

# IWG Women and Sport: Year One Report

4 August 2022 – 30 September 2023

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# Chair's Foreword

Welcome to our Year One Report, which reflects a successful first year of the UK IWG Secretariat. With the generous support of our funders, our Global Executive, and our UK Steering Committee, we have built up our team and developed and agreed a four-year strategy which we will deliver with pride.

Our New Zealand predecessors faced unprecedented challenges during their time as hosts of the Secretariat, navigating their way through the Covid pandemic to keep the IWG functioning. I look back with admiration at their delivery of the IWG Conference and applaud their dynamism and agility in embracing new ways of working to ensure the conference could be attended both in-person and virtually, and maintain its reputation as the biggest global conference on gender equality in sport.

We continue to push the IWG forward, re-setting our strategy to reflect the post-pandemic societal changes, global challenges and opportunities, with a clear vision for 'sport and physical activity contributing to a world where all women and girls thrive.'

Following the successful launch of our strategy in August, we are already making good progress. From securing high-profile international sporting organisations as signatories of the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration, to collaborating with the UK government on a "Women's Sport Investment Accelerator" with intentions to share learning globally, to laying foundational work for the next IWG Conference in 2026, we are moving forwards at pace into the Olympic and Paralympic Year ahead of us, ready to capitalise on the emphasis Paris 2024 will bring to women and sport. Our focus will continue to be both global and domestic sharing of data, programmes and learning as we continue to build the IWG network.

2023 has been a fantastic year for women's sport and the success stories from the world's stage have proven we are in a period of change for the better. Record-breaking attendance figures, the emergence of more women as officials at high-profile sport events and a flourishing sports sponsorship market are all proof points that change is happening, but there is undoubtedly still a long way to go and the IWG team are committed to helping accelerate this change.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sport England, UK Sport, the National Lottery, the Sport and Recreation Alliance, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales and the University of Hertfordshire whose continued support will be pivotal in our successes over the remaining three years.

**Annamarie Phelps CBE OLY**  
Chair of the IWG UK Secretariat

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# Secretary General's Introduction

I am delighted to present the impact report for the IWG UK Secretariat's first year.

The Secretariat changes country every four years to reflect the international focus of the network, and with that brings the challenges of setting up a Secretariat from scratch. This includes establishing the fundamental administration processes and recruiting new team members, supporting them to settle in and fully understand the intricacies of the IWG: learning and building on the work of previous Secretariats.

Our priority in year one has been to engage with and listen to stakeholders as we developed the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, really focusing on what IWG can best do to contribute to the achievement of gender equality in sport and physical activity globally. I am grateful to my colleagues within the sport and physical activity system, as well as the IWG Global Executive, the UK Steering Committee, past IWG Co-Chairs, Secretary Generals and IWG founder, Dr Anita White, for their advice and guidance through this process.

Our aim has been to provide a clear and simple Strategic Plan setting out areas of focus where we believe we can add most value, as well as our desire to collaborate with the many organisations and individuals who make up the sport and physical activity systems around the world.

This report sets out our progress in the first year and our direction of travel for the remainder of the UK Secretariat, which will have an emphasis on the 'Connections' strand of the strategy while still keeping a focus on 'Insight' and 'Advocacy'.

It has been a privilege to lead the IWG UK Secretariat through this year: a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us.

**Lisa O'Keefe**  
Secretary General of the IWG UK Secretariat



# IWG Women and Sport: Strategic Plan 2022-2026

## Vision

**Sport and physical activity contributing to a world where all women and girls thrive.**

## Mission

**Bring stakeholders together to make the changes needed to the structures and values of sport globally.**

## Strategic Priorities 2022-26

### Connections

**Pace and impact of change enhanced through connected and collaborative networks.**

- Inclusive Digital Community platform and content.
- Strong global strategic partnerships.

### Insight

**Driving a research and insight led approach to gender equality.**

- Curated IWG Insight Hub which draws together the world's best knowledge and tools, making them available and accessible.

### Leadership and Advocacy

**Influence policy and strategy through demonstrating the value and impact of systemic gender equality.**

- Collaboration on impact with Brighton Plus Helsinki Declaration Signatories.
- UK Legacy Plan.

## Impact and Legacy

### Connections

- Thriving communities of practice in all continents, connected globally.
- Accessible and well attended events programme driven by needs of community.
- Theme specific communities of practice enabled through platform.
- 9th World Conference Birmingham July 2026.

### Insight

- Use of data, research and insights to shape approaches to gender equality as standard.
- Better connected individuals and organisations benefiting from accessible knowledge and practice.

### Leadership and Advocacy

- Value and impact of systemic approaches to gender equality understood and being adopted into practice.
- UK legacy resulting in strong collaboration focussed on:
  - Investment.
  - Visibility and Portrayal.
  - Leadership.



**IWG Core Values:** Collaborative · Inclusive · Open · Impactful



**IWG**  
**Women & Sport**  
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# Connections

We enabled more connected and collaborative networks to enhance the pace and impact of change by:

## Strengthening global and international strategic partnerships

- Building on the work of past Secretariats, IWG prioritised the strengthening of relationships with a range of global strategic partners including speaker roles at:
  - UNESCO International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VII) Multistakeholder forum.
  - 10th Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting
  - Global Observatory for Gender Equality in Sport Conference
  - UN Women NGO CSW67 Parallel Session in conjunction with Women Sport International (WSI), International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW), Women's Sport Africa Network and the Women's Sport Foundation.
- Engagement with UNESCO Sport Team plus the Council of Europe, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, EU Commission and the IOC in helping shape elements of the Fit for Life Programme.
- Developed our relationships with gender advocacy organisations.



## Building an inclusive digital community

- Updated and relaunched the IWG website and social media channels - Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube, and LinkedIn (see Appendix 1)
- Mapping underway of networks at continental and national level with identification of 'fire starters' so crucial to the success of the inclusive digital network.
- Closed LinkedIn Group established with soft launch to build up content before making more visible.



## Offering financial support to advance the women and sport movement and promote inclusion

- Launched the Anita White Fund with two awards:
  - The **Anita White Catalyst Grant** for women who have completed leadership programmes to advance the women and sport movement.
  - The **Cath Sweet Award** for women who wish to deliver programmes that promote social inclusion through sport with a focus on disability.
- Established an IWG Funding, Accountability and Assurance Group to review grant applications.







# IWG 2022-2023 Highlight

## The Handover Event



The launch of the in August 2022 was an early highlight for Year One. While it technically falls outside of this reporting period, it marked an early success for us, kickstarting our journey and raising our profile in the UK. Attended by sporting and political leaders from across the UK and the Commonwealth, the event celebrated the success of women's sport and reflected on the work still to be done. It was made possible thanks to the close collaboration of IWG, Commonwealth Games Federation, UK Sport, Sport England, Team NZ and the Sport and Recreation Alliance.

“The handover event was recently acknowledged at the prestigious 2023 Sport Business Awards in the UK, winning the silver medal in the ‘Women's Sport Business – Governing Body and Teams’ category alongside our bid video which was awarded a gold medal.”

– Annamarie Phelps CBE OLY



# Insight

We drove a research and insight led approach to gender equality by:

## Building an inclusive digital community

- Bringing together experts to shape the development of the hub and ensure it helps answer the most pressing questions and sets out clearly the case for, and value of, gender equality in sport and physical activity.

## Sharing the 'History and Key Learnings of IWG Women and Sport'

- Researched by Professor Elizabeth Pike from the University of Hertfordshire, involved all former IWG Co-Chairs and Secretary Generals to contribute to the story of the first 30 years of the IWG.
- Interviewees were asked to reflect on what went well during their Secretariat, and what they believe should be the priority areas of focus for the IWG going forward.
- The book, written by Professor Pike, will be available as a free e-Book in early 2024.





### Evaluating progress towards gender equality in sport and physical activity

- Bringing together experts to shape the development of the hub and ensure it helps answer the most pressing questions and sets out clearly the case for, and value of, gender equality in sport and physical activity.

### Ensuring work of the Secretariat is research and insight-led

- Research grant secured to conduct a review of gender equality activity amongst existing Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration signatories, and review active non-signatories primed for a conversation about signing up and sharing learning with the network.

### Reviewing policy approaches to gender equality

- Research grant secured from the University of Hertfordshire to review global policies for gender equality and sport. Findings will be published in 2024 to identify best practice.

### Reviewing policy approaches to gender equality

- Co-hosted launch of [UK Sport research](#) on Gender Equality in International Sports Leadership with an audience of over 50 members from their International Relations network.

# Advocacy

We influenced policy and strategy through demonstrating the value and impact of systemic gender equality by:

## Expanding our partnerships to share learning and impact of gender equality

- Continued to grow and promote the work of Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration by adding more signatories
  - International Tennis Federation
  - Lawn Tennis Association
  - Rugby Football Union
  - Montenegrin Olympic Committee
- Discussions ongoing with more organisations who have expressed an interest in signing up.

## Platforms for Advocacy

- Worked with key stakeholders to identify opportunities to make the case for systemic approaches to gender equality.
- Delivered the keynote at Scottish Women in Sport Conference making the case for whole system approach focused on structures and values.





### Building our reputation

- Contributed to the UK Government commissioned Independent Review into the future of domestic women's football in England through membership of the expert panel.

### Building our connections with host region of 9th IWG World Conference

- Launched West Midlands Local Leaders Project to find three community sport and physical activity leaders to help identify how to leverage IWG coming to the ICC in Birmingham, West Midlands in July 2026. Thanks to Sport England funding, local leaders joined the UK Delegation at the 8th World Conference in Auckland.

## IWG 2022-2023 Highlight DBT Collaboration



An early task was to consult with UK Stakeholders to identify the 'big issues', tackling which would become the UK Legacy part of the strategy.

"Investment was identified as one of the 'big issues', which led to collaboration with the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) plus Deloitte to develop a 'Women's Sport Accelerator' programme. The programme is designed to boost investment and increase broadcast audiences for women's sport through mentoring, networking events and sessions on market insights, connecting women's sports rightsholders with industry experts and sports investors.

"With two successful sessions so far, I'm optimistic the model can be replicated internationally in the future."

– Lisa O'Keefe

# Regional Reports

## Americas and Caribbean

### Rosaura Mendez Gamboa

- Research conducted into the current situation of women and sport in the Ibero-American countries and introduced Declaration of Santiago 2023.
- Mentorship programme established to contribute towards the development of gender equality in University sports in the American continent.
- In Rosaura's role as a Deputy of the Republic, facilitation of discussions regarding gender equality in sport.
- Costa Rica to host of 2023 AGM, allowing for promotion of IWG and the Brighton Declaration amongst key sports stakeholders.

## Europe

### Sallie Barker

- Focus during 2023 was on equality, diversity, and inclusion in European sport, highlighting LGBTQI+ and people living with disabilities.
- Objectives achieved include: producing a Position Paper on Gender Equality in Sport; delivery of webinars, training sessions and equality sessions; presentations and attendance at over 30 events; re-establishment of European network.
- Planning underway for five events in 2024, as well as two projects – 'Sport for Unity, Resilience and Empowerment' and 'A Fairer Coaching: Promoting an equal and inclusive coaching model in Europe'.



## Africa

### Game Mothibi

- Three graduations from the Matilda Mwaba Mentorship Programme in partnership with the University of London.
- More work done on Safeguarding in 2023, including training more Safeguarding Officers in Botswana and establishing a regional safeguarding hub in Southern Africa by IOC.
- GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation) started Play Effect Africa, which is in charge of creating a database of Agents of Change in Sport for Development and Women and sport in Africa.
- Planning underway for Africa's quarterly Women and Sport webinars in 2024 and the third Africa women and Sport conference in 2025 – both opportunities to strengthen the Women and Sport Movement in Africa and to promote Birmingham 2026.

## Asia

### Etsuko Ogasawara

- Followed up on action plans from 10 Governments following the 2021 ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) – Japan workshop, including delivery of empowerment workshop in Thailand.
- Hosted the 9th Japan Womens Leadership Academy (WLA) which established a strong new network of 275 alumni.
- First ever ASEAN Women in Sport conference held in November in Malaysia, Etsuko gave keynote speech highlighting the role of IWG.

## Oceania

### Carolyn Ngiraidis

- Focus during 2023 was on safeguarding policies for all NOCs, Leadership and Visibility.
- Regional Safeguarding Skills Building Workshop 2023 delivered to representatives from 14 NOCs.
- Leadership project rolling into next year to identify participants for a workshop, with an outcome they facilitate an equity project at their home NOC.
- An Impact Network Project Manager funded by IOC has been appointed.

# NGO Reports

## WSI

### Diane Huffman

- Focus during 2023 was on inclusion and safeguarding.
- Activities accomplished include: delivery of webinars; co-ordinated and attended meetings with like-minded organisations.
- Research for publication in 2024 includes: sport in a post binary world; non-accidental violence in sport; persons with a disability and gender leadership in sport.
- Will be relaunching Celia Brackenridge scholarship fund in 2024.

# Co-opted Member Reports

## Lilamani de Soysa

- Advocating for IWG in the Lausanne Network for Women and Sport, plus at various speaking and conference events throughout the year.
- Researching menstruation and sport for Professor Elizabeth Pike's book series which has been approved for publication by the Committee of Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Ongoing discussions with a partner to start a skateboard and surf programme for girls in Sri Lanka.

## Louissette-Renee Thobi Etame-Ndedi

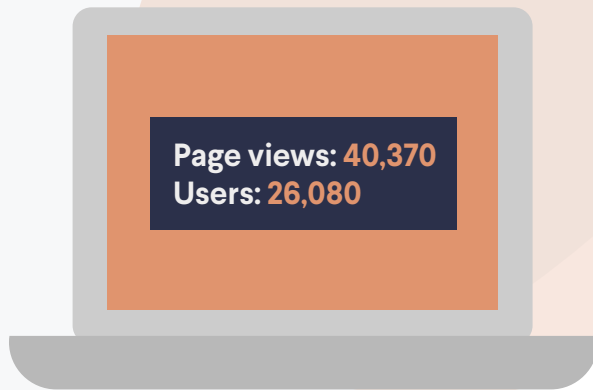
- CONFEJES hosted a virtual meeting to mark International Day of Women's Sport (24 January) where delegates discussed the most practiced sports in their countries where women excel, the difficulties encountered and the solutions they advocate.
- Collected statistics on female representation in member states and government.
- Launch of the Women-Sport and Health Call for Projects.



# Appendix 1

Social Media Snapshot, as of 30 September 2023:

## Website



## Social

