



THE WORKERS CUP

INSIDE THE LABOUR CAMPS OF QATAR
A TOURNAMENT FOR WORKERS

DISCUSSION
GUIDE

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LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKER



Our team has worked together in Qatar for many years producing films for outlets that include CNN, BBC and HBO. Some of these films focused on migrant workers building World Cup facilities, but they only told a small portion of the story, and the workers themselves were often portrayed as victims. Many times we were obligated to hide the identities of our contributors or to shoot undercover. These stories still offered important insight, but they lacked the intimacy that I believe leads to deep understanding.

In order to make a film of which workers could be proud, I aimed to capture the complexity of their experiences and push beyond the common narrative that migrant workers are casualties of circumstance. My hope is that our film will create empathy rather than sympathy for them.

At its heart, *The Workers Cup* is a sports film and it employs the narrative conventions of the genre that have proven so effective over time. In particular, I've been inspired by documentaries about amateur competitions that serve as powerful illustrations of our social structures and the human spirit.

Soccer/Football provided the perfect access point for this emotional and relatable story. Featuring protagonists from India, Kenya, Ghana and Nepal who are living together in Qatar, *The Workers Cup* is a portrait of our increasingly globalized world. Yet sport, in all of its agony and ecstasy, is universal. The World Cup is being built on the backs of our protagonists— still, they can't help but love the game.

This paradox holds the film in balance for me, and I believe it reveals a greater truth about how we find meaning in life.

Adam Sobel

"Director, *The Workers Cup*"

INTRODUCTION



In 2022, Qatar will host the biggest sporting event in the world, the FIFA World Cup. But far from the bright lights, star athletes and adoring fans, the tournament is being built on the backs of an estimated 2 million African and Asian migrant workers, many of whom work for long hours in poor conditions with little pay. The Workers Cup gives voice to some of the men who are laboring to build sport's grandest stage while competing in a soccer tournament of their own. Their very human stories raise questions about corporate use of foreign labor, government complicity in labor abuses and the world's willingness to look away, even as millions eagerly watch the carefully crafted media spectacle that is the World Cup.

**The team in the changing room before a big match.
From left: Kenneth, David, Binumon, Purna, Umesh, Padam.**

INTRODUCTION

KEY ISSUES

The Workers Cup will be of special interest to people looking to explore the following topics:

- athletics
- economic development
- FIFA
- football/soccer
- human rights
- labor issues
- the Middle East
- GCC
- migrant labor
- Qatar
- workers' rights
- working conditions
- the World Cup
- remittance economics

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

The Workers Cup is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- High school students, youth groups and clubs
- Football leagues
- Businesses that advertise during the World Cup or sponsor national teams
- Groups focused on any of the issues listed in the "Key Issues" section
- Cultural, art and historical organizations, institutions and museums
- Civic, fraternal, labor and community groups
- Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities and high schools
- Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as local libraries.

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection, designed for people who want to use The Workers Cup to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues and communities.

In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action.

BACKGROUND



Migrant Workers and Remittances

Migrant workers currently make up the vast majority of Qatar's population, comprising an estimated 2 million workers from Asia, Africa and elsewhere in the Middle East. Most workers in Qatar come from India, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Egypt. According to the International Labour Organization, there are approximately 232 million migrant workers globally. A large proportion of these workers come from developing countries facing high unemployment and poverty, traveling to countries where unskilled labor is in demand. Women comprise almost half of global migrant workers, and approximately one eighth are between 15 and 24 years old.

The workers send a portion of their wages back to their families – the funds transferred in this process are called remittances – often significantly contributing to their home economies. As of 2016, emigrants globally sent approximately \$574 billion (U.S. dollars) back to their home countries, and a report in

2016 from the World Bank found that remittances in developing countries account for more than triple the development assistance received. World Bank studies have suggested that remittances helped lower poverty rates by almost 11 percentage points in Uganda; however, remittance fees (paid to host countries) average 10 percent and can be as high as 20 percent.

The Institute for Human Rights and Business notes, "These workers—and in particular low-skilled migrants—are often among the most vulnerable to exploitation and frequently less able to understand, defend or promote their rights. In the labor market migrant workers can suffer job discrimination, unfair treatment, unequal wages, harsh working conditions and other affronts to their basic dignity. The situations low-skilled migrant workers face are often made worse by excessive debt. This debt is incurred through high recruitment fees they must pay to secure the work.

BACKGROUND



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BACKGROUND



Labour Violations in Qatar

In 2010, Qatar was selected to be the site of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Since then, Qatar - the first Middle Eastern country to host a major global sporting event - has faced widespread criticism. Allegations of corruption during the bidding process and FIFA's decision to reschedule the tournament to the winter have mired the preparations in controversy.

Primarily, Qatar has been criticized over labour practices. Qatar has promised to build nine new stadiums and renovate three more, at a proposed cost of over \$6 billion (U.S. dollars), in addition to updating city infrastructure. The companies working on the World Cup facilities and related projects are under intense pressure - and work in extreme heat throughout much of the year - to complete the ambitious plans, as the country aims to complete the rapid infrastructure development needed to prepare for the competition and the 1.2 million fans expected to visit the country.

International nongovernmental organizations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have accused contractors, including those working on World Cup stadiums, of turning a blind eye to conditions meeting international definitions of forced labor.

The main criticism of the government was its support of the kafala system, which bound the workers residential status to their employer. The Qatari authorities are also accused of failing to adequately address the fact that hundreds of migrant workers die each year in unclear circumstances, with serious concern that their deaths could be linked to several factors, including: the country's extreme heat, a lack of access to clean (and cool) drinking and sanitation water, an unhealthy living environment, overcrowding of their accommodation and bad nutrition among others.

BACKGROUND

An investigation by Impactt, a consulting firm hired by Qatar's World Cup organizers, found that migrant workers frequently work 18-hour days. Three quarters of the interviewed workers, whose passports are often held by their employers, paid fees in their home countries to be recruited. Migrant workers are not allowed to form or join trade unions, something that is considered a key labour right.

Facing intense pressure over several years, Qatari officials have taken various steps in response to criticism of labor practices in the country. In 2017, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations agency that promotes labour rights and protections, officially closed a three-year case against Qatar over its treatment of migrant workers. Both sides agreed to a three-year Technical Cooperation Program that would ensure compliance with international labour conventions and the emirate agreed to enact worker protections, including establishing a minimum wage and lifting restrictions on migrant workers' ability to exit the country, among others.

As of 2019 however, observers on the ground note that the advertisement of reforms surpass the actual changes made - two years after the

Technical Cooperation Program was set in motion. They point to the following shortcomings:

- Workers' ability to change employers, which was meant to be dropped as part of the overhaul to the kafala system, is still decided on a case by case basis.
- The wage protection system suffers from blindspots, with hundreds of workers continuing to be stranded after months of non-payments.
- The national complaints mechanism remains slow to settle labour disputes and in many cases workers have returned home without money owed to them.
- While the establishment of Joint Committees comprised of employer and worker representatives has begun, these committees are not a substitute for freedom of association and forming unions.
- Serious protection gaps still exist for domestic workers and others not directly covered by the labour law.

Update

In October 2019, Qatar once again made commitments to abolish the kafala system. The promised legislation is expected to come into force from January 2020. As of the date of publishing (Nov. 2019), the details have still not been released however a press statement by the ILO mentions the following:

- All workers will no longer require an exit visa to leave Qatar temporarily or permanently.
- All workers will be able to change their employers without their sponsor's permission.
- Finally, Qatar will adopt into law a non-discriminatory minimum wage which will apply to all workers across all sectors in the state in 2020.

BACKGROUND

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GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen or pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion:

- If a friend asked you what this film was about, what would you say?
- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, whom would you ask and what would you ask them?
- What did you learn from this film? What insights did it provide?
- Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?

At the end of your discussion, to help people synthesize what they've experienced and move the focus from dialogue to action steps, you may want to choose one of these questions:

- What did you learn from this film that you wish everyone knew? What would change if everyone knew it?
- If you could require one person (or one group) to view this film, who would it be? What do you hope their main takeaway would be?
- Complete this sentence: I am inspired by this film (or discussion) to...

DISCUSSION PROMPTS



Labor Policies

What did you learn from the film about what makes migrant workers vulnerable? What situations do they face that would not affect a citizen of Qatar?

A worker describes being attacked and cut by his roommate: "He was a nice person and a good man. The only problem is he wanted to go home." The man believed that his employers would only let him leave if they thought he was "mental." Should businesses ever be permitted to deny workers the right to leave? Why or why not?

Kenneth is misled by an agent into thinking he will be able to play soccer professionally in Qatar. If you were assigned to write a statement that all companies were required to present to job candidates recruited from

other countries, what information would that statement contain? Who should bear responsibility for agents who mislead potential recruits? Should people ever have to pay fees and take on loans to get jobs?

Sebastian observes, "Because of FIFA 2022 there is a lot of international monitors like the U.N. and Amnesty International. They are more cautious about workers' rights now." What would the impact be if such monitoring was global and constant? What would happen to corporations and workers if everyone followed United Nations declarations and legally-binding conventions that included workers' rights as basic human rights?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS



Working Conditions

Paul says he hides his life from his friends at home because “Their perception of being abroad is the high life... the nice places you get to visit. But the life that I’m living here... this is no life, man. It's like you're trapped or something.” Even if workers were permitted to leave camp they would have few options – the housing is isolated and there is no transportation available. So, as Kenneth says, “All you think about is to get up, go to work, come back and rest.” In your view, do the companies owe their workers anything beyond the paychecks, room and board that they currently provide?

Paul notes that he often works with people from other countries and they don't speak the same language, so he cannot talk to anyone. How does recruiting workers who cannot communicate with one another influence workers' ability to improve conditions?

Umesh describes the divide between mall patrons and blue collar workers, who are not permitted to enter public parts of the mall. He comments, “There's really no reason to go anyway.” He can't afford to shop at the stores there. How else are blue collar workers kept separate from white collar workers for whom they work? Why would businesses want to prevent blue collar workers from interacting with others in society?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Economics

Samuel was a goalkeeper in a youth football league in Ghana and hoped to play for a senior team one day but he was struggling to make ends meet: "it became obvious the managers were cheating us. I had nothing...I was playing football but it wasn't getting me anywhere. And here I was offered a paying job. The salary wasn't good but better than Ghana...If this is hell then I'd rather be in hell than in heaven in Ghana." Why do so many migrant workers travel to Qatar if they know that the living and working conditions there are so difficult?

One team member uses the phrase "modern slavery" to describe the situation of foreign workers in Qatar, explaining, "So many immigrants are coming to Qatar to work in search of greener pastures. But maybe a couple of them are not finding this greener pasture.

They are staying in Qatar...It's like against their will but not directly like you're being enslaved here. But...you can't go back so you just stay and work for maybe the small salary." Do you think the label "modern slavery" is fair? Why or why not?

In Qatar, male workers can only get visas for their wives if they earn more than \$2,750 per month. Despite working in the country for eight years, Padam earns only \$400 per month and says that even if he worked for another eight years, he wouldn't earn enough to have his wife join him or "afford a car back home." How do companies and countries benefit from policies that keep families apart?



Qatar could lower the threshold. Why do you suppose they don't?

Umesh says he does this work so he can build a house for his family: "With all of this struggling what's the point of our lives anyway? It's for the good of my children that my own life is thrown away." Have you ever heard similar expressions of sacrifice? Where and when?

Calton says, "One day you'll be telling your grandchild, 'You know that stadium, I also built it.' Then your grandchild looks at you and says, 'You don't even own a thatched house yet you built a big stadium.' Then what are you?" How would you answer that question? What would you say to the grandchild?

Padam recalls friends and others who died on job sites. Look around your own community at large construction projects. What price did workers pay to bring those projects to fruition? Why do those who finance the projects, rather than the people who actually build them, tend to reap the most glory and the lion's share of the economic benefits?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS



Tournament Benefits

The GCC team asks for time off to train. Why would the company grant that request? GCC estimates that fielding a Workers' Cup team costs them about \$27,500. What return does the company get from that investment?

What is the benefit of the Workers' Cup to the players? How about to workers who aren't on the team?

The spokesperson for the organising committee says, "This tournament demonstrates how much we care about corporate social responsibility." In contrast, Calton says, "It is not about the worker. It was never about the worker." Why is corporate social responsibility important to the organisers? Why do you think they organised the tournament?

Kenneth hopes that there will be professional scouts looking for players at the Workers' Cup. If you were in his shoes, and assuming there were scouts at the games, would you consider that

opportunity reward enough for the sacrifices made? How does the tournament raise the hopes of workers like Kenneth?

What are team members implying when they accuse the Tanzifco team of not using real workers because the players have "big tummies"?

After a loss, ethnic tensions are revealed, with some claiming favoritism for African players and others reporting racial "jokes" that they don't find funny. What unifies the GCC team and how do/could they overcome their differences?

Sebastian says, "When we started this game I thought... they want to boost this game in Qatar. They want these guys to participate in Qatar. It is just mockery. Doing some article or photograph in the newspaper and showing the white people we are doing perfect here. They have a very big pressure because they are abusing the humans here. We have rights! We are not slaves! We have rights!" Why do you think Sebastian feels this way?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS



Long-Term Effects

Looking for answers to an interviewer's question, one player asks his teammates what they think freedom is. Their answers include:

"I think freedom means... maybe not being under slavery but having access for everything. Your movement, for expression."

"Freedom is... like living in Kenya with free democracy."

"You're free to talk to whoever you want. You're free to express your feelings to any lady you want. That's freedom!"

"Freedom... is emancipating yourself from mental slavery."

How do you think their experiences as foreign workers shaped their understanding of "freedom"? Do any of their answers ring especially true to you? How would you have answered the question?

In Qatar, blue-collar migrant workers vastly outnumber the native Qatari population. What do you think the long-term impact of this arrangement will be?

We see Padam on the phone arguing with his wife. Umesh talks on the phone with his children. What do you imagine the effects of distance and working conditions are on the workers' families?

Trying to unify his team Sebastian says, "Don't make barriers inside you. It will demolish you... We should be good human beings. That is the most important thing and that is not happening worldwide." How could the experiences of the workers featured in the film prepare them to lead the way in showing the world how to be "good human beings"?

ACTION



Taking Action

- Develop a letter writing campaign: identify a person of influence to appeal to for a specific policy change and write a letter to them. Letters can contain a problem statement, facts to support any claims, and a specific request that is actionable and measurable.
- Create a social media campaign: Raise awareness around issues by launching a social media campaign. Create and follow a plan, and connect to some of the big players who also care about the issue, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Labor Organization. In addition, groups that love football could

be an excellent audience for this form of education. Consider creating an infographic to circulate, a short video, or even a meme. This is an excellent, real-world group project that can have a big impact.

- Create an artistic response: After viewing and discussing the film, respond by creating an artwork in any medium (drawing, cutting, sculpting, and painting), music, drama, poetry/spoken word or dance. Artists could then share what their representation means, where it came from, or what it represents to them.

ACTION



- Investigate the policies in place at FIFA or other international athletic bodies (e.g., the International Olympic Committee) in terms of what they require from host nations regarding treatment of workers. Use what you find to engage those who organize international events in discussions or actions to enforce or improve those policies.
- Show the film: Arrange a showing of the film at your school or community center. Facilitate small discussion groups after the film using questions from this guide or create your own.
- Write a film review: A decent movie review should entertain, persuade and inform, providing an original opinion without giving away too much of the plot. Write your own film review and post it to social media.
- Join watchdog organizations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch or Solidarity Center to hold event organizers, companies and countries accountable for preserving the basic human rights of workers.

RESOURCES

AL-JAZEERA: "UN CLEARS QATAR OVER TREATMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS"

www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/clears-qatartreatment-migrant-workers-171108145003698.html

This article provides an overview of Qatar's efforts to improve conditions for workers.

BBC: "HAVE 1,200 WORLD CUP WORKERS REALLY DIED IN QATAR?"

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33019838>

A BBC report on mortality rates for foreign workers in Qatar, including those working to build facilities for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

BUSINESS & HUMAN RIGHTS RESOURCE CENTRE

<https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/migrantworkers-in-gulf-construction>

This website covers companies involved in construction projects in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

FIFA

www.FIFA.com

FIFA is the official organizing body for the World Cup and a supporter of the Workers' Cup. Its site includes statements about workers' rights in Qatar, for example:

<http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/y=2014/m=5/news=fifa-welcomes-workers-welfare-measures-announcedtoday-by-the-state-of-2338852.html>.

FIFA'S HUMAN RIGHTS

https://resources.fifa.com/mm/document/affederation/footballgovernance/02/89/33/12/fifashumanrightspolicy_neutral.pdf

This is FIFA's official human rights policy as of May, 2017.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

www.ilo.org

This agency of the United Nations recommends and reports on labor practices to ensure fair treatment of workers. Qatar is a member state of the agency.

MIGRANT RIGHTS

<https://www.migrant-rights.org/>

Migrant-Rights.org is a GCC-based advocacy organization that aims to advance the rights of migrant workers.

SUPREME COMMITTEE FOR DELIVERY & LEGACY

<https://sc.qa/en>

The website of the committee organizing the World Cup in Qatar.

UNITED NATIONS GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf

The key reference for how businesses are supposed to ensure they respect human rights of people affected by their work.

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: "GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES ON DEVELOPING A HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY"

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/DevelopHumanRightsPolicy_en.pdf

This guide includes guidance on fair labor practices.

WORKERS' CUP

www.workerscup.qa/

The official website of the tournament featured in the film,