Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

**Promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal**

**Questionnaire**

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1. **How is sport used in your country to promote human rights? What are the best practices being applied?**

From the perspective of human rights, MSEs bring both opportunities and risks. Massive public and private investment needed to create new jobs, potential for improving essential infrastructure, improving of urban areas, developing housing, increase participation in sport… At the same time, MSEs generate violations of human rights and are increasingly under scrutiny from civil society organisations over a large number of concerns.

ECPAT (<http://www.ecpat.net>) and Terre Des Hommes (<http://www.terredeshommes.org>) focus on effects on children of major sporting events. See campaigns under <http://ecpat-france.fr/kaka-et-juninho-soutiennent-la-campagne-ne-detournez-pas-le-regard-1414/> and <http://www.terredeshommes.org/causes/children-mega-sporting-events/> (new website as from mid-May [www.childrenwin.org](http://www.childrenwin.org))

Human rights concerns also come during and after the events themselves (police harassment of the homeless and squatters, forced removal of street vendors from commercial exclusion zones, lost livelihoods, child sexual exploitation…).

The London 2012 Olympics laid down several benchmarks in addressing human rights related challenges (sustainability embedded from the start, emphasis on leaving a positive legacy for the city, sport in the UK, and for the wider Olympic movement). It also opened itself up to scrutiny by an independent commission.

Not every example of good practice of London 2012 can be replicated easily in other contexts. There are events and risks for next MSE such as in Brazil, Russia, Qatar. Without the requisite leadership and support of the sports' governing bodies and future MSE host governments, sufficient human rights risk mitigation measures will not be taken.

It is in the light of this concern that organisation are targeting the organizers of mega sporting events to take measures on how to prevent these harms and be held accountable when harm happens. A growing coalition of organisations is focussing on including child related issues in the bidding process.

**2. What are the possibilities of using sport and the Olympic ideal to strengthen respect for human rights?**

Olympics and FIFA World Cup have frequently played a symbolic part in promoting human rights. The close association between the Olympic movement and values of harmony among nations, solidarity and fair play, is part of what makes the Olympic Games in particular so popular with business partners.

With events in Brazil, Russia and Qatar and the debates over the social opportunity costs of hosting MSEs, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), FIFA and other international sports governing bodies are facing growing pressure to reform their candidate country/city bid requirements. The 1st phase of the « childrenWIN » project focusses on documenting, increasing awareness and engaging to both mitigate negative effects and maximize the positive opportunities for children before, during and after mega sporting events.

**6. How can the media help in the promotion of human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal?**

Media can concentrate on human rights concerns specifically in relation to companies in their capacity as an MSE formal supplier. Ex. Media coverage and campaign against the mining firm Rio Tinto over air pollution linked to the production of the Olympic medals). Ex. Before UEFA’s Euro 2012, media reports created alarm among visiting players and fans over the risk of possible racial abuse and attacks.

ECPAT and Terre Des Hommes work with media (traditional and social media) for awareness raising on the positive and negative effects on children of the Mega Sporting Events.

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Right scan contribute but they are not a panacea. They will not bring an end to negative human rights impacts or adverse media publicity. They do however, if implemented from the outset of the MSE life-cycle, reaffirm state duties with respect to protecting individuals from rights abuses involving non-state actors, as well as offer a process to mitigate and effectively manage business-related human rights risks. They also enable companies to respond to stakeholder concerns in a timely way, potentially halting problems before they escalate.

As for the Brazil World Cup, Qatar and Russia, a number of human rights-related concerns have gained media and campaigning attention[[1]](#footnote-1). Children Win project calls for a revision of the bidding process to include at all stages assessment, risk mitigation measures and reinforcement for positive effects.

1. Striving for Excellence - Mega-Sporting Events and Human Rights, Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), Occasional Paper Series, Paper Number 2, October 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)