

IWG Women and Sport: Year Four Report

1 October 2025 – 30 September 2026

#ShareTheChange



IWG
Women & Sport

Hosted by

SPORT+
RECREATION
ALLIANCE



Chair's Foreword

Writing this introduction for our final annual report without reflecting on the last four years requires discipline. Change requires deliberate and sustained advocacy and action, and none of what we achieved this year could have been done without the basis of the last 3+ years.

Certainly not without the global efforts of those within the women's sports movement over many decades, in particular Celia Brackenridge and Dr Anita White who were central to the IWG's foundation.

Across all levels of sport, we regularly see progress in equality: sport clubs, local authority initiatives, national government and federation policy, and international sporting and multi-lateral coalition activity.

However, progress is neither equal nor linear. In every country in the world, gender inequality remains; boys are more active and engaged in sport than girls, investment in women's sport lags woefully behind men's at every level. In a world polarized by inequalities, wars, economic crises and politics, we continue to see women's rights dismantled in countries as diverse as Afghanistan and the USA. And yet we know that where women and girls thrive, families, communities and economies thrive.

Inevitably, perhaps, this last year has been focused on Summit preparations, the attribution and handover to Brazil, the next Secretariat; European signatories, and Commonwealth opportunities. So, I was particularly delighted to welcome the Commonwealth Secretariat as a

signatory; an association of states covering 2.7 billion people around the world and a natural partner for sport globally with their commitment to gender equality, sustainable development, community and sharing.

With limited resources and a small team focussed on delivery of the Summit, I am grateful to our Global Executive members for representing the IWG in their regions and organisations, and to the IOC, UN Women, Council of Europe, European Olympic Committees EU Office, and our incredible network of European and UK sport organisations who have been key, helping amplify our voice and advocating for the IWG.

I cannot finish without thanks to the many incredible partners that came together to make the IWG's Global Summit happen, and who are listed later in the report, alongside our host organisation, the Sport & Recreation Alliance; the UK Steering Committee, our inspiring speakers, and the Summit Organising Committee led by Clare Barrell. Thanks to those who came to Birmingham, open to sharing and learning; it was a joy to be amongst you. Above all, my personal thanks to Lisa O'Keefe whose passion for sport and gender equality and commitment to change has carried us all throughout the 4 years. Lisa set out determined to elevate the Summit, demonstrate the value of women's sport and create a safe place to explore what needs to happen to maintain momentum beyond the breakthrough – and did it brilliantly.

Annamarie Phelps CBE OLY
Chair, IWG UK Secretariat



Secretary General's Introduction

In this, the final year of the IWG's 2022–2026 Strategic Plan, I am pleased to present the final Annual Report of the IWG Women & Sport UK Secretariat.

The year has of course been dominated by the 9th Global Summit, but we also continued to work hard to strengthen the IWG global 'network of networks', and work with signatories to the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration to demonstrate the impact of deliberate actions to advance opportunities for women and girls in and through sport.

Our mission since taking on the IWG Secretariat in 2022 has been to bring stakeholders together to focus on the changes needed to the structures and values of sport globally. To shift thinking from 'Fixing the Women' to 'Fixing the System'. Recognising that lasting change happens when organisations work together and invest for the long term. I am grateful to all those who shared such examples at the 9th Global Summit with honest reflections of the bumps and course corrections along the way. Please do take the opportunity to watch some of the Summit sessions which can be accessed through the IWG Women & Sport website along with the growing collection of Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration signatory spotlights, bringing to life the work of the global network.

Finally, with preparations now well underway to transfer IWG Women & Girls from the UK to Brazil, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have supported and worked alongside us in the delivery of the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan over the past four years. We couldn't have done it without you.

Lisa O'Keefe MBE
Secretary General, 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.

Insight

Driving a research and insight led approach to gender equality.

Leadership and Advocacy

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

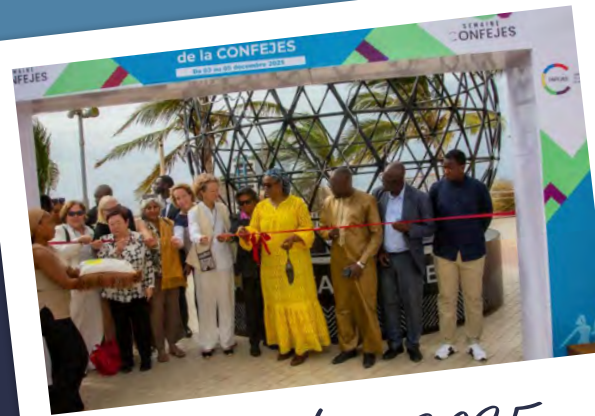


Timeline of Key 2025/26 Activity



October 2025

Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester Mayors become first 'place based' signatories to the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration.



December 2025

CONFES hosts IWG AGM in Dakar, Senegal.



December 2025

International Olympic Committee (IOC) becomes a supporting partner to the 9th IWG Global Summit on Women & Sport.



January 2026

Brazil Olympic Committee announced as IWG 2026-2030 host.



March 2026

IWG Secretariat visit to Brazil to begin formal handover of Secretariat.



May 2026

27 Finnish sporting organisations unite to champion gender equity by signing the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration.



March 2026

Collective signing of Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration by World Gymnastics, British Gymnastics and the UK home nations Federations.



June 2026

Procter and Gamble, Standard Chartered Bank, Sky, Sport Wales and This Girl Can announced as Theme Partners to the 9th IWG Global Summit on Women & Sport.



June 2026

Lisa O'Keefe joins the Standard Chartered & UN Women panel at Cannes Lions Sport for Beyond Campaigns: Rethinking How We Keep Girls in Sport.



July 2026

The Commonwealth Secretariat, the Scottish Government, and the Ministry of Sport and Arts, Botswana signed the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration during the 12th Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting in Glasgow, UK.



July 2026

9th IWG Global Summit on Women & Sport held in Birmingham, UK.

Connections

Strengthening the global network of networks

This year we continued our approach towards growing and connecting the IWG network of networks whilst also building partnerships, both with a focus on the IWG 9th Global Summit.

We continued to strengthen our digital foundations and impact:

- Continued delivery of our refreshed IWG Digital Strategy and the move from standalone communications to a connected content programme
- Further development of the IWG Global Database
- New process for Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration signatories onboarding and story capture
- Development and delivery of an integrated Summit marketing plan including theme development, positioning and core messaging through to content creation, audience development and ticket sales
- Tools and assets developed with built in considerations for handover to next IWG host
- Clear and consistent branding supported by practical assets
- Continued growth and engagement of our digital community with a focus on B2B and high impact platforms



We built relationships with a range of organisations who became Summit Partners

Delivery of the IWG 9th Global Summit was possible thanks to a range of organisations who came on board as either a Theme or Supporting Partner along with our host the Sport & Recreation Alliance.

Theme Partners

- Procter & Gamble – ‘Insight Stage & Hive’ Partner
- Sky UK – ‘Visibility’ Theme Partner
- Standard Chartered – ‘Leadership’ Theme Partner
- Sport Wales – ‘Innovation’ Theme Partner
- This Girl Can – ‘Participation’ Theme Partner

Summit Partners

- Affleck & Co
- Aston Villa FC Women
- City of London
- Getty Images
- JTA
- Merseyside Sport Partnership
- Run Communications
- Sport England
- Sport Scotland
- Taylex Group
- The International Olympic Committee
- This Woman Runs
- UK Sport
- University of Birmingham
- University of Hertfordshire
- West Midlands Growth Company
- Women in Sport

SPORT+ RECREATION ALLIANCE



sky sports

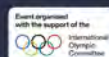
sportwales
chwaraeoncyfwr



Affleck & Co.
Championing Women.
Redefining Sports Business.



gettyimages



sportscotland
the national agency for sport



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of
Hertfordshire UH



taylexgroup

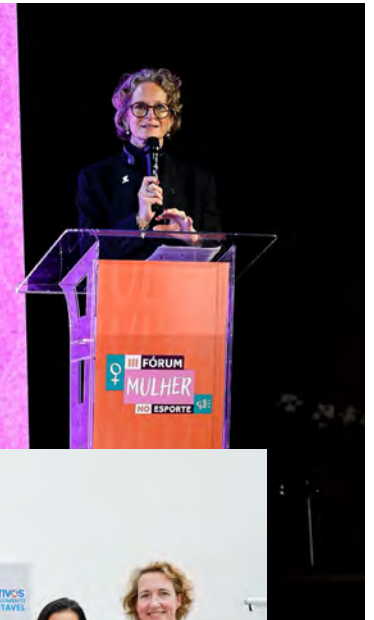


IWG 2025-2026 Highlight Strengthening Connections in Brazil

“Annamarie and I had the opportunity to join our Global Board Member Dr Rosaura Méndez Gamboa on a visit to Brazil following the announcement that the Brazil Olympic Committee (COB) has been selected as the next hosts of IWG Women & Sport.

“The trip was an invaluable opportunity to continue the handover process with Brazil, meet with key stakeholders including colleagues from the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Sport, UN Women, the Senate Sports Commission and the Chamber of Deputies, and attend the COB Fórum Mulher no Esporte (Women in Sport Forum).”

– Lisa O’Keefe MBE



9th Global Summit on Women & Sport

We hosted the 9th Global Summit on Women & Sport from 9-11 July in Birmingham, UK.

The theme of the Summit was 'Beyond the Breakthrough'. The Summit's focus was not on celebrating breakthroughs in isolation, but on what happens after them – how progress is embedded, strengthened and sustained so it cannot be turned back when leadership or priorities change.

Over three inspiring days, the ICC Birmingham welcomed change-makers, innovators and influential figures from across the global sporting community. Together, over 900 delegates and speakers from 82 countries forged new connections, built collaborations, explored solutions, and committed to creating lasting change for women and girls in and through sport and physical activity.



The carefully curated programme comprised a mix of keynote speakers including IOC President Kirsty Coventry, HRH Prince Feisal Al Hussein of Jordan, World Athletics President Lord Sebastian Coe, and Trinh Tu, CEO, Ipsos UK & Ireland. Interviews with Professor Laura McAllister and Michele Kang winner of the 2025 IOC Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award for Europe, and presentation of the Global Award to Abhijit Bhattacharya in recognition of his work with volleyball in rural India.

A mix of panels and speakers discussed the five sub themes of the Summit – Leadership, Innovation, Participation, Visibility and Investment before breakout sessions were used to explore aspects of each theme in more detail.

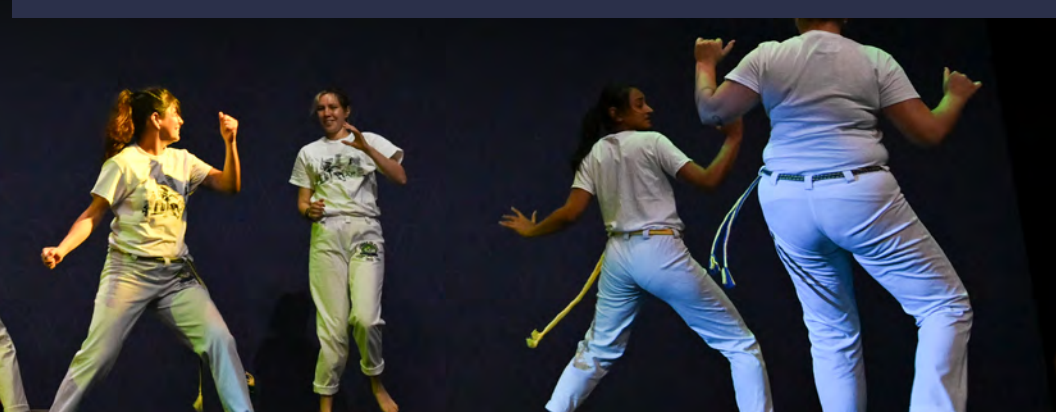
The final day of the Summit centred on 5 Continental Sessions jointly developed by IOC and IWG continental representatives, enabling delegates to focus on the themes, knowledge and insights of most relevance to their part of the globe.





Official Handover to Brazil

The Summit included the ceremonial handover of the IWG Secretariat from the UK (2022-2026) to Brazil (2026-2030). The next hosts will be the Brazil Olympic Committee (BOC) led by the Vice President of the BOC Yane Marques and Manoela Penna, BOC Director of Communications, Marketing and Olympic Values.



Our thanks go to the Summit Organising Committee and the Content Group

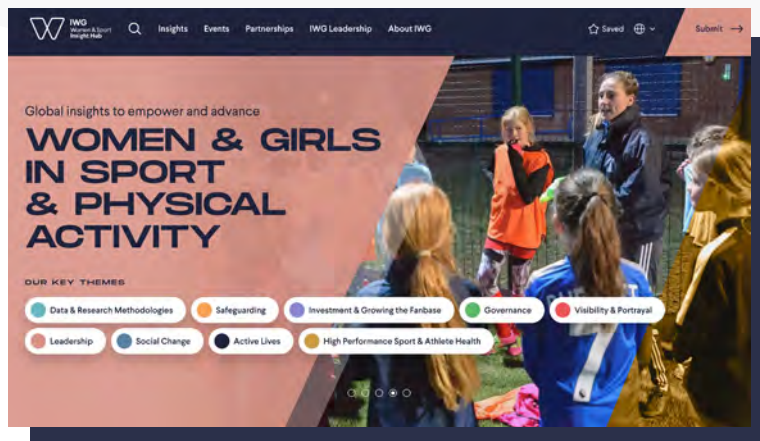
Clare Barrell (Chair, Summit Organising Committee), Karen Weir, Ruth Hall, Tanya Joseph, Lynn Robinson, Zena Wooldridge OBE, Dave Strain, Martin Lindsey, Lisa West (Chair, Content Group), Jen Browning PLY, Preeti Shetty, Lucy Mills, Justine Blomeley, Maggie Murphy, Christina Philippou and Professor Elizabeth Pike.

Insight

IWG's revised approach to sharing insight led expertise

In 2025/26 we continued to drive a research and insight led approach to gender equality. The 9th Global Summit was the most prominent opportunity to share knowledge and insights, but this was supplemented by our continued sharing of knowledge via our digital channels.

We shared insights from across the network to a global audience



- We continued to issue the monthly IWG Newsletter to proactively share the latest news, insights, events and resources with the IWG network.
- Ongoing development work to further improve the IWG Insight Hub, to allow for easier and quicker content management.
- Completion and publication of the IWG 2022-2026 Progress Report by IWG Research Lead, Professor Elizabeth Pike (University of Hertfordshire).



Advocacy

IWG's continued commitment to driving policy and strategy development

This year, we increased our focus on growing the number of signatories to the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration. Creating a simple 'onboarding' process to capture key information to ensure learnings and insights are shared with the global network.



New signatories in year four included:

Turkish Rowing Federation	Parkwood Leisure	Finnish Multicultural Federation	Scottish Government
StreetGames	French National Olympic and Sport Committee	Finnish Paralympic Committee	Ministry of Sport & Arts, Botswana (MOSA)
Taiwan Parliamentary Women's Sport Diplomacy Committee	Newcastle City Council	Finnish Society of Sport Sciences	Catalan Athletics Federation
Unió de Federacions Esportives de Catalunya (UFEC)	World Gymnastics	Finnish Tennis Association	Catalan Federation of Modern Pentathlon
Kosovo Olympic Committee	Gymnastics Northern Ireland	Finnish Public Health Federation	Catalan Volleyball Federation
Kosovo Paralympic Federation	British Gymnastics	Finnish Institute of High Performance Sport	England Athletics
Kosovo Judo Federation	Welsh Gymnastics	Finnish Wellbeing and Sports for Multicultural Women	Scottish Women in Sport
Kosovo Volleyball Federation	Scottish Gymnastics	Mäntyharju Recreation Association	Weightlifting Scotland
Kosovo Basketball Federation	English Gymnastics Association	Professional Coaches of Finland	Scottish Cycling
Kosovo Karate Federation	Durham Cricket	Finnish Workers Sport Federation	Boxing Scotland
Kosovo Boxing Federation	Durham Cricket Foundation	Finnish Senior Sports Leaders & Managers Associations	Scottish Squash
Kosovo Wrestling Federation	Eagles Community Foundation	Sustainable Sport Finland	Tennis Scotland
Kosovo Autosport Federation	England and Wales Cricket Board	Swedish Finland Sports Federation	Fujairah Martial Arts Club (FMAC)
Kosovo Rugby Federation	Foundation of Light	Swedish Finland School Sports Association	Bangladesh Women's Sports Federation
Women Football Club Prishtina	Newcastle Eagles Basketball	Swedish Finland Sport Shooting Association	Get Berkshire Active
Agency for Gender Equality (Kosovo)	Newcastle Red Bulls	Finnish Deaf Sport Federation	University of Oxford
Special Olympics Kosovo	Newcastle United Foundation	Urhea Foundation	Active Oxfordshire
Center for Gender Studies	Newcastle University	Finnish Sport Institute Foundation	British Fencing
Faculty of Physical Education & Sport	North East Combined Authority	Aquatics GB	Rise
UBT College	Northumbria University Newcastle	Swim England	Professional Disc Golf Association
Active Cheshire	Sport Resolutions	Scottish Swimming	UK Coaching
Cheshire East Council	Sports Federation of Southern Finland	Swim Wales	
Everybody Health & Leisure	Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Jyväskylä	Sport Birmingham	
Brio Leisure	Finlands Svenska Gymnastikförbund	Active Partnerships Network National Organisation	
Climbing Hut	Finland's Swedish Sports	Welsh Rugby Union	
The Wishing Well	Finnish-Swedish Orienteering Federation	Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport	
Warrington Wolves Foundation	Finland Swedish Ski Association	Liike - Sports & Development, Finland	
The Queen's School	Finnish Cheerleading Federation	FAME Foundation	
Mind Body Balance Academy	Finnish Coaches Association	This Girl Can	
Livewire & Warrington Borough Council	Finnish Judo Federation	Commonwealth Secretariat	



During the UK's 4-year term (as of 16 September 2026), **143 additional organisations** have signed up to the Declaration taking the total number to **753**.

Amongst those signatories there have been several firsts including the first 'place based' signatories drawing together multiple organisations taking a systemic approach to drive progress within a specific geographic location.

Continental Reports

The IWG Global Executive consists of experts in the field of gender equality and equity from around the world, giving the IWG a unique opportunity to undertake activity on a global scale.

Americas and Caribbean

Rosaura Méndez Gamboa

- Transfer of Secretariat: Brazil assumes IWG leadership 2026-2030 and hosts the 10th Global Summit in Rio 2030, the first major milestone in South America.
- Strategic Alliances: Consolidation with FISU and continental and national sports organizations to align institutional plans with international standards.
- Access to Knowledge: Translation of materials into Spanish to eliminate language barriers in Latin America.
- Continental leadership of the movement articulated regional agenda with shared roadmap, explicit incorporation of gender in university sports.
- 2026-2030 Priorities: Comparable indicators, gender-equal budgeting, women leader development, safe environments, regional evidence and construction of continental roadmap toward Rio 2030.

Europe

Tarja Krum

- Strengthened the European network for gender equality in sport by connecting organisations across the region, fostering collaboration and sharing good practices through the ENGSO Equality Within Sport (EWS) network.
- Established the ENGSO EWS Mentoring Programme. A new European platform to strengthen the capacity of Equality Officers and inclusion professionals and support long-term change.
- Expanded engagement with the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration, supporting new signatories including NOC Kosovo, NOC France and UFEC, alongside national signing initiatives involving 16 organisations in Kosovo and 28 organisations in Finland.
- Advanced gender equality across Europe through capacity-building, advocacy, strategic engagement and promotion of the IWG Global Summit.

Africa

Game Mothibi

- Strengthened the Women Sport African Network (WSAN) institutional capacity and long-term sustainability through a Strategic Planning Workshop in partnership with the Anita White Foundation and the Sport for Social Change Network.
- Expanded visibility, leadership development and cross-sector collaboration by partnering with Africa Sport Ventures Group to deliver the 2026 Fifty Most Influential African Women in Sport, a girls' mentorship programme, the Africa Women Ministers' Roundtable, and an exhibition during the 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Dakar.
- Elevated Africa's voice on the global stage by successfully hosting the Africa regional session at the IWG Global Summit, generating dialogue and partnerships around unlocking investment for women and sport, and advancing women's leadership and governance across Africa.

Asia

Etsuko Ogasawara

- Seijo University's Center for Sport & Gender Equality (SGE) advanced the Japan-ASEAN Project on Women's Sports and Gender Equality, promoting training and research toward gender-sensitive sport policies across 11 ASEAN countries.
- Naoko Fujioka became the first Japanese and Asian Woman inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in June 2026.
- Key events: OCA Gender Equity Seminar (Brunei, April 2025); ASEAN-Japan Policy Makers Workshop (Cambodia, January 2026); JCRWS organized the 11th Women Leaders Academy (Karuizawa, Japan, October 2025).
- National Women in Sports Seminar 2026 (Kuala Lumpur, June) featured a keynote by Josai University's Rieko Yamaguchi and launch of Malaysia's Women's Action Plan for Sports (PTWDS) 2026-2030.

Oceania

Carolyn Ngiraidis

- The birth of the Blue Pacific Talanoa: Building An Inclusive Safe Sport Ecosystem.
- The Oceania Impact Network (OIN) emerged through strong collaboration between four organizations – UN Women, Fiji Multi-Country Office, the Australian Government Team Up, the IOC Olympism365 and Olympic Solidarity with the Equity Commission Oceania. Combining resources and technical expertise needed to drive real and systematic change.
- Delivery of the New Zealand Olympic Committee "Wahine Toa Leadership" Program transitioning retired high performance women athletes, coaches, officials and administrators into impactful sports leadership roles.

Co-opted Member Reports

Lilamani de Soysa

- Championing the Brighton plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration – promoting and encouraging organisations to join the IWG and sign the declaration.
- Promoting and diffusing knowledge about the IWG Insight Hub and encouraging scholars and practitioners to contribute to it.
- Promoting the 9th IWG Global Summit through networks.
- Professionalising the Lausanne Network for Women in Sport to strengthen relationships and advance gender equality in sport.
- Participation as IWG Board member in a documentary film on cyber harassment of women in Africa (#Harcèlement 2.0, by Ache Ahmat Moustapha), where sport was highlighted.

Louissette-Renée Thobi

- The remarkable appointment of Mrs. Annick Lydie Djouma Pikbougoum as the 3rd female Minister of Sports in Burkina Faso took place in January 2026. As an IOC representative and sports management expert, her taking office represents a major political advancement for gender equality.
- Active promotion of women's sports through the January 24 celebration in Gorée and the “Women-Sport-Health” initiative, which funded 68 projects between 2022 and 2025, reaching thousands of women across 16 CONFEJES member States.
- Hosting the IWG AGM in Dakar, organizing the 1st International Conference on Women and Sport in Africa (CIFSA), and mobilizing 47 women to attend the 9th IWG Global Summit.

NGO Reports

WSI

Diane Huffman

- Women Sport International (WSI) worked to advance gender equality through advocacy, research, and collaboration.
- Provided advisory support related to safeguarding to UNESCO and the GO; commented to UN Special Rapporteur's reports and presented at the NGO Platform re: UN Commission on the Status of Women.
- Conducted equity awareness through webinars on gender identity, health, economic well-being, and leadership of women in sport.
- WSI continued evidence-based advocacy toward prevention of gender-based violence, inclusive gender participation including a study on sport policy related to deaf and hard of hearing women and girls in sport, worked with young women's leadership development, and mapping the status of gender polices in sport.

IAPESGW

Maria Luisa Guinto

- Successfully hosted the 20th IAPESGW World Congress in Cebu, Philippines, despite severe typhoon disruption, bringing together global leaders to advance equity, inclusion and innovation in physical education and sport.
- Organised a Special Issue on Gender in International Sports Studies, advancing research-informed advocacy and amplifying diverse global perspectives on women and girls in sport.
- Strengthened global influence through IAPESGW representation on the boards of ICSSPE and ISCPES, embedding gender equity within international sport science and policy agendas.
- Delivered a global webinar series providing continuing professional education on gender-responsive practice, safe sport, and inclusive physical education, extending IAPESGW's impact beyond its quadrennial congress.

Our thanks remain with the UK Steering Committee for their ongoing support of the IWG

IWG UK Steering Committee 2025-2026:

Jeanette Bain-Burnett, Executive Director for Policy and Integrity at Sport England

Esther Britten, Deputy Director, Head of Events & External Affairs at UK Sport

Vikram Banerjee, Managing Director at the England and Wales Cricket Board

Clare Barrell, Director International Relations and Member Services at World Rugby

Ali Donnelly, Corporate Affairs Director at England Rugby

Katie Fawkner-Corbett, Sport and Recreation Alliance Board Member

Ruth Hall, Sport and Recreation Alliance Board Member

Tanya Joseph, former Managing Director for Corporate Affairs at Hill and Knowlton

Joel Lavery, Strategic Lead on Major Sporting Events for the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC)

Professor Elizabeth Pike, Head of the Institute of Sport at the University of Hertfordshire

Viveen Taylor, Director of Equality Diversity Inclusion in Sport at Sport England

Lisa Wainwright MBE, CEO of the Sport and Recreation Alliance

Jessica Williams, Head of Service and Partner Development at Sport Wales