UNDERSTANDING THE LEVELS OF ACCESS TO AND ENGAGEMENT IN SPORTS AND PARTICIPATION LEVELS IN SOCIETY IN WANDOOR AND JUNGLIGHAT

KANISHK SRINIVASAN AND TANISHKA SACHIDANAND
Acknowledgements:
The authors of this report would like to thank our colleagues at Dakshin Foundation and the Andaman and Nicobar Environmental Team (ANET) in Wandoor for aiding in the research and facilitation of the project. This study was conceptualised with the aid of Adam Jadhav, Kartik Shanker and Madhuri Mondal, and would not have been possible to conduct without the aid of Anand Rao and the field staff at ANET. We would also like to thank the youth from the Wandoor and Junglighat communities – who helped us organise meetings and gather information for this study.

PHOTO CREDITS: KANISHK SRINIVASAN
# Table of contents

Executive summary 2  
  1.0) Introduction 3  
  2.0) Background: Programme overview 5  
  3.0) Objectives 7  
  4.0) Methods 8  
  5.0) Wandoor:  
    5.1) Site description 9  
    5.2) Youth clubs 10  
    5.3) Engagement levels in sports 11  
    5.4) Levels of access to sports 13  
    5.5) Gender dynamics 14  
    5.6) Other youth interests 15  
    5.7) Potential challenges 16  
  6.0) Junglighat:  
    6.1) Site description 18  
    6.2) Youth clubs 19  
    6.3) Engagement levels in sports 20  
    6.4) Levels of access to sports 21  
    6.5) Gender dynamics 21  
    6.6) Other youth interests 22  
    6.7) Potential challenges 23  
  7.0) Key Action Points 24  
  8.0) Plans for intervention 25  
  9.0) Conclusion 27  
  10.0) References 28
Executive summary

In the last two decades, there has been a steady increase in the industrialisation of fisheries, as well as the conversion of coastal commons for infrastructure, aquaculture or tourism development. This has led to poor biodiversity conservation outcomes, food security and livelihoods concerns. To address these systemic issues, Dakshin Foundation aims to provide place-based education and experiential learning opportunities by using the medium of sports and outdoor-based physical activities to engage with youth and children from these communities.

In order to develop and implement this programme, we conducted a study out to develop a baseline understanding of the levels of access and participation of youth in outdoor sports and physical recreational activities in our target sites. This report is the result of the study conducted in the South Andaman areas of Wandoor and Junglighat between February and March 2021. The report presents an overview of the existing levels of participation and access to sports, which will help us develop plans and interventions for Dakshin Foundation’s upcoming ‘Sports and Community Wellbeing’ programme.

Through our study, we found that there is a significant level of interest amongst youth in participation and engagement in sports and outdoor activities. Interviews and observations showed that there is also a need to provide youth and children with activities and spaces to enjoy themselves in a productive manner. However, in both sites, there are challenges that need to be addressed to facilitate increased participation and encourage participants to use this programme as a platform to engage with their communities and the larger society.
1.0 Introduction

India’s coastline is home to over 14 million people who depend mostly on fishing as a primary source of income and day-to-day sustenance. These communities also supply fish, a critical nutritional commodity, to the country’s population. In the past two decades, there has been a steady increase in the industrialisation of fisheries, as well as the conversion of coastal commons for infrastructure, aquaculture or tourism development. As a result of many interacting factors, these geographies are characterised by large-scale interrelated issues such as poor biodiversity conservation outcomes, food security and livelihoods concerns. These activities also threaten land rights, social relations and local knowledge and traditional governance systems of these coastal communities. So far, mainstream interventions largely involve restricting the use of biodiversity and natural resources and removing these communities from their lived experiences and their environments. These experiences feed into a lack of connection with the environment and a larger loss of identity for these communities (Giles-Corti and Donovan, 2002; Ding Ding et al, 2012).

In this context, it is critical to develop a holistic programme that would help address these systemic issues by providing place-based education and experiential learning opportunities while simultaneously tapping into the existing interests and aspirations of these communities. Our aim is to design and implement interventions for youth from fishing and coastal communities using the medium of sports and outdoor-based physical activities for youth. The goal is not only to improve physical health and wellbeing among youth of these communities, but also to help foster deeper connections to the natural environments that surround them (Cox et al, 2006; Harrington et al, 2017).

Before moving ahead with implementing the project in our field sites, it is first important to conduct a preliminary study to identify existing interest in sport engagement and how sports are currently organized. This study was also used as a tool to understand what factors affect the participation of youth and children in these communities in sports and outdoor recreational activities. Through this study, we also developed an understanding of some of the current basic needs of these groups, which will help us design our interventions and make them more relevant to them, which would also encourage them to participate in these activities.

The study was conducted in two sites in the South Andaman district of Andaman and Nicobar Islands – Wandoor and Junglighat. These sites were chosen because of
Dakshin Foundation’s long-term association with these fishing communities. The Andaman Nicobar Environment Team is a research hub owned and managed by Dakshin situated in Wandoor village. This makes it an ideal location to pilot sports interventions. Junglighat is the largest fishing community in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and hence it is very important to engage with this community for building their capacities in fisheries management and sustainability in the long run.

This report will provide a foundational understanding of current engagement levels of youth from coastal communities in sports and recreational activities and their interest in facilitating and participating in activities to improve their communities. Additionally, this report will identify key action points that will help address challenges in implementing sports and outdoor-based intervention programs (Bailey, 2006; Mcgee et al, 2006; Fredricks and Eccles, 2008; Bandy and Moore, 2009; Eime et al, 2013)
2.0 Background: Programme Overview

The primary goal of Dakshin’s ‘Sports and Community Wellbeing’ programme is to use sports to (a) improve the general health and wellbeing of fishing communities through outdoor and recreational sports interventions (b) facilitate conversations around social and environmental issues and promote engagement with those issues. The programme will attempt to create experiential and place-based curricula that could improve the community understanding of social needs and their natural environment.

The nature of the sport or physical activity would be crucial to the message and the programme's desired purpose. Along with sports such as football, volleyball and ultimate frisbee, an integrated sports-based curriculum will also be designed to connect these sports to the specific place-based environmental and social issues that are faced by the local participant communities. Sports like kayaking, surfing, scuba and freediving, rock climbing and bouldering could be used to directly communicate the importance of the outdoor environment and the need for sustainable livelihoods. We envision using sports as a rallying point for engagement with health, fitness and nutrition, and as an entry point for discussions about environment, society, culture, and even traditional education subjects, such as mathematics and the sciences. While there can be activities year-round at the community centres (rooted model), we also aim to scale these through camps that are conducted at multiple sites throughout the year (roving model).

The activities in the programme will include capacity-building programmes with certain individuals and groups within the communities so that they can be given the opportunity to run smaller programmes along these lines in other areas within their respective regions. The broader aim is to revitalise interest in coastal commons as physical spaces, which will boost these communities' pride in the surrounding natural spaces and work for their protection. In some parts of the country, traditional fishing methods involve an element of athleticism and adventure, (eg. freediving in Palk Bay) and interest in these traditional fishing methods could be restored and reignited by drawing parallels to these elements through the use of certain sports, which could make this another long-term goal for the programme.

The flowchart below is a visual illustration of how this project will help in the development of a sports-based programme. By assessing the nature and level of the engagement of youth in sports currently, we can develop a baseline understanding of their current levels of access to sports, which will help us design activities and initiatives
accordingly, and make things conducive for their participation in the 'Intervention' stage. Similarly, assessing their current levels of participation and stewardship of their communities would help us design activities that could build on their current levels of interest and engagement in their respective communities.

To summarise, the programme aims to provide youth from coastal villages with gender-equal and supportive spaces to nurture their physical talents, self-esteem, confidence and individual and community wellbeing. It aims to empower local youth to participate in and lead a range of social and environmental activities, with sports as a unifying platform. It aims to foster deeper connections between coastal communities and the natural environments that surround them. It aims to equip youth in coastal communities with skills and knowledge that would enable them to pursue other livelihood options (eg. sustainable and low-impact tourism ventures). It also aims to establish a scalable model that eventually benefits tens of thousands of children in coastal India.
3.0 Objectives

This report aims to develop an understanding of levels of access to and participation in sports and outdoor recreational activities by youth in fishing communities while also aiming to understand how they perceive and interact with their social and environmental surroundings – which will help us design and implement our sports-based interventions in a manner that builds on their existing level of awareness and current perceptions.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. to develop an understanding of how youth in coastal communities in fishing villages engage in sports and other outdoors activities, and how much access they have to spaces/facilities that allow them to play sports.
2. to explore social factors that determine what sports youth do or do not play, and how these influence their engagement.
3. to develop an understanding of how youth from fishing communities perceive their responsibility towards their social and environmental surroundings.
4. to develop an understanding of how engagement with and access to outdoor spaces influences youth perceptions and attitudes towards their immediate social and environmental surroundings.
4.0 Methods

The main objective of this study was to assess current levels of youth engagement in sport and outdoor activities in fishing communities and identify the scope for intervention programmes that target health and wellbeing along with sensitizing youth to their natural environments. The first phase of the study, conducted between December 2020 and January 2021 involved discussions with staff members within Dakshin and ANET who were able to provide input on identifying respondents in the designated study sites. As part of this stage of data collection, informal and semi-structured conversations were conducted with Dakshin staff who have prior experience working in the Andaman Islands and were familiar with the project sites and the communities, as well as the concept and rationale of the 'Sports and Community Wellbeing' programme.

Field interviews were conducted between February and March 2021, by means of semi-structured interviews in two sites: Wandoor and Junglighat. A total of 19 interviews and 7 group discussions were carried out across the two study sites, with respondents from local youth clubs, government bodies and educational institutions. Respondents also included youth club members and local youth actively involved in sports. Tour boat operators, Forest Department staff members, college students, temple committee members and local grocery store owners were among the respondents.

The collected data was analysed manually by categorising the information under themes that were identified and aligned with the objectives of this study. The primary themes were:

- Youth clubs - institutions, structure and activities
- Engagement of youth in sports and outdoor activities
- Access to spaces where sports could be played
- Gender dynamics
- Youth interests - professional interests and challenges faced by youth
5.0 Wandoor

5.1 Site description

Wandoor village is in the Southern Andaman district and is in close proximity to the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (MGMNP) and the Lohabarrack crocodile sanctuary to the north. As per a panchayat survey conducted in 2017, Wandoor houses a population of 1505 community members in a total land area of 217.84 hectares, who are primarily of Bengali descent. While a majority of residents used to practice agriculture earlier, they have moved away from an agrarian lifestyle after the 2004 tsunami. Currently the main livelihoods are fishing and tourism-related in addition to growing arecanut plantations. Some village members own land in the area, although land ownership is minimal, owing to reduced agricultural opportunities and significant land degradation because of the tsunami.

![Wandoor Village satellite map](image)
Through our interviews and fieldwork, we found that the youth in Wandoor are mostly involved in tourism activities and are less inclined to pursue fishing-related occupations. However, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the tourism industry, many youth in the village have been compelled to participate in fishing-related activities to support themselves. Some youth continue to participate in part-time unskilled labor in various sectors.

5.2 Youth clubs:

Prior to understanding how these youth engage in sporting activities and outdoor recreational activities, it is important to understand their roles in their respective communities, and how they tend to organise themselves. One of the primary outlets for these youth to organise themselves are through **youth clubs**. These youth clubs are bodies that are present in villages across the country. As organisations, they are registered with the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, which is a government body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, under the Government of India. These youth clubs are collectives of youth who organise themselves to work for the betterment of their communities, while also providing spaces for recreational and leisure activities.

Different youth clubs have different systems of organising themselves, but at a general level, each youth club has a President and a Vice-President, along with a secretary. Different youth clubs have different forms of membership – some have monthly fees for members, while others have a one-time registration fee for joining. Some have a much more informal model for fund generation, which is to call for donations and request funds from the community on an event-to-event basis. These events can range from religious functions and festivities, to supporting a member of the community in case of an emergency.

There are four youth clubs in the Wandoor area, which are present in different geographical areas of the village –
- Kranti Youth Club – North Wandoor area
- Youth Club Wandoor – Wandoor middle school/panchayat area
- Rajiv Gandhi Youth Club – Wandoor Jetty area
- Hashmatabad panchayat youth club - Hashmatabad village (under Wandoor panchayat)

These youth clubs have different levels of activity. The Kranti Youth Club is a new organisation, having only been registered within the last two years. They have built a
hall for the club in North Wandoor with the help of Panchayat where the youth club members could meet and also host community festivals and other celebrations. They also plan to include an indoor badminton court and facilities for indoor sports such as table tennis and carrom. The Wandoor Panchayat Youth Club has been relatively inactive since late-2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This youth club uses the Panchayat community hall near the panchayat office building in Wandoor, but the lack of a designated toilet to use for youth club members makes it difficult to be used for youth club activities. The Rajiv Gandhi Youth Club, near the Wandoor jetty is also somewhat inactive. While these youth clubs are not very active for most of the year, they host and organise activities during important days of the year, such as Republic Day, Independence Day and New Years' Eve.

While these clubs are formal institutions under which youth can organise themselves, their varying levels of activity mean that youth often organise activities such as tournaments and cleanup drives on their own without any support from these youth clubs, and merely use the names of the youth clubs on banners and posters for publicity purposes. The youth clubs as institutions provide no real support (financial or otherwise) to these activities – which are often self-funded by participants and organisers. Sports tournaments organised in the village often require a team to provide a registration fees to participate, and the funds generated from these payments are directed towards organising adequate sports equipment, trophies and prize money for the winners of the tournaments. Other incidental costs are often paid for by the organisers of the tournaments.

5.3 Engagement levels in sports and outdoors

The outdoor sports primarily played in Wandoor are volleyball, football and cricket. Other sports and games like badminton and carrom are also popular amongst the youth and children. Carrom is often played outside the shops in North Wandoor and gives the youth an opportunity to gather and socialise daily. These sports are played seasonally, with cricket and volleyball being played in the non-monsoon period, and football being played during the monsoons. There is significant interest amongst the youth to play these sports, and they are played informally daily. These sports are also played in school as part of their physical training (P.T.) classes. As part of these classes, the sports are played on the school grounds, but the students are not given any formal sports coaching. The teachers of these classes are asked to follow government-mandated 'Fit India Protocol and Guidelines' (Appendix A), which was introduced in 2019, but these documents do not provide documents to train students in specific
sports. Rather, they cover general health and fitness protocols and guidelines. Due to poor implementation and monitoring practices, the students instead play sports that they enjoy with little to no supervision and training during these PT classes.

Between 3 and 4 pm in the afternoons, boys and men between the ages of 15 and 35 gather at the New Wandoor Primary School grounds to play volleyball. Teams are formed informally, and games are played until the sun sets or until the players tire themselves out. When there are more than two teams, extra teams are formed, and a rotational system is created. In case there are extra players but not enough to form a new team, the team limits are extended (eg. volleyball teams usually consist of 6 people, but in these cases more people are allowed onto each team). This informal system ensures that everyone gets a chance to play.

During these casual games, youth from all age groups come together to play, ranging from 13-14-year-olds to 35-36-year-olds, all playing on the same field. Amongst the younger age groups, young girls were seen playing games like cricket and carrom, but there were no older female participants involved in these activities. The highly gendered nature of these gatherings mean that female participants are rarely given a platform to play sports and outdoor games recreationally outside of a school forum. The female respondents pointed out that these societal pressures, and the overwhelming male presence in these spaces meant that even the girls and women who had an interest in playing would not, as they did not feel comfortable in those environments.
Every few months, the youth from the village come together and organise tournaments amongst themselves to provide a space for youth to come together and play sports amongst themselves in a competitive manner. These tournaments vary in their accessibility. They can range from being exclusive to a panchayat, a tehsil, or open to all comers, depending on how competitive the organisers want the tournament to be, along with how large they want it to be in terms of number of participants and the duration of the tournaments. These tournaments are open to all at each level, with the only restriction being the fact that a certain amount of money needs to be paid to register for the tournament.

5.4 Levels of access to sports depending on demographics

In Wandoor, there are little to no visible divisions within the communities that manifest in inequitable access to outdoor spaces and sporting opportunities. Given that the majority of the residents in the village are Bengali and from a similar caste and class background, most children and youth have a similar level of access to sporting opportunities and physical spaces for recreational purposes. There are a smaller number of Tamil and Telugu families also residing in Wandoor, but there is little to no evidence to suggest that children and youth from these communities are excluded from these gatherings and games. Through observation, it was noticed that Hindi was commonly spoken, which is a language common to all these communities, thus avoiding any chances of exclusion.

While there were minimal demographic factors to prevent people from participating in these opportunities, there were still certain divisions that were evident. Some
respondents mentioned that families who have moved to Wandoor more recently found it more difficult to adjust to the social landscape in Wandoor, and break into the social circles that consist of youth and children from families that have lived there for a longer period. Another factor that has been seen as a determinant in an individual's participation in sports is their family's financial situation and their occupation. Tournaments require individuals within each team to pay a certain amount of money to register and participate in them, which creates a barrier for some of the less affluent youth and children in the village. Some of the older youth in the village interviewed as part of this study mentioned that they have often felt that they had to support some of their younger counterparts to encourage them to participate in sports and tournaments. This support sometimes takes the form of buying jerseys and subsidising their participation in tournaments, by partially or entirely covering the registration fees.

5.5 Gender dynamics

While there are few factors in terms of caste, class and language spoken that prevent young boys and males from participating in the sport, the participation of young women and girls in these sports and tournaments is at a negligible level. Within Wandoor, a majority of the sports played are in an outdoor setting, often in the evenings – from 3 pm until the sun sets. An overwhelming majority of these participants are young males, with little to no women visible outdoors in the village. Younger children often play informal games of cricket, pitthoo (seven-stones) and tag in a mixed-gender setting, but once they arrive at the age where puberty begins, the direction that their lives take differs drastically. While the boys are allowed to continue playing these sports and participating in outdoor recreational activities in a more independent manner, the girls are encouraged to focus on their studies and help with house-related work and are discouraged from venturing out in the hour before sunset, and are often not allowed to venture out at all after the sun sets. These situations stem from safety concerns, as there have been previously reported incidents of sexual violence in the Andaman Islands.

In a school environment, there are always opportunities provided to young female students to play sports (at both a competitive and non-competitive level). After completing their Primary and Middle schooling in Wandoor, most students enroll in the Senior Secondary School in Manglutunan (a neighbouring village), where they are often given the opportunity to participate in larger tournaments in hockey, football, cricket and volleyball. These tournaments are held once a year in the winter months of
December-January, and both boys and girls are encouraged to play and participate in these tournaments.

There is a certain level of interest amongst a handful of young women and girls in Wandoor to participate in sports and physical recreational activities, despite the lack of opportunities provided to them to exercise this interest. A few respondents mentioned that there are two college-going women in Wandoor who regularly make the one-hour commute to Port Blair to participate in sports coaching sessions at the Netaji Stadium in Port Blair. Their participation in these sessions, along with their ongoing commitments to higher studies and other extra-curricular activities through college mean that this leaves little scope for them to socialise with their peers outside of a controlled environment. All the women interviewed as part of this study responded positively to the idea of the introduction of a sports training programme for both male and female participants in the village. While all of them acknowledged that there are certain challenges currently that prevent girls and women from engaging in sports and outdoor recreational activities, they simultaneously expressed interest in the idea, and suggested that once a few women and girls are invited to participate in the programme’s suggested activities, more people would be encouraged to come and participate in the training sessions.

5.6 Other Youth Interests

This study was also used as a tool to understand some of the other interests of the youth and children in Wandoor, as well as to understand some of the issues and challenges that they face in carrying forward these interests. This information was collected with the intention of using it while building a long-term programme and designing activities and interventions that are relevant to the stakeholders in the community.

Most of the youth in Wandoor are involved in tourism and turn towards working in the tourism sector for their livelihoods. The Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent nationwide lockdown in India had a significant impact on the tourism industry in the Andaman Islands. While tourism was earlier a significant source of income for communities and residents of the islands, all of these people have had to find alternative avenues of income to support themselves and their families. In Wandoor, several of the youth who were previously involved in tourism started going on fishing trips or worked informally as the daily-wage labour or often helped support the family businesses. These occupations were viewed as temporary solutions to merely support themselves while tourism was no longer a viable livelihood and income-earning option.
During the time of these interviews, the tourism industry in the Andaman Islands was reopening gradually, and many of the respondents were also planning to re-enter their previous jobs as tour guides. Some respondents not involved in the tourism industry, such as fishworkers and college students, viewed these livelihoods as an unstable and erratic source of income, and claimed that the youth in the village had turned to tourism as it was an easy way to earn money with relatively low qualifications necessary to enter the tourism job market.

Other popular career routes taken by youth in Wandoor are the services (army, navy, police), or professional degrees which would give them job opportunities in sectors specific to their studies. One seemingly popular example of a professional degree is the Polytechnic course offered in the B.R. Ambedkar Institute of Technology in Port Blair. Youth who were interested in these career paths brought up the point that they did not feel entirely supported in these career paths, and that all youth in the village would benefit from career counselling and guidance sessions, which could potentially allow them to access a wider range of opportunities through their skill set. They brought up the point that their career and livelihood options are currently restricted to the options available to them on the islands, and that there are youth who are interested in pursuing and exploring alternative careers using their skill sets and education. They argued that skill-building workshops and guidance sessions could prove to be very valuable and would also help them cultivate the necessary vocational skills and abilities that would expand their opportunities and the scope of their livelihood options. These sessions and workshops could also be extended to youth involved in the tourism industry, as they could be introduced to alternative tourism practices as well as other skills that could prove useful if they encounter difficulties in the tourism industry. All these activities and programmes could help these youth and children increase their suitability to a larger variety of roles and livelihoods and allow them to access more options.

5.7 Potential challenges

These are some of the potential challenges that could arise while implementing this programme:

- **Availability of physical spaces and grounds for sports training purposes:** While there are spaces for youth and children to play sports regularly, and even host tournaments, there are still certain limitations in the quality of these grounds and spaces. Both the Manglutan cricket ground and the Wandoor
Middle School ground, which are regularly used for sports, are small, and the distances required to travel to access these grounds also mean that there are few people playing, given that few people have access to private transport, and public transport within the village is minimal.

- **Equal gender involvement:** There was a visible lack of young girls and women playing sports and enjoying themselves recreationally outdoors. Logistically planning for timings for both males and females to participate in programmes and activities could prove to be difficult.

- **Government support for additional facilities:** There has been little government support for individuals and institutions involved in youth clubs, which could create an obstacle when introducing a sports-based programme in Wandoor. While there was significant support expressed for the sports programme, many respondents mentioned that there would be challenges to implementing a long-term programme without consistent government support.
6.0 Junglighat

6.1 Site description

Junglighat is located in the Port Blair in the South Andaman District in the Andaman Islands. Within Junglighat, the area where the interviews for this project were conducted was Macchi Basti. Junglighat is one of the most densely populated areas in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. A majority of the residents in the area are from Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh, on the mainland. A number of these families originally relocated to the Andaman Islands between 1947 and the 1970s (Salagrama and Sarma, 2004). There is significant diversity in terms of how recently the families in the Macchi Basti area migrated to Junglighat. A majority of the Macchi Basti population are involved in fishing and other allied activities like the fish-processing and exports industry. The residents who have lived there for a longer time have largely moved out of fishing-based professions, while the more recently settled families focus on fishing.

![Satellite map of Macchi Basti in Junglighat.](image)

The Macchi Basti community are actively religious and organise themselves by temples as per their various religious beliefs and traditions. The 4 major temples under which residents organise themselves are the Shiv Mandir, the Ram Mandir, the Hanuman Mandir and the Tirupathi Temple. Each of these temples have committees which serve as community resource centres and clubs for people to collect and organise themselves.
The youth in Junglighat lack the motivation to complete their education, and often turn to part-time or full-time fishing related jobs and unskilled labour, which are high-income earning opportunities. Alcoholism and substance abuse is rampant among these youth and there is little opportunity for employment and recreation.

6.2 Youth Clubs and Temple Committees

There are three youth clubs in the area, which are affiliated to the temple committees. The three prominent youth clubs in the area are the Shivshankar Youth Club, the Suryodaya Youth Club and Dairy Farm Youth Club which consist of Macchi Basti residents. Local temple charities like the Shri Sitaram committee and the Yuva Bharat Samaj Seva trust largely sponsor the youth clubs, and as a result, host a number of events and. Apart from this, youth clubs in the area are also involved in organizing various drives and events for youth and community members. Some of the organized activities include blood donation drives, drug and alcohol awareness campaigns and cleanliness drives.

The temple committees that sponsor local youth clubs are currently undertaking plans to enhance local infrastructure. The funds for this project are being collected from temple committee members for the construction of a community hall, including the

![Hanuman temple in Junglighat overlooking the docks.](img.7)
construction of a gymnasium for community use. Through these spaces, the objective of these committees and clubs is to provide spaces for children to engage with each other and play indoor games and sports in a healthy and safe manner.

The Junglighat Macchi Basti community is clearly demarcated along the lines of these temple committees, and the area is political and these divisions are clearly visible. Several respondents brought up the fact that other committees have often withheld information and resources which would have otherwise helped the community through the pandemic, and instead divided these resources amongst their friends and family. There were also complaints that the local elite had benefited from certain government schemes that other residents were not aware of and did not share the relevant information with them. There were undertones of hostility and wariness when respondents were asked about other temple committees or youth clubs and their work.

6.3 Engagement levels in sports and outdoors

Cricket is the most popular sport in the community, with large numbers of youth and community members participating. Youth mostly initiate recreational games in the Junglighat community hall, and occasionally seek permission from the government to utilize the local school grounds to play and organize tournaments. These tournaments follow a pay-and-play system, where teams have to pay a registration fee to participate in them. There are a significant number of youth from Macchi Basti who are interested in cricket, and respondents indicated that there are at least a hundred youth from the area who usually participate in these tournaments, which could comprise of up to 15 teams.

![Img. 8: A youngster playing cricket in the Macchi Basti docks](image-url)
Despite the interest in and passion for cricket, there is a significant lack of spaces for youth to play cricket. The main space for play is in open spaces in the fishing jetty, where they were originally not allowed to play, but permission was granted after requesting the jetty authorities to open up the space to provide youth with some space to enjoy themselves. This lack of appropriate infrastructure and open spaces severely hinders their interest and participation in sports. Respondents mentioned that they were keen on playing while in school, but once they had completed their schooling, the lack of space and opportunities had reduced their interest significantly.

One other avenue for interest and involvement in outdoor activities include training for recruitment for the armed forces. Since livelihood options are limited in the area and unemployment amongst the youth is rampant, many youth (mostly young men) choose to enlist in the armed forces for improved livelihood prospects and job security. Currently, there are no formal or informal training programs available to youth who are interested in enlisting in the services, and most of their physical training for their examinations takes place at an individual level.

6.4 Levels of access to sports depending on demographics

The extremely limited space in the Macchi Basti area means that there are very few avenues for all youth and children to play any sports. Informal games are held regularly in the jetty area, but the limited space there as well means that only a small number of youth can play at any given time, which means that most people do not have access to opportunities where they can enjoy themselves and play. Amongst the youth who were observed playing cricket, a majority of the participants were in school or young adults (18-25 years old). These divisions mostly were along the lines of how recently the individuals had settled in the Macchi Basti area as well as which temple committee their families were affiliated to. There were little to no visible differences in access to sporting opportunities, since there was minimal access to the space and sporting opportunities for youth and children across the various social divisions in Macchi Basti.

6.5 Gender dynamics

Sports in the area is heavily gendered with young men making up most of the demographic that engages in outdoor and recreational sports activities. Several social
and cultural norms play into this gendered dynamic, and there is little opportunity for women and young girls to participate in sports and outdoor activities beyond a certain age group. Several respondents indicated that the male youth and adults suffer from alcoholism and drug addictions, which creates an unsafe space for women and young girls. In this context, there are no women who play sports and engage with outdoor recreational activities, since these spaces are dominated by male figures, which creates an unsafe environment.

### 6.6 Youth interests

Since there are few avenues and spaces for youth to enjoy themselves recreationally, many of the youth in the Junglighat Macchi Basti are more involved in higher studies and furthering their professions. Some respondents mentioned that while in the past, the primary occupation was fishing and other fishing-based professions, now that the youth are more educated and more aware about alternative opportunities, there are a larger variety of options available to them.

However, at the same time, there is also a waning interest in education amongst a large number of youth in the area. Through the fishing sector in the area, there are many temporary money-making opportunities that are quite lucrative, such as processing the fish and loading them onto trucks for exports. Several of the youth take up these opportunities to earn easy money, which they then spend on alcohol and drugs. There have been complaints amongst the community about young males often creating issues with their alcohol and drug consumption. Several respondents called for an intervention to provide these youth with a forum to engage with each other in a constructive manner, while also giving them something to do, potentially occupying them and keeping them from consuming alcohol and drugs.

Some respondents who were members and leaders of the temple committees and youth clubs mentioned that they have been trying to provide these youth with avenues to occupy themselves, but that they are limited by financial and logistical constraints like the lack of physical spaces to conduct events. One respondent who was active in one of the temple committees mentioned that they are currently in the process of constructing a community hall near their temple, which would be used to provide these youth with a physical space to enjoy themselves and engage with each other. One half of this community hall has been set aside to create space for a gym for these youth for them to apply themselves productively.
6.7 Potential challenges

These are some of the potential challenges that could arise while implementing a sports programme in Junglighat:

- **Lack of physical space:** The extreme population density and the fact that the entire Macchi Basti community is confined to a tiny area of Junglighat means that space is at a premium. In this context, there is no designated space for outdoor recreation and sports, and the youth in the area lack the space and the platforms to express themselves and enjoy themselves. This makes the introduction and implementation of a 'Sports and Community Wellbeing' programme extremely difficult.

- **Heavily politicised space:** The Macchi Basti community is a highly political space, with several members of the community associated with various political parties. These political differences, along with the numerous temple committees and youth clubs in such a dense area means that differences between members of these various institutions often clash and come in conflict with each other. These are all issues that need to be kept in mind while introducing a new sports-based programme in this area.
7.0 Key Action points

While there is a general interest in sports and outdoor recreational activities among youth in Wandoor and Junglighat, the current levels of access and engagement differ on various levels across these communities. Therefore, efforts need to be focused on targeting our sports programmes to the requirements and interests of youth from diverse backgrounds along with considering ways to combat existing social and cultural challenges that would potentially limit outreach of our sports programme.

A thorough analysis of the interviews conducted in Wandoor and Junglighat presented a range of stakeholders along with the unique challenges faced by youth with regards to sports access. The interviews also provided insights into how these challenges can be mitigated to ensure equitable access to sports programmes and opportunities. In this regard, it is important for our interventions to consider the following:

- Space and availability of sports infrastructure is lacking in these communities, which directly impacts the ability of youth to engage in sports and outdoor activities. Therefore, government support and capacity building of formal spaces and organized sporting activities is urgently needed.
- Recreational sports and outdoor activities are currently limited to young men, with minimal participation from young women. This is mostly attributable to long standing social and cultural norms and the lack of gender inclusive infrastructure. Establishing gender equal facilities and infrastructure is key to creating safe gender equal spaces in sports and outdoor activities.
- Youth in Wandoor and Junglighat are currently limited in their access to and participation in local governance. Regular consultations with youth and community members involved in sports will provide opportunities for these participants to voice their opinions and suggest improvements in sports infrastructure and organize sports activities and tournaments, while also encouraging them to participate more in other local socio-political issues. Simultaneously educating youth about the importance of equality and diversity in sports is central to addressing and raising awareness about issues of inclusivity in our sports programme.
- Involving local government bodies to sponsor basic amenities such as safe public transport systems and toilets along with basic sports equipment and infrastructure will potentially ensure the inclusion of more participants in our sports programme and allow for better accessibility.
8.0 Plans for intervention:

In its current format, the programme will be implemented in Wandoor initially where we will develop and test a model of intervention that we could adapt to the unique challenges and requirements of the communities and spaces in the Junglighat area. This model will also be used to introduce similar projects in other sites across the Andaman Islands and the mainland. Moving forward, we have several points to work on in order to facilitate the introduction and implementation of this sports-based programme in our target sites in Wandoor and Junglighat, respectively.

- **Establishing more in-depth relationships with youth clubs:** In Wandoor, the youth clubs are the primary institutions through which youth in the village are organised, and they could prove to be extremely useful for the proposed programme, as well as Dakshin's other work in the area. The strengthening of these relationships could help us generate interest amongst a youth community that is already organised to a certain extent. These relationships will be strengthened through workshops and group discussions on the model of the programme, and through consulting and involving members of these youth clubs in the decision-making processes as active partners.

  In Junglighat as well, establishing these relationships with people from various youth clubs and temple committees would be very valuable in moving forward with Dakshin’s other initiatives in the area, as well as a potential sports-based programme that is reworked to adapt to the physical and socio-political limitations of the site.

- **Integration and overlaps with Dakshin's 'Sea Change' programme:** Alongside the development of this programme, Dakshin Foundation is also building a larger 'Sea Change' model which is envisaged as a model for marine sustainability by addressing issues of environmental importance along with issues of social importance to communities living in coastal and marine spaces. This sports programme will serve as a platform for facilitating engagement with youth and children in these spaces on issues of health, livelihoods and education by building on the sports training sessions to also include capacity-building camps and workshops to address other pertinent issues of community wellbeing, as per each community’s specific requirements and needs.
• **Partnerships with other organisations and institutions:** Prior to actually implementing the programme, partnerships must be established with other organisations who are involved in training youth in particular sports. The options for sports that can be played or introduced through this programme are football, volleyball, cricket or ultimate frisbee. As part of the sports-based programme, the training sessions and the level of sports training should be of a certain quality, for which we aim to bring in certified trainers and coaches through these partner organisations for sports that are popular amongst the youth.

• **Consultations with youth and key informants in target sites:** Initially, we aim to focus on sessions in one particular sport before potentially expanding to other sports and outdoor recreational activities to provide youth and children with more options for recreation and games. We are also committed to involving the youth in these decision-making processes, to which end we will be building relationships and partnerships with the youth clubs, as well as fostering relationships with the local government authorities in the area.

• **Exploring additional options for activities in Junglighat:** While the sports programme will be introduced initially in Wandoor, activities in Junglighat will include camps and workshops with youth in the Macchi Basti area to build relationships with the youth clubs and temple committees to facilitate work under the other branches of Dakshin's 'Sea Change' programme and build a foundation for the eventual implementation of the sports programme in this area. A movement towards indoor sports and potentially martial arts will be conducive to the spaces in Junglighat, where the development and construction of community halls could provide youth and children with physical spaces where they can participate in our programmes and proposed activities.
9.0 Conclusion:

Supporting youth health and well-being is paramount as youth are agents of change and bearers of local knowledge in fishing communities. With several schemes already set to encourage youth to actively participate in their communities, sports is still a potential untapped avenue. Therefore, considering the scope of sports, it is essential now more than ever to explore it to achieve healthy communities by focusing on individual physical and mental well-being and community cohesion.

Through this study, we aimed to gauge the potential of sports as a means to achieving community well-being by investigating current engagement levels and understanding the social factors that influence such engagement. We attempted to gain an understanding of what sports are played, what kinds of infrastructure is currently available and how social factors influence interest levels in both sports and involvement in the larger society. The results from our study highlighted key challenges along with avenues for improvement and intervention, which we can apply while attempting to establish our sports programme in our pilot study sites. Moreover, we were able to understand how different stakeholders in these communities presently interact with sports and identify the unique challenges they face.

Our study also identified important governance and infrastructure issues that can potentially hinder the proper implementation of our sports programme. The limited availability of space, lack of inclusivity based on gender, limited access to transport infrastructure and poor youth representation in local governance are many such hindrances that could potentially limit our outreach, if not addressed. However, to counter these deep-rooted issues, we were able to identify long term solutions such as partnering and consulting with larger institutions and establishing partnerships with youth clubs to improve and solidify our outreach while simultaneously creating an inclusive space for youth to engage in sports.
10.0 References:


Ding, D., Gebel, K. 2011. Built Environment, Physical Activity, and Obesity: What Have We Learned from Reviewing the Literature? *Health & Place, 18*(1), pp. 100-105

Giles-Corti, B., & Donovan, R. J. (2002). The relative influence of individual, social and physical environment determinants of physical activity. *Social Science & Medicine, 54*(12), 1793–1812


