

Sport & Rights Alliance

Annual Report

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SPORT, HUMAN RIGHTS
AND TRANSPARENCY

Sport & Human Rights in 2022: Our Reflections

This was a big year for sport and for the Sport & Rights Alliance. Billions of fans rallied around three mega-sporting events in 2022: the Men's Club World Cup in the UAE, the Beijing Winter Olympics, and the FIFA Men's World Cup in Qatar. With each of these events taking place in countries with problematic human rights records, our work was more essential than ever. As the hosts engaged in 'sportswashing' to minimize their wrongdoings, the sport and human rights movement exerted a powerful counterforce, leveraging the international spotlight to call for global sport governing bodies to step up to their human rights responsibilities as organizers of these events.

The Sport & Rights Alliance worked diligently and passionately in 2022, in collaboration with experts, directly impacted individuals, communities and partner organizations, to further our mission: to create a world where global sport is an authentic force for good. Successfully harnessing our collective power, the Alliance called out global sport governing bodies like the International Olympic Committee (IOC), FIFA, UEFA and FIBA, the international basketball federation, for not following their own human rights policies. We amplified the voices of athletes, journalists, LGBTI+ fans and local communities negatively impacted by sport and mega-events. We exposed the true conditions behind the bright lights and fanfare in China and Qatar.

The ability for sport to inspire, unify, and empower makes it an especially capable force for positive change – and we will continue to use that force to advance human rights across all borders, cultures and contexts. As long as sport is co-opted to support the interests of human rights abusers while profiteering sport organizations turn a blind eye, the Sport & Rights Alliance will continue to act as a watchdog and accountability mechanism to increase the costs of inaction.

The only way we can counterbalance sport's powerful authorities and catalyze sport's unique potential is because of the unwavering work of our partners, the collective action and passion from the sports community, and the incredible support of our donors. And so as we reflect on all we've accomplished, our gratitude belongs, first and foremost, to you. Thank you!



Andrea Florence

Director

Sport & Rights Alliance

Our Governance



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The Sport & Rights Alliance is a global coalition of trade unions and non-governmental organizations committed to embedding human rights, including workers' rights, child wellbeing and safeguarding, LGBTI+ rights, gender equity and anti-corruption in and through world sport. Our partners are fully invested in a future where global sporting organizations promote human rights and act as an authentic force for good.

Since our founding in 2015, the Alliance has undergone significant transformations in its governance. In 2020, we went through a 5-year Developmental Evaluation and Strategic Review process. As a result, the 2021-2024 Strategic Framework and Communications Strategy were approved, internal governance systems were set up, as well as organizational charts and dedicated internal communication channels through the Operational Guidelines. Building on this work, in 2022 the Alliance has developed creative, lean and agile internal governance policy and systems to operationalize its strategy, including the development of a (i) Charter, with overarching principles, roles, responsibilities and Code of Conduct; (ii) Fundraising Strategy, and an effective and efficient (iii) Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) system to capture our impact in a more systematic and comprehensive way.

The Alliance is committed to a continued evaluation of its structure to ensure an efficient, sustainable, and transparent decision-making process that protects the interests of the people we represent and facilitates organizational effectiveness. Our capacity relies on a strong internal governance structure.

Our Senior Leadership Committee consisting of executive representatives from each of the Sport & Rights Alliance's nine Core Partners meets annually to set our strategy. This committee reviews action taken by the Alliance, approves the Annual Strategic Plan for next year, drives the development of fundraising initiatives, ensures accountability and provides high-level insight and advice.

Our board of Core Partners meets more regularly, at a minimum of monthly, to respond to emerging issues and follow up on previous impacts. For especially urgent matters, a Steering Committee takes action on core partner interests. A series of working groups remain active coordinating our communication, fundraising, and expansion.

Sport & Rights Alliance Secretariat, hosted by the World Players Association

Director: Andrea Florence

Global Network of Athlete Survivors Coordinator: Joanna Maranhão

Communications Coordinator: Rachel Causey

Graphic Designer: Victoria Andreoli

Core Partners

Amnesty International

The Army of Survivors

Committee to Protect Journalists

Football Supporters Europe

Human Rights Watch

ILGA World - The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

Transparency International Germany

World Players Association, UNI Global Union

Senior Leadership Committee Representatives

Agnes Callamard (Secretary General, Amnesty International)

Grace French (Board President, The Army of Survivors)

Jodie Ginsberg (President, Committee to Protect Journalists)

Julia Ehart (Executive Director, ILGA World)

Martha Gens (Board Member, Football Supporters Europe)

Tirana Hassan (Executive Director, Human Rights Watch)

Owen Tudor (Deputy General Secretary, ITUC)

Daniel Eriksson (Chief Executive Officer, Transparency International)

Jonas Baer-Hoffmann (Secretary General, FIFPRO and First Vice President, World Players Association)

Steering Committee

Brendan Schwab (Executive Director, World Players Association)

Minky Worden (Director of Global Initiatives, Human Rights Watch)

Tim Noonan (Director of Campaigns and Communications, ITUC)

Andrea Florence (Director, Sport & Rights Alliance)

Jyrki Raina (Chair, Sport & Rights Alliance)

Our Impact



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Goal #1

The Humanity of Sport

Policy

In 2022, the Alliance conducted various forms of advocacy, consultation and engagement with four target sport governing bodies, holding ongoing advocacy meetings with FIFA and IOC representatives, including in-person meetings with all Core Partner representatives during the 2022 Annual Summit in June 15-18 in Nyon, Switzerland. The Alliance was able to contribute to advancing the following good governance and policy changes:

International Olympic Committee (IOC)



Since the delivery of Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and Rachel Davis' [Independent Expert Report for an IOC Human Rights Strategy](#) in 2020, the Alliance has played a key role in pressing the IOC to implement the report's recommendations. In June 2022, the IOC finally recognized its responsibility to respect human rights. The Alliance applauded the update and its positive commitments, but also called for further [engagement with civil society and amendments to the Olympic Charter](#). Following this report, the new [IOC Strategic Framework on Human Rights](#) was approved in September 2022 – a huge accomplishment when it comes to one of the world's most influential and powerful sport governing bodies. The Alliance is now focused on ensuring that the IOC delivers on this new strategy as well as the human rights conditions [negotiated with the IOC](#) in the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics Host City Contract (HCC).

Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)



Starting in 2021, the Alliance delivered concrete recommendations to FIFA for the establishment of a [World Cup Grievance Mechanism](#), a remedy process for rights-holder groups potentially affected by Qatar 2022 and beyond. The Alliance also endeavored to increase the visibility of this mechanism by publishing a pop-up feature and articles on our website and encouraging reporting among individuals who were negatively impacted. The Alliance continues to monitor and provide feedback on the implementation of this mechanism, balancing [FIFA's reporting](#) with additional evidence from impacted people who did not feel safe or were not aware of the ability to report.

The Alliance's ongoing work around the endemic gender-based violence and sexual abuse in sports (from Haiti, Afghanistan, to Mali and the US) in close partnership with The Army of Survivors, Human Rights Watch and FIFPRO, has led to the recent [commitment from FIFA to launch a global, multi-sport, independent entity to investigate abuse cases in sports, which saw significant developments in 2021 and 2022](#). Having coordinated among Core Partners and strategic, external partners to drive extensive negotiations with FIFA, the Alliance highlighted serious concerns around the lack of transparency, organization and trauma-informed practices in the process.

Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)



Throughout UEFA's process of developing its [2030 Football Sustainability Strategy](#), [the Alliance raised significant concerns](#) about the organization's flawed approach — ultimately publishing a statement requesting to be removed from the list of consulted stakeholders due to UEFA's lack of meaningful engagement and transparency, including the glaring absence of considerations for LGBTI+ rights.

International Basketball Federation (FIBA)



In 2021, the Alliance coordinated campaign work to amplify Human Rights Watch's research and advocacy exposing the persistent lack of remedy and justice for survivors of sexual abuse on the [U-19 Mali girls' national basketball team](#). Supported by World Players (WPA) and WPA affiliate the Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA), the Alliance's work led to the commission of an [independent investigation](#) by McLaren Global Sport, the establishment of a [FIBA Safeguarding Council](#) and more diversity on FIBA's Management Team. In 2022, the Alliance and HRW wrote to FIBA leadership and Safeguarding Council with new reports of abuse and harassment and other developments in the case. We continue to strategize with HRW, WPA, the WNBPA, Young Players Protection in Africa-Mali and others to escalate pressure on FIBA to ensure justice and remedy for survivors and whistleblowers.

Goal #2

Powerful Sporting Moments

Events

Throughout the year, the Sport & Rights Alliance harnessed, amplified and coordinated campaigns around the following powerful sporting moments:

2022 Men's Club World Cup in the United Arab Emirates



After FIFA's surprise selection of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to host the Club World Cup 2022 — without undertaking the comprehensive human rights assessment and stakeholder consultation set out under the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) and FIFA's own [Human Rights Policy](#) — the Alliance [responded on Twitter and its website](#) to share questions and concerns about the bidding and decision-making processes involved. The Alliance [continues to engage with FIFA to push for human rights compliance across all of its events.](#)

2022 Beijing Winter Olympics



In the lead-up to the 2022 Beijing Winter Games, the Alliance hosted a [media briefing](#) on journalist safety and human rights, drawing a crowd of 50+ journalists and activists and lending to a marked increase in media requests and interviews. We also campaigned for athletes' rights with World Players, supported Committee to Protect Journalists' [Safety Advisory](#) on safely covering the event, and leveraged the increased attention on the Beijing 2022 'human rights disaster' in a letter to IOC President Thomas Bach providing a comprehensive overview of the human rights abuses and [demanding urgent human rights reform.](#)

2022 Qatar Men's World Cup



The Alliance supported a global campaign and advocacy on the abuse of migrant workers and heat death risks related to the 2022 Qatar FIFA Men's World Cup venues that resulted in the Qatari government committing to establish a minimum wage; allow independent experts to monitor labor practices and heat risks; and consolidate the reform of the kafala sponsorship system, which can lead to or enable forced labor and other abuses. We continue to advocate for further change in Qatar, including advancing press freedom, LGBTI and women's rights, and pressing for remedy where migrant workers have suffered abuse and even death.

After two Norwegian journalists were arrested and detained by Qatari authorities while reporting on 2022 World Cup preparations, the Alliance supported the [Committee to Protect Journalists' reporting and advocacy efforts on the case](#) and coordinated with FIFA to call for remedy and prevention strategies. The Alliance also facilitated collaboration between Football Supporters' Europe and ILGA World on strategies for promoting and protecting LGBTI+ rights in Qatar.

In November, just over a week before the tournament began, the Sport & Rights Alliance held a [press briefing](#) on the broader landscape of human rights abuses in Qatar. Featuring testimony from out gay former professional footballer Thomas Beattie, Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation journalist [Halvor Ekeland](#), and head of LGBTI+ football supporters group Di Cunningham, the conference resulted in over 100 attendees and coverage in several international media outlets including [The Guardian](#), [The Independent](#), [Newsweek](#), [Inside the Games](#) and [EuroSport](#).

2023 Australia & New Zealand Women's World Cup



Through the host country human rights commissions in Australia and New Zealand, the Alliance engaged with civil society on a [human rights risk assessment](#) that was published a year in advance of the tournament. This analysis is a key result of FIFA's first efforts to embed human rights in the bidding and implementation process for a World Cup. Player rights, including labor rights and gender discrimination, were identified as being among the most salient risks.

Goal #3

The People of Sport

People

The Sport & Rights Alliance has seen impact in bringing forward the following solidarity cases in order to test remedy systems and governance and bring about systemic change:



Systemic Abuse of Mali U-19 Girls Basketball Players

After investigations from [Human Rights Watch](#) and [The New York Times](#) in 2021 revealed decades-long systemic abuse and cover-up in the Mali Basketball Federation (FMBB), the Alliance coordinated the advocacy campaign together with Human Rights Watch, World Players and the Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) to hold FIBA accountable and ensure legal and psychosocial support for affected players. Though FIBA commissioned an independent investigation and announced a new Safeguarding Council, the campaign remains ongoing as victims have yet to access justice or receive adequate remedy and known abusers and enablers continue to work closely with and around the FMBB.

#WhereisPengShuai

The Alliance amplified calls from athletes worldwide to support Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai, who in November 2021 disappeared for weeks after reporting being sexually assaulted and harassed by a former top member of the Chinese Communist Party and Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee. Our collective campaign reached global media outlets and led to the IOC finally acknowledging Peng's reports of sexual abuse and abandoning its inappropriate plans to host a dinner for her and IOC President Thomas Bach.



#OpenStadiums in Iran

The Alliance provided [support](#) to the #OpenStadiums campaign asking FIFA to stand with Iranian women. We [called on](#) and advocated directly with sport governing bodies to protect **Iranian climber Elnaz Rekabi** from retaliation at home after she competed without a hijab. The Alliance is continuing to monitor and explore avenues for continued pressure to support Iranian women athletes suffering under the country's oppressive regime.



Afghanistan Women's National Football Team in Exile

Having fled Afghanistan when the Taliban took power in August 2021 and immediately banned women's representation in sport, the players of the former Afghan Women's National Team demanded their right to organize themselves and play representing Afghanistan in exile. The Alliance supported and amplified advocacy campaigns from the first Afghanistan Women's National Football Team to have their right to play recognized by FIFA.

Goal #4

The Sport and Human Rights Movement

Movement

The Sport & Rights Alliance has dedicated resources and capacity to strengthen and serve as a force multiplier for the sport and human rights movement in the following areas:

Centre for Sport & Human Rights (Centre)



Since supporting its launch in 2018, we have remained an active member in the Centre by contributing to its different multi-stakeholder activities, ensuring focus on impact and reinforcing the close link between good governance, transparency, accountability and human rights. Most recently, the Sport & Rights Alliance Director Andrea Florence was part of the Centre's [Child Labour in Sport Steering Committee](#) and Panel discussion at the 5th ILO Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour along with other internationally recognized experts.

Project Highlight Global Network of Athlete Survivors



In 2022, the Alliance coordinated a needs assessment study to gather input from athlete survivors and representative organizations on the need, interest and capacity for a global network that would facilitate greater worldwide connection, exchange, advocacy and support for athletes and whistleblowers who have experienced abuse in sport.

The study was designed and led by Joanna Maranhão, a Brazilian Olympian, survivor, advocate and researcher, with focus group moderation provided by Paralympian and researcher Stephanie Dixon. Inspired by anti-oppressive and intersectional trauma-informed principles, the methodology took a harm reduction and ethics of care approach, prioritizing the safety, wellbeing, and autonomy of participants. A total of 25 people with lived experience (40% from the Global South and 60% from the Global North) were interviewed.

Based on the overwhelming response from survivors that such a network was indeed needed, welcomed and sought after, the Alliance now proposes to pilot the development of a Global Network of Athlete Survivors with a mission to transform sport through healing, engaging in strategic survivor-led national and international advocacy work on three areas:

- 1. Healing:** Provide a space of learning, connection, support and advocacy.
- 2. Voice:** Elevate survivor voices and increase representation in sport decision-making.
- 3. Justice:** Hold sport bodies accountable for systemic abuse and advance policy.

Guidelines for Effective Safe Sport Entities



In 2022, the Sport & Rights Alliance worked with World Players Association and The Army of Survivors to develop and publish “**Establishing Effective Safe Sport Entities**”, a [concise guide](#) on the key principles and essential functions of entities established to address and remedy the scourge of abuse in sport. This project built on reports from athletes with lived experience and guidance from our own advocacy with FIFA. It provides an accessible tool for all sports bodies, governments, player associations and civil society organizations with a clear benchmark to ensure safe sport entities are able to prevent, investigate and respond to abuse in a manner that protects the safety, humanity, dignity and voice of impacted athletes.

External Communications Development



In 2021, the Alliance began to invest significantly in growing its social media presence to build brand awareness and engagement, increasing from 993 user impressions per day to 4,600 per day (a 363% increase) and user engagement from 0.8% per tweet to 2.1% (a 162% increase) over the course of 6 months in 2021. In 2022, the Sport & Rights Alliance maintained this success and increased Twitter followers to a total of 1,309 in December 2022. This continued social media activity has led to an increase in visitors to the Sport & Rights Alliance website as well, doubling the previous year’s high to 3,000 visitors in November around the 2022 FIFA Men’s World Cup. We continued using the website as a hub for human rights news, adding over 45 posts from Alliance and Core Partners initiatives, including a timely pop-up pointing visitors to FIFA’s BKMS Human Rights Grievance Reporting Mechanism, which has been viewed almost over 1500 times and clicked through in 39 of those instances.

Our Financial Sustainability



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We currently receive organizational, financial, and structural support from World Players Association, the leading voice of organized athletes around the world. Our Core Partners provide in-kind contributions totaling an estimated amount of USD 250,000/year. Oak Foundation provided a seed-grant support to the Sport & Rights Alliance's debut in early 2018, amounting to USD 650,000 until September 2023.

In addition to World Players financial contributions, in 2021 the Sport & Rights Alliance managed to secure the continuation of a 2-year grant from the Oak Foundation and a 1-year capacity building support from Neo Philanthropy. The Sport & Rights Alliance is seeking to expand its financial partnership and sustainable support to build on its impactful, collective, and cutting-edge model. Efforts to engage new donors in view of ensuring the Alliance's sustainability and independence remain ongoing and a primary objective of the Alliance's Secretariat.



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