



The Beautiful Game for All: A Comprehensive Analysis of FIFA's Efforts Towards Gender Equality in International Football

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background.....	5
1.1 Introduction to the thesis topic and research question.....	5
1.2 State of the art – academic relevance and literature review.....	6
1.3 Methodology and theory of law.....	10
Chapter 2: Problem statement.....	16
2.1 Relation between gender equality and football.....	16
2.2 Why is this an important problem?.....	18
2.3 Why choose to analyze FIFA's policies?.....	19
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework.....	25
3.1 How is FIFA, as a non-state actor, responsible for abiding by human rights standards?.....	25
3.2 FIFA's responsibility in the light of international soft law.....	27
Chapter 4: Analysis of FIFA's policies.....	39
4.1 FIFA's initiatives and their alignment with IHRL.....	39
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	50
Bibliography.....	54

List of abbreviations

AC – Agents Chamber

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination

CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child

DRC – Dispute Resolution Chamber

FFTG – Football for the Goals

FIFA – Fédération Internationale de Football Association

GLA – Global Labour Agreement

IHRL – International Human Rights Law

ILO – International Labour Organization

MoU - Memorandum of Understanding

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

PSC – Players’ Status Chamber

SGD – Sustainable Development Goals

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human rights

UEFA – Union of European Football Associations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNGP – United Nations Guiding Principles

UNHRC – United Nations Human Rights Committee

UNRIC – United Nations Regional Information Centre

UN – United Nations

WEP – Women’s Empowerment Principles

WLF - World Leagues Forum

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction to the thesis topic and research question

The fight against gender equality in sports has gained considerable attention and momentum worldwide over recent years with the outstanding growth that women's football has gained. FIFA administers football in every continent and world region, overseeing the Asian Football Conference, the Confederation of African Football, the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football, the South American Football Confederation, the Oceania Football Confederation, and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA).¹

As global football's governing body, FIFA is assumed to determine the sport's future, which encompasses the responsibility for respecting gender equality values and principles. These standards are set by International Human Rights Law (IHRL), which provides a comprehensive framework outlining people's rights and liberties, including gender equality. Considering this, it is critical to analyze if FIFA's gender policies align with International Human Rights Law standards.

The research question of this study is, "Are FIFA's gender policies aligned with the standards set by IHRL?". This question tries to determine the extent to which FIFA's policies, programs, and strategies align with IHRL's gender equality standards in football and whether FIFA is fulfilling its responsibility to promote and guarantee gender equality. The significance of this research question originates from its ability to provide insight into FIFA's commitment to gender equality and compliance with internationally recognized human rights norms. This research can give insights into FIFA's existing approach's strengths and weaknesses and highlight potential gaps between FIFA's policies and the standards set by IHRL.

Understanding the relationship between gender equality and football is essential for some reasons. Firstly, it enables us to measure the efficacy of FIFA's policies on gender equality, and by assessing its conformity with IHRL, it will be possible to adequately determine if they address this sport's structural challenges and

¹ Inside FIFA, 'About Fifa' <[Member Associations](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

systematic discrimination. Secondly, it creates an opportunity to identify areas where FIFA's policies and practices may need to be improved to align with IHRL and comply with its responsibilities as an international sports governing body.

It is then essential to understand what FIFA is and what it represents. Firstly, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) was founded in 1904, establishing a sense of cooperation and harmony within the football community.

FIFA is the global governing body for football, bringing together national football organizations and encouraging the sport's development and expansion. It shapes the landscape of football by making choices that affect the sport at all levels. The Federation oversees the game's rules, regulating transfers, organizing competitions, establishing standards for refereeing, coaching, and sports medicine, and overall promoting the sport's development worldwide.²

1.2 State of the art – academic relevance and literature review

Gender equality in international football, and FIFA's response to it, is an important topic that requires careful consideration. The promotion of gender equality in sports has made significant progress, but there is still more work to do. This thesis aims to contribute to existing research and literature by providing a detailed review and analysis of FIFA's gender equality policies and whether they align with the standards set by IHRL.

This thesis aims to investigate the integration of International Human Rights Law standards into FIFA's gender policies. The study will conduct a detailed analysis of FIFA's position as the global regulatory organization for football and its ability to promote gender equality through policy-making and implementation. Ultimately, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of FIFA's progress and role in creating a more equitable and respectful football culture.

The literature on gender equality in international football finds repeating themes and shared viewpoints among scholars, emphasizing the industry's continuing obstacles

² U.S.Soccer, 'FIFA – Soccer's World Governing Body' <<https://www.ussoccer.com/history/organizational-structure/fifa>> accessed 12 April 2024.

despite rising female participation in sports throughout the world. Gender disparities are widely acknowledged, with FIFA being the main focus.

Authors like Antoine Duval suggest that feminist legal scholars broaden their focus to include FIFA as a transnational governance site worthy of advocacy.³ This insight underlines the need for a thorough examination and active involvement with such organizations in order to confront and address critical legal issues.

Upon research, it has been contended that experts in the field deem FIFA's current human rights measures insufficient. Scholars such as Heerdt and Bernaz contend that despite FIFA's partnership with the United Nations and formulation of guiding principles, the organization falls short in adequately addressing women's rights. This is attributed to FIFA's limited "no harm" approach, as outlined by the scholars.⁴ Later in this study, these guiding principles and partnership with the UN will be thoroughly analysed.

According to Heerdt and Bernaz, implementing a feminist policy revolution at FIFA could significantly benefit national federations. To achieve this, they suggest that FIFA should adopt the United Nations Working Group on Human Rights' gender framework, which outlines key components necessary for a successful feminist transformation.⁵ Turley on the other hand suggests that FIFA could draw inspiration not only from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and jus cogens norms but also from their policies, as this thesis will argue.⁶ This will also be further evaluated, to determine if adopting said guidelines facilitates FIFA to achieve this.

Michelle Krech has pointed out that FIFA continues to prioritize power, profit, success, and hierarchy over eliminating discriminatory practices and policies.⁷ As a result, the organization's commitment to achieving gender equality in football

³ Antoine Duval, Taking feminism beyond the state: FIFA as a transnational battleground for feminist legal critique, *International Journal of Constitutional Law* (Volume 20, Issue 1, January 2022) 279.

⁴ Daniela Heerdt, Nadia Bernaz, Elements for FIFA's feminist transformation: The case for indicators on football and women's rights, *International Journal of Constitutional Law* (Volume 20, Issue 1, January 2022) 310.

⁵ Heerdt, Bernaz (n 4), 210.

⁶ Trista Turley, 'When the Escape Ends Responsibility of the IOC and FIFA at the Intersection of Sport Law and Human Rights', *Notre Dame Journal of International & Comparative Law* (Volume 6, Issue 1, Article 12, 2016) 146-154.

⁷ Michele Krech, 'Towards Equal Rights in the Global Game? FIFA's Strategy for Women's Football as a Tightly Bounded Institutional Innovation', *Tilburg Law Review, Journal of International and European Law* (25 [1], 2020) 25.

remains incomplete. In this thesis, we aim to inquire about FIFA's recent progress in the matter and whether it meets the standards set by IHRL.

Seema Patel highlights the inadequacies in safeguarding the gender rights of athletes in sports.⁸ Due to insufficient enforcement measures, sports organizations are not held accountable for human rights violations, the author states. There is a lack of clarity surrounding how human rights principles apply to sports gender rules and organizations for compliance and the reason for this, Patel explains, is that sports are perceived to be independent and private entities that are not subject to the rule of law,⁹ as the Court of Arbitration for Sport has limited capacity to challenge the lawfulness of a rule.¹⁰

Overall, scholars then agree that the organization has thus far fallen short of fulfilling its duties concerning human rights, hence the importance and relevance of our research question. In this thesis we will evaluate if there has been more progress and if FIFA's policies align with the current IHRL standards.

What are the IHRL standards?

The concept of standards can be traced back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As per its Preamble, human rights are regarded as a "common standard of achievement for all people and all nations." This implies that it is the responsibility of all to ensure that human rights are acknowledged and enjoyed globally. Rather than setting a firm benchmark, human rights primarily aim to establish fundamental guidelines.

The term human rights standard refers to the level or quality of life that must be met under these laws. Human rights standards of living are the necessary things that people need to have their human rights met.¹¹

Standards are a collection of norms, principles, and guidelines that are recognized across the globe as benchmarks for protecting and promoting human rights under

⁸ Seema Patel, Gaps in the protection of athletes gender rights in sport - a regulatory riddle, *International Sports Law Journal* (21, March 2021) 257.

⁹ Patel (n 8), 259.

¹⁰ Ibid 268.

¹¹ United Nations <[Human Rights | United Nations](#)>, accessed 26 July 2024.

IHRL, which serve as the foundation for determining compliance with human rights commitments.¹²

To comprehend the essence and implementation of human rights norms, it is necessary to differentiate between hard and soft law standards.

International Human Rights Law sets legal standards rooted in various documents, including treaties, conventions, and customary international law. The acceptance of these treaties and conventions by governments creates legal obligations that can be enforced under international law.¹³ Soft law standards, in contrast to hard law standards, are non-binding instruments and lack the force of law. Despite their non-binding nature, these standards hold moral and political significance. Examples of non-binding instruments include declarations, resolutions, and recommendations. As time goes on, such non-binding instruments can help shape customary law.¹⁴

The legal norms that govern the conduct of states impose clear legal obligations, and any violations may result in legal consequences. On the other hand, as already stated, soft law standards are based on voluntary commitments made by governments and other relevant actors.¹⁵

To encourage the use of soft law, it's important to recognize its ability to adapt, be flexible, and handle emerging issues quickly, especially when there aren't any binding agreements. Soft law provides a more agile way to respond to changing situations.¹⁶

It is important to note that non-state actors such as FIFA and other sports organizations are not subject to international law. This means that they aren't accountable to the legal system, which weakens the protection of athletes' rights and creates a gap. Later on, it will be argued why IHRL should apply FIFA, as a non-state actor.

¹² OHCHR, 'OHCHR and the right to development' <[International standards | OHCHR](#)>, accessed 26 July 2024.

¹³ United Nations, 'The Foundation of International Human Rights Law', <[The Foundation of International Human Rights Law | United Nations](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

¹⁴ Michèle Olivier, 'The relevance of 'soft law' as a source of international human rights' (2002) 290 JSTOR <[The relevance of 'soft law' as a source of international human rights](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

¹⁵ International Council on Human Rights Policy, 'Human Rights Standards: Learning from Experience' (2006) 13 <[Human Rights Standards: Learning from Experience](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

¹⁶ 'Human Rights Standards: Learning from Experience' (n 15) 14.

This research sheds light on the complexity of achieving gender equality in sports, using FIFA's strategies as a case study. The thesis addresses significant rights such as gender equality, including the right to fair pay, the right to representation, and the right to participate, which women currently still face in football. This is valuable to the ongoing scholarly debate. Additionally, this thesis has deepened our understanding of the connection between gender equality, human rights, and sports governance by highlighting women's unique challenges in football.

1.3 Methodology and theory of law

To effectively answer the research question of whether FIFA's gender policies align with International Human Rights Law, a qualitative method approach would be most appropriate.

The qualitative aspect of the research involves analyzing FIFA's gender policies, strategies, and initiatives. This requires a review of FIFA's gender policy documents, official statements, and reports to identify common themes and potential gaps.

Using the qualitative approach allows us to determine the extent to which FIFA's policies align with established international standards and principles of gender equality. Rather than solely relying on numerical data, using a qualitative approach provides a more thorough understanding of FIFA's gender policies, allowing for a deeper exploration of their complexities and nuances.

We can gain an understanding of the issues that female football players, coaches, and other stakeholders encounter, identify challenges, and evaluate the assistance they require to thrive within the football ecosystem. In conclusion, a qualitative methodological approach is ideal for investigating FIFA's gender policies concerning International Human Rights Law.

To establish if FIFA's gender policies align with international human rights law, we will undertake a thorough examination by applying qualitative research methodologies. Particularly, thematic analysis will be used to undertake an analysis of the data collected. The main goal of the research is to find themes and patterns that may provide useful insights into the alignment of FIFA's gender policy with IHRL

standards. The research will base itself on FIFA's corporate policies and guidelines, which include the different rules, ethical standards, and regulations that guide FIFA's activities and conduct.

The goal of this master's thesis is then to analyze FIFA's commitment to gender equality via qualitative research methods. This method entails a systematic investigation of non-numerical data to get a greater understanding of the subject. An essential aspect is to examine FIFA's legal and soft law frameworks, such as rules, guidelines, statutes, codes, and statements. These documents provide the basis for FIFA's governance and gender equality policy.

To conduct the research, data will be collected from various sources. The main source of information will be FIFA's official documents, including their statutes, rules of conduct, and reports. Secondary materials such as scholarly articles, research studies, and analyses of FIFA's gender policy will also be used to complement and strengthen the primary data.

Regarding the theoretical framework, International Human Rights Law is the one that lays the foundation for assessing FIFA's gender policies. This framework involves identifying the key principles of IHRL related to gender equality, non-discrimination, and women's rights. It also considers the international conventions, treaties, and declarations and their connection to gender issues in sports.

Overall, this research method seeks to give an accurate portrayal of FIFA's commitment to gender equality in international football, and that commitment's alignment with International Human Rights Law standards. The research aims to contribute to the greater conversation on gender equality in sports governance by undertaking an in-depth analysis of its gender policy, analyzing both legal and soft law mechanisms.

To guarantee the suitability of FIFA's gender policies, these first need to be scrutinized, through constructive criteria. The gender policies will be selected by relevance, depending if they address important gender-related issues in football. The second factor taken into account is how recent the policies are and the frequency of their updates. It's crucial to consider the most recent versions of the policies selected

to ensure that the evaluation appropriately represents FIFA's current commitment to gender equality. The policies also must address a wide range of gender-related issues, including participation, representation, eliminating discrimination, and promoting gender equality.

Finally, FIFA's gender policies will be evaluated side by side with internationally recognized human rights standards, notably those established by the United Nations. This parallel will help us understand whether FIFA's gender policies are consistent with widely accepted human rights standards, which is this thesis's main aim.

Relevant international agreements and conventions, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Labour Organization conventions, and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) will be assessed (and further discussed in chapter 3), ensuring the thesis's findings are grounded in internationally recognized standards.

The UN established the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, which are a set of 17 global objectives aiming at tackling social, economic, and environmental concerns by 2030.¹⁷ SDG 5 specifically aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. It seeks to eliminate prejudice and abuse against women, establish equal leadership possibilities, and encourage shared family duties.¹⁸

SDG 5 is particularly relevant in this thesis because it offers a framework for assessing the efficacy of gender policy in organizations such as FIFA. Examining FIFA's gender policy through the SDGs enables for the assessment of the organization's efforts concerning defined goals. The analysis will determine if FIFA's activities battle prejudice in football, encourage female leadership, and offer possibilities for women and girls in the sport. This guarantees that the evaluation is founded on an internationally recognized framework for gender equality.¹⁹

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is a key component of the global effort to achieve gender equality. It was established by

¹⁷ United Nations, 'The 17 Goals' <[THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

¹⁸ United Nations, 'Goal 5' <[Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

¹⁹ 'Goal 5' (n 18).

the United Nations General Assembly and focuses on women's rights and the eradication of discrimination, giving it substantial impact in setting global norms and standards in the matter.²⁰

Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, plays an important role in promoting social justice and equitable working conditions. Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration is especially relevant since it explicitly targets gender equality in labor rights, which is consistent with CEDAW's broader objectives and will be explored later in this work.²¹

In terms of business ethics and human rights, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, establish a framework involving the responsibilities and strategies for minimizing, addressing, and overcoming human rights violations, creating a more equitable and responsible global corporate environment.²² These principles are based on three pillars: the state's responsibility to protect human rights by implementing and upholding laws that prevent violations by third parties, including businesses; the corporate responsibility to respect human rights by preventing abuses and addressing negative outcomes with due diligence and accountability; and the need for both nations and businesses to ensure access to effective remedies for those affected by business-related human rights violations.²³

While not legally binding, the UNGPs establish an internationally recognized standard for ethical business conduct. They assist governments, companies, and civil society organizations in their efforts to enhance the protection of human rights worldwide.²⁴

These international conventions, frameworks, and strategic initiatives show a shared commitment to promoting gender equality, human rights, and ethical standards. They

²⁰ UN Women, CEDAW <[Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

²¹ C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (No. 100).

²² UNDP; 'United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' <[UNITED NATIONS GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

²³ OHCHR, 'Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' <[GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

²⁴ Foley Hoag, May 2011, 'UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights' <[U.N. Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

highlight the various efforts of global institutions and sports organizations to encourage inclusiveness, justice, and dignity for everyone.

FIFA holds a crucial regulatory role in sports governance, overseeing various forms of football worldwide, including association football, futsal, and beach football. This thesis argues that FIFA's governance structure and standards, such as the FIFA Code of Ethics, the FIFA Disciplinary Code of Conduct, the FIFA Statutes, the FIFA Human Rights Policy, and the FIFA Code of Conduct, demonstrate the organization's dedication to promoting integrity, fair play, and ethical behavior among its affiliates. These aspects will be further explored in this thesis.

When analyzing FIFA's policies, this thesis will apply the legal theory of corporate accountability for human rights, also known as corporate social responsibility, as it emphasizes companies' responsibility to respect and defend human rights within their activities and influence. Corporations are expected to refrain from violating other people's human rights and to address any negative consequences that may arise. The responsibility is not passive, though; companies must actively ensure that their operations do not violate human rights.²⁵

The theory relies heavily on due diligence. Corporations must carry out human rights due diligence, which includes evaluating actual and possible human rights impacts, integrating and reacting to the results, and disclosing how they were/are going to be resolved. Furthermore, when companies contribute to negative human rights consequences, they are obligated to offer or participate in remediation.²⁶

The theoretical framework is backed by international frameworks such as the UNGPS that define the corporate responsibility to respect human rights and the need for increased access to remedies for victims of business-related violations. States must also defend human rights from violations by other parties, especially companies. This includes enforcing laws, developing regulatory frameworks, and

²⁵ Fédération Internationale pour les Droits Humains, 'Corporate Accountability for Human Rights Abuses: A Guide for Victims and NGOs on Recourse Mechanisms', 3rd Edition (May 2016), 14 <[Corporate Accountability for Human Rights Abuses: A Guide for Victims and NGOs on Recourse Mechanisms](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

²⁶ Ibid (25) 281-282.

ensuring that businesses operating in their territories follow human rights standards.²⁷

In this thesis, corporate responsibility for human rights legal theory can be used to assess how FIFA fulfills its human rights responsibilities and if its policies align with International Human Rights Law standards. This involves determining whether FIFA's gender policies demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination and promoting gender equality, conducting due diligence to detect and mitigate gender-related human rights consequences, and offering remedies for violations.

²⁷ Amnesty International, 'Human Rights Risks Linked to the 2030 and 2034 FIFA World Cups' (June 2024), 14-16 <[Playing a Dangerous Game? Human Rights Risks Linked to the 2030 and 2034 FIFA World Cups - Amnesty International](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

Chapter 2: Problem statement

This chapter discusses the connection between gender equality and football and why it's essential. It identifies problems in football that prevent gender equality, such as discrimination and stereotypes, and stresses the need to address these issues to create a fairer football environment. The chapter also discusses FIFA's role in promoting gender equality, why it is important to study FIFA's policies, and FIFA's history and involvement with human rights violations.

2.1 Relation between gender equality and football

The relationship between gender equality and football is complex and has changed over time. Historically, football has been viewed as a sport for men, which made it difficult for women to participate. However, in recent years, there seems to be greater recognition of the importance of gender equality in football and a need to address the disparities and barriers that women face in the sport.

The roots of gender inequality in football can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the sport was becoming more formalized and organized. At this time, football became predominantly seen as a male sport, with women being excluded from participation.²⁸ Societal norms and gender stereotypes reinforced this idea that football was a sport for men, while women were expected to adhere to traditional gender roles.

Despite facing significant resistance and criticism, some women began challenging these norms in the early 20th century and demanded the right to play football. Women's football emerged and gained popularity in various parts of the world, with notable examples such as the Dick, Kerr's Ladies team in England.²⁹

However, in the mid-20th century, women's football faced a setback as many football associations and governing bodies banned women's participation, citing concerns

²⁸ Jake Hall, 'The Rise, Fall & Rise of Women's Football' (*Highsnobiety*, July 2023) <[The Rise, Fall & Rise of Women's Football | Highsnobiety](#)> accessed 19 June 2024.

²⁹ Kaya Zeen, 'A Brief History Of Women's Football' (*Sundried*) <[A Brief History of Women's Football - Sundried](#)> accessed 10 June 2024.

about the impact on women's health and societal norms.³⁰ Women's football was not given the visibility and development it deserved for several decades.

Nowadays, major international tournaments such as the FIFA Women's World Cup have gained global attention and contributed to raising awareness about the importance of gender equality in football³¹, but it wasn't always like this.

During the bidding process for the FIFA World Cup 2026 (men's), there were twenty-two cities in North America competing to become the host of this competition. This tournament will be unique because FIFA included human rights plans in its selection criteria for the first time. During the bidding process, host countries and host cities had to agree to various commitments, including upholding the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and creating strategies to fulfill these obligations.³² Each city made its plan public, which details its approach to creating a positive human rights legacy and addressing any potential adverse effects of hosting such a significant sporting competition.³³

The focus on human rights is a crucial and significant step for the 2026 World Cup, as these innovative ideas become a reality and reaffirm the vital link between both gender equality and football and how important it is. With a strong emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility, this event has the power to create a path for more inclusive and fair mega-sporting events in the future.³⁴

Nonetheless, there are still prize money disparities in various competitions. Taking the case of Colombia, for example, some of the country's top female soccer players were unsure if they would be able to participate in the Women's World Cup of 2023, as some of the most skilled players have been left off the team as a punishment for speaking out about the conditions within the national team.³⁵

³⁰ Izzie Jones, 'The forgotten history of women's football' Evening Standard (July 2022) <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/forgotten-history-of-womens-football-b1015636.html>> accessed 03 July 2024.

³¹ FIFA, 'Staggering statistics demonstrate FIFA Women's World Cup™ growth' (August 2023) <[Staggering statistics demonstrate FIFA Women's World Cup™ growth](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

³² Alfrey D and others, 'Candidate City Human Rights Proposals for the 2026 World Cup: The Promise of a Positive Legacy' (2022) 7 Business and Human Rights Journal 31.

³³ The Centre for Sport & Human Rights and Clifford Chance, 'The promise of a positive legacy' <[THE PROMISE OF A POSITIVE LEGACY THE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP HOST CITY CANDIDATES' HUMAN RIGHTS PLANS](#)>, 9.

³⁴ 'The promise of a positive legacy', 2.

³⁵ Brenda Elsey, 'Inside the culture of fear and abuse in Colombia women's soccer' (Power Plays, 06 July 2023) <<https://www.powerplays.news/p/inside-the-culture-of-fear-and-abuse>> accessed 18 July 2024.

In the modern days, the sport of football has an influence that goes way beyond the field, which allows for conversations and confrontations about gender prejudice inside the sport by actively promoting equality.³⁶ It has always been associated with men, which perpetuates the notion that it is a male sport; however, by promoting gender equality in the sport, there is an opportunity to fight and deconstruct these stereotypes.

In addition to physical capabilities and tactical skills, football builds self-confidence and leadership soft skills, which affects their personal development in various positive ways and gives them tools to combat other challenges they might face throughout their life as women.³⁷

Gender equality in football promotes the development of inclusive communities that embrace people of all genders and backgrounds.³⁸ By actively fighting against gender inequality in sports, sports governing bodies can challenge deeply rooted gender norms, inspire change, and overall promote inclusive communities.

2.2 Why is this an important problem?

Gender equality is a critical topic that has ramifications in many areas of the sport. Despite the growing popularity of women's football, significant differences in resources, investment, media coverage, and opportunity continue to exist between men's and women's football.³⁹

Football organizations can strengthen human rights by giving equal opportunities and treatment to all individuals involved in the game, regardless of gender; it provides women and girls a platform, which is why it is so important. For instance, alongside the initiatives built upon the Women's World Cup of 2023, FIFA, recognizing that football has the power to develop society, joined UN Women and the French

³⁶ Matthew Campelli, 'Quantifying the economic and social impact of football' (Sustainability Report, 28 January 2021) <[Quantifying the economic and social impact of football – The Sustainability Report](#)> accessed 25 July 2024.

³⁷ UEFA, 'The Psychological and Emotional Benefits of Playing Football on Girls and Women in Europe' (2017), <[The Psychological and Emotional Benefits of Playing Football on Girls and Women in Europe](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

³⁸ UNESCO, 'Towards Victory for Gender Equality' (March 2024) <[Towards Victory for Gender Equality | UNESCO](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

³⁹ Claire Poppelwell-Scevak, 'The Gender Pay Gap: How FIFA Dropped the Ball' (Jean Monnet Working Paper 4/20) 12-13.

Development Agency to promote social development and address women's issues in the African continent.⁴⁰

Women's football represents a significantly overlooked market whose commercial potential organizations often neglect, as it could be developed by financially investing in it, improving media coverage, marketing women's championships, and extending income sources, consequently improving the business.⁴¹ In the following chapters, this thesis will analyze how FIFA's gender equality policies address these difficulties, and how these can provide equal funding, investment, and opportunities for women's football.

2.3 Why choose to analyze FIFA's policies?

Overall, football is a sport that brings people together, and FIFA is a crucial organization that helps shape its development by understanding that safeguarding human rights is critical for all involved in its practices, including players, clubs, federations, and supporters.⁴² FIFA operates within a global community that values human rights and is responsible for upholding all internationally recognized human rights norms.⁴³

The Federation has the power to establish rules and policies that regulate various aspects of the game, and it must fulfill this obligation to ensure the safety of all involved.⁴⁴ Addressing these issues requires joint efforts to combat sexual violence and exploitation, promote safe and respectful sporting environments, and ensure equal opportunities, resources, and benefits for all genders.⁴⁵

Analyzing FIFA's policies on gender equality is extremely important as its approaches to gender equality, as the governing body of one of the world's most popular sports, can

⁴⁰ FIFA, Goal 8 Push Women's Football <[Push women's football – The Vision 2020-2023 | FIFA Publications](#)> accessed 17 July 2024.

⁴¹ 'The Gender Pay Gap: How FIFA Dropped the Ball' (n 39) 20-21.

⁴² FIFA's Human Rights Policy (May 2017 edition), available at <<https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/1a876c66a3f0498d/original/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r-pdf.pdf>> 4.

⁴³ As it understandable from Article 3 of FIFA Statutes (September 2020 edition), available at <<https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/5eb2b45e547ff39f/original/ndfxogwkoukoe4dm3uk0-pdf.pdf>>.

⁴⁴ Daniela Heerdt and Nadia Bernaz, Elements for FIFA's feminist transformation: The case for indicators on football and women's rights, *International Journal of Constitutional Law* (Volume 20, Issue 1, January 2022) 302-303.

⁴⁵ Kim Toffoletti, Sexy women sports fans: femininity, sexuality, and the global sport spectacle, *Feminist Media Studies*, (Feminist Media Studies, 2017) 458.

influence not just the sport itself but also more significant cultural norms and perceptions.⁴⁶

Gianni Infantino, FIFA's President, recognizes this importance, for example, regarding the media rights of the Women's World Cup of 2023. He announced in May 2023 that FIFA had made a significant increase in funding for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, with a total package of 152 million US dollars.⁴⁷ This amount is three times higher than the previous 2019 edition and ten times higher than the 2015 edition. Infantino emphasized that underestimating the FIFA Women's World Cup is both a moral and legal obligation. If bids did not reflect fair compensation for women and women's football, FIFA wouldn't broadcast the World Cup in the 'Big 5' European countries. Infantino then called upon everyone to support equitable remuneration of women's football.⁴⁸

With 211 member associations, this thesis hypothesizes that FIFA's responsibility is to set a standard. The organization plays an essential role in the community, so complying with good governance standards is vital for FIFA's larger social mission. As FIFA representatives in their respective nations, member associations are obligated to uphold the statutes, goals, and principles of football's governing body and to promote and administer the sport properly.⁴⁹

The classification of FIFA as a monopoly in football is controversial and complex. FIFA is often referred to as a monopoly in international football due to its unparalleled global control over international football events,⁵⁰ with the FIFA World Cup being the most prominent example. FIFA holds complete authority over the organization, promotion, and administration of the World Cup, the world's most famous and widely watched football competition and this authority extends to other international competitions.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Carmen Pérez González, *Transformative Equality, Due Diligence and Female Players' Rights: CEDAW as an Avenue for Women's Rights Accountability in the World of Football*, Jean Monnet Working Paper 08/20, 12.

⁴⁷ 'Broadcasters urged to pay a fair price for FIFA Women's World Cup media rights' (2023) African Business <[Broadcasters urged to pay a fair price for FIFA Women's World Cup™ media rights](#)> accessed 24 June 2024.

⁴⁸ 'Broadcasters urged to pay a fair price for FIFA Women's World Cup media rights' (n 47).

⁴⁹ FIFA, 'Associations' <[Member Associations](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁵⁰ Investopedia, 'Are There Any Legal Monopolies in America or Europe' (2021) <[Are There Any Legal Monopolies in America or Europe](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁵¹ Daniel Wilken, 'The FIFA Legal Monopoly: Can FIFA be fixed?' (*ILPB*, April 20, 2022) <[The FIFA Legal Monopoly: Can FIFA Be Fixed? | International Law and Policy Brief](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

FIFA also holds exclusive rights that enhance its monopoly. Specifically, FIFA can arrange and promote the FIFA World Cup and other international competitions. These exclusive rights cover broadcasting and sponsorship agreements, making FIFA the only entity authorized to grant rights for these worldwide televised events.⁵²

If FIFA is designated as a monopoly, its commitment to IHRL and gender equality becomes even more critical. Monopolies are typically subject to increased scrutiny and responsibility due to their significant influence on the industry. In this context, addressing gender equality aligns with the social responsibility and ethical corporate governance requirements of businesses, as further described in this thesis. It serves as a way for FIFA to demonstrate its dedication to social principles, enhancing its public image.

Women and girls have historically experienced several challenges and disadvantages in sports, such as restricted access to resources, financing, media attention, and chances for participation and growth.⁵³ We can then analyze and comprehend how FIFA addresses these discrepancies and promotes gender equality in football by examining its policies.

In evaluating FIFA's overall practices, it is of utmost importance to analyze the extent to which they prioritize the upholding of human rights standards on a global level. As the predominant governing body for football across the globe, we will argue that FIFA bears a tremendous responsibility to align itself with established international frameworks and instruments that aim to protect and promote human rights and set the global standards.

We argue that a commitment to prioritizing human rights sends the message that FIFA recognizes the importance of safeguarding the well-being and dignity of all individuals, irrespective of their background or any other differentiating characteristic.

⁵² For instance 'Tender processes open for media rights to the FIFA World Cup 26™ and FIFA World Cup 2030™ in Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia' (2024) <<https://inside.fifa.com/about-fifa/commercial/media-releases/tender-processes-open-for-media-rights-to-the-fifa-world-cup-26-tm-and-fifa-world-cup-2030-tm>> and 'Groupe M6 awarded free-to-air media rights for the FIFA World Cup 26™ and FIFA World Cup 2030™ in France' (2024) <[Groupe M6 awarded free-to-air media rights for the FIFA World Cup 26™ and FIFA World Cup 2030™ in France](#)>.

⁵³ 'The Historical Background of Women's Football' (*Breaking the Lines*, 11 April 2023) <[The Challenges and Opportunities for Women in Football – Breaking The Lines](#)> accessed 16 July 2023.

Moreover, assessing FIFA's gender equality policies from the perspective of IHRL will reaffirm that gender equality in football is a fundamental human right rather than a matter of preference. The findings of this study can then help start a conversation and highlight long-awaited debates about FIFA's role in promoting and ensuring action toward a gender violence-free future for the sport.

Regardless, FIFA's actions in the past have faced scrutiny. Scholars like Duval and Heerdt argue that prejudice against female football teams is a systemic issue that is linked to FIFA, in which FIFA has become the primary target of legal challenges based on human rights, suggesting that a feminist analysis of FIFA's rules and policies, such as the adoption of the Women's Football Strategy, could show how seriously FIFA is committed to fighting gender inequality in football and promoting women's rights.⁵⁴

Particularly, when it comes to the choice of the host country for the biggest sporting event in the world, the FIFA World Cup⁵⁵, as FIFA holds the authority to designate host countries for major tournaments like the FIFA World Cup⁵⁶, this decision could be an implicit show of support for these countries, particularly on the international stage.

Moreover, hosting such a major competition may stimulate growth in infrastructure, attract foreign investment, and boost tourism.⁵⁷ However, while it can bring economic benefits and infrastructural development, it also makes the organization vulnerable to criticism for failing to effectively address human rights issues.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar stands as an important example of how hosting a global event can shed a spotlight on a country's human rights practices. In the lead-up to and during the tournament, critical issues such as labor rights, working

⁵⁴ Antoine Duval, Daniela Heerdt, FIFA and Human Rights – a Research Agenda, *Tilburg Law Review, Journal of International and European Law*, (25 [1], 2020), 5.

⁵⁵ Matthew Hall, 'World Cups bring scrutiny on hosts' human rights – and that includes the US' (2024) *The Guardian* <[World Cups bring scrutiny on hosts' human rights – and that includes the US](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁵⁶ FIFA, 'Guide to the Bidding Process for the 2026 Fifa World Cup™' <<https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/5730ee56c15eeddb/original/hgopypqftviladnm7q90-pdf.pdf>> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁵⁷ Amnesty International, 'Human Rights Risks Linked to the 2030 and 2034 FIFA World Cups' (June 2024), 4 <[Playing a Dangerous Game? Human Rights Risks Linked to the 2030 and 2034 FIFA World Cups - Amnesty International](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

conditions, freedom of expression and assembly, women's rights, discrimination, and LGBTQ rights came to the forefront.⁵⁸

The 2022 Qatar World Cup raised serious human rights concerns, particularly regarding the treatment of migrant workers.⁵⁹ They faced harsh working conditions, low wages, and the restrictive kafala system, resulting in exploitation, fatalities, and injuries.⁶⁰ There were also significant limitations on free expression and press freedom, with journalists and activists facing censorship and arrest. While there were some advances in women's rights, legal and social constraints persisted, and LGBTQ+ individuals faced criminalization and discrimination due to Qatar's stringent legislation.⁶¹

This illustrates how hosting such an event can intensify scrutiny of a State's human rights record. The global attention has prompted proposed reforms, that are yet to be enacted⁶², and has also shed light on persistent and serious human rights concerns. This case underscores the connection between global sporting events and human rights advocacy, demonstrating how international pressure can drive change while also bringing long-standing issues to the surface.

After large criticism, FIFA has established human rights standards for countries bidding to host the World Cup, starting with the 2026 Men's edition. These guidelines are designed to uphold and safeguard human rights during these events.⁶³ However, concerns have been raised about human rights issues in Saudi Arabia, the sole bidder for the 2034 World Cup. Saudi Arabia will need to make significant improvements in the treatment of migrant workers, including addressing working conditions and low wages.⁶⁴ Minky Worden (director of global initiatives at Human

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, 'FIFA: No Remedy for Qatar Migrant Worker Abuses' (2023) <[FIFA: No Remedy for Qatar Migrant Worker Abuses | Human Rights Watch](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, 'Qatar: Rights Abuses Stain FIFA World Cup' (2022) <[Qatar: Rights Abuses Stain FIFA World Cup](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁶⁰ Amnesty International, 'Qatar: Abuse of World Cup workers exposed' (2016) <[Qatar: Abuse of World Cup workers exposed - Amnesty International](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁶¹ Abdulrahman Al Marri and Hind Al Ansari, 'World Cup in Qatar: Human Rights and Normalization', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace <[World Cup in Qatar: Human Rights and Normalization - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁶² Amnesty International, 'Qatar: Inaction by Qatar and FIFA a year on from the World Cup puts legacy for workers in peril' (2023) <[Inaction by Qatar and FIFA a year on from the World Cup puts legacy for workers in peril](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁶³ 'Guide to the Bidding Process for the 2026 Fifa World Cup™' (n 56).

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, 'FIFA Broke Own Human Rights Rules for World Cup Hosts' (2023) <[FIFA Broke Own Human Rights Rules for World Cup Hosts](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

Rights Watch), stated that ‘The possibility that FIFA could award Saudi Arabia the 2034 World Cup despite its appalling human rights record and closed door to any monitoring exposes FIFA’s commitments to human rights as a sham.’⁶⁵

The extensive surveillance and control over public life by the Saudi government raised concerns about privacy and civil liberties.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the country's history of detaining human rights activists and political opponents without fair trials is a significant issue.⁶⁷

Overall, FIFA's human rights standards aim to ensure that the World Cup has a positive impact on human rights in each host country. These examples illustrate the challenges FIFA faces and has faced in the past in reconciling its role as a global sports organization with the necessity to address human rights and gender equality issues.

⁶⁵ Graham Dunbar, ‘Why Saudi Arabia Is Set to Host the 2034 FIFA World Cup’ (2023) <[Why Saudi Arabia Is Set to Host the 2034 FIFA World Cup](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁶⁶ Freedom Collaborative, ‘FIFA must reject men’s World Cup hosting bids that risk human rights abuses’ (2024) <[FIFA must reject men’s World Cup hosting bids that risk human rights abuses — Freedom Collaborative](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁶⁷ Minky Worden, ‘Rights At Risk As Saudi Arabia ‘Sole Bidder’ To Host 2034 World Cup’ (2023) <[Rights At Risk As Saudi Arabia ‘Sole Bidder’ To Host 2034 World Cup](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The third chapter presents a framework that guides the analysis and evaluation of FIFA's policies regarding gender and International Human Rights Law standards. The chapter begins by discussing how FIFA, as a non-state actor in international sports governance, is responsible for upholding human rights standards. It then examines the principles and standards of IHRL that are relevant to promoting gender equality in sports. Finally, the chapter goes into detail on the legal framework for promoting gender equality and safeguarding women's rights in football, with a focus on soft law international instruments, and understanding what FIFA can do to align its policies with these standards.

3.1 How is FIFA, as a non-state actor, responsible for abiding by human rights standards?

FIFA is an NGO, meaning it has a relatively weak status under international law⁶⁸, but although businesses may not be directly bound by international human rights treaties, national laws still hold them accountable for violating these norms.⁶⁹ As non-state actors, companies and organizations have the power to significantly influence the human rights of others, including their employees and consumers,⁷⁰ therefore, their actions can positively and negatively impact the well-being of those affected.

Businesses must uphold human rights, a responsibility reinforced by local laws and regulations that adhere to international human rights standards.⁷¹ It is not uncommon for human rights concerns in the business world to revolve around multinational businesses facing allegations of directly or indirectly causing human rights abuses. Given the extensive reach and supply networks of such businesses, they are subject

⁶⁸ Trista Turley, When the 'Escape Ends Responsibility of the IOC and FIFA at the Intersection of Sport Law and Human Rights, *Notre Dame Journal of International & Comparative Law* (Volume 6, Issue 1, Article 12, 2016) 160.

⁶⁹ Antoine Duval, Daniela Heerdt, FIFA and Human Rights – a Research Agenda, *Tilburg Law Review, Journal of International and European Law*, (25 [1], 2020) 9.

⁷⁰ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights – An Interpretive Guide' (June 2012) 10-11.

⁷¹ Fédération Internationale pour les Droits Humains, 'Corporate Accountability for Human Rights Abuses: A Guide for Victims and NGOs on Recourse Mechanisms', 3rd Edition (May 2016), 27 <[Corporate Accountability for Human Rights Abuses: A Guide for Victims and NGOs on Recourse Mechanisms](#)> accessed 19 July 2024.

to scrutiny.⁷² There is also a worry that underdeveloped governments may not have the capacity or willingness to hold businesses accountable for their actions⁷³, therefore, it is necessary to ensure that they are also held responsible for any human rights violations that may occur.

In this case, FIFA is a business, which makes it analogically responsible for respecting international standards, as its activities and global governance within its scope of action engage and have an impact on different human rights, putting it in the bullseye for public scrutiny, especially by human rights organizations.⁷⁴ However, it is crucial to recognize that safeguarding human rights extends beyond mere legal compliance. This thesis argues that it is a fundamental expectation that applies universally to all organizations in all circumstances. This duty exists regardless of a non-state actor's pledge to human rights⁷⁵ and is reflected in soft law mechanisms that will be explored further.

International sports organizations then have an essential role in promoting gender equality and fighting against intersectional discrimination in sports, as will be discussed in the following subchapter. While implementing global human rights standards into their practices, these organizations can become powerful advocates for women's and girls' rights.⁷⁶

Key frameworks such as the UNGPs and international treaties like the CEDAW impact their activities and emphasize the need for compliance with international standards to prevent human rights violations. In fact, in 2017, FIFA adopted a comprehensive human rights policy aligned with the UNGPs, committing to respect and promote human rights across its activities.⁷⁷ This policy includes due diligence processes to identify and address human rights risks, emphasizing accountability and remediation.⁷⁸ Additionally, FIFA's Women's Football Strategy aims to promote and develop women's football globally, addressing gender disparities and ensuring

⁷² FIFA and Human Rights – a Research Agenda (n 69) 5.

⁷³ Monash University, the International Business Leaders Forum, OHCHR and the United Nations Global Compact, Human Rights Translated: A Business Reference Guide (2008) XI.

⁷⁴ FIFA and Human Rights – a Research Agenda (n 69) 5.

⁷⁵ The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights – An Interpretive Guide (n 70) 13-14.

⁷⁶ Antoine Duval, Taking feminism beyond the state: FIFA as a transnational battleground for feminist legal critique, International Journal of Constitutional Law, Vol 20, 2022, 281-285.

⁷⁷ FIFA, 'Human Rights & Anti-Discrimination' <[Human Rights & Anti-discrimination](#)> accessed 19 July 2024.

⁷⁸ FIFA's Human Rights Policy (May 2017 edition), available at <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/1a876c66a3f0498d/original/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r-pdf.pdf>.

equitable opportunities within the sport.⁷⁹ These efforts reflect an alignment with international human rights law and underscore FIFA's role in advancing gender equality.

In conclusion, this thesis will argue that by following corporate social responsibility legal theories and through the UNGPs, FIFA is expected to abide by human rights norms and consequently be accountable for aligning its gender policies to IHRL standards. We argue that the term accountability is appropriate in this context, in an 'encompassing legal' way.⁸⁰

3.2 FIFA's responsibility in the light of international soft law

FIFA has committed to protecting human rights, and it aims to do so through a variety of means. Non-binding documents, principles, and guidelines have been established to set standards for behavior, and these standards have the potential to influence the development of codes of conduct, human rights policies, and policies for member associations, clubs, and other parties involved in the world of football.⁸¹

Within International Law, various international governance mechanisms and frameworks encourage inclusive measures and equal opportunities to guide the battle for gender equality in football. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, CEDAW, the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are some of these relevant instruments and frameworks.

While International Human Rights Law does not directly address football, it establishes fundamental principles and duties that apply to gender equality in all fields, including football. These principles call for eliminating discriminatory practices, promoting equal opportunities, and recognizing women's right to participate and succeed in football. FIFA, as the governing body of football worldwide, must ensure that its policies and operations align with the requirements set forth by IHRL.⁸²

⁷⁹ FIFA, 'Strategy Dails' <[Strategy Details](#)> accessed 19 July 2024.

⁸⁰ Bernaz, N. Conceptualizing Corporate Accountability in International Law: Models for a Business and Human Rights Treaty. *Hum Rights Rev* 22, 50 (2021).

⁸¹ FIFA, 'UN Human Rights Day: FIFA reaffirms its commitment to human rights and anti-discrimination' (2023) <[UN Human Rights Day: FIFA reaffirms its commitment to human rights and anti-discrimination](#)> accessed 19 July 2024.

⁸² FIFA, 'Anti-discrimination' <[Anti-discrimination | FIFA Publications](#)> accessed 05 July 2024.

Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are then one of these frameworks, with Goal 5 concentrating explicitly on gender equality. Ending all discrimination against women and girls is a fundamental human right and essential for building a sustainable future. In line with this, gender equality has been central to the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).⁸³

The SDGs prioritize empowering women and girls, eliminating prejudice and discrimination, and guaranteeing equal opportunities. This comprehensive framework provides a platform for organizations like FIFA to align their efforts with global goals and initiatives to promote gender equality in sports.⁸⁴

Sustainable Development Goal 5 has a specific aim of empowering all women and girls and is an integral part of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, laying the blueprint for achieving a more sustainable and equitable future for all. In particular, gender equity is addressed in Goals 4, 8, 11, and 16, underscoring the importance of this issue in various aspects of global development.³² By setting specific targets that tackle a range of global issues, the UN has made it clear that gender equity requires dedicated and sustained attention. Sports has a complex relationship with gender, which creates opportunities for connecting with and applying to SDG 5.⁸⁵

Recent data on SDG 5 indicates that progress towards this goal remains insufficient. Despite the implementation of legal reforms and efforts to close legal gaps, it is projected that it may take up to 286 years to eliminate discriminatory laws if change continues at the current rate.⁸⁶

The COVID-19 pandemic and the opposition to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights have further impeded the fight for gender equality. Violence against

⁸³ United Nations Development Programme, 'Goal 5 Gender Equality' <[Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme](#)>, accessed 05 July 2024.

⁸⁴ United Nations, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (2015), available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/9814;jsessionid=2E7FCB9F8DEC41FF61EA383DCFFE5D35>.

⁸⁵ Carrie LeCrom, An Overview of Sustainable Development Goal 5, The Routledge Handbook of Sport and Sustainable Development (Brian P. McCullough, Timothy Kellison, and E. Nicole Melton eds).

⁸⁶ UN Women, Women Count and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals the Gender Snapshot 2020', <[PROGRESS ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THE GENDER SNAPSHOT 2022](#)>, 11.

women continues to be a significant concern, with the risk of violence increasing for the most vulnerable women and girls due to global health, climate, and humanitarian crises.⁸⁷ Given that we are already halfway through the SDGs timeline, it is imperative to act now and invest in women and girls to ensure their progress.⁸⁸

Target 5.1 aims to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. It highlights the need to create a society where gender-based discrimination is eliminated from all areas of life. Target 5.2 focuses on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres. This includes addressing issues that hinder the safety and well-being of women and girls, like sexual exploitation. Target 5.5 aims to ensure that women have equal opportunities for leadership and complete and adequate participation in decision-making processes at all levels of society, including in political, economic, and public spheres.

Target 5.B focuses on enabling technologies, mainly information and communications technology, to promote women's empowerment and increase their access to opportunities and resources. Lastly, Target 5.C emphasizes the importance of adopting policies and legislation that promote gender equality and empower women and girls at all levels of society, with effective enforcement of these measures.⁸⁹ Together, these targets provide a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to address the challenges of gender inequality and work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive world for all women and girls.⁹⁰

Another relevant framework regarding gender equality in sports is Football for the Goals (FFTG). On the first day of the UEFA Women's EURO 2022, the United Nations launched the FFTG initiative, and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) became the inaugural member of the initiative – FIFA, however, is not a member.⁹¹

⁸⁷ UN, 'Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', <<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>> accessed 25 July 2024.

⁸⁸ 'Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals the Gender Snapshot 2020' (n 86), 10.

⁸⁹ All target goals are available at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>, accessed 26 July 2024.

⁹⁰ "An overview of Sustainable Development Goal 5" (n 85).

⁹¹ UN, 'United Nations Launches the Football for the Goals Initiative UEFA Joins as Inaugural Member', <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/UN_Press_Release_FFTG_ENG.pdf> accessed 23 July 2024.

The initiative seeks to engage with the global football community in advocating for and promoting the SDGs. Its members are dedicated to following principles that guide their business practices and stakeholder interactions. These principles form the foundation of their sustainability initiatives and advocacy, aiming to make a positive impact while aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals.⁹²

One of the most essential principles of this initiative is a human rights-based approach. Members pledge to actively address discrimination issues and uphold human rights, creating an inclusive and respectful environment. They also strive to promote diversity and embrace human rights principles to create a football culture that celebrates individuality and equality.⁹³

CEDAW and UN Women

CEDAW (1979) is a comprehensive worldwide convention that requires member states to take steps to eliminate discrimination against women and support gender equality in all sectors of life.⁹⁴

Although only mentioned in two provisions of the CEDAW Convention - articles 10°g) and 13°c) -, it is noteworthy that sport has been acknowledged in this international legal document, an improvement from the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1967) which did not mention sport at all.

Article 10 of the CEDAW emphasizes the elimination of discrimination against women in education, which includes physical education and sports in paragraph g). The 13th article of CEDAW addresses eliminating discrimination against women in all aspects of economic and social life, including access to recreational activities, sports, and cultural involvement, in paragraph c).⁹⁵

Building on the framework established by CEDAW, UN Women is also playing a crucial role in advancing gender equality across various sectors, including sports. By

⁹² UNRIC, 'Football for the Goals' (06 July 2022), <[Football for the Goals - United Nations Western Europe](#)> accessed 23 July 2024.

⁹³ 'United Nations Launches the Football for the Goals Initiative UEFA Joins as Inaugural Member', (n 39).

⁹⁴ UNHR Office of the High Commissioner, 'Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women', <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw>> accessed 24 July 2024.

⁹⁵ UN General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cedaw.pdf>.

collaborating with governments, sports organizations, and stakeholders, UN Women is dedicated to creating inclusive and equitable environments for women and girls in sports.⁹⁶ In fact, during the FIFA Women's Football Convention, Gianni Infantino and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka signed an important memorandum of understanding (MoU).⁹⁷ It marked the first time the two organizations worked together to promote gender equality for women in and out of football.

The MoU outlines three essential areas of collaboration: sports policy development, backing sustainable initiatives that generate long-lasting cultural transformation and empowerment for women and girls globally, and launching communication campaigns to promote gender equality through sports.⁹⁸

This groundbreaking partnership between FIFA and UN Women promises to create a profound impact by challenging gender inequality and empowering women and girls through the universal language of football.⁹⁹

Recently, in light of the FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand last year (20th of July to the 20th of August 2023), UN Women and FIFA have once again united with a shared purpose of promoting gender equality in football.¹⁰⁰

The 2023 tournament was expected to draw an audience of over two billion people, making it the largest-ever audience for a single sport played by women. This presented a significant opportunity to celebrate women's accomplishments in sports and drive progress for gender equality in football.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ UN Women, 'About UN Women' <[About UN Women](#)> accessed 23 June 2024.

⁹⁷ FIFA, 'FIFA and UN Women sign first-ever memorandum of understanding' (07 July 2019), <[FIFA and UN Women sign first-ever memorandum of understanding](#)> accessed 24 July 2024.

⁹⁸ 'FIFA and UN Women sign first-ever memorandum of understanding' (n 97).

⁹⁹ UN Women, 'Press release: FIFA and UN Women sign first-ever memorandum of understanding', (7 June 2019), <<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/6/press-release-fifa-and-un-women-sign-mou>>, accessed 24 July 2024.

¹⁰⁰ UN Women, 'Press release: Women's World Cup 2023 – UN Women and FIFA join forces for gender equality' (19 July 2023), <<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/07/press-release-womens-world-cup-2023-un-women-and-fifa-join-forces-for-gender-equality>> accessed 24 July 2024.

¹⁰¹ FIFA, 'Football to highlight social causes at the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™', <<https://ipt.fifa.com/social-impact/media-releases/football-to-highlight-social-causes-at-the-fifa-womens-world-cup-2023-tm>> accessed 24 July 2025.

FIFA has also launched the "Football Unites the World" campaign to raise awareness of gender equality issues during the tournament.¹⁰² Following their joint initiative, UN Women and FIFA have announced two calls to action: "Unite for Gender Equality" aims to promote gender equality as a fundamental human right and a crucial aspect of a world of peace.¹⁰³ The second call, "Unite for Ending Violence against Women," is a powerful call to end violence against this vulnerable group, as it is still one of the most prevalent violations of human rights around the globe.¹⁰⁴

The Women's World Cup serves as a platform to inspire girls worldwide, with the athletes competing in the tournament acting as role models for young girls. It is essential to acknowledge that there are still challenges faced by women and girls in the world of sports.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, as the UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous puts it, discrimination and mistreatment are not uncommon for those who do participate.¹⁰⁶ The partnership between UN Women and FIFA then aims to address these disparities and provide equal opportunities to women and girls in sports.

Besides UN Women and FIFA, five other UN agencies, namely UNHRC, the UN Human Rights Commission, UNESCO, the World Health Organization, and the World Food Programme have also participated in the "Football Unites the World" initiative, demonstrating a collective commitment to using football as a force for positive change and empowerment.¹⁰⁷

International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization is a United Nations agency that promotes equal work for everyone and establishes international labor standards, aiming to achieve gender equality by providing women and men equal opportunities with good work conditions.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² FIFA, 'Football Unites the World – FIFA', <[Football Unites the World](#)> accessed 24 July 2024.

¹⁰³ FIFA, 'Unite for Gender Equality', <[Unite for Gender Equality](#)> accessed 24 July 2024.

¹⁰⁴ FIFA, 'Unite for Ending Violence Against Women', <[Unite for Ending Violence Against Women](#)> accessed 24 July 2024.

¹⁰⁵ 'Press release: Women's World Cup 2023 – UN Women and FIFA join forces for gender equality', (n 100).

¹⁰⁶ Why gender parity features prominently at ongoing Women's World Cup' (Nation, 24 July 2023), <[Why gender parity features prominently at ongoing Women's World Cup | Nation](#)> accessed 25 July 2024.

¹⁰⁷ 'Press release: Women's World Cup 2023 – UN Women and FIFA join forces for gender equality', (n 100).

¹⁰⁸ International Labour Organization <[Employment promotion | International Labour Organization](#)>, accessed 19 July 2024.

Regarding gender equality, the ILO's mandate centers on promoting equal treatment between women and men at work. This mandate draws its foundation from the International Labour Conventions that bear relevance to gender equality. These conventions include the Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (No. 100), which will be explored further. These principles and resolutions guide the ILO's efforts to advance gender equality and promote equitable treatment in the world of work.¹⁰⁹

In 2022 the ILO approved the Global Labour Agreement (GLA), which addresses football professionals' work conditions and rights. This agreement creates a new international framework for discussions between the World Leagues Forum (WLF), which represents 44 national professional football leagues and over 1,100 clubs, and FIFPRO, which represents more than 60,000 professional football players globally through 66 player unions.¹¹⁰

The GLA acknowledges that having mutually agreed-upon standards will improve labor relations and support the development and longevity of professional football. It serves as a forum to discuss matters related to the health and safety of players, national leagues and clubs, and overall addressing issues in women's football.¹¹¹

At the signing ceremony held at the ILO's headquarters in Geneva, former ILO Director-General Guy Ryder emphasized that:

“Football has the power to inspire and unite people of all nationalities and walks of life, irrespective of gender and ethnicity. Football players need to be protected by the fundamental principles and rights at work.”¹¹²

The GLA aligns with the ILO's principles and rights at work, as articulated in the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and amended in 2022¹¹³, which underlines ILO's commitment to upholding workers' rights and fostering fair labor practices within football.

¹⁰⁹ International Labour Organization <[The benefits of International Labour Standards](#)>, accessed 22 July 2024.

¹¹⁰ ILO, 'ILO welcomes first global agreement on working conditions and rights of professional players' (26 September 2022), <[ILO welcomes first global agreement on working conditions and rights of professional football players | International Labour Organization](#)> accessed 26 July 2024.

¹¹¹ UN, 'ILO welcomes first global agreement on professional footballers' rights', <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127971>> accessed 24 July 2024.

¹¹² 'ILO welcomes first global agreement on working conditions and rights of professional players' (n 111).

¹¹³ ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up (2022), available at <[ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up](#)>.

Regarding the principle of equal pay for equal work, ILO Convention No. 100 for Equal Remuneration for Men and Women highlights the importance of eliminating gender-based salary disparities and ensuring that women receive remuneration according to their skills, commitment, and performance. The convention stresses the importance of using objective criteria in determining compensation rather than relying on gender biases or stereotypes (Article 3).¹¹⁴

Although the convention is not directly binding on organizations, it provides a framework and standard for member states to align with. This can have an impact on national policies and practices relating to gender equality in the workplace.¹¹⁵ Moreover, some countries may follow the principles of Convention No. 100 in their labor laws and regulations, which could indirectly affect organizations that operate within their jurisdictions. By adopting these conventions' principles and agreements like the GLA, football organizations can make significant progress toward achieving gender equality.¹¹⁶

United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework (2008), put forward by former UN Secretary-general's Special Representative on Business and Human Rights Professor John Ruggie is made up of three main pillars: firstly, it outlines the obligation of the state to prevent human rights violations, including those committed by businesses. Secondly, it highlights the responsibility of businesses to respect human rights. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of improving access to remedies for individuals affected by business-related abuses.¹¹⁷ This means that organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, and private individuals should not engage in actions that endanger the rights of others.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (No. 100), available at <[Convention No. 100 Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, 1951](#)>.

¹¹⁵ ILO, 'The ILO and the G20' <[The ILO and the G20 | International Labour Organization](#)> accessed 19 July 2024.

¹¹⁶ ILO, 'ILO welcomes discussions on decent work in the professional football sector' (2023), <[ILO welcomes discussions on decent work in the professional football sector | International Labour Organization](#)> accessed 19 July 2024.

¹¹⁷ John Gerard Ruggie, Protect, Respect and Remedy: a Framework for Business and Human Rights, Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (7 April 2008), available at <[Protect, respect and remedy](#)>.

¹¹⁸ The Hague: Global Compact Network Netherlands, Business & Human Rights Initiative, 'How to Do Business with Respect for Human Rights: A Guidance Tool for Companies' (2010).

This was the first time that the United Nations Human Rights Council stated that businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights.¹¹⁹ The UNGPs' guidelines on the corporate obligation to respect human rights (second pillar) are then crucial in evaluating FIFA's efforts to promote human rights and gender equality.¹²⁰ The UNHRC also recognized that there is a growing expectation from the public for businesses to prioritize human rights and contribute positively to their advancement.¹²¹

According to this framework, businesses must then have the necessary policies and processes to meet the responsibility of respect.¹²² The Guiding Principles identify three components of this responsibility. Firstly, they should make a policy commitment to respect human rights. Second, they must continue due diligence to identify, avoid, mitigate, and compensate for any adverse effects on human rights. Finally, businesses should have systems to compensate for any adverse human rights consequences they create or participate in.¹²³ Aligning with these widely recognized principles can help FIFA ensure that its policies and actions align with human rights standards¹²⁴, which will be determined in the next chapter.

Guiding Principle 12 of the UNGP establishes that businesses like FIFA must uphold internationally recognized human rights, which are protected by the International Bill of Human Rights.¹²⁵ To uphold women's globally acknowledged rights, businesses must incorporate the CEDAW¹²⁶, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in all aspects of their operations.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Translated: A Business Reference Guide (n 73) VIII.

¹²⁰ The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights – An Interpretive Guide, (n 70) 2.

¹²¹ Human Rights Translated: A Business Reference Guide (n 73) VIII.

¹²² 'The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights An Introduction', <[Intro to UN Guiding Principles on Businesses and Human Rights](#)> 3.

¹²³ Ibid 3.

¹²⁴ Brendan Schwab, 'Embedding the human rights of players in world sport', The International Sports Law Journal (2018) 222.

¹²⁵ 'The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights' (n 70) 9.

¹²⁶ UNDP, United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, 'Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights', 22, available at <[Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#)>

¹²⁷ The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights An Introduction' (n 122).

Furthermore, businesses must recognize that women may encounter discrimination based on age, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status, which means that policies must be as specific and representative as possible.¹²⁸

Implementing good human rights practices can also bring businesses commercial benefits, as it strengthens their ability to operate in new markets and with new investors, creating more stable environments and improving community relations.¹²⁹ Contrarily, companies involved in human rights abuses often damage their reputation and brand image, resulting in a decrease in share value, higher security and insurance costs, and expensive lawsuits.¹³⁰

As Professor John Ruggie stated:

(...) the [corporate] responsibility to respect [human rights] is a baseline expectation, [and] a company cannot compensate for human rights harm by performing good deeds elsewhere. (...) 'Doing no harm' is not merely a passive responsibility for firms but may entail positive steps (...).¹³¹

Fulfilling this responsibility may involve providing training and resources to employees and business partners to increase awareness and knowledge of gender equality and women's rights.¹³²

Guiding Principle 15 is another principle important when safeguarding human rights. This principle emphasizes the importance of businesses implementing appropriate policies and practices to fulfill their obligations toward protecting human rights.¹³³

To effectively address any harm caused and prevent future violations, FIFA needs to establish efficient remediation mechanisms, as the Guiding Principle 15 states. Upholding and promoting human rights requires more than just preventing harm; it necessitates actively implementing policies and procedures. These will offer a framework for implementing and monitoring initiatives, measuring progress, and

¹²⁸ UN and United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Women's Rights are Human Rights' (2014) <<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Events/WHRD/WomenRightsAreHR.pdf>> 1.

¹²⁹ 'Human Rights Translated: A Business Reference Guide' (n 73).

¹³⁰ Lucy Amis, Peter Brew and Caroline Ersmarker, 'Human Rights – It is your Business: The Case for Corporate Engagement' International Business Leaders Forum (2005) 4.

¹³¹ 'Protect, Respect and Remedy: a Framework for Business and Human Rights', (n 117) 17.

¹³² 'Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights', (n 126) 20.

¹³³ 'The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights' (n 70) 23.

holding FIFA accountable for its commitment to gender equality, by also implementing measures to counteract negative impacts on human rights.¹³⁴

Businesses must accept responsibility and implement or participate in efficient complaint resolution systems. These processes should be designed to address the concerns of individuals and communities affected by their actions.¹³⁵ That would entail considering gender equality in all aspects of the organization's operation, from governance and decision-making to resource allocation and program creation.¹³⁶ By clearly outlining the necessary actions and setting specific targets, FIFA can closely monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its initiatives.

A helpful tool that can assist companies like FIFA in this process is the Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Analysis Tool. The Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Analysis Tool (WEPs Tool) is a business-oriented tool that assists businesses worldwide in assessing gender equality outcomes in the workplace and community.¹³⁷

The Tool is based on the WEPs Principles and offers a multilateral framework supported by various businesses, the United Nations, governments, and the public sector. It was created in collaboration with over 170 businesses, with questions based on real-world business practices and international standards.¹³⁸

This tool is an incredibly helpful resource in identifying any gender discrimination that may be present and can also provide valuable suggestions on how to enhance gender equality policies. This proactive approach toward promoting gender equality is not only beneficial for the individuals within the organization. Still, it can also have a positive impact on the reputation and success of the company as a whole.¹³⁹

Guiding Principle 16 is another principle of high relevance, and it concerns policy commitment. To truly commit to advancing women's human rights and achieving absolute gender equality, businesses need to establish a gender equality policy that's developed in collaboration with representatives from all levels of the organization.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ 'The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights An Introduction', (n 122) 4.

¹³⁶ 'Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' (n 126), 25.

¹³⁷ WEPs, 'The WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool' <<https://www.weps.org/resource/weps-gender-gap-analysis-tool>> accessed 26 July 2024.

¹³⁸ Women's Empowerment Principles, available at <[WEPs](#)>.

¹³⁹ 'Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' (n 126), 26.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

By incorporating various perspectives, FIFA can create a comprehensive policy addressing the challenges and opportunities women face in sports. Furthermore, FIFA should reference global norms like the CEDAW and the CRC to ensure the approach aligns with international standards.¹⁴¹ Also, to ensure gender equality in football and businesses in general, adequate financial resources and specific staff members or divisions can be allocated to execute guidelines efficiently.¹⁴²

Guiding principle 17 states that businesses must do human rights due diligence to recognize, prevent, reduce, and acknowledge any adverse effects their conduct may have on human rights. This includes evaluating present and anticipated human rights outcomes, utilizing the data to make informed choices, keeping records of actions taken, and transparently communicating how they address adverse effects.¹⁴³

Human rights due diligence refers to uncovering and resolving a business's human rights repercussions across its activities and business partnerships. It should involve assessments of internal policies and systems and external contact with groups that the organization's operations may impact.¹⁴⁴

According to the UN Guiding Principles, access to remedy principles is not limited to states.¹⁴⁵ They also specify that businesses should incorporate the results of their human rights due diligence processes into procedures and guidelines with adequate resources.¹⁴⁶ Companies should regularly monitor and evaluate their efforts to meet this goal.¹⁴⁷ Finally, the UNGPs advise that businesses should be prepared to share how they handle their human rights impacts, identifying which groups will most likely be impacted.¹⁴⁸ When businesses recognize that they have created or contributed to adverse outcomes, they should participate in remediation through legal mechanisms.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² "The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights' (n 70), 27.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 31.

¹⁴⁴ 'The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights An Introduction' (n 122), 3.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 4.

¹⁴⁶ UN, Guiding Principle on Business and Human Rights (2011), available at <[Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#)>, 21.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 24-25.

Chapter 4: Analysis of FIFA's policies

This chapter consists of an analysis of FIFA's policies and initiatives and looks at examples to support its findings.

4.1 FIFA's initiatives and their alignment with IHRL

According to Article 2^o/a) of the FIFA Statutes, its objectives include consistently improving and promoting football internationally considering its uniting, educational, and cultural values. These are fair play, team spirit, impact on people and the planet, transparency, and innovation.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Article 3^o of FIFA Statutes outlines that discrimination against a country, private individual, or group of individuals based on ethnic origin, gender, language, religion, politics, or any other cause is deeply prohibited, and doing the contrary can result in suspension or expulsion.¹⁵¹ With these two articles, it is already visible the organization's commitment to respecting internationally recognized human rights and promoting their protection, as gender equality is viewed as customary International Human Rights Law.¹⁵²

The concept of gender equality is acknowledged in the FIFA Code of Ethics (Edition 2023).¹⁵³ This code provides rules for FIFA officials, member organizations, clubs, players, and other stakeholders in the football world. It also sets out guidelines for behavior that confederations and national member associations must incorporate into their relevant policies.

Article 23^o outlines that individuals whom the Code binds are prohibited from displaying contemptuous or discriminatory behavior towards a country, individual, or group of people based on factors such as race, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, social origin, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion, wealth, birth, sexual orientation, or any other reason. This is an example of FIFA's policies' alignment with

¹⁵⁰ FIFA's Code of Conduct for Third Parties (2020), available at <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/6734cf98cbeaa070/original/i0mtve5d0zapbtzws1wt-pdf.pdf>, 3.

¹⁵¹ FIFA Statutes, available at <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/5eb2b45e547ff39f/original/ndfxogwkoukoe4dm3uk0-pdf.pdf>.

¹⁵² Shirley C. Wang, 'The maturation of gender equality into customary international law' (NYU Journal of International Law and Politics, 1994) 899.

¹⁵³ FIFA Code of Ethics (2018 Edition), available at <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/302ad028a0bf7784/original/dhkhat135uw887piqha0-pdf.pdf>.

the targets under SDG 5, precisely, target 5.1. As will be further explored in this chapter, FIFA has established policies that prohibit discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or any other factors. It actively promotes gender equality within football and works to create an inclusive and respectful environment for all, which falls under SDG's target of ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls.

The Federation also establishes clear standards and supports a culture of respect and accountability by including human rights concepts in its Code of Conduct.¹⁵⁴ The code binds whoever goes into business with FIFA, whom the Code of Conduct refers to as "third parties". In this context, third parties are organizations or persons who conduct business with FIFA, such as independent contractors, suppliers, or business partners, not including members of the FIFA team.¹⁵⁵

FIFA's use of a code of conduct also aligns with SDG 5, specifically target 5.C, which challenges businesses to implement and develop solid policies and enforce regulations to promote gender equality and empower women and girls across all levels. In alignment with this, FIFA has implemented policies, guidelines, and codes of conduct that promote gender equality and non-discrimination within the organization and football community. It actively collaborates with stakeholders to strengthen gender equality initiatives and enforceable practices in football.

Furthermore, article 15°/1 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code considers discrimination against women and girls a disciplinary offense. This includes any contemptuous, discriminatory, or derogatory words or actions towards a country, person, or group of people based on their gender or any other grounds. Individuals, clubs, and associations may face sporting sanctions as a result and the current 2023 version of the Disciplinary Code also includes more detailed sanctions.¹⁵⁶ This disciplinary provision aligns with Target 5.2 of SDG 5, which aims to eliminate all types of public and private harassment of women and girls, such as trafficking and sexual misconduct, as FIFA is committed to preventing all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, in football. As analyzed, FIFA strongly opposes any form of

¹⁵⁴ FIFA's Code of Conduct for Third Parties (2020).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ FIFA Disciplinary Code (2023 edition), available at <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/59dca8ae619101cf/original/FIFA-Disciplinary-Code-2023.pdf>.

abusive behavior, harassment, or discrimination against women and girls who are involved in football. The organization has then implemented disciplinary measures to address such issues and ensure a safe and respectful environment for everyone involved, such as Article 15^o/1 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code.

Additionally, in May 2017, FIFA's Congress formally adopted a Human Rights Policy, which Professor John Ruggie recommended.¹⁵⁷ This policy emphasizes the issue of gender inequality in football, stating that it focuses on identifying and addressing differential impacts based on gender, promoting gender equality, and preventing all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment.¹⁵⁸ With these changes, FIFA's legal framework now includes a comprehensive human rights framework that strongly emphasizes gender equality.¹⁵⁹ 'Article 4' of the FIFA Statutes (now Article 3, regarding "*nondiscrimination and stance against racism*") is also referenced in the policy document, emphasizing the importance of identifying and addressing gender-based discrimination.¹⁶⁰

Section 2 of the FIFA Human Rights Policy also states that FIFA's commitment to align all its operations with all internationally recognized human rights includes those on the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Mainly, in Section 5 of this Policy, FIFA states that it aims to defend and support the highest international labor standards, particularly those established in the eight fundamental International Labour

Organization conventions. This then includes ILO Convention No. 100, which establishes the fundamental principle of providing equal pay for men and women workers when they perform work of equal value. The primary goal of this convention is to combat wage discrimination based on gender and foster gender equality within work environments, and FIFA commits and attempts to do precisely that.

Furthermore, FIFA also formed a Human Rights Advisory Board in March 2017, responsible for providing reports on FIFA's progress in human rights and making suggestions to remedy any human rights concerns linked with its activities. Another

¹⁵⁷ John Ruggie, 'For The Game. For The World.' (FIFA and Human Rights. Corporate Responsibility Initiative Report No. 68. Cambridge, 2016), available at <["FOR THE GAME. FOR THE WORLD."](#)>.

¹⁵⁸ FIFA's Human Rights Policy (May 2017 Edition).

¹⁵⁹ Claire Poppelwell-Scevak, 'The Gender Pay Gap: How FIFA Dropped the Ball' (Jean Monnet Working Paper 4/20), 8.

¹⁶⁰ Carmen Pérez González, Transformative Equality, Due Diligence and Female Players' Rights: CEDAW as an Avenue for Women's Rights Accountability in the World of Football, Jean Monnet Working Paper 08/20, 8.

key milestone was reached in May 2018, when FIFA developed a complaint mechanism established for human rights activists, coinciding with the start of the World Cup in Russia.¹⁶¹ This shows that FIFA is building a safe space that gives women in football a platform to voice their concerns.

A significant change occurred in the summer of 2022 when the conversation surrounding gender policies in sports gained traction after the international governing body for swimming, Fina, decided to ban transgender women who had undergone any aspect of male puberty from participating in high-level female competitions. As part of its new policy, Fina also committed to creating a separate "open" category for trans women in select events.¹⁶²

In light of this development, FIFA at the time announced that it would be conducting a review of its gender eligibility regulations to ensure that they were fair and inclusive, and aligned with the organization's obligations to human rights. The FIFA Human Rights Advisory Board praised this decision in its fifth report, released in February of 2021, as it agreed that FIFA's existing "Gender Verification Guidelines" needed an update. The Board expressed its satisfaction with the review process, anticipating that it would facilitate a more respectful and informed dialogue surrounding the participation of transgender women and women with sex variations in football, in contrast to the climate in other athletic domains.¹⁶³ This works as an example of how FIFA is working towards a more inclusive and equal environment in football.

The FIFA Women Football Strategy (2018) also sets specific goals for achieving gender equality in football.¹⁶⁴ The Strategy's objectives are to grow participation, enhance the commercial value, and build the foundations. These are the women's football-specific goals. According to the Strategy, this is to be achieved by improving the overall level of play, upgrading the quality of women's tournaments, and investing in the development of talented players. FIFA's goal is to ultimately attract athletes

¹⁶¹ Verfassungsblog, 'FIFA and Human Rights: Introduction to the Symposium' <<https://verfassungsblog.de/fifa-and-human-rights-introduction-to-the-symposium/>> accessed 26 July 2024.

¹⁶² PA Media, 'FIFA to review its gender eligibility regulations in wake of Fina ruling' (2022) <<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/jun/21/fifa-to-review-its-gender-eligibility-regulations-in-wake-of-fina-ruling>> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁶³ Fifth Report by the FIFA Human Rights Advisory Board (February 2021), 16 <<https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/4769eb55b4e22ba5/original/vforeieiz1fh06ld4a36-pdf>> accessed 25 July 2024.

¹⁶⁴ FIFA Women's Football Strategy, available at <<https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/baafcb84f1b54a8/original/z7w21ghir8jb9tguvbcq-pdf.pdf>>.

and provide them with a stable and challenging atmosphere where they can display their abilities on a global scale.

The Federation recognizes the importance of women's football and is committed to creating opportunities for women to excel in the sport.¹⁶⁵ Setting specific and measurable goals like the ones on this strategy is fundamental to aligning an organization's gender policies with IHRL, following Guiding Principle 15. Additionally, it is the way to take a successful proactive and systematic approach toward achieving gender equality, as FIFA is adopting specific and measurable goals to, in this case, enhance the participation and competitiveness of the women's game.

The year 2022 marked the fourth anniversary of this strategy, and the progress is visible¹⁶⁶, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 2022, 144 member associations embraced women's football plans, marking a substantial improvement.

In response to the pandemic's impact, the FIFA Council approved the FIFA COVID-19 Relief Plan in June 2020, with a dedicated \$500,000 explicitly allocated to women's football. An impressive 199 of the 211 FIFA member associations used \$99,500,000 from this fund.¹⁶⁷ These types of allocations of financial resources are commendable from FIFA. Progress is also reflected in the FIFA/Coca-Cola Women's World Ranking, which already includes 185 nations as of 2022, a notable increase from only 147 countries in 2018.¹⁶⁸

As part of their commitment to promoting women's football, FIFA also released the pioneering Guide to Club Licensing in Women's Football in 2022, further solidifying their dedication to the growth and development of the sport.¹⁶⁹ Initiatives like this show how FIFA can contribute to a future where everyone has equal opportunities, giving women more chances of becoming professional footballers.

¹⁶⁵ Michele Krech, 'Towards Equal Rights in the Global Game? FIFA's Strategy for Women's Football as a Tightly Bounded Institutional Innovation', *Tilburg Law Review, Journal of International and European Law* (25 [1], 2020) 14-15.

¹⁶⁶ FIFA, 'FIFA Women's Football Strategy celebrates four-year anniversary', <[FIFA Women's Football Strategy celebrates four-year anniversary](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁶⁷ FIFA, 'FIFA Council unanimously approves COVID-19 Relief Plan', <[FIFA Council unanimously approves COVID-19 Relief Plan](#)>, accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁶⁸ FIFA, 'Women's Ranking', <https://inside.fifa.com/fifa-world-ranking/women?dateId=ranking_20220805>, accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁶⁹ FIFA Guide to Club Licensing in Women's Football, available at <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/26ed8fae521947ad/original/FIFA-Guide-to-Club-licensing-in-women-s-football_EN.pdf>.

Furthermore, the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 in Australia and New Zealand features a historic participation of 32 teams from two different Asian confederations. This is an example of enhanced representation in football and how important it is. The Swiss Federation was also the first organization to carry out a comprehensive survey with leagues and clubs concerning the women's game as part of its larger ambition to globalize football and promote the development of women's football.¹⁷⁰

The FIFA Benchmarking Report of Women's Football, which was created over nine months, gives valuable information about various significant aspects of the elite women's football environment, including sports, finance, participation from fans, player-related concerns, and COVID-19.¹⁷¹ This groundbreaking report serves as an example of how owning up to any adverse impacts FIFA's actions might have on human rights includes evaluating the present and past human rights outcomes and utilizing data to make informed decisions.

As we have already acknowledged and followed UN Guiding Principle 15, this type of due diligence is preponderant to respect international human rights standards fully. According to Section 3 of its human rights Policy, FIFA intends to take steps, based on comprehensive due diligence, to prevent creating or contributing to adverse human rights consequences through its actions and resolve and mitigate adversities when they arise.

Concerning the need for training and resources, two elements crucial in FIFA's human rights responsibility, the organization has developed some critical programs, that consequently help to professionalize women's football.¹⁷² Some examples are the FIFA Coach Mentorship Programme and FIFA's Coach Education Scholarships.

The FIFA Coach Mentorship Programme is a Women's Development Programme's program, that aims to create and empower a new generation of female coaches.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ FIFA, 'Bareman: FIFA Benchmarking Report will help us grow the women's game', <[Bareman: FIFA Benchmarking Report will help us grow the women's game](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁷¹ FIFA Benchmarking Report Women's Football, available at <<https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/3ba9d61ede0a9ee4/original/dzm2o61buenfox51qjot-pdf.pdf>>.

¹⁷² Daniela Heerdt and Nadia Bernaz, Elements for FIFA's feminist transformation: The case for indicators on football and women's rights, International Journal of Constitutional Law (Volume 20, Issue 1, January 2022) 307.

¹⁷³ FIFA, 'Second edition of the FIFA Coach Mentorship Programme launched', <[Second edition of the FIFA Coach Mentorship Programme launched](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

The scholarships project is one of FIFA's eight women's development projects, and it aligns with Goal 8 of FIFA's The Vision: 2020-2023, which is to accelerate the growth of women's football. It is intended to give financial aid to top female coaches and/or players and support their coaching education, career development mentorship, and networking opportunities.¹⁷⁴

Regarding efficient remediation mechanisms, as FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 raised many problems and controversies, followed by various accusations of human rights violations¹⁷⁵, FIFA established a Human Rights Grievance Mechanism¹⁷⁶ for individuals who would like to report human rights violations concerning international tournaments.¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, FIFA's Football Tribunal is divided into three chambers: the Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC), the Players' Status Chamber (PSC), and the Agents Chamber (AC). Each one is vital to ensure equal treatment in the football industry.

The DRC is responsible for resolving football-related problems. The PSC supervises player transfers and resolves any issues that may emerge throughout these proceedings. The AC supervises and guarantees transparency in the behavior of player agents, protecting the interests of those they represent and clubs involved in agent-related disagreements.¹⁷⁸

To effectively carry out its duties, the Football Tribunal follows the FIFA Council's Procedural Rules Governing the Football Tribunal (Procedural Rules), which outline the procedures and regulations for considering cases and conflicts. The Football Tribunal is essential for maintaining the sport's integrity, providing impartial conflict resolution, and developing an open and transparent football culture.¹⁷⁹

The promotion of leadership positions for women is also one of the focal points of the FIFA Women's Football Strategy. FIFA encourages more women to take

¹⁷⁴ FIFA, 'Female coaches benefit from FIFA's Coach Education Scholarships', <[Female coaches to benefit from FIFA's Coach Education Scholarships](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁷⁵ Amnesty International, 'Qatar World Cup of Shame' (29 July 2021), <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/03/qatar-world-cup-of-shame/>> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁷⁶ FIFA Reporting Portal available at <<https://fifa.gan-compliance.com/p/Case?locale=en-GB>> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁷⁷ FIFA, 'FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Grievance Mechanism', <[FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ Grievance Mechanism](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁷⁸ FIFA Football Tribunal, <Football Tribunal> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁷⁹ Dr. Erkut Sogut, 'Understanding the FIFA Football Tribunal' (17 July 2023), <[Understanding the FIFA Football Tribunal - Dr. Erkut Sogut](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

decision-making, coaching, and administrative positions, recognizing the need for better representation. This dedication to leadership diversity guarantees that women have a voice and influence in determining the sport's future, as representation and leadership are vital to achieving equal opportunities for women in sports.¹⁸⁰ Overall, the FIFA Women's Football Strategy strengthens its commitment to its statutes, notably with Articles 3 and 4 of its Statutes, which require it to respect the principles of fair play, integrity, and nondiscrimination, aligning with human rights principles.

The Strategy also aligns with Target 5.5 of SDG 5, which aims to ensure that women have equal opportunities for leadership and full participation in decision-making at all levels of political, economic, and public life. FIFA ensures women have equal opportunities to participate fully in leadership positions within the organization, national associations, and football clubs. It advocates for gender diversity in decision-making bodies and supports initiatives that empower women in football governance, which aligns with SDG 5.

Regarding the Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Tool, as previously stated, is an excellent resource for assessing an entity's strategic commitment to gender equality. It allows for discovering areas for improvement and prospective possibilities, adopting best practices worldwide, and establishing clear and quantifiable targets. Furthermore, the application enables progress tracking over time, allowing for benchmarking against rivals in the sector and standards. It discloses future activities and contributes to ensuring the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially those targeted at promoting and supporting women and girls, by taking advantage of global gender equality resources.

In the context of FIFA, the WEP Tool could be used to evaluate the organization's commitment to gender equality within its operations, policies, and practices. It may help FIFA identify areas where improvements can be made to promote women's empowerment and gender equality in football, both on and off the field. Using the WEP Tool, FIFA can measure its progress in advancing gender equality and set concrete goals to address any identified gaps.

FIFA has also implemented initiatives and programs to promote and support women in leadership positions, such as the FIFA Leadership Development Programme,

¹⁸⁰ Amée Bryan, A VIEW FROM THE TOP: Women Leaders and Contradictory Constructions of Gender Inequality in English Football, Jean Monnet Working Paper 11/20, 6-8.

whose strengthening and expansion consists of one of the tactics in the Women's Football Strategy.¹⁸¹

An example of FIFA Women's Leadership Development Programme impact is Helen Mallon, who was named chair of Capital Football shortly after completing the program.¹⁸² In 2016 FIFA also selected their first-ever women Secretary General, Fatma Samoura. FIFA's executive committee has also shown growth, with six female members in 2021, up from one in 2014.¹⁸³ Initiatives like these contribute to more inclusive decision-making processes, as they put women in positions where they can represent each other, and voice firsthand concerns related to gender inequality.

Acknowledging the importance of addressing the gender gap in leadership roles more clearly, FIFA developed the Women's Leadership Development Programme in 2015. The program's ultimate purpose was to help put more women in high leadership roles in football, which it did through yearly networking, mentorship, and in-person training.¹⁸⁴

While the program's impact is still being felt, women who have participated in it appear to be rising to positions of power in the sport, such as Helen Mallon, who was selected as chair of Capital Football in New Zealand, and Doris Aroko, as vice president of Football Kenya Federation.¹⁸⁵

Even though the program itself does not have any direct legal duties, it demonstrates FIFA's commitment to respecting international human rights standards, such as non-discrimination and gender quality, as well as the organization's commitment to taking proactive actions to reduce gender inequality, which results in more effective decision-making.¹⁸⁶

Supporting grassroots development programs that engage and excite young girls to play football is critical, as they allow for equitable access to training, facilities, and

¹⁸¹ Women's Football Strategy (n 164), 17.

¹⁸² FIFA, 'FIFA Women's Leadership programme delivering dividends Down Under', <[FIFA Women's Leadership programme delivering dividends Down Under](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

¹⁸³ Carrie LeCrom, An Overview of Sustainable Development Goal 5, The Routledge Handbook of Sport and Sustainable Development (Brian P. McCullough, Timothy Kellison, and E. Nicole Melton eds).

¹⁸⁴ FIFA, 'Women in Football Leadership Programme: building networks; strengthening the sport' (FIFA, 2023) <[Women in Football Leadership Programme: building networks; strengthening the sport](#)> accessed in 20 July 2024.

¹⁸⁵ 'An Overview of Sustainable Development Goal 5', (n 183).

¹⁸⁶ FIFA, 'Female leaders in football: creating a network and being a role model', <[Female leaders in football: creating a network and being a role model](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

resources, ensuring that ambitious female footballers have the assistance they require to prosper.¹⁸⁷

In addition to participation, FIFA has greatly emphasized enhancing women's football competitions. The FIFA Women's World Cup has significantly improved in recent years. The Federation has invested in infrastructure, marketing, and media coverage, resulting in higher viewership and growing interest in the tournament. The increased visibility and quality of the Women's World Cup have played a pivotal role in elevating the status of women's football and inspiring young girls to pursue the sport.¹⁸⁸ Fighting gender prejudice in sports reporting and giving equal coverage to men's and women's football are then essential steps toward more equitable media representation.¹⁸⁹

The commercialization of women's football has also been a focal point for FIFA. Although there is still a gap in financial investment compared to men's football¹⁹⁰, FIFA's efforts have contributed to a revenue increase and a wider recognition of the commercial potential of the women's game, as analyzed in the previous chapter. This shows how human rights and good practices brought commercial benefits.¹⁹¹ This increased investment creates a positive cycle, further fueling the growth and development of women's football, as stipulated in "The Vision 2020-2023", Goal 8.¹⁹²

There is also a need for ongoing efforts to address gender disparities in coaching and officiating roles within football. Women are underrepresented in these positions, and the Federation must collaborate with member associations to create opportunities and remove barriers for women to excel in coaching and officiating at all levels of the game.¹⁹³ By increasing the representation of women in these areas, FIFA can create a more inclusive and diverse environment.

¹⁸⁷ Poppelwell-Scevak, 'The Gender Pay Gap: How FIFA Dropped the Ball' (n 159) 17-18.

¹⁸⁸ Women's Football Strategy (n 164), 2.

¹⁸⁹ Emmanuel Mogaji, Foluké Abigail Badejo, Simone Charles & Jacqueline Millisits, Financial well-being of sportswomen, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* (13:2, 2021) 300-301.

¹⁹⁰ 'The Gender Pay Gap: How FIFA Dropped the Ball' (n 159) 6-8.

¹⁹¹ 'Towards Equal Rights in the Global Game? FIFA Strategy for Women's Football as a Tightly Bounded Institutional Innovation' (n 165) 18-20.

¹⁹² FIFA, 'Making Football Truly Global The Vision 2020-2023', available at <<https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/a08ad6a73aa4d41b/original/z25oyskjgrxru7iym-pdf.pdf>>.

¹⁹³ Heerdt, Bernaz, 'Elements for FIFA's feminist transformation' (n 172) 307.

Additionally, FIFA Statutes include measures emphasizing the importance of gender equality and non-discrimination in football. They serve as a legal basis for FIFA's commitment to promoting gender equality and resolving gender inequality in the sport. Article 3 of the FIFA Statutes emphasizes FIFA's mission to combat all forms of discrimination within the football community, reaffirming its commitment to promoting fair play, integrity, and non-discrimination in football.

Overall, FIFA displays its commitment to respect human rights above the basic hard law obligations by voluntarily adopting soft law principles.¹⁹⁴ It recognizes that promoting and protecting human rights extends beyond legal requirements and should be an intrinsic element of an organization's culture and activities.¹⁹⁵ These positive changes in regulations set by FIFA demonstrate how the organization can indirectly impact club decisions.

Regarding the UN Guiding Principles, which we have already established as extremely important in FIFA's mission to align its policies with the standards set by International Human Rights Law, Section 1 of FIFA Human Rights Policy states explicitly that FIFA "is committed to respecting human rights by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights." Even though this human rights policy dates back to 2017, we can still acknowledge that in 2023 FIFA is committed to respecting international human rights through all their initiatives already enumerated.

In conclusion, FIFA's policies related to gender equality have led to significant advancements in promoting the growth and development of women's football. It has facilitated a more inclusive and equitable environment for women and girls in football through initiatives targeting participation, competitions, leadership, and commercialization. While gender equality has not been fully achieved yet, FIFA's commitment to gender equality is evident through its actions and efforts. By prioritizing and investing in women's football, ensuring fair treatment and opportunities, and addressing the remaining disparities, the Federation can continue to drive positive change and foster a genuinely equal and inclusive future for the sport.

¹⁹⁴ 'The Gender Pay Gap: How FIFA Dropped the Ball' (n 159), 16.

¹⁹⁵ 'Women's Football Strategy' (n 164).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As a significant global regulatory body, FIFA holds a unique position of influence within the football community and the broader sports industry. By setting a positive example and implementing the recommended changes, FIFA can inspire other sports organizations to adopt gender equality and human rights in their policies and procedures.

With such a significant influence, FIFA, in its Human Rights Policy, recognizes its obligation to preserve the intrinsic worth and equal rights of all individuals impacted by its actions. This commitment is incorporated in Article 3 of the FIFA Statutes, which underscores FIFA's commitment to preserving and protecting all internationally recognized human rights.

The Federation's human rights policy expresses FIFA's statutory pledge to uphold human rights. It explains its strategy for implementing these standards under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. This guideline goes beyond FIFA and its workers to various organizations involved in FIFA-related activities, and all stakeholders are then encouraged to join the organization's continued efforts to implement this policy, ensuring the beautiful game serves everyone. FIFA seeks to improve people's lives worldwide by maintaining human rights values and establishing a welcoming and respectful environment, promoting football as a force for social change and peace.¹⁹⁶

It is of utmost importance to give credit where credit is due, and in the case of FIFA's efforts towards human rights, the progress made has been significant. With almost 90 recommendations given by the Human Rights Advisory Board¹⁹⁷ until 2021, FIFA has taken action on the majority of them. Specifically, 60% of recommendations have been implemented or closed out, while the remaining 40% are in ongoing or advanced stages of implementation. It is noteworthy that FIFA has taken action on almost every recommendation given, with some cases requiring additional and swifter action, while others needed the establishment of comprehensive systems to prevent future recommendations.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ FIFA Human Rights Policy (2017).

¹⁹⁷ Fifth Report by the FIFA Human Rights Advisory Board (February 2021), 20.

¹⁹⁸ Fifth Report by the FIFA Human Rights Advisory Board (February 2021), 19.

FIFA has set an example for other sports organizations by incorporating recognition of responsibility to respect human rights throughout its policies (such as the FIFA Statutes, FIFA Code of Ethics, FIFA Code of Conduct, and FIFA Human Rights Policy) and has influenced significant and positive efforts in these commitments across a wide range of issues and cases.

The organization's commitment to human rights is also evident in its willingness to engage with various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to ensure that its policies and practices align with international human rights standards.¹⁹⁹

FIFA has then been effective in promoting gender equality in sports by implementing policies, programs, and initiatives that enhance the participation of women and girls in sports, improve the quality and competitiveness of women's tournaments, and provide leadership opportunities for women in football administration.

Additionally, FIFA's commitment to upholding human rights is evident in its efforts to address issues such as discrimination, gender inequality, workers' rights, and freedom of expression within the football community. FIFA's regulations acknowledge the significance of non-discrimination, equal opportunities, and gender diversity in football, which align with the principles of International Human Rights Law.

Overall, FIFA's efforts toward human rights are commendable, and its commitment to continuous improvement and accountability is deserving of recognition. However, there are still areas that require attention and improvement.

After studying and reviewing FIFA's policies and practices under International Human Rights Law standards, several recommendations can be made to strengthen FIFA's commitment to gender equality and human rights.

It is important that FIFA takes specific steps, followed by clear and measurable goals, to further its commitment to gender equality and human rights. To start with, FIFA must reinforce its anti-discrimination protocols by targeting all forms of prejudice within the football community, prioritizing gender-based discrimination.

Furthermore, as FIFA is responsible for ensuring that men's and women's events are equally valued, including financial compensation, this is achieved by increasing

¹⁹⁹ FIFA, 'Social Impact', <[Social Impact](#)> accessed 20 July 2024.

gender diversity in leadership and decision-making roles through targeted programs, mentoring initiatives, and advocating for equal opportunities in football coaching, officiating, and administrative positions.

As stated in the previous chapter, FIFA has been making progress in this department, but a more significant effort is needed when it comes to advocating for women's rights. How does FIFA acknowledge that electing more women for its executive board will impact its operations beyond administrative or organogenic aspects? Conversations and debates like these are essential because it gives gender policies and achievements a deeply rooted meaning. Women are more than just quotas that need to be filled.

To ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved in football, which, following the recommendation of having debates and conversations about gender inequality in football and how it is an ongoing problem in the sport, can be achieved by educating individuals on identifying and reporting abuse, and establishing effective investigative and disciplinary measures to handle misconduct.

FIFA's human rights remedy mechanism in the light of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar was groundbreaking and still is important, as the workers affected are still suffering from the adverse conditions they were under²⁰⁰, it is important for FIFA to set other remedy mechanisms. These mechanisms should be specific to addressing gender inequality concerns and the violation of the internationally recognized principle of non-discrimination against women.

This will allow FIFA to identify areas that require more attention and regularly evaluate and report on the effectiveness of its policies and processes. By doing so, FIFA can ensure accountability and transparency in its commitment to gender equality.

Alongside promoting debates within the federation (with its employees and partners), FIFA should also have a more significant focus on continuous education and awareness campaigns that support gender equality, human rights, and inclusion in football to increase understanding of human rights concepts and how they apply in

²⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch, 'Qatar: Six Months Post-World Cup, Migrant Workers Suffer', <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/16/qatar-six-months-post-world-cup-migrant-workers-suffer>>, accessed 20 July 2024.

football. However, let it acknowledge that FIFA has, as a matter of fact, taken steps toward education and awareness as it has established several coaching initiatives and workshops. However, there's still work to be done.

By following these recommendations, FIFA can better align its policies and procedures with IHRL standards, contribute to progress in gender equality in football, and create a respectful and inclusive atmosphere for all involved in the sport. These initiatives are necessary for FIFA to fulfill its obligation to protect human rights and promote gender equality in football.

To conclude, this research consisted of an in-depth analysis of FIFA's policies concerning gender equality in correlation with International Human Rights Law. It is worth highlighting that FIFA has made extremely important and groundbreaking improvements toward promoting gender equality in football. It has implemented policies and programs to encourage women's participation, improve the quality of women's tournaments, and provide leadership opportunities for women within the football industry. We acknowledge that FIFA is working towards achieving gender equality in the sport and that it conducts its operations understanding the significance of non-discrimination, equal opportunities, and gender diversity in football, aligning its core values and policies with the principles of International Human Rights Law.

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