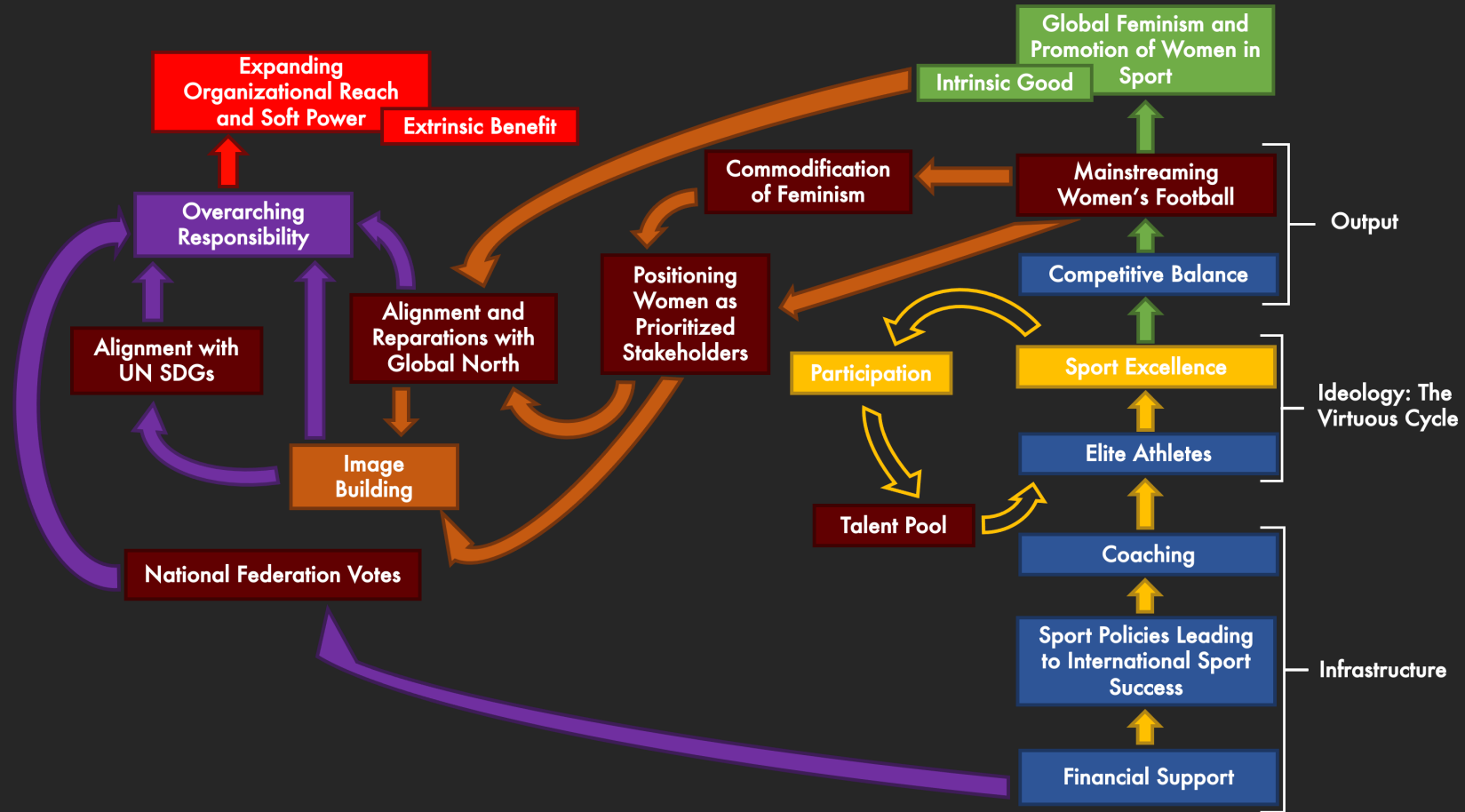


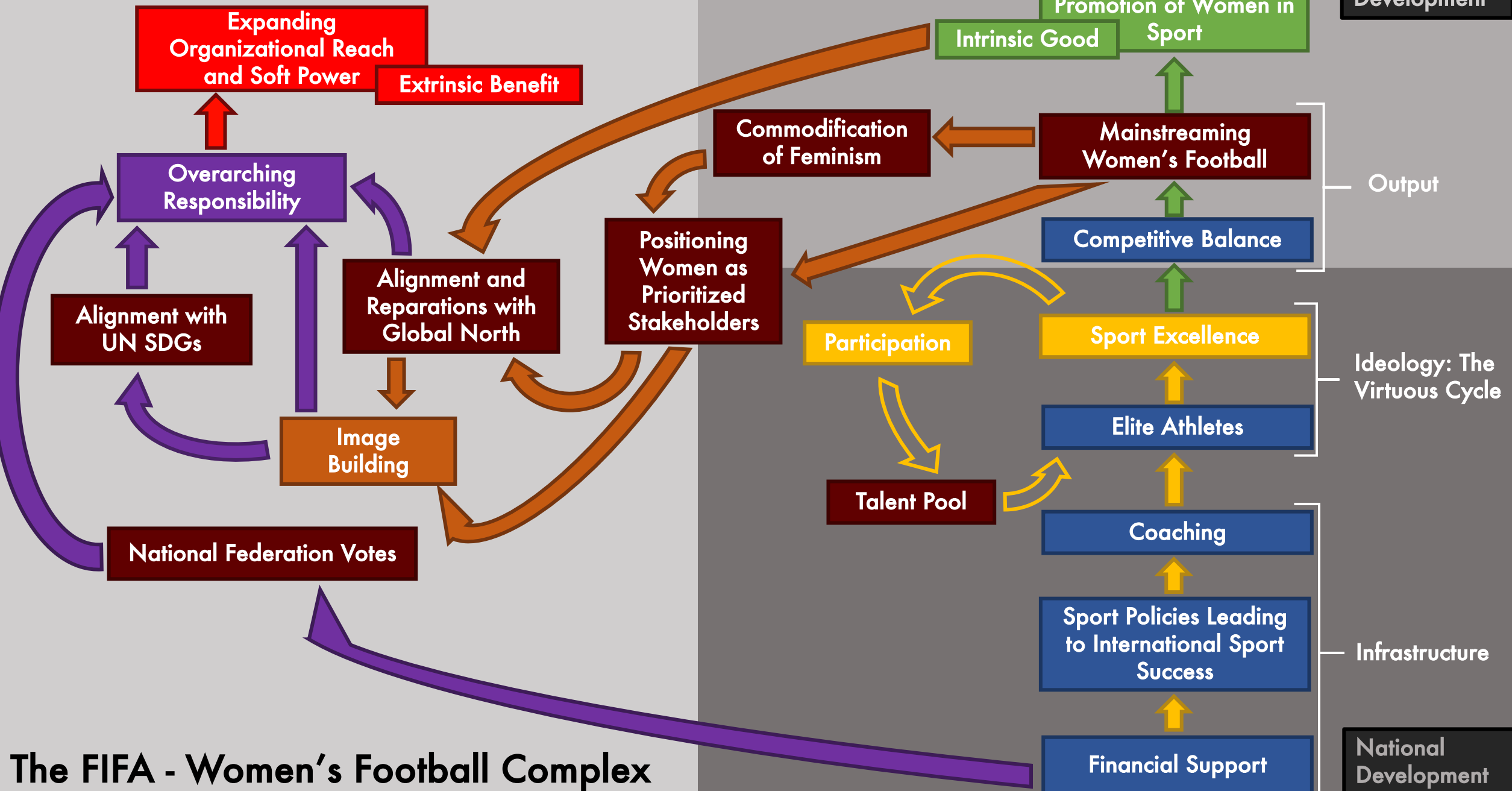
# The FIFA - Women's Football Complex

Jonah Lee  
2023



**Organizational (FIFA) Development**

**International Development**



**The FIFA - Women's Football Complex**

**National Development**

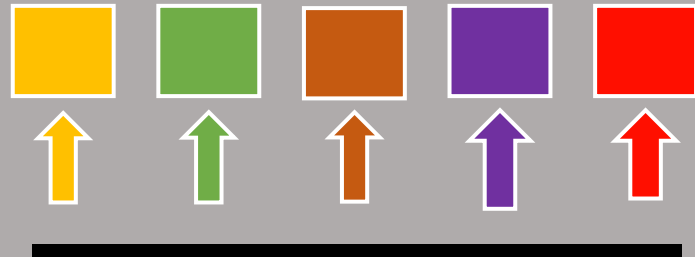
Output

Ideology: The Virtuous Cycle

Infrastructure

# Legend

The coloured arrows lead to their respective definitions of "sport success"

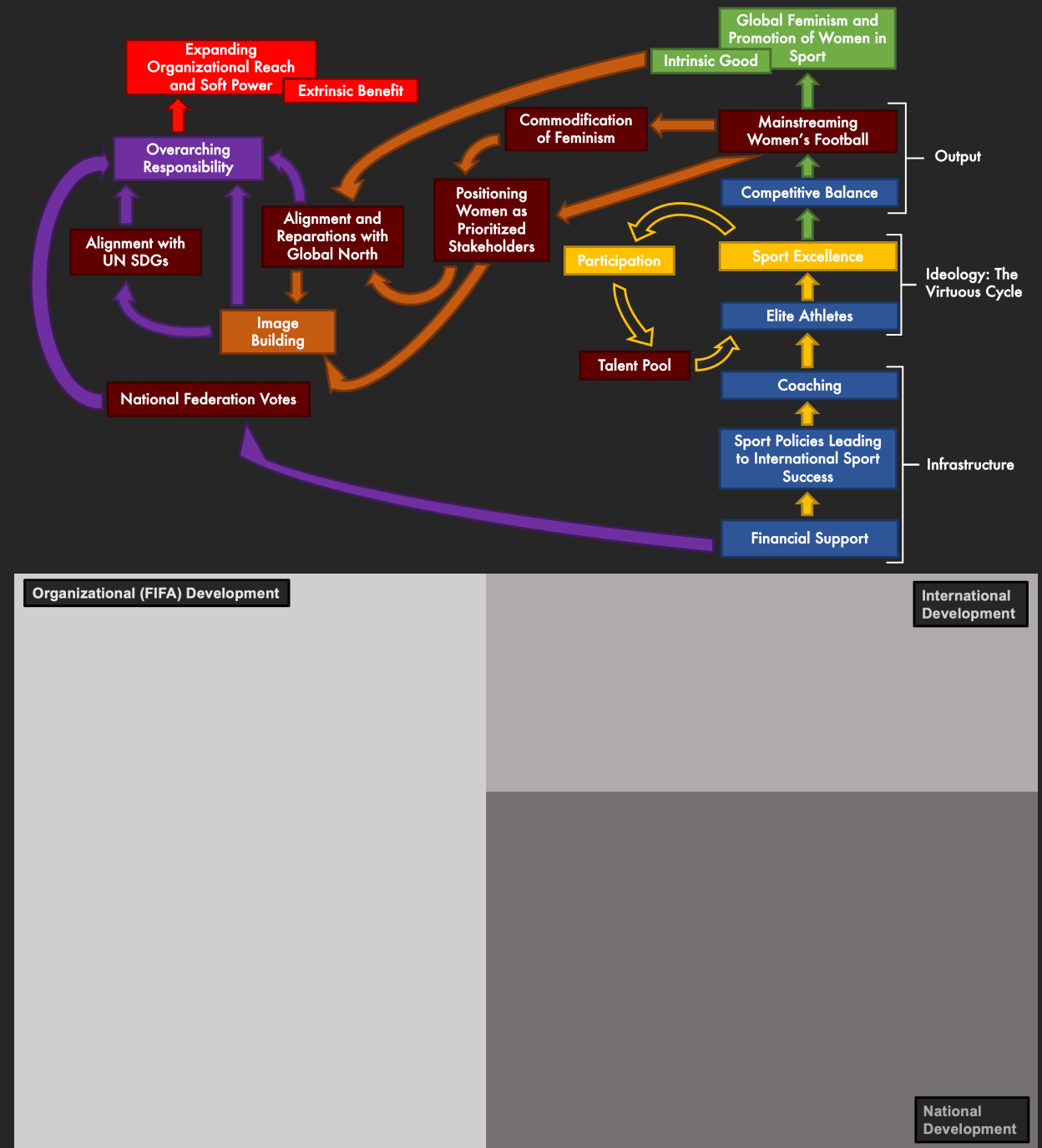


The intermediates are colored based on their use of sport:

**Sport Development:** Use of resources in a way that increases sport and its capacity (performance, participation, etc.)

**Sport For Development (S4D):** Use of sport as a means for social change (community development, wellbeing, etc.)

The tone of the background represents the focus of the section:



# Introduction:

## The Importance of the 2023 Women's World Cup

Although the goal of international competition and the metric that defines "sport success" tends to be performance-based, its effects, outcomes, and intentions lay elsewhere. Consider the 2023 Women's World Cup, an event whose global interest has well surpassed all of its prior renditions and is expected to be a 'watershed' moment for gender equality and women's sport. It is evident that the significance of this tournament extends beyond podium finishes - why this year in particular has generated such attention and importance is an inquiry that may be better understood through considering how "sport success" may vary in meaning depending on the perspective at which it is approached.

This model aims to highlight the implications and ways in which "sport success" is defined as it pertains to the 2023 Women's World Cup. The first is at the national level and involves the typical sport development system of the Western World, whose objective is to attain sport excellence and its expected by-product of mass participation. With heightened performance in countries across the globe, the focus shifts to an international perspective and the goal becomes sport for development (S4D), which sees the use of football as a tool to promote gender equality and feminism. The third view displays FIFA's role in the formation of this system and how the do-good nature of sport through S4D benefits the organization in building their image, positioning them as global leaders, as well as extending their reach and soft power.

# Infrastructure



Click on the components of the model to access additional readings

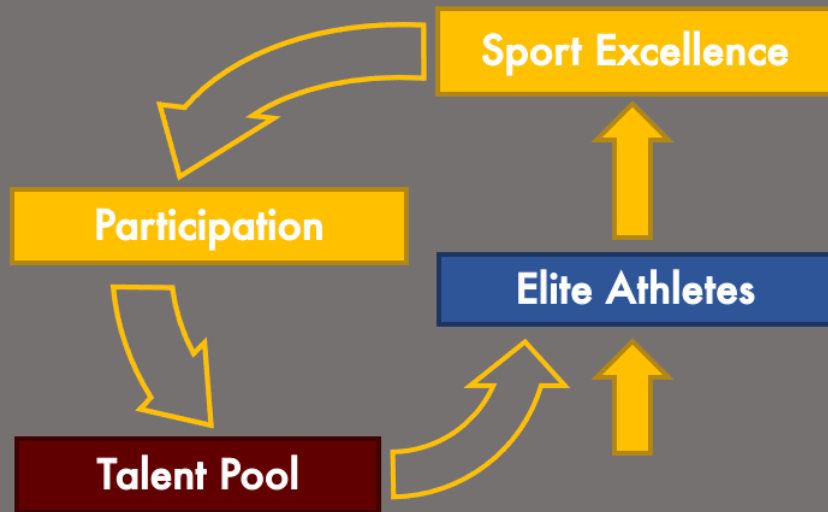
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As a not-for-profit organization, FIFA's revenue is to be utilized in a way that keeps to their purpose – one of the primary methods in which they do so is through the provision of 3 to 5 million USD to each of its 211 member federations to better operations and develop football within the nation. This source of financial support is the input and primary driver of the entire system, whose infrastructure is based largely on the Sport Policies Leading to International Success (SPLISS) conceptual model created by De Bosscher and colleagues.

Situated between the macro, largescale contexts of a nation such as their population, geography, and extent of urbanization, and the micro-level factors pertaining to an individual such as their personal environment, are the areas of sport policy in which change may be implemented. The SPLISS model identifies nine pillars of policy that influence global sport success and it is important to recognize that despite being distinct entities, they operate in conjunction with one another to deliver effective programming. Of the SPLISS factors, coaching quality is recognized as the one that produces tangible results and is thus placed above the others as an indicator of progression to lead into the next section of the system.

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# Ideology: The Virtuous Cycle



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Through effective coaching, high-level athletes are produced to realize success at the world stage in the form of medal counts and memorable performances. This athletic ranking between nations is why elite sport is heavily invested in as it allows for the attainment of soft power. However, this investment is often pursued with a second goal in mind, which is to generate mass participation at the grassroots level via a top-down approach. Coined by Grix and Carmichael as the “virtuous cycle”, participation is secondary to and falls under the umbrella of international sport success. The ideology behind prioritising elite athletes is that performing well at global competition fosters national unity and pride. Combining this with the increase in world-class facilities and resources, the expected result is a greater drive in the population to participate in sport and a broadening of the talent pool. While in theory this assumption of inspiring the masses presents itself as a plausible reason to invest in elite sport, current research displays a lack in definitive evidence and thus has been depicted in the model by hollow arrows.

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# Output

Mainstreaming  
Women's Football



Competitive Balance

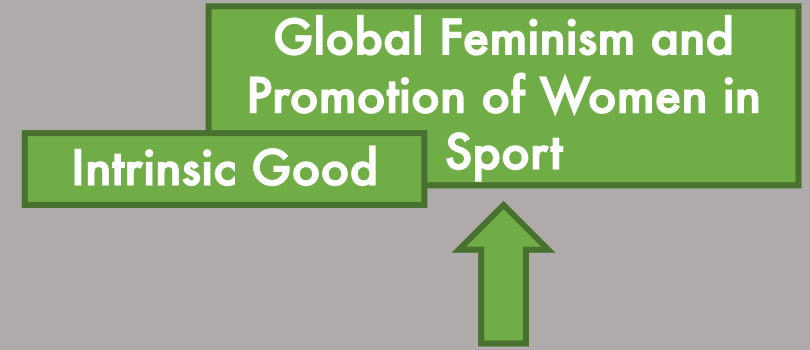


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The Infrastructure and Ideology sections of the model are reflective of the sport development structure that is commonly utilized by Western nations in generating performance (and participation) and is one that continues to grow in its adoption by countries around the world. Considering the global implications associated with bettering sport development internationally, it is expected that competitive balance, a metric that assesses the uncertainty of matchups, should increase. This holds true in women's football as an article by Scelles displayed a significant growth in competitive balance and in participating nations at the FIFA Women's World Cup since its inaugural event in 1991, with no sacrifice to the calibre of these matches. Levelled playing fields increase the uncertainty of a match's outcome and along with a larger number of teams in the competition pool, results in greater rivalries, fan interest, and overall progression towards the mainstreaming of women's football.

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# Global Feminism and Progressions Towards Gender Equality Through Sport

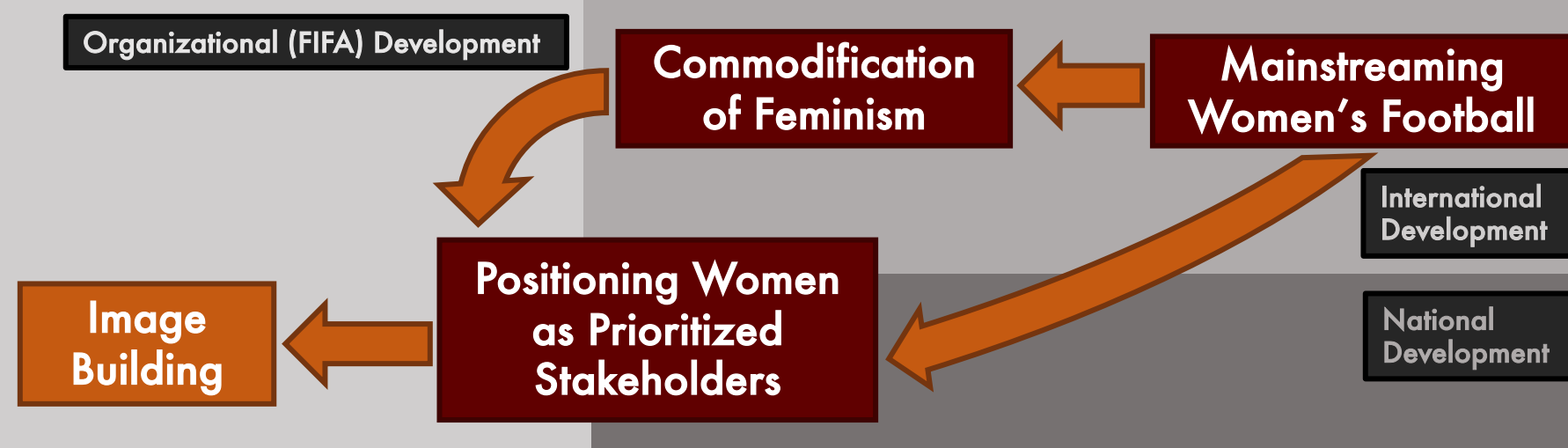


The mainstreaming of women's football contributes to the broader conversation of global feminism and aligns with the notion that sport is a fundamentally good and pure entity. By providing the funds to develop its member federations, FIFA embeds themselves within this movement and positions themselves as leaders in its oversight. At the national level, the increase in performance of women's football teams, when tied back to the "virtuous cycle", is expected to result in greater participation. As being involved in sport is known to produce a range of positive benefits from psychosocial to physical, FIFA's facilitation of this cycle and the resulting promotion of women in sport showcases how the organization uses football as a tool for social good.

Considering the organization's deep involvement in this movement, a question that can be raised, then, is what do they gain from this in return? Contrasting the goal of progressing gender equality in sport, the following section conceptualizes sport as an entity that is not pure – while social good does result from FIFA's actions, their intentions behind doing so lay elsewhere.

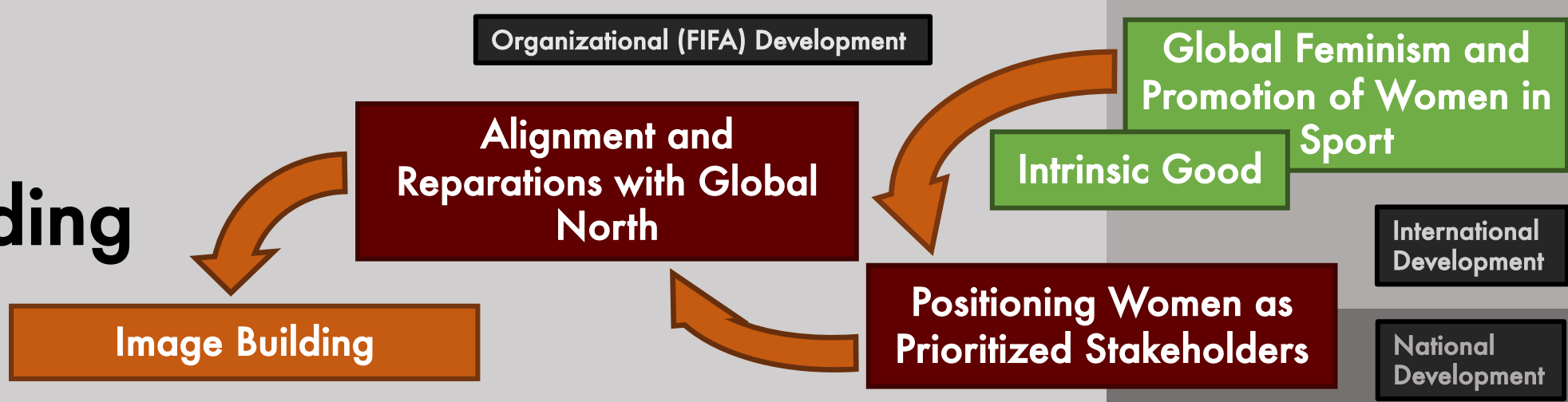


# Towards Image Building



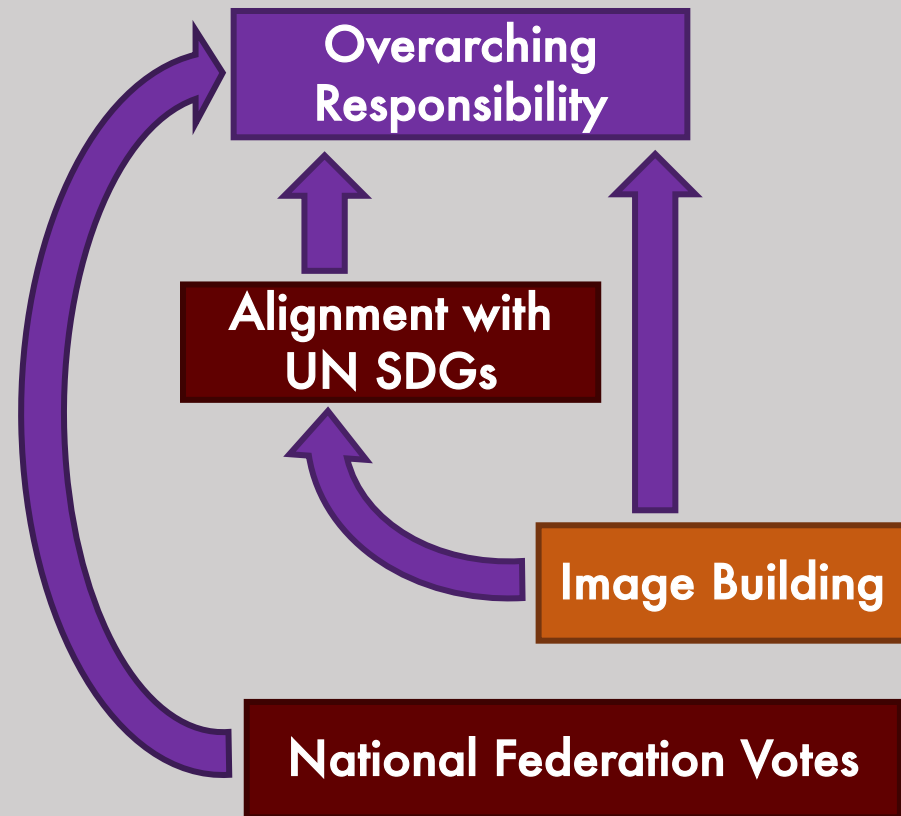
FIFA's facilitation in the development of women's football has provided them with an opportunity to rebuild their image and distance themselves from past controversy. Progressions towards this were first noticed in 2016 with the FIFA 2.0 reform, which emphasized their desire to grow the women's side of the game. By mainstreaming women's football, the organization has been able to access an untapped market whilst simultaneously pivoting and repositioning themselves as leaders of a social movement – this is the commodification of feminism. The changes in priority made by FIFA have also been found to influence those under its reach as well, which was seen through the assessment of bids for the 2023 Women's World Cup by Desjardins. Of notable findings was how the four prospective nations all mobilized gender equality to position themselves as favourable hosts for the tournament. The employing of neo-liberal feminist logics by member federations in order to align with FIFA's agenda of mainstreaming women's football presents an intersection of all three perspectives (national, international, organizational) in the positioning of women as prioritized stakeholders.

# Towards Image Building



Revenue generation through commodifying feminism is not the only benefit to FIFA's increased priority of women's football, as it also aids the organization in its reparations with the Global North. Considering the pre-existing strength of women's football within this region displayed through national team powerhouses in Canada and the United States along with New Zealand and Australia being the hosts of the 2023 Women's World Cup, it would be expected for the organization to already be well-aligned with these nations. However, FIFA's extensive history lacking in care for women's sport contradicts their intent. Some of the many issues include the gender pay gap in prize money, lack of response to gender discrimination lawsuits related to artificial turf use, and the misogyny of former president Sepp Blatter. While FIFA's reform had addressed these concerns, it is evident that they still seems to lack true intention, as they disregarded the absence of women's rights in Qatar, the hosts of the 2022 Men's World Cup. By increasing global interest in women's sport and positioning women as prioritized stakeholders, FIFA seeks to align themselves with that of the Global North.

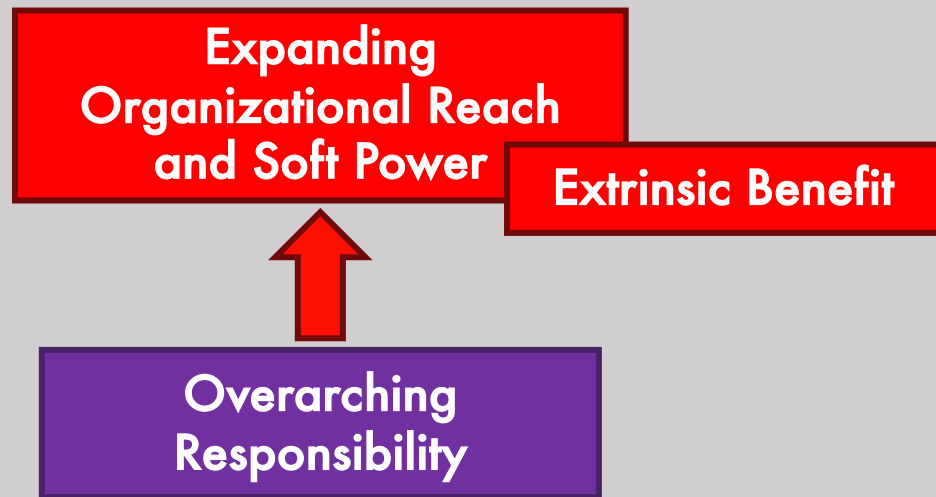
# Leadership Positioning: Overarching Responsibility



The rebuilding of FIFA's image in a positive light through developing women's football aligns them with the United Nations in working towards their Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality. This is not the first time the organization has used football as a tool for development as they have a number of initiatives that involve targeting other SDG's such as Sustainability and Human Rights. Despite more contradictions such as their treatment of migrant workers, by embedding themselves in the objectives of the UN, FIFA is able to maintain a well-standing reputation and still present themselves as leaders of change and do-good.

FIFA's leadership positioning ties back to the importance of financial support to aid nations in developing better football systems. Though several million USD may not be as impactful for countries with well-developed programs such as the United States, lesser developed nations rely heavily on this funding to support their operations. A final related note to consider is the heightened vulnerability to corruption from bribery as a result of differing finances and the decision-making process of the FIFA Congress, as each of the 211 member federations have one vote of equal weight.

# The Goal: Expanding Organizational Reach and Soft Power



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The rising competition and popularity in women's football works in conjunction with FIFA's sport for development initiatives in gender equality and feminism to promote them as leaders of social change. While this is a clear example of how sport can be used as a tool for good, it is also evident that this movement may not be as fundamentally pure as advertised, given it aids the organization in rebuilding themselves as saviours of women's sport and furthers their soft power.

The aim of this document was to present how FIFA has both facilitated and benefitted from the development of women's football, to highlight some of the different ways in which "sport success" may be defined under this system, and to provide a base of resources for further elaboration.

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