

Executive Summary

'Let's Win This Game Together'

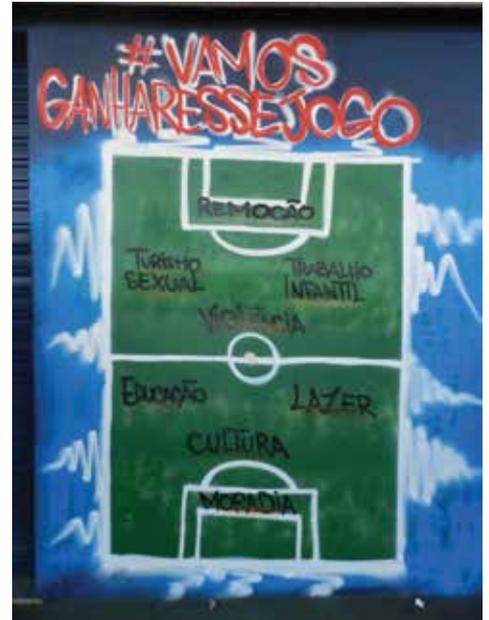
Documenting children's rights violations around the 2014 Brazil FIFA World Cup

Background

Children's rights have been on the international agenda for over 25 years, yet there are still gaps in ensuring these rights are sufficiently protected. This is particularly relevant during Mega Sporting Events (MSEs) that may increase the exposure of children to violations of their rights as well as the worsening of their socio-economic situations. Researching children's lives in the context of MSEs, such as the FIFA World Cup, are key to understanding these impacts. Brackenridge et al (2013) highlight that while risks of child exploitation may increase during MSEs, there is no data to determine whether these risks translate to harm. The pilot research summarised here aims to gain a better understanding of rights violations against children in the context of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. It seeks to provide evidence to advocate that MSE organizers have a role in preventing or mitigating such violations.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted over two stages. The first involved media analysis of local, national and international sources before, during and after the World Cup as well as the analysis of Government and Civil Society data and reports focusing on children's rights and MSEs. The second stage focused on a period of empirical data collection, just after the World Cup in 2014, in two Brazilian cities (Rio de Janeiro and Recife). This comprised in-depth interviews with 13 NGOs/Government Agencies working with children/human rights and participatory focus group workshops with children from favelas in each case study city.



Key Findings

This pilot research identified four key violations: police (and army) violence; displacement; sexual exploitation; and child labour. The additional violation of neglect also emerged as an issue during the MSE. It is important to highlight that not all children experience the same level of rights violations. Overall this pilot research suggests that poor children living in favelas were more at risk of experiencing rights violations. The Dial 100 hotline data suggests that the number of reported violations against children increased by 17% in the 12 host cities during the World Cup compared to 2013 (National Secretariat for Human Rights of the Federal Government, 2014). The interview data also stated that girls are more at risk from sexual exploitation and harassment while boys are especially at risk of police violence.

Before the World Cup: The intense media attention during this period signalled the media's potential to highlight key issues and campaign for children's rights to be upheld and protected.

- Police and army violence was a critical issue in the pre-cup period, relating to three issues: street clearances of street children; police occupation of favelas and displacement through forced removals; and the protests of 2013. These high profile protests received significant media attention and media and documentary analysis highlighted police violence during occupation and around removals. However, it is through empirical data that the issue of violence against street children emerged most strongly; along with some limited reporting in the media. More research is required as the stories of the most marginalised are least likely to be made visible.
- Displacement also received attention in the media and documentation analysis (ANCOP, 2012), with children from favelas providing contextual examples.
- Sexual exploitation and child labour were highlighted more in the media and documentation than by the empirical research, although this was still positioned as a significant problem facing vulnerable children. Furthermore, sexual harassment was raised as a problem for girls during favela occupation.

During the World Cup: In addition to the four main violations, neglect was also mentioned.

- The empirical data suggested that sexual exploitation and child labour were more prominent during the event than displacement and police violence. This latter point was related to clearance of street children as children still mentioned continued violence within occupied favelas. The media attention tailed off in favour of reporting on the games which took priority over issues of rights violations.
- Interviewees raised suspicions of possible sexual exploitation within stadium VIP areas as local professionals were not able to check these spaces. They also mentioned anecdotal reports of child labour in and around stadiums and at Fan Fests as well as the neglect of children at Fan Fests, through selling alcohol to under 18s and poor procedures for keeping children safe. These issues require further research.

After the World Cup: Media attention quickly turned to the presidential elections in Brazil and there were no accessible published documents discussing the post-event legacy and impact. Interviews with NGOs suggest further long-term research post-MSE is required for two key areas:

- Verification and investigation of street children's stories of violence on their return to the cities post-MSE.
- The long-term impacts on children and families following relocation to areas that were seen to offer a lower quality of life at the point of displacement, was raised as requiring further research attention.

Actions minimizing violations against children: Positive outcomes emerged from the documentary analysis which identified significant collaboration between Government, NGOs and UN agencies to produce guidelines for eradicating violations and to use the MSE to achieve momentum for change. The National Agenda for Convergence Protect Brazil, National and UNICEF-led campaigns, as well as the Dial 100 hotline and the creation of the 'Protect Brazil' mobile phone app, which both sought to facilitate the reporting of violations, demonstrate positive steps for ensuring children receive protection. 'The Agenda of Convergence' established intersectoral Local Committees of Protection with the aim of preventing and intervening in situations of risk to children arising around the preparation for, and implementation of, MSEs. However, a review of procedures for improving action in key areas was suggested by interviewees, including: a longer time frame for better integration between organisations operating before during and after MSEs; better and more reliable data, including statistical data on rights violations; and meaningful participation of children within Local Committees. Finally, the empirical data also highlighted some positive influences on children's rights including the emotional benefits of MSEs for community and family cohesion during the event.

Recommendations

The research highlights two key area for recommendation: policy (specifically MSE organisation) and research.

Policy recommendations: New standards should be developed that protect children within bidding criteria and include a 'social risk legacy assessment'. In addition, a review of and enforcement of well-developed local policies for children's rights should be implemented. Specifically, MSE organisers and local committees should ensure children's rights is part of security policy and provide advanced training for MSE and local security forces, including police. Finally MSEs could provide a valuable outlet for campaigning for change around the violation of children's rights.

Research recommendations: Better and more consistent research is required to fully analyse the impacts of MSEs on children. The development of systematic baseline data, over time before, during and after MSEs, would help to identify the type and frequency of violations. A research tool that would coordinate data between Government, Police and Civil Society could be particularly effective and should be trialled. More in-depth qualitative and longitudinal research is required to understand the specific impacts on particularly marginalised children such as girls and street children, including the longer-term impacts. Children's voices must be heard and children should participate fully in any research about their lives.

Contact Information

*This research was produced by the Transforming Childhoods Research Network at the University of Dundee.
For more information or the full report contact: Dr Lorraine van Blerk l.c.vanblerk@dundee.ac.uk*

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