

PROTECT CHILDREN IN SPORTS EVENTS IN **MOROCCO**



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Organizations Involved:

Amane, Bayti, Morocco Child Rights Platform (PCDE), and 16 national organizations working on child protection in Morocco. Sara to add the names of organizations .

The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of ECPAT International and its partners and do not necessarily reflect the views of all organizations present. The workshop was funded by the AEGIS project.

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On May 8 2025, ECPAT International, in collaboration with Amane, Bayti, and the Morocco Child Rights Platform (PCDE), organized a national workshop in Rabat, Morocco, to discuss child protection in the context of upcoming major sporting events: **the Africa Cup 2025 and the FIFA World Cup 2030 (Spain, Portugal, and Morocco)**. The goal was to conduct a risk and opportunity analysis and begin a strategic reflection on medium-term child protection actions.

The workshop brought together 16 organizations, including civil society actors, experts, and frontline workers, to critically analyze risks, share knowledge, and formulate strategies for prevention and response.



Objectives of the Workshop

- **Conduct a risk and opportunity analysis related to major sporting events in Morocco.**
- **Initiate strategic reflection on emerging child protection concerns, especially in digital and sporting environments.**
- **Build collective strategies to prevent exploitation and abuse during large-scale events.**
- **Promote collaboration with Spain and Portugal to ensure regional coherence in child protection efforts.**

Structure and Overview of the Day

The workshop began with a round of introductions, establishing a space of trust and collaboration. This was followed by a presentation of global findings on sexual exploitation of children in sporting environments, drawing from various international case studies and reports. Participants then collectively reflected on how these findings resonate with the Moroccan context.

Gender dynamics emerged as a central theme throughout the discussions. Many organizations emphasized the patriarchal nature of sports, particularly football, where male dominance and control continue to

shape the landscape. Several participants shared that they routinely integrate gender-based violence (GBV) into their work on sports and child protection.

They noted that while reporting of GBV in sports is increasing in Morocco, it remains a taboo subject. There is a growing sense of urgency to address the issue more directly, especially through gender-sensitive and survivor-centred approaches.

Participants also highlighted systemic challenges, including a lack of government coordination and limited engagement by international federations. There was a shared critique that much of the current research and evidence generation around child protection in sports remains Eurocentric and disconnected from realities in the Global South. The need for decolonizing knowledge production and ensuring equitable representation in global processes was clearly voiced.

Participants also identified structural vulnerabilities that heighten the risk of child exploitation, including:

- » The lack of specific legal protections within sports clubs and federations.
- » Limited funding and budget constraints for safeguarding measures at stadiums and during major events.
- » Risks faced by Moroccan children who leave their rural villages to join sports academies in cities, often without sufficient oversight or safeguards.
- » Migration patterns and informal mobility between Morocco, Spain, and Portugal, creating additional vulnerabilities for children.
- » The lack of infrastructure and child protection mechanisms in rural and underserved areas.

These findings reinforced the need for stronger national coordination and a regional partnership with Portugal and Spain to address the cross-border nature of exploitation risks tied to international tournaments.

Participant Reflections

Participants highlighted the lack of previous workshops on child abuse in sports. Many expressed concern over gaps in legal frameworks, cultural barriers, and lack of inclusive infrastructure. There was a strong call for legal reform, awareness raising, and coordinated actions across sectors and countries.

The workshop methodology was designed to be interactive and inclusive. It included the sharing of international findings and global research on child protection in sports, followed by group work and World Café-style discussions. This participatory format enabled the generation of local-led solutions and followed a decolonized, gender-informed approach that centered local perspectives and lived realities.

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SESSIONS

Through these thematic sessions, the participating organizations highlighted key challenges, risks, and recommendations emerging from the Moroccan context. The sessions below summarize the main findings and areas of concern raised during the discussions.

Session 1

Group 1:

Children's Vulnerabilities in Sports

- » Lack of legal clarity around the status of sports clubs in Morocco.
- » Commercialization of sports ignores child safety.
- » Gender barriers and limited access for girls and children with disabilities.
- » Normalization of violence in sports environments.
- » Abuse facilitated by coaches and in some cases, with parental involvement.
- » Disparities in access to justice linked to socioeconomic status.
- » Participants emphasized that child protection should not be left to children accountability lies with institutions and offenders.

Group 2:

Legal Frameworks and Accountability

- » Current penal code offers limited protection.
- » A new draft law on violence against children in sport is under discussion.
- » Judges often blame victims; institutional responses are reactive, not preventative.
- » Governments only act when cases go viral or attract public pressure.
- » Participants called for legal mechanisms that allow transnational reporting and prosecution of offenders.



Session 2

Group 1: **Digital Risks and Online Exploitation**

- » Use of dating/prostitution apps, gaming platforms, and livestreaming pose high risks.
- » Migrant and street-connected children especially vulnerable.
- » Weak digital literacy among parents.
- » Lack of reporting protocols for child-specific cases.
- » Meta has a Casablanca office, but no designated national reporting authority.
- » Recommendations included stronger prevention tech, awareness campaigns, and restriction of child labor at stadiums.
- » Concerns were also raised about children being used to sell goods around stadiums and public venues, increasing their exposure to exploitation.

Group 2: **Civil Society's Role & Cross-Border Collaboration**

CSOs must:

- » Raise awareness and build reporting mechanisms.
- » Advocate for legal reform.
- » Work with tech companies and international partners.
- » Mobilize funding for child protection actions linked to major events.
- » Need for campaigns targeting parents, coaches, and institutions.
- » Opportunities to coordinate with Spain and Portugal on joint advocacy.
- » Calls for long-term partnerships with Portuguese and Spanish CSOs, and the creation of a trilateral working group dedicated to child protection in sports.

Session 3

Tourism, Mobility and Exploitation Risks

- » Increase in sexual tourism, CSAM production, and informal accommodation risks.
- » Visa-free entry from Spain/Portugal increases exposure risks.
- » Urgent need to control public spaces and monitor online behavior.
- » Possibility of child labor and exploitation in tourism-related activities.
- » Highlighted the risks of informal and unregulated hosting platforms such as private rentals through AirBnB.

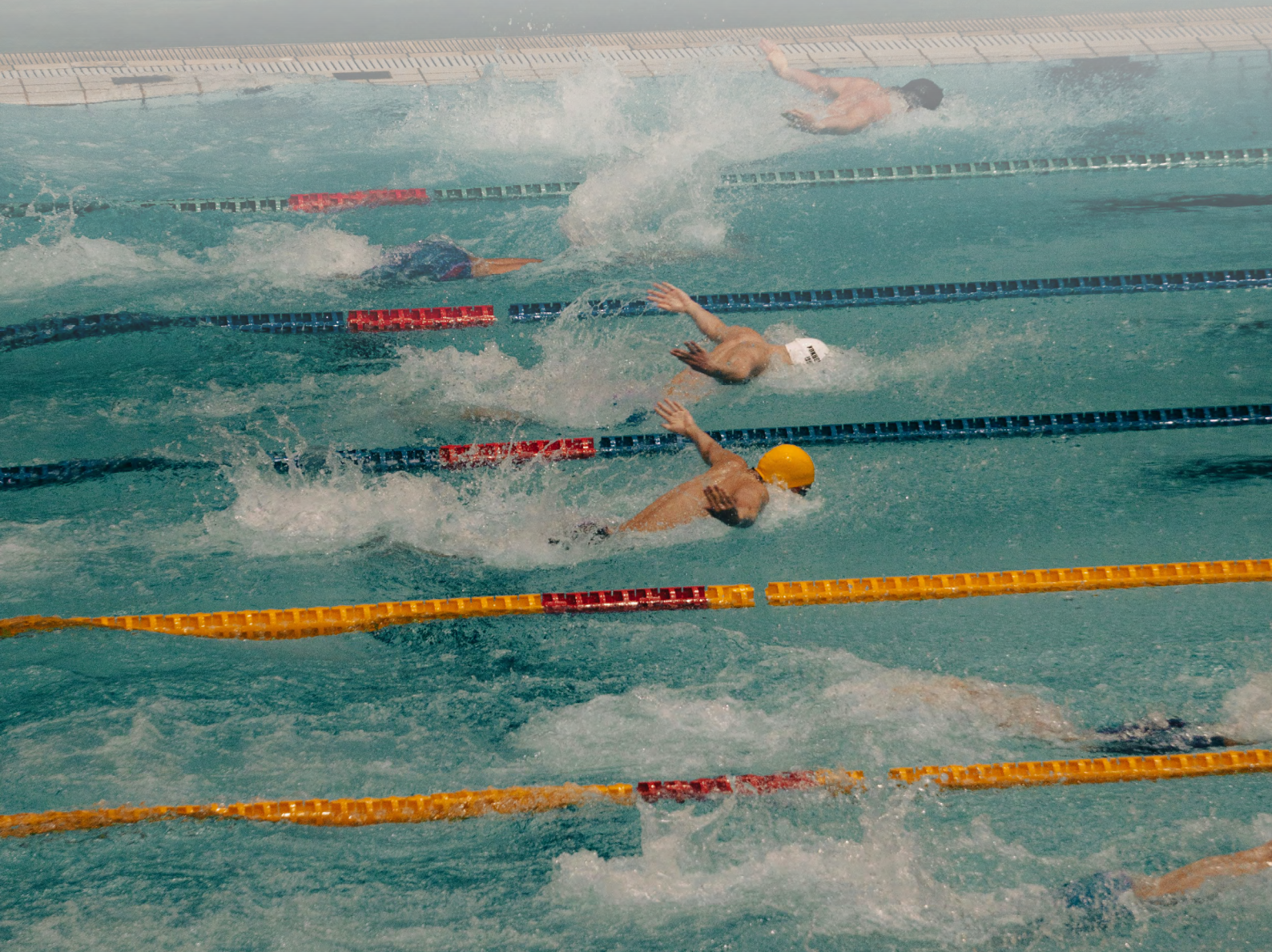
Key Takeaways and Next Steps

- » Public-private partnerships should be formed, including with the Moroccan Royal Federation of Football.
- » Advocacy efforts must target the ongoing parliamentary bill on sexual violence.
- » Establishment of a national hotline and legal reporting channels.
- » Develop child protection policies in sporting clubs and stadiums.
- » Coordination with Portugal and Spain for regional harmonization.
- » Incorporation of child protection into digital platforms and public awareness strategies.
- » Funding and resources should be dedicated exclusively to safeguarding during events.
- » Strengthen rural-urban safeguarding strategies to ensure children who relocate for sports are protected.
- » Formalize partnerships between Moroccan, Portuguese, and Spanish CSOs to coordinate prevention and response.

Conclusion

This workshop served as a critical step in bringing together key stakeholders to address the intersection of child protection, sport, and digital vulnerability in Morocco. With the Africa Cup 2025 and FIFA World Cup 2030 approaching, the findings of this workshop underscore the urgent need for robust legal, social, and institutional measures to protect children.

The outcomes of this session will inform follow-up actions led by ECPAT, Amane, Bayti, and PCDE, with the aim of influencing national and regional policies and ensuring a child-safe environment throughout major sporting events. Emphasis will be placed on cross-border collaboration with Spain and Portugal and ensuring the safety of children in both urban and rural regions before, during, and after major tournaments.





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