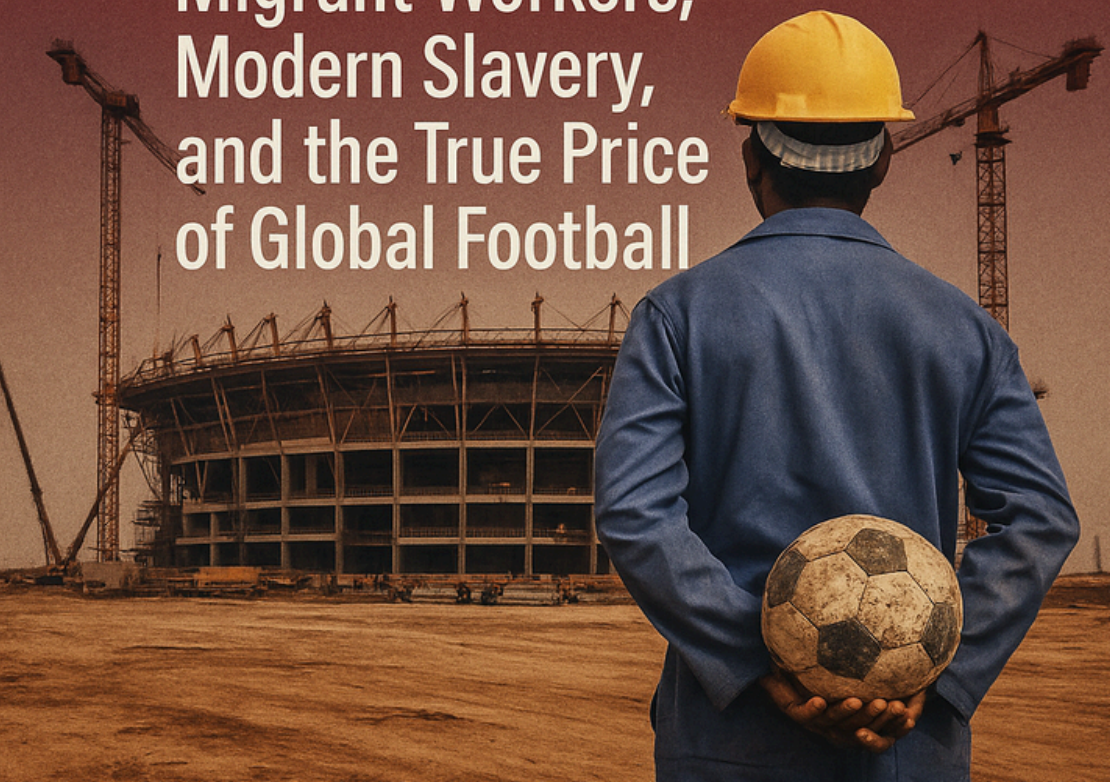


# FIFA 2022 QATAR

## THE HUMAN COST OF SPORTSWASHING

Migrant Workers,  
Modern Slavery,  
and the True Price  
of Global Football



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***FIFA 2022 Qatar: The Human Cost of Sportwashing – Migrant Workers, Modern Slavery, and the True Price of Global Football***

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This book has been prepared as a comprehensive reference that compiles widely available facts, documented historical records, and publicly accessible analyses from global, regional, and local sources. Its purpose is to provide an organized and factual account of the human, social, and economic dimensions surrounding the FIFA 2022 World Cup, drawing upon published materials, official statements, investigative reports, and existing research.

The work does not introduce new claims, nor does it advocate for a particular political position. Rather, it aims to document, contextualize, and consolidate information already present in the public domain for the benefit of researchers, students, and future readers seeking a clear and structured understanding of the subject.

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## **FIFA 2022 Qatar: The Human Cost of Sportwashing – Migrant Workers, Modern Slavery, and the True Price of Global Football**

FIFA 2022 in Qatar was hailed as a global sporting spectacle, yet beneath the dazzling stadiums and fanfare lies a chilling narrative of human rights violations and systemic exploitation. This incisive examination exposes how migrant workers, vital to constructing the World Cup infrastructure, endured conditions tantamount to modern slavery—reflecting a grievous human cost overshadowed by the tournament’s glitzy image.

The event serves as a stark illustration of sportwashing, where football was strategically deployed to enhance national prestige while masking the harsh realities faced by vulnerable laborers. This book rigorously analyzes the socio-economic dynamics of Qatar’s migrant workforce, the institutional frameworks that failed to safeguard their rights, and the ethical dilemmas posed by prioritizing global branding over human dignity.

By comparing the financial outlays and human toll of FIFA 2022 with previous tournaments, it questions whether the escalating price of hosting such events justifies the loss of lives and widespread suffering. The critical lessons drawn call for urgent reforms in international sporting governance, greater corporate accountability, and robust policies to prevent exploitation in future mega-events.

Ultimately, this work challenges stakeholders to rethink the true cost of global football’s expansion and to seek a future where spectacular sporting achievements are not built on the backs of marginalized communities.

# CHAPTER.1

## INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF FIFA 2022 AND THE GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT ON QATAR



The 2022 FIFA World Cup, held in Qatar, represented a watershed moment for international football, not only due to the tournament's unique geopolitical and cultural context but also for the unprecedented scrutiny it attracted concerning human rights, labor practices, and the socio-economic dynamics underpinning modern mega-sporting events. As the first World Cup ever hosted in the Middle East and the Arab world, FIFA 2022 was positioned as a landmark occasion intended to showcase Qatar's ambition on the global stage. However, this tournament also became emblematic of a broader and more troubling narrative: the intersection of sport, political image-making, and the human cost born primarily by migrant workers.

Qatar's successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup was announced in December 2010, marking the culmination of an intense and highly competitive selection process. The decision elicited immediate international debate due to Qatar's extreme climate, relatively small population, and, most notably, its reliance on a vast migrant labor force to execute the extensive infrastructure projects required for the event. The selection thrust Qatar briefly into the global spotlight, and with it came an intensified focus on how the tournament—and the accompanying infrastructural and urban development—would be realized. This attention soon expanded beyond logistical and sporting concerns to encompass critical questions of human rights and labor conditions, driving global awareness toward the realities faced by the estimated hundreds of thousands of migrant workers employed in Qatar's construction sector.

The World Cup's monumental scale demanded massive investment in new stadiums, transportation networks, accommodation facilities, and urban development initiatives across Qatar. With a project cost estimated to exceed \$200 billion—the highest ever recorded for any FIFA World Cup—the financial footprint alone highlighted the enormity of the undertaking. Yet, alongside this economic magnitude lay a darker dimension: harrowing reports documented exploitative labor practices, widespread violations of basic human rights, and systemic inequalities affecting an overwhelmingly foreign workforce. The global community and media soon began to question whether the extravagant expenditures and bold national ambitions justified the documented human cost.

Historically, mega sporting events have often been leveraged as platforms for “sportwashing,” a term used to describe the instrumentalization of high-profile sports events by states to bolster international image, distract from contentious domestic issues, and project soft power. Qatar's hosting of FIFA 2022 fit closely within this paradigm. The Qatari state sought to reposition itself on the world stage through sophisticated branding and messaging campaigns centered around modernity, hospitality, and cultural diplomacy. Nonetheless, the narrative of development and progress was starkly contrasted by persistent allegations of modern slavery, forced labor, unsafe working conditions, meager wages, limited labor rights, and significant barriers to justice encountered by migrant workers in the country.

Migrant workers from South Asia, Africa, and other regions constitute over 90% of Qatar's population, with the overwhelming majority employed in construction, domestic work, and service sectors—roles that played a vital part in actualizing the infrastructure required for the World Cup. Many of these workers arrived under the kafala sponsorship system, which has been widely criticized for enabling exploitative conditions by tying workers' legal residency to their employers' discretion, severely restricting their freedom of movement and bargaining power. The outcry over the treatment of these individuals has

sparked a global human rights campaign examining the responsibilities of host governments, corporations, and international sports governing bodies.

FIFA itself, as the governing organization overseeing the World Cup, attracted intense scrutiny regarding its role and accountability. Critics have queried whether FIFA exercised sufficient oversight of Qatar's labor practices during the event's preparation phase or whether the organization prioritized financial and commercial interests over ethical concerns. Despite promises of reform and worker protections introduced during the lead-up to the tournament—including new labor laws and initiatives to dismantle segments of the kafala system—subsequent investigations highlighted ongoing challenges in implementation, enforcement, and transparency.

In addition to the labor and human rights issues, the decision to stage FIFA 2022 in Qatar raised critical questions about the environmental and financial sustainability of such an event. Qatar's arid desert climate necessitated an extraordinary investment in advanced cooling technologies for stadiums and infrastructure, further amplifying the environmental footprint. Coupled with the nation's considerable expenditure, the cost of hosting FIFA 2022 was not only historically significant but also emblematic of an era where global sporting events increasingly reflect a complex interplay between geopolitical ambition, economic calculations, and contentious social consequences.

Comparing FIFA 2022 to previous World Cups reveals the exceptional scale of investment and controversy associated with the Qatari edition. No prior tournament approached the mixture of climatic challenges, infrastructural demands, political complexities, and human cost that characterized this event. Although Qatar's wealth facilitated the rapid completion of world-class facilities, the social costs—measured in lives lost, human rights infringements, and exploitation—have been regarded by many stakeholders as disproportionate and unacceptable. This raises profound ethical questions that extend beyond football and challenge the global sports community to reconsider the frameworks governing such megaevents.

The lessons emerging from FIFA 2022 are multifaceted and far-reaching. They compel us to critically evaluate the institutional mechanisms for safeguarding human rights in the context of international sporting events and to explore new models of governance, transparency, and accountability. In particular, they highlight the necessity of embedding ethical labor practices and rigorous oversight as fundamental prerequisites rather than optional conditions. Moreover, the tournament acts as a cautionary tale about the risks of sportwashing—a strategy that can obscure systemic abuses under the guise of cultural exchange and international unity.

This book, *\*FIFA 2022 Qatar: The Human Cost of Sportwashing – Migrant Workers, Modern Slavery, and the True Price of Global Football\**, endeavors to provide a comprehensive and analytical examination of these critical issues. It delves into the historical context of FIFA's host selection processes, the composition and conditions of Qatar's migrant labor force, frameworks for understanding and addressing human rights violations, and the broader socio-political mechanisms of sportwashing. Furthermore, it offers a comparative analysis of FIFA 2022's human and financial costs against those of previous tournaments, assesses the international and corporate responses to labor abuses, and grapples with the ethical questions surrounding the value placed on human life in the pursuit of global sporting spectacle.

By unpacking these themes, this volume aims to contribute to an informed discourse on the responsibilities of governments, private sector actors, sports institutions, and civil society in preventing exploitation within the context of international sports events. It calls for concerted policy action and systemic reform to ensure that future tournaments do not come at the expense of vulnerable populations. Above all, it challenges readers to reconsider what we accept as the "cost" of global football's continued expansion and to advocate for a sporting world that truly upholds principles of dignity, justice, and human rights.

As we commence this exploration, it is crucial to place FIFA 2022 within its broader historical and socio-political milieu, understanding both its unprecedented scale and the profound implications it holds for the future of sport, global governance, and human rights advocacy. The subsequent chapters will navigate the complex realities behind the headlines, offering an evidence-based analysis that unpacks the layers of labor exploitation, governance failures, and ethical dilemmas intertwined with this global event.

In doing so, this book aspires not only to document a pivotal moment in sports history but also to inspire meaningful change—ensuring that the true price of global football is never paid by those least responsible for the spectacle.

# CHAPTER.2

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: FIFA WORLD CUP AND THE EVOLUTION OF HOST NATION SELECTION



The FIFA World Cup, established in 1930, has evolved from a modest international football competition into the most widely viewed and prestigious sporting event worldwide. Over its history, the tournament's significance has extended beyond the field, becoming a global platform for cultural exchange, national prestige, and, increasingly, geopolitical expression. Understanding the historical context of the FIFA World Cup, particularly the process and politics surrounding host nation selection, is essential to comprehending the complexities underlying the 2022 Qatar tournament, including its human rights implications and broader socio-political dynamics.

### **Origins and Early Host Selection: A Eurocentric Tradition**

The first FIFA World Cup was held in Uruguay in 1930, deliberately hosted in a country where football was already a prominent sport. In the early decades, the tournament primarily rotated among football-strong nations, predominantly in Europe and South

America. During this period, the selection of host countries was a relatively informal process, largely driven by the enthusiasm and lobbying capacity of national football associations and the logistical feasibility of hosting.

Up until the mid-20th century, FIFA focused on growing the tournament's popularity rather than on equity or strategic geopolitical considerations. Hosts were often nations with established football infrastructures, and the tournament's influence remained largely regional, confined to Europe and the Americas.

## **Post-War Expansion and Diversification of Hosts**

Following World War II, the FIFA World Cup experienced significant growth in international reach and economic impact. Hosting the tournament began to represent an opportunity for countries to showcase national pride, development, and international status. The post-war era also saw an emergent trend of hosting in more diverse geographic locations.

The 1950 World Cup returned to Brazil, marking the first time the tournament was held outside Europe besides Uruguay's inaugural hosting. More notably, the 1978 tournament was held in Argentina, and the 1982 edition in Spain, signaling FIFA's willingness to extend the tournament beyond its European strongholds while maintaining it primarily within football-advanced economies.

However, true diversification took further shape in the 1990s, when FIFA began a more globalized approach, awarding hosting rights to countries outside traditional football power centers. This period marks the beginning of a more politicized and economically motivated host selection process.

## **The Bidding Process and Increasing Commercialization**

By the 1980s and 1990s, FIFA formalized the host selection process through competitive bidding whereby nations submitted detailed proposals, including infrastructural plans, financial guarantees, and visions for the tournament. This era coincided with the increasing commercialization of football, with growing television rights, sponsorships, and global marketing amplifying the World Cup's economic stakes.

The bidding process became a high-stakes competition not only for the practical ability to host but also for the geopolitical and marketing narratives that a host nation could project. Countries increasingly viewed the tournament as a vehicle for national branding and international influence, alongside purely sporting aspirations.

Notably, the 1994 World Cup in the United States represented a landmark: it demonstrated the tournament's potential as an economic powerhouse in non-traditional football markets, harnessing vast media coverage and commercial investment. The success in the US accelerated FIFA's motivation to award hosting rights to emerging economies seeking to leverage football for global visibility.

## **Emergence of Emerging Economies as Hosts: Opportunities and Controversies**

The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw an expanding pool of emerging economies bidding for the World Cup. South Africa's successful bid for the 2010 World Cup was historically significant, marking the first time the tournament was hosted on African soil. This occasion carried symbolic weight for African nations, aiming to showcase developmental progress and unity post-apartheid.

Concurrently, Asian countries gained prominence as potential hosts, reflecting football's expanding global footprint and commercial appeal. Japan and South Korea co-hosted the 2002 World Cup, the first in Asia and the first shared by two nations. This event demonstrated FIFA's recognition of Asia's vast market potential and its desire to globalize the sport beyond traditional strongholds.

Yet, with this global expansion came greater scrutiny. The selection process was increasingly criticized for lacking transparency and being susceptible to political lobbying and vote trading. Allegations of corruption and ethical breaches periodically surfaced, culminating in intense debate over FIFA's governance and decision-making integrity.

## **Qatar's Successful Bid for 2022: A New Chapter in Host Nation Selection**

In December 2010, FIFA awarded the hosting rights for the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, a small, wealthy Gulf nation, in a controversial decision that broke several precedents and introduced new complexities to the history of host selection.

Qatar was the first Middle Eastern country to secure the World Cup, marking a strategic pivot in FIFA's policy to bring the tournament to new regions with emerging football markets. The successful bid was framed as a historic opportunity to promote football development in the Middle East, expand the sport's global reach, and project the region's modernity and capacity on the international stage.

However, Qatar's selection ignited widespread debate and concern regarding multiple factors: the country's extreme climate, its limited footballing tradition and infrastructure, and most critically, the socio-political conditions surrounding migrant labor, human rights, and governance.

## **Criticisms and Controversies Surrounding Qatar's Selection**

The decision to award Qatar the 2022 World Cup was met with significant scrutiny both within and beyond football circles. Concerns arose over the feasibility of hosting matches in the intense summer heat, prompting FIFA later to reschedule the tournament to November–December—a historic break from tradition.

More alarmingly, Qatar's labor practices attracted global criticism. The country's reliance on migrant workers—primarily from South Asia and other developing countries—to construct World Cup infrastructure raised red flags about exploitation, unsafe working conditions, restrictions on labor rights, and systemic abuses tantamount to modern slavery.

Investigations by human rights organizations documented widespread violations, including delayed or withheld wages, hazardous living conditions, confiscation of passports, and inadequate legal protections. These reports exposed a stark contrast between Qatar's global image projection through the World Cup and the stark realities faced by the migrant workforce enabling its delivery.

Additionally, allegations of corruption tainted the bidding process, with several FIFA officials indicted or investigated for bribery and vote manipulation related to World Cup selections, including Qatar's. This further complicated the narrative, fueling skepticism about the legitimacy and ethical considerations underpinning the selection.

## **Evolution of Host Nation Selection Post-Qatar**

The controversies surrounding Qatar 2022 have spurred FIFA and the broader international community to re-examine the ethics and criteria underlying World Cup host selection. There is growing recognition of the need for enhanced transparency, accountability, and rigorous consideration of human rights records and labor standards in candidate nations.

FIFA has introduced reforms to its bidding process, including the implementation of human rights commitments as part of hosting agreements and greater stakeholder consultation. However, critics argue these reforms remain insufficient without enforceable mechanisms and independent monitoring.

The Qatar experience also highlights the risks associated with allowing narrow economic interests or geopolitical ambitions to overshadow the welfare of vulnerable populations. It underscores the necessity to integrate comprehensive human rights assessments and labor protections into the fabric of global sporting event governance.

## Historical Significance and Lessons Learned

The history of FIFA World Cup host nation selection reflects the tournament's evolution from a purely sporting event to a multifaceted global spectacle entwined with political, economic, and cultural agendas. The awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar epitomizes this transformation, illustrating how the selection process can serve as a platform for national image building but simultaneously exposes profound ethical and human rights challenges.

Comparatively, past tournaments have witnessed their own controversies and costs—for instance, the 2014 Brazil World Cup involved debates over displacement and public spending—but the scale and nature of the human rights concerns in Qatar are unprecedented in many respects.

Hence, the Qatar case serves as a pivotal moment in the tournament's history, catalyzing a critical discourse on the moral responsibilities of governing bodies, host nations, and the global community. It compels football stakeholders to reconsider how mega-events can be organized in ways that prioritize human dignity, equitable development, and social justice, beyond the veneer of national pride and commercial success.

## Conclusion

The FIFA World Cup's journey from a regional competition to a global phenomenon is inseparable from the evolving politics and economics of host nation selection. The award of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar underscores both the opportunities and risks inherent in this global sporting enterprise, particularly regarding governance, transparency, and human rights.

An informed historical perspective on host selection illuminates the structural and systemic issues exposed by the Qatar tournament. It provides indispensable context for understanding the human cost behind the spectacle and sets the foundation for evaluating how future tournaments can adopt more ethical, inclusive, and accountable frameworks.

Only by critically assessing this history can the global football community aspire to reconcile the passion and unity the World Cup inspires with the imperative of respecting the rights and lives of all individuals who contribute to its realization.

# CHAPTER.3

## QATAR'S MIGRANT WORKFORCE: DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS



Qatar's remarkable transformation over recent decades into a global energy powerhouse has been underpinned significantly by its expansive migrant workforce. This workforce forms the backbone of the country's rapid urban development and infrastructural expansion, particularly as Qatar prepared to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. However, beneath the gleaming modernity and the spectacle of international football, there exists a complex narrative of human migration, economic disparity, and structural vulnerabilities that define the lives of millions of migrant workers. This chapter explores the demographics and socioeconomic conditions of Qatar's migrant labor force, elucidating the foundational role they have played in the nation's development and exposing the inequalities and challenges faced within this population.

## Demographic Composition of Qatar's Migrant Workforce

Qatar's total population, estimated at approximately 2.9 million people by late 2021, is characterized by an overwhelmingly high proportion of expatriates. Migrant workers constitute roughly 85% to 90% of this population, with local Qataris representing only about 10%–15%. This demographic imbalance is largely driven by Qatar's economic model, which relies heavily on foreign labor for nearly all sectors outside of government and public administration.

The migrant workforce in Qatar predominantly originates from South Asia and Southeast Asia. The largest groups come from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines, with significant numbers also from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and other countries. Each nationality tends to be concentrated in certain sectors or types of labor, shaped by historical migration patterns and recruitment agreements:

- Indian and Bangladeshi workers are extensively employed in construction and related trades.
- Nepalese migrants have been prominent in sectors such as construction and domestic work.
- Filipino and Indonesian workers are more frequently found in domestic service roles and hospitality sectors.

The workforce composition skews heavily male, particularly in construction, transportation, and industrial sectors, where men constitute upwards of 90% of employees. Domestic work sectors tend to involve more female migrant workers, yet these are also underrepresented in government statistics due to their employment nature often being informal or unregistered.

## Socioeconomic Roles and Sectoral Distribution

Qatar's migrant labor force can broadly be categorized into low-skilled, semi-skilled, and skilled workers, with the majority falling in the low-skilled and semi-skilled brackets. These workers are primarily engaged in:

1. **\*\*Construction and Infrastructure Development\*\***: This sector constitutes the largest employer of migrant labor, particularly in the years leading to FIFA 2022. The construction of stadiums, hotels, roads, metro systems, and other infrastructure projects relied on intensive labor input from this group.
2. **\*\*Domestic and Care Work\*\***: Migrant workers, predominately women, serve as housekeepers, nannies, cooks, and caregivers for Qatari families.

3. **\*\*Service and Hospitality\*\***: The rapid growth in tourism and international events has spurred demand in hotels, restaurants, retail, and entertainment, providing employment to a large segment of the migrant workforce.

4. **\*\*Manufacturing and Industry\*\***: Some migrants are employed in industrial sectors including oil and gas services, though this sector is relatively more technical and employs fewer overall workers.

Economically, migrant workers contribute significantly to Qatar's GDP through their labor and also by sustaining remittance flows to their home countries. According to World Bank data, remittances from Qatar to South Asia and Southeast Asia constitute an important source of income for millions of families abroad. However, these economic contributions come with pronounced disparities in income and living conditions.

## **Employment Conditions and Wage Structures**

The socioeconomic realities faced by Qatar's migrant workers are shaped by several systemic factors, such as the kafala sponsorship system, wage practices, and working conditions. Despite legal reforms in recent years, many migrant laborers continue to encounter significant challenges linked to their employment status and economic vulnerability.

### **\*\*Wage Levels:\*\***

Wages for migrant laborers vary considerably depending on skill level, sector, and nationality. The lowest-paid workers, often in construction and manual labor, earn near the minimum wage threshold set by the Qatari government, which stood at approximately QR 1,000 per month (roughly USD 275) following its introduction in late 2020. However, many workers have reported delays, non-payment, or deductions that reduce their effective income.

Skilled laborers, such as engineers and technicians, command higher salaries but still often earn significantly less than equivalent roles in Western countries. Domestic workers' wages tend to be the lowest and frequently fall below formal national minimum wage standards, as this sector was excluded from some labor reform measures.

### **\*\*Working Hours and Conditions:\*\***

Typical working hours for construction workers can extend to 10 or more hours per day, six days a week, with limited rest days during peak project periods. Official regulations mandate maximum working hours and require health and safety provisions, but enforcement remains inconsistent.

Many workers live in labor camps situated outside major urban centers, where accommodation often consists of shared rooms with limited privacy or amenities. These camps vary widely in quality but have been frequently criticized for overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate safety provisions.

#### **\*\*The Sponsorship or Kafala System:\*\***

A defining element of Qatar's migrant labor model has historically been the kafala sponsorship system, which tied workers' legal status and ability to change employment to their employer's consent. This system has been widely criticized for enabling exploitative practices, including withholding passports, restricting mobility, and trapping workers in abusive employment situations.

Headway was made in 2020 and 2021 with reforms allowing workers to change jobs without employer permission, introducing a minimum wage, and strengthening dispute resolution mechanisms. However, the legacy of kafala continues to affect the socioeconomic conditions of many laborers, particularly those in vulnerable sectors such as domestic work.

### **Living Conditions and Social Challenges**

The socioeconomic challenges experienced by Qatar's migrant workers extend beyond the workplace and into their daily living environments and social realities.

#### **\*\*Housing and Accommodation:\*\***

Labor camps accommodate tens of thousands of workers, often located in industrial districts or isolated suburbs with limited transportation access. Most camps provide basic necessities—such as meals, medical facilities, and recreation—but crowds and poor maintenance contribute to health risks and social isolation.

Some reports document substandard housing conditions, including inadequate climate control in Qatar's harsh desert environment. Despite government initiatives to upgrade worker housing standards, disparities persist.

#### **\*\*Access to Healthcare and Social Services:\*\***

Qatar provides healthcare access to migrant workers through employer-funded insurance schemes and public health facilities. Nonetheless, barriers such as language, transportation, and fear of job loss deter some workers from seeking necessary medical care.

Social integration remains limited, as migrant workers seldom receive pathways for permanent residency or citizenship, restricting their participation in broader societal activities. Family reunification is rare, and many workers endure prolonged separation from dependents.

#### **\*\*Psychosocial Effects and Vulnerability:\*\***

The demanding nature of migrant labor, combined with restrictive social and legal frameworks, contributes to psychological stress and mental health challenges. Feelings of isolation, exploitation, and uncertainty about the future are common.

The vulnerability of migrant populations has been exacerbated during periods of economic slowdown or crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where lockdowns and reduced work opportunities intensified financial hardship and limited mobility.

### **Institutional and Legal Context**

Qatar's approach to managing its migrant workforce is regulated by a combination of national labor laws, ministerial decrees, and international agreements. The country has ratified key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, yet implementation gaps remain.

Several institutions oversee labor conditions in Qatar, including the Ministry of Labour and the National Human Rights Committee. Reforms aimed at improving labor rights have been accelerated partly due to global pressure around the 2022 World Cup preparations.

Key legislative improvements have included:

- The introduction of a non-discriminatory minimum wage in 2019.
- The establishment of workers' support and insurance funds.
- Legal prohibitions against passport confiscation and late wage payments.

Nonetheless, enforcement challenges and employer resistance to reforms continue to affect compliance, particularly among subcontractors in construction and domestic employment.

## **Qatar's Migrant Workforce in the Context of FIFA 2022**

The preparation for FIFA 2022 intensified Qatar's dependence on migrant labor more than ever before. According to some estimates, over 1.5 million migrant workers were involved in World Cup-related projects from infrastructure to event operations. This unprecedented scale magnified existing socioeconomic disparities and exposed migrant labor to increased risk of exploitation and hardship.

While Qatar promoted the World Cup as a symbol of modernization and global hospitality, the human cost borne by the migrant workforce has brought widespread international criticism. Calls for improved labor conditions, transparency, and human rights protections highlighted the tension between Qatar's ambitions as a global sporting host and the lived realities of those who made its stadiums and facilities possible.

## **Conclusion**

Qatar's migrant workforce is an indispensable pillar of the country's economic and infrastructural development, particularly in the context of hosting FIFA 2022. The demographic makeup—dominated by low-skilled male workers from South Asia and Southeast Asia—reflects deeply ingrained patterns of labor migration shaped by socioeconomic necessity and geopolitical dynamics.

However, these workers have historically faced structural vulnerabilities characterized by low wages, restrictive employment conditions, inadequate living standards, and limited legal protections. Despite reforms underway, many migrants remain exposed to socioeconomic marginalization and exploitation.

Understanding Qatar's migrant workforce not only demands recognition of their demographic and economic contributions but also necessitates confronting the profound inequalities and human rights challenges embedded in this labor model. Their experiences offer critical lessons about the social cost of mega-sporting events and the imperative for systemic reform to ensure that economic development and global prestige never come at the expense of human dignity.

# CHAPTER.4

## HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORKS AND THE TREATMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN QATAR



The preparation and execution of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar brought global attention to critical issues encompassing human rights, labor standards, and the treatment of migrant workers. At the core of this scrutiny lies the interplay between international human rights frameworks and the specific legal, social, and economic context of Qatar's migrant labor force. This chapter examines the existing human rights frameworks relevant to migrant workers, evaluates Qatar's compliance with these standards, and analyzes the implications of these conditions in the broader scope of the FIFA 2022 tournament.

### International Human Rights Standards Applicable to Migrant Workers

International human rights frameworks establish a comprehensive legal foundation aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of all individuals, including migrant workers. Notable among these are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966). Together, these instruments articulate rights such as freedom from forced labor, right to fair working conditions, freedom of movement, protection from discrimination, and access to justice.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) constitutes a pivotal component in the governance of labor rights. With conventions such as the Forced Labour Convention (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105), and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention (No. 143), the ILO reinforces global standards targeting exploitation and abuse in labor migration. Additionally, the Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189), though ratified by few Gulf states, sets further benchmarks specifically protecting domestic and vulnerable workers.

Despite these frameworks, the challenge remains in translating international commitments into national legislation and enforcement, especially in countries with large populations of temporary migrant laborers, such as Qatar.

## **Qatar's Legal and Institutional Frameworks for Migrant Worker Protection**

Qatar hosts approximately 2.4 million migrant workers, constituting the overwhelming majority of its labor force. The legal architecture governing their status is primarily shaped by the Kafala (sponsorship) system, labor laws, and various ministerial regulations.

The Kafala system historically restricted migrant workers' ability to change employers or leave the country without their sponsor's approval, effectively creating conditions conducive to exploitation. However, in response to mounting international criticism and pressure from human rights organizations during the FIFA World Cup preparation period, Qatar introduced a series of labor reforms.

Notably, in 2020 and 2021, the Qatari government implemented amendments removing the requirement for exit permits and enabling workers to change jobs without sponsor consent after completing a probationary period. The introduction of a minimum wage law in 2021 aimed to guarantee a baseline of financial security. Further, the establishment of the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund was intended to provide compensation for unpaid wages.

Despite these legislative improvements, enforcement remains inconsistent. Structural challenges such as the dependency on employers for legal residency, limited unionization rights, and weak complaint mechanisms continue to undermine worker protections.

## **Tensions Between International Standards and Domestic Practice**

Qatar's efforts to reform labor rights must be understood within the tension between international norms and domestic governance realities. While the country ratified core ILO conventions such as the Forced Labour Convention (No. 29) and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105), it has not ratified ILO Convention No. 87 concerning freedom of association and protection of the right to organize, nor Convention No. 98 on collective bargaining. This limits migrant workers' capacity to form or join independent trade unions, severely constraining their bargaining power.

Additionally, the legal status of migrant workers as temporary residents, with limited pathways to permanent residency or citizenship, exacerbates their precarity. The Kafala system's remnants persist in practice despite reforms, and enforcement agencies often lack the resources or political will to address abuses decisively.

Several independent investigations and United Nations human rights bodies have underscored ongoing violations including confiscation of passports, delayed or withheld wages, poor living conditions, excessive working hours, and inadequate occupational safety measures. For example, reports from the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Amnesty International indicate that forced labor conditions persisted in some sectors, despite government claims of progress.

## **The Intersection of Mega-Sporting Events and Human Rights Responsibilities**

The awarding of the FIFA World Cup to Qatar intensified scrutiny of human rights practices, catalyzing both domestic reform efforts and international advocacy. In 2017, following sustained pressure, FIFA introduced its Human Rights Policy, aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), recognizing the organization's responsibility to uphold human rights in host countries.

Qatar responded positively to some degree, establishing committees and implementing regulatory changes ostensibly to align with international expectations. FIFA, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC), and Qatari authorities entered into agreements aiming to protect workers' rights on World Cup-related projects. However, critics argue that these initiatives functioned more as damage control measures, designed to preserve Qatar's international image rather than effectuate systemic change.

The use of international events like the FIFA World Cup as platforms for sportwashing highlights the exploitation risk of mega-events, where superficial commitments to labor rights mask ongoing abuses. This dynamic underscores the necessity for binding, transparent, and enforceable standards within the spheres of event procurement, construction, and operation.

## **Analysis of Treatment of Migrant Workers in the Context of Human Rights Frameworks**

The treatment of migrant workers in Qatar during the FIFA 2022 preparations reflects a profound disconnect between international human rights obligations and ground realities. While reforms were introduced, the degree to which these improvements met the benchmarks set by international frameworks is questionable.

Key violations can be mapped against specific rights articulated in international instruments:

- Right to freedom from forced labor: Despite reforms, numerous reports indicated that migrant workers experienced coercion and inadequate freedom to terminate employment contracts.
- Right to fair remuneration and working conditions: Wage delays and substandard living conditions were well documented, contravening the ICESCR provisions.
- Right to freedom of association and collective bargaining: The absence of legally recognized trade unions for migrant workers infringed upon their ability to advocate for rights.
- Right to safe and healthy working environments: Construction-related fatalities and injuries highlighted inadequate occupational safety standards.

The extent of non-compliance demonstrates structural deficiencies in implementation capacity and political will, compounded by the systemic vulnerabilities inherent in migrant labor governance in the Gulf region.

## **Human Rights Accountability and the Role of International Actors**

International organizations, civil society, and governments played a significant role in exposing abuses and pressuring reforms in Qatar. The ILO's technical cooperation programs and the creation of the Qatar Foundation's Workers Welfare Standards marked attempts at external oversight. Moreover, UN bodies, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), contributed observations and recommendations highlighting the necessity of aligning Qatari law with international human rights obligations.

Nevertheless, limitations in jurisdiction and enforcement capacity meant accountability largely depended on Qatar's political commitment and domestic mechanisms. Media investigations and whistleblower testimonies proved crucial in revealing ongoing violations, but translating these revelations into sustained improvements remains a challenge.

FIFA's engagement attracted criticism for insufficient accountability measures and inconsistent application of human rights due diligence in its host selection and event oversight processes. The lack of enforceable sanctions for human rights violations within the governance structures of international sports federations further complicates generating meaningful change.

## **Conclusion: The Imperative for Stronger Human Rights Protections for Migrant Workers**

The human rights frameworks established under international law provide clear standards designed to protect migrant workers from exploitation and abuse. Qatar's experience in preparing for FIFA 2022 demonstrates both the progress possible through reform and the persistent challenges when systemic issues remain unaddressed.

The treatment of migrant workers during this period highlights the need for:

- Comprehensive legal reform fully harmonized with ILO conventions and UN human rights standards.
- Robust enforcement mechanisms, including independent monitoring and accessible complaint procedures.
- Recognition of migrant workers' rights to organize and collectively bargain.
- Transparency in labor practices associated with global sporting events.
- Binding human rights requirements incorporated into host country selection and oversight by organizations like FIFA.

Only through adherence to these principles can the exploitation of migrant workers be mitigated and the human cost of global sporting spectacles reduced. Ultimately, the FIFA 2022 Qatar experience underscores the vital importance of viewing international events not merely as platforms for national prestige, but as reflections of a shared responsibility to uphold human dignity and fundamental rights.

# CHAPTER.5

## MODERN SLAVERY AND LABOR EXPLOITATION IN THE BUILD-UP TO FIFA 2022



The preparation for the FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar revealed a deeply concerning nexus of modern slavery and labor exploitation, casting a long shadow over the tournament and raising pressing questions about human rights abuses intertwined with global sporting events. This chapter examines the systemic issues of labor exploitation faced by migrant workers in Qatar, highlights the mechanisms of modern slavery embedded within the construction and infrastructure projects leading up to FIFA 2022, and contextualizes these within the broader international human rights discourse.

### Scope and Scale of Labor Exploitation

Qatar's ambitious drive to transform a desert nation into a world-class sporting hub demanded an unprecedented influx of migrant labor. It is estimated that over 1.8 million migrant workers, primarily from South Asia and Southeast Asia, were involved in constructing stadiums, accommodation, transport infrastructure, and hospitality facilities

for the World Cup. The sheer scale of this workforce, combined with Qatar's demographic imbalance—where migrants constitute approximately 90% of the population—produced a labor system uniquely prone to exploitation.

Central to this exploitation were restrictive labor practices characteristic of forced labor and modern slavery, as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations' protocols on trafficking. Many migrant workers were recruited under exploitative conditions, subjected to coercion, deception, and inhumane treatment, trapped by oppressive employment contracts and stringent immigration controls.

### **Kafala System: Structural Enforcement of Labor Control**

The Kafala sponsorship system, historically entrenched in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, played a pivotal role in facilitating labor abuses in Qatar prior to significant reforms prompted by international scrutiny. Under Kafala, migrant workers' legal status was directly tied to their employer or sponsor (kafeel), granting employers disproportionate control over workers' mobility and employment conditions.

This system enabled employers to withhold passports, restrict workers from changing jobs without consent, and impose unfair contract terms. Workers often found themselves in conditions tantamount to debt bondage, especially given the recruitment fees paid upfront in their home countries. The inability to leave exploitative employment without risking detention or deportation effectively trapped many in a cycle of forced labor.

Although Qatar introduced labor reforms in recent years, including partial dismantling of Kafala restrictions and the institution of minimum wage laws, enforcement inconsistencies and loopholes continued to challenge the elimination of exploitative practices in the build-up to FIFA 2022.

### **Recruitment Practices and Wage Theft**

Migrant workers frequently encountered exploitative recruitment processes characterized by exorbitant fees charged by recruitment agents in their countries of origin. These fees, sometimes amounting to several months' salary, induced crippling debt that workers were compelled to repay under threat of withholding of wages or other coercive measures.

Upon arrival in Qatar, many workers faced delayed or withheld wages, a pervasive method of coercion contributing to economic exploitation and forced compliance. Multiple reports documented instances where salaries were underpaid or not paid for extended periods, effectively trapping workers in exploitative conditions by making it impossible to return home or meet basic living expenses.

Transparency in employment contracts was often absent, with many workers signing documents in languages they did not understand, further exacerbating their vulnerability. This created a power imbalance that employers exploited to modify employment terms arbitrarily, extending working hours, or worsening conditions without recompense.

## **Living Conditions and Occupational Hazards**

The labor exploitation extended beyond remuneration and contractual terms to living conditions and health and safety standards. Workers were frequently housed in overcrowded, substandard accommodations, lacking adequate sanitation, ventilation, or privacy. These accommodations were often remote from urban centers and workplaces, requiring lengthy, exhausting commutes.

Occupational health and safety presented another dimension of exploitation. The extreme summer temperatures in Qatar, often exceeding 40°C (104°F), exposed outdoor workers to life-threatening heat stress. Despite regulations limiting midday work hours in summer, enforcement was inconsistent, and many workers continued to endure hazardous working environments.

Tragically, these conditions contributed to a significant number of worker injuries and deaths during the construction phase. Official Saudi and Qatari government data cited hundreds of migrant worker deaths since the awarding of the World Cup to Qatar. Human rights organizations and independent research suggest that these figures likely underestimate the true scale, as many fatalities were recorded without linking them to work-related causes or FIFA infrastructure projects.

## **Legal and Institutional Responses**

The egregious nature of labor exploitation in Qatar drew intense international condemnation, compelling Qatari authorities and FIFA to initiate reforms and commitments toward improved labor standards. Key reforms implemented in the years leading up to the tournament included the establishment of the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund, improvements in wage protection systems, the abolition of exit permit requirements for most migrant workers, and the introduction of a nondiscriminatory minimum wage.

Qatar also ratified several International Labour Organization conventions and engaged in dialogue with the ILO to establish monitoring and inspection mechanisms. Dedicated labor dispute resolution committees were created to address grievances. However, critics argued these reforms were often slow, lacked transparency, and failed to dismantle the core power imbalances underpinning exploitation.

FIFA, as the governing body of football and the organizer of the World Cup, faced mounting pressure to uphold its human rights responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. FIFA's response included demanding compliance from local organizing committees, commissioning independent investigations, and integrating human rights criteria into future bidding processes. Nonetheless, accountability mechanisms and sanctions for labor abuses remained limited.

## **Global Awareness and Advocacy**

International media coverage, investigative journalism, and reports by human rights organizations—including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)—were instrumental in exposing modern slavery conditions. Survivors and labor activists told stories of exploitation that galvanized public opinion and compelled greater scrutiny of football's role in ethical governance.

Trade unions and migrant rights groups mobilized to provide support for affected workers, including legal aid and advocacy for better protections. Furthermore, consumer and sponsor pressure led some corporations involved in World Cup projects to adopt stronger labor standards in their supply chains, although such measures were often piecemeal and reactive.

## **The Intersection of Sportwashing and Labor Exploitation**

The exploitation of migrant labor in Qatar cannot be disassociated from the broader phenomenon of sportwashing—where states leverage global sporting events to cultivate a positive international image while obscuring or deflecting attention from human rights abuses.

Qatar's investment in the World Cup was part of a strategic national project to reposition itself geopolitically and economically. Yet, this project came at an immense human cost borne predominantly by marginalized migrant workers. While giant stadiums and state-of-the-art infrastructure dazzled a global audience, these tangible symbols of sporting prestige masked systemic abuses that challenged the ethical foundation of the event.

The incongruity between Qatar's image as a modern, progressive host and the lived realities of its workforce highlighted the pitfalls of mega-event-driven development models that prioritize spectacle over dignity and justice.

## **Aftermath and the Legacy of Exploitation**

Though FIFA 2022 has concluded, the legacy of labor exploitation remains a crucial concern. The migrant workers who powered the tournament's infrastructure continue to face challenges related to delayed wages, inadequate compensation, and barriers to legal redress.

Moreover, the systemic weaknesses that permitted modern slavery have not been entirely eradicated. The partial reforms against Kafala did not dismantle all structural mechanisms of control, leaving many vulnerable to exploitation in future projects.

Sustainable change requires not only legislative reforms but also robust enforcement, transparency, worker empowerment, and international cooperation to ensure no human being is sacrificed for entertainment or national prestige.

## **Conclusion**

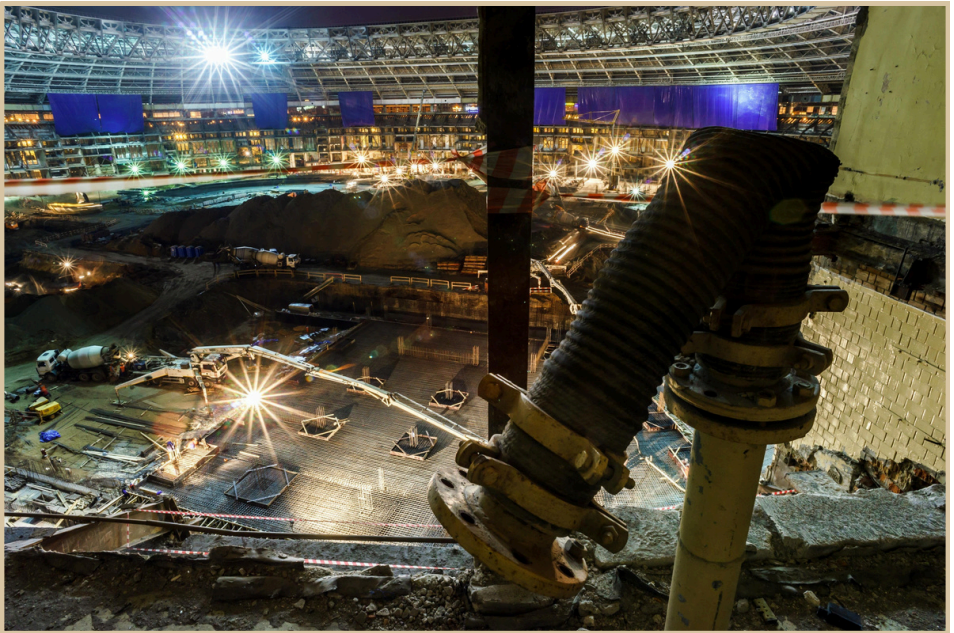
The build-up to FIFA 2022 in Qatar exposed modern slavery and labor exploitation as inseparable components of the tournament's global narrative. Migrant workers, despite their indispensable role, endured severe abuses under systems that curtailed their freedoms, exploited their vulnerabilities, and disregarded their human rights. The Kafala system, exploitative recruitment practices, poor living and working conditions, and inadequate legal protections created an environment conducive to forced labor and inhumane treatment.

While Qatar implemented reforms under intense international pressure, these changes were often reactive, partial, and insufficient to address fundamental power imbalances. The World Cup illuminated the dark underbelly of global sports mega-events, where the pursuit of international prestige often obscures the profound human cost.

This chapter underscores the necessity of embedding human rights at the core of international sporting governance, ensuring that future events do not repeat the mistakes of Qatar 2022. Only through concerted efforts involving host states, international organizations, corporations, civil society, and sports governing bodies can exploitation be eradicated, and the dignity of all workers honored.

# CHAPTER.6

## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT: THE HUMAN COST BEHIND STADIUMS AND FACILITIES



The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar marked an unprecedented scale of infrastructure development, driven by the nation's ambition to establish itself as a global sporting hub. This tournament necessitated a comprehensive transformation of Qatar's urban landscape, encompassing the construction of world-class stadiums, transportation networks, hospitality complexes, and auxiliary facilities capable of supporting an event of such magnitude. However, beneath the veneer of architectural elegance and technological innovation lies a profound narrative of human cost—one characterized by exploitative labor practices, systemic violations of human rights, and the dehumanizing conditions endured by the migrant workers whose labor was indispensable.

## Scale and Scope of Infrastructure Projects

Qatar invested an estimated \$220 billion across various sectors in preparation for the FIFA World Cup, making it arguably the most expensive tournament in history. This investment included the construction of seven new stadiums and the significant renovation of an eighth, along with extensive infrastructure such as the Doha Metro system, new road networks, hotels, and media facilities. The logistics and complexity of these projects demanded a labor force exceeding one million migrant workers, predominantly from South Asia and Africa, who formed the backbone of the construction industry in Qatar.

The ambitious timeline, driven by FIFA's fixed World Cup dates, created immense pressure on laborers to meet stringent deadlines under often hazardous circumstances. Despite technological advances in construction, the reliance on manual labor remained overwhelming, making the welfare of tens of thousands of workers a critical issue.

## Labor Conditions and Systemic Exploitation

Migrant workers experienced a range of exploitative labor conditions characteristic of what many international bodies have labeled as modern slavery. Central to this exploitation was the kafala (sponsorship) system, which legally bound workers to their employers and severely restricted their freedom of movement and labor mobility. Although Qatar introduced labor reforms during the World Cup preparation period, many of these changes were either insufficient or inadequately enforced, allowing systemic abuses to persist.

Reports from organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Labour Organization detailed instances of withheld wages, excessive working hours without proper rest or hydration, unsafe working environments, and inadequate living conditions in worker accommodations. The extreme summer temperatures, regularly exceeding 40°C (104°F), compounded health risks, with many workers reportedly exposed to heatstroke and other heat-related illnesses on-site.

Contractual agreements were often ambiguous or not provided in the migrant workers' native languages, leading to misunderstandings and exploitation. Passport confiscation—a widespread practice—effectively trapped workers in conditions tantamount to forced labor, undermining their autonomy and ability to seek justice or alternative employment.

## Casualties and Human Losses

Perhaps the most harrowing aspect of Qatar's infrastructure development for FIFA 2022 concerns the human toll in measurable terms of illness, injury, and death. Estimates of migrant worker fatalities during the World Cup preparation vary; exact figures remain opaque due to limited transparency from Qatari authorities. However, investigative reports and aggregated data suggest that thousands of workers have died in Qatar since the preparation for the World Cup began.

A study by the Guardian in 2021 determined that more than 6,500 migrant workers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka had died in Qatar since 2010, the year Qatar was awarded the World Cup. While not all deaths were directly linked to World Cup projects, the overwhelming majority involved young workers employed in construction and related sectors.

The causes of death include workplace accidents, cardiac arrests exacerbated by extreme physical exertion in demanding conditions, and diseases aggravated by poor living environments. Official investigations into these fatalities have been criticized as inadequate, often failing to differentiate deaths related directly to World Cup infrastructure development from other causes, thus complicating efforts to hold responsible parties accountable.

## Living Conditions and Accommodation Challenges

The camps and housing facilities provided to migrant workers were frequently overcrowded and poorly maintained. Reports highlighted insufficient access to clean water, substandard sanitation, and cramped living spaces that offered little respite from the relentless desert climate. These conditions not only posed immediate health risks but also amplified psychological stress among workers, who often lived weeks or months away from their families in alien environments.

Although Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy—the body responsible for World Cup preparations—claimed to implement new standards for worker accommodations, independent monitoring frequently disclosed discrepancies between official statements and reality on the ground. The lack of adequate grievance mechanisms left workers with limited means to address inadequate conditions or report abuses without fear of retaliation.

## Institutional Oversight and Accountability

The role of both Qatari authorities and international stakeholders in recognizing and addressing labor abuses has been the subject of intense scrutiny. FIFA, as the governing

body of the tournament, faced significant criticism for failing to enforce human rights standards robustly throughout the planning and delivery of the event. Despite initiating reforms and collaborating with organizations like the International Labour Organization to improve labor rights, implementation gaps persisted.

Qatar undertook reforms, such as abolishing the exit permit requirement for migrant workers, establishing workers' support and insurance funds to cover unpaid wages, and improving occupational health and safety protocols. However, enforcement remained uneven, with labor disputes and abuses continuing to be reported throughout the build-up to the tournament.

Private contractors and subcontractors operating on stadium and infrastructure projects were often implicated in these labor rights violations. The complexities of multi-tiered contracting chains obscured accountability and hindered transparency, allowing some parties to benefit from lax oversight and circumvent responsibility for worker welfare.

## **The Legacy of FIFA 2022 Infrastructure and Its Human Cost**

The stadiums constructed for FIFA 2022 reflect architectural innovation, sustainability efforts, and a desire to position Qatar prominently on the global stage. For example, Lusail Iconic Stadium, the centerpiece venue with a capacity of over 80,000 spectators, showcases cutting-edge cooling technology and modular design principles intended to serve community purposes after the event. However, the gleaming infrastructure conceals the profound sacrifices made by the migrant workforce, raising difficult questions about the true price paid for sporting grandeur.

Many facilities are expected to catalyze economic diversification beyond oil and gas, supporting Qatar's National Vision 2030 agenda. Yet, the social and ethical implications of how these structures came to be cannot be disentangled from their intended roles as symbols of national pride and global prestige.

Subsequent monitoring and evaluation must critically assess not only the functional and aesthetic success of these venues but also the extent to which they fulfill commitments to human dignity, workers' rights, and social justice.

## **Global Reflections and Lessons Learned**

The human cost of Qatar's FIFA 2022 infrastructure development serves as a watershed moment in global sporting history. It exposes the capacity for mega sporting events to accelerate infrastructural progress while simultaneously enabling systemic labor

exploitation and human suffering. This duality compels stakeholders—from international sporting bodies, host governments, construction companies, and civil society—to rethink the organization and supervision of such mega-events.

Key lessons include:

- The necessity of binding, enforceable human rights standards integrated into contracts and tender processes from the outset.
- The imperative for independent, transparent monitoring of labor conditions, with meaningful worker representation and grievance mechanisms.
- The importance of dismantling exploitative sponsorship systems that restrict worker freedoms and perpetuate vulnerabilities.
- Prioritizing the health, safety, and dignity of laborers as an intrinsic component of infrastructure development rather than a peripheral concern.
- Recognizing that the legitimacy and sustainability of international sporting events depend on addressing social justice alongside technical and economic goals.

Qatar's experience underscores the need for international cooperation to establish clear labor rights frameworks that transcend national borders. Sporting bodies such as FIFA must wield their influence to enforce ethical standards and sanction violations to avoid perpetuating "sportwashing" strategies that mask serious human rights abuses.

## **Conclusion: Balancing Progress with Human Dignity**

The infrastructure that shaped FIFA 2022's physical landscape embodies a story far more complex than architecture and innovation. It symbolizes a paradox wherein the glamour of global football convenes atop a foundation riddled with exploitation and suffering.

While Qatar's massive investments and infrastructural achievements are indisputable, they are inseparably linked to the narratives of migrant workers who sacrificed basic rights and, in some cases, their lives. The lessons deriving from the human cost borne in stadiums and facilities offer a critical blueprint for future international sporting events—one where progress and human dignity are not mutually exclusive but inherently intertwined.

Only through honest reckoning, robust regulatory frameworks, and sustained international vigilance can the global community ensure that the next generation of sporting infrastructure development honors the fundamental rights of every individual involved in its creation.

# CHAPTER.7

## SPORTWASHING EXPLAINED: MECHANISMS AND MOTIVATIONS BEHIND IMAGE PROMOTION



Sportwashing is a term that has gained significant traction in recent years, referring to the strategic use of high-profile sporting events and affiliations by states or entities to cleanse, distract from, or improve an adverse reputation. In the context of FIFA 2022 and Qatar's global positioning, sportwashing encapsulates how the nation harnessed the unparalleled visibility offered by world football's premier tournament to craft a carefully curated image on the international stage. This chapter examines the multifaceted mechanisms through which sportwashing operates, the motivations underpinning its use, and the profound implications arising from this phenomenon.

## Understanding Sportwashing: Definition and Context

At its core, sportwashing involves leveraging sports—its cultural significance, mass appeal, and global reach—to overshadow negative narratives related to politics, human rights violations, environmental concerns, or governance issues. This process is analogous to other forms of “washing” such as greenwashing or whitewashing, whereby image rehabilitation is sought through symbolic gestures rather than substantive reforms. The mechanism of sportwashing often entails hosting mega-sporting events, owning prominent sports teams, or sponsoring major sporting properties to evoke positive associations and divert critical scrutiny.

Historically, authoritarian regimes and states with contested legitimacy have utilized sports as a soft-power instrument to project an image of modernity, prosperity, and openness. The FIFA World Cup, given its global audience measured in billions, presents an unparalleled platform for such nation-branding endeavors. Qatar’s hosting of the 2022 World Cup, therefore, must be understood through this lens—where an intense image management strategy was masterminded to distract from international criticism regarding labor conditions, migrant rights, and political transparency.

## Mechanisms of Sportwashing in International Sporting Events

The operational mechanisms that underpin sportwashing leverage both overt and covert means. Key among them are:

- **Massive Infrastructure Development:** The rapid construction of state-of-the-art stadiums, transport networks, and accommodation facilities serves not only functional purposes but prominently frames the host nation as a futuristic, capable, and progressive society. These physical manifestations of development are heavily publicized globally to shift focus onto visible achievements rather than underlying socio-political issues.
- **Media and Public Relations Management:** Governments orchestrate comprehensive media campaigns, controlling narratives through strategic partnerships with international broadcasters, journalists, and influencers. Positive stories emphasizing hospitality, culture, and hospitality dominate coverage, while dissenting voices or critical investigations face censorship, marginalization, or are drowned out by promotional messaging. Qatar’s sophisticated PR apparatus exemplified this approach, investing heavily in managing the tournament’s narrative.

- **Investment in Sports Ownership and Sponsorship:** Beyond hosting events, states like Qatar engage in acquiring stakes in major football clubs (e.g., Paris SaintGermain through Qatar Sports Investments) and sponsor global sporting events and organizations. This financial clout creates symbolic associations linking nations to the celebratory and aspirational dimensions of sport, thereby bolstering their legitimacy and soft power.
- **Selective Reforms and Symbolic Gestures:** In preparation for global scrutiny, host nations may introduce limited labor reforms or human rights initiatives aimed at demonstrating goodwill. However, these measures often fall short of comprehensive change and primarily serve as image management tools to mitigate international backlash.
- **Public Diplomacy and Cultural Showcases:** Sportwashing also integrates cultural diplomacy, with host nations leveraging the influx of international visitors to present curated versions of their traditions, arts, and societal values. Festivals, exhibitions, and ceremonies accompanying sporting events reinforce a sanitized national identity.

Taken together, these mechanisms constitute a multi-layered, sophisticated approach wherein sport becomes an instrument for narrative recalibration. In Qatar's case, significant financial investment in infrastructure, strategic media management, and cultural framing were deployed with remarkable efficiency.

## Motivations Behind Sportwashing: Why Nations Engage in Image Promotion

The strategic motivations driving sportwashing are complex and interlinked, often combining geopolitical ambitions with domestic political objectives. The primary drivers can be classified as follows:

- **Enhancing International Standing and Legitimacy:** For nations like Qatar, hosting the FIFA World Cup offered a platform to assert themselves as influential global actors beyond their geographic size or traditional political weight. Sportwashing enables reframing perceptions away from controversies towards narratives of modernization, vitality, and global integration.
- **Economic Diversification and Investment Attraction:** Mega sporting events function as catalysts for economic diversification, attracting tourism, foreign direct investment, and development opportunities. Countries with economies heavily reliant on finite resources (e.g., hydrocarbons) seek to showcase alternative growth trajectories through sport-led urban transformation and international visibility.

- **Domestic Nation-Building and Social Cohesion:** Sportwashing also serves domestic agendas by promoting national pride, unity, and social cohesion. Governments use the global spotlight to cultivate a shared identity and galvanize public support, legitimizing ruling regimes through narratives of progress and prestige.
- **Distraction from Human Rights and Governance Concerns:** Arguably the most contentious motivation is the deliberate use of sport to divert international attention from systemic human rights abuses, labor exploitation, and authoritarian governance. The glittering spectacle, media saturation, and fanfare attempt to eclipse criticism and limit the impact of advocacy campaigns.

These incentives combine to reinforce the tendency for host nations to prioritize image enhancement over genuine reform. Qatar's investment exceeding \$200 billion on infrastructure and promotional efforts reflects how such motivations can lead to enormous financial and human costs, carefully obscured beneath the veneer of global sportsmanship.

## **The Role of Football as a Strategic Vehicle**

Football's unparalleled reach and emotional resonance confer a unique potency to sportwashing strategies. The FIFA World Cup attracts billions of viewers, cuts across cultural and geopolitical boundaries, and engages passionate fanbases worldwide. This universal appeal allows host nations to embed themselves in global consciousness positively.

Furthermore, football's egalitarian narrative—where talent, competition, and national pride converge—provides powerful imagery for host nations to appropriate. Qatar's leveraging of football symbolized a desire not only for sporting excellence but also to integrate into the global community through a widely beloved cultural form.

However, the alignment of football with local political agendas and human rights controversies also reveals the darker dimension of this instrumentality. The exploitation of migrant workers and systemic modern slavery practices starkly contrast the inclusive ethos football represents, thereby highlighting the dissonance sportwashing creates between image and reality.

## **Challenges and Critiques of Sportwashing**

While sportwashing can temporarily shape public perceptions, the model faces increasing challenges:

- **Increased Global Awareness and Activism:** The growth of transnational human rights organizations, investigative journalism, and social media activism has amplified scrutiny of host nations' domestic practices. The exposure of labor abuses in Qatar, for example, has generated sustained pressure on FIFA, sponsors, and governments.
- **Ethical Questions for Sports Governing Bodies and Corporations:** FIFA's awarding of events to nations with problematic records has sparked debates over complicity and responsibility. Corporate sponsors face reputational risks, raising questions about due diligence and moral accountability when supporting events implicated in sportwashing.
- **Temporary Nature of Image Gains:** The positive effects of sportwashing are often short-lived, vulnerable to subsequent scandals or sustained critical inquiry. The transient spectacle risks unravelling if underlying issues remain unaddressed.

These dynamics underscore that sportwashing is at best a superficial remedy that fails to resolve the root causes of reputational damage, and at worst, it constitutes a cynical exploitation of sport's symbolic power at enormous human and financial cost.

## **Conclusion: Sportwashing as a Double-Edged Sword**

The case of FIFA 2022 in Qatar offers an instructive example of sportwashing's mechanisms and motivations. Through monumental infrastructure development, orchestrated media campaigns, and strategic football diplomacy, Qatar sought to recast its international image. However, this image promotion was made possible only by the systemic exploitation of migrant workers subjected to precarious, inhumane labor conditions—a truth that complicates the narrative of sporting glory.

The fundamental lesson is the recognition that sportwashing operates as a tool of power that obscures human suffering beneath spectacle and celebration. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for stakeholders—fans, media, policymakers, and human rights defenders—to interrogate the price paid behind the scenes and demand greater transparency and accountability from event organizers and hosting nations.

In moving forward, it is imperative to question whether the motivations behind such image promotion justify the means employed, especially when they involve the perpetuation of modern slavery and labor exploitation. Sportwashing, while effective as a short-term strategic instrument, cannot serve as a substitute for equitable human rights practices and ethical governance. The enduring challenge lies in transforming global sport into a force that genuinely reflects the values of fairness, dignity, and respect for all individuals involved.

## CHAPTER.8

### THE ROLE OF FOOTBALL IN QATAR'S NATIONAL AND GLOBAL BRANDING STRATEGY



The FIFA World Cup 2022 presented Qatar with a unique platform to position itself prominently on the global stage, harnessing football not merely as a sport but as a strategic vehicle for national and international branding. In this chapter, we explore how Qatar employed football to craft a new national identity, boost its soft power, and advance its geopolitical and economic ambitions. Nonetheless, this branding came at a significant human cost, raising critical questions about the ethical dimensions of such strategies and the long-term implications for global sports governance.

## **Football as a Catalyst for National Image Transformation**

Qatar's decision to host the FIFA World Cup—the first Middle Eastern country to do so—was consciously aimed at transcending traditional perceptions dominated by its size, regional geopolitics, and the controversies surrounding its labor practices. Football emerged as a universal language through which Qatar sought to foster an image of modernity, progress, and hospitality. By capitalizing on the sport's global appeal, Qatar endeavored to position itself as a progressive and innovative nation capable of hosting a complex and widely watched international event.

This ambition aligned with Qatar's broader National Vision 2030, a strategic framework focused on economic diversification and enhanced global influence. Football, with its mass appeal, enormous media reach, and passionate fan engagement, became an effective instrument to signal Qatar's ambitions beyond hydrocarbon wealth, emphasizing infrastructural sophistication, tourism development, and cultural openness.

## **Leveraging Global Football for Soft Power Expansion**

Soft power—the ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion—was a core consideration in Qatar's football-driven branding strategy. Throughout the preparation and execution of FIFA 2022, Qatar harnessed football to cultivate diplomatic goodwill, increase global awareness, and foster bilateral relations across diverse regions.

Sporting events of global scale have a proven track record of enhancing host nations' visibility and cultural diplomacy. Qatar's unprecedented investment in football infrastructure, technological innovations such as state-of-the-art cooling systems for stadiums, and a compact geographic hosting model were deliberately showcased to project an image of cutting-edge capability and hospitality excellence.

Beyond infrastructure, Qatar amplified its soft power by securing strategic partnerships with international football clubs, media broadcasters, and marketing agencies. Entities like Paris Saint-Germain—owned by Qatar Sports Investments—and the acquisition of media rights through beIN Sports solidified Qatar's presence within the international sports economy ecosystem. These affiliations not only promoted Qatar's brand but also created networks of influence that extend well beyond the World Cup's immediate timeframe.

## Global Branding Through Sportwashing

Central to Qatar's use of football as a branding tool was the practice of sportwashing—a deliberate attempt to utilize sports events to distract from and obscure contentious domestic issues, principally labor rights abuses and human rights violations. While football poured international attention onto Qatar's achievements, it also offered a veneer of legitimacy and normalization that often overshadowed critical scrutiny.

The construction of stadiums, transport systems, and hospitality enterprises underpinning FIFA 2022 necessitated a vast migrant workforce—estimated at over one million workers—whose exploitation has been extensively documented. The spectacle of the World Cup was employed to mask these human rights concerns under a shining facade of unity, celebration, and technological prowess.

This deployment of football towards the selective reshaping of national narratives epitomizes the challenges facing global sport today. It raises ethical concerns regarding the extent to which international sports organizations and global audiences inadvertently enable regimes to sanitize their global images through mega-events, even as profound human suffering persists in their shadows.

## The Strategic Dimensions of Qatar's Football-Centered Branding

Qatar's football strategy was multi-layered, designed to generate economic benefits while consolidating keen geopolitical interests. Hosting the World Cup was a part of a broader attempt to diversify the economy, reducing reliance on energy exports by boosting tourism, international business, and sports-related industries.

Tourism, in particular, received a significant impetus, with FIFA 2022 attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world. The global media coverage—reportedly reaching billions globally—was leveraged to promote Qatar's cultural heritage, infrastructure developments, and ambitions as a luxury destination. Qatar invested heavily in tourism, hospitality, and transport sectors, intending to use the World Cup as a springboard for sustained visitor influx.

Geopolitically, Qatar leveraged football's unifying appeal to strengthen ties with key players worldwide, positioning itself as a regional leader and cosmopolitan hub. The World Cup facilitated dialogue and engagement with countries that might have otherwise remained distant due to geopolitical rivalries. This use of football as a bridge in international relations furthered Qatar's strategic goals of regional influence and global acceptance.

## **Limitations and Backlash Against the Football-Driven Brand Narrative**

While Qatar's global football branding succeeded in drawing immense positive attention, it was met with considerable international criticism and skepticism. Human rights organizations, labor unions, and some governments highlighted discrepancies between Qatar's projected image and on-the-ground realities faced by migrant workers.

Independent investigations and reports exposed extensive labor abuses—including low wages, poor living conditions, passport confiscations, and unsafe workplaces—undermining claims of a socially responsible host nation. This dissonance between branding aspirations and labor realities perpetuated a damaging narrative that eroded credibility in some international quarters.

Moreover, the FIFA World Cup's compact nature and infrastructural investments, while impressive, sparked debates concerning the sustainability and long-term utilization of stadiums and facilities—factors integral to genuine national legacy. Critics argued that the event prioritized short-term prestige over enduring socioeconomic benefits, further complicating the assessment of Qatar's branding strategy's success.

## **The Ethical Quandaries and Human Cost Overshadowing the Brand**

Qatar's sophisticated football-driven branding must be critically examined within the context of its human costs. The global goodwill generated by football was undeniably marred by the documented suffering of thousands of migrant workers, many of whom endured exploitative labor practices that in some cases resulted in injury or death.

This tragic human toll brings into sharp relief the broader implications of deploying sport as a tool for image management. The conflict between the aspirational national narrative and the lived experiences of marginalized workers reveals foundational ethical dilemmas. It prompts a necessary reevaluation of the extent to which sports mega-events can or should be instruments of state branding when predicated on compromised human rights.

International observers must consider whether the polished image presented during FIFA 2022 adequately reflects the lived realities within the host nation. In this respect, football's role in Qatar's branding strategy exposes the fraught interface between global spectacle and suppressed social grievances.

## **Lessons from Qatar's Football-Driven Branding Strategy**

Qatar's engagement with football as a branding mechanism offers instructive insights for future host countries and international organizations. Firstly, it demonstrates the transformative potential of global sports events to elevate nation branding but also underscores the necessity of integrated ethical frameworks to safeguard human rights and social justice.

Secondly, the experience illustrates the dangers of disproportionate emphasis on image over substance—where infrastructural magnificence and media coverage overshadow systemic exploitation. Genuine national branding requires transparent commitments to improving labor conditions, engaging civil society, and upholding international human rights standards.

Finally, Qatar's model highlights the importance of global sports governance bodies such as FIFA assuming greater responsibility for comprehensive oversight, ensuring that host countries balance ambitions for prestige with enforceable protections for vulnerable populations.

## **Conclusion: The Dual-Edged Sword of Football in Qatar's Branding Endeavors**

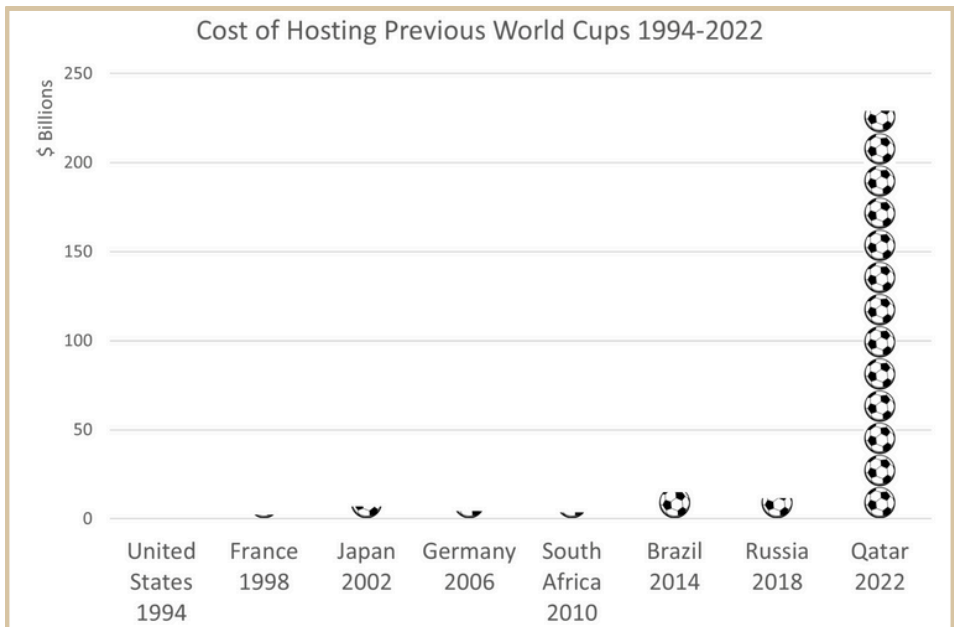
Football played a pivotal and multifaceted role in Qatar's quest for enhanced national and global stature through the FIFA 2022 World Cup. It functioned as an engine of soft power, economic diversification, and cultural diplomacy, successfully projecting a modern and innovative image abroad. However, this projection was achieved amid significant human rights compromises and contested narratives of labor exploitation.

The experience of FIFA 2022 underscores that football and sports mega-events can serve as powerful platforms for nation branding but also possess the potential to facilitate sportwashing, whereby critical social issues are masked in favor of curated images. A holistic understanding of Qatar's football branding strategy thus demands acknowledgement of both its achievements in global visibility and the profound ethical and human costs that accompanied it.

Moving forward, the lessons from Qatar implore stakeholders across governments, international organizations, sports federations, and civil societies to embed human rights and labor protections at the core of event planning and national branding strategies. Only through such commitments can football's unifying spirit be harmonized with principles of justice, dignity, and respect for all participants, ensuring that the beautiful game enriches societies without compromising fundamental human values.

# CHAPTER.9

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: HUMAN AND FINANCIAL COSTS OF FIFA 2022 VERSUS PREVIOUS TOURNAMENTS



The FIFA World Cup is the pinnacle of international football, captivating billions globally every four years. However, behind the spectacle lies a complex matrix of financial investment, human labor, and social impact. The 2022 edition in Qatar offers a unique and troubling case study in the evolution of these costs, especially concerning human rights and labor practices. This chapter provides a comparative analysis of both the human and financial costs of FIFA 2022 relative to previous World Cups, examining dimensions such as infrastructure expenditure, labor exploitation, and the overall human toll.

## **Financial Investment: Qatar 2022 Against Its Predecessors**

Qatar's financial outlay for the World Cup was unprecedented. Official figures estimate expenditures upwards of \$220 billion, considering stadium construction, infrastructure overhauls—including transportation, hospitality, and urban development—and security measures. This contrasts starkly with earlier tournaments. For example, Russia 2018's total cost approached \$11 billion, and Brazil 2014 around \$15 billion. Even the 2010 South Africa World Cup, which was regarded as one of the most extensive investments in African history, accounted for roughly \$4 billion.

The immense financial scale of Qatar 2022 is attributed not only to infrastructural requirements but also to Qatar's ambition to redefine itself as a global hub for sport, tourism, and commerce. The small size of the country necessitated large-scale, rapid development projects, including seven new stadiums and widespread urban modernization, which cumulatively contributed to inflated costs.

However, these financial figures must be contextualized within Qatar's particular economic model and the geopolitical significance attached to the tournament. Unlike previous hosts with larger domestic markets and established sporting cultures, Qatar leveraged the World Cup as a centerpiece to diversify its economy beyond hydrocarbon dependency.

## **Human Costs: Labor Exploitation and Migrant Worker Fatalities**

When juxtaposing the financial magnitude of FIFA 2022, the human cost—particularly among Qatar's predominantly migrant labor workforce—is equally staggering, if not more distressing. Independent investigations estimate that over 6,500 migrant workers from South Asia and other regions died as a direct or indirect consequence of working conditions associated with World Cup infrastructure projects between Qatar's successful bid in 2010 and the tournament in 2022. These figures far surpass mortality reports tied to any previous World Cup host nation preparations.

By contrast, similar comprehensive mortality data from prior tournaments are generally scarce or underreported. This discrepancy is due to differences in labor regimes, regulatory oversight, and independent monitoring. Nonetheless, anecdotal and investigative reports from previous host nations—such as Brazil and Russia—indicate far fewer documented deaths linked to World Cup preparatory work. For example, ahead of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, concerns were raised about labor safety and displacement, but the scale of reported fatalities did not approach Qatar's figures.

This sharp increase in reported deaths and labor abuses for FIFA 2022 reflects the exceptional vulnerabilities migrant workers faced under Qatar's kafala sponsorship system, characterized by restrictions on mobility, poor living conditions, delays or non-payment of wages, and excessive work hours in extreme temperatures. These factors cumulatively constitute systemic labor exploitation, often categorized as modern slavery by human rights organizations.

## **Modern Slavery and Regulatory Frameworks: A Comparative View**

Unlike previous World Cups, Qatar attracted heightened international scrutiny related to labor rights violations due to exposés by global media and NGO advocacy. While Brazil and Russia both encountered criticism for human rights issues—including forced evictions and discrimination—these were primarily peripheral to labor exploitation.

Qatar's systemic labor abuses, in contrast, involved structural exploitation embedded within labor recruitment and employment practices. Despite some reforms initiated in the lead-up to the tournament (such as the partial dismantling of the kafala system and the introduction of a minimum wage), these measures were widely regarded as insufficient and voluntary with weak enforcement.

In other tournaments, particularly in wealthier Western hosts (e.g., Germany 2006, South Africa 2010 had a unique position as an emerging economy), labor regulations and human rights frameworks were comparatively stronger, reducing the likelihood and scale of abuses. Qatar's workforce remains uniquely exposed due to its heavy reliance on low-skilled migrant labor with limited legal protections.

## **Cost of Sportwashing: Financial Outlays and Ethical Consequences**

Financial costs of hosting World Cups invariably include heavy expenditures on branding, marketing, and hospitality aimed at maximizing global visibility and "nation branding." Qatar's investment dwarfs entire budgets from previous hosts, reflecting the nation's intention to use the tournament as a major element of its international persona overhaul, often referred to as "sportwashing."

Sportwashing entails improving a country's global image through association with popular sports events, thereby deflecting attention from problematic internal practices, including human rights violations. Qatar's case exemplifies this costly strategy—both in absolute and relative terms.

Economically, the investment has stimulated select sectors such as construction, real estate, and tourism infrastructure. However, the benefits remain unevenly distributed,

particularly for migrant workers who bore most of the physical and human cost. The ethical implications question whether the prestige and promotional gains justify sacrificing workers' rights and lives.

Prior tournaments, while also engaging in image-building, generally lacked the intense combination of sportwashing motives aligned explicitly with high human costs. For example, Brazil's World Cup was nationally celebrated amid social protests concerning public funds' allocation and displacement, but state-led repressions, while significant, did not revolve around such acute migrant labor exploitation.

### **Was FIFA 2022 the Most Expensive World Cup to Date?**

Financially, FIFA 2022 holds the record as the most expensive World Cup in history. The roughly \$220 billion figure surpasses previous records by vast margins. Of this, stadium construction alone accounted for about \$8 billion, but the bulk was invested in urban infrastructure projects and new transport links designed to accommodate not only the tournament but Qatar's long-term development goals.

The scale of the budget is disproportionate in comparison to the country size and population. Previous tournaments in larger countries integrated infrastructure improvements more closely aligned with existing urban capacities, reducing blank-slate construction costs.

However, expenditure alone is not the sole measure of a tournament's cost. The broader spectrum includes social costs, opportunity costs, and intangible impacts, particularly concerning human rights violations.

### **The True Cost: Is the Price Worth It?**

Assessing whether the cost of FIFA 2022 was "worth it" requires balancing metrics of national prestige, economic diversification, and sporting legacy against human suffering and systemic abuses. Quantitatively, Qatar succeeded in delivering an impressive tournament with state-of-the-art venues and global attention. Qualitatively, it failed to sufficiently safeguard vulnerable populations that made it possible.

The loss of thousands of lives, widespread reports of forced labor, and denial of basic human rights tarnish any purported legacy of progress or unity that the tournament may have projected. For many advocates and human rights organizations, the human cost far outweighs financial or reputational gains.

Previous World Cups, even with their own documented social issues, generally did not reach this level of labor exploitation and mortality. Thus, FIFA 2022 sets a sobering new precedent, questioning the ethics of hosting mega-events without stringent human rights protections.

## **Lessons From Comparative Analysis**

This comparative lens underscores the urgent necessity for reforms in the governance of global sporting events. Future tournaments must prioritize human rights integration into bidding processes, contractual obligations, and compliance monitoring. The financial magnitude of investments must be transparent and linked to enforceable labor standards.

Moreover, the data suggests that investments in infrastructure unaccompanied by robust protections for workers can lead to severe human costs that far exceed economic calculations. Even the often-cited “legacy benefits” are compromised when foundational rights are ignored.

Previous tournaments offer varying lessons, but none on the scale of Qatar’s complexities in balancing rapid development and human dignity. The global football community, including FIFA, host nations, and sponsors, must learn from these disparities to establish frameworks that preclude exploitation and ensure ethical, inclusive progress.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, FIFA 2022 in Qatar represents the apex of financial expenditure for a World Cup tournament, outstripping all predecessors by an order of magnitude. However, this colossal investment came with an equally extraordinary human price, primarily borne by migrant workers subjected to conditions tantamount to modern slavery.

While previous World Cups presented challenges related to social displacement and labor conditions, none have matched the documented mortality figures or systemic rights violations uncovered in Qatar. The concept of worth, therefore, cannot be confined to monetary or prestige-based terms; it must foreground human rights and dignity.

The comparative analysis presented here serves as a foundational appraisal for stakeholders involved in future mega sporting events, emphasizing that without ethical accountability and enforceable protections, the “greatest show on earth” risks becoming a spectacle at the expense of the most vulnerable.

# CHAPTER.10

## THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF FIFA 2022 ON QATAR'S MIGRANT COMMUNITIES



The FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar represented a landmark event on the global sporting calendar, bringing unprecedented international attention to the small Gulf state. However, behind the pageantry and spectacle lay a complex and deeply troubling reality for Qatar's migrant communities—the backbone of the nation's economic transformation and the primary labor force responsible for realizing the massive infrastructure projects that this tournament demanded. This chapter critically examines the economic and social impact of FIFA 2022 on these migrant workers, analyzing both the immediate effects and the broader implications for their welfare, socio-economic status, and human rights.

### **Economic Contributions and Dependence on Migrant Labor**

Qatar's migrant workforce, composed largely of individuals from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and parts of Africa, has served as the backbone of the country's rapid development. By 2022, estimates indicated that migrant workers constituted approximately 90% of

Qatar's total population and nearly 95% of the private sector labor force. The construction of stadiums, transportation infrastructure, hotels, and other facilities critical to FIFA 2022 would not have been feasible without this extensive labor pool.

Economically, the World Cup brought significant investment and accelerated infrastructure projects, theoretically creating employment opportunities for migrant populations. Wages, remittances, and access to new jobs were important for many workers and their families abroad. Yet, this economic contribution must be weighed against the severe conditions under which this labor was performed and the exploitative structures that governed it.

### **Precarious Working and Living Conditions**

Despite the economic activity generated, the social and economic benefits for many migrant workers were deeply constrained by systemic abuses. Wage delays, non-payment, exorbitant recruitment fees, poor accommodation, and unsafe working environments were widely documented issues. Many workers lived in overcrowded labor camps with inadequate sanitation, limited privacy, and insufficient healthcare access. These conditions were exacerbated by Qatar's kafala (sponsorship) system, which restricted labor mobility and allowed employers disproportionate control over workers' legal status and ability to change jobs or leave the country.

Although some reforms were introduced in the lead-up to FIFA 2022—such as the partial dismantling of the kafala system and establishment of a minimum wage—implementation remained inconsistent. Many workers continued to endure exploitative conditions despite policy rhetoric promising improvements.

### **The Human Cost: Mortality and Health Impacts**

One of the gravest concerns related to the socio-economic impact on Qatar's migrant workers was the significant loss of life during the tournament's preparatory phase. Independent investigations and reports indicated that thousands of migrant workers died in Qatar between the awarding of the World Cup in 2010 and the event's commencement in 2022. Causes ranged from heat stress and workplace accidents to inadequate medical care and neglected safety protocols.

These fatalities represent not only profound human tragedies but also a stark reflection of the inadequate health and safety protections extended to the migrant workforce. The physical toll—compounded by mental health challenges stemming from isolation, exploitation, and lack of social support—underscores the high social cost borne by these communities for the sake of an international sporting spectacle.

## **Economic Exploitation and Modern Slavery Dynamics**

The economic impact on migrant workers cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the elements of modern slavery and labor exploitation that permeated many sectors involved in World Cup preparations. Recruitment practices often involved deceptive job offers, forced indebtedness, retention of passports, and coercive control mechanisms that placed workers in situations of enforced labor.

This exploitation translated into economically damaging consequences for migrant workers and their families—low or unpaid wages, extreme debt burdens from recruitment fees, and inability to improve living standards even in the context of increased employment. The economic benefits gleaned by Qatar's state apparatus and corporate contractors were seldom equitably shared with the very workers whose labor underpinned these gains.

## **Social Fragmentation and Marginalization within Qatar**

Beyond the economic dimension, FIFA 2022 intensified existing social disparities and marginalization experienced by migrant communities in Qatar. Structurally, migrants were excluded from citizenship, political participation, and many social protections enjoyed by Qatari nationals. Their presence was framed as temporary and utilitarian, rather than integral to the country's long-term social fabric.

The social isolation experienced by many migrant workers was significant, fueled by restrictions on movement, limited community integration opportunities, and cultural and linguistic barriers. These factors contributed to feelings of alienation and vulnerability, exacerbated by the stark contrast between the world-class venues showcasing Qatar's wealth and the impoverished living conditions of the labor force behind them.

## **Economic Gains for Qatar and the State's Strategic Priorities**

From the state perspective, FIFA 2022 offered an economic windfall through increased global visibility, tourism, investment, and diversification of the economy away from hydrocarbon dependency. The World Cup served as a key element in Qatar's National Vision 2030, designed to position the country as a regional hub for sports, culture, and commerce.

However, this economic strategy relied heavily on maintaining a low-cost labor force while simultaneously investing heavily in public relations campaigns aimed at showcasing modernity and progressiveness. The financial benefits accrued by government entities, construction firms, and hospitality sectors stood in stark contrast to the economic precarity faced by migrant workers.

## **Did FIFA 2022 Bring Lasting Improvements?**

One of the critical questions revolves around the sustainability and permanence of reforms initiated in the wake of international scrutiny surrounding Qatar's labor practices. Although FIFA, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Qatari government implemented monitoring mechanisms, labor dispute resolution systems, and enhanced regulations, many observers and advocacy groups remain skeptical about the deep-rooted structural changes.

For migrant communities, tangible improvements—such as the establishment of workers' support hotlines, increased wage transparency, and improvements in accommodations—are important but limited steps without comprehensive guarantees and enforcement.

## **The Broader Socioeconomic Implications**

The social impact extends beyond immediate labor conditions. The World Cup highlighted entrenched inequalities within Qatar's society and the vulnerabilities of migrant populations. Their lack of legal empowerment and social capital limits their capacity to assert rights and seek redress.

Furthermore, the visibility of these issues on the global stage has prompted a renewed dialogue about responsible migration governance, corporate accountability in global supply chains, and the imperative for host countries to uphold international human rights standards. The tournament thus serves as a cautionary archetype of how mega-events can exacerbate existing social cleavages if human rights frameworks are not integrated into their planning and execution.

## **Comparative Economic Cost and Impact on Migrant Labor**

FIFA 2022's economic scale was unprecedented for the region, with an estimated \$220 billion spent on infrastructure and development, far exceeding costs of previous tournaments—though such comparisons are nuanced given differing economic contexts and timeframes. The magnitude of migrant labor involvement was similarly unmatched, involving hundreds of thousands of workers over more than a decade.

While previous host countries have faced labor-related challenges, Qatar's demographic dominance by migrant labor and the severity of documented abuses have placed this tournament under an exceptional spotlight. The economic model employed showed a disproportionate reliance on vulnerable labor, raising ethical and economic questions about the equitable distribution of costs and benefits.

## Reflections on Economic and Social Justice

Ultimately, the economic and social impact of FIFA 2022 on Qatar's migrant communities invites a sober reflection on human rights and economic justice in the context of global sporting mega-events. The vast economic resources funneled into infrastructure and image promotion must be measured against the human suffering, exploitation, and loss of life suffered by migrant workers.

This chapter underscores the critical necessity for transparent accountability, genuine reforms, and equitable development that respects human dignity—beyond the ephemeral glory of sporting triumphs. Only through integrating these principles can future events avoid replicating the human and social costs witnessed in Qatar.

In conclusion, FIFA 2022 served as a stark illustration of how mega-sporting events can drive profound economic activity while simultaneously perpetuating social injustice and economic exploitation. The tournament's legacy in Qatar will be measured not only in terms of stadiums and trophies but also by the lasting impact—positive or negative—on the migrant workers who made it possible. Governments, sport governing bodies, corporations, and civil society must heed these lessons to ensure that the pursuit of global sporting excellence does not come at the expense of vulnerable human lives and rights.

# CHAPTER.11

## MEDIA AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO LABOR ABUSES DURING THE TOURNAMENT PREPARATION



The preparations for FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar ignited a global spotlight not only on the sporting spectacle itself but also on the human cost underpinning the tournament's realization. Central to this narrative was the pervasive media coverage and international response to the labor abuses suffered by Qatar's migrant workforce—an army of predominantly South Asian laborers whose efforts forged the physical and symbolic infrastructure of the event. This chapter examines how the media framed these labor abuses, the spectrum of international reactions, the influence of advocacy and watchdog groups, and the broader implications of these responses for Qatar, FIFA, and the global sporting community.

## **Global Media Coverage: Raising Awareness Amidst Censorship and Contestation**

From the moment Qatar was awarded the World Cup in 2010, international media began to scrutinize the living and working conditions of migrant laborers engaged in stadium construction, infrastructure development, and ancillary services. Pioneering investigative reports by global outlets such as The Guardian, BBC, Al Jazeera, and The New York Times exposed systemic labor rights violations, including exploitative kafala sponsorship systems, wage withholding, hazardous working environments, and crowded, unsanitary living quarters. These reports often relied on testimonies from workers, NGOs, and diplomatic sources, presenting harrowing accounts that challenged the sanitized narratives offered by Qatari authorities and FIFA.

Notably, investigative journalist Touria Meliani's work and organizations like Amnesty International propelled frontline stories to global prominence. Data-driven reporting also contextualized the scope of abuses; with estimates of migrant workers in the hundreds of thousands and reports citing thousands of deaths potentially linked to working conditions, the gravity of the situation was impossible to ignore. However, media in Qatar and certain allied states often featured restraint or outright whitewashing, showcasing the tournament's development in a celebratory light and citing reforms initiated by the government.

This divergence between international criticism and local media framing underscored a contested media environment. It also highlighted the power asymmetries in information dissemination, where voices of workers were amplified abroad but often muted or marginalized domestically. The dissemination of these reports had a multifaceted impact: they fueled public outrage, pressured regulatory bodies, and catalyzed call-for-action campaigns worldwide.

## **International Responses: Diplomatic, Institutional, and Civil Society Engagement**

The media spotlight was instrumental in galvanizing international responses from governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, and the sports community. Diplomatically, numerous Western governments expressed concern during bilateral engagements with Qatar, urging labor reforms. Some embassies actively disseminated worker rights information and improved consular support, particularly from labor-sending countries like Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

Intergovernmental bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) engaged Qatar in dialogues focusing on labor law reforms. Despite Qatar's non-membership until 2012, the state subsequently collaborated with the ILO in a tripartite agreement aiming to improve labor standards, introduce a minimum wage, and dismantle certain exploitative practices. These incremental steps were frequently referenced internationally as signs of progress but also criticized as insufficient or inconsistently applied.

At the institutional level, FIFA encountered intense scrutiny. Historically reticent on labor and human rights issues, FIFA adopted a more proactive stance in this cycle by commissioning independent monitoring against forced labor and introducing enhanced human rights requirements for host nations. However, critics argued that these measures functioned largely as reputational safeguards rather than mechanisms ensuring substantive change.

Civil society and labor rights organizations were perhaps the most vocal critics and advocates. Groups such as Human Rights Watch, Migrant-Rights.org, and the FairSquare Campaign launched awareness initiatives, documented abuses, and provided platforms for migrant voices. Campaigns utilized multimedia, social media, and coordinated international days of action to maintain pressure. Notably, the #NoFIFAWC in Qatar movement, while small, symbolized transnational resistance against sportwashing practices.

However, these groups faced significant hurdles, including restricted access to workers, potential retaliation against activists, and the challenge of effectuating lasting policy enforcement. The Qatari government's incremental labor reforms were often met with skepticism by activists who highlighted persistent structural inequities and exploitation despite legal changes.

## **Media Influence on Qatar's International Image and Corporate Responses**

The pervasive coverage of labor abuses challenged Qatar's ambitions to position itself as a progressive, global sports hub. The term "sportwashing" gained traction in media and academic discourse, articulating how Qatar leveraged the World Cup's glamor to veil structural human rights problems.

Confronted with growing reputational risks, Qatar's leadership undertook significant public relations campaigns, including virtual tours of stadiums, showcasing worker welfare initiatives, and broadcasting endorsements by international athletes. Collaborative efforts with global organizations aimed to convey a narrative of reform and responsibility. These efforts, often conveyed through state-sponsored media outlets and strategic partnerships, reflected a sophisticated approach to crisis management.

Parallely, several multinational construction firms and sponsors faced heightened scrutiny over their complicity in labor abuses. Under intense public and shareholder pressure, companies instituted labor audits, strengthened compliance programs, and in some cases withdrew from contracts. Notably, brands such as Adidas, Coca-Cola, and Visa were compelled to address labor rights concerns in their corporate social responsibility frameworks. Yet, critics assert that economic interests frequently overshadowed ethical considerations, perpetuating a cycle of superficial reforms.

## **Limitations and Criticisms of International and Media Responses**

Despite their visibility, media and international responses revealed inherent limitations in addressing the root causes of labor abuses. Structural factors such as the kafala system – which ties workers' residency status to their employers—remained entrenched for much of the preparation period and contributed to systemic vulnerabilities.

Some commentators criticized media coverage for occasional sensationalism and a predilection for dramatic narratives emphasizing tragedy over nuanced systemic analysis. This framing risked depoliticizing the issue by treating labor abuse as isolated incidents rather than manifestations of systemic inequality and global capitalism.

Furthermore, certain governments prioritized strategic economic partnerships with Qatar over human rights advocacy, reflecting tensions between realpolitik and ethical diplomacy. FIFA's response was also seen by many as reactive rather than proactive, with limited enforcement capabilities regarding host-country compliance with human rights benchmarks.

Importantly, the voices of migrant workers themselves often remained marginalized in mainstream discourse. Language barriers, fear of reprisal, and restricted media access limited direct worker participation in shaping the narrative. This gap underscored the challenges of empowerment within tightly controlled environments.

## **The Legacy of Media and International Accountability in Context**

The sustained media coverage and international pressure generated tangible, albeit incomplete, reforms. In the years leading to the tournament, Qatar abolished the kafala system, introduced a non-discriminatory minimum wage, and enhanced labor dispute resolution mechanisms. Independent labor inspectors, including those supported by the ILO, conducted fieldwork that spotlighted ongoing issues and improved transparency.

Nonetheless, the extent to which these reforms represent enduring structural change remains contested. Post-tournament monitoring is critical to evaluate whether Qatar's labor improvements persist absent the global gaze. Furthermore, the FIFA 2022 experience imparted significant lessons on the capacity and limits of media and international actors to influence host countries' labor practices in mega sporting events.

The tournament established a precedent for increased attention to human rights in the awarding and execution of sporting mega-events. Subsequent bids and events have integrated more rigorous human rights due diligence, partially catalyzed by the intense international scrutiny the Qatar World Cup provoked.

## **Conclusions: Reflections on Accountability, Media, and Global Advocacy**

The international media's comprehensive exposure of labor abuses during FIFA 2022 preparations constituted a watershed moment in global sports governance and human rights advocacy. It underscored the powerful role of investigative journalism and civil society in challenging powerful state and corporate actors engaged in sportwashing.

International responses exhibited both promise and shortcomings. Diplomatic pressure, ILO engagement, and corporate accountability initiatives demonstrated the potential for multilateral collaboration. Yet, the enduring presence of exploitative labor frameworks highlighted the constraints of voluntary reforms absent binding international labor standards and enforcement.

The episode illuminated key priorities moving forward: elevating migrant worker voices within media narratives, enhancing the enforceability of human rights commitments by international sports organizations, and fostering sustained international vigilance beyond the temporal confines of a tournament.

Ultimately, the media and international community's engagement with Qatar's labor abuses during FIFA 2022 revealed that mega sporting events remain contested arenas where the spectacle of sport intersects with the realities of human rights. The lessons learned emphasize the necessity of continuous scrutiny and principled advocacy to ensure that the true price of global football neither obscures nor disregards the dignity of the laborers who make it possible.

# CHAPTER.12

## CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE ROLE OF FIFA IN ADDRESSING HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS



The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar stands as one of the most scrutinized sporting events in history, not merely for its athletic spectacle but for the profound human rights concerns intertwined with its organization and execution. Central to understanding the underpinnings of these issues is an examination of corporate accountability, particularly the role FIFA—the global governing body of football—played in addressing or failing to address the exploitation of migrant workers and systemic abuses that occurred in preparation for the tournament.

### **FIFA's Responsibilities as a Governing Body**

FIFA wields tremendous influence over international football, encompassing not only competition regulation but also the ethical standards that underpin the sport. As the authoritative body responsible for the World Cup, it inherently assumes a duty to ensure t

hat the event it sanctions upholds fundamental human rights principles. This encompasses oversight of bidding processes, the selection of host nations, and continuous monitoring regarding labor and social conditions associated with event preparation.

Despite the explicit provisions of FIFA's own Human Rights Policy, adopted in 2017 in alignment with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the Qatar World Cup's preparation period reflected considerable gaps between policy and practice. The UNGPs articulate the responsibility of organizations like FIFA to "know and show" how they address human rights risks within their operations and through their influence, including supply chains and partners.

This responsibility extends to demanding transparency, enforcing remedial measures where violations occur, and leveraging its significant economic and political power to compel host nations into compliance with international labor standards. However, the extent to which FIFA exercised this authority during the Qatar 2022 preparations has been widely criticized.

### **FIFA's Human Rights Policies: Framework and Implementation**

In the wake of mounting media exposés highlighting the brutal exploitation of Qatar's migrant workforce—ranging from confiscation of passports and hazardous working conditions to forced labor and deaths linked to unsafe infrastructure projects—FIFA attempted to respond by emphasizing its commitment to human rights through explicit policies.

The FIFA Human Rights Policy sets forth principles intended to prevent child labor, forced labor, discrimination, and unsafe working conditions. It also requires compliance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards and advocates for independent workers' grievance mechanisms.

However, the policy's enforcement has faced significant impediments:

- **\*\*Lack of Binding Enforcement Mechanisms:\*\*** FIFA's role is primarily regulatory rather than executive. It does not possess the jurisdictional authority to enforce labor reforms in sovereign host states directly. Its leverage thus depends on the willingness of host nations to cooperate and on FIFA's readiness to apply pressure or sanctions, both of which were limited in the case of Qatar.
- **\*\*Reactive Rather than Proactive Approaches:\*\*** Much of FIFA's response to human rights abuses was reactive—prompted by external reports and public outcry rather than arising from robust due diligence or proactive monitoring frameworks embedded throughout the lifecycle of World Cup preparations.

- **\*\*Dependency on Local Partners:\*\*** The implementation of human rights measures largely rested on cooperation with Qatari authorities and contractors, many of whom had vested interests in maintaining status quo labor practices, leading to conflicts of interest and undermining efforts toward substantive reform.

## **Corporate Accountability in the Context of Qatar 2022**

Corporate accountability in mega-events like the FIFA World Cup transcends the actions of the host nation alone. It encompasses all stakeholders—including FIFA, construction companies, sponsors, media outlets, and other corporate entities involved in event execution and commodification.

FIFA's contractual arrangements with Qatar—and by extension, its commercial partners—exerted significant influence on the conditions of labor exploited for construction of stadiums, infrastructure, and hospitality facilities. Yet accountability for human rights violations was fragmented and often obscured by complex subcontracting layers and jurisdictional challenges.

Key areas highlighting corporate accountability failures include:

- **\*\*Opaque Supply Chains and Subcontracting:\*\*** Numerous companies engaged in infrastructure development vetted their suppliers insufficiently. This lack of transparency enabled labor intermediaries to deploy exploitative practices such as withholding wages and imposing excessive working hours without adequate safeguards.
- **\*\*Insufficient Safeguards for Migrant Workers:\*\*** While some Qatari legislative reforms were introduced during the lead-up to the tournament—such as the partial dismantling of the kafala sponsorship system—their enforcement was inconsistent. Corporations involved failed to enforce compliance rigorously, and FIFA as the event's principal organizer was criticized for inadequate oversight.
- **\*\*Complicity in 'Sportwashing':\*\*** Corporate entities, including FIFA, were implicated in 'sportwashing'—the strategic use of a high-profile event to divert global attention away from serious human rights abuses. The financial incentives and reputational gains associated with hosting the World Cup arguably discouraged vigorous scrutiny or meaningful intervention in labor issues.

## **Assessment of FIFA's Response and Post-Tournament Accountability**

In the aftermath of persistent global criticism, FIFA implemented several measures aimed at improving conditions and enhancing transparency. These included commissioning independent audits, setting up grievance procedures for workers involved in World Cup projects, and partnering with international organizations to monitor labor rights.

Nonetheless, independent assessments emphasize that these initiatives fell short of full remediation. Notably:

- Several high-profile human rights violations persisted throughout the tournament period.
- FIFA's limited enforcement powers meant that violations uncovered were often addressed only superficially or internally, without exposing perpetrators or initiating sanctions.
- The organization's annual reports showed improvements but were often criticized for underreporting the severity of abuses and failing to provide meaningful metrics for accountability.

This reality poses critical questions about whether FIFA has sufficiently internalized its corporate accountability obligations or whether it remains a primarily commercial entity prioritizing revenue and global reach over human rights.

## **The Wider Implications for Corporate Governance in Global Sporting Events**

Qatar FIFA 2022 has underscored the vital importance of robust corporate governance frameworks within global sporting events. The intrinsic complexity and scale of these events demand:

- **\*\*Enhanced Due Diligence:\*\*** FIFA and related corporations must maintain rigorous, ongoing human rights risk assessments spanning the entire project lifecycle—from bidding and planning to construction and delivery.
- **\*\*Binding Human Rights Clauses in Contracts:\*\*** To ensure enforceability, human rights protections must be embedded within all contractual agreements with host nations, sponsors, construction firms, and service providers, with clear consequences for violations.
- **\*\*Independent Monitoring and Reporting:\*\*** Objective, transparent, and accessible monitoring mechanisms, guided by civil society participation and international standards, must be instituted to verify compliance.
- **\*\*Worker Empowerment:\*\*** Providing accessible grievance and remedy mechanisms for workers, including whistleblower protections, is essential for real-time identification and address of abuses.

FIFA, as a preeminent actor in international sports, must champion these principles not only to mitigate risk but to set a global standard that resists the exploitation so prominently exposed in the Qatar World Cup preparations.

## Key Lessons for FIFA and the International Sporting Community

The experience with FIFA 2022 provides invaluable insights that can catalyze reform:

1. **\*\*Integration of Human Rights Due Diligence Early in Bidding Processes:\*\*** Rather than treating human rights as ancillary post-award compliance matters, human rights audits and conditionalities should be integral determinants in host selection.
2. **\*\*Establishing Accountability Beyond National Jurisdiction:\*\*** Given that many abuses occur in host countries with weak labor law enforcement, FIFA must assert extraterritorial responsibility through enforceable human rights obligations.
3. **\*\*Transparency as an Antidote to Sportwashing:\*\*** Public disclosure of labor conditions, contracts, and compliance reports can counteract sportwashing's obfuscation, ensuring that ethical concerns are not sidelined.
4. **\*\*Collaborative Stakeholder Engagement:\*\*** Continuous dialogue with labor unions, NGOs, migrant worker representatives, and international agencies enables more comprehensive and credible oversight.
5. **\*\*Sanction Mechanisms for Non-Compliance:\*\*** FIFA must adopt clear penalty frameworks for both hosts and suppliers who fail to uphold human rights, thereby deterring future abuses.

## Conclusion: Toward Genuine Corporate Accountability in World Football

FIFA's stewardship over the 2022 World Cup has revealed the complex challenges of corporate accountability in the intersection of global sports, mega-event hosting, and human rights. Although measures were taken to address grievances and labor abuses, the magnitude of migrant worker exploitation and inadequate enforcement reflect significant accountability deficits.

To restore integrity and moral legitimacy, FIFA must transition from a primarily commercial focus to a governance model entrenched in respect for human dignity and human rights. This entails not only adopting comprehensive policies but also exercising decisive action when violations arise, ensuring full transparency, and championing the welfare of the millions whose labor underpins football's global spectacle.

Only through such transformation can the true price paid by migrant workers and vulnerable populations be acknowledged and mitigated, affirming that the celebration of global football does not come at the unacceptable cost of human suffering.

# CHAPTER.13

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: IS THE COST OF LOST HUMAN LIVES JUSTIFIABLE FOR GLOBAL SPORTS EVENTS?



The staging of mega sporting events, such as the FIFA World Cup, has long been a cause for global celebration, uniting fans and nations in the spirit of competition and cultural exchange. However, beneath the grandeur of illuminated stadiums and the spectacle of world-class athleticism lies a more complex, often troubling reality. The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar spotlighted this dynamic with unprecedented intensity, forcing the international community to confront the ethical implications of hosting global sports events at such staggering human cost. This chapter examines the profound question: Is the cost of lost human lives justifiable for global sports events?

At the heart of this ethical inquiry is the reality confronted by Qatar 2022—where thousands of migrant workers endured conditions tantamount to modern slavery, leading to a tragic loss of life that continues to spark outrage and demands for justice. Estimates vary, but credible reports indicate that the preparation for the tournament cost the lives of numerous migrant laborers, predominantly from South Asia, who endured exploitative labor practices, inadequate safety standards, and systemic human rights abuses over many years. These human tolls are often obscured by the dazzling veneer of the event, yet they demand rigorous ethical scrutiny.

The ethical dilemma centers on the notion of sacrifice: to what extent should human lives be risked or commodified to stage an event that captivates billions but, simultaneously, endangers the fundamental human rights of the most vulnerable? Traditional perspectives on global sports have celebrated economic stimulations, infrastructural legacies, and international prestige as justifications for hosting such events. However, when weighed against preventable deaths, systemic exploitation, and the broader implications of silent suffering, these justifications falter under moral examination.

Globally, sports mega-events are often justified through the lens of economic benefit and national development. Host nations project the ability to transform their international image, stimulate tourism, and accelerate urban and infrastructural development. Qatar's ambitious \$200 billion investment in infrastructure and facilities was emblematic of this approach. Yet this financial and reputational investment disproportionately overshadowed the human cost borne chiefly by migrant workers.

The concept of “sportwashing” is crucial here—using sport to cleanse or mask reputational deficits linked to governance, labor, or human rights concerns. Qatar's World Cup became an archetype of this practice, leveraging the global passion for football to build a narrative of modernity and progressive national identity. However, this narrative belied systemic abuses that plagued the labor force erecting the very infrastructure emblematic of Qatar's new image. Ethically, this raises questions about complicity—not only of the host nation but also of international bodies like FIFA, sponsors, media, and spectators who engage with these events without adequate scrutiny.

Human rights frameworks provide a normative foundation for assessing the morality of largescale projects linked to global events. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, and United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights collectively underscore the imperative to prevent forced labor, ensure safe working conditions, and uphold dignity and fairness. The failure to uphold these standards in Qatar is illustrative of a critical ethical failure that transcends national boundaries—it calls into question the ethical governance of global sporting institutions and the broader international community's role in accountability.

Acknowledging the economic and geopolitical pressures faced by Qatar and FIFA, ethical responsibility nonetheless demands an uncompromising prioritization of human life over economics or spectacle. The scale of these human rights violations and associated fatalities starkly contrasts with the official narratives downplaying or underreporting these tragedies. Ethical scrutiny demands transparency, verification of labor conditions, and accountability mechanisms from all stakeholders involved.

Comparatively, the 2022 World Cup's human cost appears unprecedented in both scale and visibility. Although past tournaments also involved labor controversies and financial excess, the convergence of isolated migrant community vulnerabilities, weak regulatory oversight, and the immensity of infrastructural ambition in Qatar produced a human rights crisis of overwhelming proportions. This comparison compels a reassessment of how ethical standards have been applied unevenly across sporting mega-events historically.

Crucially, the assessment of whether the cost of lost human lives is justifiable cannot be divorced from the concept of inevitability. Many deaths and abuses were preventable through adequate labor protections, governmental reforms, and proactive international intervention. The failure to act reflects a prioritization of image and profit over human dignity, and thereby, the argument that such losses were an unavoidable cost of progress does not withstand ethical inquiry.

The economic returns projected by Qatar's World Cup illuminate another dimension of this debate. While Qatar sought to use the event as a catalyst for long-term diversification and global stature, the reality is that the millstones of currency, construction, and national pride came secured by the sacrifices—often fatal—of workers who lacked a voice in the decisionmaking that shaped their fates. The calculus, therefore, of economic gain versus human cost veers towards inequity and exploitation.

From a moral standpoint, the irreversible loss of human life as a "price" for global sports is indefensible. The intangible costs—the pain, trauma, and loss suffered by workers and their families—transcend any quantifiable benefit that might accrue to stakeholders. Ethics compel us to view sports not merely as commodifiable entertainment but as an endeavor demanding respect for human rights and equitable treatment of all participants and laborers involved.

This juncture also offers critical lessons for the international sports community. It reveals the urgent need for reform of governance structures within FIFA and other bodies overseeing sports mega-events. Enhanced due diligence, labor protections, and binding human rights obligations must become integral prerequisites for hosting rights. Failure to implement these measures risks perpetuating cycles where economic ambition trumps ethical responsibility.

Furthermore, public consciousness and consumer behavior surrounding sports events must evolve. Global audiences bear indirect responsibility by continuing to celebrate and financially support events where human rights violations occur. Ethical consumption in sports involves demanding greater transparency, holding sponsors and organizers accountable, and supporting advocacy for labor rights.

In evaluation, while the spectacle of FIFA 2022 achieved unprecedented global visibility and sporting excellence, it did so at a profound human cost. The deaths and suffering of migrants exploited under the guise of progress are a stark indictment of the ethical failings of this event. No strategic or financial gain can justify this loss. Indeed, this paradigm challenges the fundamental values that global sports purport to champion: unity, fairness, respect, and dignity.

The overarching ethical lesson demands that human lives and rights must never be collateral damage for global sporting ambitions. The legitimization or normalization of such sacrifice risks eroding the moral fabric of international sport and human dignity itself. Future events must be predicated not only on the thrill of competition but on ethical stewardship and protection of the most vulnerable contributors to these global spectacles.

In conclusion, the question posed by this chapter leads to an unequivocal ethical stance: the loss of human lives incurred in the preparation and conduct of FIFA 2022 is not justifiable. It is a clarion call for systematic reform in the governance of sports mega-events, the prioritization of human rights, and the unequivocal repudiation of exploitation disguised as development. Only by embracing these principles can the global football community hope to reconcile the sport's expansive appeal with the imperatives of justice and humanity.

# CHAPTER.14

## LESSONS LEARNED: WHAT FIFA 2022 REVEALS ABOUT MODERN SPORTS MEGA-EVENTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS



The FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar marked one of the most momentous global sports occasions in recent history, not only for its sporting achievements but also for the profound human rights issues it inadvertently illuminated. This chapter explores the crucial lessons that can be extrapolated from the intersection of human rights, labor conditions, and the expansive demands of hosting modern sports mega-events. Qatar 2022 thus serves as a case study for understanding how global sports spectacles have evolved, the challenges inherent in their execution, and the potential for meaningful reform.

## 1. Recognition of Systemic Vulnerabilities in Host Nations

Qatar 2022 showcased the extensive systemic vulnerabilities within countries selected to host large-scale international events. Despite Qatar's rapid infrastructural development and economic wealth, the reliance on a vast migrant labor workforce exposed entrenched social inequalities and exploitative labor practices. The country's kafala system, despite legal reforms, functioned in ways that curtailed migrant workers' freedoms and rights, illustrating the gap between legislative intention and on-the-ground realities.

The lesson is clear: the selection and evaluation processes for host nations must incorporate comprehensive assessments of human rights conditions, with an emphasis on migrant worker protections. This is essential to prevent systemic abuses from being overshadowed by the spectacle of the event.

## 2. The Human Cost of Accelerated Development

The expedited construction of stadiums, transport infrastructure, and accommodations for the World Cup illuminated the human cost that modern mega-events frequently incur. It brought to public attention the prevalence of modern slavery-like conditions, including forced labor, wage withholding, hazardous working environments, and inadequate living conditions. Estimates of the number of migrant workers who suffered severe abuse—and, tragically, lost their lives—highlight how infrastructure development on this scale, if left unchecked, can come at an unbearable price.

The lesson for future events is the need for enforceable standards that prioritize labor rights and safety above deadlines and cost-cutting. Host countries and organizing bodies must implement transparent mechanisms for monitoring, reporting, and remedying labor abuses in real-time.

## 3. Sportwashing Risks and the Limits of Image Rehabilitation

Qatar's World Cup campaign epitomized the concept of sportwashing—using high-profile sporting events to project a curated national image that diverts attention from internal sociopolitical issues. While Qatar successfully presented itself as a modern, progressive hub, the underlying human rights abuses highlighted the ethical contradictions inherent in this form of image management.

This phenomenon teaches that while sports can unify and inspire, they can also be manipulated as tools for obfuscation. Stakeholders, including international sports federations, sponsors, and global audiences, must cultivate a critical awareness of how mega-events can mask systemic injustices and demand greater accountability before, during, and after such events.

## **4. The Role and Responsibility of International Sporting Bodies**

FIFA's role in awarding and overseeing the World Cup came under severe scrutiny. The organization's governance processes and human rights due diligence frameworks were found lacking in terms of preventing labor abuses and ensuring ethical hosting standards. Qatar 2022 revealed the necessity for international sports bodies to embed human rights criteria as binding conditions for hosting rights.

This underscores the imperative for explicitly incorporating human rights impact assessments, on-site monitoring, and independent auditing within the bid and preparation phases. FIFA's future credibility depends on its ability to enforce robust, transparent compliance mechanisms that safeguard vulnerable populations.

## **5. The Power of Global Media and Civil Society in Driving Accountability**

Media coverage and NGO advocacy were instrumental in exposing labor abuses and pressuring stakeholders to respond. The widespread reporting on migrant worker conditions and human rights violations helped catalyze some reforms in Qatari labor laws and enforcement mechanisms. Social media platforms further amplified these voices, translating localized suffering into global awareness.

The lesson here highlights the crucial role of informed, persistent journalism and civil society activism in maintaining transparency and accountability. For future mega-events, partnership frameworks involving media, NGOs, and international watchdogs are vital to ensure that rights abuses do not go unnoticed or unchallenged.

## **6. Economic Imperatives Versus Ethical Considerations**

Qatar 2022 was arguably one of the most expensive FIFA tournaments in history, with estimates ranging widely but reportedly exceeding \$200 billion when considering infrastructure, amenities, and security costs. While such investment promised economic diversification and global prestige for Qatar, it came with a profound ethical cost—notably the human suffering linked to construction and labor exploitation.

Critically, the event forced the global football community to confront the question: Is the financial and reputational gain for a host country and the sport itself ever justifiable if it is predicated on systemic human rights violations? FIFA 2022 teaches that economic gains should never eclipse the fundamental rights and wellbeing of individuals, and that long-term legacies must be measured by inclusivity and dignity, not merely by profitability or spectacle.

## **7. Necessity for Multilateral Frameworks and Legal Accountability**

The absence of binding international legal frameworks governing labor standards and human rights obligations for sporting mega-events has been painfully evident. Qatar's case exemplifies the challenges faced when sovereign states retain control over labor frameworks while hosting global events with international significance.

This highlights the urgent need for multilateral cooperation involving governments, international organizations, sports federations, and human rights bodies to develop enforceable legal standards. Binding agreements could ensure protection for workers and hold corporations, sponsors, and host governments accountable through legal and financial repercussions.

## **8. Long-Term Social and Cultural Impacts on Host Nations**

Beyond the immediate human costs, FIFA 2022 evoked questions about the long-term social and cultural implications for Qatar and similar host nations. Issues such as the integration of migrant communities, social stratification exacerbated by labor exploitation, and the legacy of restrictive labor practices that persist post-event remain critical concerns.

The lesson is that mega-events should align with sustainable social development goals, fostering not only infrastructure but also social cohesion, inclusivity, and equitable rights for all residents—especially marginalized populations such as migrant workers.

## **9. Empowerment and Voice of Migrant Workers**

One of the critical blind spots revealed by Qatar 2022 was the limited agency and voice afforded to the very individuals whose labor underpinned the event's success. Migrant workers' narratives were often mediated through external advocates rather than being front and center in discourse and decision-making processes.

A vital lesson is the necessity of empowering workers directly through legal recognition, labor unions, representation channels, and access to grievance mechanisms. Only by centering the experiences and rights of laborers can future events hope to avoid replicating exploitative practices.

## **10. Redefining Success Metrics for Sports Mega-Events**

Traditionally, success in sports mega-events has been quantified through metrics such as economic returns, global TV ratings, stadium attendance, and infrastructural

achievements. Qatar 2022 compels stakeholders to redefine these success indicators to include human rights impact, social justice outcomes, and ethical governance.

The legacy of any mega-event must entail a holistic assessment that equally values human dignity alongside sporting excellence and economic benefits. This paradigm shift is essential to ensure that future hosting respects and uplifts communities rather than exploiting them.

## **Conclusion**

FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar stands as a watershed moment that exposes the complex entanglement of global sports mega-events with human rights challenges. It has brought to the fore systemic failures, ethical dilemmas, and the urgent necessity for reform at multiple levels—from host nation labor systems, to international sports governance, to corporate responsibility.

The lessons learned underscore that without a foundational commitment to human rights and transparent accountability, the grandeur and global unity that sports aspire to foster will continue to mask profound human costs. Future mega-events must rise above the traditional focus on spectacle and revenue, embedding respect for human dignity and justice at their core to truly reflect the unifying spirit of sport.

Qatar 2022 thus becomes more than a football tournament; it is a cautionary tale and a clarion call for all stakeholders to prioritize people over prestige, ethics over economics, and humanity over hype. Only through sustained, coordinated action derived from these painful lessons can the true promise of global sports events be realized without sacrificing the fundamental rights of those who make them possible.

# CHAPTER.15

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: PREVENTING EXPLOITATION IN FUTURE INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS



The FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar has exposed profound and systemic issues related to migrant labor exploitation, human rights violations, and the broader ethical implications of mega-sporting event hosting. The revelations surrounding forced labor, inadequate living conditions, and the suppression of worker rights call for urgent, robust policy interventions to prevent recurrence in future international sporting events. This chapter provides comprehensive policy recommendations aimed at dismantling exploitation, enhancing accountability, and safeguarding the dignity and rights of workers engaged in the construction and operational phases of these global undertakings.

## **1. Establishing Binding International Human Rights Standards for Sporting Events**

An essential foundational step is the creation of binding international human rights standards tailored specifically for mega-sporting events. These standards need to encompass protections for migrant workers, prohibit forced labor and modern slavery practices, ensure fair wages and safe working conditions, and enforce freedom of association. Unlike current voluntary frameworks, such as FIFA's Human Rights Policy, these standards must be codified in international law or treaty mechanisms involving host countries, international sporting bodies, and relevant global agencies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations.

## **2. Rigorous Pre-Selection Host Country Assessments and Conditional Bidding**

Future bidding processes must incorporate stringent, transparent human rights assessments as core criteria for host country selection. Eligibility should depend not only on infrastructure capacity or economic potential, but critically on demonstrated respect for labor laws, adherence to international labor standards, and commitments to enforceable human rights protections. Conditional bidding frameworks should include mandatory remedial action plans addressing labor rights and migrant welfare, with ongoing verification before and during event preparations.

## **3. Independent Monitoring and Reporting Bodies**

Independent, well-resourced monitoring bodies must be established before the awarding of event hosting rights. These entities should possess the authority to conduct unannounced inspections, assess labor conditions directly on-site, and engage with workers confidentially. Transparency mechanisms, including publicly accessible reports and grievance databases, are crucial to deter exploitative practices and hold authorities and contractors accountable. Such bodies should consist of representatives from international organizations, civil society, labor unions, and independent experts to guarantee impartiality and effectiveness.

## **4. Mandatory Corporate Accountability and Supply Chain Due Diligence**

Corporations involved in the construction, supply, and service provision for sporting events must be mandated to conduct rigorous human rights due diligence throughout their supply chains. This includes verifying subcontractors' compliance with labor standards, implementing corrective action protocols, and publishing transparent accountability reports. Legal frameworks should impose penalties for non-compliance, including fines, loss of contracts, and blacklisting, to ensure that corporations cannot evade responsibility by outsourcing exploitative practices.

## **5. Strengthening Migrant Worker Rights and Protections**

Host countries must reform domestic labor laws to align with international human rights standards, with particular emphasis on protecting migrant workers. Immediate reforms should include abolition of restrictive sponsorship systems, guarantee of freedom of movement and association, prompt and fair wage payments, and provision of safe and dignified living conditions. Mechanisms that empower workers to report abuses without fear of retaliation are essential, as are accessible legal aid and compensation programs for victims of exploitation.

## **6. Embedding Human Rights Clauses in Hosting Contracts and FIFA Agreements**

Contracts with host countries should explicitly embed human rights obligations, with clearly defined benchmarks and penalties for violations, including potential revocation of hosting rights in cases of severe non-compliance. FIFA and related governing bodies must evolve their contractual frameworks to prioritize ethical considerations on an equal footing with financial or infrastructural criteria. Performance reviews tied to human rights outcomes should be periodic, with demonstrable progress required to maintain operational licenses and sponsorship agreements.

## **7. Enhancing Worker Participation and Representation**

Incorporating worker participation structures in decision-making processes related to event preparations is critical for ensuring their voices influence policy and practice. Establishing joint labor-management committees and enabling unionization without impediments are vital measures. These platforms facilitate dialogue, enable early identification of abuses, and foster collaborative solutions that enhance workplace safety and equity.

## **8. International Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing**

Mega-sporting events require a coordinated international approach to address complex cross-border labor issues. Collaborative frameworks should be developed among host countries, sporting bodies, labor organizations, and human rights agencies to share best practices, conduct joint investigations, and establish rapid response mechanisms to emerging abuses. Leveraging international diplomacy to hold recalcitrant states accountable will reinforce normative expectations and encourage compliance.

## **9. Transparent Funding and Budget Allocation with Human Rights Impact Assessments**

Host nations and event organizers should be mandated to conduct human rights impact assessments prior to budget approval for event infrastructure and services. Transparent publication of financial allocations ensures scrutiny of expenditures related to labor conditions and welfare. Any disproportionate spending that compromises human rights must be addressed proactively, with audit procedures linked to event funding approvals.

## **10. Public Awareness and Media Engagement Strategies**

Sustained public attention and critical media coverage play a pivotal role in exposing abuses and holding stakeholders accountable. Policy frameworks should encourage collaboration with independent media and civil society to monitor developments throughout event preparations. Additionally, public awareness campaigns by sporting bodies and governments can educate spectators and fans on the human costs associated with their events, generating consumer pressure to reform exploitative practices.

## **11. Legal Recourse and Compensation Mechanisms for Affected Workers**

Establishing clear legal pathways for workers to seek redress for labor rights violations is paramount. This includes specialized tribunals or ombudsperson offices with jurisdiction over event-related abuses and the capacity to award timely and adequate compensation. Compensation funds could be established with contributions from host countries, FIFA, and corporate contractors specifically to address grievances and reparations for workers harmed during event preparations.

## **12. Incorporation of Ethical Criteria in Sponsorship and Marketing Deals**

Sports marketing and sponsorship agreements should incorporate ethical standards that disallow partnerships with entities implicated in labor exploitation or human rights abuses. Sponsors have a unique leverage position to insist on compliance and transparency as conditions of engagement. Encouraging ethical consumerism and investor activism will pressure all stakeholders to align promotional activities with human rights commitments.

## **13. Continuous Post-Event Evaluation and Legacy Planning**

The conclusion of sporting events should not mark the end of accountability efforts. Postevent evaluations focusing on labor rights outcomes and human rights impacts

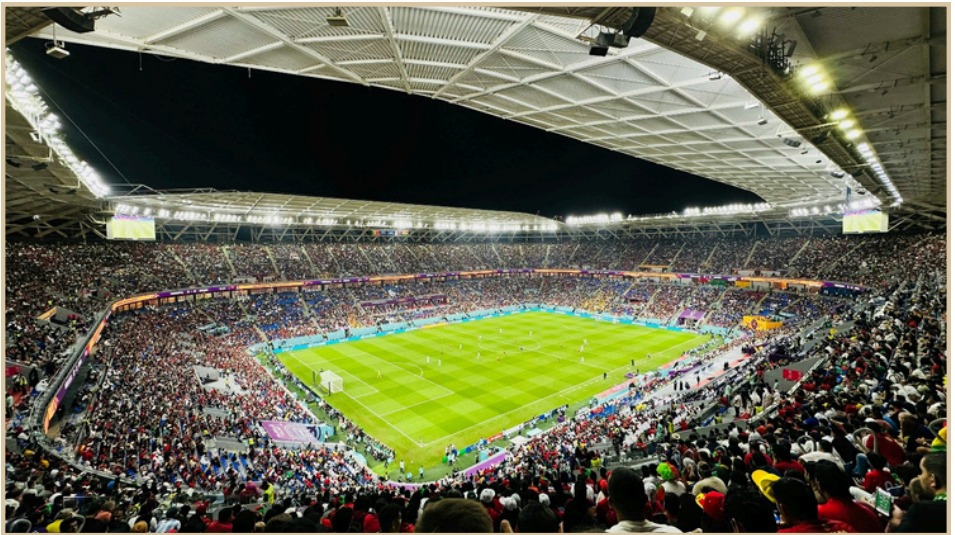
must be instituted, with findings informing future policies. Legacy planning should prioritize sustainable improvements in labor practices and social infrastructure for migrant worker communities beyond the event timeline, ensuring that benefits are enduring rather than transient or superficial.

## **Conclusion**

The sobering human costs uncovered during the FIFA 2022 Qatar preparations demand systemic change in how international sporting events are conceptualized, governed, and executed. Preventing exploitation is not merely a moral imperative but a prerequisite for the legitimacy and long-term success of global sports mega-events. The recommendations outlined in this chapter offer a multi-faceted, actionable roadmap to embed human rights at the core of event planning and implementation. Through binding international standards, rigorous oversight, corporate accountability, and empowerment of workers, future events can avoid repeating the devastating abuses witnessed in Qatar. Ultimately, sustainable reform will require the collective will of international institutions, governments, corporate actors, civil society, and fans worldwide to ensure that the price of global football expansion is never paid again in human suffering.

# CHAPTER.16

## THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL AND ETHICAL HOSTING: CAN SPORTWASHING BE EFFECTIVELY COUNTERED?



The FIFA World Cup remains the pinnacle of global sporting events, drawing billions of viewers and driving immense economic, cultural, and political impacts for host countries. However, the 2022 tournament in Qatar starkly highlighted the darker dimensions underlying such monumental undertakings—namely, the exploitation of migrant labor, violations of fundamental human rights, and the use of sport as a tool for geopolitical image management, commonly referred to as “sportwashing.” As the footballing world reflects on the legacy of this watershed event, the pressing question emerges: can sportwashing be effectively countered, and is the future of football compatible with ethical hosting practices?

## Understanding Sportwashing in Modern Football

Sportwashing—the strategic use of major sporting events to cleanse, distract from, or improve a regime’s international image—is not new. Yet, FIFA 2022 brought this phenomenon into sharper, more controversial focus. Qatar’s heavy investments in infrastructure and hospitality, juxtaposed with widely reported abuses of the migrant workforce responsible for bringing these projects to fruition, illustrated the stark contradictions at play.

Sportwashing functions by leveraging the universal appeal of sport to project narratives of modernity, tolerance, and progress, often obscuring systemic issues, such as human rights abuses or autocratic governance. Qatar’s assertions of sports diplomacy sought to position the nation as a progressive hub in the Middle East, promoting an image of tolerance and world-class achievement.

However, this effort came at an undeniable human cost—including thousands of migrant workers subjected to precarious employment conditions, restricted freedoms, substandard living environments, and inconsistent access to adequate legal recourse or protections—a reality that numerous international human rights organizations rigorously documented.

## The Challenges of Dismantling Sportwashing

Effectively countering sportwashing presents several intertwined challenges:

- **Global Governing Bodies’ Complicity and Governance Deficits:** FIFA’s historical opacity, limited accountability mechanisms, and inconsistent enforcement of ethical requirements have allowed deep-rooted governance deficits to persist. The organization’s decision-making processes around host selection have often prioritized financial and geopolitical considerations over human rights, thereby enabling sportwashing strategies.
- **Political and Economic Incentives for Host Nations:** Hosting mega-events offers significant prestige, economic opportunities, and geopolitical leverage, which countries seek to capitalize on—sometimes at the expense of ethical concerns. These incentives create resistance to external pressure and complicate efforts to enforce reforms or sanctions that might undermine hosting ambitions.
- **Lack of Binding International Frameworks:** While international human rights instruments and labor conventions exist, their application to mega-sporting events remains fragmented and non-binding in many respects. Accountability is often diffused among states, corporations, sports bodies, and intermediaries, impeding coordinated action.

- **Global Public and Media Attention Cycles:** Awareness of migrant abuses and governance failures often spikes around the event but wanes afterward. The fleeting nature of media focus reduces sustained public pressure, allowing systemic issues to persist or be deprioritized post-event.

These hurdles collectively render sportwashing a deeply entrenched, complex issue requiring multifaceted, sustained interventions.

## Emerging Responses and Opportunities for Reform

Despite these challenges, the aftermath of FIFA 2022 has generated unprecedented scrutiny, advocacy, and policy discourse around ethical hosting and the human cost of sporting mega-events. This has created opening avenues to counter sportwashing more effectively in the future:

- **Strengthening Governance, Transparency, and Accountability in FIFA and Other Sport Bodies:** Pressure on FIFA to reform its governance structures, ethical frameworks, and host selection criteria has intensified. Proposals include instituting robust human rights due diligence protocols, independent oversight mechanisms, and mandatory transparency on labor and environmental standards. Incorporating independent human rights experts into decision-making processes is an important progressive step.
- **Binding Human Rights Obligations for Host Countries and Corporations:** There is a growing movement to integrate international human rights standards explicitly into hosting contracts and agreements. Binding commitments, with enforceable sanctions for violations, would raise the stakes for hosts and contractors, reducing impunity for labor abuses and rights violations.
- **Empowering Migrant Workers through Legal Protections and Representation:** Ensuring migrant laborers have access to fair wages, safe working conditions, and legal recourse is central to ethical hosting. Lessons from Qatar's reforms—such as partial dismantling of the Kafala sponsorship system—highlight the indispensability of systemic labor reform enforced through transparent monitoring and worker empowerment.
- **Enhanced Civil Society and Media Engagement:** Civil society organizations, unions, and independent media play crucial roles in amplifying the voices of marginalized workers and exposing abuses. Strengthening protections for whistleblowers and journalists and ensuring access to information about megaevents can sustain continuous, rigorous scrutiny beyond the tournament's duration.

- **Consumer and Sponsor Influence:** Fan communities, international sponsors, and broadcast partners wield significant influence. Ethical consumerism, corporate social responsibility commitments, and conditional sponsorship tied to human rights criteria can incentivize more responsible conduct by hosts and governing bodies.

These converging responses illustrate that while sportwashing remains a formidable challenge, a collective ecosystem of reforms and activism offers a promising counterbalance.

## The Future of Hosting Mega-Sporting Events: Towards Ethical Football

To chart a sustainable, ethical future for football's most prestigious platforms, a paradigm shift in the conception and execution of sport mega-events is imperative. The lessons of FIFA 2022 demand moving beyond symbolic gestures towards structural transformation.

Key principles that should underpin future events include:

- **Human Rights as a Core, Non-Negotiable Component:** Human rights cannot be an afterthought or peripheral concern but must be integrated at every stage—from bidding through to legacy planning. This requires enforceable standards, regular independent audits, and meaningful stakeholder engagement, including with affected communities.
- **Transparency and Accountability as Foundations:** Open reporting on all social, economic, and environmental impacts—positive and negative—is fundamental. FIFA and host nations must embrace transparent processes, ensuring information accessibility to global audiences and affected populations alike.
- **Collaborative, Multi-Stakeholder Governance:** A rights-respecting future necessitates inclusive governance frameworks that incorporate voices from marginalized groups, labor representatives, human rights experts, and civil society organizations alongside commercial and governmental stakeholders.
- **Legacy beyond Infrastructure:** Ethical hosting must prioritize sustainable development that benefits host communities in concrete, long-term ways, including protections for migrant workers, improvements in labor laws, and incorporation of social justice goals beyond event completion.

In this context, football's global governance bodies have a responsibility to recalibrate values and incentives, emphasizing ethical stewardship over commercial or political expediency.

## Is the Cost of Ethical Hosting Worth It?

The human tragedy and financial expenditures tied to FIFA 2022 bring into question the true “cost” of hosting. The stark realities of migrant exploitation and modern slavery challenge justifications rooted in economic return or global prestige. The loss of human lives and dignity can never be reconciled with mere sporting spectacle or short-term gain.

Ethical hosting entails higher upfront commitments—financial, operational, and political—but these must be contextualized as investments in human dignity, sustainable development, and credible legacy. When cost-benefit analyses systematically value human rights, transparency, and accountability, the hidden costs of previous tournaments become unacceptable outliers rather than industry norms.

Markets, fans, media, and sponsors increasingly expect alignment between sport and ethical values. The commercial resilience of football depends on growing this trust. Ignoring the human cost risks entrenching reputational damage and undermining the sport’s universal appeal.

## Global Collaboration as a Prerequisite for Change

No single actor can dismantle sportwashing alone. Effective countermeasures demand coordinated engagement among international organizations, governments, sporting bodies, corporate sectors, civil society, and fans. Global collaboration can pool expertise, harmonize standards, and enforce accountability mechanisms that transcend borders.

Initiatives such as the International Labour Organization’s guidance on ethical sports megaevents, the UN’s “Protect, Respect and Remedy” framework, and burgeoning transnational advocacy networks exemplify positive efforts. Embedding human rights observatories as part of mega-event governance could provide ongoing oversight and early warning on violations.

Football’s unparalleled global platform can serve as a catalyst for broader social progress, but only if ethical imperatives eclipse instrumentalized branding and short-sighted gains.

## Conclusion

FIFA 2022 in Qatar epitomized both the immense global allure of football and the acute ethical dilemmas posed by sportwashing. It has served as a stark warning and wake-up call: without decisive reform and vigilance, the sport will continue to risk complicity in human suffering under the guise of spectacular celebration.

Countering sportwashing is achievable but requires persistent, systemic interventions. Football's future depends on embedding human rights and ethical governance as fundamental pillars of event hosting, not optional add-ons.

The true measure of success lies not solely in tournament grandeur or financial metrics, but in whether the sport can uphold the dignity, rights, and welfare of all those whose labor underpins its grandest stages. Only by internalizing this lesson can the beautiful game remain worthy of the world's passion.

# CHAPTER.17

## CONCLUSION: REFLECTING ON FIFA 2022 AND THE TRUE PRICE OF GLOBAL FOOTBALL EXPANSION



The FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar stands as one of the most momentous sporting events in recent history—not merely for its athletic spectacle but for the profound and complex legacy it has imparted. As the culmination of years of preparation, infrastructure development, and global engagement, this tournament epitomized the intersections of sport, politics, economics, and human rights. In reflecting upon FIFA 2022, we must critically examine the true cost of global football expansion—beyond the glittering stadiums and vibrant fanfare—to understand the human toll embedded within.

## The Unseen Human Cost

The most indelible lesson of FIFA 2022 lies in the acute spotlight cast on migrant workers in Qatar: the demographic backbone of its World Cup preparations. Predominantly hailing from South Asia and other global south regions, these workers faced precarious labor conditions characterized by exploitation, restrictions on freedom, unsafe workplaces, and, in many tragic cases, loss of life. The reports of modern slavery, forced labor practices, withheld wages, and insufficient regulatory oversight revealed a human rights crisis masked by the spectacle of sport.

This tournament forced the international community to confront uncomfortable truths about the labor frameworks underpinning mega sporting events. The infrastructural marvels— including stadiums, transportation networks, and accommodation facilities—that dazzled millions were, in reality, built on the backs of vulnerable migrant laborers who endured systemic abuses. The staggering human cost—documented through accounts of injuries, accidents, and fatalities—reminds us that the pursuit of global football expansion can no longer be disentangled from the ethical imperatives of human dignity and labor rights.

## Sportwashing and the Global Image

Qatar's use of the FIFA World Cup as a vehicle for sportwashing is perhaps one of the most studied examples to date of how sporting mega-events can be exploited by states to craft and project a positive international image. This strategic deployment of football sought to shift global narratives, veiling contentious domestic and labor issues beneath a veneer of progressive modernization and cosmopolitan appeal.

The extent to which Qatar's campaign succeeded in recalibrating public perception was bolstered not only by massive infrastructural investment and media amplification but also by FIFA's role as gatekeeper and promoter of the event. However, this image-building came at immense ethical and human expense—raising critical questions about the legitimacy of sportwashing in a world increasingly sensitive to human rights violations.

This dynamic underscores the inherent tension between the commercial and political motives driving football's global expansion and the foundational principles of sport as a domain of fair competition, solidarity, and respect for human rights.

## Financial and Ethical Costs: A Comparative Perspective

From a financial standpoint, FIFA 2022 was reportedly the most expensive World Cup ever held, with estimates of Qatar's total expenditure surpassing \$220 billion—including both official and ancillary infrastructure projects. This dwarfs the costs of previous

tournaments by a significant margin. While some of these expenditures contributed to long-term upgrades in Qatar's national infrastructure, much of it was driven by the need to meet FIFA's stringent requirements and to realize state ambitions of enhanced geopolitical status.

Yet, when measured against the economic benefits, the question arises: was the cost worth it? The answer is inherently complex and varies depending upon perspective. For Qatar, the tournament represented a strategic investment in soft power, international visibility, and tourism development. For FIFA and global football, it signified a domain expansion into new markets and audiences. However, juxtaposed against the documented loss of human life and the persistent systemic exploitation of migrant workers, it becomes difficult to justify the cost purely through sporting success or economic gain.

No financial metric can adequately encapsulate the value of human lives lost or the enduring trauma suffered by laborers and their families. This ethical dimension challenges policymakers, organizers, and football governing bodies to rethink the parameters of success beyond economic returns and sporting achievement.

## **Lessons Learned and the Path Forward**

FIFA 2022 has served as a watershed moment for global sports governance, labor rights advocacy, and the ethics of international event hosting. First and foremost, it has illuminated glaring deficiencies in regulatory frameworks that allowed labor abuses to proliferate unchecked. The tournament's legacy compels FIFA, national governments, and international institutions to adopt more rigorous, enforceable mechanisms to prevent exploitation in future events.

Transparency, accountability, and worker empowerment must become foundational pillars of sports mega-event planning. The introduction and enforcement of binding human rights commitments, credible monitoring systems, and meaningful stakeholder engagement—including migrant worker representation—are essential to safeguard dignity and fairness.

Furthermore, the global football community and its fans wield considerable influence and bear a collective responsibility. Consumer awareness and advocacy can pressure governing bodies and sponsors to prioritize ethical considerations over mere commercial interests. This aligns with a broader call for football to reassert its core values and resist becoming complicit in sportwashing or other forms of exploitation.

## **Towards Ethical Hosting and Sustainable Football Expansion**

The reality emerging from FIFA 2022 is that global football expansion, if pursued without accountable ethical frameworks, risks perpetuating cycles of human suffering and injustice. Therefore, reimagining the future of football requires a holistic approach that balances sport's universal appeal with the imperatives of social justice and human rights.

Host selection processes must be reformed to integrate rigorous human rights due diligence and labor protections as non-negotiable criteria. Moreover, international collaboration is necessary to ensure that labor standards are upheld—transcending national borders and competing economic interests.

Sustainability in football hosting also entails leveraging existing infrastructures more responsibly, promoting investments that benefit local communities equitably, and fostering inclusive legacies that prolong positive social impact well beyond the closing ceremonies.

## **Final Reflections: Reckoning with the True Price of FIFA 2022**

As this examination illustrates, the FIFA 2022 World Cup transcended sport to become a complex case study in the costs and consequences of global sports mega-events. Qatar's World Cup showcased modern football's capacity for global unification and cultural celebration, yet simultaneously exposed the vulnerabilities of laborers and the pernicious effects of unchecked sportwashing.

The "true price" of the 2022 World Cup—measured not merely in dollars but in lives disrupted or lost—forces an unavoidable moral reckoning. It implores us to prioritize human rights and ethical standards in the governance of international football, ensuring that the pursuit of global expansion never again comes at such an intolerable cost.

Looking forward, the hope is that FIFA 2022 serves as a catalyst for transformational change rather than a cautionary tale to be forgotten. Only through committed reforms, vigilant oversight, and an unwavering dedication to human dignity can the beautiful game maintain its integrity and fulfill its promise as a unifying force that uplifts rather than exploits.

In conclusion, the legacy of FIFA 2022 is a dual narrative: one of unprecedented global engagement with football and one of a somber reminder of the human costs underlying such vast ambitions. The responsibility now rests with all stakeholders—governments, governing bodies, corporations, fans, and civil society—to ensure that the next chapters of football's global story respect the lives and rights of all those who make the game possible.

The challenge is clear: to redefine success in global football not solely by trophies won or revenues generated, but by the extent to which it advances human rights, social justice, and ethical governance. This is the true price of, and the only sustainable path to, meaningful global football expansion.

## **Final Reflection: The Lasting Legacy of FIFA 2022**

As the world witnessed the spectacle of the FIFA 2022 tournament in Qatar, the event marked not only a milestone in global football but also a profound case study in the human cost underlying the grandeur. The extensive reliance on a vast migrant workforce exposed entrenched issues of modern slavery, systemic labor exploitation, and grave human rights violations that accompanied the rapid development demanded by such a mega-event. Qatar's ambition to leverage football as a vehicle for international prestige—commonly identified as sportwashing—served to obscure the harsh realities faced by thousands of migrant workers whose contributions were essential yet overlooked.

Compared to previous editions of the World Cup, FIFA 2022 arguably entailed unprecedented financial and human costs. The scale of infrastructure investment coupled with documented abuses positions this tournament as a somber exemplar of how global sporting events can exacerbate vulnerabilities rather than address them. The loss of human lives and persistent hardships endured by workers raise fundamental ethical questions about the justice of these costs and whether any sporting achievement can justify such profound suffering.

The lessons from Qatar's World Cup are clear: the global football community, governing bodies, host nations, corporations, and civil society must prioritize human rights and transparent accountability above promotional gains. Future events demand rigorous safeguards, binding labor protections, and inclusive policies that place the dignity and welfare of all individuals at the core of planning and execution. Without such transformations, the cycle of exploitation risks perpetuation under new guises.

FIFA 2022 stands as a critical inflection point—illuminating the urgent need to reconcile the love of sport with the imperative of ethical responsibility. It challenges us to envision a future for football and international sporting events where the true price is not measured in human suffering, but in shared dignity, respect, and equitable opportunity for all stakeholders. The pursuit of this vision is essential if football is to fulfill its potential as a unifying force rather than a mechanism of human cost and injustice.

Below is a **structured, working bibliography** of major **online sources** that correspond to the claims, frameworks, and examples in this book. It's based on the themes and explicit references in our book (human rights law, kafala, migrant deaths, labour reforms, sportswashing, FIFA governance, media investigations, etc.).

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The awarding of the 2022 FIFA World Cup to Qatar brought global attention to the negligence and exploitation faced by the country's migrant workers. Many of these workers, employed under conditions amounting to modern slavery, toiled on construction projects, including the building of football stadiums. This human cost of sporting events raises urgent questions about sportwashing and corruption, as well as the impact on those who work behind the scenes to deliver global football.