

CASE STUDY

*Harnessing Sport for Health: Qatar's 2022 FIFA
World Cup Partnership*

2025



Basic information	
WHO Region	EMRO
City or Country	Qatar
Timeline	2019-2024
Type of intervention	Policy; systems strengthening
Primary level of implementation	Country
Primary sectors involved	Health; sport; transport; urban planning; communications
Primary health outcomes or challenges	Health security; emergency preparedness; promotion of physical activity; healthy behaviours; intersectoral governance

Case description

Qatar's preparation for the FIFA World Cup 2022 became the foundation for a sustained national effort to integrate health into all aspects of major-event planning and into broader urban development. Beginning in 2019, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) conceived the tournament as a structured opportunity to test and strengthen new public health and intersectoral coordination systems. The Sport for Health (S4H) partnership with WHO and FIFA – launched in 2021 as Healthy FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022: Creating Legacy for Sport and Health – was designed from the outset to extend beyond the tournament itself.

Rather than treating health preparedness as a one-time exercise, the initiative embedded it within Qatar's broader public health architecture. The country established integrated command and communication mechanisms connecting emergency services, surveillance units and municipal authorities. These arrangements, initially created to manage large crowds, have since informed approaches to mass-gathering and emergency preparedness. Joint protocols for surveillance, information sharing and risk assessment – developed with WHO support – have provided a model for subsequent event planning and health-security coordination.

At the same time, the collaboration catalysed progress in preventive and promotive health. The Sport for Health model structured outreach around four pillars – physical activity, healthier nutrition, tobacco control and mental well-being – implemented through campaigns, school initiatives and national-media partnerships. These



Child kicking a football. 2022. © Sajin Sudha.

messages, first rolled out for visitors and residents during the tournament, are aligned with the MoPH's ongoing Health Promotion Strategy and related community programmes. The national Sports Day and a continuing awareness platform under the MoPH website and social media now sustain the same themes for local audiences.

Infrastructure and environmental improvements made for the event also supported healthier urban living. Investments in transport connectivity – especially the Doha Metro, serving seven of the eight stadiums created for the event – reduced car dependency and established expectations for transit-oriented access to future venues. Food-safety and nutrition guidelines piloted in stadium concessions informed national guidance for healthier food procurement in public institutions. Facility designs emphasizing accessibility and smoke-free environments have provided references for subsequent public space projects.

Health systems also benefited. The establishment of a parallel medical service and surveillance system during the event demonstrated national capacity for high-volume, integrated health operations: over 44 000 patient encounters were managed without

overburdening existing hospitals. These operational lessons have informed planning discussions on Qatar's emergency-care protocols and health-information systems.

These documented outcomes make clear the programme's systemic effects. Via publication of *Changing the Game: Strengthening Health and Well-Being Through Sport Events* in 2024, the approach taken in Qatar has been documented as a reference case for future mega- and community-sport events in the region.

By embedding health objectives in planning, delivery and legacy evaluation, Qatar helped turn what could have been a transient project into a platform for long-term institutional strengthening. The initiative left in place trained personnel, tested coordination systems, and a governance model linking health, sport and urban-infrastructure authorities. Its experience continues to inform both national policy and WHO guidance on healthy and safe mass gatherings.

Strategic Highlight

Qatar's Sport for Health partnership demonstrates how a major event can serve as a structured entry point for systemic change in urban health. The 2022 World Cup created political momentum, intersectoral collaboration and technical innovation that have outlived the tournament itself. By aligning sport, health and city-planning agendas, Qatar supported the conversion of short-term operational needs into enduring institutional capacity.

Key transferable insights include the importance of defining legacy goals at project inception; using event preparations to test new governance and data systems; and integrating health promotion with infrastructure and service investments. The case also illustrates how partnerships between international bodies and national authorities can accelerate adoption of WHO frameworks on health security, risk management and healthy environments. The local implementation of Qatar's collaboration with WHO and FIFA has fostered global learning, contributing evidence that has already informed guidance for future hosts of mass gatherings.

When leveraged strategically, the exceptional resources and visibility of a major event can anchor long-term policy shifts, strengthening institutions, improving coordination, and normalizing the consideration of health across other sectors of urban governance.

Further Information

- [Changing the game: Strengthening health and well-being through sport events](#)
- [Qatar-WHO partnership leaves legacy for safer, healthier mega-sporting events](#)
- [Qatar: Sports and Health 2022: Playing for our health](#)

- [Ashghal paves the way to FIFA World Cup Qatar](#)
- [Healthier food and healthier food environments at sports events: an action guide for sports event organizers](#)
- [Sport for Health Conference, Doha, Qatar, 4-6 October 2022: summary report](#)