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The Implications of COVID-19 for Community Sport and Sport for Development

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Executive Summary

This paper examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community sport (CS) and sport for development (SfD) in Commonwealth countries. The authors conducted an extensive review of literature from Commonwealth and other websites, including the Commonwealth Coronavirus Resource Centre; reviewed programme documents of seven SfD agencies operating in at least 13 Commonwealth countries; and interviewed eight academic and professional colleagues with expertise in Community Sport and SfD across the Commonwealth.

Our major findings are as follows:

- Few countries were prepared for the pandemic, especially in the areas of CS and SfD.
- The pandemic exposed the underfunding and neglect of physical education and CS, which resulted in the sector being unable to serve as a significant source of resilience for country populations.
- Participation in sport and physical activity fell significantly as a result of the pandemic, with a likely severe impact on mental health and general well-being; the pandemic exacerbated the already lower participation of girls and women.
- Many sports organisations, including their athletes, responded with immediate cooperation with closures and other public health measures; volunteering in emergency centres; preventative health messaging about hand-washing, physical distancing and the importance of ongoing physical activity; and the repurposing of facilities for emergency shelters and food depots.
- Many local governments and sports organisations developed innovative approaches to the changed circumstances the virus necessitated, creating programming that could be delivered online and by traditional media such as radio and loudspeakers; modifying and creating new activities appropriate to restricted environments; closing streets and opening new bike lanes to enable physically distanced walking, running and cycling; and working with public health experts to develop safe 'return to play' guidelines.
- The preoccupation with high-performance sport, at a time of severe financial challenge across the entire sports sector, created additional barriers to what could be accomplished without significant, targeted public reinvestment in CS and SfD.

We recommend that Commonwealth sports ministers:

1. Immediately begin planning for a second wave of COVID-19 and future pandemics with strategies for CS and SfD that include consultations for community mobilisation, prevention measures, programme adaptations, return to play guidelines and appropriate training. The Commonwealth Secretariat should play a coordinating role in the development of such planning and training.
2. Immediately strengthen investments in CS and SfD as preventative health measures, in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A first step would be to implement 'common indicators to measure the contribution of physical education, physical activity and sport to prioritised SDGs and targets,' as already agreed to in Action 2 of the Kazan Action Plan. Governments should plan to fund, monitor and evaluate CS and SfD as essential components of national population health.
3. Ensure the sports sector 'builds back better' by applying a gender equality lens to all ongoing planning and investment.
4. Be directly involved in the activation of pandemic planning for further COVID-19 waves, and for any future pandemics, to ensure coordination. Ministers should communicate clearly with the sports sector on how it could be engaged beneficially.
5. Take the lead in working with public health authorities and sports bodies in updating, communicating and coordinating uniform, safe return to play guidelines.
6. Ensure as much as possible that the public space innovations introduced in urban areas during COVID-19, such as the street closures and additional bike lanes that have enabled safe walking, running and cycling, are made permanent.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAC	Coaches Across Continents
COVID	19 - novel coronavirus (formerly known as 2019-nCoV)
CS	Community Sport
CUI	Canadian Urban Institute
PYDF	Positive Youth Development Foundation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SfD	Sport for Development
SDP	Sport for Development and Peace
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the frailty of and the urgent need to redesign the social contract (*Financial Times*, 2020; *The Lancet*, 2020). Elderly people in long-term care facilities; low-income individuals, disproportionately women, working in low-paid, essential jobs that expose them to risk; or those unemployed as economies have shut down have been most likely to suffer and die from COVID-19 (Dennis, 2020; Marmot, 2020). Countries with impoverished health systems and weak economies have suffered most from the virus.

The social inequality exacerbated by the pandemic has drawn increased attention to the medical and social determinants of health. The medical model focuses on the immediate needs of those infected, including the development of a vaccine as the primary solution. The social determinants perspective considers the impact on the entire population, not just those with the disease. In keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the social determinants perspective applies an equity lens to ensure no one is left behind. 'Socio-economic status is the strongest determinant of health. Long-term economic harm may have greater health consequences than COVID-19' (Goel, 2020).

Socio-economic status is also the strongest determinant of participation in recreational sport and physical activity. It is well documented that such

activity is important for individual and population health. Government austerity measures in many Commonwealth countries since the 1980s have increasingly removed public sector support to physical education in schools and recreational sport and physical activity in communities. Freely available sport has been replaced by various pay-to-play initiatives by the public and private sectors and non-governmental organisations.

The latter, including sport for development (SfD) organisations, supported by sponsorships, corporate social responsibility and charitable donations, have moved in to provide cheaper alternatives to comprehensive state programmes. These alternatives may well benefit those they reach but they cover only a fraction of the population and are rarely sustained. Many rely primarily on well-meaning but inexperienced youthful volunteers. All this has meant falling rates of participation and social systems that are much more fragile. In the face of the pandemic, school and community sport have provided much less resilience than they could have done.

These issues bring a number of long-standing concerns of Commonwealth governments into sharp relief: the scourge of global inequality; the need for evidence-led approaches to policy development and government action; and the importance of a strong, well-funded and coordinated public sector.

It is in this context that this paper examines the policy implications of COVID-19 for community sport (CS) and SfD. After outlining our sources of data, we present and discuss the evidence in five areas:

- COVID-19 prevention measures in CS;
- Mobilising CS to respond to the pandemic;
- Establishing guidelines for return to activity;
- Programme modifications; and Possibilities for building back better.

We conclude with a discussion and recommendations.

2. Evidence

2.1 Prevention measures introduced in sport

Government policy responses to the pandemic varied, depending on their concern about COVID-19 spreading to their country or the appearance of cases. Some countries responded quickly in anticipation of the pandemic (e.g. Botswana, New Zealand) and have benefited from this rapid response by having relatively few cases. Some responded more slowly and have seen higher rates of confirmed cases and deaths and protracted lockdown measures.

Most cases imposed a state of national emergency and introduced similar national policies. These national policies included the following:¹

- Non-essential businesses and services were closed down, and those who were able to were encouraged/required to work from home.
- Quarantines were imposed on those who tested positive, on those arriving from another country and on vulnerable facilities such as long-term care homes.
- Physical distancing rules were introduced (usually 2 m) and enforced.
- Wearing surgical masks was encouraged in many countries, and required in some countries and locations.
- All public events that brought large numbers of people into close proximity were postponed or cancelled (e.g. schools, concerts, sports events, theatres).
- Limits were imposed on the number of people who could congregate in a public space.
- Some national borders were closed to non-essential travel, and bans on non-essential travel were imposed in some countries (e.g. Wales banned recreational travel into national parks; people in Scotland are still restricted, at the time of writing, to a range of 8 km from their home).
- Public health messages about hand-washing/sanitising and physical distancing were prominent, as was information about the way

1 <https://www.thecommonwealth.io/coronavirus-response-centre/>

the virus might be transmitted via surfaces, human contact and aerosolised droplets, and about COVID-19 symptoms.

Because this is a new virus, and new information is constantly becoming available, policies and messaging have been adapted as necessary (e.g. design and use of masks).

In most cases, sports have followed national policies (although in North America professional sports leagues began to close before the introduction of national policies).

The following outlines the policy measures introduced in sports at the start of the pandemic. Section 2.3 covers the way policy measures changed at different stages of the pandemic.

2.1.1. Policy and guidelines on the cessation of Community Sport activity

As noted, national and local policies were applied to CS resulting in, in most cases, a complete cessation of sports and recreational physical activity. For example, McCree (personal communication, 17 June 2020) believes that 'COVID-19 may have had a common impact on stopping all sport activity on each [Commonwealth Caribbean] island' before going on to outline his local situation:

"The need for physical distancing and other pandemic policies brought about a complete disruption of sport and physical activity and, in some cases, a switch to online forums"

Participation in sport, recreation and physical activity... came to a virtual halt in Trinidad and Tobago from around the first week of March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic consistent with the global pattern. In particular, competitive sport was hardest hit as a result of the cessation of sport competition at the school, community and national level across all sports. Gym attendance also came to a halt. An informant in Pakistan noted 'no community sport, except for golf clubs where members continue to play' (personal communication, 16 June 2020).

In Canada, some restrictions varied by region but in general all CS and most recreational activity was cancelled. City parks and children's playgrounds;

walking, running and cycling trails; provincial parks; and national parks were all closed. For example, 46 of the 65 municipalities tracked had closed their playgrounds, and 27 had closed their park amenities (Canadian Urban Institute, 2020).

In sum, the need for physical distancing and other pandemic policies brought about a complete disruption of sport and physical activity and, in some cases, a switch to online forums. The 'lockdown' led to the instant disruption of recreation, competition and people's immediate social networks.

While news agencies have focused on professional and international sport (e.g. postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics), much less attention has been paid to the effects on CS and recreation.

In some places, to ensure that physical activity would continue, sport agencies issued directions and guidelines to ensure it did not come to complete halt. Instructions included exercising at home and reducing social contact to a bare minimum. Furthermore, people were allowed to walk, run or cycle alone or with the members of their household (Sport Singapore, 2020). Eventually, as Section 3.3 notes, most countries began to realise that restrictions on physical activity could themselves be damaging to health, and began to introduce cautious guidelines allowing physically distanced physical activity.

2.1.2. Closure and repurposing of sport facilities

National and local policies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 were enforced by the closure of facilities and public recreation spaces. Some facilities that were closed because of the pandemic were repurposed for community needs. For example, the outdoor lobby at the Marion Jones Sports Complex in Belize is being used as a food pantry distributing flour, sugar, and water to community members in need (Lee et al., 2020). Similarly, in Toronto, Canada, Maple Leaf Sport and Entertainment, the company that owns most of the major professional teams in the city, has used its facilities as shelters and depots for food distribution.

In Buenos Aires, Argentina, the city's sports facilities and Olympic Park were repurposed to provide temporary physically distanced shelter for nearly 2,000 homeless people. And in Wuhan, China, sports stadiums, gymnasiums and exhibition centres were temporarily transformed into 16

hospitals (JLL, 2020). Even some manufacturers of sports equipment repurposed for the pandemic. Bauer, a Canadian company manufacturing ice hockey and lacrosse equipment, retooled to manufacture medical face shields (Kimelman, 2020).

2.1.3 Restrictions placed on Community Sport

Section 3.1.1 outlined the restrictions put in place for CS as national pandemic policies were introduced. Section 3.3 outlines the modification and relaxation of these restrictions in detail.

2.1.4. Summary, questions and recommendations

- For future planning on the repurposing of sports facilities, it will be important to involve both local and national governments and the owners/managers of sports facilities in negotiations on how to repurpose facilities for specific uses in anticipation of a second or third wave of COVID-19 or future pandemics. Similar negotiations could be conducted with manufacturers in terms of retooling to produce emergency equipment. Such negotiations should take into account likely areas of greatest need.
- Again, in terms of future planning for the cessation of CS and recreational physical activity outdoors, best practices from COVID-19 on adapting activity programming to online use should be compiled and made widely available in the Commonwealth. These should include adaptations made to online sources for those with little/no access, such as through the distribution of .pdf material, and the use of widely available television channels and/or radio stations to provide information on continuing activity at home or in safe ways (physically distanced) outdoors.
- The immediate implementation of these measures may help combat the consequences on physical and mental health of a decline in activity.

2.2 Mobilising the Community Sport sector to support the primary response to COVID-19

The lack of preparedness for the pandemic, in societies at large as well as in the CS and SfD sectors, made mobilising the CS sector to support the primary response to COVID-19 quite difficult. Mobilising the CS sector was not a high priority for public health agencies, and any support seems to have been initiated by the CS sector itself. Such support is admirable, since

the CS sector itself has been stretched in its attempts to ensure the safety and income continuity of employees, to close facilities and to communicate to diverse stakeholders. There have been many heroic stories of CS providing emergency support and initiatives to provide those in need with access to shelter, food and personal protective equipment (PPE).

2.2.1. Supporting official community health messaging

London Sport (2020) in the UK and Oscar Foundation (2020) in India have been distributing information on disease prevention, the importance of hand-washing, the use of masks and so on. Pro Sport Development (Bhargava, 2020) has helped in the distribution of PPE in Odisha, India. CAC (2020) has produced a new Purposeful Play curriculum that seeks to educate people on best practices to deal with COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.

The Safer Communities Programme (affiliated with Fight for Peace) in Kingston, Jamaica, 'is also supporting state responses, and, in partnership with the National Parenting Support Commission, UNICEF [the United Nations Children's Fund] and a private sector foundation, has set up a coronavirus helpline for parents.' This is a unique situation of collaboration between the SfD sector and other partners to support government initiatives, facilitated through effective existing communication lines and ways of working (Fight for Peace, 2020).

Right to Play (2020), which has programmes in seven Commonwealth countries, has been using these to teach and encourage hand-washing, social distancing and other hygiene practices to keep children safe, on the basis of experience gained during the Ebola epidemic in 2014. In non-

Commonwealth Burundi, where schools stayed open, Right to Play distributed soap and buckets to encourage frequent hand-washing.

Right to Play has also been working to keep children learning where schools were closed, with appeals to parents and elders to arrange some sort of formal learning situation, especially for children and young women. In Tanzania, these appeals are made through a public address system mounted on the back of a truck. Right to Play also provides remote instruction in life skills and educational games, through radio (Tanzania) and online. Part of this involves reaching out to teachers in disadvantaged communities to help them better deliver what they do. Finally, efforts have been directed towards keeping children mentally strong: Right to Play is drawing on its experience in conflict zones to interact with children, parents and teachers to 'deliver health and psychosocial support activities', through modifications to its 'PLAY' programme, so that children can organise games themselves.

As noted, a general lack of preparedness for the pandemic has been a central feature across society and the sport system. However, as the examples above show, CS and SfD actors have successfully delivered interventions to support official and community health messaging across the Commonwealth.

Factors in this success include:

- The provision of clear, timely and available public health advice;
- Existing communication channels and partnership networks between government and CS and SfD and activation of these in response to COVID-19 to reach communities;
- Experience in dealing with previous pandemics (e.g. Ebola in 2014) or other states of emergency.

2.2.2. Redeploying Community Sport organisations and volunteers to assist with community service

There are several examples of individuals, organisations and governments redeploying CS organisations and staff to assist with community service. For example, Grant Jarvie (personal communication, 17 June 2020) pointed out that in Scotland there are:

... some genuine good philanthropists popping up with a focus on sport helping communities. I have been pleasantly amazed about what some clubs have been doing, not solely, but particularly in areas of poverty. I am Chair of a local authority sport, culture and leisure trust which is helping distribute 1,000 plus meals a day for school children whose families would struggle with evening meal provision.

Ben Sanders (personal communication, 16 June 2020) in South Africa wrote that many SDP [sport for development and peace] actors are being innovative, distributing food and other vouchers, helping even with medical supplies and testing. These include Grassroot Soccer who developed a COVID-19 curriculum, Amandla EduFootball and Whizzkids United who are helping with COVID testing, I believe.

In India, the Oscar Foundation (2020) distributed essential supplies to families in late March, and Fight for Peace (2020) has been running food programmes for children and families.

In addition, and in response to school closures, Safer Communities Programme in Jamaica 'has adapted to deliver programmes online and is developing training materials to facilitate remote self-paced learning' (Fight for Peace, 2020). The private sector has also assisted CAC to help with education. In India, and several non-Commonwealth countries NIKE provided funding to CAC to provide urgent relief while creating a long-term running play-based educational pathway for children during and after COVID-19. NIKE wanted to do more than just encourage local organisations to distribute masks, food, soap, etc. So they are partnering with us to work out how to deliver play-based education during COVID-19 in addition to emergency needs. This includes small-sided games, at-home education through play, and playing safely in larger groups' (Burgess, personal communication, 23 June 2020).

At government level, in Toronto, non-essential city staff, many from the Parks and Recreation Department, were given the choice of redeployment or unpaid leave; many chose redeployment and worked in areas such as long-term care or senior citizens' homes (Rider, 2020). In Belize, staff from the Ministry of Youth Education and Sports, together with sport coordinators from

the Belize National Sport Council, organised and ran the food pantry mentioned in the previous section (Lee et al., 2020).

2.2.3. *Utilising sports clubs/leagues' social networks to maintain community connections*

StreetGames (2020) provides numerous examples of an SfD organisation utilising its social networks to extend its mandate during the pandemic in order to reach out to families and older people in addition to youth.

These responses further highlight the role CS plays in community networks and understanding the unique contexts and specific needs of the community. The value of community-based responses by sport has been noted in other disaster contexts, such as in the Christchurch Earthquake (New Zealand), when CS played a critical coordination role and acted as a support network for children facing significant secondary stressors as a result of the closure of schools and the breakdown of community infrastructure in particular (Rutherford, 2020).

Finally, professional athletes in various countries stepped up to help by paying salaries for cleaners and other minimum wage workers who were laid off and by making large donations to front-line charities. Of particular note is the intervention of Marcus Rashford, a Manchester United player, who successfully campaigned for a continuation of free school lunches for impoverished school children during the summer months.

2.2.4. *Summary, questions and recommendations*

Some valuable contributions from CS and SfD organisations have been seen in terms of i) supporting official community health messaging, ii) redeploying organisations and volunteers and iii) activating community networks.

Critical steps to ensure Community Sport and Sport for Development organisations can continue to deliver this response and maximise the positive impact are as follows:

- Ensure clear, accessible and timely public health messaging;
- Support CS and SfD organisations to build safe and supportive community networks;
- Recognise the valuable role and platform of sport organisations in the community and ensuring they are recognised in response, resourcing and long-term sustainability planning;
- Consider and rethink the role of SfD organisations in terms of their coordination, regulation and funding (expanded in Section 4)

2.3 Return to activity guidelines

'Return to activity' or 'return to play' refers to efforts to re-establish sport and physical activity following the easing of restrictions and reduced threat from COVID-19. Most attention to (and media coverage on) return to play has been at the professional sport level, and at the level of high-performance international sport such as the Olympics. This is motivated primarily by financial concerns – profits, salaries, associated work for wage earners and media contracts. At the CS level, the emphasis on return to play has been driven by the desire to do so safely, and to restart the economy (clubs, gyms, dojos and so on).

There has been some tension in these two efforts. People are anxious to return to work and recreation, and governments recognise that permitting a return to activity would be popular.

At the same time, public health and medical officials have warned against 'jumping the gun' here, and governments are aware that there are risks associated with making the decision to return to activity too early. The re-imposition of restrictions, as has happened in some places because of the reappearance of COVID-19, is unpopular with citizens and may result in less compliance than during the original lockdown. Careful and staged 'return to activity' policy frameworks, such as those in Australia, Canada, Scotland, Singapore and South Africa, are generally related to a larger

policy framework associated with the reopening of businesses and services, and a return to work and while each new relaxation of restrictions is important and popular, it is equally important to remain aware that it may be necessary – and difficult and unpopular – to return to a previous stage.

2.3.1. Criteria and support to ensure a safe and well-managed return to Community Sport

Most return to activity guidelines have been developed under the guidance of medical officers of health and public health experts (e.g. Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Jamaica, 2020). They often have established criteria such as a specified number of days without an increase in new cases of COVID-19 ('flattening the curve') or an ongoing reduction in the number of new cases.

Initially, during the height of the pandemic, most activities took place in people's residences. This included exercise, online leadership of activities such as yoga, dance, SfD-led activities online and the use of social media platforms such as TikTok. StreetGames (2020) talks of 'using TikTok to share funny ways of staying active at home; e.g., using a frying pan to practice tennis serves #SERVES (London Sports Trust).' Families fortunate enough to have gardens were able to engage in a wider range of activities.

For countries and regions where there was a hard lockdown, the first stages of restriction allowed for physical activity, usually solitary or physically distanced walking, running and cycling. Measures to reopen parks, and new infrastructure such as street closures and new bicycle paths, seem, at least anecdotally, to be encouraging new forms of physical activity. Research by Sport New Zealand (2020) supports this: almost 40 per cent of people started or restarted sports activities during lockdown and increased participation was seen in walking, cycling and running/jogging reported in April 2020 compared with previous years.

Participation in other sports saw a different response. In Ontario, for example, prior to Stage 1, playing sports such as cricket, golf or basketball could result in a significant fine (Bascaramurty, 2020).

As some countries moved toward reopening in a phased manner, certain sports and games were allowed even as others remain restricted.

The next stage, in some countries and regions, was driven by return to work/return to business as much as by the return to activity. And it was driven by demand from participants and business owners; the class-based and commercial or non-profit forms of activity approved suggest effective lobbying on the part of businesses and participants. In the Stage 1 reopening of the Province of Ontario, the first mentioned were seasonal businesses, activities and services such as golf driving ranges, recreational services at marinas, rod and gun clubs and cycling tracks. Activities included water sports on outdoor bodies of water (not in swimming pools), racquet sports with a net, track and field, gymnastics and figure skating, and animal sports such as horse racing. Each of these came with specific modifications about physical distancing and handling equipment (Government of Ontario, 2020a). In Stage 2, which began on 8 June, swimming pools were included, as were outdoor team sports, both with a great many restrictions and limitations (e.g. team sports are to be physically distanced, for training only, with no scrimmages or games) (Government of Ontario, 2020b).

"Begin with meeting the requirements set by governments for a safe environment, preparation for a limited reopening where shared space is reduced, a quick response in the face of another wave or outbreak and sustaining these practices to ensure the health of all participants and others present."

The requirement to wear masks is relaxed for people undertaking strenuous physical activity but other considerations remain. To ensure a safety at clubs, it is necessary to limit shared equipment as far as possible. Furthermore, it is mandatory to ensure regular sanitation of facilities and to adapt spaces to ensure physical distancing. This will pave the way for the return of CS.

National sports bodies have also developed return to activity guidelines. For example, Sport Australia (2020) has a four-stage plan for the return of professional and community sport. Every organisation is mandated to appoint a COVID-19

safety coordinator, who will oversee the four elements for the process of return – Plan, Prepare, Respond and Recover.

The process is to begin with meeting the requirements set by governments for a safe environment, preparation for a limited reopening where shared space is reduced, a quick response in the face of another wave or outbreak and sustaining these practices to ensure the health of all participants and others present.

Other members of the Commonwealth also have protocols in place for a gradual reopening of facilities but the situation remains in limbo at the moment. Some announcements appear to be more informal. Ben Sanders (personal communication, 16 June 2020) wrote from South Africa, 'Recently, our president announced that non-contact sport can resume fully and that training for contact sport can also resume, though dates have not been confirmed.' Others are much more specific, such as the continually updated guidelines provided by Ottawa Public Health (2020).

2.3.2. *Summary, questions and recommendations*

A smoother return to activity has been seen in countries with limited cases of COVID-19, such as New Zealand. This has been supported by the provision of clear health guidelines, reliable and regular reporting on case numbers and the creation of clear stages and associated action plans. Based on this review and qualitative research, the following recommendations are provided for governments to support a smooth and safe return to activity.

- Clear public health guidelines, including explicit stages or alert levels;
- Creation of sports sector frameworks and guidelines for different levels of activity, based on public health advice and working with public health officials;
- Future planning advice that includes the provision of guidelines for safe physical activity even during lockdown and during stages of high restriction;
- Provision of reasonable means to monitor and enforce the guidelines at each stage

2.4 Modifications to programme design and delivery

As in the previous subsection, return to activity guidelines generally entail a staged process, with gradually decreasing modifications towards the goal of 'normal' activity.

2.4.1. *Modifications*

Shift to online formats: The most significant modification has been the shift to online formats for instruction, coaching, exercise leadership and so on, and the associated limitations contingent on internet availability. As Pro Sport Development (personal communication, 21 June 2020) explains, it was initially at a loss as COVID-19 restrictions came into place. But over time it was able to develop online programmes that could be used in future. However, this is resource- and time-intensive: filming, editing, and sharing videos on various online platforms can be an onerous task and requires technological knowledge and IT capacity.

The comfort and ease with which these programmes can be accessed varies across regions, and often by class, gender, ability and age, among other factors. The problem is exacerbated by the unequal availability of high-speed internet and smartphones from country to country and region to region across the Commonwealth (UN DESA, 2020). Despite widespread advocacy for the internet as a democratising and equalising force, lack of access may further reproduce social inequalities. As such, it is also important to consider other modifications and modes of delivery during lockdown conditions.

Active Mauritius activity programming is designed for seniors, and, while broadband access is quite good, many of the participants are not familiar with communications technologies. A personal communication (17 June 2020) noted that 'for that issue we are still thinking how but we might ask the carer of the elder to help, or we have asked the IT guys to make it as elderly friendly as possible.' Further modifications are being introduced to the online modification, including the introduction of 'downloadable infographics of all the exercises' to take advantage of the fact that 'all the elders have a quite recent mobile phone nowadays' and can download the infographic and use it. If access is still a problem, the plan is to work with the different senior citizen councils to provide the downloads

and printing of the infographics. Finally, Active Mauritius has a one-hour time slot daily on the local TV sports channel (YS-tv); it is 'planning to have video sessions, live or recorded, delivered through this channel and have the elders tune in at the appropriate time.'

Pro Sport Development (personal communication, 21 June 2020) in Odisha, India, noted the scarcity of smartphones and broadband internet as a major obstacle in modifying its CS initiative to online delivery. However, in partnership with the Martha Farrell Foundation, Pro Sport Development has produced *Kadam Badhaate Chalo*, an initiative to spread awareness on sexual violence against women and girls. Its online programming has been able to reach children across India and involve them in building campaigns through Zoom. This exercise offers a glimpse into what may be possible if internet access is more equitably distributed.

Shift to physical distancing: A second key modification has been the adaptation of activities to honour the physical distancing guidelines (established at 2 m in many places). This is leading to changes in the way sports are played, and has the potential to enable the emergence of new forms of games, sports, dances and exercise systems that respect distancing guidelines. One of the authors of this paper (BK) has made extensive observations in Toronto city parks since they reopened and has seen growth in such innovative forms of activity. Also, there are examples of SfD organisations developing new games and drills that maintain physical distancing. For example, CAC's series of soccer-based game drills also provides information about staying free of COVID-19.²

Other modifications: Finally, it may be necessary to make other modifications to programming in order to take account of the current circumstances. For example, Right to Play aims to keep children mentally strong during the COVID-19 pandemic by 'drawing upon their experience in conflict zones to interact with children, parents and teachers to "deliver health and psychosocial support activities," through modifications to their 'PLAY' program so that children can organize games themselves' (Right to Play, 2020).

2.4.2. Key considerations for enhanced online and virtual delivery

The previous subsection highlighted two key considerations for enhanced and virtual delivery. The first concerns internet access and equipment to establish access; without such access, it is not possible to make the shift from face-to-face to online programming.

The second concerns participants' familiarity with the technologies of internet access; if potential participants are unwilling or unable to learn, then it is necessary to find 'work-arounds' such as those under consideration by Active Mauritius.

2.4.3. Summary, questions and recommendations

Based on this, the following considerations are recommended when modifying programmes:

- Identify target populations and ensure any modifications are made with their needs and contextual factors in mind, including access to and familiarity with technology.
- Consider the local context, cultural factors and trends to support modification to delivery, such as the rise in digital innovation and the use of mobile technology across Africa, and in Kenya in particular. Explore low-cost production channels and use existing online infrastructure such as international, national, regional and local sport networks and platforms (e.g. All India Football Federation's #FitWithIndianFootball campaign) (PTI, 2020).
- Ensure that modifications take into account and address the current circumstances and needs in relation to the pandemic and improved hygiene measures.
- Enhance risk assessment protocols and modifications to improve physical distancing during activity.
- Take into account the need for effective impact measurement and a results-based approach to the delivery of modifications.

2 Note that some exercise physiologists in Canada, who have not been consulted on the physical distancing guidelines, are suggesting that 2 m is not enough for people who are being physically active, and that 8–10 m would be a safer guideline (personal communication, 25 June 2020).

2.5 Building back better

Building sport back better has become a serious preoccupation for many CS and SfD organisations, policy-makers, administrators and athletes, and some governments. While there has been much emphasis on sustaining the *status quo* and returning to 'normal,' the pandemic has shed light on how much of the *status quo* is not normal. The time away from regular activity has given many a chance to reflect on the problems in CS and SfD, and to begin to consider how to resolve them and develop an 'ideal' of programme delivery.

The major challenges to all organisations are economic recession and lack of funding, which are likely to add to the scourge of growing social inequality. As just one example, in most countries, the burden of home schooling and child care created by the pandemic has been shouldered primarily by girls and women. This, in turn, has made it even more difficult for them to participate in sport and physical activity, even at the most informal level. In most Commonwealth countries, girls and women already participate in lower numbers than boys and men, and in qualitatively unequal ways. This is combined with ongoing concerns about environmental sustainability, threats to democracy, and local and global conflict.

2.5.1. *Reforms to Community Sport and Sport for Development to enhance equality, inclusion and safety while responding to social transformations including digitalisation, urbanisation and environmental sustainability*

Funding: Status quo or building back better? While the New Zealand government has earmarked funds to 'strengthen and adapt' the CS sector in order to build back better (Wade, 2020), and Singapore has set aside funds for sport innovation, the economic support provided to sports organisations in some countries does not come with any requirements to build back better and seems to be directed much more towards supporting and sustaining the *status quo*. For example, Sport England (2020a) has committed £210 million, derived from National Lottery and government funding, to help the sport and physical activity sector. For organisations facing short-term financial stress or the threat of bankruptcy, an emergency fund of £35 million has been reserved out of the total.

South Africa has established a fund of R150 million, administered by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (2020) to assist coaches and athletes affected by the cancellation of tournaments following the outbreak of COVID-19. Canada has set aside CA\$72 million for the Olympic sport sector (Government of Canada, 2020), including emergency funding available to the Aboriginal Sport Circle. New Zealand has extended rollover funding to sports bodies to offset the significant financial losses expected in the coming months (Robertson, 2020). And the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment, and Sport, Jamaica, (2020) has set up the Athletes Assistance Programme, with JMD 80,000, to select athletes whose preparation has suffered because of postponement of the Tokyo Olympic Games.

Although welcomed by existing programmes, many of these emergency support packages do not address the need to make post-COVID sport safer, and more accessible and equitable.

"Building sport back better has become a serious preoccupation for many community sport and Sport for Development organisations, policy-makers, administrators and athletes, and some governments."

However, other signs suggest that consideration is being given to social change and building back better. As noted above, the New Zealand government package has earmarked NZ\$104 million to help the sector rebuild in the medium term, including making changes to operating models, and NZ\$78 million to find innovative ways to deliver play, active recreation and sport (Wade, 2020). Governments in South Africa, Pakistan and other countries have consulted sport federations for their input regarding how to deal with the unprecedented challenges.

Online programming: Online delivery of CS and SfD – the major modification to respond to the pandemic – represents a potential opportunity for positive future change, but it will be a while before we learn about its effectiveness. Most importantly, any attempt to build sport back better requires a political response that pays heed to the inequities exposed and exacerbated by COVID-19 and the context of overall social policies such as the SDGs.

A founding member of the Positive Youth Development Foundation (PYDF) SfD programmes in South Africa notes the need to tackle the huge level of inequality that still plagues the world (Page et al., 2020). This recognition is already influencing decisions, as in the launch, by the Laureus Foundation (2020), of the Sport for Good Response Fund to mitigate the retrenchment of SfD programmes. But a more fundamental shift is required. The PYDF founders advocate a shift to objectives that challenge hegemonic values and ideas, a shift that is not merely procedural but also philosophical: 'The broader societal problems that are reflected, reinforced, and even contributed to, by the hegemonic structures within sport must be challenged directly on an individual and organisational level' (Page et al., 2020).

Urban design: In Canada, it has been found that those most affected by the virus have been larger cities, the poor, the elderly and racial minorities; and there have been increased reports of racism (especially anti-East Asian), sexual assault, domestic violence, food insecurity, homelessness, mental health challenges and workplace safety issues. However, in terms of 'building back better,' 11 municipalities closed traffic lanes to reserve them for pedestrians and cyclists, and the more recent opening-up of roads and parks for walking, cycling and street games is one of the emerging success stories. As the report notes, Cities across Canada have started to implement strategies to open more space for residents to move without compromising safety. Streetscapes are being repurposed for pedestrian and cycling use. CUI's CityWatchCanada.ca recorded that at least 11 municipalities have already put this idea into action, with more cities likely to follow. Montréal alone has provided 112 km of new walking and biking paths for their residents to move around the city (CUI, 2020).

To the extent that the pandemic is leading to urban redesign, especially infrastructure that facilitates active transportation, physical recreation and informal sports, this is one of the clearest examples of 'building back better.' Jeanes et al. (2020) argue for greater promotion of informal sport, such as the street games noted above (and by the SfD organisation StreetGames). They cite data from Australia and the UK to show that club-based sport is making way for more informal programmes. Two statistics stand out in Jeanes et al. (2020):

Some 40% of the 6,600 young people (age mean = 13.9 years old) surveyed by the Australian Sports Commission in 2016 had not engaged in organised sport within the last 12 months. Formal sport is not necessarily providing the 'fun with friends' that young people say they are looking for (ASC, 2017). Among UK adults, a million more people were active in 2018/19 than in 2015 (Sport England, 2019). Yet participation in organised sports decreased in the same period by over one million people.

"To emerge stronger from this crisis, it is necessary to acknowledge and address the inherent inequalities in sports that discriminate on the basis of body, gender, sexuality, age, ability, caste, race, tribe, location class and religion (Das and Gaiind, 2020)."

It will be interesting to see sports formerly associated with youth from low-income families – street football and hockey, basketball, cricket or baseball – become more widely played. The costs of organised sports, together with win-at-all-costs attitudes, are increasingly making these less attractive to young people. Other recreational sports previously more associated with middle class youth, such as Ultimate, could be added to the informal repertoire, and could introduce some more gender inclusivity to informal sports.

2.5.2. Summary, questions and recommendations

Building back better concerns include funding, continuation of online programming and urban design. But the overarching theme is equity and inclusion. In other words, 'better' is generally being taken to mean more opportunity to participate for more people. To emerge stronger from this crisis, it is necessary to acknowledge and address the inherent inequalities in sports that discriminate on the basis of body, gender, sexuality, age, ability, caste, race, tribe, location class and religion (Das and Gaiind, 2020). In many ways, this concern for equity and inclusion is a damning critique of the current sport systems in many countries, which is widely seen as inequitable and exclusive. The call is timely during a pandemic, because greater

participation in CS and recreational physical activity is, as noted previously, strongly related to individual and public health.

It may also be seen as a call to establish a balance between what Donnelly and Kidd (2015) have referred to as the 'two solitudes' – on the one hand sport for all, which includes CS and recreational physical activity; and, on the other hand, high-performance sport and the highly competitive development systems that lead to professional sport.

The latter absorbs massive public resources in many countries – government funding, facilities and equipment, coaches and instructors, and so on. By some estimates, the proportion of government funding in some countries is 90 per cent to high-performance sport ('sport for the few') and 10 per cent to 'sport for all'. As a significant public health measure, a shift to 50-50 funding would go a long way towards helping establish equitable and inclusive sport for all.

3. Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic was unexpected but there have been alerts – scares related to infectious diseases such as SARS in 2003, various forms of the influenza coronavirus and Ebola. But many of the measures put in place, the knowledge and planning accumulated by governments and medical and public health experts, and the stockpiles of PPE that were mandated after 2003 have been affected by various government austerity measures.

As a consequence, many countries did not expect, and faced challenges being ready for, COVID-19, and the speed with which they were able to react varied greatly. That same lack of readiness was evident in CS and SfD. Apart from some strategies in Africa, reintroduced from recent experiences with Ebola, the main response in CS and SfD has been to follow schools and universities to shift their programming online. There have been some creative approaches in an attempt to mitigate the inequities associated with broadband access, but online is mainly being approached as a temporary measure until organisations are able to return to face-to-face programming. Also, as so many school and university students and teachers and others working from home have learnt, Zoom

and Teams are a very pale facsimile of face-to-face programming or interactions with coaches, teachers and activity leaders.

Some organisations have found that less is more when it comes to online programming. Using social media tracking, Donny Jurgens Development Solutions found that, after a time, its Home Gym Challenge videos were not being watched all the way through; in response, it cut the videos from 20 minutes to 5–10 minutes (personal communication, 26 June 2020). In the final analysis, a blended model that combines face-to-face, modified activity and digital approaches appears to be a useful compromise.

3.1 Community Sport, Sport for Development and population health

It is important here to reiterate Goel's (2020) concerns about the medicalisation of the response to the pandemic. It is, of course, crucial to attend to the immediate medical needs of those infected and to search for a vaccine. But an overemphasis here distracts from the perhaps even greater damage that may be being caused by ignoring overall population health.

Ideally, future planning for a second wave of COVID-19 or the next pandemic will build on learnings from the first wave and include strengthened CS and physical recreation and SfD **right now** as crucial components of population health and a key part of public health preparedness. Reams of evidence exist to show a connection between recreational physical activity and physical and mental health in terms of both protection from illness and the development of resilience, and in terms of rehabilitation from mental or physical illness.

Comprehensive planning for a second wave and future pandemics should also prepare, with extensive consultation, adaptations that can be implemented immediately on identification of a health crisis. Planning should include activity programming in various forms and adapted to different populations, employing wherever possible a blended face-to-face and online model, with the latter supplemented by radio, TV, print and other means to communicate health and activity messaging and programming. Planning should also include the repurposing of sports facilities for community needs, the redeployment of CS

staff for more urgent needs and well-structured opportunities for safe forms of sport and physical activity.³ These adaptations will be enabled by clear government guidance and should be informed by public health guidelines.

It is now evident, approximately 100 days after lockdown in many places, that physical activity participation has decreased in countries where measures are available. As the Commonwealth Secretariat (2020) warned at the end of March, although the restrictions imposed in the wake of COVID-19 are necessary, there will be 'wider health, societal and economic impacts.' We are already beginning to gather a sense of the disruption caused. A survey conducted by StreetGames (2020) in low-income areas of England and Wales found that 68 per cent of the 248 people contacted were engaging in less physical activity. This was accounted for, in part, by the limited space available to those who live in low-income areas.

"Disaggregated data are essential to explore the nuances of class, race and gender inequality as it relates to sport and physical activity participation."

The survey also found that, despite modifications made by local organisations to increase support to low-income families, and offers of online help, familial breakdown, financial precariousness and a severe impact on the mental health and well-being of participants were widely reported. This was confirmed by Sport England (2020b), which found a small impact on overall activity levels but a much sharper impact when it took into consideration class, race, age and disability. In Canada, in mid-June, children had slipped below the already low levels of involvement in physical activity (Canadian Press, 2020). The widespread disruption has meant the isolation not only of those who are sick but also of populations at large on an unprecedented scale. This has implications for mental health, as noted, and there has been recognition that a spike in poor psychological health may be imminent

(Sport Medicine Advisory Committee, 2020). To this end, policy-makers and sports and physical activity leaders should maintain constant vigilance and take a prevention-first approach. Physical

activity is supposed to mitigate the consequences of months of social isolation. In Canada, the armed forces have stepped in to assist the isolated elderly in desperately under-staffed long-term care centres. During the next wave, could young physical educators and SfD leaders be despatched to those at risk to engage them in age- and condition-appropriate, healthy physical activity?

3.2 Social inequalities and population health

The growth of social inequality over the past 30 years has been well documented, but the pandemic has thrown this into sharp relief, and exposed the damage to the public sector in many countries that has been a consequence of years of austerity measures. Given the agenda to build sport back better, it is crucial to pay heed to the inequities the pandemic has exposed.

To add to various calls for additional data on social inequality, including measures of racial inequality in countries where these data are not already collected, it is crucial to begin to collect comprehensive, national data on sport and physical activity participation, including by social class, race, ethnicity, gender, age and disability. This is aligned with Action 2 of the Kazan Action Plan (MINEPS, 2017), which focuses on developing 'common indicators to measure the contribution of physical education, physical activity and sport to prioritised SDGs and targets.' The development of the measurement framework and model indicators has been led and coordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat with the support of a global Steering Group comprising the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), leading member countries and sector experts. A number of member countries and organisations are currently utilising this framework, with greater global adoption anticipated. Disaggregated data are essential to explore the nuances of class, race and gender inequality as it relates to sport and physical activity participation.

For example, it is important to ask whether the design of new city infrastructure for cycling and walking has served the entire population, including at-risk groups, or only communities with an active middle-class cycling, anti-car lobby. In terms of gender, it is important to recognise that, in most

3 'Safe' should be read here as both safe from infection and safe from abuse (Harvey, 2020).

Commonwealth countries, the burden of the second and third shifts still falls largely on women, and that the pandemic has exacerbated this. Future pandemic planning has to take account of women's work as caregivers (for those at both ends of the age spectrum), stay-at-home and work-from-home parents and providers of home schooling and the fact that so many women work in essential services. This has detrimental effects, both quantitative and qualitative, on women's opportunities to participate in sport and recreational physical activity.

3.3 A note about Sport for Development

We have been struck by the extent to which, during the pandemic, SfD organisations in various Commonwealth countries have been involved beyond sport, functioning as community service providers (food, shelter, counselling, transportation, tutoring and so on). In effect, SfD organisations were among those engaged in carrying out services formerly provided by the public sector in many countries. However, from their websites and from interviews, it seems that some were involved in community service provision even before the pandemic, and that some staff were beginning to question whether, in some cases, sport was secondary to various other services in attracting young people (Darnell and Eisenkraft-Klein, in progress).

Questions related to funding, regulation and coordination, discussed widely in and about the SfD sector before the pandemic, are thus now seemingly even more relevant. While there have been critiques of corporate 'sportwashing', corporate social responsibility and short-term funding, important philanthropic gestures are also being made. For example, Nike's funding to CAC seems to go well beyond the narrow limits usually imposed on such funding – not just to material goods but also to activities and teaching. Assistance to the SfD sector in negotiating longer-term and more flexible (while transparent and accountable) funding would be valuable in general, and particularly in the event of a second wave of COVID-19 or another pandemic. It would also enable more efficient use of resources, rather than the currently ongoing efforts and resources devoted to fundraising.

In addition, and recognising that the valuable work carried out by SfD organisations is often fragmented and reaches only small portions of the

population, the question of regulation (for various quality and outcome measures) and coordination of work seems particularly timely.

"Questions related to funding, regulation and coordination, discussed widely in and about the sector before the pandemic, are thus now seemingly even more relevant."

Involving SfD organisations in planning, and coordinating their work with state and local services and agencies, would help produce more efficient public health responses to a second wave or future pandemics.

3.4 A legal note

An article from lawinsport.com notes that, for SfD and CS organisations, any return to 'normalcy' will not be straightforward since clubs and programmes owe a duty of care to their members and other participants. Legal advice must be sought before any possible intervention is explored since lockdown or emergency rules apply. This is especially important where insurance is involved. Significant costs and criminal liability may follow if health and safety laws are violated, as workers must not be put in harm's way, unless they are performing essential services (James, 2020).

3.5 A note on the role of universities

One of our colleague consultants, Akshai Mansingh (Jamaica), drew our attention to a session on Sport after COVID-19 in the Department of Sport at the University of the West Indies (University of the West Indies Mona Media, 2020). In addition to carrying out research such as this, universities provide an ideal forum for academic discussions and community engagement on important topics such as the effects of the pandemic on sport and recreational physical activity. We remind ourselves, and urge our colleagues at universities across the Commonwealth, to consider organising similar forums. We regret that the Commonwealth University Sport Research Network proposed by the Commonwealth Games Federation at the time of the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia, never got off the ground.

4. Conclusion

The learnings from our research do not suggest a return to 'normalcy'; they are learnings for 'the new normal'.

While the pandemic has affected different Commonwealth countries in different ways, provoking different responses in public health, CS and SfD, we can draw several overall conclusions.

Despite previous experience with HIV/AIDS, SARS, H1N1 and Ebola, and extensive 'pandemic preparedness planning', few countries were adequately prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the domains of CS and SfD. Moreover, several decades of under-investment in physical education and community-based sports, at a time of sharply increasing income inequality across most Commonwealth countries, meant that participation levels in sport and physical activity were already low and falling. As a result, few countries met the virus with the population-based health and resiliency that CS can bring.

When the virus hit, the first response in most countries was complete shutdown. While the sports sector was quick to support public health messaging about respecting closures, practicing physical distancing and hand-washing, it took some time before governments and the sports sector could adapt to the changed conditions with modified policies and programming. Consequently, participation in sport and physical activity fell even further, with a severe impact on mental health and general well-being expected (e.g. CAMH, 2020).

The first lesson of the pandemic is that any preventative strategy must begin with planning and investment.

Recommendation 1:

Commonwealth countries effectively prepare for a possible second wave of COVID-19 and future outbreaks and directly engage the sports sector in that planning and training, with key learnings from the current pandemic. Working with sports ministers, the Commonwealth Secretariat should play a coordinating role in the development of such planning and training.

Recommendation 2:

Commonwealth countries significantly invest in CS and SfD as a strategy for population health. Governments should plan for, fund, monitor and evaluate CS and SfD as essential components of national health.

An approach is already recognised in the Commonwealth's commitment to the SDGs; the imperative now is to enhance implementation. A first step would be to utilise 'common indicators to measure the contribution of physical education, physical activity and sport to prioritised SDGs and target' as already agreed to in Action 2 of the Kazan Action Plan.

In all Commonwealth societies, the pandemic has exposed the sharply rising inequality of recent decades – the result of neoliberal globalisation and the retreat by many governments from many fields of social policy. Elderly people in long-term care facilities; low-income individuals, disproportionately women, working in low-paid, essential jobs that expose them to risk; and those unemployed as economies have shut down have been most likely to suffer and die from COVID-19. Countries with impoverished health systems and weak economies have also suffered disproportionately from the virus. In sport, the pandemic has exacerbated the already lower participation of girls and women and those from impoverished backgrounds.

Recommendation 3:

It is essential the governments 'build back better' by applying a gender equality lens to all ongoing planning and investment in sport.

This recommendation also builds on previous recommendations of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and multiple Commonwealth Sports Ministers' Meeting, and the Gender Equality Initiative of the Commonwealth Games Federation.

The crisis has persuaded many societies that only government can institute the necessary public health measures and provide the necessary income support to help people survive the shutdown of considerable economic activity. We hope that, during post-COVID rebuilding, governments will continue to play a leading role, and that such leadership will extend to CS and

SfD. We see a renewed role for both national governments and intergovernmental bodies such as the Commonwealth.

Despite the lack of preparedness, many governments and sports organisations mobilised quickly to respond to the crisis.

Many sports organisations, including some prominent athletes, declared their immediate cooperation following closures and the implementation of other public health measures, encouraging volunteering in health centres and long-term care centres and promoting preventative health messaging about hand-washing, physical distancing and the importance of ongoing physical activity. Some sports organisations helped repurpose, or permitted the repurposing of, gymnasiums and arenas for emergency use as hospital facilities, homeless shelters and food depots.

Many sports organisations and governments developed innovative approaches to the changed circumstances required by the shutdown. They delivered adapted programming online and by means of traditional media such as radio and loudspeakers. Municipalities closed streets and opened new bike lanes to enable physically distanced walking, running and cycling. Sports organisations worked with public health authorities and with each government to develop uniform safe 'return to play' guidelines. But such efforts occurred spontaneously, with little initial coordination, either with public health authorities or with other sports organisations.

Recommendation 4:

With further waves of COVID 19 and during any future pandemic, ministries of sport should be directly involved in the activation of the pandemic planning and communicate clearly with the sport sector about the way it could be beneficially engaged

Recommendation 5:

Ministries of sport should take the lead in working with public health authorities and sports bodies in updating, communicating and coordinating uniform, safe 'return to play' guidelines

Another finding from the pandemic is that some people, entirely on their own, developed new ways to exercise (safely and with appropriate physical distancing) to enhance their own physical and mental health and well-being. In the consultants' country, where parks and playgrounds were closed in the initial stages of the pandemic, citizens took to the streets in record numbers to take part in walking, running, riding and modified ball games, forcing municipalities to create new bike lanes and close streets and lanes of streets for exercise. To be sure, these new forms of activity were enabled by class and gender: it was safer to do this in affluent neighbourhoods with less density. Those (mostly women) at home with child and elderly care and home schooling were much less able to go outside to exercise.

Recommendation 6:

As much as possible, governments should ensure that the public space innovations introduced in urban areas during COVID-19, such as street closures and additional bike lanes that have enabled safe walking, running and cycling and informal games, are made permanent

We hope that one outcome of this discussion paper will be a greater preparedness on the part of governments at all levels and CS and SfD organisations to pivot quickly toward accessible alternative programming and the support of public health measures when the second wave or the next pandemic arrives.

Summary of recommendations

1. Commonwealth countries must effectively prepare for a possible second wave of COVID-19 and future outbreaks and directly engage the sports sector in planning and training. Working with sports ministers, Commonwealth Secretariat ministers must play a coordinating role in the development of such planning and training.
2. Commonwealth countries must invest significantly in CS and SfD as a strategy of prevention. Governments should plan for, fund, monitor and evaluate CS and SfD as essential components of national population health.
3. Commonwealth sports ministers must ensure the sports sector 'builds back better' by applying a gender equality lens to all ongoing planning and investment.
4. In any resumption of COVID-19 and during any future pandemic, ministries of sport should be directly involved in the activation of the pandemic planning in Recommendation #1 and communicate clearly with the sports sector about the way it could be beneficially engaged.
5. Ministries of sport should take the lead in working with public health authorities and sports bodies in updating, communicating and coordinating uniform, safe 'return to play' guidelines.
6. As much as possible, governments should ensure that the public space innovations introduced in urban areas during COVID-19, such as street closures and additional bike lanes that have enabled safe walking, running and cycling, are made permanent.

5. Endnotes

The research team carried out an extensive review of COVID-19-relevant literature from Commonwealth websites (e.g. the Commonwealth Coronavirus Resource Centre), sportanddev.org and many other sources.

We also used our contacts with academic and professional colleagues, with expertise in CS and SfD in various parts of the world. These individuals were asked to provide information on the response to COVID-19 by CS and SfD organisations in their countries. These included:

- Ramon Spaaij, Professor, College of Sport and Exercise Sciences, Victoria University (Australia);
- Ross Kidd, Community Development Consultant (Botswana);
- Akshai Mansingh, Dean, Faculty of Sport, University of the West Indies (Jamaica);
- Ben Sanders, Development Consultant (South Africa);
- Roy McCree, Fellow, Institute of Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies (Trinidad and Tobago);
- Grant Jarvie, Chair of Sport and Director, Academy of Sport, University of Edinburgh (UK);
- Iain Lindsey, Lecturer, School of Applied Social Sciences, University of Durham (UK);
- Donald Njelesani, Children with Disabilities Consultant (USA and Zambia).

Programme documents for COVID-19-relevant programming from five SfD organisations identified and provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat were reviewed, together with their websites. The SfD organisations were:

- Sport for Life (Canada);
- Pro Sport Development (India);
- Active Mauritius (Mauritius);
- Donny Jurgens Development Solutions (South Africa);
- Coaches Across Continents (CAC) (UK).

In addition, with contact information provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat, we carried out an email interview with a key staff member at each of the five organisations.

These were supplemented by the research team with reviews of the websites of two major SfD organisations for COVID-19 related materials and programming:

- Right to Play (Burundi, Canada [57 Indigenous communities], Ghana, Mozambique, Pakistan, Tanzania and Uganda); and
- Fight for Peace (Jamaica and UK).

In addition, one of our international colleagues recommended StreetGames (UK), which was also included in the review.

Finally, the team reviewed the Project Play website –an affiliate of the Aspen Institute (think tank) in the USA. Despite not being a Commonwealth organisation, it was selected because, unlike most US youth sports organisations, which tend to have a 'play to win' philosophy, it advocates for 'sport for all' and devotes research and advocacy to encouraging youth sports organisations to provide inclusive and low-cost opportunities for participation. Project Play has posted many useful and thoughtful COVID-19-related materials.

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This paper was commissioned to support Commonwealth countries to effectively translate global learning into effective policy responses to COVID 19. The current pandemic has highlighted the fragility of the current sport system and the vulnerability of the community sport and sport for development sectors in particular. However, clear evidence exists for the significant contributions these sectors have made and can continue to make in response to the pandemic, and the scale of impact that can be achieved by these sectors when they are enabled by a conducive policy context.

The Centre for Sport Policy Studies (CSPS), in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education at the University of Toronto, is engaged in empirically- based research in the service of sport policy, monitoring and evaluation studies, and education and advocacy for the two most important ambitions of Canadian sport: 'sport for all' (widespread grassroots participation) and healthy high performance in elite-level sports. The Position Papers represent an important part of the work of CSPS.

The Sport for Development and Peace team at the Commonwealth Secretariat advocates for the use of sport as a vehicle for development and peace building. Their work focuses on how sport can be used to contribute to national development objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sport and Coronavirus section on the Commonwealth Coronavirus Response Centre has been established to provide further information to Government ministries, public authorities and sporting organisations to their response to the Coronavirus pandemic, strengthen strategies to respond to future crises, and also support efforts to 'rebuild better' after COVID-19.



Commonwealth Moves

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