

COLLECTIVE ACTION & RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN MEGA SPORTING EVENTS

Developing knowledge and best practices for Football Associations in engaging the hospitality sector in Qatar

Webinar Report



**Centre for Sport
& Human Rights**

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This document is a report of the webinar convened by the Centre for Sport and Human Rights, which brought together actors in the sport ecosystem to explore what steps Football Associations (FAs) can take to responsibly participate in mega sporting events, with a specific focus on the upcoming World Cup in Qatar and the hospitality sector. The webinar also built on the tool published in 2021 providing initial guidance for FAs, Labour Rights in Qatar: Due Diligence Starter Kit for National FAs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many actors are involved in the successful delivery of events like the FIFA World Cup, and *collaboration* between all of them is essential to find collective solutions to address human rights challenges.

National Football Associations (FAs) are clearly a critical part of this ecosystem, and their participation in events is increasingly under scrutiny. They do not choose themselves where competitions are hosted, but they can play a role in ensuring that events have a positive impact.

FAs should first and foremost do no harm – this means considering the impact on people, be they children, workers, fans, journalists, or members of the LGBTQI+ community. It is part of their duty of care, and it means putting people at the centre of decisions, processes and positions taken across all activities with consideration for areas such as anti-discrimination, gender equity and child safeguarding. In sports, this means not only doing no harm on training fields, in dressing rooms, and in board rooms, but also in decisions taken in relation to the partnerships made and the services procured.

There are plenty of examples of human rights issues beyond the control of an FA. Even if it has itself caused no harm, the organisation may nevertheless have contributed to harm or been linked to it. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) provide the roadmap to help FAs understand their responsibilities. The UNGPs are a set of guidelines for governments and organisations to use in order to prevent, address and make right human rights abuses committed in business operations. They provide the first global standard for preventing and addressing the risks of human rights harms linked to business activities, and continue to provide the internationally accepted framework regarding business and human rights.

Two key concepts are relevant in particular:

1. **Due diligence** - means ongoing proactive engagement with stakeholders to understand where risks lie, and the steps that can be taken to mitigate them. Where an organisation causes or contributes to risks to people, the UNGPs ask them to prevent, and mitigate issues that are most harmful and make right any wrongs. Where risks arise through relationships with others, the UNGPs ask them to use their leverage with their partner to prevent and mitigate those harmful actions. This includes not only understanding what their risks are and how they are being mitigated, but putting in place processes to do so on an ongoing basis.



- Leverage** is an advantage that gives power to influence. In the context of the UNGPs, it refers to the ability of a company or a FA to effect change in the wrongful practices of another party that is causing or contributing to a negative human rights impact.

This webinar focused on the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup and examined where the risks are for FAs, especially in the hospitality industry. Everywhere in the world hotels operate under franchise models and depend on a large proportion of staff being subcontracted or engaged via employment agencies. When considering roles such as housekeepers, gardeners, security guards, and restaurant staff, it is clear that hospitality is an industry characterised by irregular working hours that depends on low wage work which is typically undertaken by migrant workers. Here there is a systemic risk of labour abuses, including in extreme cases trafficking and forced labour. In the Gulf region, these risks are compounded by issues like recruitment fees that are shouldered by migrant workers and additional vulnerabilities that arise as a result of significant power imbalances that create obstacles to workers asserting their rights and accessing remedy.

So, where does the FAs due diligence begin when it comes to understanding these risks? And how can football federations go further?

One starting point for FAs is to simply educate themselves on the risks and understand the efforts of the tournament organisers, in this case, FIFA and the Supreme Committee. Yet while actions and assurances from FIFA and the Supreme Committee matter, it is important for FAs to recognise that Qatar is undergoing significant change. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and others stated that while comprehensive labour reforms have been put in place in the country, there remain significant gaps when it comes to implementation and enforcement. Moreover, driving compliance requires input from many actors, not only the tournament organisers. This means there is a role for everyone to play. That includes FAs and others staying in hotels, including an expectation that they do their own due diligence, by asking questions and becoming part of the solution.

The Danish Football Association and the sponsor AB InBev shared their experiences in the meeting of how they have directly engaged their hotels in Qatar. These steps are important in creating a culture of transparency and accountability and in reducing the risk of breaches of labour rights. In addition, the pressure and focus on Qatar as a result of playing host to the World Cup has been a catalyst for human rights improvements in the country, and can serve as an example of how change can occur, and of the steps that can and should be implemented wherever in the world teams and sponsors travel for events.



Key Recommendations

Responsibility

First, National Football Associations should recognise their own responsibility to do no harm and to prevent, address and make right any negative human rights impacts they may have caused, contributed to through their activities, or be linked to via their commercial relationships, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Awareness

Like all stakeholders, Football Associations should educate themselves on the human rights risks connected to an event and understand the applicable international standards and the efforts of the tournament organisers and other key actors to apply them.

Engagement

Proactive engagement is critical and requires dialogue and collaboration on an ongoing basis with all stakeholders – including adversely affected people or their representatives – to understand where human rights risks lie, what can be done together to mitigate them and how to build or support complaints channels that meet the needs of those who have come to harm.

Risk Assessment

Integrating human rights risk assessment processes requires systems to be in place, informed by appropriate human rights expertise and stakeholder input, to properly assess risks in operations and business relationships.

Transparency

Leadership and innovation should be encouraged, requiring that Football Associations regularly communicate openly not only about achievements and progress but also about the challenges faced in responding to adverse impacts and how they are seeking to address such issues, learn from their mistakes and improve.



Opening remarks: The role of organisers –standards, due diligence and assurance

Andreas Graf, Head of Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination at FIFA, provided an overview of the framework that FIFA has already put in place to address event-related human rights risks.

He referenced the fact that as most of the teams competing at the FIFA World Cup are known, this conversation falls at a timely moment as national teams will start their logistical preparations for the tournament, including their selection of hotels for the duration of the tournament. Some members who qualified earlier or who foresaw their qualification have already started working on these preparations, paving the way for other member associations in terms of engagement with stakeholders, hotels and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The objective is to share those experiences.

FIFA has a special responsibility to help ensure that the companies involved in the delivery of the tournament in Qatar and anywhere else respect workers' rights, not only in construction, but also in the delivery of services such as hotels. FIFA has already outlined its commitments and initiatives for implementing risk management around what they are trying to achieve for the tournament. For example, hotels are required to ensure they respect human rights and in particular are subject to the Worker Welfare Standards developed by Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy. A system has been put in place alongside these standards to audit and collaborate with hotels around their compliance with workers' rights. As the tournament organiser, FIFA conducts its own checks, working with companies and hotels, to collaborate on implementation. Based on FIFA's human rights policy, FIFA expects its member associations to follow this commitment and to uphold their responsibility not to harm people with respect to their activities. For hotel selection, this would mean FAs looking at what FIFA is already putting in place and what they can do additionally to close possible gaps in worker protections. For example, this is something the Danish Football Association has already taken action on.

To conclude, FIFA acknowledged the work done by the Supreme Committee and the ILO within the hospitality sector, such as engaging with hotels and setting up workers' committees, and encouraged all FAs to reach out to the ILO for guidance and to collaborate on their own due diligence.

Mahmoud Qutub, Executive Director for Worker Welfare at Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC) and Advisor to the Chairperson in Workers' Welfare & Labour Rights at FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 LLC, highlighted the SC's standards, auditing process and work with hotels.



The SC's focus has shifted from the construction sector to the hospitality sector as the FIFA World Cup approaches its last six months of preparation. Without counting the construction sector, the SC estimates that around 150,000 staff are involved in the delivery of the tournament, and they all fall under the auspices of the Workers' Welfare Programme and the SC's standards. Within this, the hospitality sector is important – a vast number of football fans are expected in the country, in addition to the players' associations and other tournament related entities. It is unprecedented work that has not been done in the country before, but the SC feels that progress so far has been positive.

The SC's mandate includes about 159 hotels, which means responsibility for around 41,000 workers without counting the hotels currently still under construction. The SC's commitment to workers is underpinned by their Workers' Welfare Standards which were developed to ensure the safety and welfare of workers. These standards cut across three key pillars:

- Ethical recruitment: This refers to the journey of staff and employees to Qatar including measures to prohibit and remedy the payment of illegal recruitment fees.
- Accommodation: The SC's work here seeks to ensure workers have decent living conditions, adequate facilities and that provision for other essential needs, such as health and nutrition, are met.
- Work environment: The SC's standards include the critical aspect of health and safety on-site, and auditing and enforcing measures related to working hours, medical screenings etc.

The SC's task is to monitor and enforce their standards, but responsibilities also remain on the contractors and hotels to self-audit their operations and their supply chain on a continuous basis. The SC also has enforcement measures as necessary, such as reporting non-compliant contractors to the Ministry of Labour, blocking companies, placing them on a watch list, or even blacklisting them in the worst scenarios. In general, engagement and collaboration with contractors has led to better results. A multi-stakeholder annual reporting system has also been put in place, which consists of reports issued by the SC, reports issued jointly by the SC and Building & Woodworkers' International (BWI) focusing on health and safety in the construction sites, and independent reporting by their external monitor Impactt.

At the start of engagement with the hospitality sector in 2019, two key working groups were established: a Joint Working Group coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, SC, ILO, and Institute for Human Rights and Business; and a Strategic Dialogue Group that extended participation to include other national and international stakeholders. These working groups have been essential in setting the stage for the reforms within the industry through collaboration with hotel operators, exchanging knowledge on employment standards and developing good practices. A key achievement was the launch of guidance tools for promoting fair recruitment and employment for hotel operators in Qatar. The SC's engagement with this sector has resulted in further positive outcomes such as better



accommodation for the workforce, stronger ethical recruitment practices and supply chain management, as well as enhanced worker representation through the implementation of the SC's Workers' Welfare Forum. However, it was also recognised that challenges remain in the hospitality sector and there is still work to be done ahead of the tournament.

The SC encouraged FAs to engage early, by considering incorporating the SC's Workers' Welfare Standards or a similar set of standards as contractual requirements for contracts or sub-contracts with hotel operators and services providers. The SC also encouraged participants to conduct independent due diligence on the organisations with which FAs will be engaging with, to make sure that standards are being implemented within the wider hospitality service sector.

The principles underpinning a responsible approach

Max Tuñón, Director of the Qatar Project Office at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), positioned this work within the broader context of Qatar's labour reforms. The ILO has been in Qatar for four years and has been working closely with the government and in particular with the Ministry of Labour. Even though significant progress has been made in that time, the ILO acknowledged that there is still a lot of work to be done. The ILO is not focused specifically on the Qatar World Cup but on the overall issues facing the workforce of Qatar in general which represents over 2 million people. The changes and labour reforms associated with the World Cup are part of the longer-term vision for the country to develop a more competitive and diversified economy.

Some highlights from the past years have included:

- The reform which changed Qatar's law on the sponsorship system (known as *Kafala*) – previously workers were dependent on their employers for entry into the country, their stay, their jobs and even their exit from the country. This was one of the more problematic elements of the Qatar law system and has now been dismantled.
- Significant progress has been made when it comes to wages and wage protection with the creation of a non-discriminatory minimum wage a year ago.
- Improvements were made in relation to health and safety, with new legislation introduced on heat-stress in particular.
- Enhanced social dialogue between workers and employees has been introduced at the strategic level, but also at the corporate level where elected migrant representatives sit opposite management representatives to address issues that arise in the workplace.



However, challenges still exist – implementation of reforms and change does not happen overnight. It takes time to change mindsets and to build institutions. The key challenges that remain include:

- Ensuring the full implementation of the legal reforms – for example, there are still instances where employers retaliate against workers who seek to claim the workplace rights
- The issue of unpaid wages – there are still too many cases where workers have not received their due wages and the recovery process is taking too long.
- The issues of domestic workers – new legislation was adopted 5 years ago but gaps remain when it comes to its implementation, particularly in terms of working hours and the right for domestic workers to take a weekly day off.

In addition to existing challenges, it was emphasised that recruitment fees, working overtime, unpaid overtime, and sub-standard accommodation for workers remain the key issues for the hotels and services sectors. Still, the ILO is impressed by the efforts made by the SC, especially their audits and follow up, as well as the corrective actions that have been taken in several hotels. The ILO is also working with the SC, FAs, and hotels on a model of due diligence complementing the audits – for example, a 'Danish Model' has been created in partnerships with the Danish Football Association. In response, the ILO and the SC delivered training to management and workers' representatives on access to information, negotiation skills, grievance mechanisms, non-discrimination, violence and harassment in the workplace.

Direct experiences and implementation – Football Associations and Hospitality Sector

Jakob Jensen, CEO of the Danish Football Association (DBU), shared some experiences of their model of directly engaging their hotel in Qatar and promoting adherence to the labour laws. As a federation that has a team qualified for the World Cup, DBU feels it is its obligation to engage around the situation in Qatar and to use its voice to engage with others. Furthermore, the DBU considers that part of their obligation is to take care of their players who are not experts in human rights or due diligence, and is including these considerations in its own due diligence. Part of this process has seen the DBU talking and cooperating with a wide variety of stakeholders such as the Danish trade unions, international trade unions, the ILO, FIFA, the SC and Amnesty International.

The DBU felt that it was important to be transparent and conduct due diligence on all service providers they were engaging with, including creating an overview of their entire supply chain, ranging from hotels to transport, training ground, security etc.



Concretely the model applied – which has been defined “the Danish Model” by other constituents – consists of:

- Transparency – by coordinating and doing due diligence through audits, the DBU has tried to map what may happen throughout their supply chain when in Qatar, and is requiring the hotel they will sign a contract with to work in compliance with the SC standards and the ILO conventions. This is a requirement not only for the hotel, but also for the other subcontractors they are going to use.
- Coordination – the DBU established a joint, permanent coordination and orientation committee with the hotel (including BWI, the SC, hotel employees, and hotel management), which they are convening on regular basis, discussing their wishes, their needs, critical elements identified through due diligence, and what progress has been made. The DBU has visited the worker accommodation facilities with experts who know what to look for. DBU has also recommended establishing coordination mechanisms and engaging in a dialogue with those who are on the ground if no progress is seen or egregious issues are found. One such example was a hotel that had problems with their security company and ultimately, changed it twice to meet the standards.
- Due diligence and external audit – the DBU works with other partners to conduct due diligence. They are discussing this approach with other federations who have qualified, and they are engaging with an external auditor.

Carlo Javakhia, General Manager at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Doha, reflected on adapting to new labour laws and engaging with the SC’s auditing process within the hotel. The Ritz-Carlton is working with the SC to make sure they implement all regulations. This has included going beyond the requirements in some cases, including by identifying and understanding the challenges that people are facing. The hospitality industry is comprised of multiple stakeholders – the hotel employs 95% to 97% of staff, and there is a small percentage coming from subcontractors as additional manpower. Their main challenge comes from the subcontractors. The Ritz-Carlton is a multinational company with strict procedures regarding recruitment, employee welfare, working hours, accommodations, nutrition, and access to the health facility system. The hotel had subcontractors for security, valet parking, and cleaning. The company visited their subcontractors’ workers’ accommodations and put pressure on the subcontractors to meet Ritz-Carlton’s expectations and those of the local authorities. This leverage helped in making improvements to the worker accommodations and providing better facilities to the employees. This is where the pressure applied by the SC has been helpful.

Hospitality is a labour-intensive industry. The conditions that employees are living in and the way they are treated has an immediate impact on the final consumer – the guests. While collaborating with the SC, a worker welfare committee was established to better understand what more the Ritz-Carlton company can do, even though the hotel already meets the legal requirements. For example, during one committee meeting, employees brought to the management’s attention that there were issues with the transportation contractor. After two warnings, the company was still not meeting the hotel’s expectations, so they changed contractor.



Implications for other actors involved

Clare Flannery, from AB InBev, shared thoughts on the due diligence process around hotels in Qatar from the perspective of one of the top sponsors for the FIFA World Cup. AB InBev has been mostly focused on how to support events, treat people with respect and make them feel included. Regarding the due diligence process, AB InBev has contractual clauses around human rights in direct business relationships, but also for subcontractors' agreements.

AB InBev stressed that they are not as familiar with the hospitality sector, but they started by searching for resources and materials to better understand the nature of the industry and the risks. Collaboration with some of the other speakers was essential to understanding what they needed to look for in order to be able to identify challenges and go in in more depth on certain areas.

AB InBev built a partnership with hotels, maintaining regular conversations with them, on issues or questions of concern. They also worked with the Danish FA to get access to the reports the FA conducted. The SC has also been supportive which has led to a better understanding of the hospitality sector within Qatar, allowing the evolution of their due diligence process.

AB InBev has further worked on making sure that their internal team has a good understanding of the situation and they are equipped to respond – for example, they would like to create a team in Qatar that can assess the situation during the World Cup, training the team to ensure they have a good understanding of human rights, of what the working conditions are supposed to be etc, and to ensure their team will know how to respond and handle any issues.

AB InBev is ready to build further partnerships with hotels and stakeholders interested in the Danish model, connect different actors and support them along the way.

Isobel Archer, of the Business and Human Rights Resource Center (BHRRC), shared examples from the BHRRC's recent surveys and reviews of the hospitality industry in Qatar. The BHRRC looks at a broad range of sectors – sport and human rights being one. BHRRC has created a [portal](#) to increase corporate transparency. This contains information on the practices of companies operating across Qatar in preparation for the FIFA World Cup. The portal includes information on the human rights record and business relationships of over 120-130 hotel properties that will undoubtedly be hosting FAs, fans and teams, as well on stadiums and other projects.

The BHRRC has been engaged in the hospitality sector in the Gulf region for 3 years. While most of the hotels are multinational and have expanded ahead of the World Cup, surveys have been conducted in 2019 and 2021 to better understand the working conditions, recruitment practices, etc.

The BHRRC acknowledged that while progress has been seen in the hospitality industry, especially in Qatar where the actions of companies have been applied to workers, some of which even go beyond the work for the World Cup, overall, the hospitality sector is still falling behind on human rights and gaps remain in areas such as recruitment.

BHRRC is looking to leverage that other stakeholders, including football associations and sponsors, have in their preparations for the tournament – particularly when booking accommodation and other service providers. They have reached out to associations of all of the qualified teams to ask questions around human rights due diligence. So far, fewer than a third of associations have responded at all, and the information on due diligence steps is very thin which has been disappointing, though it is encouraging that one or two associations are demonstrably more engaged on human rights. As transparency around engagement is so important, the Resource Centre wants to be able to highlight those associations which are doing more in this area and will continue to encourage all stakeholders to disclose any steps they are taking.

To conclude, BHRRC reiterated that the UNGPs are a very important framework which set clear responsibilities for companies to respect human rights. They are an essential starting point for stakeholders – including FAs – around the World Cup, or any other Mega Sporting Event, to understand the scope of the potential impact on human rights.

According to BHRRC, four main aspects that could be strengthened in the 6 months leading up to the World Cup include:

- Awareness that human rights due diligence is not a one-off – it is an interactive, ongoing and evolving process focused on improvement.
- Stakeholders have to be vigilant, engage with unions in home countries, and speak with workers or human rights associations.
- The due diligence process has to be linked to an identified person or team with expertise within the organisation.
- Commitment to transparency is essential.

[A recording of the webinar is available here.](#)



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