

MIGRANT WORKERS SPORT TOURNAMENTS – AL KHOR

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ABSTRACT

The hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar presents many opportunities and challenges for the host destination. While the World Cup has provided Qatar with opportunities to enhance its prestige on the world stage, the global spotlight has also raised concern about allegations of human rights abuses, especially in relation to workers' rights. In order to address some of these concerns, a sport and recreation facility – Al Khor Migrant Workers Sports Complex - was built in 2014 in the Al Khor Industrial Area. This multi-sport complex is aimed at enriching the quality of life of blue-collar workers. The project was developed by Barwa Real Estate in partnership with the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy and Qatar Foundation. This case study aims to present an evaluation of two tournaments that took place in late 2016 to early 2017 for users of the facility. The organisers wanted to explore the impact of sports participation on the health and wellbeing of migrant workers in Qatar. Results of a survey conducted with participants in the tournament are presented. Furthermore, challenges in organising and sustaining these tournaments are highlighted.

Keywords: Migrant workers, sport tournaments, 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar

Introduction

In recent years we have seen many developing or emerging nations bid for and host sport mega-events, and the FIFA World Cup in particular. For example, South Africa, Brazil and Russia have hosted the three previous editions of the FIFA World Cup in 2010, 2014 and 2018, respectively. Qatar is set to host this mega-event in 2022, and it will be the first FIFA World Cup to be hosted in the Middle East and in an Arab country. The significant exposure stemming from the globalisation of sport has led to many countries looking to host these events to leverage the popularity of sport and use it as a platform to achieve various political and socio-economic objectives; what is generally referred to as “soft power”.

The Asian Games hosted by Qatar in 2006 is considered as the turning point in its strategy for hosting major international events.¹ This event is deemed to have profiled Qatar on the world’s stage, and improved its image and global reputation.² Qatar has continued to invest in hosting major international sport events; along with the upcoming hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup there have been more recent announcements of a bid to host the 2030 Asian Games as well as entering into “continuous dialogue” with the International Olympic Committee for a future Games, most likely in 2032. It is contended that Qatar’s investment in sporting events aims to accomplish foreign policy ambitions as well domestic objectives such as nation-building, promoting and developing a healthy society, developing infrastructure and diversifying the economy.³ The clear reference to the significance of sport is captured in Qatar’s National Vision (QNV) 2030, Qatar’s economic, social, human, and environmental development blueprint, “To become a leading nation in bringing the world together through sports”.⁴

As much as sport mega-events have increasingly being used as a tool for public diplomacy or “soft power” that can fast-track re-imaging and reputation enhancement, it is cautioned that it is also high-risk strategy, especially for emerging nations due to the global media spotlight. Despite some positive media coverage, Qatar has also experienced widespread criticism and negative media coverage, especially in relation to workers’ rights.⁵ The focus of this case study is therefore to shed light on the issue of migrant workers in relation to the hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. More specifically, it focuses on two tournaments that took place in 2016-2017 at the Al Khor Migrant Workers Sports Complex as a means to explore the impact of sports participation on the health and wellbeing of migrant workers in Qatar.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup and migrant worker challenges

Qatar, considered by many as an outsider, won the right to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup in December 2010. Qataris have high expectations for the tournament, to be hosted from the 21 November to 18 December. The development in preparation for 2022 and beyond is ambitious and is taking place in the context of QNV 2030.⁶ Consequently, the 2022 FIFA World Cup is seen as an occasion whereby achievement towards national development goals can be progressed and a “lasting legacy for Qatar, the Middle East, Asia and the world” can be created (SC, n.d.b.).⁷

In 2011, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC) was established and is responsible for 2022 FIFA World Cup host country planning and operations.⁸ The 2022 FIFA World Cup will only include three host cities (Al Khor, Doha and Al Wakrah) and is therefore considered to be the most compact World

Cup ever. The eight stadiums are Al Bayt, Al Janoub, Al Rayyan, Al Thumama, Education City, Khalifa International, Lusail and Ras Abu Aboud stadiums.⁹ (FIFA, n.d.).

Despite some positive media coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, much of the negative international media coverage, particularly in western media, has mainly centred on the 'kafala' or sponsorship system for migrant workers.^{10 11} This system developed in the 1950s in West Asia to regulate employer relations with migrant workers and is standard practice in the Gulf countries and some Arab states.¹² The purpose of this system, from an economic perspective, was to bring in temporary labour quickly when required during times of economic boom and then to expel them during less prosperous periods.¹³ Under the 'kafala' system, - the residency status of a migrant worker is legally bound to the employer or sponsor for the contract period.¹⁴ Thus, while migration to the Gulf region offers employment opportunities for migrant workers, the restrictive nature of the system can lead to negative consequences such as the exploitation and abuse of these workers.¹⁵ As this system fails to protect the rights and welfare of migrant workers, there has been overwhelming condemnation of it from international organisations and civil society with ensuing calls for an alternative labour migration governance policy.¹⁶¹⁷

In the wake of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the spotlight has once again been shone on this system and the treatment of migrant workers in Qatar in general. At the height of the construction period, the World Cup will have 30,000 workers on our projects, from a range of countries including Nepal, India, Turkey, China, Ghana and the Philippines.¹⁸ In order to address the dogged critique of workers' rights, the SC developed a Workers' Charter in 2013 and Workers' Welfare Standards in 2014 (that were based on Qatar Foundation's Workers' Welfare Standards¹⁹) to ensure the

health, wellbeing, and safety and security of workers involved in the 2022 FIFA World Cup.²⁰ More recently, Hassan al-Thawadi, the Secretary General of the SC stated that criticism levelled at Qatar in relation to the treatment of migrant workers will have a “ripple effect that will improve regional labour standards.”²¹ He further indicated that these reforms will extend beyond the World Cup and apply to workers more broadly. Reforms cited include the abolition of the ‘kafala’ system, “workers’ welfare forums” to raise complaints with employers, and a more than 50% rise in the minimum wage.²² Qatar would be the first Gulf State to apply a national uniform minimum wage irrespective of nationality.²³ The International Labour Organisation (ILO) who have been working on reforms with the Qatar government since 2017 indicated that while there has been progress, there were “many more milestones to pass”.²⁴ An Amnesty International report highlighted that despite continual promises to improve workers’ rights in the lead-up to the 2022, many workers are still being exploited.²⁵ However, the Secretary General underscored the country’s pledge to ensure that changes will be sustainable. The adoption of Laws No. 17 and 18 of 2020 on the 30 August 2020 have been welcomed by the ILO as a “historic move” by the State of Qatar.²⁶ The former law provides for the introduction of a “non-discriminatory minimum wage”; the first for a country in the region. The latter law ends the requisite for migrant workers to obtain their employer’s permission to change jobs, the No Objection Certificate (NOC), and will come into force six months after it has been gazetted.²⁷ The abolition of the NOC is the most far-reaching change as it undermines the control of foreign labour by employers. Furthermore, it should usher in a local labour market and competition between employers for labour for the first time. Figure 1 provides a timeline of some of the

major milestones achieved in relation to workers' rights and the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

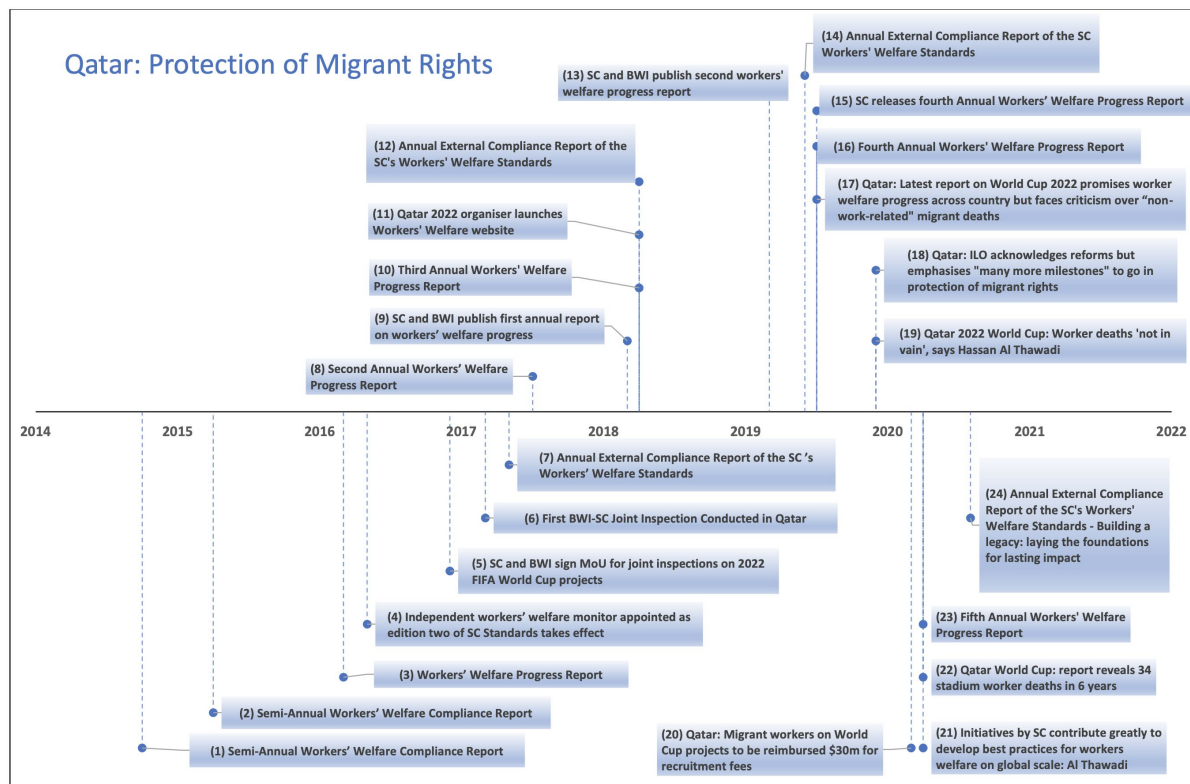


Figure 1: Milestones achieved in relation to the protection of migrants' rights – Qatar 2022 World Cup

Source: Adapted from Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 2020

Al Khor migrant workers sports complex

In line with improving the standard of living for workers, the Al Khor Workers Sports Complex designed and developed by Barwa Real Estate Company in partnership with the SC and Qatar Foundation, is an integrated recreational and sports facility.^{28 29} The complex was developed in accordance to the goals and objectives of QNV 2030.³⁰ The facility opened in 2014 and aimed to serve more than 160,000 blue-collar workers in Al Khor and the surrounding areas.³¹ It is reported that during 2016, the number of visitors to the facility exceeded 500,000.³²



Figure 2: Al Khor Workers Sports Complex Entrance
Photo by Jones, 2020

The facility, built on a 245,000sqm area, features several sport and recreational facilities including four cricket fields, four football pitches, three volleyball courts, four basketball courts and four kabaddi fields.³³ Furthermore, a supermarket, shops, two open-air cinemas, a mosque and a plaza area are also located in the precinct.³⁴ The complex has been utilised by government and private corporations alike, including the Ministry of Interior, SC and Qatar Foundation, among others.³⁵ A professional facility management company is responsible for its operations and provides administration, security, cleaning and regular maintenance services.³⁶



Figure 3: Al Khor Workers Sports Complex Layout of Facilities
Photo by Swart, 2020

Methodology

Qatar Foundation (QF) organised two tournaments at the Al Khor Migrant Workers Sports Complex primarily for blue collar workers who frequent the facility on their days off, Friday in particular. The migrant workers' tournaments started on 25 November 2016 and were completed on 27 January 2017. The two tournaments included basketball (eight teams) and 6's cricket (16 teams) and were played on Fridays. Workers who frequented the facility were approached to create teams. The intention was to include a third tournament as well, viz. volleyball, however the organisers struggled to make-up up sufficient teams amongst the workers to participate. There was no official sponsorship of the tournaments other than the fact that QF got first right of refusal for use of the ground as they were sponsoring the facility. The organisers utilised in-house referees and relied heavily on volunteers to

organise the tournaments. QF also provided equipment (in terms of cricket bats, balls and stumps and basketballs) as well as medals and trophies for the winners.

The organisers wanted to explore the impact that sport participation has on the health and wellbeing of migrant workers in Qatar and chose the participants at the two tournaments held at the Al Khor Migrant Workers Sport Complex as the case study. The primary method of data collection was the survey method. The survey was an adapted version of a widely used self-rated health and wellbeing survey. Volunteers who assisted with the organisation of the tournaments also helped the researchers with the distribution of the surveys to participants. The volunteers also assisted with the translation of the survey questions to the languages spoken by the participants. Workers were made aware of the nature of the survey, informed that their participation in the survey was voluntary and that their responses would be treated confidentially. Ninety-four (94) usable questionnaires were collected during the period of the surveys. The data was inputted into SurveyMonkey and analysed accordingly. Analysis of the survey data was supported by qualitative interviews with one of the organisers and one of the volunteers. Some of the key findings are presented next.

Key findings

Ninety-six (96%) of the respondents were residents of Al Khor. In terms of nationality, the participants who responded to the survey were mainly from Pakistan (26.6%) and the Philippines (24.5%), followed by India (14.9%), Bangladesh (13.8%) and Sri Lanka (12.8) as per Figure 4.

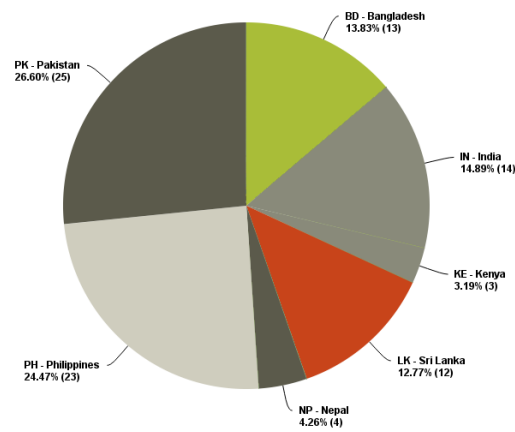


Figure 4: Nationality of respondents

The length of residency in Qatar varied, with most respondents residing in Qatar for 1-2 years (45%), followed by 3-5 years (20%) and 6-9 years (17%) as presented in Figure 5. Seventeen percent (17%) were residing in Qatar for less than a year, with only 4% living in Qatar for more than ten years.

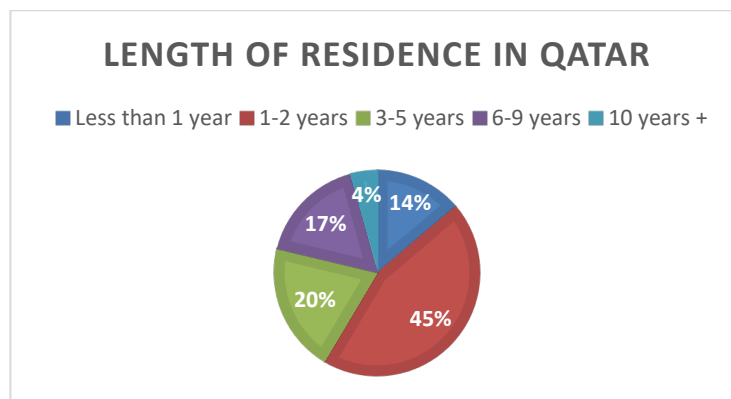


Figure 4: Length of residence in Qatar of respondents

The current position of employment of respondents varied with most of them being carpenters (12.8%), drivers (10.6%) and technicians (7.4%). The positions were reflective of the construction and related industries; other positions included

electricians, painters, masons, welders, equipment operators, pipe fitters, riggers, safety advisors and security personnel.

The results of the survey showed that migrant workers who have access to sport facilities and participate in sport tournaments report high levels of health and wellbeing, as illustrated in the following tables. As per Table 1 (88%) of respondents rated their general health as excellent to very good, while 83% rated their physical health the same. Fewer respondents (62%) rated their emotional health as excellent to good.

Self-rating Questions	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Would you say in general your health is?	60	22	18	0	0
How would rate your physical health?	58	25	17	0	0
How would you rate your emotional health?	44	18	34	2	2

Table 1: Self Rated Health and Wellbeing of Migrant Workers Participating in Sports Tournaments (in %)

Table 2 presents statements about their feelings and thoughts, on a scale of 0-10, with 0 being the lowest and 10 the highest. The highest average rating was “feeling relaxed” (9.06), followed by “thinking clearly” (8.73), “being able to make my mind up about things” (8.7) and “feeling close to other people” (8.61).

Statements	Rating Average
I've been feeling relaxed	9.06
I've been thinking clearly	8.73
I've been able to make up my mind about things	8.70
I've been feeling close to other people	8.61
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	8.27
I've been feeling useful	8.22
I've been dealing with my problems well	8.02

Table 2: Rating of Statements about Feelings and Thoughts by Migrant Workers Participating in Sports Tournaments (Rating on a scale of 0-10, 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest)

In terms of overall feelings and thoughts, the highest average rating was 8.92 for feeling happy yesterday, followed by 8.78 for feeling satisfied with life nowadays and 8.65 for the extent to which they feel things they do in life are worthwhile. On average, respondents did express lower ratings in relation to how worried they felt yesterday, which could likely explain their slight lower rating for emotional health, as mentioned previously.

Statements	Rating Average
I've been feeling relaxed	9.06
I've been thinking clearly	8.73
I've been able to make up my mind about things	8.70
I've been feeling close to other people	8.61

I've been feeling optimistic about the future	8.27
I've been feeling useful	8.22
I've been dealing with my problems well	8.02

Table 3: Rating of Statements about Overall Feelings and Thoughts by Migrant Workers Participating in Sports Tournaments (Rating on a scale of 0-10, 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest)

The findings indicate that for these migrant workers who have access to sport facilities and participate in sport tournaments, they reported high levels of health and wellbeing generally, with lower ratings for emotional wellbeing. Workers also expressed to the volunteers that they were appreciative of the opportunity to participate in an organised tournament, and expressed support for additional tournaments.



Figure 5: Migrant workers' medal ceremonies and cricket equipment made by workers
Source: Jones 2017

Limitations and challenges

As reported by one of the organisers of the tournament, as well as a volunteer, organising the tournament itself was challenging due to limited resources. The tournaments being hosted on Fridays when workers were generally off for the day, posed challenges with accessing sufficient volunteers to assist with the organisation. Logistical challenges were also encountered especially in relation to the distance of Al Khor away from Doha. The volunteers also played an important role in overcoming language barriers in relation to getting the teams together as well as the translation of the surveys into the home languages of the workers. The organisers wanted to host additional tournaments at the complex but due to the logistical challenges no further tournaments were held.

Areas of event organisation that could be improved for future tournaments included the registration process, communication with Barwa to avoid double-bookings, marketing of the event to the community to increase awareness and working with other organisations to provide financial support such as Qatar Olympic Committee, Barwa, and the Ministry of Public Health.

In terms of additional research, the organisers recommended a follow-up study of migrant workers who do not have access to sport facilities in order to provide comparative data. It is likely that the outcome of these findings could result in policy changes with regards to migrant workers and the provision of sport facilities and/or access to sport. Moreover, it is anticipated that future studies exploring the impact that sport has on the health and wellbeing of migrant workers would be beneficial. Provision of future tournaments and collaborations could also be used as

a platform to develop migrant welfare communities through various programs such as basic health and wellness education, sports awareness and refereeing courses.

Conclusion

The 2022 FIFA World has provided an opportunity for Qatar to leverage its soft power in terms of re-imagining and reputation enhancement as well as to create impetus for the achievement of national development goals. While there has been some positive media coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, much of the negative international media coverage has centred on the 'kafala' system and the treatment of migrant workers in Qatar in general.

In order to address these concerns, several initiatives have been undertaken by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (MADLSA) in collaboration with the ILO project office in Doha. These include the development of a Workers' Charter and Workers' Welfare Standard, the introduction of a "non-discriminatory minimum wage" and ending the law requiring migrant workers to obtain their employer's permission to change jobs. Aligned to improving the standard of living for workers, the Al Khor Workers Sports Complex was developed and opened in 2014 to to serve the blue-collar workers in Al Khor and the surrounding areas.

QF organised two tournaments (basketball and 6's cricket) at this complex for workers, on Fridays, from the 25th November 2016 to the 27th January 2017 as a means to explore the impact of sports participation on the health and wellbeing of migrant workers in Qatar. The findings indicate that for these migrant workers who have access to sport facilities and participate in sport tournaments, report high levels of health and wellbeing generally, with lower ratings for emotional wellbeing. The workers also expressed their interest in participating in additional tournaments.

However, the organisers highlighted numerous logistical challenges which resulted in no further tournaments being organised. It is recommended that these logistical challenges be addressed through partnerships, since sport and recreation provide an opportunity for physical activity and social engagement outside of the work environment. It is further recommended that a follow-up study of migrant workers who do not have access to sport facilities be conducted to provide comparative data. The hosting of future tournaments could also serve as a platform to develop various health and wellness education programs, and sport awareness and refereeing courses for migrant workers. Finally, the significantly lower reporting on emotional well-being needs to be followed up to identify the main problems and whether they can be addressed through sport and other remedial measures.

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³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

TEACHING NOTES

This case study reviews how mega-events such as the 2022 FIFA World Cup can raise awareness of social challenges that host destinations may face. In this instance, the global spotlight has raised concern about allegations of human rights abuses, especially in relation to workers' rights. The case study focuses on the development of a sport and recreation facility which was built with the aim of improving the quality of life of blue-collar workers. Specifically, it focuses on the organisation of two tournaments for users of the facility, whereby the organisers wanted to explore the impact of sports participation on the health and wellbeing of migrant workers in Qatar. Challenges in organising and sustaining these tournaments are underscored. The case study also serves to illustrate how workers' rights can be integrated into a sustainability strategy for a mega-event. Students are asked a range of questions more broadly about the importance of workers' rights, sustainability, sport tournaments and health and wellbeing of workers, and the extent to which these practices can be enhanced.

Question 1: How are workers' rights linked to sustainability, and in terms of the specific case study presented, which of the United Nation's (UN's) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are they most closely aligned to?

The opening question relates to the broader context of locating sport mega events within societal concerns such as poverty and inequality, and how these events can assist in achieving the UN's SDGs by 2030. While the case focuses primarily on SDG8 Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG10 Reduced Inequalities, the sport tournaments and the associated survey undertaken on

workers' health and wellbeing also addresses SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing.

The case further illustrates the importance of SDG17 Partnerships for the Goals as achieving the SDGs requires collaboration amongst different organisations.

The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ Sustainability Strategy (2019):

sets out the ambitious plans to maximise the tournament's contribution to people's well-being, economic development and environmental protection in the short and long term. In line with FIFA 2.0, our strategic roadmap to deliver on our vision, we have embedded commitments to champion human rights, maximise our community impact and implement a series of landmark governance reforms. This strategy is a landmark in the history of the FIFA World Cup™ as the first sustainability strategy to be developed and delivered jointly by the three primary delivery partners for the tournament: FIFA, Q22 (FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 LLC) and the SC. Reinforcing FIFA's commitments, we pledge to safeguard the rights and welfare of workers engaged on FIFA World Cup 2022™ sites and to promote their rights in projects and supply chains directly linked to the FIFA World Cup™, leaving a legacy of world-class standards and practices for workers in Qatar and internationally. To achieve this, we will continue to build on the excellent work of the SC and its Workers' Welfare Department to protect workers engaged on FIFA World Cup 2022™ sites and use our leverage with our sponsors, licensees and suppliers to seek to prevent and mitigate adverse human rights impacts for their workers. Through this strategy, we seek to align our efforts to advance sustainable development with the UN's SDGs that aim to protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

(Fatma Samoura, FIFA Secretary General, 2019)

Source: <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022tm-sustainability-strategy.pdf?cloudid=p2axokh26lzaafloutgs>)



Source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

When Qatar bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2022™, it did so with a vision to use the tournament as a catalyst for sustainable, long-term change. From the start, we believed in the power of football and the FIFA World Cup™ to inspire innovation, to build bridges between cultures and peoples, and to accelerate positive social transformation. Our measure of success is the legacy this tournament leaves behind for Qatar, the region, and the world. A key objective for the FIFA World Cup 2022™ is to serve as a catalyst for the achievement of Qatar's development goals as laid out in the QNV 2030 and the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2018-2022, which define the long-term outcomes for the country under four main pillars: human development, social

development, environmental development and economic development. The framework of this strategy is aligned with these pillars and aims to generate significant long-term contributions to Qatar's vision of sustainability. Under the pillar of human development, labour rights for all workers associated with the tournament will continue to be a key priority for us in this new strategy. We pledge to safeguard the rights and welfare of workers engaged on FIFA World Cup 2022™ sites and to promote their rights in projects and supply chains directly linked to the FIFA World Cup™, leaving a legacy of world-class standards and practices for workers in Qatar and internationally. To accomplish this, beyond our work to ensure decent working and living conditions for workers engaged on FIFA World Cup 2022™ sites, we aim to play a pivotal role in supporting the Qatari government with continued reform at the national level towards full compliance with relevant international labour standards.

(H.E. Hassan Al Thawadi, Q22 Chairman / SC Secretary General, 2019)

Source: <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022tm-sustainability-strategy.pdf?cloudid=p2axokh26lzaafloutgs>)



FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ Sustainability Strategic Framework (FIFA, Q22 & SC, 2019)
Source: <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022tm-sustainability-strategy.pdf?cloudid=p2axokh26lzaafoutgs>

Question 2: You are the Sport and Recreation Manager for an organisation in Qatar. Your organisation would like to contribute to addressing workers' rights in Qatar, specifically by reviving the Migrant Workers Sport Tournaments in Al Khor. Explain how you go about implementing this initiative to mitigate some of the challenges as experienced in the case study presented.

Drawing on the challenges faced and lessons learned from the Migrant Workers Sports Tournaments at Al Khor, students can develop innovative suggestions as to how to deal with some of the challenges experienced. Students can also think of how they improve the research and data collection methods. For example, possibly including some physical measures such as Body Mass Index (BMI) and/or other related measures. Consideration could also be given to the

partnerships, for example MOPH, in addressing awareness campaigns; and/or university health science/ sport science departments in relation to outreach. Sport organisations could also be approached in terms of assistance with providing referees and/or organising referee workshops.

Question 3: What progress has the 2022 FIFA World Cup made in relation to workers' welfare?

Additional Resources:

FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ Sustainability Strategy (2019).
<https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022tm-sustainability-strategy.pdf?cloudid=p2axokh26lzaafloutgs>)

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