



NHSMUN

Background Guide | *UNTOC*

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) at NHSMUN 2025! My name is Omar Balhawan, and I am honored to serve as your director for Session I. This will be my first year staffing NHSMUN, and I could not be more excited to embark on this journey alongside such a talented group of delegates.

I am currently in my fourth year at Toronto Metropolitan University, where I study politics & governance. I was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, and still return multiple times a year to stay connected to my roots. Last year, I took a gap semester to complete a three-month internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beirut, working with the Directorate of Protocol. There, I assisted in welcoming high-level delegations, managing official documentation, and supporting preparations for state visits—an experience that strengthened my appreciation for diplomacy, attention to detail, and cross-cultural collaboration.

Beyond my academic and professional pursuits, I have a deep passion for food and hospitality. Whether experimenting with new recipes at home or enjoying a dinner with friends and family to create memories with taste that will last forever, I enjoy creating experiences that bring people together. I bring that same energy to MUN—focusing on building a welcoming environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and inspired to contribute.

This year's topics address urgent and multifaceted challenges that cross borders and legal systems. I encourage you to approach our discussions with open minds, intellectual curiosity, and a commitment to realistic, innovative solutions. My goal is for our committee to be both a space for rigorous debate and a place where lasting friendships can form.

I am truly looking forward to meeting each of you in March, hearing your perspectives, and witnessing the creativity and dedication you will bring to our work. If you have any questions about the topic, the conference, or MUN in general, please do not hesitate to reach out.

See you in March!

Omar Balhawan

Director

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)

Session I

nhsmun.untoc@imuna.org



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Dear Delegates,

My name is Siya Goswami, and I am so excited to welcome you to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Crime (UNTOC) committee at NHSMUN 2026! This year, the committee has two incredibly interesting and pressing challenges related to transnational crime. I eagerly anticipate lively, well-rounded debate and discussion that is so characteristic of UNTOC!

I currently attend the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. I am studying international affairs and computer science, hoping to work at the intersection of technology and international development in the future. Although I am not part of the collegiate Model UN team at my school, NHSMUN has been, and continues to be, an integral part of my Model UN journey. I attended NHSMUN for three years as a delegate in high school, and I had the honor of serving as the Assistant Director of UNTOC last year. It is incredibly rewarding to return to this incredible committee as your Session II Director. Participating in Model UN during high school and continuing in my undergraduate career has reinforced my passion for international relations and diplomacy, and it is my hope that your experience also gives you a more expansive understanding of the world we live in and all the solutions you can potentially bring to life.

Outside of academics and MUN, I love to read, write, and dance. I am a huge fan of the A Court of Thorns and Roses series by Sarah J. Maas, and my favorite genres are fantasy/romance with a little bit of suspense mixed in! I also do bhangra, an Indian folk dance, as a part of my university's collegiate team. I also love to travel and discover new restaurants. My favorite vacation I have ever taken was a summer trip to the United Kingdom, where we explored London and Edinburgh! I am originally from New Jersey, which means I also love going outside for walks and driving to the beach. In college, I also love to go for walks and visit all the monuments and sites the capital has to offer. One niche little fact about me is that I love aviation and plane-watching. For my birthday this past year, I actually went to an open field next to the airport to watch planes take off and land for hours on end.

I am beyond excited for the debate and resolutions that will emerge from our committee. Both topics cover extremely unique and nuanced topics that require extensive preparation and collaboration. These topics are also global in nature, giving each delegation and viewpoint an opportunity to contribute to the resolutions that emerge. Until then, happy researching and do feel free to contact us with any questions. I look forward to meeting you all in March!

Siya Goswami

Director

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)

Session I

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A NOTE ON RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to the conference.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#), [Advanced Delegate Guide](#), [Research Guide](#), and [Rules of Procedure Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are both prepared to debate throughout the committee. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections.

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic. It is best to focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Country Policy – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and 12 point font size. This is a maximum; **3–5 pages per topic is often a suitable length**. The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for submitting position papers on or before **February 20, 2026**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 30, 2026**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference. Instructions on how to submit position papers will be shared directly with faculty advisors.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at nhsmun@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.

COMMITTEE HISTORY

The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) is a legally binding agreement between member states. It was created as a response to the rise of globalized crime networks in the 1990s, as traditional national laws were insufficient to address crimes that easily crossed borders. UNTOC was established after the General Assembly adopted Resolution 55/25 and placed its implementation under the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).¹

The Convention was signed in Palermo, Italy, in 2000, and entered into force in December 2003.² This landmark convention serves as the main tool in the global fight against transnational organized crime and is based on the commitment of signatory countries to deny safe havens to transnational organized criminals. This is achieved by prosecuting these criminals wherever their activities occur and by fostering international cooperation.

The signing ceremony for UNTOC was held in Palermo, Sicily, the hometown of anti-mafia prosecutor Giovanni Falcone. After his assassination in 1992, he, along with others in the Italian and American law enforcement, laid the groundwork for international cooperation against organized crime.³ Regional groups such as the EU pushed for common standards, shaping early UN negotiations and laying the foundation for UNTOC's adoption. However, creation of a legally binding convention was not always certain. Discussions on the need for a convention began in international forums as late as 1975, until it was finally signed on November 15, 2000.⁴

UNTOC is the fundamental international framework for fighting transnational organized crime, supported by three additional Protocols: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking of Persons, the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air (Especially Women and Children); and the protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition. These Protocols provide further measures in the fight against transnational organized crime, focusing on three essential components. They were adopted to target the most urgent aspects of organized crime such as human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and trading of illicit arms.

However, a country must first join the convention itself before it can join the three protocols. After this point, it shows a desire to work against transnational organized crime by creating domestic criminal offences (e.g., laws, penalties.) Essentially, UNTOC establishes a legally binding framework for international cooperation among law enforcement and judicial authorities to share evidence and find international criminals. Countries are encouraged to update their legislation, which enhances their ability to investigate and prosecute these criminals.

Today, UNTOC is made up of 190 parties. Its additional protocols have achieved substantial participation: the Trafficking in Persons Protocol (178 parties), the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol (149 parties), and the Trafficking in Firearms Protocol (118 parties). By its large party count, UNTOC demonstrates itself as an important international tool in the fight against transnational organized crime.

¹ "United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime." 2021. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>.

² United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime. n.d. "Signatories to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime and its Protocols." Signature/Ratification Status of the CTOC. Accessed August 30, 2025. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/signatures.html>.

³ UNODC. n.d. "UNTOC20 - Fondazione Falcone." UNTOC20 - Fondazione Falcone. Accessed August 30, 2025. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/unto20/falcone.html>.

⁴ Tennant, Ian. 2020. "The Promise of Palermo." 2020. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-promise-of-Palermo-GI-TOC-Tennant.pdf#:~:text=This%20year%2C%202020%2C%20marks%20the%20th%20anniversary,is%20now%20the%20near%2Duniversal%20legally%20binding%20framework.>



Organ Trafficking & Transplant Tourism

Photo Credit: John Crawford

Organ trafficking and transplant tourism crosses borders, laws, and moral obligations. These crimes take advantage of the world's most vulnerable people. Criminals use global inequalities to engage in the illegal trade of human organs.¹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that people are trafficked for organ removal using tricks, threats, and exploitation.² Many victims are misled by false promises of money or medical needs.

The enforcement gap exists because these networks are international. Criminals often work across three or more countries. Donors may be recruited in one place, surgeries done in another, and recipients flown in from a third. These cross-border crimes make investigations slow and

complex. Different laws between countries, limited extradition treaties, and poor cooperation allow traffickers to escape justice. When one country strengthens its laws, traffickers move to places with weaker regulation. Without global coordination, enforcement will stay ineffective.

Global Financial Integrity (GFI) estimates that the illegal organ trade makes profits of hundreds of millions to over a billion US dollars yearly.³ Often, organized crime groups run these operations. They profit from both organ harvesting and transplant tourism, where patients travel abroad to buy organs illegally.⁴ Some procedures happen in poorly regulated clinics. In other cases, some healthcare workers and government officials help make it happen for their own benefit.

Organized crime means groups of criminals working together to earn money and avoid capture.⁵ In organ trafficking, some people recruit vulnerable people as donors. Others manage money and travel. Doctors may perform illegal surgeries. Corrupt officials may provide fake documents or help move people across borders. These groups usually do not have one leader or base. They operate across countries and need to quickly relocate if laws tighten. These activities are hidden, but global.

The world faces a key challenge: ensuring organ donation and transplant happen legally, ethically, and while respecting human rights. Stopping organ trafficking requires reducing vulnerability, improving accountability, and strengthening cooperation between countries.

TOPIC BACKGROUND

The Origins of the International Organ Trade

Organ transplants, the donation of an organ from one body to

another, have long been a thing of myth and legend. For example, the ancient Greeks spoke about organ transplants in a purely imaginative way.⁶ These stories often involved the Greek gods altering the organs of humans to receive animal

organs or body parts.⁷ However, these tales were often symbolic or metaphorical and did not motivate any true medical innovation. Regardless, the idea of organ transplants has persisted throughout history.

1 Abigail Leonard, *Organ Trafficking: How Structural Inequality Leads to Individual Exploitation* (New York: Human Trafficking Search, 2021) [humantraffickingsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Organ-Trafficking.How-Structural-Inequality-Leads-to-Individual-Exploitation.pdf](https://www.humantraffickingsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Organ-Trafficking.How-Structural-Inequality-Leads-to-Individual-Exploitation.pdf).

2 *Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015) www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2015/UNODC_Assessment_Toolkit_TIP_for_the_Purpose_of_Organ_Removal.pdf.

3 *Global Financial Integrity, Transnational Crime and the Developing World* (Washington, DC: Global Financial Integrity, 2017), gfiintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Transnational_Crime-final.pdf.

4 "Explainer: Understanding Human Trafficking for Organ Removal," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed August 30, 2025, www.unodc.org/unodc/frontpage/2024/June/explainer_-understanding-human-trafficking-for-organ-removal.html.

5 "Defining organized crime," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed August 30, 2025, www.unodc.org/e4j/ru/organized-crime/module-1/key-issues/defining-organized-crime.html.

6 Jacques Quintin, "Organ transplantation and meaning of life: the quest for self fulfilment," *Medicine, health care, and philosophy* vol. 16, no. 3 (September 2013): 565-574, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3696169/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3696169/).

7 "Understanding the challenges to investigating and prosecuting organ trafficking: a comparative analysis of two cases," *Trends in Organized Crime* 28 (2025): 51-78, link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12117-021-09421-2.

In the early 1900s, “successful” transplants were achieved with dogs.⁸ In these cases, the dogs would survive a surgery but would die soon after. These transplants demonstrated that it was possible to transplant an organ from one body to another. However, the need for effective and long-lasting organ transplants persisted. Before the 1950s, diseases like nephritis, the breakdown of the kidneys, were incurable. Previously, unsafe surgical procedures often led to death due to infection. Another issue was “organ rejection.” Organ rejection occurs when the organ recipient’s body attacks the new transplanted organ, assuming it is a threat.⁹ This is because a body’s immune system recognizes an organ from someone else as a foreign and possibly harmful object. However, this changed in 1954, with the first successful human organ transplant.¹⁰ This transplant occurred between identical twins. Because of this, organ rejection was not an issue, as the genetics between the transplanted organ and host were so similar.

By the late 1970s, the development of powerful

immunosuppressant drugs revolutionized transplantation. For the first time, organs from unrelated donors could be transplanted with high success rates, allowing the procedure to become a standard medical practice rather than an experiment. These drugs that suppress or weaken a body’s immune system are now effective in ensuring the long-term success of organ transplants.¹¹ This has led to a broad increase in transplants.

Other organs, including livers, hearts, and lungs, have been successfully transplanted. By the 1990s, organ transplants were common across the world, from Latin America to Western Europe to Eastern Asia.¹² Systems like the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) in the United States and Sistema Nacional de Trasplantes (SNT) in Spain were common and ensured greater accessibility to organ transplants so people who needed an organ could be matched with a donor.

With a greater ability to perform organ transplants came a greater demand for organs. As the survival rates of organ transplants went up, doctors began to recommend

transplants more. What previously was a terminal diagnosis or an incurable illness could now be solved with transplants.¹³ This quickly led to a shortage of legal organ donations. This was for two reasons. While the procedure was quickly becoming more popular, the number of doctors who could perform transplants was still low.¹⁴ Additionally, the ability to harvest enough donor organs is still limited. Organs must be transplanted rapidly, usually within 24 hours of being harvested.

This imbalance between demand and legal supply set the stage for the emergence of an illicit organ market. Kidneys were the first organ to prominently emerge on the black market. Starting as early as the 1980s, the black market sale of kidneys was common in parts of South Asia and Latin America.¹⁵ The combination of vulnerable source populations and low regulatory oversight created a prime market for the illegal sale of organs. As the need for organs continued to rise, so too did the spread of the black market. National laws and ethical guidelines were introduced to address these abuses, for example,

8 Thomas E. Starzl, “History of Clinical Transplantation,” *World Journal of Surgery* 24, no. 7 (February 2014): 759-782, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1007/s002680010124.

9 Margareta A. Sanner, “Transplant recipients’ conceptions of three key phenomena in transplantation: the organ donation, the organ donor, and the organ transplant,” *Clinical Transplantation* 17, no. 4 (August 2003): 391-400, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1034/j.1399-0012.2003.00065.

10 Kristen D. Nordham and Scott Ninokawa, “The history of organ transplantation,” *Proceedings (Baylor University Medical Center)* 35, no. 1 (October 2021): 124-128, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8682823/.

11 Dmitri Bezinover and Fuat Saner, “Organ transplantation in the modern era,” *BMC Anesthesiology* 19, no. 32 (2019), link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12871-019-0704-z.

12 Rainer W. G. Gruessner and Enrico Benedetti, *Living Donor Organ Transplantation*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2024), books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=NrLBEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=By+the+1990s,+organ+transplants+were+common+across+the+world+from+Latin+America,+to+Western+Europe,+to+Eastern+Asia&ots=ObI8ofVwt8&sig=fC5Dpe4Cutb1Ag5TUuNQ17k5Rkk.

13 Lee Bolton, “Living donation by persons with certain fatal diseases,” Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, accessed August 22, 2025, optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/policies-by-laws/public-comment/living-donation-by-persons-with-certain-fatal-diseases/.

14 Jay A. Fishman and Robert H. Rubin, “Infection in Organ-Transplant Recipients,” *The New England Journal of Medicine* 338, no. 24 (1998): 1741-1751, www.nejm.org/doi/abs/10.1056/NEJM199806113382407.

15 Roger Lee Mendoza, “Kidney black markets and legal transplants: Are they opposite sides of the same coin?” *Health Policy* 94, no. 3 (2010): 255-265, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S016885100900267X.

India's Transplantation of Human Organs Act (1994) and the World Health Organization's Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue and Organ Transplantation, but enforcement was often weak, and demand still outpaced legitimate donation.

Multiple factors, like entrenched poverty, weak enforcement, private-sector demand, healthcare access gaps, and social attitudes (including historical religious debates in some communities), combined to create fertile conditions for illicit kidney markets in parts of South Asia.¹⁶ While modern interpretations of religion generally permit organ donation, earlier schools of thought were far more divided.¹⁷ This contributed to a general shortage of organ donors in the region. There are multiple other factors for legal organ shortages, including low public awareness and mistrust of health systems.

Additionally, shortages are amplified by inadequate critical-care capacity. Regions lacking coordinated retrieval networks lose viable donations if there is a lack of ICU beds, ventilators, transplant retrieval teams, and logistics, as organs need to be moved fast. Thus,

possibly illicit sources from the black market have become a main way to secure an organ.

The growth of the black market happened similarly in other regions, including in Latin America. Illegal organ trafficking quickly became linked to global criminal groups. These are networks that work across different countries.¹⁸ The organ trade needs coordinators,

Transplant tourism often benefits wealthy populations, as they have the money to pay the cost of travel. The late 1980s and 1990s marked a surge in this phenomenon, especially in countries with weak regulation and cheap medical services.

corrupt doctors, smugglers, and other criminal support. Many crime groups already had similar systems for other ventures, so they

expanded into organ trafficking. This business model is lucrative because what some desperate people pay for organs can far exceed local annual incomes, and the risk of prosecution or long prison terms has traditionally been low in many jurisdictions. The organ trade amounts to between 840 million and 1.7 billion USD annually.¹⁹ "Brokers" are a large part of organized crime groups within organ trafficking.²⁰ Brokers coordinate with the illicit donors and recipients of organs. Often, donors are deceived, coerced, or economically pressured into selling organs, raising serious human rights concerns.

Transplant tourism has also gained prominence. This refers to traveling to another country for an organ transplant, mainly because it is restricted in one's home country or there is a long waitlist. Transplant tourism often benefits wealthy populations, as they have the money to pay the cost of travel.²¹ The late 1980s and 1990s marked a surge in this phenomenon, especially in countries with weak regulation and cheap medical services. Increased efficiency in transplant techniques has strengthened the illegal organ trade.²² However, crime tracking,

16 James Stacey Taylor, *Stakes and Kidneys: Why Markets in Human Body Parts are Morally Imperative* (London: Routledge, 2005), www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315242477/stakes-kidneys-james-stacey-taylor.

17 Michael Oliver et al., "Organ donation, transplantation and religion," *Nephrology Dialysis Transplantation* 26, no. 2 (February 2011): 437-444, academic.oup.com/ndt/article-abstract/26/2/437/1894177.

18 Phil Williams, "Transnational Organized Crime," 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2017), www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203122570-45/transnational-organized-crime-phil-williams.

19 "Explainer: Understanding Human Trafficking for Organ Removal," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

20 Francis L. Delmonico, "The Hazards of Transplant Tourism," *Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology* 4, no. 2 (February 2009): 249-250, journals.lww.com/cjasn/fulltext/2009/02000/the_hazards_of_transplant_tourism.1.aspx?ref=hir.harvard.edu.

21 I. Glenn Cohen, "Transplant Tourism: The Ethics and Regulation of International Markets for Organs," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 41, no. 1 (2013): 269-285, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-medicine-and-ethics/article/transplant-tourism-the-ethics-and-regulation-of-international-markets-for-organs/CBC7F01429EA13E57B48CC9CAB09DB60.

22 Muna T. Canales, Bertram L. Kasiske, Mark E. Rosenberg, "Transplant Tourism: Outcomes of United States Residents Who Undergo Kidney Transplantation Overseas," *Transplantation* 82, no. 12 (December 2006): 1658-1661, journals.lww.com/transplantjournal/fulltext/2006/12270/Transplant_Tourism_Outcomes_of_United_States.26.aspx.



Dialysis unit of CKD & Urology Hospital (Credit: Yahya)

tracing, and policing have also grown stronger, creating a complex and tumultuous global stage for organ trafficking.

Victims & Vulnerable Populations

Legal pathways for organ donation typically follow one of two options. Organs can be harvested from someone who has passed away or from a living relative or blood match. Iran allows regulated compensation for living kidney donation; monetary compensation is given to those who donate an organ.²³ However, many people donate organs out of financial necessity in illicit ways. Selling one's organs provides a quick

and "easy" method to get paid. However, in black market deals, many participants are not fully informed of the illegality. Brokers will distort the truth or lie about organ sales to get as many cheap organs as possible.²⁴

Further, only individuals who can afford to pay benefit from obtaining new organs on the black market. As a result, wealth and health inequality gaps are widened. Legal organ donations can take years, and most people have to wait their turn. Wealthy patients who can pay for secret transplants or can afford to travel for transplant tourism effectively "buy" access to scarce life-saving treatment. This leaves poorer patients for longer on waitlists and erodes

faith in fair allocation systems. The illicit market also takes organs away from the regulated systems, increasing overall inequity. The perceptions of unfairness also lower the legal donation rates and deepen shortages. Policy responses that could address this include greater transparency in allocation, with public reporting of waitlists and allocations, strict penalties for clinicians and hospitals that facilitate queue-jumping, and cross-border information-sharing to detect and block illicit patient movements.

Globally, the majority of organ donors in illicit transactions come from economically marginalized communities. Certain populations are at a higher risk of being taken advantage of. Some even have organs taken without giving consent. Economically coerced individuals, migrants, victims of human trafficking, and prisoners all might be victims of coerced or forced organ trafficking and transplant tourism. In impoverished countries, organ trafficking can be presented like the only option to quickly generate money. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 5-10 percent of all organ transplants worldwide may involve trafficked organs, most commonly kidneys.²⁵ Kidneys are the most commonly trafficked organ because they can be donated by a living person and there is persistent global demand.

23 Diane M. Tober, "Kidneys and Controversies in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The Case of Organ Sale," *Body & Society* 13, no. 3 (September 2007): 151-170, journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1357034x07082257.

24 Sheila M. Rothman and David J. Rothman, "The Hidden Cost of Organ Sale," *American Journal of Transplantation* 6, no. 7 (2006): 1524-1528, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1600613522039004.

25 "Explainer: Understanding Human Trafficking for Organ Removal," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

An example of this can be seen with India.²⁶ India's "Organ Bazaar" is one of the largest physical manifestations of the human organ black market. Brokers will agree to pay off a donor's debts, wedding costs, or medical costs in exchange for organs. But oftentimes, the brokers will lie and promise more money or downplay the actual risk that organ transplants hold. Black market medical procedures tend to be more dangerous and unhygienic than legal procedures. Donors are also often unaware of the impact that living without an organ can have on an individual, such as a significantly reduced quality of life, the need for constant medical monitoring, and a shortened life expectancy. In some cases, "donors" receive no payment at all once the operation is complete, leaving them in worse financial and physical condition. Brazil and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are two other notable countries where impoverished individuals have been manipulated into donating organs.²⁷ Similar dynamics have been observed in the Philippines, Pakistan, and parts of Eastern Europe, where economic desperation fuels supply

and international patients create demand.

Migrants, especially those without legal status, face a high risk of being forced into organ donation. With limited protections, they are easy targets. Brokers and organized crime groups exploit this vulnerability to isolate and control them. Migrants are less likely to report abuse to doctors or police if they are coerced or manipulated.²⁸ This makes them easy targets for brokers and organized crime groups. Many also lack money, which makes them vulnerable to financial pressure. Organ donations may be presented as the only way out of poverty. With limited access to resources, migrants cannot always seek advice or check facts.²⁹ Thus, these populations are more susceptible to entering risky organ donor arrangements. Refugees and displaced persons are particularly at risk, as traffickers exploit humanitarian crises where law enforcement and health systems are weak.

Some forms of organ trafficking happen without any consent, as with human trafficking.³⁰ Human trafficking is the recruitment, transport, transfer, holding, or

receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation. Victims are often moved across borders as part of this abuse. Systems of human trafficking have expanded to include organ trafficking.³¹ Often, individuals are kidnapped or taken prisoner and forcibly have their organs removed. Human trafficking systems are complex and difficult to control. Stopping them requires strong international cooperation and commitment. Under the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons (a protocol to the UNTOC Convention), trafficking for the purpose of organ removal is recognized as a distinct crime requiring international legal cooperation.³² However, prosecution remains rare and convictions limited, often because evidence is dispersed across jurisdictions and victims are difficult to locate.

The last example of victim exploitation comes in prisons. There are numerous documented cases of prisoners who were offered leniency, better food, or more privileges if they agreed to donate their organs. This has especially been the case in certain Latin American countries.

26 Monir Moniruzzaman, "'Living Cadavers' in Bangladesh: Bioviolence in the Human Organ Bazaar," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2012): 69-91, anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1548-1387.2011.01197.

27 Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Global Traffic in Human Organs," *Current Anthropology* 41, no. 2 (April 2000), www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/300123; James Kazongo, *DRC: Richest and Poorest Country* (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2016), books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Epg4DAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT6&dq=Brazil+and+the+Democratic+Republic+of+the+Congo+are+just+two+other+countries+where+poor+members+of+society+have+been+manipulated+into+donating+organs&ots=Zk25cDSKFV&sig=KkJan0_w8B8ecFujh3Hl9rJ9VaY.

28 Tamara Makarenko, *Human Trafficking and Human Security* (London: Human Trafficking and Human Security, 2009), www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203890912-3/organized-crime-crimes-organized-tamara-makarenko.

29 Rothman and Rothman, "The Hidden Cost of Organ Sale," 1524-1528.

30 Debra Budiani-Saberi and Seán Columb, "A human rights approach to Human Trafficking for Organ Removal," *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 16 (2013): 897-914, link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11019-013-9488-y.

31 Kevin Bales, "What Predicts Human Trafficking?" *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 31, no. 2 (2007): 269-279, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01924036.2007.9678771.

32 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, annex I to UNTS 2237, November 15, 2000, art. 3, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons.

However, there is also evidence of prisoners who underwent sporadic and random “medical procedures,” then woke up and found that their organs had been stolen.³³ This was the case in Kosovo during the 1990s, as well as in Egypt with migrants in the 2010s.³⁴ China has faced longstanding, well-documented international allegations and accusations relating to organ removal from prisoners; these allegations have prompted international scrutiny, independent investigative reports, and calls for transparent, verifiable reforms.³⁵ When the state itself is implicated in organ harvesting, as alleged in some countries, regulation and independent oversight become nearly impossible.

Gender also plays an under-discussed role. In some settings, men are overrepresented among living organ donors because recruiters target able-bodied earners, while in other contexts, women are disproportionately coerced into selling organs because of caregiving responsibilities, household debt, or pressure from intimate partners.³⁶ Data gaps hide gendered harm, as most national registries and law-enforcement reports do not publish gender-disaggregated data on trafficking for organ removal.

Therefore, delegates could push for gender-disaggregated reporting and targeted research to inform policy. Training for police, border officials, health workers, and judges could also teach key players to recognize signs of gender-based violence that often accompany organ-trafficking recruitment. Understanding gender dynamics is crucial to designing effective prevention measures.

In some settings, men are overrepresented among living organ donors because recruiters target able-bodied earners, while in other contexts, women are coerced into selling organs because of caregiving responsibilities, household debt, or pressure from partners.

In summary, victims of organ trafficking are often misled or coerced. Brokers and organized

crime groups prey on those with limited access to information and advice. This isolates vulnerable members of society and takes advantage of a lack of oversight.³⁷ Therefore, to combat organ trafficking, attention must be paid to the specific people being exploited. Effective solutions require strengthening victim protection frameworks, enhancing cross-border investigations, and addressing poverty, conflict, and inequalities that make individuals vulnerable in the first place. Further, migrant groups, trade unions, women’s organizations, and community leaders in prevention and outreach can function as early-warning networks and trusted intermediaries for survivors.

Supply Chains of the Organ Trade

Illegal organ trafficking is run through complex planning and organization by criminal groups. Brokers search for targets often in communities with high poverty or debt burdens, monitor migration routes, and cultivate relationships with locals who can introduce them to potential donors. Recruitment is a process of grooming and negotiation. A broker’s initial offers

33 Kirsten Foot, *Collaborating against Human Trafficking* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2015), books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=u8VwCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=The+fact+of+the+matter+is+that+systems+of+human+trafficking+or+complex+and+nua nced+%E2%80%93+regulating+them+requires+firm+international+collaboration+and+commitment&ots=iO-r-qoBMg&sig=akVrMTQ5Khv4DPaoHcpd8UwFU_g.

34 Robert Muharremi, “From Organ Trafficking to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers: A Case Study on How Strategic Narratives Influence International Criminal Justice,” *International Criminal Law Review* 23, no. 4 (2023): 552-579, brill.com/view/journals/icla/23/4/article-p552_003.xml.

35 Usman, Amjad, and Khan, “Human Trafficking and Smuggling: Intersection with Maritime Law and International Cooperation,” 504-510.

36 Muhammad Iqbal et al., “Gender Disparity in Living Organ Donation: A Qualitative Analysis of Experiences and Perceptions of Female Donors in Pakistan,” *PMC* (2025), pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11815450/.

37 Maggy Lee, *Human Trafficking* (London: Routledge, 2013), books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=kHZ0S-epSdQC&oi=fnd&pg=P2&dq=human+trafficking&ots=Y9W3yfyiDN&sig=2kFNfLFWUpdlwWJ07nix2SAcOD4.

of help or small loans are usually followed by misleading promises of medical care and a fraudulent consent process that often occurs under pressure.³⁸ Brokers use social networks, local intermediaries, employment ads, online adverts, and sometimes fraudulent “charities” to find candidates, also through landlords, clinic staff, smugglers, and gang members. They may further identify people from debt records, refugee flows, or prison lists.

Additionally, the location of brokers and the victims they choose is heavily correlated to geographic hubs, or centers, of organ donation. Organ traffickers are especially active in Latin America, South Asia, and Eastern Europe. Brokers work to match potential victims with individuals in need of organs and who are capable of paying for the organs. Often, they will create a “package” deal for people seeking organs to purchase. This includes the cost of travel, trafficking the organ, and the surgery itself.³⁹ Because the shortage of legal organs in the world is so extreme, for those who can pay, trafficking an organ is sometimes the easiest option. Since organ trafficking is illegal, the doctors who perform these surgeries

do it in secret. Often, they are either part of the organized crime group network, or they are coerced into doing these surgeries.⁴⁰ They also typically receive a portion of the profit from the organ sale. Facilities where these surgeries occur are hidden and are often unsanitary and unsafe. Additionally, the mortality rates of these surgeries are high due to the lack of both legal oversight and incentive for safe surgery.

Criminal networks arrange clandestine clinics, falsified medical records and consent forms, and sometimes collude with licensed hospitals by using false patient identities or bribing staff. During surgeries, brokers and crime groups also often arrange safe houses. These are places for both the donors and the recipients to be held. To stay secret, they often work with local police.⁴¹ Often, they pay off law enforcement to make the process easier. This happens more often in countries with high corruption and strong criminal groups. Therefore, organ trafficking touches many industries and interests. Enablers also include travel agents, corrupt officials, middlemen, translators, ambulance services, and complicit medical staff. Every weak link in

the organ transplant system could possibly be exploited.

While the organ recipient often has money to ensure a safer recovery and access to medical resources, the donor is often left with countless issues. Not only have they undergone a major surgery, but they also lack post-operative care. This creates an extremely high risk of infection and sepsis.⁴² Victims are unable to get proper healthcare without revealing the network of organized crime, so they are discouraged from seeking help by fear of legal prosecution or retaliation from the perpetrators. Victims are also typically from groups that are pushed to the margins of society. These groups are specifically targeted by brokers and organized crime groups because they do not attract much attention.⁴³ Unfortunately, groups like migrants and prisoners are not prioritized, and as such, they are often forgotten. The persistent aftercare gap deepens physical harm and prevents victims from seeking medical help.

Victims may be left with a lifetime of health issues resulting from surgery, in addition to mental trauma and anguish from the invasive procedure itself. This leaves

38 Alexander M. Capron and Francis L. Delmonico, “Preventing Trafficking in Organs for Transplantation: An Important Facet of the Fight Against Human Trafficking,” *Journal of Human Trafficking* 1, no. 1 (2015): 56-64, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23322705.2015.1011491.

39 Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Keeping an eye on the global traffic in human organs,” *The Lancet* 361, no. 9369 (2003): 1645-1648, [www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(03\)13305-3/fulltext?version%3DprinterFriendly=&code=lancet-site](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(03)13305-3/fulltext?version%3DprinterFriendly=&code=lancet-site).

40 George M. Abouna, “Organ Shortage Crisis: Problems and Possible Solutions,” *Transplantation Proceedings* 40, no. 1 (2008): 34-38, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0041134507014595.

41 Johann Graf Lambsdorff, *International Handbook on the Economics of Corruption* (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006), www.elgaronline.com/downloadpdf/edcollchap/1845422422.00007.pdf.

42 Edward R. Kleemans and Henk G. van de Bunt, “The social embeddedness of organized crime,” *Transnational Organized Crime* 5, no. 1 (1999): 19-36, www.researchgate.net/profile/Er-Kleemans/publication/260460230_The_social_embeddedness_of_organized_crime/links/0f3175316fc20a9ef6000000/The-social-embeddedness-of-organized-crime.pdf.

43 Jharna Chatterjee, “The Changing Structure of Organized Crime Groups,” *IALEIA Journal* 16, no. 2 (2005), citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=419b94791ea63b3ab8c64265cf78483e9f448ad1.

them with a long recovery and prevents them from fully being able to work a normal job, creating an even larger collection of issues for victims.⁴⁴ They are also rarely paid what they were promised but have no mechanism to collect proper payment. These groups often work with corrupt officials in different countries. They have networks to launder money through.⁴⁵ Payments are laundered through cash dealers, shell companies, false invoices, and via informal digital channels. Perpetrators can also exploit jurisdictional gaps and inconsistent record-keeping to conceal transactions.

To summarize, the typical supply chain of the international organ trade begins with identification and recruitment. This could be from local scouts, online ads, fake job or charity offers, and recruitment in prisons or refugee camps. The next step is donor procurement and transport, which relies on forged documents, cross-border movement, and deals that bundle travel and surgery for recipients. Next is the medical procedure, with complicit surgeons, clinics, and falsified consent and medical records. Payments are usually handled through cash transactions, intermediaries, and money-laundering mechanisms,

while containment and silence are enforced via safe houses, threats, and bribed officials to prevent disclosure. Finally, aftercare abandonment leaves donors without follow-up care, facing broken promises and long-term health consequences. Understanding these stages helps target policy measures to disrupt the chain at multiple points.

The supply chains of organ trafficking and brokers reveal that organ trafficking is well thought out, planned, and executed. Each step of the process, each facet of the crime, and each party involved must be dealt with and mitigated. Without a comprehensive way to tackle each part of the supply chain, it will continue to grow. While brokers are certainly a core part of the operation, holistic strategies are crucial to attack all parts and end this nefarious practice. Policy responses should therefore map directly onto the supply chain. For example, strengthening hospital licensing and credential checks to disrupt medical facilitation, mandatory reporting and transparency to prevent falsified records, targeted anti-money-laundering measures for medical payments, and robust victim aftercare and protection programs to reduce supplier vulnerability

could all be potential steps in the right direction.

International Collaboration

Legal organ transplants have had decades of growth and changes in regulations.⁴⁶ Laws were originally very lax, and transplants themselves were unregulated. By the 1990s, countries began to introduce legislation, but it was mainly focused inwards.⁴⁷ At this point, the World Health Organization (WHO) stepped in to encourage change. The WHO called for transparency and openness with transplantation systems, pushing for centralized networks and information sharing.⁴⁸ The WHO's Guiding Principles and the Global Observatory have been important technical references for states seeking to harmonize definitions and improve registry systems. A driving factor was concerns with potential illegal activities related to organ transplants. Before this, illicit organ transplants were largely considered issues of medical ethics, not organized crime. In fact, most reported crimes related to organ trafficking came from hospitals and hospital workers, as opposed to external crime groups.⁴⁹

44 Akinlolu O. Ojo et al., "Organ donation and utilization in the USA," *American Journal of Transplantation* 4, no. s9 (2004): 27-37, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1600-6135.2004.00396.

45 Michael Levi and Peter Reuter, "Money Laundering," *Crime and Justice* 34 (2006), www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/501508.

46 David L Kaserman, *Fifty Years of Organ Transplants: The Successes and Failures*, L & Med, 2008, heinonline.org/hol/cgi-bin/get_pdf.cgi?handle=hein.journals/ilmed23§ion=8.

47 Dmitri Bezuibiver and Fuat Saner, "Organ Transplantation in the Modern Era," *BMC Anesthesiol* 19, 32 (2019). doi.org/10.1186/s12871-019-0704-z.

48 C.J.E Watson and J.E. Clark, "Organ Transplantation: historical perspective and current practice," *BJA: British Journal of Anaesthesia*, 108, (January 1, 2012), academic.oup.com/bja/article-abstract/108/suppl_1/i29/237577.

49 Eytan More and Hagai Boas, "Organ Trafficking: Scope and Ethical Dilemma," *Current Diabetes Reports* 5, (2005), 294-299, link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11892-005-0026-z.

The next set of major international action against organ trafficking came in 2000, when the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) was ratified.⁵⁰ While UNTOC itself does not specifically detail organ trafficking, it has specific provisions regarding human trafficking. Organ removal is considered a subset of human trafficking. This was a large international step toward fighting organ trafficking and was crucial in spreading awareness of the issue. UNTOC enables mutual legal assistance, extradition, and joint investigations that can connect investigators across borders. It also improved organ registries and transparency of legal transplants.

International institutions have been pivotal in past actions and will continue to be crucial parts of the process. The World Health Organization has been immensely helpful in clearly defining terms, providing a medical perspective, and setting clear guidelines.⁵¹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has also served as a pillar of research on the topic, which has been crucial in enforcement. The UNODC is the parent organization of UNTOC and has ensured that knowledge surrounding organ trafficking is consistent with modern times.⁵² UNODC also provides technical



Launch event urging people to join the NHS Organ Donor Register (Credit: Scottish Government)

assistance for national legislation and supports capacity-building for prosecutors and judges handling trafficking for organ removal.

The first major international action to explicitly address organ trafficking came in 2015, with the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs.⁵³ This treaty explicitly criminalized the organ trade. It included measures and restrictions on coerced organ transplants. It also provided measures for victim protection, mechanisms for international cooperation, and overall gave a clear guide for

preventing organ trafficking.⁵⁴ The Convention also established mechanisms for cooperation on prosecution, information exchange, and victim assistance that can be models for non-signatory states. This convention, unfortunately, was limited in the countries that actually ratified it. Limited ratification and patchy uptake mean enforcement remains uneven. The nature of transnational organized crime makes it extremely difficult to combat without broader agreement and collaboration. Many countries with high levels of organ trafficking did not ratify the treaty at all, which limited the ability of those involved

50 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime."

51 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Explainer: Understanding Human Trafficking for Organ Removal,"

52 American Society of Transplantation, "Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism," accessed August 23, 2025, www.myast.org/organ-trafficking-and-transplant-tourism.

53 Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs*, CETS 216, November 25, 2015, rm.coe.int/16806dca3a.

54 C Petrini, "A New Tool in the Global Fight Against Traffic in Human Organs," *Clinica Teraputa*, 166 (2015), pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25756255/.

to make meaningful strides against organ trafficking.⁵⁵

There are also examples of regional conventions and collaborative action. For example, the African Union has attempted initiatives against organ trafficking.⁵⁶ These drafts have yet to fully materialize due to issues with enforcement. Practical regional steps that work include shared transplant registries, standardized consent forms, and regional task forces for joint investigations and prosecutions. Combating crime prevention networks is difficult without broader global support. The European Union has had broader success through sets of treaties and agreements that take firmer stances against organ trafficking. The EU's comparative success stems from legal harmonization and operational cooperation.

At the legal level, EU instruments (notably Directive 2011/36/EU) and the Council of Europe's 2015 Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs have helped align criminal definitions and victim-protection standards.⁵⁷ This enables more consistent prosecution of organ-removal offenses. Operational cooperation through Europol, Eurojust, and joint investigative teams improves intelligence sharing and reduces the demand

for illicit organs by optimizing the lawful allocation. Nevertheless, enforcement remains uneven where corruption, patchy implementation, or gaps between health-sector reports and criminal investigations persist, allowing traffickers to exploit weaker jurisdictions.

The 2008 Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism (updated in 2018) clarified global terminology and urged all states to prohibit the sale of organs and strengthen transparency in donation systems. The Declaration specifically defined key concepts such as “transplant commercialism,” “trafficking in human organs,” and “transplant tourism,” giving states and international organizations a common vocabulary for law, policy, and medical ethics.⁵⁸

It recommended banning the sale of organs, promoting ethical deceased-donor programs, establishing transparent national transplant registries and allocation systems, protecting donors and recipients, and sanctioning brokers and complicit medical personnel. Although highly influential in ways such as shaping WHO guidance, professional codes, and many national reforms, the Declaration is non-binding. Its impact, therefore, depends on domestic

adoption, institutional capacity, and sustained enforcement efforts. While the Declaration provides a crucial framework, durable progress requires implementing the guidelines more widely, promoting organ registries and increased data sharing, targeted anti-money-laundering measures, and enhanced operational cooperation to address the technical and financial means that traffickers now use.

Research is the backbone of enforcement. It provides further information and facts about the issue itself. The International Police Organization (INTERPOL) has worked to unite law enforcement across borders and has been indispensable in the “boots on the ground” side of the issue.⁵⁹ INTERPOL's notices and targeted operations (including forensic support and cross-border task forces) are practical tools that have disrupted trafficking networks. The nature of transnational organized crime means that international collaboration is crucial. Countries cannot work alone. Criminal groups benefit from crossing borders to skirt enforcement and regulation. Thus, international collaboration and framework sharing will need to grow in importance and prominence.

55 The Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons, “Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal,” *ICAT Issue Brief*, November 2021, icat.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd461/files/publications/icat_brief_tip_for_or_final.pdf.

56 AFRICAN REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION, “ITUC-Africa Calls for Urgent Action to End Organ Trafficking and Exploitation in MENA,” IUTC, April 24, 2025 www.ituc-africa.org/ITUC-Africa-Calls-for-Urgent-Action-to-End-Organ-Trafficking-and-Exploitation.html.

57 Rory Watson, “European parliament tries to stamp out trafficking in human organs,” *British Journal of Medicine*, VOL 327, (2003), pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC261687/

58 “The Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism (2018 Edition),” *Transplantation* 103, no. 2 (February 2019): 218–219, doi.org/10.1097/TP.0000000000002540.

59 Migration Data Portal, “Human Trafficking,” Migration Data Portal, July 31, 2024, www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/human-trafficking.

Other international treaties have worked to strengthen collaboration in other areas, thus impacting collaboration on crime as a whole. However, definitions of various crimes within organ trafficking differ from country to country.⁶⁰ As a result, international collaboration is more difficult absent a clear framework. While agreements have pushed countries to pay broader attention, the mechanics of how to combat organ trafficking remain shallow and undeveloped. Organ traffickers benefit from ambiguity and a lack of clear oversight. As such, firm and clear international collaboration is needed.



Historic donor cards from the UK (Credit: Science Museum)

CURRENT STATUS

Case Study: Organ Trafficking in Southeast Asia

Across Southeast Asia, the illegal trade in human organs, especially kidneys, has grown stronger. It thrives on poverty, weak health systems, poor cross-border policing, and online anonymity, and was accelerated by post-COVID economic crises.⁶¹ Traffickers move donors, buyers, papers, and money between countries, taking advantage of legal gaps and quick-shifting

routes. The demand for transplants keeps rising while legal supply stays low.

International agencies have documented a modern toolkit for traffickers. UNODC and INTERPOL note the increasing use of social media, messaging apps, and opaque digital channels to recruit donors, advertise organs, coordinate logistics, and obscure payments.⁶² Payments are also concealed through cash, third-party intermediaries, false invoicing, or cryptocurrencies, complicating

financial traces and anti-money-laundering efforts.⁶³ UNODC's recent reporting also documents that organized crime groups active in online financial scams and cyberfraud now overlap with trafficking networks. This indicates complex syndicates that finance and hide organ-trafficking operations.⁶⁴

Additionally, while arrests and targeted operations are rising, prosecution and conviction rates for trafficking-for-organ-removal remain low in many countries, and victims often receive no

⁶⁰ Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking, "Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal."

⁶¹ Yantoultra Ngui, "Southeast Asia Human Trafficking Now a Global Crisis, Interpol Says," *Reuters*, March 27, 2024, www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/southeast-asia-human-trafficking-now-global-crisis-interpol-says-2024-03-27/.

⁶² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal*.

⁶³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Trafficking in Persons (GLOTIP) 2024* (Vienna: UNODC, 2024), www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2024/GLOTIP2024_BOOK.pdf.

⁶⁴ UNODC, *GLOTIP 2024*.



Participants at a World Day Against Trafficking in Persons event; global advocacy efforts relevant to organ trafficking awareness (Credit: ETI2021)

reparations.⁶⁵ This is a persistent enforcement gap emphasized in recent UN and US government reporting. In 2024, the World Health Assembly adopted Resolution WHA 77.4, calling on Member States to improve equitable access to transplants, strengthen oversight, and implement WHO's updated guiding principles on transplantation. The WHO is now developing a global strategy on donation and transplantation (to be presented in 2026), reinforcing international technical support

for Member States to tighten oversight and registries.⁶⁶ These policy steps are intended to shrink the permissive space for transplant tourism and organ trafficking, but as always, their impact depends on national implementation and enforcement.⁶⁷

In the early 2000s, a worldwide shortage of organs, severe poverty, and weak institutions allowed criminal groups to take advantage of the situation by creating transplant tourism networks. In particular, after global attention on

kidney sales in poor areas of the Philippines, the government passed the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003.⁶⁸ This introduced transplant regulations from the Department of Health.⁶⁹ But corruption, weak law enforcement, and the secret nature of the trade made it difficult to punish offenders, and the financial incentive was too compelling for some people. In low-income areas, people sold their kidneys for as little as USD 2,000.⁷⁰

Across Southeast Asia today, poverty and debt remain the main drivers of organ trade. In Myanmar, its civil war has left many people willing to sell kidneys out of desperation. Evidence shows brokers target vulnerable individuals from economically disadvantaged and conflict-affected regions like Kachin and Shan States. Investigations and media reporting in 2023-2024 documented Myanmar's citizens traveling to India to sell kidneys. This prompted Indian probes into alleged "cash for kidneys" scandals and highlighted how regional migration, conflict, and poverty feed cross-border organ markets.⁷¹

In Indonesia in 2023, police uncovered a ring that sent Indonesians to Cambodia for

65 U.S. Department of State, *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines*, 2024, www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/philippines/.

66 World Health Organization, Human Organ and Tissue Transplantation: Resolution WHA 77.4 (Geneva: WHO, 2024), www.who.int/health-topics/transplantation.

67 World Health Organization, Human Organ and Tissue Transplantation: Resolution WHA 77.4.

68 Republic of the Philippines, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, Republic Act No. 9208, amended by RA 10364; Department of Health, Administrative Order No. 2008-0004, "Rules and Regulations Governing the Accreditation of Transplant Facilities Engaged in Kidney Transplantation from Living Non-Related Donors," January 2008, lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2003/ra_9208_2003.html

69 Republic of the Philippines, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, Republic Act No. 9208.

70 Channel NewsAsia, "Kidney for Sale: Inside Philippines' Illegal Organ Trade."

71 "Debt and Desperation Driving Overseas Kidney Sales," *Frontier Myanmar* (date of publication), January 17, 2023, www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/debt-and-desperation-driving-overseas-kidney-sales/.

kidney surgeries.⁷² They arrested 12 suspects, including a police officer and an immigration worker, tied to 122 sales.⁷³ This showed how involved corruption is and sparked calls for tougher laws at the national level. In the Philippines, a 2023 US Department of State Human Rights Report noted that the government has made only small strides in prosecuting crimes related to trafficking.⁷⁴ This is exemplified by how in 2024 Philippine authorities uncovered organ-trafficking links involving medical staff, prompting them to reiterate that organ selling constitutes human trafficking.⁷⁵ This case again shows how poverty and weak hospital checks keep feeding the organ trade, even with long-standing bans.⁷⁶

Southeast Asia's geography and weak legal patchwork encourage transplant tourism and make smuggling routes easy to reconfigure.⁷⁷ Routes shift quickly: Myanmar to India, Indonesia to Cambodia, and within the Philippines.⁷⁸ The region's porous land borders, island archipelagos, and dense coastal shipping lanes—combined with large migration

flows, low-cost regional flights, and established medical-tourism corridors—allow traffickers to move donors and recipients quickly across jurisdictions and to conceal travels among routine labor or family migrations. Traffickers also exploit low visa barriers, and the same criminal networks already involved in other transnational crimes in Southeast Asia are increasingly implicated.

Especially between 2023 and 2025, organ trafficking in Southeast Asia has been driven by poverty, weak systems, and organ demand.⁷⁹ Global bodies have sharpened guidance, but weak enforcement and corruption remain. The way forward requires closing legal loopholes, cutting financial flows that sustain trafficking, expanding ethical deceased-donor systems, and strengthening regional law-enforcement cooperation and victim assistance programs.⁸⁰ Even with efforts to stop trafficking, presently, crime groups still work with minimal consequences.⁸¹ This has made the region a major source of trafficked organs, creating serious ethical and humanitarian issues.

Exploitation in Informal Health Systems and Unregulated Clinics

Illicit organ transplantation operations frequently occur in informal or unregulated medical facilities. These are establishments without adequate supervision, consistent legal frameworks, or safety measures. These operations take advantage of gaps in healthcare oversight, commonly evading ethical evaluations, disregarding proper consent procedures, and functioning without clear donor and recipient monitoring systems.⁸² These conditions allow organ traffickers to hide their illegal activities through document falsification, inadequate donor evaluation, and performing risky surgical procedures. Unregulated clinics often lack basic infection-control protocols, standardized blood-borne pathogen screening, safe anesthesia practices, and post-operative follow-up. All this dramatically increases donor morbidity and mortality.

Additionally, fear of organ traffickers may prevent people from

72 Ngui, "Southeast Asia Human Trafficking Now a Global Crisis, Interpol Says."

73 Ngui, "Southeast Asia Human Trafficking Now a Global Crisis, Interpol Says."

74 U.S. Department of State, 2023 Philippines Human Rights Report, www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267_PHILIPPINES-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf

75 "NKT1: No Basis Yet to Sanction Nurse Linked by NBI to Organ Trafficking," *Inquirer.net*, July 18, 2024, newsinfo.inquirer.net/1961988/nkti-no-basis-yet-to-sanction-nurse-linked-by-nbi-to-organ-trafficking.

76 Channel NewsAsia, "Kidney for Sale: Inside Philippines' Illegal Organ Trade," CNA, 2018, www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/kidney-for-sale-philippines-illegal-organ-trade-857551.

77 "Exploring Asia Organ Trade," *Freedom United*, August 21, 2024, www.freedomunited.org/news/exploring-asia-organ-trade/.

78 Bodean Hedwards, Lucia Bird Ruiz-Benitez de Lugo, and Perkha Traxl, *Maritime People Smuggling and Its Intersection with Human Trafficking in South and South East Asia: Trends and Issues* (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2023), globalinitiative.net/analysis/maritime-people-smuggling-human-trafficking-south-east-asia/.

79 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Transnational Organized Crime in the Pacific: Expansion, Challenges and Impact* (October 2024), www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/2024/TOCTA_Pacific_2024.pdf.

80 Erlisa Demneri, "For Sale: The Pervasive Organ Trade in Asia," *Harvard International Review*, August 21, 2024, <https://hir.harvard.edu/for-sale-the-pervasive-organ-trade-in-asia/>.

81 Maria Soledad Antonio, Campbell Fraser, and Cordia Chu, "Revisiting Transplant Tourism Regulations in the Philippines: How Can We Improve the Practice?" *Transplantation* 102, Supplement 7 (July 2018): S112, DOI:10.1097/01.tp.0000542717.99201.4b.

82 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal*.



Customs inspection area at the German-Swiss border (Credit: Raimond Spekking)

utilizing hospital services for most conditions. In Mozambique, for example, this fear is so pervasive it stops some people from obtaining treatment that could drastically improve their overall quality of life.⁸³ However, organs can be sourced from all over the world, and exploitation can happen even in highly regulated settings. In 2022, doctors at NYU Langone Health reportedly harvested the organs of a brain-dead woman without notifying her family or obtaining consent.⁸⁴ In other alarming updates, investigative reporting has documented multiple cases

where donation-after-circulatory-death procedures were rushed or proceeded despite signs of consciousness, prompting reviews and Congressional scrutiny.⁸⁵ This shows that distrust of hospitals is not always rooted in stories about “organ traffickers” alone. Sometimes, the system failures, aggressive procurement practices, and gaps in oversight must be fixed to restore public confidence.

An April 2025 investigation revealed Mediheal Hospital in Eldoret, Kenya, was directly facilitating kidney trafficking.⁸⁶

Donors were transported across boundaries for procedures, while international patients reportedly paid as much as USD 200,000 per kidney.⁸⁷ Authorities quickly suspended the hospital and formed a task force that ultimately recommended criminal charges against senior medical personnel for ethical breaches and involvement.⁸⁸ This case highlighted major regulatory weaknesses, including failures to register transplants properly or verify donor documents. Traffickers exploit gaps in international patient screening. Recipient hospitals sometimes accept falsified medical histories and forged consent forms, and clinicians in donors’ home countries may either unknowingly refer patients onward to illicit networks or be actively complicit in arranging travel, paperwork, and clinic placements that enable trafficking. The Mediheal case also exposed systemic failures in medical credentialing and oversight. This shows how lapses in hospital accreditation, professional licensing checks, and national transplant registries create exploitable gaps.

Procedures can occur in both totally unregulated clinics and in licensed hospitals where corrupt or complicit staff circumvent the rules. UNODC and INTERPOL reports

83 “Mozambique: Fear of Organ Trafficking Hinders a Young Man’s Dream of Living Without Fear of the Sun,” *Club of Mozambique*, October 15, 2025, clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-fear-of-organ-trafficking-hinders-a-young-mans-dream-of-living-without-fear-of-the-sun-293883/.

84 Joshua Rhett Miller, “Family of Beloved Grandmother Still Searching for Answers After Organ Harvesting ‘Nightmare,’” *Newsweek*, August 7, 2025, www.newsweek.com/myriam-hoyos-de-baldreich-organ-donor-harvesting-rfk-hhs-2106673.

85 Joshua Rhett Miller, “Family of Beloved Grandmother Still Searching for Answers After Organ Harvesting ‘Nightmare,’” *Newsweek*, August 7, 2025, www.newsweek.com/myriam-hoyos-de-baldreich-organ-donor-harvesting-rfk-hhs-2106673.

86 Deutsche Welle, “Kenya: Kidney Probe Launched, Clinic Denies Allegations,” April 23, 2025, www.dw.com/en/kenya-kidney-probe-launched-clinic-denies-allegations/a-72317858.

87 Deutsche Welle, “Kenya: Kidney Probe Launched, Clinic Denies Allegations.”

88 AllAfrica, “Kenya Taskforce Recommends Prosecution of Mediheal Officials,” July 24, 2025, allafrica.com/stories/202507250028.html.

indicate that trafficking-for-organ-removal operations frequently involve a network of recruiters, brokers, medical facilitators, and corrupt officials who falsify records, consent documents, and identity papers to conceal illegal transplants.⁸⁹ These illicit clinics also participate in complex laundering schemes, including opaque “medical tourism” packages. This means anti-money-laundering tools are critical to detection.

INTERPOL’s 2021 report focusing on West and North Africa demonstrates how inadequately supervised clinics, particularly in regions with refugee or displaced communities, serve as channels for international trafficking operations.⁹⁰ These medical facilities work with criminal organizations to enable unlawful transplants and avoid discovery through disconnected monitoring systems. National responses could combine immediate enforcement with longer-term system reforms. This could be accomplished with inspections, temporary closures, and criminal referrals with mandatory transplant registries, national accreditation standards, and routine audits.

Without proper oversight, these facilities will remain facilitators of organ trafficking. To disrupt this infrastructure, states could require mandatory reporting of all organ transplants to a central registry,

impose routine accreditation checks, and conduct unannounced inspections of transplant facilities. Independent verification of donor consent, with third-party interpreters or legal counsel, can help protect victims before a transplant is made. Additionally, professional sanctions for complicit clinicians could deter other medical professionals from engaging in criminal networks.

The WHO’s 2024 Resolution (WHA 77.4) emphasizes the critical importance of implementing preventative regulatory measures instead of responding with facility closures after problems arise. This would ideally stop medical facilities from ever becoming centers for trafficking operations.⁹¹ Delegates should examine ways to assist governments in establishing strong organ transplant tracking systems, enhance clarity regarding patients crossing borders, and strengthen whistleblower protections within healthcare organizations.

Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed upon in 2015 after the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, with support from 193 UN Member States. They act as a common plan for creating a more peaceful, fair, and sustainable

world by 2030. These goals cover important areas like ending poverty, protecting the environment, improving healthcare, and ensuring strong institutions.

Effective international teamwork based on the Sustainable Development Goals promotes unity and motivates countries to focus on inclusive, people-centered policies that have a positive impact beyond their borders. By working together, member states can create effective strategies to address the organ trade that focus on fairness, health, and human rights.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being aims to “make sure everyone can live healthy lives and enjoy well-being at every age.” This goal is directly threatened by the ongoing abuse found in transplant tourism and illegal organ trade. People who fall victim to organ trafficking often undergo surgery without proper medical help and are sometimes forced into it. As a result, they face serious health issues because of the procedures and insufficient care after the operation. Additionally, patients who go overseas for illegal transplants often experience significant medical issues, which leads to worse health results around the world. This weakens national health systems and goes against the fundamental idea of fair access to safe healthcare. Transplant trafficking highlights significant inequalities in organ donation

⁸⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Key Indicators of Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal (2025), www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2025/TIP/TIP_for_OR_EN_FINAL.pdf.

⁹⁰ INTERPOL, “North and West Africa: INTERPOL report highlights human trafficking for organ removal,” September 30, 2021, www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2021/North-and-West-Africa-INTERPOL-report-highlights-human-trafficking-for-organ-removal.

⁹¹ World Health Organization, Human Organ and Tissue Transplantation: Resolution WHA 77.4.

systems. SDG 3 encourages countries to strengthen ethical guidelines in organ transplantation, improve public health safety, and enhance transparency to avoid medical exploitation.⁹²

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions emphasizes the importance of creating “peaceful and inclusive societies.” It focuses on ensuring access to justice, having accountable institutions, and upholding the rule of law. Organ trafficking, which is often supported by international criminal groups, flourishes in places where laws are weak, corruption is common, and regulations are lacking. Under SDG target 16.2, countries are

urged to put an end to all types of exploitation, trafficking, and violence.

Target 16.4 specifically aims to reduce “illegal financial and arms flows,” which includes breaking down organized crime. To tackle organ trafficking, the legal system and the skills of law enforcement could be improved. States could also encourage openness in both public and private healthcare services.⁹³ These steps are important for rebuilding trust in public governance and making the world a fairer place, where vulnerable people are safeguarded instead of taken advantage of.

Connecting these Sustainable Development Goals to organ trafficking highlights the need for ethical healthcare systems and strong institutions. It also shows how this issue affects various areas, including healthcare, justice, and human development. Organ trafficking is a major obstacle to worldwide advancement. Governments can create systems that are inclusive, prioritize human dignity, prevent future exploitation, and promote sustainable development by incorporating strategies that align with the Sustainable Development Goals into their national plans.

BLOC ANALYSIS

Points of Division

Organ trafficking and transplant tourism are serious issues that cross national borders. Delegates disagree primarily on three points related to this issue. Some states disagree on how to implement international regulation, with either binding protocols or voluntary standards, and other states question the balance between patient access to lifesaving treatments vs. anti-trafficking enforcement. A third contention is how to support the costs, with either unconditional funding or conditional aid tied to specific benchmarks the recipient

must meet. There are a range of opinions on how extensive international regulations should be, how open national organ systems should be, and whether it is better to use punishment or rewards as strategies.

There are also complicated cultural and economic situations, particularly in countries where low organ donation rates, economic problems, or weak laws affect the visibility of trafficking networks. These bloc divisions provide a useful guide for how countries may align in debate, but these bloc descriptions are not binding.

States with Organ Shortages and Rising Transplant Tourism

This bloc consists of countries that face serious shortages of organs, even though they have fairly developed infrastructure to maintain healthcare regulations. These states are frequently places where transplant surgeries take place, but they also play a role in transplant tourism when the local demand is greater than what can be provided. The gap between the need for organs and the legal supply, caused by low donation rates and consent rules, pushes patients to

⁹² United Nations, “Goal 3: Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All,” www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/.

⁹³ United Nations, “Goal 16: Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies,” www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice.

seek help in other countries, where they might unknowingly support unfair organ markets.⁹⁴

Concerns about religion and culture regarding organ donation, a general mistrust of healthcare organizations, and insufficient educational efforts all lead to low rates of organ donations in these countries.⁹⁵ The shortage is pushing both policymakers and patients to find other solutions, and some of these solutions raise ethical and legal questions. Transplant tourism, which involves people traveling to other countries for organ transplants, brings up serious human rights issues. This is particularly concerning when there are questions about whether the donor truly agreed to give their organ or if the organs come from individuals who have been trafficked.⁹⁶

Countries like Canada have made laws to address this issue. Bill S-204 stops Canadians from getting organs from other countries unless they can confirm that the donor agreed to it.⁹⁷ This bloc can help enhance donation systems in the country by promoting awareness campaigns, offering opt-out donation options, and

providing incentives. On a global scale, they might push for clearer rules on sharing data and for having universal donor registries. This bloc will likely prioritize measures that expand the legal supply (through deceased-donor programs, public education, and opt-out systems), protect patients' access to lifesaving treatment, and push for transparency measures that do not unduly restrict legitimate medical travel.

However, they may be extra cautious about enforcing strict rules that could limit patients' ability to move or access important treatment that can save their lives. Thus, they would likely support safeguards that ensure patients are not criminalized when seeking lawful care abroad. Countries like the United States, Canada, Germany, and Japan are good examples of this group, as well as the UK, France, and Australia.⁹⁸ Even though they are not usually involved in illegal buying, their ongoing shortages create a higher demand, and the countries have strong enforcement and tracking capabilities. This bloc will likely focus on ethics, working together with other countries, and finding ways to lessen the reliance

on foreign organs by changing domestic systems.

States Strengthening Laws with Enforcement Challenges

This bloc includes countries that have made laws against organ trafficking and transplant tourism, but they struggle to enforce these laws because of weak institutions, corruption, and economic challenges.⁹⁹ The countries that are often involved in the trafficking of organs, either as places where the organs come from or where they are passed through, include the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Egypt, and Bangladesh.¹⁰⁰ Even though there are strong policies in place, the gaps in rules, informal payment methods, and poor coordination between agencies let the illegal trade continue with little accountability.¹⁰¹ In these countries, the domestic situation often involves poverty, unequal access to healthcare, and weak systems for monitoring and regulation. People from underrepresented communities are pressured or tricked into giving money, with false promises of financial help

94 Iqbal, Mazhar, "Challenges to Organ Donation in Developed Countries," BMC Medical Ethics, 2023, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10450150/.

95 Tarabeih, Sherihan, et al. "Religio-Cultural Beliefs and Organ Donation." BMC Health Services Research, 2024. pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10882290/.

96 Library of Parliament Canada, "Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism," 2020, lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/202028E.

97 Library of Parliament Canada, "Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism," 2020, lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/202028E.

98 Library of Parliament Canada, "Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism,"

99 Vintari, Valeria, "Organ Trafficking in Developing Countries," IE-EI GEGPA Thesis, 2023, www.ie-ei.eu/Ressources/FCK/image/Theses/2023/Vintari_GEGPA_Thesis_2023.pdf.

100 World Health Organization, "Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation," 2021,

101 World Health Organization, "Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation,"

that seldom come true.¹⁰² Thus, one priority of this bloc may be donor funding for legal national organ registries to limit the organ demand.

Local officials or medical staff in this bloc might either help with or overlook illegal activities, particularly when they lack funding or are tempted by bribes.¹⁰³ Even though some changes to the law are happening, these efforts often face challenges due to political instability, poorly funded justice systems, and corruption in local governments.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, these countries may require anti-corruption and whistleblower protections as systems are dismantled. These countries may push for collaborative and technical assistance, such as with drafting regulations and having prosecutorial trainings, as well as phased enforcement timetables that recognize institutional constraints. This bloc will probably push back against broad enforcement policies that overlook the specific situations of different countries or that put additional strain on already overloaded systems. Countries in this group aim to move from just reacting to problems to actively preventing them.¹⁰⁵

In the committee, they might support working together on data-sharing platforms and focused education campaigns, as well as efforts to lessen international pressure on at-risk groups.

States with Minimal Regulation and High Vulnerability to Exploitation

This bloc includes states that either do not have many laws dealing with organ trafficking or have systems that currently do not limit organ trafficking. These countries frequently face serious challenges from armed conflict, economic failure, or political unrest, which creates an ideal environment for black market networks to grow.¹⁰⁶ The lack of strong border control, insufficient public health systems, and the non-existence of donor registries make the situation even worse.¹⁰⁷ In these situations, organ trafficking might be allowed or ignored because of bribery, poor training, or the absence of a working legal system.¹⁰⁸ Thus, this bloc may emphasize humanitarian responses, temporary bans on transplant tourism agreements until

safeguards exist, and large-scale technical and financial support, rather than punitive international enforcement.

Healthcare providers might be involved in illegal operations, either because they feel pressured or for their personal financial gain. In this bloc, victims are often refugees, prisoners, or people who have been forced to leave their homes. They have few options for help or safety, as they would be vulnerable.¹⁰⁹ In places like Libya and some areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, organ trafficking is connected to human trafficking, forced labor, and larger humanitarian issues. This makes it very difficult to enforce laws without significant help from the international community.¹¹⁰ This group would likely resist strict international rules unless there is financial help provided. These countries would focus on humanitarian methods and view organ trafficking as part of bigger global issues, such as inequality, migration, and recovery after conflicts.

Delegates can ask for technical missions, support from the UN to build institutions, and funding from donors to set up anti-trafficking

102 Caulfield, Timothy, "Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Organ Removal," Canadian Justice Department, 2006, www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/tp/rr06_3/rr06_3.pdf.

103 Caulfield, Timothy, "Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Organ Removal,"

104 J. Siddiqui and S. Azam, "Key Issues in Transplant Tourism," BMC Medical Ethics, 2013, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3812925/.

105 Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies, "Addressing Transplant Tourism," 2017, www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1739&context=ijgls.

106 Tomasz Wujciak, "Current Practices in Organ Trafficking," International Journal of Travel Medicine and Global Health, 2023, www.ijtmgh.com/article_132577_6f0fdaa85cfc4799ece63a1ff8b68c5b.pdf.

107 Human Rights Brief, "Ethical Concerns in Transplant Practices," American University, 2020, digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1311&context=hrbrief.

108 NYC Bar Association, "Report on Breaches in Organ Harvesting Practices," 2021, www.nycbar.org/reports/human-organ-supply-report-on-ethical-considerations-and-breaches-in-organ-harvesting-practices/.

109 NYC Bar Association, "Report on Breaches in Organ Harvesting Practices,"

110 NYC Bar Association, "Report on Breaches in Organ Harvesting Practices,"

offices or train health professionals. This bloc could also benefit from emergency victim protection funds and broad transitional legal frameworks that prioritize victims’

rights. They are also expected to back resolutions that provide transitional legal support and long-term reintegration programs for victims. In the committee,

their involvement will emphasize the importance of practical, long-lasting, and fair solutions based on global cooperation and realistic approaches.

COMMITTEE MISSION

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) is the only global legal agreement that addresses transnational organized crime.¹¹¹ The United Nations General Assembly adopted it in 2000 through resolution 55/25. UNTOC is an agreement that requires countries to make specific activities related to organized crime illegal and to work together across country borders. This involves extradition, working together in law enforcement, helping each other legally, and encouraging positive practices.

Practices may involve establishing ethical review boards in hospitals, promoting transparency in transplant systems, or mandating hospitals to confirm the origin of each organ before transplantation. Such measures help combat corruption and establish public confidence. UNTOC supports these initiatives by encouraging the exchange of effective practices among countries and developing international standards that can be

implemented across various legal frameworks.

All countries that agree to the Convention are legally required to follow it, but how they do so can vary and is up to each country’s legal system. This allows states to act according to their specific legal, social, and political situations while still meeting their responsibilities under international law. UNTOC is critical for addressing issues like organ trafficking and transplant tourism. These crimes are often made easier by complicated networks that cross national borders and include brokers, recruiters, healthcare workers, and sometimes corrupt officials. The Convention sets clear responsibilities to fight against these crimes, particularly through agreements that focus on human trafficking and organized crime groups.

UNTOC’s essential regulations mandate the establishment of anti-trafficking legislation and empower law enforcement to investigate transnational crimes. Additionally, states are required to implement mechanisms for

recovering money obtained through these transnational crimes and ensuring witness protection. These requirements are incorporated within the convention’s three accompanying protocols, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. These instruments provide practical measures for states to dismantle criminal organizations. Organ trafficking is specifically identified as a type of human trafficking when it includes taking organs by using force, trickery, or taking advantage of someone’s weakness.¹¹² This issue is closely connected to larger problems such as corruption, money laundering, and the illegal smuggling of migrants.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNTOC is the main group that checks how well things are being done and helps countries discuss policies. The COP gives member states the chance to evaluate how effectively the convention is being followed and to suggest improvements for it.¹¹³ In committee, delegates will evaluate how the issue of organ trafficking

¹¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC),” accessed June 8, 2025, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html.

¹¹² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC),”

¹¹³ UNODC, “Model United Nations (MUN): Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNTOC,” accessed June 8, 2025, www.unodc.org/e4j/en/mun/cop-untoc.html.

is being addressed on a global scale. To make improvements, solutions should be applicable to various legal and organizational settings. This could involve establishing global reporting channels for informants and supporting services to care for remote donor populations. Such policy approaches provide necessary adaptability while ensuring all states can undertake feasible measures to combat organ trafficking. Additionally, delegates might suggest financial support for public awareness programs or collaboration with established civil society organizations that serve vulnerable communities. These approaches help combat exploitation while respecting each state's sovereignty over their healthcare systems.

Organ trafficking and transplant tourism are severe and damaging crimes. They break human rights, harm the trust in public institutions, and reveal significant flaws in global healthcare systems. It is important to address these issues under UNTOC because the convention focuses on threats that cross borders and organized crime groups. Delegates should focus on creating responses that highlight the importance of working together internationally, establishing sustainable legal systems, and ensuring protections for those who are most at risk. This involves strengthening local supervision, improving openness in healthcare systems, and making sure that both donors and recipients receive fair treatment.



Safeguarding Sport from Corruption

Photo Credit: Armin Kuebelbeck

Sports are one of the largest societal and cultural influences in the world. It brings people from different backgrounds together in ideals of fair play. International sporting events, like the Olympics and FIFA World Cup, are also a source of national pride for countries. Sports like football, cricket, and basketball have billions of fans across the world. For example, 51 percent of the global population follows football.¹ However, its large influence and expansion make it a target for corruption. With the rise of digital platforms, global championships, and large sponsorships, the industry sees billions of dollars in revenue every year. The global sports market was valued at roughly USD 417- 460 billion in 2024 and is projected to exceed USD 600 billion by 2030.² This ultimately supports athletes and their fans, but it also gives new incentives to criminal networks and deceptive actors. The industry is also highly self-regulated. This gives these actors more opportunities to take advantage of some outcomes. This undermines the integrity of sports.

Illegal betting is one of the biggest problems in sports-related corruption. Though legal betting is allowed and regulated in many

countries, illegal betting offers a less regulated and more profitable experience. Although illegal betting has existed in many forms across history, online betting began in the 1990s, alongside the development of the internet.³ In many instances, criminal groups set up unlicensed betting websites. They also use cryptocurrency, or largely untraceable digital currency, to hide their identity.⁴ Since the transactions are mostly hidden and the return on investment is high, the profits are also very high.

Match-fixing is also closely related to illegal betting. Many athletes have purposefully taken steps to change the outcome of a match to give bettors an advantage. This hurts the reputation of a sport and causes public distrust. Money laundering can also occur through investments and sponsorship deals. Criminal groups may use sports clubs to transform illegal proceeds into clean money. Revenue moves across borders through official transfers and private investors. These flows of money can often support large criminal networks.

Another major corruption concern is doping. This is the use of performance-enhancing drugs. Doping results in an unfair advantage and puts athletes's health

at risk. In 2020, there were 910 documented anti-doping rule violations worldwide.⁵ Although anti-doping rules exist, many individuals continue to find new ways to cheat. Some governments may even support this behavior to advance their sports programs, which harms the principle of fair competition.

Bribery is also a serious problem. Sports organizations that oversee major sporting events are particularly at risk for bribes and other corrupt offers. In 2019, sports governing bodies received approximately USD 1.1 billion in bribes during the 2010s.⁶ Further, countries with more financial resources may try to influence voting in their favor.

Women in sport also face specific corruption risks rooted in power imbalances. They are often subject to discrimination and abuse. Corruption arises when officials or intermediaries misuse power for private gain, favoritism in selections and contracts, and retaliatory cover-ups. Where such conduct is coordinated, crosses borders, or has links to betting or trafficking pipelines, it fits the organized-crime concerns of UNTOC. Gaps in accountability, weak whistleblower

1 Nielsen, *2025 Global Sports Report: Key Factors Transforming Sports and Your Sponsorship Strategy*, New York: Nielsen (The Nielsen Company (US), LLC), June 12, 2025, accessed August 3, 2025, www.nielsen.com/insights/2025/global-sports-report-2025/,

2 Statista, *Worldwide sports market revenue from 2005 to 2022, with forecasts to 2028* (chart no. 370560), Statista, accessed August 3, 2025, www.statista.com/statistics/370560/worldwide-sports-market-revenue/,

3 Delasport, *The History of Sports Betting: From Antiquity to 2025*, Delasport, accessed August 3, 2025, www.delasport.com/history-of-sports-betting/#_4,

4 Coursera Staff, *How Does Cryptocurrency Work? A Beginner's Guide*, Coursera, updated July 15, 2025, accessed August 3, 2025, www.coursera.org/articles/how-does-cryptocurrency-work,

5 Statista, *Doping in Professional Sports: Topic Overview*, topic no. 9029, Statista, accessed August 3, 2025, www.statista.com/topics/9029/doping-in-professional-sports/#topicOverview,

6 Play the Game, *"The Problem: Crime and Corruption in Sport,"* in *ClearingSport: Towards an Entity Countering Crime, Corruption, and Other Integrity Breaches in Sport*, Play the Game (March 2025), accessed August 3, 2025, www.playthegame.org/projects/clearingsport/the-problem-crime-and-corruption-in-sport/,

protections, and conflicts of interest allow these schemes to persist.

The growth of technology and e-sports is another important consideration. These are less regulated than traditional sports. Cheating, software manipulation, and match-fixing may continue if unaddressed.

Without strong international rules, these problems may take on new forms. However, technology can also help fight corruption. Advanced monitoring, artificial intelligence, and data analysis can help fight irregular betting and performance. It is important to understand these new tools before criminal groups can use them to their advantage.

Safeguarding sport from corruption requires global cooperation, transparent systems,



Cricket match between English cricket clubs (Credit: Acabashi)

and input from many different actors. It is important for the United Nations Convention Against

Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) to address deep-rooted corruption in sport.

TOPIC BACKGROUND

Illegal Betting and Match-Fixing

Illegal betting in sports is a challenge that persists due to the popularity of sports betting. This practice is placing wagers on the outcome of various sporting events. Wagers, which are used to support a bettor's prediction of the result, can

come in the form of money or other valuable possessions.⁷ Throughout the process, bettors make calculated risks, hoping to add to their own money or valuables.⁸ In 2020, the global legal betting market on sports and horse racing was worth approximately USD 40 billion, with bets placed from countries around the world.⁹ Legal betting is carried out through sports betting

operators. These operators manage customer bets at a location within certain operating hours.¹⁰

However, digital betting has become more common due to new technologies and online markets. Bets are considered illegal when wagers are from regions where betting is prohibited. Illegal betting also involves operators without a license, who can then conduct

⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Corruption in Sport*, Chapter 9: "Corruption and Abuse in Sport" (Vienna: United Nations, 2022), www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2022/Global_Report_on_Corruption_in_Sport_Chapter_9.pdf.

⁸ "The Dark Side of Sports Betting: Match-Fixing and Gambling-Related Corruption," *Immunize Nevada*, October 1, 2025, immunizenevada.org/the-dark-side-of-sports-betting-match-fixing-and-gambling-related-corruption/.

⁹ *Global Report on Corruption in Sport*, Chapter 9.

¹⁰ "Sports betting operator," *Law Insider*, accessed June 17, 2025, www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/sports-betting-operator.



Casino at the Aria in Las Vegas (Credit: Jon Konrath)

unauthorized bets. It is often linked to organized crime. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), USD 1.7 trillion is the estimated sum of all wagers placed in the illegal betting market.¹¹ With the rise of online gambling platforms, many illegal betting operators can often go undercover. As a result, illegal online betting has become more widespread over the last two decades. Many betting sites also accept cryptocurrencies, which help to transfer money in anonymity.¹²

A report by the Asian Racing Federation (ARF) Council on Anti-Illegal Betting and Related Financial

Crime found that nearly 40 percent of 530 betting websites were not fully compliant with licensing requirements and regulations. This indicates that the illegal market is growing at a faster rate than that of the legal industry.¹³ Football, basketball, and tennis had the most activity. Further, 25 percent of the websites accepted cryptocurrencies, 73 percent used third-party software, and 42 percent used mirror websites to go undercover.¹⁴ These trends are linked to illegal operators who offer better prices with minimal operating costs and rules. Another aspect of online betting is white labeling. This is a partnership between unauthorized

and authorized operators, which allows illegal betting to continue in regions where gambling may be banned.

Money laundering transforms money obtained through illegal means into lawful transactions and legal income. An estimated USD 140 billion is laundered through sports betting annually.¹⁵ For example, profits from criminal activity can be deposited into a betting account and withdrawn as winnings. Or, an illegal online betting website can be used for only money laundering purposes by distributing funds. Organized criminal groups in Asia have turned illegal proceeds into “clean” money because the return on investment in sports betting is extremely high. They can also achieve this without other, more serious crimes. For example, “casino junkets” are firms that recruit and extend credit to VIP gamblers and often run/host VIP rooms in Macau’s casinos. These junkets launder more than USD 202 billion every year in Macau, China.¹⁶ Macau licenses six casino operators, but historically, junket promoters operated VIP rooms alongside them. Mainland China prohibits most gambling, and authorities intensified a crackdown from 2019 onward on cross-border gambling, junkets, and underground banking.

¹¹ United Nations News, “‘Illegal Betting Is the Number One Factor Fueling Corruption in Sports,’ UN Conference Hears,” *UN News*, December 16, 2023, news.un.org/en/story/2023/12/1144857.

¹² *Global Report on Corruption in Sport*, Chapter 9.

¹³ World Lottery Association, “Understanding Illegal Betting Is Key to Maintaining the Integrity of Sport,” *World Lottery Association Insights*, February 29, 2024, www.world-lotteries.org/insights/editorial/blog/understanding-illegal-betting-is-key-to-maintaining-the-integrity-of-sport.

¹⁴ World Lottery Association, “Understanding Illegal Betting Is Key to Maintaining the Integrity of Sport.”

¹⁵ *Global Report on Corruption in Sport*, Chapter 9.

¹⁶ *Global Report on Corruption in Sport*, Chapter 9.

This culminated in high-profile arrests and new restrictions. As enforcement tightened, parts of the industry and related online gambling shifted or expanded into regional hubs such as the Philippines and Cambodia, prompting further crackdowns.

Illegal betting is also strongly linked to match-fixing. This is the manipulation of an athlete's performance in favor of a gambler.¹⁷ One such example is spot-fixing. This is a predetermined action in a game that allows the player to meet the goal of the bettors. This can include an intentionally mis-bowled ball, a foul, or a particular score. Another example is point-shaving. This keeps the final score or result within a particular range or at a specific point, which is already known to the bettors.¹⁸

In 2024, 43 members of China's football association received lifetime bans over betting-related match-fixing accusations.¹⁹ Additionally, there have been several historical cases of this activity. In 2000, the South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje admitted to receiving funds from bookmakers. These individuals facilitate gambling

in sporting events.²⁰ Just six years later, major Italian football clubs faced allegations of manipulating the referee assignments for more favorable match penalties and results in the Calciopoli Scandal. One decade later, a joint investigation led by the British Broadcasting Network (BBC) and BuzzFeed found that some professional tennis players ranked within the top 50 have engaged in match-fixing practices. According to the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), a 2014 study found that athletes, bettors, horse trainers, and horse racers all have intentionally changed the result of a sporting event to influence betting markets.²¹ These incidents have shown that many sporting events are at-risk for match-fixing corruption.²²

However, match-fixing is not always betting-related. For example, players can engage in tanking, or deliberately underperforming during a match.²³ This can have long-term consequences on athletes. Underperforming players and teams may lose important funding or support to advance their careers. This may cause a decrease in public engagement, as the sport loses

integrity. Further, athletes from low-income backgrounds may engage in match-fixing more because of the short-term financial benefits. The legal betting industry is also negatively affected. Consumers may feel more hesitant to participate in an untrustworthy system.²⁴ They may no longer feel attached to the sport because their confidence in their favorite athletes and teams may decrease. As a result, they may not engage in legal betting, finding it to be meaningless.

International organizations have tackled illegal betting in some ways. In 2016, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) carried out Operation SOGA. 4,000 raids found USD 649 million in illegal bets from across the world.²⁵ In 2023, Operation HAECHI arrested 3,500 people and found USD 300 million from cyber-related financial crime.²⁶ Sports betting operators also have information about bettors. They can report any suspicious activity through the International Betting Integrity Association (IBIA). This is a not-for-profit organization that receives information from operators about betting markets.²⁷ These actors can play a crucial role

17 *Immunize Nevada*, "The Dark Side of Sports Betting: Match-Fixing and Gambling-Related Corruption."

18 Masters, *Corruption in Sport: From the Playing Field to the Field of Policy*.

19 "China's Football Association Bans 43 People for Life Following Corruption Probe," *The Independent*, September 10, 2024, www.independent.co.uk/asia/china/chinese-football-association-corruption-banned-b2610121.html.

20 Sport Integrity Commission, "Competition Manipulation," *Sport Integrity Commission*, accessed June 4, 2025, sportintegrity.nz/integrity/anti-corruption/competition-manipulation.

21 Adam Masters, *Corruption in Sport: From the Playing Field to the Field of Policy* (Berlin: International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, 2015), www.icsspe.org/system/files/Masters%20-%20Corruption%20in%20Sport%20-%20From%20the%20Playing%20Field%20to%20the%20Field%20of%20Policy.pdf.

22 *Immunize Nevada*, "The Dark Side of Sports Betting: Match-Fixing and Gambling-Related Corruption."

23 Masters, *Corruption in Sport: From the Playing Field to the Field of Policy*.

24 *Immunize Nevada*, "The Dark Side of Sports Betting: Match-Fixing and Gambling-Related Corruption."

25 *Global Report on Corruption in Sport*, Chapter 9.

26 Interpol, "USD 300 Million Seized and 3 500 Suspects Arrested in International Financial-Crime Operation," news release, December 19, 2023, www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2023/USD-300-million-seized-and-3-500-suspects-arrested-in-international-financial-crime-operation.

27 *Global Report on Corruption in Sport*, Chapter 9.



Doping sampling kit (Credit: Augustas Didžgalvis)

in finding and eliminating illegal betting operations.

Illicit Enhancement of Performance

Athletes and teams sometimes use performance-enhancing substances to achieve their desired result. Medical professionals, pharmacists, and coaches have worked together to create drugs that significantly improve athlete performance. Known more generally as doping, many in the sports industry are swayed by their benefits. With better performance, athletes can receive more contracts and sponsorships.

The IOC began anti-doping testing in 1972 because various athletes had gone undetected despite using doping methods.²⁸ More drugs had been found at the 1998 Tour de France. In 1999, the IOC held the World Conference on Doping in Sport. Following the conference, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was created. It aims to eliminate doping in sports. It has created the World Anti-Doping Code and International Standards. This is a set of anti-doping policies and standards that sports organizations and public officials must follow.²⁹ They also conduct research, educate populations, oversee investigations, and work

with key partners to eliminate doping.

The WADA list of banned substances includes three major categories: anabolic androgenic steroids, human growth hormones, and erythropoietin.³⁰ The steroid category contains naturally occurring (e.g., testosterone) and synthetic (e.g., danazol) male hormones. The use and abuse of steroids in young male non-Olympic athletes was first reported in the 1980s. Following this, the United States passed the Anabolic Steroid Enforcement Act (1990) to keep records of steroid manufacturing and use. However, the country's black market is valued at USD 100 million. The international market stands at USD 1 billion annually.³¹ Doping remains extremely profitable with many illegal means. However, steroids hardly come without risk. Some negative side effects include liver tumors, reproductive harm, and psychiatric symptoms.³² Some drugs are even counterfeit and come from pharmacies that do not provide proper testing or medication.

Human growth hormone (hGH and rhGH) is a naturally occurring hormone produced by the pituitary gland. It plays a crucial role in the growth and development of the body. The hormone can be taken as supplements or injections. It is

28 David A. Baron, David M. Martin, and Samir Abol Magd, "Doping in Sports and Its Spread to At-Risk Populations: An International Review," *World Psychiatry* 6, no. 2 (June 2007): 118-123, doi.org/10.1002/j.2051-5545.2007.tb00194.x.

29 World Anti-Doping Agency, "What We Do," accessed June 5, 2025, www.wada-ama.org/en/what-we-do.

30 Baron, Martin, and Magd, "Doping in Sports and Its Spread to At-Risk Populations," 118-123.

31 Baron, Martin, and Magd, "Doping in Sports and Its Spread to At-Risk Populations," 118-123.

32 Susan Cunningham, "Understanding steroid use and potential side effects," *UCHealth Today*, October 2, 2024, www.uchealth.org/today/understanding-steroid-use-and-potential-side-effects/.

highly abused because it is allegedly safer than steroids.³³ Just six months before the 2000 Sydney Olympics, 1,575 vials of hGH were taken from a pharmacy, but the other drugs were left untouched. At the time, hGH was undetectable in drug tests.³⁴ However, use of the hormone is also not without consequences, and blood tests can now detect it. Some risks of hGH include abnormal bone growth, cardiovascular disease, and a decreased life span.³⁵

Erythropoietin (EPO) is also a naturally occurring hormone produced by the kidney. It produces red blood cells during low oxygen levels. It has become an easy replacement for “blood doping,” when an athlete donates their own blood, only to transfer it back into the bloodstream before competing.³⁶ EPO replaces this process by producing new red blood cells. The athlete can then use more oxygen. However, EPO is also used in large quantities, which can cause severe or even fatal effects.³⁷ Lab testing cannot differentiate naturally occurring EPO from the synthetic version, and many non-athletes may

also use them to achieve a body image or cosmetic standard. This can lead to abuse and addiction, but people still use the drugs to improve their performance, prolong an athletic career, and receive financial benefits.

In 2006, 23 professional cyclists were disqualified from the Tour de France due to confirmed reports of doping procedures. Even the champion that year tested positive for steroids.³⁸ Later that year, two Pakistani cricket fast bowlers also tested positive for steroids. Over 130 positive doping test results were found at the 2012 Olympic Games.³⁹ That number has decreased over the past decade. Only 29 confirmed doping cases were found at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. However, in the most recent 2024 Paris Summer Olympics, the International Testing Agency (ITA) found over 40 anti-doping rule violations from athletes.⁴⁰ This rise may be because, for the first time, gold medalists in track and field events were given prize money. Countries also give winning athletes reward money and prestige, so they may feel an

increased pressure to use prohibited substances.⁴¹ Testing provides answers but also comes with a price tag. According to WADA, the 270,000 doping tests used in 2013 cost between USD 229 and 500 million to manufacture. With improvement in detection methods, this cost will likely only increase.⁴²

The World Anti-Doping Code contains Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs). These include the use or possession of a prohibited substance, concealment and distribution of a prohibited substance by an athlete or staff, or the evasion of testing.⁴³ Some countries and regions are more prone to engaging in doping practices than others. Historically, the German government supported its athletes in taking prohibited substances through the 1970s. The Chinese government followed suit in the 1980s and 1990s, and the Russian government did so most recently.⁴⁴ In 2012, WADA received an email from Russian Olympic discus thrower Darya Pischchalnikova that she had taken performance-enhancing drugs under the supervision of Russian

33 Baron, Martin, and Magd, “Doping in Sports and Its Spread to At-Risk Populations,” 118-123.

34 Denis Campbell, “Growth Drug That Will Put Out Olympic Flame,” *The Guardian*, September 10, 2000, <https://www.theguardian.com/sydney/story/0,366629,00.html>.

35 Mary Anne Dunkin and Alyson Powell Key, “Human Growth Hormone (HGH): Benefits, Risks, and Uses,” *WebMD*, May 1, 2024, www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/human-growth-hormone-hgh.

36 Baron, Martin, and Magd, “Doping in Sports and Its Spread to At-Risk Populations,” 118-123.

37 “Erythropoietin (EPO),” *Macmillan Cancer Support*, accessed June 17, 2025, www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatments-and-drugs/erythropoietin-epo.

38 Baron, Martin, and Magd, “Doping in Sports and Its Spread to At-Risk Populations,” 118-123.

39 Rocco Porreca, “Corruption and Doping Ahead of the Paris Olympics,” *Oxford Brookes University*, July 19, 2024, www.brookes.ac.uk/about-brookes/news/news-from-2024/07/corruption-and-doping-ahead-of-the-paris-olympics.

40 “Paris found almost 50 doping cases before, during Olympics,” *ESPN*, September 19, 2024, www.espn.com/olympics/story/_/id/41324982/paris-found-almost-50-doping-cases-olympics.

41 Porreca, “Corruption and Doping Ahead of the Paris Olympics.”

42 Eugen Dimant and Christian Deutscher, “The Economics of Corruption in Sports: The Special Case of Doping,” *Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics*, Harvard University, 2015, www.ethics.harvard.edu/publications/economics-corruption-sports-special-case-doping.

43 Shlomo Fischer, “Sports Corruption: The History and Challenges of Anti-Doping Regimes in the U.S. and Abroad,” *Columbia Law School Center for the Advancement of Public Integrity*, 2017, scholarship.law.columbia.edu/public_integrity/43/.

44 Fischer, “Sports Corruption: The History and Challenges of Anti-Doping Regimes in the U.S. and Abroad.”



Protest banner against doping at the 2006 Tour de France (Credit: Wladyslaw)

sports authorities.⁴⁵ Just two years later, at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, at least 15 Russian medal-winning athletes had taken illegal substances under state supervision. However, WADA did not initially take Pischchalnikova's claims or other widespread Russian doping allegations seriously, as certain investigations and actions were not carried out. This has left some athletes and officials wondering whether WADA is even effective. Also, as seen in the case of the Russian authorities, some organizations may be unwilling to enforce WADA regulations because they want to continue illegal practices.

On the other hand, WADA officials claim that it does not receive sufficient resources for its work. It is often forced to enlist the help of international sports federations and national sports committees. It is funded by both the IOC and national governments, which results in a limited budget. However, the IOC is expected to receive USD 8 billion in television revenue from now until 2032. Private sports leagues (NBA, FIFA, NHL) can also provide funding because their athletes may be actively involved in Olympic sports and receive coverage.⁴⁶ This could significantly expand WADA's budget and capacity, ensuring that anti-doping practices

and regulations are effectively implemented in sporting events across the world.

The work of international organizations and national bodies has been crucial in combating the use of performance-enhancing drugs. For example, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) is an independent organization founded by World Athletics in 2017. It seeks to eliminate doping by following WADA's code. It has implemented a global testing program, investigated rule violations, and collected samples for the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP).⁴⁷ This tool stores a record of an athlete's samples, which can help detect any discrepancies and/or usage of illegal substances.⁴⁸ Some countries have even implemented government agencies to monitor doping.

Although these efforts are indicative of a larger effort to align domestic policy with international norms, education-based techniques should be considered at the athlete level. Athletes and their support staff can be influenced by financial gains, state-sponsored programs, and prestige before using these substances. It is important to remind athletes of associated risks, especially from a young age. Adolescents are more likely to try doping substances, indicating the need for youth intervention programs. WADA's Anti-Doping Education and Learning Platform

⁴⁵ Rebecca R. Ruiz and Michael Schwartz, "World Anti-Doping Agency Says Russia Cheated," *New York Times*, June 15, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/06/16/sports/olympics/world-anti-doping-agency-russia-cheating.html.

⁴⁶ World Anti-Doping Agency, "What We Do."

⁴⁷ Athletics Integrity Unit, "Know Us," Athletics Integrity Unit, accessed June 26, 2025, www.athleticsintegrity.org/know-us.

⁴⁸ World Anti-Doping Agency, "Athlete Biological Passport," World Anti-Doping Agency, accessed June 26, 2025, www.wada-ama.org/en/athlete-biological-passport.

(ADEL) also provides courses and programs for athletes and sports professionals of all levels. Compulsory educational training could help in furthering anti-doping education and values.⁴⁹

Bribery and Competition Vote-Buying

Bribery in sport takes many different forms. It appears in illegal betting, match-fixing, and doping. It also occurs in the process of selecting locations and leaders of sporting events.⁵⁰ Hosting major tournaments, like the Olympics or FIFA World Cup, can bring in billions in revenue for the host country. The country gains not only money from tourism and infrastructure but also international attention and prestige. It can also gain legitimacy from its citizens because it can host a large-scale event. This pressure can lead to dishonest practices, especially during the bidding process for these events. The voting system often involves committees that represent each country and their offers to host the event. These committees may use bribery to gain hosting rights. This is also known as vote-buying. These bribes include cash payments, gifts, travel benefits, or even jobs for



Former Russian parliament member speaking at 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics
(Credit: LDPR)

family members. Officials within international sports organizations may accept these offers to secure personal profits. Many sports regulations often officially regulate themselves, making it difficult for other bodies to hold them accountable.

There have been many cases of vote-buying in sports competitions. Before the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, ten IOC members accepted USD 1 million in cash, gifts, and luxury items. These were all bribes from Salt Lake City's Olympic bid committee.⁵¹

They included tuition payments, scholarships, and health care benefits. Before the 2016 Rio Olympics, Brazilian organizers were also caught in a scandal involving bribes. Investigators found that they had paid off Lamine Diack, the former president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), and his son.⁵² In 2019, Tsunekazu Takeda, the president of the Japanese Olympics Committee, stepped down as French investigators found evidence of vote-buying that helped Tokyo win hosting rights for the 2020 Summer

49 World Anti-Doping Agency, "About ADELPH – Education and Training," *World Anti-Doping Agency*, accessed June 26, 2025, www.wada-ama.org/en/what-we-do/education-and-training/about-adel.

50 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *IPACS Task Force 4: Tackling Bribery in Sport – An Overview of Relevant Laws and Standards* (Vienna: UNODC, 2022), www.unodc.org/images/Safeguardingsport/Publications/IPACS_TASK_FORCE_4.pdf.

51 Tony Semerad, "How Salt Lake City's 2002 Bribery Scandal Rocked the Olympic Movement," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, November 29, 2023, www.sltrib.com/news/2023/11/29/how-salt-lake-citys-2002-bribery/.

52 Associated Press, "Rio Olympics Chief Sentenced to 30 Years in Prison for Buying 2016 Votes," *The Guardian*, November 26, 2021, www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/nov/26/rio-olympics-chief-sentenced-to-30-years-in-prison-for-buying-2016-votes.



Horseracing at Churchill Downs (Credit: Jeff Kubina)

Olympic Games.⁵³ These incidents have damaged public trust in the IOC. Fans and countries started to question the fairness of the Olympic bidding process.

This form of corruption is also common in domestic sports. In 2018, ten college sports officials in the US were arrested for corruption and fraud. These included basketball coaches, agents, and financial advisors. Assistant coaches took bribes to steer athletes to specific financial advisers, and an apparel company executive funded illicit payments to recruits to secure commitments to sponsored programs.⁵⁴ In 2018 a federal

jury convicted Adidas executive James Gatto and two associates of wire-fraud offenses for pay-to-play schemes steering recruits and advisers. Additional trials produced further convictions in 2019.

FIFA is football's global governing body. Founded in 1904 in Paris, it is football's global governing body; the FIFA World Cup began in 1930. It is responsible for hosting the FIFA World Cup every four years. It also faced one of the biggest cases of bribery and vote-buying in sports history.⁵⁵ In 2015, more than two dozen FIFA officials were found guilty of a 24-year self-enrichment scheme. The US Department of

Justice (DOJ) uncovered that seven FIFA executives had taken USD 150 million in bribes over more than two decades. Seven additional people had taken bribes from marketing groups for television contracts. They were eventually arrested in Zurich, Switzerland.⁵⁶ The charges related to the bidding process for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, hosted by Russia and Qatar, respectively. A Russian energy firm allegedly paid USD 80 million for the country to become a partner of the 2018 World Cup.

Charles Blazer, a former FIFA official, confessed that he and others on the Executive Committee accepted bribes of up to USD 10 million during the selection of South Africa as the 2010 World Cup host. He also revealed bribes related to the broadcasting rights for the Confederation of North, Central America, and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) Gold Cup tournament from 1996 to 2003.⁵⁷ These scandals left FIFA's reputation severely damaged. Fans were disappointed to see the focus shift from fair play to profit. When bribery and vote-buying involve coordinated networks (e.g., agents, executives, officials) operating across borders, they become organized-crime facilitators squarely within UNTOC's scope.

53 Christine Brennan, "Tokyo Olympics Vote-Buying Scandal: How the 2020 Games Were Tainted," *USA Today*, March 20, 2019, www.usatoday.com/story/sports/christinebrennan/2019/03/20/tokyo-olympics-vote-buying-scandal-2020-games/3221850002/.

54 Andrew Lawrence, "Hot Dog Money: Behind the Bribery Scandal That Rocked College Basketball," *The Guardian*, June 4, 2024, www.theguardian.com/books/article/2024/jun/04/hot-dog-money-book-review-ncaa-basketball-scandal.

55 Michael Levy, "FIFA," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last modified December 15, 2023, www.britannica.com/topic/Federation-Internationale-de-Football-Association.

56 Jack Rollin, "2015 FIFA Corruption Scandal," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last modified May 27, 2015, www.britannica.com/event/2015-FIFA-corruption-scandal.

57 Rollin, "Fifa Corruption Crisis: Key Questions Answered."

Vote-buying and bribery hurt the fairness of international sports. They create a system where countries with more money or power can dominate the bidding process. This leads to mistrust between countries, athletes, and fans. It also increases the risk of other forms of corruption. For example, before the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, many migrant workers faced abuse and unsafe working conditions. These human rights issues were not solved, even after global calls for reform. Unresolved and systemic corruption in sports organizations ultimately affects everyone.

To reduce risks, international institutions must enforce stronger rules. The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) has Articles 15, 16, and 21, which prohibit active and passive bribery of or by public officials, foreign officials, and private sector actors.⁵⁸ The Conference of States Parties (COSP) oversees this convention and its goals. COSP has passed two major resolutions focused on sports corruption. Resolution 7/8 (2017) called on countries to use new laws and law enforcement to address corruption. Resolution 8/4 (2019) urged member states to enforce those laws and tackle competition manipulation, illegal betting, and money laundering. Ultimately, it stressed the importance of

information sharing among global law enforcement.

Strong governance in sports organizations is key. Many cases of vote-buying happen because internal codes of ethics are weak or not enforced. National governments can help by setting clear standards. For example, Egypt's Olympic Committee introduced a national Code of Conduct in 2018 to help guide sports behavior in cases of betting and bribery. India's National Sports Development Code also addresses fairness in athlete selection for sporting events. In Brazil, the 2013 "Pelé Law" links government funding to strong governance rules. The Netherlands also has this rule, only offering support to sports associations that follow the conditions of a national governance code.⁵⁹

Countries can also form central bodies to monitor and guide sports integrity. Japan created a Sports Integrity Unit in 2014. This monitors sports organizations and their governance policies.

Slovakia has a Monitoring Committee for Countering Sports Competition Manipulation. It connects law enforcement, betting companies, and sports associations. In these ways, a national government can help efforts to combat corruption.⁶⁰

International organizations can also take action. The United

Nations Global Compact of 2013 introduced a task force and paper called "Fighting Corruption in Sport Sponsorship and Hospitality." This helps companies think about revenue and visibility in non-corrupt ways. INTERPOL also runs a Match-Fixing Task Force. This supports member states in investigations and operations. It also gives training and workshops to law enforcement agencies and others working to address bribery. One such resource is the joint INTERPOL and IOC Handbook on Competition Manipulation. This provides information on how athletes can avoid match-fixing schemes. It also explains how sports associations and law enforcement can work together to identify these schemes.⁶¹ The Sports Integrity Global Alliance is a non-profit association established in 2017. It is an independent international body that assesses how effectively a sports organization has implemented ethical practices. It focuses on five strategic areas: good governance in sport, financial transparency, betting/gambling, media sponsorships, and youth development and child support.⁶²

Fraud and Money Laundering

Today, sport has become a massive channel for fraud and money laundering. The increasing commercialization and expansion of sport through broadcasting

58 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Corruption in Sport: Safeguarding Sport from Corruption* (Vienna: UNODC, 2021), www.unodc.org/res/safeguardingsport/grcs/section-3_html/SPORTS_CORRUPTION_2021_S3.pdf.

59 *Global Report on Corruption in Sport: Safeguarding Sport from Corruption*, Section 3.

60 *Global Report on Corruption in Sport: Safeguarding Sport from Corruption*, Section 3.

61 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *COVID-19 and Anti-Corruption* (New York: UN DESA, 2020), social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/migrated/22/2020/07/COVID-19-and-Anti-Corruption-for-distribution.pdf.

62 *Global Report on Corruption in Sport: Safeguarding Sport from Corruption*, Section 3.



German football stadium at night (Credit: Mario Klassen)

and sponsorships has provided the perfect opportunity for illegal flows of money. Some of the most popular sports for these risks include football, cricket, horse racing, car racing, and basketball. These events are either international or have a wide following. They generate high value through the transfer of players, which increases the money in circulation.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is a global intergovernmental body that develops rules and regulations for the global financial system, particularly against money laundering.⁶³ It has created guidelines known as the global anti-money laundering (AML)

and counter-terrorist financing (CTF) standard. Its report on money laundering in sport focuses specifically on football, as it is one of the biggest, highly viewed sports in the world. Since the 1990s, the professional football industry has expanded tremendously. This is largely due to more commercial broadcasting and sponsorships. Teams began to grow in scale and distance, bringing in players from across the world. This caused cross-border money transfers that were largely unregulated.

Criminal groups sometimes try to buy status and launder funds through club ownership, agents, and transfer markets, which is why leagues apply owner tests and

anti-money-laundering checks. Private investors legitimately shape media, ticketing, and player-trading strategies, but the same channels can be abused for bribery, bid-rigging, or front-company schemes. The European football market was valued at 38 billion EUR in the 2023-2024 season.⁶⁴ High wage bills and complex commercial rights (including image-rights deals) are normal features, though these structures can be misused for tax evasion or illicit payments if controls are weak.⁶⁵ A well-publicized example is Lionel Messi's Inter Miami agreement, which reportedly includes profit-sharing with Apple and Adidas and an option to buy a stake in Inter Miami. This is all legal when disclosed and taxed.⁶⁶ The corruption risk comes from opaque ownership, conflicts of interest, undisclosed side payments, and weak oversight across borders.

There is also a long list of actors involved in bringing each game to a stadium. This list includes clubs, players, sponsors, the media, investors, and even real estate agents. With so many different people, criminals can easily enter the market through a false partnership. They can carry out a complicated scheme that involves many different actors. For example, agents who represent athletes may inflate or overcharge for their fees. Or, the funds from a charity game

63 Financial Action Task Force, *Money Laundering through the Football Sector* (Paris: FATF, 2023), www.fatf-gafi.org/en/publications/MethodsandTrends/MoneyLaunderingThroughTheFootballSector.html.

64 Tariq Panja, "European Football's Revenue Surge: Premier League Leads the Way," *The New York Times*, June 11, 2025, www.nytimes.com/athletic/6419926/2025/06/11/european-football-revenue-premier-league/.

65 ACAMS Today, *Money Laundering in Soccer*, December 13, 2023, www.acamstoday.org/money-laundering-in-soccer/.

66 Investopedia, *Tax Haven: Definition, Examples, Advantages, and Legality*, updated February 15, 2025, www.investopedia.com/terms/t/taxhaven.asp.

may not get distributed to the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) they were initially meant for.⁶⁷

There have been several measures taken by international organizations against money laundering schemes. For example, the European Union (EU) has tried to bring more regulatory measures to professional football. In 2007, the European Parliament passed a resolution where the Council of the European Union was tasked to develop strong anti-crime measures in football.⁶⁸ A couple of months later, the European Commission published the White Paper on Sport. This suggested addressing cross-border corruption through the EU and implementing its AML legislation. But the EU has only been successful in the past couple of years. It approved an AML package that brings professional clubs and agents under its AML framework.⁶⁹ This package has a five-year implementation period, but it also gives national governments the power of excluding some clubs from regulation. These new rules require clubs and agents to review their AML risks and put customer due diligence (CDD) procedures in place.⁷⁰ In 2024, the EU also

approved a new financial crime agency. It is called the Authority for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AMLA). It oversees high-risk finance companies and places fines when requirements are not met. This agency will also try to align the uncoordinated AML policies of member states.⁷¹

Further, the Union of European Football Association (UEFA) has a Fraud Detection System. It finds any irregular betting patterns across European matches.⁷² The English Football Association also adopted the “Money Laundering and the Proceeds of Crime Act” in 2007. This gives clubs guidance on actions to take and laws to follow in the case of a suspected fraud. National authorities can also play an important role at the country level. For example, the Direction Nationale du Contrôle de Gestion (DNCG) is a body that controls the finances of professional and novice sporting clubs in France. It allows direct monitoring of transactions that take place. As a result, there are often many organizations involved in tracking down and eliminating money laundering schemes at various levels. This indicates a need

for cooperation and coordination among different frameworks.

Gender and Corruption in Sport

Professional women’s sports have gained an increasing amount of attention and popularity. The 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup and International Cricket Council (ICC) Women’s 2020 T20 World Cup drew millions of viewers. The reach and influence of women in sports continues to grow across the world.⁷³ Despite this success, female athletes continue to face challenges related to gender equality and discrimination. From a corruption perspective, this expands opportunities for the misuse of power for private gain through bribery, “sextortion,” favoritism, and kickbacks. Also, when schemes are structured and cross borders, the involvement of organized criminal groups falls within UNTOC’s scope.

In 1994, the Brighton Declaration called for more fairness and equity in sports, especially the inclusion of women and girls.⁷⁴ Greater representation can disrupt closed patronage networks that

67 ACAMS Today, *Money Laundering in Soccer*.

68 Kathryn Westmore, “Money Laundering in Football: The Not So Beautiful Game?” *Royal United Services Institute*, last modified January 25, 2024, www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/money-laundering-football-not-so-beautiful-game.

69 Jan Struckmann, Marcel Michaelis, and Mathis Schwarze, “Update: The EU Keeps the Ball Rolling in Its Battle Against Money Laundering – Next on the Agenda: Professional Football,” *Freshfields Risk & Compliance*, March 22, 2025, riskandcompliance.freshfields.com/post/102ic7b/update-the-eu-keeps-the-ball-rolling-in-its-battle-against-money-laundering-ne.

70 Richard Vanderford, “European Union Approves New Financial Crime Agency,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 2024, www.wsj.com/articles/european-union-approves-new-financial-crime-agency-16a44882.

71 Richard Vanderford, “European Union Approves New Financial Crime Agency.”

72 Alisa Abramova, “How Money Is Laundered Through Football,” *Sumsu*, October 28, 2022, sumsub.com/blog/money-laundering-football/.

73 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Corruption in Sport: Safeguarding Sport from Corruption and Crime*, Section 5 (Vienna: United Nations, 2021), www.unodc.org/res/safeguardingsport/grcs/section-5_html/SPORTS_CORRUPTION_2021_S5.pdf.

74 *Global Report on Corruption in Sport: Safeguarding Sport from Corruption*, Section 5.

channel selections, contracts, and funds to insiders. In sports organizations, greater representation is associated with lower corruption risk by disrupting closed patronage networks and improving oversight. Many perspectives can lead to multiple solutions for a funding issue or athlete dispute. Without it, male-dominated power and patronage networks continue to thrive. When those networks steer selections, funding, or contracts in exchange for favors, money, or influence, they constitute corruption.

Women often play in smaller sports associations than men. These organizations might not have enough funds to support female athletes throughout the various stages of their lives.⁷⁵ This leaves some women at risk for engaging in corrupt acts, as they may be motivated by necessity for financial gain. Female athletes may get caught up in major corruption breaches, as was the case with Melina Ferrero and Sofia Luini. In 2024, both of these women were sanctioned for offenses under the Tennis Anti-Corruption Program (TACP).⁷⁶ These cases were related to the criminal case involving a transnational match-fixing syndicate in Belgium. Thus, UNODC has noted the importance of reducing the likelihood of women engaging

in corruption because of financial vulnerability by ensuring fair pay.⁷⁷

Gender-based violence, in ways such as sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation, is primarily a criminal law issue. It becomes corrupt when officials make access to benefits (selection, playing time, funding, travel documents, visas, medical treatment, silence)

Female athletes continue to face challenges related to gender equality and discrimination. From a corruption perspective, this expands opportunities for the misuse of power for private gain through bribery, "sextortion," favoritism, and kickbacks.

dependent on sexual access. This is commonly termed "sextortion." In a prominent case from Afghanistan, FIFA put a life ban on former federation president Keramuddin

Karim for "having abused his position and sexually abused various female players, in violation of the FIFA code of ethics."⁷⁸ Allegations included pressuring female players for sexual favors to secure transportation costs. In another example, a former USA Gymnastics national team doctor was found in 2016 to have sexually abused more than 150 athletes, including minors.⁷⁹ Sextortion is recognized by Transparency International as a form of corruption. In sports, it can be systemic and shielded by networks, which is exactly the organized pattern UNTOC flags when the conduct is coordinated and across borders.⁸⁰

Additionally, some people may misuse their position to cover up wrongdoing or retaliate against complainants. It overall involves misuse of authority and an unequal power dynamic. When these acts are coordinated by multiple actors, repeated across institutions, or facilitated by bribe payments, forged documents, or intimidation, they may indicate organized criminal activity within UNTOC's mandate. Many women affected by these issues cannot always report or voice their concerns. Weak whistleblower protection, conflicts of interest in disciplinary bodies, and interference with investigations are recurrent corruption risks.

⁷⁵ *Global Report on Corruption in Sport: Safeguarding Sport from Corruption*, Section 5.

⁷⁶ "Argentinian Tennis Players Melina Ferrero and Sofia Luini Suspended," *International Tennis Integrity Agency* (ITIA), August 6, 2024, www.itia.tennis/news/sanctions/argentinian-tennis-players-melina-ferrero-and-sofia-luini-suspended/.

⁷⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Corruption in Sport* (Vienna: UNODC, 2022), www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2022/Global_Report_on_Corruption_in_Sport_Full_report.pdf.

⁷⁸ Suzanne Wrack, "Afghanistan's Football President Banned for Life for Sexual Abuse," *The Guardian*, June 8, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2019/jun/08/keramuddin-karim-banned-for-life>.

⁷⁹ *Global Report on Corruption in Sport: Safeguarding Sport from Corruption*, Section 5.

⁸⁰ "On Your Marks, Set... Stop! Stop Sextortion in Sport," *Transparency International*, May 23, 2022, <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/sextortion-sport>.

Whistle-blowers are sometimes directly threatened.

FIFA imposed a life ban on Haiti FA president Yves Jean-Bart in 2020. Although this was later annulled in 2023, the appeal was dismissed by the Swiss federal court. Separately, FIFA's Ethics Committee banned U-20 team supervisor Nella Joseph for 10 years for coercing players into sexual relations with the president. These violations were committed by two authority figures with power. Each case reflects the misuse of entrusted power for private gain. When such conduct is facilitated by bribes, intimidation, or cross-border coordination, it overlaps with corruption control. When it is structured and transnational, it is an UNTOC concern. Retaliation, evidence suppression, and interference in proceedings are corruption-related obstructions that enable impunity.

Many cases involving women often go overlooked. There is sensitivity and shame around the subject. The victim also experiences complex trauma. Adequate punishment and transparency are important in helping female athletes. Sports practitioners and leaders should consider developing binding obligations with clear, straightforward compliance requirements for organizations that oversee women's sports and athletes.

National bodies might also consider laws and policies that punish violence against female



Professional female football players (Credit: Solo1207)

athletes and empower whistle-blowers. Many countries do not have measures to identify abuse in sport, nor confidential third-party reporting. However, some states have effective resources for female athletes. For example, the Dutch Olympic Committee and Sports Federation have created a registration system that tracks information about perpetrators. The German Olympic Committee created a campaign called "Strong Networks against Violence." This involved self-defense training and mental health counseling for victims.⁸¹ Some other key groups include unions, sports media, NGOs, and survivor groups. Efforts at the grassroots level can also help sports organizations realize well-rounded measures are necessary

to uplift female athletes and grow women's sport.

To align with UNTOC, governments could criminalize and actively pursue organized schemes that exploit women in sport (e.g., trafficking via sham academies or scholarships, cross-border bribery for visas, and betting-linked coercion), protect whistleblowers and witnesses, and ensure asset recovery and debarment tools reach women's sport.

⁸¹ UN Women and UNESCO, *Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls in and through Education: A Handbook for Education Stakeholders* (New York: UN Women, 2023), www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/3343_unwomen_unesco_vawg_handbook_6a_singlepage.pdf.

CURRENT STATUS

Case Study: Cricket Corruption

After football, cricket is the most popular sport in the world. Followed by approximately 2.5 billion people, the International Cricket Council (ICC) World Cup and T20 World Cup are one of the highest-viewed global cricket tournaments. Originally from England, cricket is played with a bat and ball and two opposing teams of eleven players each.⁸² Cricket spread to many parts of the world due to British colonization and has since gained international recognition and a massive following. The ICC is the primary administrator of the game, especially in organizing various forms of the game.⁸³ Cricket has significantly grown in South Asia, particularly with the growth of the Indian Premier League (IPL).⁸⁴ It was created by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and has since then evolved into a Twenty20 knockout format where teams based in major Indian cities compete in the championship. Well-financed teams from private investors and owners of the teams bid for players in an auction. They bid incredibly high

amounts for the best players. New franchises are continually on the rise, pouring in billions of dollars into players, teams, sponsorships, and broadcasting rights. This has allowed the league to reach even remote corners of the subcontinent, drawing millions of fans to stadiums and the television from March to May.⁸⁵

The significant outpouring of money into and popularity of the IPL has made it increasingly vulnerable to corruption scandals over the years. Most notably, the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and Rajasthan Royals (RR) were found guilty in an illegal betting and match-fixing scandal in 2013.⁸⁶ Three players from RR were arrested on charges of spot-fixing and accepting bribes for predetermined runs in matches. Following this incident, police also arrested the CSK's team principal and RR's co-owner on counts of illegal betting and conspiracy. They ultimately received lifetime bans from all cricket activities, and the two teams were also suspended for two years.⁸⁷ The growth of current teams and emergence of new ones could potentially lead to more corruption scandals should athletes, managers,

and investors decide to forgo transparency.

The BCCI has avoided much supervision and regulation due to its classification as a private organization.⁸⁸ As a result, it is not subject to the measures listed in India's Prevention of Corruption Act (PoCA) and Right to Information (RTI) Act.⁸⁹ Although it is listed as a private body, it receives significant government support through tax concessions and exemptions. Further, the organization and its members are not subject to the same transparency measures as public bodies, which allows it to have virtually unlimited control over cricket in India. It has full power over the national team, including addressing complaints and disciplinary actions. However, it may likely dismiss many organizational concerns in this self-governing capacity. Further, many of the BCCI's most influential members are closely affiliated with politicians and bureaucrats. This has created a system of nepotism in some cases where meritorious individuals do not have decision-making power or influence.⁹⁰ The BCCI falls under the ICC's

⁸² "Cricket: Technical Development," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed July 19, 2025, www.britannica.com/sports/cricket-sport/Technical-development,

⁸³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Cricket: Technical Development,"

⁸⁴ "Indian Premier League," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed July 19, 2025, www.britannica.com/topic/Indian-Premier-League,

⁸⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Indian Premier League,"

⁸⁶ "Chennai Super Kings: India Cricket Scandal," BBC News, July 15, 2015, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-33517583#

⁸⁷ BBC News, "Chennai Super Kings,"

⁸⁸ Matthew Stephenson, "Cracking Down on Conflict of Interest in Indian Cricket," *Global Anticorruption Blog*, June 14, 2024, globalanticorruptionblog.com/2024/06/14/cracking-down-on-conflict-of-interest-in-indian-cricket/,

⁸⁹ Stephenson, "Cracking Down on Conflict of Interest in Indian Cricket,"

⁹⁰ Stephenson, "Cracking Down on Conflict of Interest in Indian Cricket,"

jurisdiction and can be investigated by its Anti-Corruption Unit, but these reforms often go unaddressed due to the BCCI's influence in the ICC. Many ICC board members have connections to or were former BCCI board members, allowing the BCCI to hold a significant amount of power in ICC decision-making.

Corruption in cricket continues to pose challenges for the integrity of the sport. At a cricket conference in December 2024, former Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara warned of the dangers of match-fixing in light of more franchise leagues appearing.⁹¹ The ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit's former chair, Alex Marshall, also identified that minor leagues, like the Abu Dhabi T10 League, could serve as a starting point for unregulated corruption. One assistant coach from the league was already accused and convicted of affecting the outcome of some matches.

Ashar Zaidi, a player from the Pune Devils team in the Abu Dhabi T10 League, was also banned for five years on corruption charges. The co-owners were suspended for one year because they were also found to place bets on matches. These examples show the vulnerability to corruption of smaller, less prominent leagues. Women's leagues are also no exception. In February 2025, former Bangladesh cricketer Shohely Akhter was found guilty of



Sri Lankan cricket team practicing before a match vs Australia (Credit: Astronomyinertia)

match-fixing, offering bribes, and blocking the Anti-Corruption Unit's investigation. She was ultimately banned for five years. Women's domestic English cricket has also been under immense pressure from bettors, with one match generating almost EUR 296,000 on just one betting platform.⁹² As a result, the England and Wales Cricket Board has sent anti-corruption officers to women's matches, especially tier-two, or domestic, matches.⁹³

The growth of leagues and domestic cricket poses challenges to the already heavily unregulated international sphere. Cricket corruption serves as an example of how the popularity of a sport and

the intense influence exercised by only a couple of actors can result in consequences that severely damage not only the reputation of the sport but also the aspect of fair play and competition that its fans are incredibly enthusiastic for.

Technological Advancements

Technology can help in the fight against sports corruption. Sports governing bodies and public authorities often struggle to track online illegal betting and money laundering because they lack advanced tools. New technology and cryptocurrency

91 "India's Cricketing Mess," Arab News, accessed July 19, 2025, www.arabnews.com/node/2583616/sport,

92 Arab News, "India's Cricketing Mess,"

93 "English Women's Cricket Becomes Fully Professional," Yahoo! Sports, accessed July 19, 2025, sports.yahoo.com/article/revealed-english-women-cricket-becomes-090200063.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLnNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAFnF-VEmuJCMiO-hMFDni5veMVucUj9cShlobBVQFXcwJ1DI1du_jT_mFOM--K0OBvhM9Q3gBIQ6pAe4bSwgrQc4jyAa35pfPhaAFdOZ7yKSGbtXfbowONfnf3vQYJuAWAaBUVQojKcMDrnsfhGhirGo8EJN8YqxUnOCY8_htJf7&guccounter=2.

have made it more difficult to identify involved actors. Cryptocurrencies allow users to avoid know-your-customer (KYC) procedures. These help detect people making transactions and suspicious activity. However, new tech like open-source intelligence (OSINT) includes sophisticated, machine-based algorithms that can help find abnormal trends and irregular betting patterns.⁹⁴ For example, in 2016, an Australian tennis player faced match-fixing charges. Monitoring systems found suspicious betting patterns linked to his activity.⁹⁵ He was then banned by the International Tennis Integrity Agency for 19 months. This case demonstrates how technology can detect violations and uphold rules. Case management software is another tool. It can store and analyze match data, financial records, and athlete profiles. This can help understand or even predict athlete-driven match-fixing or performance-enhancing behavior. These tools can assist law enforcement officials in resolving cases more efficiently.⁹⁶

Some companies already specialize in detecting manipulation. For instance, the Premier League

in England and Wales and the Badminton World Federation work with Genius Sports, who tracks sports data and watches global betting markets for signs of corruption.⁹⁷ Stats Perform also helps organizations like the Wimbledon Championships and the Football Association in England by analyzing betting and performance data. An emerging tool that some companies are now interested in is in-game statistical analysis. This allows analysts to compare the “expected performance” behaviors with observed behaviors. This includes the number of yellow or red cards, goals scored, tackles, match flow, etc. Significant differences may suggest competition manipulation. Still, sports are unpredictable, and the information cannot be fully trusted. These tools may thus sometimes flag normal variation in a game as suspicious.⁹⁸

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming more utilized in sports. At Wimbledon, a major tennis tournament in the United Kingdom, AI robots were used to judge close match points.⁹⁹ Elite events increasingly use electronic line-calling systems to replace

or reduce on-court line judges, improving consistency but raising governance and labor concerns. However, human referees can be influenced by emotions, bias, or crowd pressure. Machines are incapable of feeling this. Further, players often believe that a match decision is wrong. But during the 2024 tournament, 75 percent of the 1,535 player challenges to referee calls were incorrect.¹⁰⁰ AI still needs improvement, but it gives consistent and reliable results. This can help reduce bias and protect players and officials from match-fixing.

Sports organizations are also using AI fraud detection systems. FIFA has partnered with Sportradar, which runs the Universal Fraud Detection System (UFDS). The UFDS found 1,329 suspicious matches across 11 sports in 2023. AI helped detect 73 percent of those matches.¹⁰¹ The highest number of suspicious matches, 880 total, was found in football. These data also showed that Europe had the highest number of general incidents, at 667.¹⁰²

AI is also helping detect performance-enhancing drugs. Some systems now check both the use and effects of drugs, which

94 “Fair Game: The Role of OSINT in Combating Sports Corruption,” Skopenow, accessed July 19, 2025, www.skopenow.com/news/fair-game-the-role-of-osint-in-combating-sports-corruption,

95 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Safeguarding Sport from Corruption: Section 4*, 2021, www.unodc.org/res/safeguardingsport/grcs/section-4_html/SPORTS_CORRUPTION_2021_S4.pdf,

96 “Tackling Sports Corruption with Technology,” Clue Software, June 27, 2022, www.cluesoftware.com/2022/06/27/tackling-sports-corruption-with-technology/#how-does-technology-facilitate-sports-corruption,

97 UNODC, *Safeguarding Sport*, 4,

98 UNODC, *Safeguarding Sport*, 4,

99 Sean Ingle, “Rise of the Machines: AI Outrage in Tennis,” *The Guardian*, July 15, 2025, www.theguardian.com/sport/2025/jul/15/rise-of-the-machines-ai-outrage-technology-tennis-sport,

100 Ingle, “Rise of the Machines: AI Outrage in Tennis,”

101 *Advanced AI Helps to Weed Out Suspicious Betting Activity and Match-Fixing*, Ministry of Sport, accessed July 19, 2025, ministryofsport.com/advanced-ai-helps-to-weed-out-suspicious-betting-activity-and-match-fixing/,

102 “Can AI Help Detect Doping in Sports?” Euronews, July 9, 2025, www.euronews.com/next/2025/07/09/can-ai-help-detect-doping-in-sports-euronews-tech-talks,

are called “markers of exposure” and “markers of effect.”¹⁰³ One AI model studies an athlete’s full biochemical profile to spot signs of EPO versus natural characteristics. Another system detects when an athlete’s sample has been swapped. The system compares the current data with previous information to determine any inconsistencies. In Australia, the government agency Sports Integrity Australia (SIA) is working with the University of Queensland to study new EPO detection methods.¹⁰⁴ The research looks at using quantum sensors to tell natural from synthetic EPO. A quantum sensor is a device that finds minimal differences in physical or chemical properties. This is a useful tool because natural and synthetic EPO are very similar. This has been a major challenge in the past, but they hope to use a successful product before the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games.¹⁰⁵

Technology can also pose challenges. One rising concern is e-sporting. These draw huge crowds and offer big prizes.¹⁰⁶ Some football clubs have also created video games. The virtual aspect of e-sports sometimes puts it at more risk for corruption than real tournaments. Players or bettors can use unauthorized software to cheat. In 2020, five Australian e-sport players were charged for competition manipulation



Gaming at China’s League of Legends Pro League (LPL) Summer 2015 Grand Final (Credit: Bruce Liu)

offenses.¹⁰⁷ The relative newness of e-sports has made regulation difficult. There is no global framework. However, the E-Sports Integrity Commission (ESIC) is a not-for-profit association that works to eliminate fraud and other integrity issues in e-sports. It investigates and prosecutes cheating cases, but there is still no form of internationally recognized governance.¹⁰⁸ However, as e-sports become more accessible, it is crucial to consider e-sporting in future international regulations.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals that address many issues. These include poverty, hunger, education, health, climate change, and equality. The goals aim to create a safer, more sustainable world by 2030. Countries, organizations, and other stakeholders must work together to achieve them.

In the context of sports, SDG 16, or “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,” is the most relevant.

¹⁰³ Euronews, “Can AI Help Detect Doping in Sports?”

¹⁰⁴ “Partner Quantum Challenge 2032 Anti-Doping Project,” Sport Integrity Australia, October 2024, www.sportintegrity.gov.au/news/media-statements/2024-10/partner-quantum-challenge-2032-anti-doping-project,

¹⁰⁵ Sports Integrity Australia, “Partner Quantum Challenge 2032 Anti-Doping Project,”

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Safeguarding Sport from Corruption: Section 1*, 2021, www.unodc.org/res/safeguardingsport/grcs/section-1_html/SPORTS_CORRUPTION_2021_S1.pdf,

¹⁰⁷ UNODC, *Safeguarding Sport*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ “Esports Integrity Commission,” Esports Integrity Commission, accessed July 19, 2025, esic.gg/,



FIFA Club World Cup 2025 Championship Match (Credit: DHSGov)

This goal focuses on building just and fair societies. It promotes access to justice and strong, accountable institutions.¹⁰⁹ Target 16.5 aims to reduce all forms of corruption and bribery. This applies directly to many forms of corruption found in sports. These include illegal betting markets, match-fixing, competition vote-buying, and fraud or money laundering.¹¹⁰ These activities are supported by weak and unregulated systems, especially in countries where public institutions are not strong. Criminals may exploit these weaknesses to gain profits. Athletes may also face immense pressure from the governments of countries

they represent. This could also lead to match-fixing.

Target 16.6 focuses on effective, accountable institutions at all levels. This is also crucial in ensuring justice.¹¹¹ In sports, this means that national governments, sports bodies, and international organizations must create and enforce clear rules. These rules should apply to everyone: athletes, coaches, referees, sponsors, and investors. Countries should also ensure that sports organizations do not regulate themselves in ways that avoid transparency. Government support, legal systems, and law enforcement are necessary to make sure sports are clean and fair.

Target 16.7 promotes inclusive and responsive decision-making.¹¹² This is especially important in not only creating those rules but also fighting gender inequality in sport. Women must ultimately have a voice in how sports policies are made to eliminate all forms of harassment and abuse. This is related to Target 16.3, which promotes equal access to justice. Sometimes, female athletes cannot report what happened or are ignored when they do. Strong institutions must support victims, investigate claims, and punish offenders. This is connected to Target 16.2, which aims to protect children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence.¹¹³ Young female athletes, especially minors, are nearly twice as at risk for abuse in sports as male athletes.¹¹⁴ Sports organizations and governments must work together to protect them.

Target 16.4 focuses on stopping organized crime and illegal money flows. This is directly linked to illegal betting and money laundering in sports.¹¹⁵ Criminal networks use sports to move illegal money through betting platforms, fake sponsorships, and team investments. Stronger financial systems, anti-money laundering laws, and coordinated monitoring can help stop these crimes. Well-funded law enforcement can more

¹⁰⁹ "Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions," United Nations, accessed July 19, 2025, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/.

¹¹⁰ United Nations, "Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,"

¹¹¹ United Nations, "Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,"

¹¹² United Nations, "Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,"

¹¹³ United Nations, "Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,"

¹¹⁴ "Trans Women in Sports: Facts Over Fear," SF.gov, accessed July 19, 2025, <http://sf.gov/trans-women-in-sports-facts-over-fear>,

¹¹⁵ United Nations, "Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,"

successfully enforce anti-money laundering frameworks.

Together, these targets within SDG 16 create a blueprint for making sports more ethical and fair. They encourage systems that punish corruption. Strong and just institutions can effectively implement sports integrity measures. Through the goal, countries can not only uphold fair play and public trust in sport but also incorporate those principles into general society.

SDG 10, or “Reduced Inequalities,” is also important for making the sports industry more fair and honest. Many people who place illegal bets or launder money are pushed into these actions because of poverty or financial stress. Target 10.1, which aims to raise the income of the bottom 40

percent of the global population, can help reduce poverty and lower the chance of illegal activity.¹¹⁶ Poor financial situations can also lead athletes with less money to turn to doping. Target 10.2, which promotes the inclusion of all people in society, hopes to support athletes who might be tempted by the short-term financial benefits that using illegal drugs can offer.¹¹⁷

This goal also includes targets focused on institutions, which play a big role in sports. Target 10.5 hopes to improve the rules of global financial markets and institutions.¹¹⁸ This is key when combatting money laundering because the FATF already has anti-money laundering rules in place that must be enforced properly. Monitoring global markets can also help find suspicious patterns or investments that may point to fraud.

Target 10.6 is especially relevant to fairness in which countries are represented in sports. It hopes to promote the representation and voices of developing states in global decision-making.¹¹⁹ Wealthier states often have more power to win hosting rights and make revenue, while developing countries with growing sports industries are left behind. This target supports stronger voices for developing countries in global sports decisions. This is especially important in international spaces like the Olympics and FIFA World Cup.

SDG 10 relates to a root cause of corruption in sport: inequality. Delegates should not only consider the short-term solutions to the issue but also examine long-term factors that can eliminate corrupt acts from occurring overall.

BLOC ANALYSIS

Points of Division

Sports corruption, or dishonest activity in the industry, is not limited to one region or country. It takes many forms across the world. Because it measures perceptions of public-sector integrity, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is best used as a contextual

risk indicator, not a direct measure of sports corruption.¹²⁰ This scale is from 0 to 100, with 0 signifying high levels of corruption and 100 signifying very clean. Governments shape sport integrity through law, enforcement, and cooperation with regulators and betting authorities. Stronger public-sector integrity can support cleaner sport, but high-CPI countries are not immune, and low-

CPI countries can still run effective sport-integrity programs.

If a country has a high CPI score, it may not give resources toward sports-related regulation measures. Or, it might not have the financial resources to implement those measures. As a result, countries with a CPI score of 65-100 likely seek transparency in sports and tend to have more capacity for

¹¹⁶ United Nations, “Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries,” in *The Global Goals: Transforming our world*, United Nations, accessed August 3, 2025, sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10#targets_and_indicators,

¹¹⁷ United Nations, *Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries*,

¹¹⁸ United Nations, *Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries*,

¹¹⁹ United Nations, *Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries*,

¹²⁰ “Corruption Perceptions Index 2024,” Transparency International, 2024, www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2024/index/ind,

integrity units, data-sharing, and cross-border cooperation. They still face risks with betting markets and complex finance schemes. Countries with a CPI score of 30-64 likely support some measures, but some may also seek global prestige and not wish to. This bloc often has mixed capacity, as their reforms may outpace actual enforcement and political priorities could shape ambition. Then, countries with a CPI score of 1-29 may have weak systems and little to no anti-corruption measures. They commonly face resource and rule-of-law gaps that criminal groups exploit in betting, transfers, and ownership. These are not hard categories; they signal likely needs for technical assistance, cooperation, and oversight rather than fixed positions.

Therefore, safeguarding sports from corruption is an issue that may not have full agreement from all countries. There are many motives and circumstances under which a country may view tackling corruption in sports. It must also consider its willingness to work with and regulate sports organizations. As a result, delegates must work together to find a solution that incorporates considerations from all stakeholders.

High CPI Score: 65-100

This score range represents countries that have taken strong steps to reduce public sector corruption. These countries have laws and systems that promote transparency and accountability. They want sports organizations, including international and national bodies, to follow strict anti-corruption rules. Countries in this group are more likely to support global efforts to stop illegal betting and other types of corruption

The Corruption Perceptions Index is from 0 to 100, with 0 signifying high levels of corruption and 100 signifying very clean.

in sports. They also support international agreements and tools that promote fair play. They back data-sharing platforms, integrity units, independent match observers, and technologies that help referees make fair match decisions.

Countries in this bloc include New Zealand and Canada. For example, New Zealand has a high CPI score of 83. This reflects its strong anti-corruption work. Sport Integrity New Zealand

(Te Kahu Raunui) coordinates integrity policy and services across doping, safeguarding, and integrity education, not only anti-corruption.¹²¹ Canada has a CPI score of 75. It has a Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES). This independent organization hosted a conference in 2023. One year later, it created a white paper on competition manipulation and gambling.¹²² It identifies trends and offers comprehensive solutions to the national government.

An important legal tool is the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (Macolin Convention). Created by the Council of Europe, it calls for cooperation among authorities, sports organizations, betting operators, and competition organizers.¹²³ This shows how higher-capacity states can cooperate on match-fixing. It has multiple parties, including Norway and Switzerland with scores of 81, and signatories such as Australia and Morocco.

High-CPI countries are likely to support the expansion of these agreements and encourage others to adopt them. They often have the tools and political will to lead global change. With strong institutions and civil society, these countries can set an example of fairness and integrity for others to follow.

¹²¹ *Sport Integrity New Zealand*, accessed July 19, 2025, sportintegrity.nz/,

¹²² Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *CM2023 Whitepaper: Match Manipulation and Gambling in Sport*, March 2024, cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2024-03/cces-mgss-cm2023-whitepaper-e.pdf,

¹²³ “*Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (Macolin Convention)*,” Council of Europe, accessed July 19, 2025, www.coe.int/en/web/sport/macolin,

Medium CPI Score: 30-64

This score range includes countries that have made some efforts to reduce public sector corruption. These countries may have taken some steps to identify and reduce corruption but have not followed through with strong enforcement. One reason for this could be the lack of solid regulatory systems. In the context of sport, the issue may also relate to the desire for global and cultural influence. These countries might support some domestic anti-corruption policies, but they may hesitate to push for stronger international measures. This is often due to an unwillingness to change long-standing sports programs and traditions. They may also exercise national sovereignty.

For example, Brazil has a CPI score of 34. This reflects its attempts to build legal tools and the struggle to address newer forms of corruption. In 2023, it passed the General Sports Law that criminalizes private corruption in sport and match-fixing, including prison terms and fines.¹²⁴ The law includes prison sentences of two to six years and fines for corrupt officials. Recently, seven soccer players were involved in a major

betting scandal. A criminal group offered them up to USD 100,000 to carry out prearranged actions.¹²⁵ In November 2024, star striker Bruno Henrique was linked to another match-fixing case. He was accused of forcing a yellow card during a 2023 championship match after betting sites received a high volume of bets related to it. As a result, “Operation Spot-Fixing” led to twelve search and seizure warrants and his arrest under the General Sports Law.¹²⁶ While Brazil has made legal progress, challenges remain due to the growth of online betting and unclear regulations for sports organizations.

Saudi Arabia has a CPI score of 59. It has rapidly expanded its sports footprint via wealth investments and event hosting. The governance focus around this is evolving, as prestige could override anti-corruption enforcement. Sports tourism in the Middle East is already a USD 600 billion industry.¹²⁷ Star footballer Cristiano Ronaldo joined Al-Nassr FC, one of the top teams in the Saudi Pro League. The country’s Public Investment Fund also gave USD 2.3 billion to other national clubs.¹²⁸ Beyond football, Saudi Arabia is also encouraging Formula 1 teams to move their operations to the region. It has also invested USD

38 billion into an e-sports hub by 2030. With long-term growth plans, these countries may overlook corruption risks to continue the industry’s success.

Low CPI Score: 1-29

This score range represents countries with little to no effort to combat public sector corruption. These countries are largely developing. They have weak finances and infrastructure, which may result in loose anti-corruption measures. As a result, they have fragile public institutions. Rates of illegal betting and money laundering are high. Sports programs may be at risk for corruption due to weak rule of law. Underfunded regulatory bodies may not be of much assistance. Match-fixing, illegal betting, and money laundering are especially prevalent. Economic instability may motivate individuals to participate in illegal betting. Athletes and sports officials may accept bribes at a higher rate.

Afghanistan has a CPI score of 17. It has faced many accusations of match-fixing and sexual abuse. In 2019, five officials from and the president of the Afghanistan Football Federation (AFF) were suspended after sexual harassment of female athletes.¹²⁹ After

¹²⁴ *Sports Law Criminalizes Private Corruption Practiced in the Sports Sector*, Demarest Advogados, accessed July 19, 2025, www.demarest.com.br/en/sports-law-criminalizes-private-corruption-practiced-in-the-sports-sector/.

¹²⁵ *Brazil Soccer Players Charged in Sports Betting Scandal*, USA Today (For The Win), May 10, 2023, ftw.usatoday.com/story/sports/soccer/2023/05/10/brazil-soccer-players-charged-sports-betting-scandal/81105458007/.

¹²⁶ *Match-Fixing in Brazilian Football: 20 Years of History*, Genius Sports, accessed July 19, 2025, www.geniussports.com/content-hub/match-fixing-in-brazilian-football-20-years-of-history/.

¹²⁷ *The Growth of Sports in the Middle East*, World Economic Forum, March 2023, www.weforum.org/stories/2023/03/sports-middle-east/.

¹²⁸ World Economic Forum, *The Growth of Sports in the Middle East*.

¹²⁹ *Eighteen Afghanistan Men Boycott World Cup Qualifier*, The Guardian, November 7, 2023, www.theguardian.com/football/2023/nov/07/eighteen-afghanistan-men-boycott-world-cup-qualifier.

the Taliban's rise in 2021, the reputation of its sports sector has suffered. In 2023, players accused the football management of misallocating travel funds. Eighteen players boycotted during the World Cup qualifiers.¹³⁰

These countries may need a financial push and government-driven steps to create anti-corruption measures. However, these states may not have fully functioning economies or even governments, contributing to a

failed or weak sports sector. This bloc should focus on public sector corruption solutions before turning to the sports sector. It should also work to implement regulations for illegal betting and money laundering schemes.

COMMITTEE MISSION

UNTOC has an obvious role in addressing sports-related corruption. As a part of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), this committee strives to prevent and combat global organized crime and corruption. The growth of the sports industry has left it at risk of attacks from criminal networks and deceptive actors. As sports grow commercially and digitally, this risk only grows. This committee must act to support member states in creating strong systems and enforceable regulations.

Illegal betting, doping, and money laundering cases involve actors across many countries. These systems are difficult to identify and eliminate without global efforts. Weak law enforcement and sports governance can also allow these crimes on a large scale. However, UNTOC can use its mandate to strengthen international frameworks. Through joint operations and data sharing, international enforcement agencies can find disruptive actors and stop their activity. Transnational coordination is effective when these agencies share intelligence and

strategies. Member states can also expand their efforts by creating their own national units.

Delegates should consider using technology to more efficiently achieve these goals. It can improve investigations. Although some member countries may not have the financial resources to implement these measures, third-party sites and platforms can make a big difference. The committee should also consider taking the first step to create an international e-sports framework.

The committee can also push for stronger anti-doping measures. Many national programs still lack proper enforcement. Government-sponsored doping is still a challenge. UNTOC can support member states by encouraging research and new methods of detection. WADA's Anti-Doping Code provides a strong guideline for countries that do not yet have measures in place. Delegates should consider the code's guidelines when developing future global anti-doping policy frameworks.

UNTOC is also responsible for trying to close the governance

gaps in sports organizations. Self-regulated sports bodies may not implement effective regulations. The committee can encourage countries to adopt a model where public and/or government funding is only given based on good governance policies. Additionally, the committee should consider methods and incentives to promote global standards and international laws. Using regional models can help other countries understand how to fit policies into their own domestic programs.

UNTOC also has a clear obligation to help vulnerable groups. Female athletes face gender-based harassment and abuse. This is a unique form of corruption that requires strengthening principles and laws around gender equality. Delegates are challenged to consider the rise of women's sports and well-rounded policies that encourage more female athletes to join a safer, more accessible industry. This committee has the power to promote transparency and uphold the integrity of sports overall. It must ensure that sport remains fair, equitable, and free from corruption.

¹³⁰ The Guardian, "Eighteen Afghanistan Men Boycott World Cup Qualifier."

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION QUESTIONS

The following research and preparation questions are meant to help you begin your research on your country's policy. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

Topic A

1. How does your country prosecute drug trafficking/traffickers, and what methods have worked best?
2. What modes of entry and departure must your country confront? (eg, land, sea, air.) How might organized crime exploit this, and how might international cooperation be required to address this?
3. What are the long term health, social, and economic impact on individuals who are trafficked for their organs?
4. What steps can nations take to allow victims of organ trafficking to feel safe and step forward about their experiences? In what ways must the victims of these crimes be protected?
5. How effective have international frameworks, such as the Palermo Protocol, WHO guidelines, or UNTOC been in addressing organ trafficking?
6. To what extent should private organ transplants be restricted or controlled domestically, and how might your government's actions result in positive or negative consequences?

Topic B

1. How does the perception toward addressing public sector corruption in your country influence the way and extent to which the government and/or sports officials may address sports-related crime?
2. How may efforts to eliminate illegal betting and money laundering in sports develop in your country? Are there financial or infrastructural limitations your delegation has to consider for implementation and monitoring of certain laws?
3. How can your delegation foster effective cooperation among your country's government officials, sports associations, and other stakeholders to track down sports-related corruption? How might a potential collaboration work and function?
4. What challenges exist in prosecuting sports-related crimes in your country? Consider legal loopholes, lack of enforcement, and other forms of corruption (political, economic, media). Are there gaps in legislation relating to betting, bribery, doping, etc.?
5. What role could education and public awareness play in preventing sports corruption within your country? Is it possible that the media, organizations, and schools play a role in ensuring prevention of corruption by making current and younger generations less vulnerable to bribery? Additionally, could anti-corruption campaigns shift public attitudes and reduce demand for illegal betting?
6. Would stronger anti-corruption policies and measures harm or benefit your country's economic interests? Could transparency attract more sponsors and investors by improving credibility or could it pressure your country's sports institutions to reform (policy/practice changes), even if it means hurting them economically?

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Topic A

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- World Health Organization. Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue and Organ Transplantation. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2010. www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241597852

Topic B

- Eugen Dimant and Christian Deutscher, “The Economics of Corruption in Sports: The Special Case of Doping,” Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard University, 2015, www.ethics.harvard.edu/publications/economics-corruption-sports-special-case-doping.
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