</b>	Other. PSD has provided programming to a reduced number of participants through online modes only.
<b>GRS SA</b>	None
<b>AusCycling</b>	Temporarily ceased providing services
<b>Dragones</b>	None

**15** Which of the following actions have you taken to support your organisation in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Persuade sponsors to continue their support.
- Persuade members to continue to pay their fees.
- Reduce expenditure in line with reduced activity.
- Identify new funding opportunities.
- None of the above

<b>PSD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuade sponsors to continue their support.</li> <li>• Reduce expenditure in line with reduced activity.</li> <li>• Identify new funding opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>GRS SA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuade sponsors to continue their support.</li> <li>• Reduce expenditure in line with reduced activity.</li> <li>• Identify new funding opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>AusCycling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuade sponsors to continue their support.</li> <li>• Persuade members to continue to pay their fees.</li> <li>• Reduce expenditure in line with reduced activity.</li> <li>• Identify new funding opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Dragones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuade sponsors to continue their support.</li> <li>• Persuade members to continue to pay their fees.</li> <li>• Identify new funding opportunities.</li> </ul>

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Could you please share any recommendation on how grassroots sport can contribute to address and mitigate current and future challenges posed by COVID-19 to society and youth in particular.

<p><b>PSD</b></p>	<p>Grassroots sport is a very important cog within the sporting ecosystem, which unfortunately has been overlooked before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Grassroots sport has a crucial role to play to address several health and social challenges that have been highlighted due to the onset of COVID-19. Firstly, COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of keeping physically fit, as co-morbidities mainly in the form of non-communicable diseases have increased the chances of adverse impact of COVID-19. Grassroots sport not only engages young populations in structured and frequent physical activity, but ensures that they develop lifelong habits that keep them physically fit as they go into adulthood. Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the inequalities, discrimination and lack of access faced by several individuals and communities in society. Grassroots sport can be an excellent avenue to address many of these issues and link sport with enabling the achievement of several SDGs outlined by the United Nations. Moreover, grassroots sport can equip young people with relevant life skills that they can utilise beyond the sports field. Thirdly, the COVID-19 pandemic along with the various lockdowns have brought to light the issues of mental health and well-being affecting a vast proportion of our population, especially among the youth segment. Grassroots sport can assist in tackling these issues, improving mental health and well-being and developing social networks of support.</p>
<p><b>GRS SA</b></p>	<p>In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, nation-wide lockdown, and social distancing restrictions, GRS adapted its sport-based methodology and implementation process for virtual/remote delivery to provide life saving COVID-19 information along with sustained SRHR and psychosocial support and access to services for vulnerable youth. Through a multi-channel approach with remote implementation guidelines and a new Call Centre Model featuring programme delivery via group calls (~10 participants) as well as Whatsapp, SMS and individual follow ups, GRS Coaches continue to engage young people in Alexandra through evidence-based SKILLZ programmes along with our newly developed SKILLZ COVID-19 RESPONSE curriculum in order to educate and sensitise young people on COVID-19 while continuing to support their SRHR needs during the pandemic. GRS's programme delivery and training can be adapted to virtual methods, including telephone, TV, radio, SMS, WhatsApp, and Facebook, depending on youth connectivity levels (e.g., access to cell phones), and the SKILLZ COVID-19 curriculum has been integrated across existing SKILLZ programming. GRS will continue to utilise the Call Centre platform, Whatsapp and SMS innovations for remote programming delivery in the near future, and we continue to explore long-term integration of these and other innovations within our regular offer to reflect beneficiaries' needs and desires while taking into account accessibility of digital platforms among our target beneficiaries. Thus far, GRS is pleased to report a positive response to our remote programming adaptations based on feedback from youth, parents and key stakeholders, as well as demonstrated in our routine monitoring and evaluation.</p>
<p><b>AusCycling</b></p>	<p>- policies and processes for online and virtual participation - safe delivery practices (considering health implications further)</p>

<b>Dragones</b>	Grassroots sport should be able to provide healthy links, community help, care and moreover hope. Digital training was not an option for us during the lockdown (houses were too small) so we started a reading club. Open air and team sport are safe and cannot be substituted and we have witnessed that screen addiction is a real danger. Material help and specially food was suddenly also a big priority since in our city mostly all the food banks are managed by old people (with higher risk of death by COVID-19). The knowledge that we had from our players allowed us to take very fast and effectively the steps to help them and, knitting networks in the community, to all the neighbourhood.
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**17**

Would you be willing to share a few photos and/or video of your work, in-field training or activities showcasing what measures you took since the onset of COVID-19? Could you please e-mail these to [magda.delange@theicss.org](mailto:magda.delange@theicss.org) due to the limited functions on MS forms to upload from outside of the ICSS?

<b>PSD</b>	Yes, will share via email.
<b>GRS SA</b>	n/a
<b>AusCycling</b>	n/a
<b>Dragones</b>	Yes



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