Leveraging table tennis to develop confident, competent and gender-sensitive leaders

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Pro Sport Development, in collaboration with the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Foundation, implemented the Community Table Tennis (CTT) program in the city of Bhubaneswar, India from April 2021 to July 2023. The program leveraged the power of table tennis to support young people from marginalized communities residing in various slum settlements across Bhubaneswar, by addressing issues of gender inequality and providing them with opportunities to develop relevant and necessary soft skills.

Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha, has a slum population of 301,611 (36% of the total population) living in 436 recognized slum settlements across the city (Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, 2020). Gender discrimination as well as public health and wellbeing are major concerns in these slums. Young people, especially girls, from these marginalized slum communities face obstacles in their socio-economic development due to inadequacies in their educational experiences, lack of proper systems and structures and a dearth of opportunities.

The CTT program aimed to empower young people, especially girls, between the ages of 10-16 years to become gender-sensitive and take leadership within their schools and communities to confront gender norms and positively impact their families, peers, teachers, and the larger community.

The two-year program envisioned the following outcomes for its participants:

**Outcome 1**

Young girls and boys become gender-sensitive and change their attitudes towards gender-based stereotypes

**Outcome 2**

Young girls and boys develop gender-sensitive leadership ability and build soft skills

**Outcome 3**

Young girls and boys articulate life choices and make decisions concerning their life, leading to greater economic and social wellbeing

*Figure 1: CTT outcomes*
CTT utilized table tennis as a participatory tool within school settings to engage 284 participants (47% girls) from four community schools in slum areas of Bhubaneswar.

4 Community schools

Vivekananda School of Integral Education, Raghunathpur

Vivekananda Sikshya Kendra, Dumduma

Beena Bharati Vidhya Mandir, Bharatpur

Saraswati Sishu Vidhya Mandir, Patrapara

Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Figure 2: CTT schools

284 Participants

133 girls

151 boys

Figure 3: CTT outreach
The CTT program utilized a structured, goal-oriented curriculum\(^1\) that worked with young people from marginalized slum communities in Bhubaneswar to:

- Encourage education, training and responsibility through the practice of table tennis
- Utilize table tennis to cultivate several soft skills and values such as leadership, teamwork, communication, self-esteem and mutual respect
- Improve gender relations among young people within educational institutions in various slum communities
- Empower young people to recognize and resist gender-based discrimination in their homes and communities

The CTT program was delivered by PSD’s trained facilitators across four community schools in marginalized slum areas of Bhubaneswar. The schools provided a dedicated space within their premises to establish table tennis facilities. These facilities were set up by PSD, who installed appropriate table tennis infrastructure at each community school, including table tennis tables. Additionally, PSD provided each of these community schools with adequate table tennis equipment such as racquets and balls. Moreover, sports kits, including t-shirts and shorts, were distributed to all participants of the program to ensure a quality learning experience for them.

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\(^1\) Click here to view the sample of the CTT curriculum developed by PSD, in collaboration with Martha Farrell Foundation and ITTF Foundation
The CTT program was scheduled to begin in April 2020; however, it was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program finally started in April 2021, amidst India's second wave of the pandemic. Due to government-mandated lockdowns, the program initially provided online sessions to the participants. With schools reopening in the last quarter of 2021, PSD began on-ground implementation of the program in October 2021.

The CTT program sessions, conducted on a weekly basis, were divided into the following three categories:

- **Table tennis skills**: Enable the participants to learn key table tennis skills such as grip, serve, forehand shots and backhand, so that they can master the basics of table tennis
- **Soft skills**: Develop essential soft skills in participants such as communication, teamwork, leadership, focus and self-esteem to enable their socio-emotional development
- **Gender sensitization**: Build participants’ awareness on gender and socialization process as well as address various gender-based stereotypes and myths

611 sessions delivered from April 2021 to June 2023 - 39 online sessions and 572 offline sessions

336 Table tennis sessions

170 Soft skill sessions

105 Gender sessions

Figure 5: Breakdown of CTT sessions
In July 2022, PSD partnered with Signify Innovations to enhance the lighting in the table tennis facilities in the four community schools in Bhubaneswar. As part of its ‘Khel Jyoti’ CSR program, Signify Innovations installed LED lighting with solar backup in the table tennis facilities of these four schools.

The LED lighting was designed and executed as per national sport guidelines, resulting in certified illumination levels in the table tennis facilities. The lighting is powered by solar energy to ensure an uninterrupted power supply, making it sustainable in the long run. High-mast LED outdoor lights were also installed around the schools to make the areas around the courts safer for the participants, especially girls.

By lighting up the table tennis courts and improving the existing facilities in these schools, PSD and Signify Innovations ensured a quality playing experience for the participants, who otherwise had minimal access to adequate and appropriate table tennis facilities.

As part of the CTT program, PSD provided several exposure and learning opportunities including events, tournaments, camps and exposure visits.

13 exposure opportunities

- 6 Tournaments
- 2 Visits
- 2 Events
- 3 Camps

Figure 6: CTT exposure opportunities
These opportunities were provided to the participants to engage them in fun and healthy competitions and enhance their learning through sport and physical activity, especially table tennis. The exposure opportunities are outlined below:

**Events**

PSD organized community events, which utilized table tennis as a tool to engage young people from marginalized slum communities in Bhubaneswar, to commemorate and celebrate the International Day of Sports for Development and Peace (IDSDP) and World Table Tennis Day (WTTD).

![International Day of Sports for Development and Peace (IDSDP) and World Table Tennis Day (WTT) celebrations](image)

**International Day of Sports for Development and Peace (IDSDP) and World Table Tennis Day (WTT) celebrations**

- **30th March to 6th April 2022**
- **217 participants**
- **96 girls**   **121 boys**
- [Click here to watch a video of the event](video)

![ITTF visit and IDSDP celebrations](image)

**ITTF visit and IDSDP celebrations**

- **3rd and 4th April 2023**
- **80 participants**
- **38 girls**   **42 boys**
- [Click here to watch a video of the visit](video)

*Figure 7.1 : CTT events*
ITTF Foundation visits CTT

In April 2023, PSD hosted a delegation from the ITTF Foundation, who visited our CTT program in Bhubaneswar from 1st to 5th April 2023. The delegation included ITTF Foundation President Perta Sörling and ITTF Foundation’s Director Leandro Olvech, among others.

During their visit, the delegation visited CTT’s community schools, to witness the program firsthand, and experience Odisha’s culture through presentations by the participants.

The ITTF delegation also visited the communities and homes of some of the participants to understand the impact that the CTT has had on the community. They interacted with the participants, their families, and teachers. The delegation listened to their stories of change, to witness the transformative power of table tennis that has empowered participants to resist gender discrimination and has developed pivotal soft skills in them.

In addition to the community visits, the ITTF Foundation delegation facilitated capacity-building workshops for PSD team members, along with members of several other sport and development organizations from the region. The workshops focused on what sport for development (S4D) is, and the concerted effort by the ITTF Foundation to promote table tennis for development. Using the CTT program as an example, the workshops highlighted how sport can be used to achieve sustainable development and social change.

Tournaments

PSD conducted several mixed-gender sport tournaments to provide the CTT participants to build their table tennis skills as well as develop soft skills and sporting values in a competitive environment. These mixed-gender tournaments engaged the CTT participants in various sports, such as table tennis and netball, providing them with an opportunity to compete with peers of different genders. Such events allowed the participants to develop a healthy and inclusive attitude toward everyone.
Mixed-Gender Netball Tournament (2021-22)

📅 8th May 2022

👩‍♂️ 54 participants

30 girls  24 boys

Mixed-Gender Table Tennis Tournament (2022)

📅 13th to 16th July 2022

👩‍♂️ 86 participants

43 girls  43 boys

Odisha Inter-School Table Tennis Championship, Cuttack

📅 12th and 13th August 2022

👩‍♂️ 14 participants

7 girls  7 boys

Figure 7.2: CTT tournaments
Mixed-Gender Netball Tournament (2022-2023)

📅 18th December 2022

♀ 80 participants

♀ 44 girls  ♂ 36 boys

Click here to watch a video of the event

Mixed-Gender Table Tennis Tournament Qualifiers

📅 2nd to 10th January 2023

♀ 248 participants

♀ 115 girls  ♂ 133 boys

Mixed-Gender Table Tennis Tournament (2023)

📅 29th January 2023

♀ 108 participants

♀ 46 girls  ♂ 62 boys

Click here to watch a video of the event

Figure 7.3: CTT tournaments
Visits

In the lead-up to, as well as during the FIFA U-17 Women’s Football World Cup, held in Bhubaneswar, PSD conducted exposure visits for the CTT participants to foster their interest in sport and physical activity. These visits provided an opportunity for the participants to watch professional football matches in Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, with this being a first-time experience for most of them.

**Figure 7.4: CTT exposure visits**

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**Kick off the Dream: U-17 Women Football Carnival**

- 28th May 2022
- 70 participants
- 42 girls 28 boys

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**FIFA U-17 Women’s World Cup Football Match**

- 17th October 2022
- 49 participants
- 25 girls 24 boys
Camps

PSD organized summer and winter camps for the CTT participants to keep them engaged during their school vacations, in order to strengthen their table tennis skills.

Table Tennis Summer Camp 2022

6th to 11th June 2022

101 participants

40 girls  61 boys

Table Tennis Winter Camp

26th to 30th December 2022

70 participants

27 girls  43 boys

Table Tennis Summer Camp 2023

8th to 16th May 2023

62 participants

23 girls  39 boys

Figure 7.5: CTT camps
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY
To monitor the program’s progress, a management information system (MIS) was developed to record key data on attendance, number of sessions, quantity of equipment distributed, number of exposure camps, tournaments and the participation number at these events. Moreover, data on participants such as their name, age, school, class and gender were also stored in the MIS. The delivery of the sessions was regularly monitored by the implementation team’s senior staff members, who made periodic visits to assess the quality of the sessions and provided weekly feedback to facilitators.

The program’s outcomes and impact were evaluated using a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods.

**Data collection methodology**

As part of its evaluation, PSD utilized a robust data collection approach. Both quantitative as well as qualitative data collection tools were carefully designed by PSD to evaluate the impact of the program on the participants, and other stakeholders. Quantitative data was collected through baseline and endline surveys, whereas the qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions and interviews conducted at midline and endline.

**Quantitative data**

For the quantitative data, baseline and endline surveys were conducted, using a carefully designed questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section collected the basic demographic details of the respondents, including their school, class, age and gender. The second section consisted of eleven questions, which were designed in such a manner that helped the evaluators gauge the interest of respondents towards physical activity as well assess their attitudes and behaviors toward gender roles and stereotypes. The survey was built in English and was subsequently translated into Odia, the vernacular language of the region.

PSD ensured a representative sample size was selected during both the baseline and endline. The sampling process was done keeping in mind key demographic parameters such as school, age, class and gender, ensuring a representative mix of respondents.
The baseline survey was collected in the months of October and November of 2021. A total of 194 participants filled out the baseline survey. The endline survey data was collected between the months of June and August 2023. A total of 158 participants filled out the endline survey.

While the baseline survey collected the names of respondents, the evaluators decided to completely anonymize the endline survey to ensure that the respondents were able to express themselves freely, without the fear of being recognized.

Both the baseline and endline surveys were self-answered by the respondents. Both surveys were conducted in-person in the CTT community schools on hard paper copies, wherein each question was written both in English and Odia.

PSD recorded the consent of the respondents to participate in the survey. The respondents were informed that the anonymized data from the surveys will be documented and analyzed for evaluation purposes.
Qualitative data

The qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and short interviews, conducted at the endline. The FGDs and interviews were conducted by utilizing questionnaire guides, which were developed by the evaluation team to understand the impact of CTT on the participants as well as on the larger community.

A total of four FGDs were conducted - three FGDs were conducted with the participants and one with the program facilitators. Moreover, short interviews were conducted with participants, their parents and school teachers. In total, 15 interviews were conducted with all relevant stakeholders - nine with participants, four with parents and two with school teachers.

Furthermore, four stories of change were developed to highlight selected participants who showcased significant changes through the course of the program. This qualitative data captured the unique experiences of the participants, showcasing the numerous ways in which the CTT benefited them.

![Data collection tools diagram](image-url)
The impact of the CTT has been presented on the basis of following key outcomes of the program:

<table>
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<th>Table Tennis Skills</th>
<th>Gender awareness</th>
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<td>• Increased opportunities to engage in table tennis</td>
<td>• Increased gender awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increased interest in table tennis</td>
<td>• Increased knowledge on menstruation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improved table tennis technical skills</td>
<td>• Empowered to resist gender-based discrimination and advocate for gender equality in their homes and communities</td>
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<th>Soft skills and value development</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
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<td>• Development of crucial soft skills such communication, teamwork and leadership</td>
<td>• Increased confidence and self-esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improved peer relations, especially among those of different genders</td>
<td>• Knowledge of prospective careers, especially those in the sport industry</td>
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*Figure 9: CTT key outcomes*
Increased opportunities to engage in sport and physical activity, particularly table tennis

Most CTT participants, before the initiation of the program, did not have access to organized sport and physical activity in their schools or communities. Three out of the four community schools did not even have a physical education (PE) or sport teacher who could engage the young people in appropriate sports or physical activities. The CTT program provided its participants with the opportunity to engage in a structured and goal-oriented sport and physical-activity-based program.

Before the CTT program, 42% of the survey respondents stated that they participated in sport and physical activity for 1-2 days a week, while 38% of them participated in sport and physical activity for only 3-4 days a week. Only 20% of the baseline survey respondents participated in sport and physical activity for more than 5 days a week.

In the endline survey, it was noted that a larger number of respondents reported engaging in sport and physical activity for more than 5 days a week. In the endline, 57% of the respondents said that they participated in sport and physical activity more than five days a week, while 38% of the them said that they participated for 3-4 days in a week.
A female participant highlighted the sporting opportunities provided through this program:

I had never heard of table tennis before this. It was a dream come true when we got the opportunity to play table tennis and I was really happy. I did not know I had the talent to play table tennis. I have taken part in two tournaments so far.

Another female participant shared how they were the first in their family to get the opportunity to participate in organized sport:

When my relatives got to know that I play table tennis, they were delighted, as I am getting this opportunity, and I am the first one from the family to get this chance. If not for this program, I would not have gotten this opportunity anywhere else. We practice table tennis at our school and whenever a tournament happens, students from many schools take part in it. We were not only playing alongside our schoolmates, but also with students from other schools.

**Increased interest in sport and physical activity, particularly table tennis**

A major outcome of the CTT program was the increased interest of participants in sport and physical activity, especially table tennis. The program was a major factor in fostering the interest of the participants in sport and physical activity.

A female participant shared how she earlier was not interested in table tennis, but slowly her interest in it increased:

In the beginning, I was not interested in the game of table tennis. Even after watching a table tennis game, I was not interested and felt that I would not be able to play it. After slowly learning to serve and counter, I felt really comfortable playing it. My desire to play table tennis also grew.

A male participant shared how his interest in table tennis has increased after attending CTT sessions:

We want to play even more now. My interest in table tennis has really increased since I started attending the sessions [...] table tennis has become a habit for us.
Improved table tennis technical skills

Another outcome of the CTT program was the improvement in the table tennis skills of the participants. The participants were taught table tennis skills such as serving, forehand shots, backhand shots and smash.

During the FGDs, the CTT participants reported that their technical table tennis skills had improved. A female participant noted:

> After joining the program, my table tennis skills have improved a lot. I have learned service, backhand, forehand push, counter and spin, and many other moves.

A male participant shared how earlier others would stop playing with him as he could not even return a serve:

> When we first started playing table tennis, I did not know how to hold the [racquet] properly. When the opponent used to hit the ball, I could not return their serve and they would stop playing with me. I would get nervous because of this. Our sir told me to stay calm. After subsequent table tennis sessions, I was able to hit the ball and return the serve.
One of the key outcomes of the CTT program was the increased awareness of participants on gender. The gender sessions helped participants develop their understanding of gender and the socialization process, as well as increase their knowledge of gender-based discrimination and stereotypes in their daily lives.

The survey asked the respondents about various activities and whether they are performed by girls, boys or both. The baseline results showed how the participants felt the roles in their communities were gendered (Figure 11).

The endline survey results showed that an increased number of respondents believed that both girls and boys perform these activities (Figure 12). In the endline, 86% of the survey respondents responded that both girls and boys should take care of their younger siblings. Moreover, 84% of the survey respondents felt that both girls and boys should perform household chores, up from 25% at the baseline. Further, 79% of the respondents felt that both girls and boys can go out with their friends to play or hangout.
The gender sessions also helped the participants identify gender stereotypes and discrimination, as a female participant observed the limitations imposed on girls by families and society:

Everyone always says that there is a difference between girls and boys. My mother tells me things like, ‘Don’t laugh so loudly, don’t run so fast.’ She tells me that girls should live within their limits. She tells me not to play, not to go out and not to talk to boys. Society discriminates between girls and boys, but why is it that only we suffer? A boy's family always supports him in whatever he wants to do. But why doesn't a girl's family support her? Girls can also do everything in their future. Even a girl dreams of going out and working, doing a job, becoming a doctor, or anything else etc. However, her family doesn't support her. It doesn't matter how good the girl is at her studies, they are just married off.

As articulated by a female participant in an FGD:

Society has certain rules that say girls should only do household chores. If we want, then we can change these standards that have been set by society. We have learned from our gender class that rules such as ‘only boys can work outside’ and ‘girls should be at home’ are not right and that even girls can work outside and boys can help out with household chores.

The gender sessions also helped the participants identify gender stereotypes and discrimination, as a female participant observed the limitations imposed on girls by families and society:
During the baseline, the survey respondents were asked whether particular sports such as football, gymnastics, hockey, cricket, dance, table tennis, kho-kho and kabaddi can be played by girls, boys or both. A combined average of 52% of the respondents felt that both girls and boys could play all the mentioned sports. Moreover, only 42% of the respondents felt that both girls and boys can take part in kabaddi or gymnastics. Further, 45% of the respondents said that only boys can play kabaddi, while 38% of them said that only boys can play cricket.

Which of the following professions are feasible options for girls and boys?

- **Football**:<br>  - Girls: 5%<br>  - Boys: 2%<br>  - Both: 31%<br>  - No response: 62%
- **Gymnastics**:<br>  - Girls: 9%<br>  - Boys: 23%<br>  - Both: 26%<br>  - No response: 42%
- **Hockey**:<br>  - Girls: 4%<br>  - Boys: 36%<br>  - Both: 35%<br>  - No response: 7%
- **Cricket**:<br>  - Girls: 9%<br>  - Boys: 6%<br>  - Both: 38%<br>  - No response: 52%
- **Dance**:<br>  - Girls: 5%<br>  - Boys: 7%<br>  - Both: 32%<br>  - No response: 56%
- **Table Tennis**:<br>  - Girls: 11%<br>  - Boys: 9%<br>  - Both: 13%<br>  - No response: 67%
- **Kho-Kho**:<br>  - Girls: 16%<br>  - Boys: 15%<br>  - Both: 20%<br>  - No response: 49%
- **Kabaddi**:<br>  - Girls: 4%<br>  - Boys: 9%<br>  - Both: 45%<br>  - No response: 42%
- **Combined average**:<br>  - Girls: 11%<br>  - Boys: 9%<br>  - Both: 27%<br>  - No response: 53%

Figure 13: Baseline responses to sport and physical activities that girls and boys can play; n=194
The endline survey results showed a change in the respondents’ gender-role-attitudes towards these particular sports. In the endline, 83% of the survey respondents believed that both girls and boys can participate in the outlined sports, using a combined average. Further, 92% of the respondents felt that both girls and boys can play table tennis, while 86% of them felt that both girls and boys can play football and hockey.

Figure 14: Endline responses to sport and physical activities, which girls and boys can play; n=158
Increased knowledge on menstruation

During the program, the participants learnt about menstruation, something not discussed often either in school or at home. It was found that the girls especially were very appreciative of learning about menstruation as well as breaking the myths and stigma around the topic. As a female participant noted:

Our body goes through certain changes during menstruation and society has imposed some norms suggesting that during this period we should not touch things or visit temples. However, we have learned that all of these are just myths.

Another female participant shared how the classes on menstrual health and hygiene relieved her of the stress she was going through because of the myths surrounding periods:

We earlier had certain myths around teenagehood, but after attending the class, those myths were addressed and busted. For example, during our teenage years, there are a lot of changes in our bodies. We used to be under a lot of stress because of those changes. Girls start undergoing periods during their teenage years. We used to hear different types of things about periods in homes or in the community. We used to get tense after hearing them. However, after our classes with PSD, we realized that having periods is not a bad thing.

Usually, only girls are taught and told about mensuration, as a result, boys have little to no knowledge of it. However, the CTT program educated both girls and boys on mensuration health and hygiene. This sentiment was also reciprocated by one of the male participants, who shared:

I learned a lot about menstruation. There were many myths that I used to consider facts, and these were all broken down for me. It is a normal part of life and should be taught to everyone, not just girls.
Stigmatization of menstruation is widespread in Indian society, where periods have long been considered dirty and impure. Rishita Barik faced a similar reality at home. Menstruation was considered taboo at her home, restricting her from engaging in basic activities like praying in the puja room or entering the kitchen during her periods. Rishita’s upbringing led her to think that these constraints are social norms that must be strictly adhered to.

The CTT program has been instrumental in transforming Rishita’s perception of the changes experienced by her body, helping her understand that these are natural and absolutely normal. The program sessions allowed her to reflect on how these misconceptions have shaped her ideas about her body, helping her understand that these are just myths that exclude and marginalize women and girls.

Rishita understands that these myths negatively impact women and girls across various spheres of life, spanning from homes to playgrounds to workspaces. This motivates her to constantly and consistently put in efforts to change the mindset of her parents and other members of her community. Rishita strongly believes in the importance of imparting accurate information on topics like menstruation and periods to young people from an early age:

This information is very important for those, who do not know about menstruation because of the fear they have in their minds about it - why periods happen and what happens in the body (during menstruation). It is absolutely necessary for everyone to know about this. Maybe they will not be afraid of menstruation after learning about it.
Several girls and young women in the slum communities of Bhubaneswar face gender-based discrimination, with gender stereotypes negatively impacting their lives on a daily basis. The CTT program aimed to equip its participants with the necessary knowledge to tackle gender-based stereotypes and discrimination.

The gender sessions empowered participants to resist gender-based discrimination and advocate for gender equality in their homes and communities. As a female participant shared:

A boy from my class would sometimes call me to inquire about the homework we used to receive in school. This used to really irk my mother and she would become really angry. She would always shout at me and tell me not to talk to boys or play with them. Earlier, I would not say anything back to her. However, after attending PSD’s classes, I explained to my mother that it is not wrong for girls and boys to talk to each other or become friends with each other. One can become friends with anyone, be it a girl or a boy.

Another female participant thanked the CTT program for helping her tackle gender discrimination faced by her at her home:

My mother never allowed me to go and play outside but I used to fight my way. When the table tennis tournament happened for the first time, I had to fight with my mother to take part in it, however, I could not win. When I finished as the runner-up in the second tournament, I was really happy and my mother was happy too. I want to thank PSD for providing us with this opportunity.
A male participant’s parent shared how their son changed his perspective after attending the gender sessions:

He learned something about gender through PSD’s program. He always tells us that boys and girls are equal in all work and that why should only women do all the housework and men do outside work? He always says that everyone should do all the work. Now he is helping his mother with housework.

A female participant believed that they should share their learnings from the CTT program with others from the community, advocating for a gender-just society:

We should share our learnings with other people, be it young or old people. If they do not understand then that is okay. But we talk to them respectfully and try to talk to them two or three times so that they understand.

**Improved peer relations, especially among those of different genders**

In the slum communities of Bhubaneswar, people of different genders usually do not interact with one another. The baseline survey results reflected the same. When asked whether they play with members of the opposite gender, 61% of survey respondents said that they sometimes played with people of the opposite gender, while 6% of them said that they had never played with members of the opposite gender.

![Figure 15: Survey responses to whether respondents interact with the opposite gender](image)

**Figure 15: Survey responses to whether respondents interact with the opposite gender**
The CTT’s mixed-gender programming ensured that participants of different genders were provided with opportunities to interact with one another. The endline survey data showed a substantial improvement in participants’ interaction with people of different genders. 85% of the survey respondents said that they always interact with members of the opposite gender, while only 13% of the survey respondents said that they sometimes interact with those of the opposite gender.

During the baseline, the survey respondents were asked which of the following games/activities girls and boys play together in their communities:
- Fun games (such as hide and seek or pithoo)
- Sports (such as cricket, hockey, football or badminton)
- Board games (such as ludo or snakes and ladders)

Only 44% of respondents said that girls and boys play fun games together, while 53% said that girls and boys play sports together in their communities.

The CTT program showed a positive influence on this indicator, as in the endline survey 94% of respondents said that girls and boys can play sports. Further, 73% of the survey respondents said that girls and boys can play board games together.

To further understand the reason behind girls and boys not playing together, PSD asked the survey respondents during the baseline survey to mark the reasons from the following options:
- Because boys and girls are hesitant to talk to each other
• Because boys are better at sports than girls and girls usually don’t know the rules of the game
• Because families don’t allow girls to go outside and play
• Because girls and boys are not allowed to play together

At baseline, 37% of the survey respondents said that it was because boys and girls are hesitant to talk to each other, 27% said that it was because boys are better at sports than girls and girls usually do not know the rules of the game, 53% said that it was because families do not allow girls to go outside and play and 13% said that it was because girls and boys are not allowed to play together. All of the survey respondents felt that there were one or multiple of the above reasons because of which girls and boys did not play together.

Figure 17: Survey responses to reason(s) as to why girls and boys do not play together; survey respondents could mark multiple options

When PSD was conducting its endline evaluations, the survey again asked the respondents the reasons that girls and boys do not play together. Many of them informed PSD’s data collection team that they did not agree with any of the options presented to them.
Earlier, whenever I wanted to borrow something like a pen, pencil or eraser from a boy, I would not ask them or would ask one of my friends to borrow the item from him. After PSD’s program, I have become so comfortable that now I talk to boys.

Earlier, only the boys used to play amongst themselves, but after the program, both boys and girls started playing together.

I used to feel a little shy talking to anyone, but after attending the gender class, I am not so shy anymore and now I am comfortable talking to girls.

The CTT program was instrumental in fostering positive relationships among the participants, especially among those of different genders. A female participant shared how girls and boys would earlier never talk to each other despite studying in the same room, but are now comfortable with each other:

Girls and boys used to sit in the same class, but despite that, they did not talk to each other. In our class, there were a lot of boys who were not comfortable talking to us. After PSD’s classes, boys have become more comfortable talking to us. We have seen a lot of changes in boys. And there are a lot of girls who earlier did not talk to boys, but now do.

Another female participant shared how she used to avoid talking to boys, but now is comfortable making conversations with them:

Earlier, whenever I wanted to borrow something like a pen, pencil or eraser from a boy, I would not ask them or would ask one of my friends to borrow the item from him. After PSD’s program, I have become so comfortable that now I talk to boys.

The CTT program not only catalyzed conversations amongst girls and boys, but also ensured that they participated together in sport and physical activity. Another female participant shared how now girls and boys play sport together:

Earlier, only the boys used to play amongst themselves, but after the program, both boys and girls started playing together.

A male participant shared how he was earlier shy in talking to girls, but now has no problem talking to them:

I used to feel a little shy talking to anyone, but after attending the gender class, I am not so shy anymore and now I am comfortable talking to girls.
Gender stereotypes prevalent in our society reinforce the idea that some sports are better suited for a particular gender. Moreover, young people from slum communities in Bhubaneswar have minimal interaction with people of genders that are different than their own. It was in this scenario that Udit Narayan Sahoo was introduced to the mixed-gender approach to sport through the CTT program.

The CTT program offered a welcome change from the usual gender-segregated activities, creating a safe space for young people of different genders to play together. With the help of this aspect of the program, Udit got the opportunity to interact with girls, something he had previously struggled with. In addition to the program sessions, participation in mixed-gender tournaments, further allowed Udit to challenge and overcome his personal gender bias. As a boy, the general consensus amongst his male peers was that girls were not as good as boys in sports. Boys, including himself, did not like playing with girls and felt that playing with them would not be as challenging or interesting.

Udit now not only feels at ease conversing and engaging in sport with girls but actively seeks to encourage and learn from them. This shift in mindset and behavior has not gone unnoticed, as even Udit’s mother, Jayanta Kumar Sahoo, has observed a positive change in his attitude towards girls:

“When [Udit] first started playing table tennis, he used to come home and tell us that girls and boys play together in the program led by PSD. He did not want to play with girls. But after playing, his thoughts towards girls have changed a lot. Now, he says that girls are playing better than boys. He talks very well with his sisters and other female friends and supports them in both studies and sports.”

Click here to read more about Udit Narayan Sahoo’s story
Development of crucial soft skills such as communication, leadership and teamwork

The CTT program had a positive impact on the development of soft skills and sporting values in its participants.

A female participant shared how the program helped them develop soft skills such as teamwork and leadership:

We were taught skills such as teamwork and leadership. We played a lot of games and I was the captain in a lot of those games. I feel very good about it. Being a leader, I learned about the responsibilities you have to assume, what needs to be done, and how to communicate with the other team members. I got to learn all of this. I also learned that what a person cannot do alone, a team can do together.

A male participant shared how they learned communication and respect through the CTT sessions:

PSD not only taught us to play table tennis but also taught us how to communicate with others and how to respect others.

Another female participant shared her learnings on communication and leadership from the CTT program:

I hesitated while talking to others and would end up not even talking to them. But now I am comfortable talking to others. I learned a lot about leadership. A leader should never tell others that the team lost because of them. If someone is not playing nicely, then the leader should give them confidence and motivate them.

PSD’s Community Sport Trainer, Pragatee Sethy, noted how the communication skills of the participants had improved:

Participants’ communication has also improved a lot. Earlier, when I started taking sessions, no one would talk to me or respond to questions. Then girls started coming forward more, to give me the answers [...] and towards the end of the program, girls and boys would come forward and explain what they were feeling.
Increased confidence and self-esteem

Another outcome of the CTT program was the increased confidence and self-esteem observed in its participants. Many CTT participants reported that the program had enabled them to become more confident in themselves and their abilities.

A female participant shared how she thought she could never play sports and how the CTT program has helped her gain confidence:

> We have gained new belief. The talent that we have unearthed through this program has given us a lot of confidence, which will stay with us forever. It is good that I got to learn this sport as I never thought I could play such a sport.

Another female participant shared how she has become more confident, especially while talking to other people:

> PSD has taught us to be confident and express ourselves. After attending PSD’s classes and sessions, I have become more confident. Now, I do not worry about what the other person will think about me. I am able to talk to everyone confidently. Earlier, I would not be able to even look at the other person while talking to them; I used to look down at the ground. But now my confidence level has risen and I am able to look at other people while talking to them.

Many CTT participants, through the program, also learned to accept and embrace their body shape and size, gaining confidence in the process, as shared by a female participant:

> We also learned that everybody has a different body shape and not everyone has the same body shape. I am really short for someone my age, so people at home and in class used to tease me saying, ‘You are so short, what will you do now?’ I used to feel a lot of pressure because of this. However, after attending PSD’s class, I got to know that no matter their height or body shape, a person can do anything and everything they want to do.
Knowledge of prospective careers, especially those within the sport industry

Through their participation in the CTT program, participants were able to articulate life choices and were empowered to make decisions concerning their future. The participants understood that their future choices should not be influenced or restricted by the gender-based stereotypes, which people have around certain careers.

During the baseline, when participants were asked whether the professions of pilot, lawyer, nurse, teacher, social worker, teacher, doctor, firefighter and police/army officer were feasible for girls, boys or both, it was noticed that the responses were gendered (Figure 18). On a combined average, only 64% of the respondents felt that these professions were feasible for both girls and boys.

There were certain professions that the respondents stereotyped more than others. Only 35% of respondents felt that becoming a nurse is appropriate for both girls and boys, while 51% felt that it was appropriate only for girls.
Another profession that was stereotyped was that of a firefighter. Only 31% of the respondents felt that firefighting as a profession was feasible for both girls and boys, while 53% of the respondents felt that was feasible only for boys.

Figure 18: Baseline responses to professions feasible for girls and boys; n=194
The endline survey results showed that the participants had moved beyond their
gendered stereotypes around career choices (Figure 19). On a combined average, 83% of
respondents felt that all professions were feasible for both girls and boys. Moreover,
more than 90% of respondents felt that professions such as pilot, lawyers, doctors and
teachers were feasible for both girls and boys.

**Figure 19: Endline responses to professions feasible for girls and boys; n=158**
The endline survey results show that the participants, especially girls, do not feel restricted by certain types of professions, and their new perspective has opened up the potential for new career paths for them.

The participants of the CTT program displayed knowledge of prospective careers, especially those in the sports industry. The survey respondents were also asked which profession they wanted to pursue in the future. The respondents shared a variety of professions, ranging from those within and outside the sport industry.

What job would you like to do in the future?

Table-tennis-player  Writer  Cricketer  Football manager  K-popstar  Electrician  Footballer  Software engineer  Singer  IAS officer  Racer  Nurse  ITI Lawyer  Actor  Bank manager  Army officer  DJ  Gamer  Youtuber  Army officer  Artist  Pilot  Fashion designer  Lecturer  Company Secretary  Sportsperson  Government Job  Dancer  Scientist  Lawyer  Hockey Player  Writer  Firefighter  P.E. teacher  Youtuber  Indian army  Engineer  Businessman  Doctor  Social worker  Policeman  Bank officer  Secretary  Work at PSD  Vlogger  Sports player  Air Hostess  IPS officer  Beautician  Teacher

The CTT program has motivated many participants to pursue a career in the sport industry such as that of a cricketer, footballer, table tennis player or PE teacher. One respondent even said they wanted to work at PSD in the future. A female participant shared how if given an opportunity, she would certainly choose a career in sports:

Now I think we can even make a career in sports, and it is my wish to have a profession in the field of sports, like the ma’am and sir, who coach us. I really want to enter this line of work and if I get the opportunity in the future, I will certainly choose it. Earlier, we did not know that we could move forward in the field of sports. We were not aware of the many opportunities available in sports.

A male participant’s parent shared how their child, after joining the CTT program has become motivated to become an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer:

He never used to say what he would do in the future, but after joining PSD’s program, he has decided what he wants to do in the future. He says that in the future he wants to be an IAS officer.
WAY FORWARD
The CTT program, a two-year intervention implemented by PSD in collaboration with the ITTF Foundation, ended in June 2023. However, motivated by the program's positive impact on the participants, PSD is trying to set up self-sustainable community table tennis clubs in the community schools where the CTT program was implemented. PSD envisions that these community clubs will provide an opportunity for the young people of these communities to indulge in table tennis sessions and ensure sustainable utilization of the infrastructure, which was set up by PSD, beyond the program.

PSD is reaching out to several local table tennis coaches in the area who can set up after-school community table tennis clubs. Once set up, young people from nearby slum communities will be able to access the table tennis facilities by enrolling themselves in the community table tennis club by paying a nominal fee, which will be decided upon by the respective community school.

Moreover, PSD will continue engaging three out of the four community schools through its flagship sport and physical-activity-based intervention, the Community Sports Program (CSP). Young people in these three community schools will be able to join CSP’s next cohort for the academic year 2023-24.

As evidenced by the quantitative and qualitative data presented in the report, the CTT has had a clear and profound impact on the participants as well as associated stakeholders such as the parents, teachers, school administrators and the larger community. The program is a testament to how sport and physical-activity-based interventions can be leveraged to improve the physical and socio-emotional wellbeing of young people as well as empower them to tackle gender-based inequality and discrimination prevalent in their communities. The program has been highly successful in developing 'confident, competent and gender-sensitive young leaders' in marginalized slum communities in Bhubaneswar. We express our deepest gratitude to all the participants, facilitators, the ITTF Foundation, Signify Innovations and the four community schools, as well as other key stakeholders, who contributed in numerous capacities to make the CTT program a resounding success.
PRO SPORT DEVELOPMENT