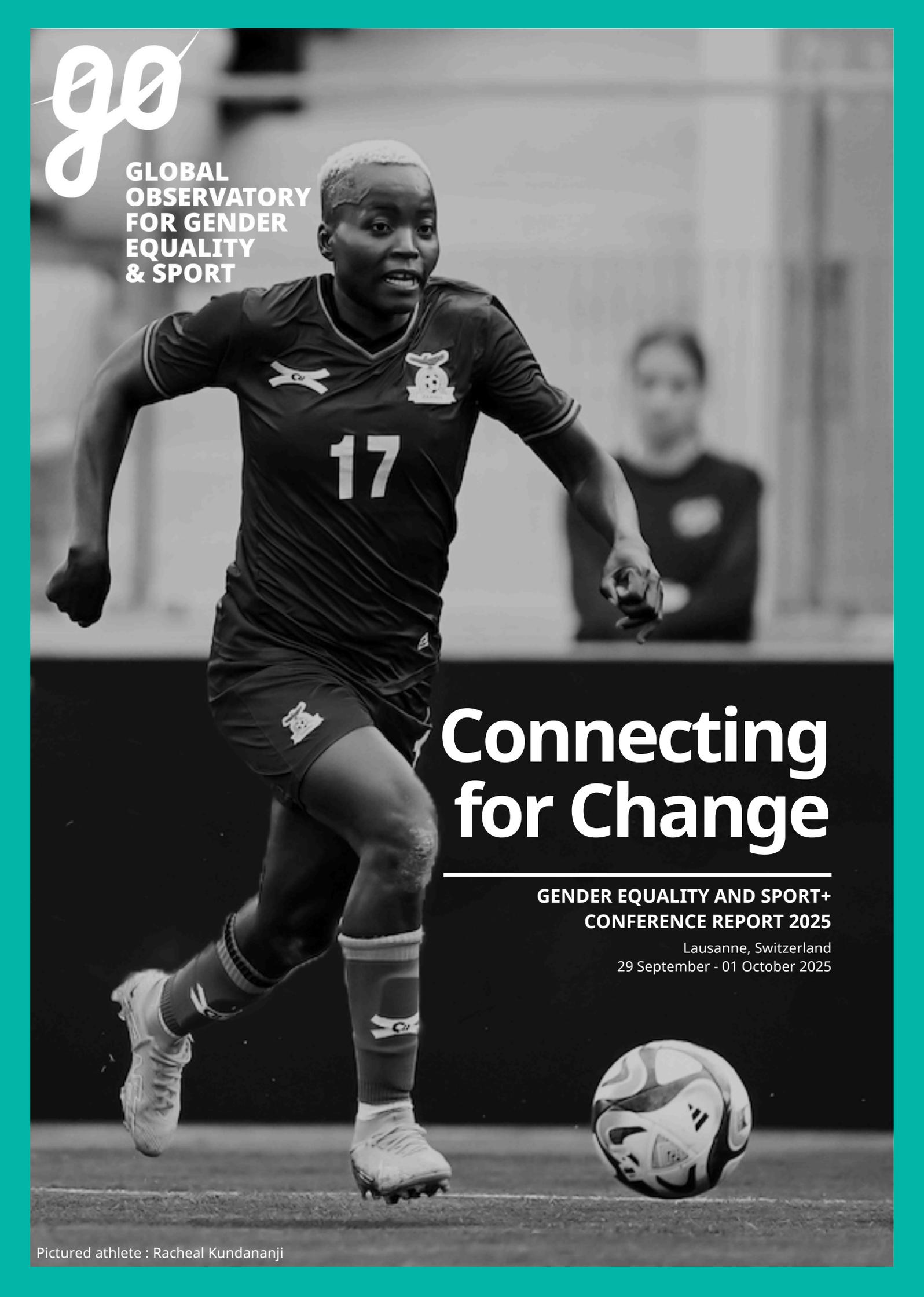




**GLOBAL  
OBSERVATORY  
FOR GENDER  
EQUALITY  
& SPORT**



# Connecting for Change

---

**GENDER EQUALITY AND SPORT+  
CONFERENCE REPORT 2025**

Lausanne, Switzerland  
29 September - 01 October 2025

# Table of Contents

---

3

About the Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport

6

Welcome Address  
Canton de Vaud

7

A Message From  
the President

8

Powering the  
Next Phase

10

Executive  
Summary

11

Audience  
Demographics

13

Governance  
Meetings

15

**Session 1:** Meaningful  
Inclusion and Participation  
in and Through Sport

19

**Session 2:** Who is Responsible for  
Preventing and Responding to  
Gender-Based Violence?

23

**Session 3:** Measuring Impact –  
Going Beyond the Numbers

29

**Session 4:** Harnessing  
the Potential of Digital  
Technology & AI

31

**Session 5:** Reimagining Sport –  
Athlete Empowerment

33

**Q&A Panel:** Current  
Research Landscape on  
Women's Health and Sport

34

**Workshop:** Participatory  
Approaches for Advancing  
Gender Equality in Sport

36

**Session 7:** Change Making –  
Shaping the Future of Sport  
and Gender Equality

40

Expert and Academic  
Partners' Meetings

41

Shaping the  
Future Together

44

Save  
the Date

# About the Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport

The mission of the Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport is to advance gender equality for women and girls in all their diversity through physical education, physical activity, and sport (PEPAS).

As a research and data-driven organisation, the Global Observatory is a platform that aims to facilitate access to knowledge, the creation of partnerships, and mobilisation for gender equality in sport.

The objective is to address gender inequalities on a global scale and to promote safe, fair, and inclusive environments within the sports ecosystem and beyond, serving as a catalyst for action that drives positive change worldwide.

The Global Observatory structures its actions around three key priorities:

### **Establish a global knowledge hub**

aggregating key data, statistics, research, and best practices, and stimulating innovative research to close evidence gaps.

### **Connect, coordinate, and convene**

individuals and organisations engaged in gender equality and sport.

**Ensure strong and consistent advocacy and communication** to disseminate information, amplify messages, and mobilise support for impactful action.



## Supported By



The GO drives inclusive change through the engagement of key stakeholders:

1. By collaborating with universities and academics, the GO collects data, facilitates knowledge exchange, and generates evidence-based recommendations, while developing unified methodologies and strategic approaches to address systemic gender inequalities in sport.
2. By working with governments and UN agencies, the GO advocates for policy reform, resource allocation, and coordinated initiatives that promote gender equality in sports on a global scale.
3. By partnering with sports organisations, including international federations, the GO promotes the integration of gender equality principles into governance, competitions, and development programmes, fostering structural change across the sporting ecosystem.

The Global Observatory aims to address the multiple, systemic and intersecting inequalities faced by women and girls in sport and society, by contributing to the achievement of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a focus on:



## Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Simultaneously, we also contribute to:





**We gather not just to celebrate the achievements of women in sports, but to exchange ideas and develop collaborations to challenge the boundaries, shift the narratives, and together build a future where equity, opportunity, and recognition of women and girls in sports are not aspirations, but realities.**

**Felicite Rwemarika**  
President  
Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport



**Christelle Luisier Brodard**  
President of the State  
Council  
State of Vaud

## Welcome Address Canton de Vaud

---

Christelle Luisier Brodard, President of the Council of State of Vaud and Minister responsible for sport, reaffirmed the Canton's strong partnership with the Global Observatory since its creation in 2021. Highlighting that the initiative, launched in collaboration with the City of Lausanne and the University of Lausanne, UNESCO, and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, responds to concrete needs from governments, federations, academia, and civil society by providing essential data, insights, and expertise to advance gender equality in sport.

The Canton's own investments and policy commitments to strengthen inclusion in sport through a comprehensive six-year tenure plan, will dedicate \$85 million annually to grassroots sport, infrastructure, and equitable access for all residents, including targeted programmes for women and girls. Projects such as the Honeywell Project for women's football and new leadership-training initiatives for women in sport management demonstrate Vaud's intent to create pathways for participation and leadership alike. These actions align closely with the Observatory's mission and reflect the Canton's responsibility, as home to more than 60 international sport federations within the Olympic Capital, to foster progress, connect stakeholders, and to support initiatives like the Global Observatory. Striving for a better, more equitable world in and through sport.



**The Canton has been proud to accompany the Observatory on its journey. We are truly happy to see this initiative grow as it answers concrete needs expressed by sports federations, governments, academia and civil society, providing data, insights and expertise to help them to design and improve programmes and policies for women and girls in sports.**

**Christelle Luisier Brodard**  
President of the State Council  
State of Vaud



**Felicite Rwemarika**  
President  
Global Observatory for  
Gender Equality & Sport

## A Message From the President

---

Félicité Rwemarika welcomed the conference with a message celebrating women's achievements in sport while calling for continued collaboration to turn equity from aspiration to reality. Speaking as founder of Women in Sport Rwanda, she reflected on sport's power to unite communities, transform mindsets, and create opportunities once denied to girls. Rwemarika shared how cultural norms have shifted in Rwanda, from excluding girls from physical activity to achieving near gender parity, demonstrating sport's potential as a tool for confidence, leadership, and reconciliation. She described sport as a force for unity, confidence, and reconciliation, sharing that Rwanda's recent hosting of the UCI World Championships symbolised a milestone for women's inclusion and national pride.

She reminded participants that true equality extends beyond participation to leadership, representation, and decision-making, and called for sustained investment in gender data and cross-sector collaboration to drive lasting change.



**The Global Observatory was established to contribute to this effort through mobilisation of data and research, connecting experts and sharing good practice. This conference is a space to amplify those voices, share those stories and commit the actions that will drive lasting change.**

**Felicite Rwemarika**  
President  
Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport

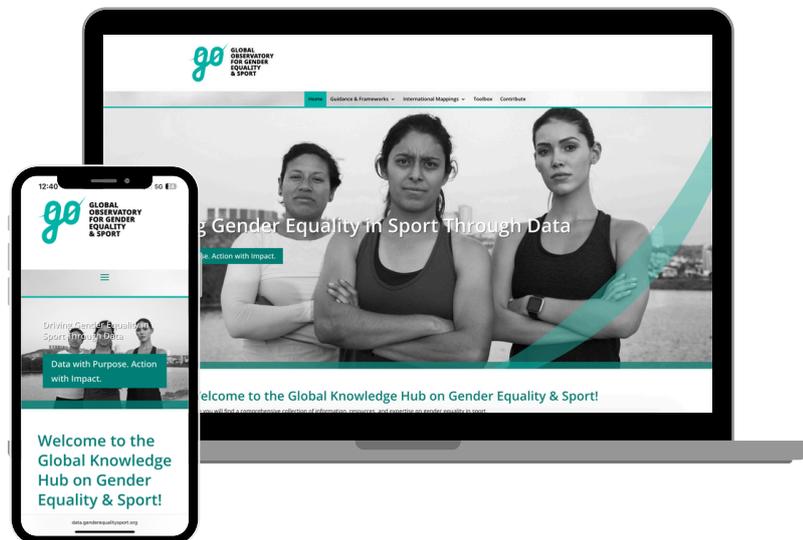


**Dr. Lombe Mwambwa**  
CEO  
Global Observatory for  
Gender Equality & Sport

## Powering the Next Phase

Early in the programme, the CEO of the Global Observatory, Dr. Lombe Mwambwa, addressed participants from around the world and reflected on the significance of this collective milestone. Celebrating how far the Global Observatory has come in just a few years, transforming from an emerging idea into an operational institution dedicated to driving and monitoring progress toward gender equality in sport. Noting that real, systemic change requires not only advocacy but also the establishment of institutions that can measure and sustain progress, positioning the Global Observatory as both a catalyst and a tracker of transformation.

### Launching of the GO Knowledge Hub



A major highlight of her address was the official launch of the Global Observatory Knowledge Hub, a new interactive and open-access platform designed to centralise global data, research, and best practices on gender equality in sport. The Knowledge Hub serves as both a repository and a collaborative tool for aggregating evidence, mapping policies, and connecting expertise worldwide. It will help institutions, policymakers, and practitioners translate data into action.

The Knowledge Hub aims to answer three fundamental questions:

1. Are we on track with gender commitments?
2. Where are the current investment gaps?
3. What examples and frameworks demonstrate what works?

Through this, the platform is built around three key resource areas: Guidance and Frameworks, International Mappings, and a Toolbox of Resources. Since 2021, the Observatory and its partners have identified over 250 potential gender indicators, refined down to 77 core measures that reflect the most pressing global priorities. These indicators build on frameworks such as the Beijing Platform for Action (celebrating its 30th anniversary), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Sport for Generation Equality Framework, and the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration.



### Guidance & Frameworks

#### Turning data into action

Curated collection of key indicators, frameworks and research insights to drive data-driven research and evidence-based actions.

[More](#)



### International Mappings

#### Exploring the global landscape

Mappings of national gender and sport policies, historical milestones, and global directories to map the evolving landscape of gender equality in sport.

[More](#)



### Toolbox

#### Practical resources for action

Repository of resources, guidelines, best practices, toolkits, and methodologies from the GO and its partners, supporting effective policy-making at all levels.

[More](#)



The Knowledge Hub also consolidates work from multiple global and regional partners, including UNESCO, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and Ibero-American networks, to create a shared vision for accountability. The Observatory's ongoing mapping projects include national gender-equality policies, civil society organisations working on women and sport, and women's leadership representation across sport-for-development programmes.

Ultimately, the Knowledge Hub is envisioned as a living, evolving resource, one that promotes coordination, transparency, and shared ownership of the gender equality agenda in sport. She closed by inviting participants to explore the Hub, contribute their insights, and strengthen collective momentum toward measurable and sustained progress.

# Executive Summary

## Connecting for Change

The 2025 Gender Equality and Sport+ Conference reaffirmed the organisation's leadership in advancing gender equality in and through sport. Across three days of dialogue, from the closed Board and Advisory meetings to the public conference and expert sessions, members, researchers, and partners collectively recognised that sustainable progress depends on accountable governance, inclusive data, cross-sector collaboration, and athlete-centred approaches.

From institutional strategy discussions to the expert and academic meetings, the event underscored how evidence, partnership, and integrity can transform sport into a vehicle for equality and systemic change. Participants agreed that equality frameworks must move beyond statements of intent toward measurable action. Athlete voice, inclusive research, and technological innovation emerged as key levers for change, alongside a deepened understanding of women's health and well-being throughout all life stages.

The Global Observatory's collaborative structure, linking its Board, Advisory Council, experts, and academic partners, continues to serve as a model for translating knowledge into policy and practice.

### Key themes from the Gender Equality and Sport+ Conference

#### Governance & Accountability

Transparency, leadership commitment, and monitoring mechanisms are essential for real progress.

#### Athlete Voice & Agency

Empowering athletes through structured representation and protection mechanisms drives authentic inclusion.

#### Inclusive Research & Data

Diverse, intersectional evidence informs meaningful policy and impact measurement.

#### Health & Well-Being

A holistic approach to women's health, physical, mental, and reproductive, underpins safe participation.

#### Collaboration & Partnerships

Sustained, multi-sector cooperation transforms local efforts into global progress.

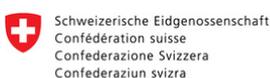
#### Intersectionality & Representation

Recognition of overlapping identities ensures visibility and belonging for all.

#### Education & Co-Creation

Equality must be built with communities, not for them.

**Thank you to our Conference partners whose support is vital to the sustainability of our work**



Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA



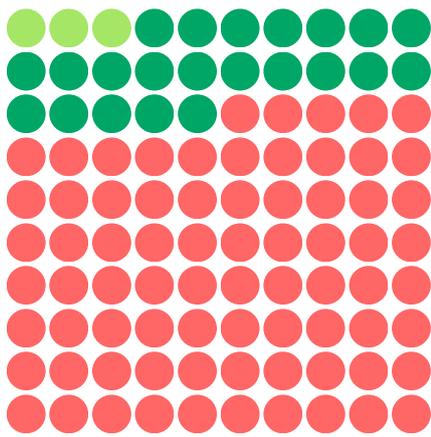
Ville de Lausanne



UNIL | Université de Lausanne

# Audience Demographics

## Diversity and Reach at a Glance



### Gender Representation

The majority of attendees were women however, the trend suggests a broadening engagement across genders.

Total Registrations  
(+8% from 2024)

154

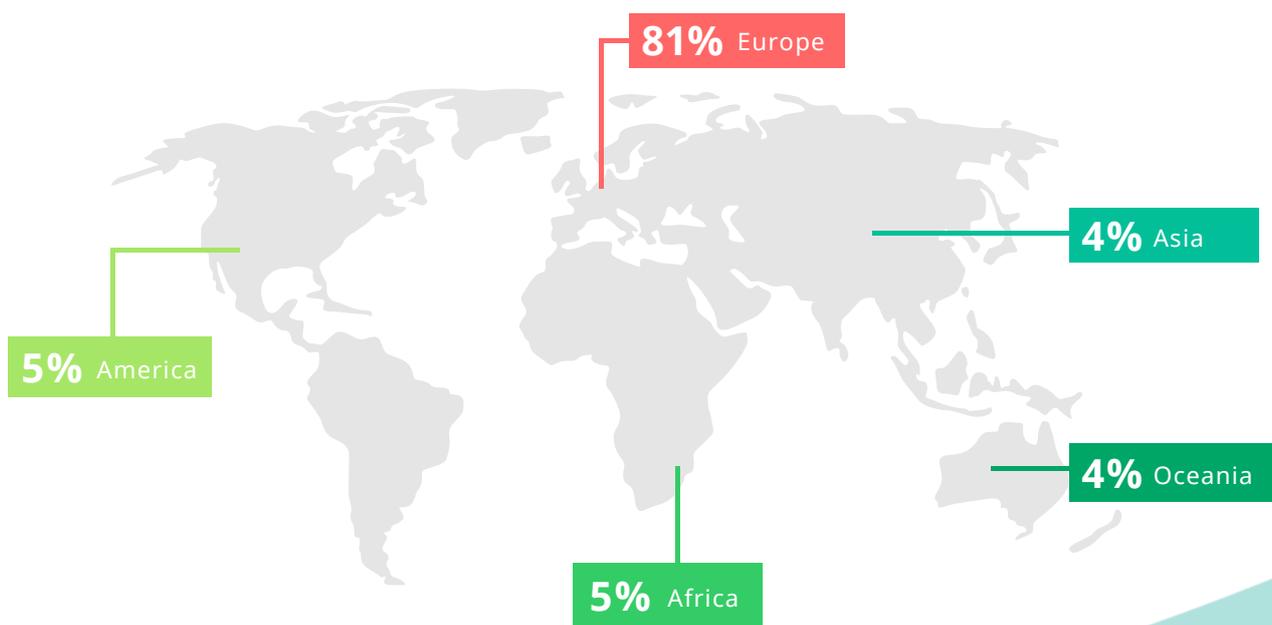
First Time  
Participants

55%

3% Prefer not to say  
22% Men  
75% Women

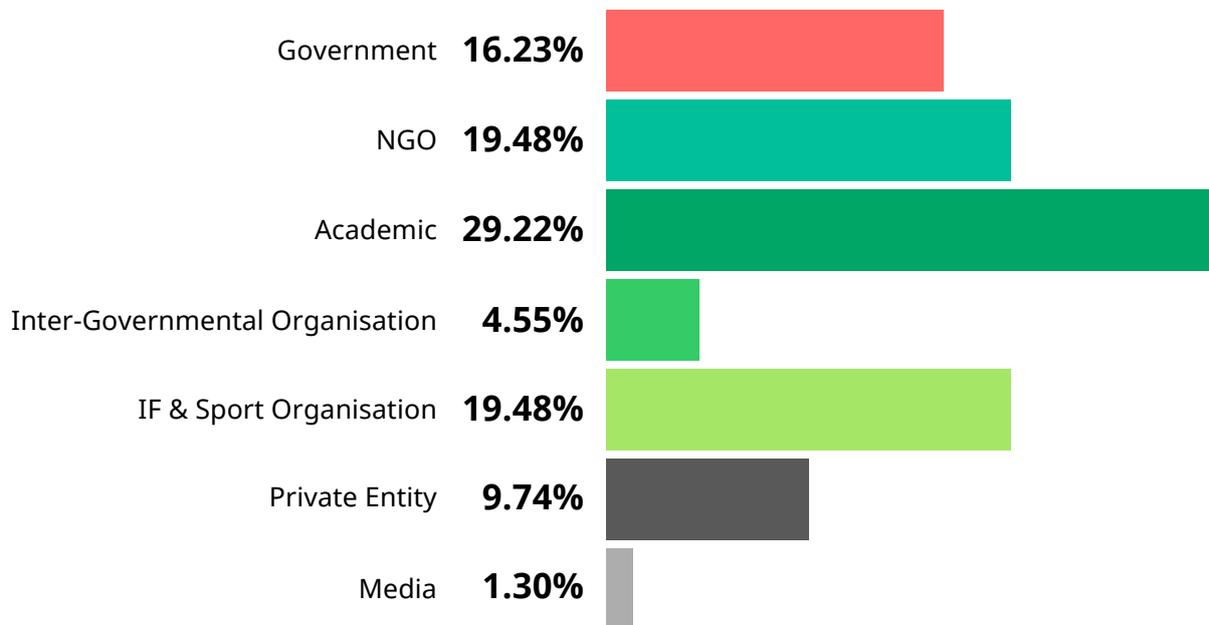
### Continental Representation

The geographic reach of the conference has grown since 2024, with participants from five continents representing 32 countries, indicating a stronger global reach and different perspectives on the day.



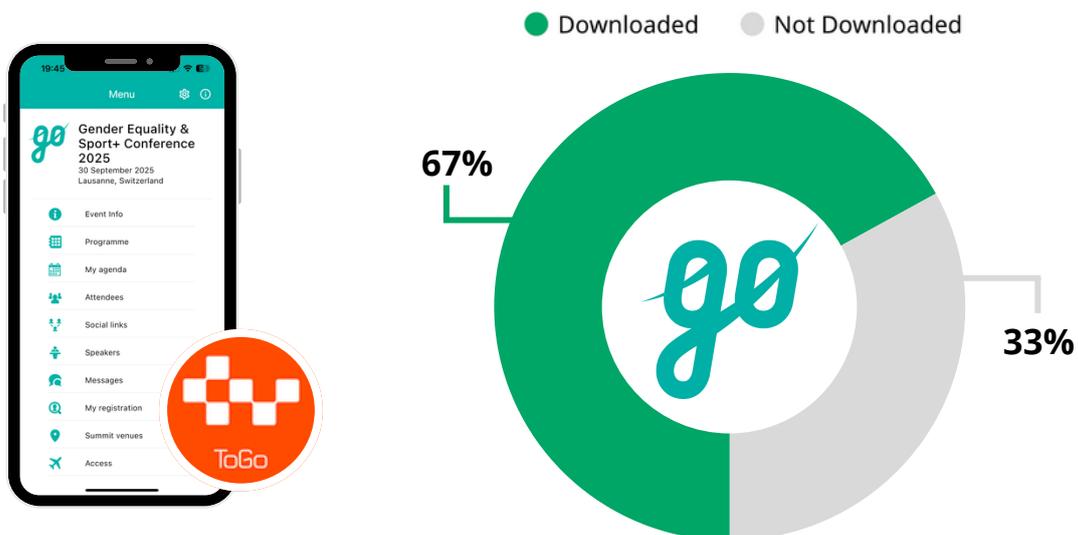
## Stakeholder Representation

The day involved a diverse group of participants bringing different insights and experiences. This allowed for increased knowledge sharing and the formation of new connections.



## GO Networking App Usage

The GO App (powered by EventWorks) generated significant interest, with 67% of participants downloading it and engaging with one another throughout the day.





## Governance Meetings

# Board, General Assembly and Advisory Council

The opening day of the Annual Conference brought together the Global Observatory's Board, General Assembly, and Advisory Council for strategic discussions and alignment on priorities for 2026. The Board, reviewed progress, stakeholder collaboration, and finances, and approved the 2026 objectives centred on three strategic pillars:

- **Knowledge Hub:** Ensuring continuous development of thematic work, with a focus on gender-based violence and women's health in sport.
- **Connect, Coordinate, and Convene:** Strengthening collaboration with governments, international federations, and partners while continuing to expand the Advisory Council and the annual event.
- **Advocacy and Communication:** Sustaining visible, consistent leadership and messaging on gender equality in sport.

The General Assembly confirmed these objectives and budget, elected Fabien Ohl as Vice-President for a four-year term, and set the schedule for 2026 governance meetings. The Advisory Council, meeting in person ahead of the Conference, reinforced the need for regionally sensitive data, inclusive language, and cross-sector collaboration to sustain gender equality efforts.

Members offered longterm, tangible, collaborations for creating safe environments for women and girls, broadening stakeholder engagement, and translating research into actionable policy to drive meaningful change across the sport ecosystem.

### Key Takeaways:

- 2026 objectives and budget approved under three current strategic pillars.
- Fabien Ohl elected Vice-President (2025–2029).
- The Advisory Council emphasised inclusive data, cross-sector partnerships, and safe, equitable sport environments.

# Voices That Shaped the Conversation

## Thank You to Our Panellists



## Session 1

# Meaningful Inclusion and Participation in and Through Sport

### Understanding the foundations of inclusive sport

This opening panel explored sport's potential to enable inclusion and empowerment, while also recognising how exclusion can persist without strong frameworks. Speakers from school sport, policy, legal, and LGBTQI+ advocacy highlighted that meaningful inclusion requires safe, equitable, and empowering experiences for all participants across sports.

#### Presentation By:



**Hasnae El Ayoubi**  
Executive Director  
International School Sport  
Federation



**Nikki Dryden, OLY**  
Human Rights & Sport Lawyer  
Right Collective



**Hugh Torrance**  
Co-President  
European Gay and Lesbian  
Sport Federation



**Dr. Decius Chipande**  
Head of Sport Council  
African Union Sport Council

#### Moderated By:



**Prof. Adele Pavlidis**  
Director Griffith Centre for  
Social Cultural Research  
Griffith University

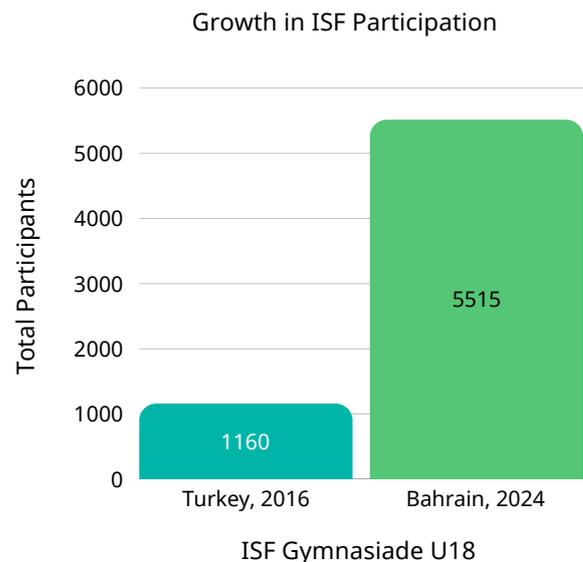
#### Key Takeaways:

- Inclusion in sport goes beyond access — it requires active participation, representation, and empowerment.
- Legal and policy frameworks are crucial, but without cultural change and accountability, they risk remaining symbolic.
- Grassroots and youth-focused initiatives can drive sustainable inclusion when connected with institutional support.
- Intersectionality (gender, sexuality, geography, socio-economic status) must be acknowledged in designing inclusive sport systems.

**Hasnae El Ayoubi,**  
Executive Director  
International School Sport Federation

Opening the session, Hasnae El Ayoubi highlighted school sport as a foundation for lifelong participation and inclusion. The International School Sport Federation (ISF), an IOC-recognised federation based in Lausanne, connects 126 national members, engaging students aged 11-18 across 30+ sports and 5-7 international events each year, including the flagship Gymnasiade. Participation in ISF events has expanded dramatically, from 1,000 athletes across 25 countries in 2016 to over 5,500 athletes from 71 countries in 2024, demonstrating the rising importance of school sport worldwide.

Beyond competition, ISF integrates education, safeguarding, and teacher training. Through initiatives such as She Runs, a global event dedicated to school-aged girls combining sport, mentorship, and cultural exchange, ISF empowers young women to lead and to recognise issues like body shaming, which many are not aware of experiencing. Despite progress, El Ayoubi underscored persistent gender gaps: girls' participation drops after age 15, widening in the U18 Gymnasiade. Female representation exceeds 50% in volleyball but remains below 40% in football/futsal, while the Americas near parity and Asia still trails. Encouragingly, nations such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar are now sending girls' teams, reflecting a gradual yet meaningful shift toward greater inclusion.



**When you do trainings for the teacher, you actually reach a thousand kids. So we introduced PE teachers' training. We collaborated with international federations in delivering PE teachers' trainings for the host city.**

**Hasnae El Ayoubi**  
Executive Director  
International School Sport Federation

**Dr. Decius Chipande**  
Head of Sport Council  
African Union Sport Council

Dr. Decius Chipande highlighted that while many sport-for-development initiatives across Africa have had positive impact, they often lack sustainability because they remain largely NGO-driven rather than being fully embedded within national policy. He noted that strong frameworks for inclusion exist throughout the continent, yet the greatest challenge lies in being proactive and holding all stakeholders accountable for implementation. True inclusion, he emphasised, will only advance through systemic alignment, when governments, NGOs, sport bodies, and communities work collaboratively rather than in silos.

“

**No one entity can do this alone. As long as we are in silos and we are not taking a comprehensive and collaborative approach, we are not going to succeed.**

**Dr. Decius Chipande**  
Head of Sport Council  
African Union Sport Council



**Nikki Dryden, OLY**  
Human Rights & Sport Lawyer  
Right Collective

Nikki Dryden emphasised that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives risk becoming mere slogans if they are not grounded in human rights. She reminded the audience that while sport can inspire, it can also exclude, silence, and harm when left unchecked. Dryden called for a shift from “celebrating diversity” to driving systems change and examining where power lies within sport structures. Drawing on her experience as a human rights lawyer and advocate for athlete survivors, she underscored the need to embed legal accountability and genuine rights-based approaches at the centre of inclusion efforts.



“

**Meaningful inclusion is if we really unravel that tapestry. So we take the beautiful cloth, we take it apart, and we actually look and put human rights at the centre as we start to rebuild sport, because human rights is binding.**

**Nikki Dryden, OLY**  
Human Rights & Sport Lawyer  
Right Collective

**Hugh Torrance**

Co-President

European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation

The European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF) mobilises grassroots LGBTQI+ sport communities across Europe, amplifying lived experiences and activism to drive change from the ground up. The organisation emphasises the need for consistent data, greater visibility, and stronger collaboration with institutions to build truly inclusive sporting environments.



“

**I think the biggest challenge for us is actually that queer women's experiences are just less well understood and so continuously and frequently deprioritised in almost every paradigm that we work in.**

**Hugh Torrance**

Co-President

European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation



## Session 2

# Who is Responsible for Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence?

### Bringing lived experiences to the forefront

The discussion challenged sport organisations to move beyond policies and embrace a culture of accountability and care. Panellists shared concrete pathways, from education and survivor-led design to inter-ministerial cooperation, that can bridge the gap between intention and impact in safeguarding.

Presentation By:



**Prof. Kirsty Forsdike**  
Associate Professor  
Latrobe University

Presentation By:



**Victoire Aimé**  
Associate Project Officer  
Gender Equality  
UNESCO



**Toluiva Keneti**  
Rugby Development Manager  
Lakapi Samoa



**Mathilde Grenet**  
Founder & CEO  
En Garde

Moderated By:



**Anne Tiivas**  
Founding President  
and Chair  
Safe Sport International



**We need to actually speak to people first, before we even start, before we even begin to develop a programme or a project. That's what co-development and co-design really should be.**

Prof. Kirsty Forsdike  
Latrobe University

This panel explored institutional and individual responsibilities in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in sport, with a focus on prevention, community-based programming, disclosure mechanisms, survivor engagement, and aligning global frameworks with lived experiences.

It was highlighted that preventing GBV requires a multi-agency, multidisciplinary, collective approach, combining strong policies with meaningful survivor participation, ensuring the affected person/s are centred and then the framework is effectively built.

The discussion emphasised both the systemic challenges and the practical steps, from grassroots safeguarding to global frameworks, that can foster safe, inclusive environments in sport.



### Key Takeaways:

- Preventing and responding to gender-based violence (GBV) in sport requires a multi-agency, multi-level approach involving governments, federations, clubs, communities, and survivors themselves. No single actor can or should bear full responsibility.
- Effective safeguarding depends on connecting global policy frameworks, such as UNESCO's Safe Sport Standards, with grassroots delivery, ensuring that survivor voices and local contexts inform every level of action.
- Institutions must move beyond policies that look good on paper to frameworks with real accountability, backed by funding, leadership, and a legal basis to enforce safeguarding commitments.
- Survivors' lived experiences must be at the centre of programme design and evaluation, ensuring genuine co-development rather than token consultation.
- Programmes like Samoa's Get into Rugby Plus show that sport can be a powerful platform to shift harmful gender norms, promote equality, and create safe spaces when embedded with life skills and safeguarding training.



**It can't change overnight, but it's a collective effort for everyone. It's something that we look forward to strengthening, which is the reason why we reviewed the programme, to ensure all these gaps that we had from the previous years will be strengthened now.**

**Toluiva Keneti**  
Rugby Development Manager  
Lakapi Samoa

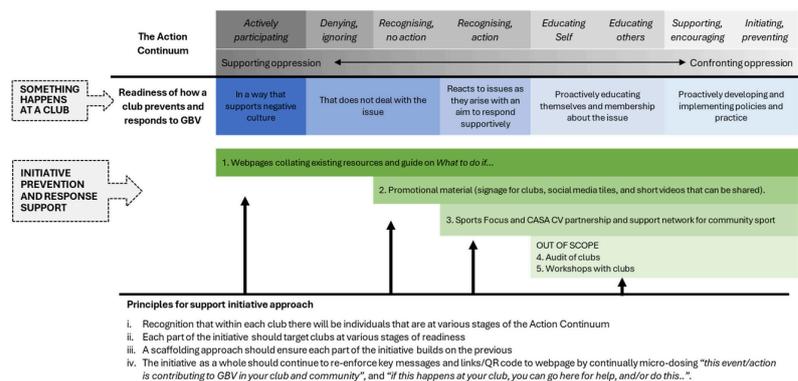
**Prof. Kirsty Forsdike**  
Associate Professor  
Latrobe University

Associate Professor Kirsty Forsdike opened the session by framing gender-based violence (GBV) in sport as “pervasive, harmful, and complex”, with prevalence rates for women ranging from 26% to 74%. She explained that GBV in sport includes sexual, physical, psychological, financial, and technology-facilitated abuse, and that such violence is often normalised within sporting cultures as “part of the game”. Forsdike highlighted that few studies have examined organisational responses and that most existing research focuses narrowly on sexual violence, overlooking other forms such as intimate partner or online abuse. She stressed that while sport can be empowering, it also reproduces the same patriarchal and hierarchical systems that enable violence, often leaving women to carry the invisible burden of keeping themselves safe.

Drawing on her research in Australia, Forsdike presented the Readiness to Respond model, an action framework developed with community partners to strengthen trauma-informed responses and build safer sport environments across all levels. She noted that progress depends on co-creation with local organisations, survivor-informed partnerships, and legislative backing to ensure accountability. Forsdike called for a shift from viewing violence as the fault of “bad apples” to recognising it as a systemic issue that demands collective responsibility across sport, government, and research sectors.



## READINESS TO RESPOND: DEVELOPMENT



**We really have to step outside of sport to be able to tackle this issue. We have specialist services who have worked in this space for decades; they should be our first port of call. Our local community and survivor voices have to be brought into the conversation because they are the experts in what’s happening and how things need to be addressed.**

**Prof. Kirsty Forsdike**  
Associate Professor  
Latrobe University

**Victoire Aimé**

Associate Project Officer Gender Equality  
UNESCO

Victoire Aimé, Associate Project Officer for Gender Equality at UNESCO, presented the organisation's initiative to develop Global Policy Standards for Inclusive, Equitable, and Safe Sport and Physical Education, a comprehensive framework designed to harmonise safeguarding and gender equality policies across 194 Member States. Emerging from the MINEPS VII conference in Baku (2023) and endorsed by 110 governments, the standards aim to address fragmented policy landscapes and establish shared principles and indicators aligned with UNESCO's International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport. The initiative includes 18 standards, one specifically dedicated to safeguarding, and integrates survivor consultations and multi-stakeholder input from governments, sport bodies, researchers, and civil society.

Building on this foundation, Aimé highlighted the importance of inter-ministerial cooperation, linking ministries of sport, health, justice, and education, and adopting participatory approaches that engage survivors, whistleblowers, and bystanders in policy creation and evaluation. She explained that while binding legislation remains essential, voluntary frameworks play a critical role in laying the groundwork for enforceable regulations. UNESCO's phased approach, she added, combines advocacy, capacity-building, and pilot implementation in selected countries by 2026, ensuring that safe sport policies are both inclusive and actionable at the national level.



**While we need rules and regulations that are binding and mandatory, we shouldn't underestimate the value of voluntary frameworks that create the preconditions for future legally binding regulation.**

**Victoire Aimé**

Associate Project Officer Gender Equality  
UNESCO

## Session 3

# Measuring Impact – Going Beyond the Numbers

### Bringing meaning to measurement

This session examined how to measure gender equality in sport beyond quantitative metrics, highlighting the importance of contextualisation, qualitative methods, and inclusive frameworks. Panellists emphasised that data must capture lived experiences, intersectional realities, and systemic barriers to create meaningful change. Discussions stressed the value of combining indicators with storytelling, participatory approaches, and strong political and financial commitment to ensure that measurement leads to action.

#### Presentation By:



**Jules McGeever**  
Co-Founder  
Equal Careers

#### Presentation By:



**Belén Lara Martínez**  
Executive Secretary  
Ibero-American Sport Council



**Dr. Nana Adom Aboagye**  
Research Consultant



**Angela Mantilla**  
Head of Programs  
Adidas Foundation

#### Moderated By:



**Lombe Mwambwa, PhD**  
CEO  
Global Observatory for  
Gender Equality and Sport

#### Key Takeaways:

- Numbers alone are not enough. Quantitative data must be complemented with qualitative methods, storytelling, and participatory approaches.
- Context and intersectionality matter. Data should reflect regional, cultural, and lived experiences to avoid homogenising women's realities.
- Funding and accountability are critical and without political will, resources, and structural reform, measurement frameworks risk being symbolic.
- Collaborative and inclusive design strengthens data systems by engaging stakeholders at all levels, from governments to grassroots communities.

**Jules McGeever**

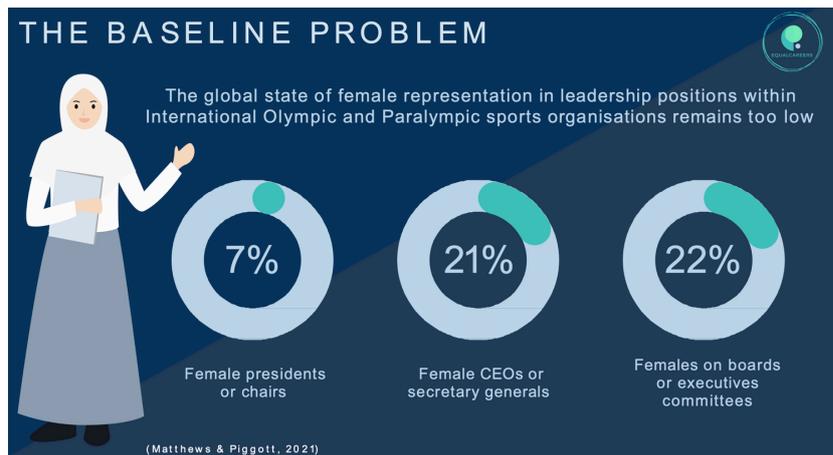
Co-Founder  
Equal Careers

Jules McGeever presented insights from Equal Careers' global analysis of leadership development in sport, based on data from 187 participants across 69 countries and 100+ federations. The study revealed that while programmes improve confidence, showing a 75% readiness rate and a +73 impact score, systemic barriers persist.

Women who experienced harassment or bias (91%) still pursued leadership roles, but only 32% succeeded compared to 54% of those who hadn't, showing how culture, not capability, limits advancement.

Mentorship emerged as a key lever, yet current efforts are often ad hoc and only 33% of participants received structured mentoring. Quotas proved effective and only when backed by political will, and women with professional experience outside sport were 20% more likely to pursue and 21% more likely to succeed in leadership roles, underscoring how sport's internal culture can erode confidence.

McGeever concluded that leadership initiatives must shift from individual skill-building to systemic reform, addressing governance, culture, and accountability at national federation levels. She urged for ongoing mentorship, localised content, and impact monitoring to ensure leadership readiness translates into real opportunity.



**Equity in sports leadership isn't about simply handing women the keys to boardroom doors through leadership programmes. These things are important, but they only tell you half the story. It takes more and often more uncomfortable affirmative action. True change comes when organisations work with women, but also remove the cultural, structural and policy locks.**

**Jules McGeever**  
Co-Founder  
Equal Careers

**Belén Lara Martínez**

Executive Secretary  
Ibero-American Sport Council

Belén Lara Martínez presented the Ibero-American Sport Council's work to strengthen gender equality measurement across Latin America and the Iberian region. Through collaboration with UNESCO and regional partners, the Council has developed 16 indicators to assess the social and developmental impact of sport, three of which specifically focus on gender equality.

These indicators help governments evaluate progress, identify policy gaps, and promote accountability. Early findings show that while awareness of gender inequality has increased, many countries still lack the financial resources or data capacity to implement lasting change. In several cases, no dedicated budget exists for gender equality in sport, despite policy recognition.

Martínez emphasised that real progress depends on integrating these indicators into national decision-making and aligning budgets with gender equity goals. She underscored that political commitment and sustainable investment are essential to transform awareness into measurable results.



**There is already awareness of gender gaps in this forum, but the capacity to measure and calculate indicators remains limited. To make real progress it is essential to deal with resource allocation with these gaps, so that budget and actions respond directly to inequalities.**

**Belén Lara Martínez**  
Executive Secretary  
Ibero-American Sport Council



**Dr. Nana Adom Aboagye**  
Research Consultant

Nana stressed that intersectionality must be embedded in measurement frameworks, not treated as an afterthought, since ignoring it distorts data and conceals the realities of women's diverse experiences. She emphasised that storytelling and participatory action research are essential tools to authentically capture lived experiences, particularly in African contexts. True progress, she noted, depends on reimagining how women in sport are measured, centring the voices of those from the Global South and marginalised identities.

**Angela Mantilla**  
Head of Programs  
Adidas Foundation

Angela Mantilla explained that as a young organisation, the Adidas Foundation has faced challenges navigating overwhelming and fragmented data when designing programmes. She emphasised that effective measurement requires balance and funders must align their data requests with the real needs of partner organisations and communities.

To make data meaningful, she stressed the importance of consultation, local expertise, and lived experience, ensuring programmes are designed collaboratively and remain adaptable and sustainable over time.



**Making sure the data that we're asking our partners to collect is meaningful for them. Because this should be answering questions for them, for their communities, for the people that they are trying to serve.**

**Angela Mantilla**  
Head of Programs  
Adidas Foundation







## Session 4

# Harnessing the Potential of Digital Technology & AI

### How can we shape AI to make a more inclusive sport ecosystem?

This session dove into how digital technology, AI, and big data are transforming the sport ecosystem and implications for safe and inclusive sport.



**Lucy Mills**  
Founder & Chief Catalyst  
Ready Sport Global

Lucy Mills, the Founder and Chief Catalyst at Ready Sport Global highlighted how digital technology and artificial intelligence are rapidly reshaping the sports ecosystem, particularly for women's sport. Drawing on her work with Ready Sport, she emphasised AI's potential to close gender gaps through athlete performance tools, media innovation, fan engagement, and safeguarding online spaces.

Mills pointed to both opportunities and risks, noting that women's sport, often with limited resources, has the chance to "leapfrog" traditional models and embed digital-first, AI-enabled strategies from the ground up. At the same time, she stressed the importance of building ethical frameworks, centring women in data and design, and ensuring that digital transformation remains rooted in people, culture, and values, not just the tools.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Women's sport has unique opportunities to innovate. With smaller teams and fewer long-established systems, women's organisations can adopt digital-first and AI-enabled approaches with more agility and creativity than men's clubs who run into complications because they are further established.
- AI can advance gender equality if women are centred in its design.
- Safeguarding athletes from online abuse, illegal streaming, piracy, and misinformation is as important as leveraging AI for performance, media, and fan engagement.





**If we want AI to work for women in sport, we must build it with women at the centre of the data, the design and the decision-making. Otherwise, we risk repeating the same inequalities at scale.**

**Lucy Mills**  
 Founder & Chief Catalyst  
 Ready Sport Global

## Audience Reflections & Dialogue

Questions explored how AI can drive equity without reinforcing old inequalities.

An audience member asked how educators can teach AI and digital innovation in sport when many feel unqualified or behind on the technology.

Lucy said that students today are already “digital natives”; they know far more about AI tools than most teachers realise. Rather than trying to lecture them on technology, she suggested educators should listen to students, adapt course design, and focus on developing new skills and critical thinking for an AI-driven world. She noted that education itself is being disrupted, and that teaching approaches must evolve accordingly.



An audience member raised a concern about the lack of resources in women’s sport compared to men’s. They asked whether relying on AI might risk becoming a “band-aid solution”, a cheaper but imperfect fix, instead of addressing the deeper structural inequalities in funding and staffing.

Lucy acknowledged that women’s sport often operates with fewer resources, but highlighted that this can actually foster innovation and adaptability. She explained that women’s teams tend to be smaller, less burdened by legacy systems, and more open to experimentation. This gives them the opportunity to design AI adoption strategically, focusing on people, culture, and organisational readiness, whereas many men’s clubs are stuck with fragmented systems and sunk costs.

## Session 5

# Reimagining Sport – Athlete Empowerment

### What role can the athlete play in advancing gender equality?

This session brought lived experience to the forefront, showing how athletes can advance gender equality through their platforms and personal journeys.

#### Moderated By:



**Gaby Garton**  
Player Relations Coordinator  
World Players Association



**Bernadette Deka-Zulu**  
Co-Founder & Global Lead  
The Racheal Kundananji  
Legacy Foundation



**Friba Rezayee, OLY**  
Executive Director  
Women Leaders of Tomorrow



**Maggie Mac Neil, OLY**  
Student  
Louisiana State University

#### Key Takeaways:

- Athlete voices are essential in shaping inclusive and equitable sporting systems.
- Structural inequalities in sport, especially around gender and geography, continue to hinder progress, but grassroots leadership and advocacy can bridge gaps.
- Transitioning from athlete to advocate is a powerful way to sustain momentum for change and inspire the next generation.
- Partnerships, recognition, and accountability from global institutions are critical for ensuring athlete empowerment leads to lasting reform.



**We know gender inequality in sport is not a myth, it is something that is there.**

**Bernadette Deka-Zulu**  
Co-Founder & Global Lead  
The Racheal Kundananji Legacy Foundation

This session showcased how athletes are at the heart of advancing gender equality in sport, using their lived experiences and platforms to inspire change. Bernadette Deka-Zulu shared the story of Rachel Kundanaji's rise from rural Zambia to global football, and how her foundation now uses football as a tool for education and empowerment despite systemic inequities and limited resources. Friba Rezayee reflected on her historic journey as the first Afghan woman to compete at the Olympics, describing how her participation in Athens became both a women's rights milestone and a revolution for Afghan sport. She highlighted the current realities for Afghan women under Taliban rule and called for international federations to recognise and support women athletes outside of Afghanistan.



Meanwhile, Olympic champion Maggie Mac Neil explored the transition from elite athlete to advocate, emphasising both the opportunities and challenges of finding identity beyond competition. She raised concerns about the limited influence of athlete committees and stressed the importance of collective action through associations to protect athletes who speak out. Together, the panellists' stories illustrated both the barriers faced by women athletes—structural inequality, lack of recognition, and systemic exclusion—and the power of resilience, advocacy, and partnership to transform sport into a driver of empowerment and social change.

“

**I founded Women Leaders of Tomorrow and a sports programme called Growth of Afghanistan League because we wanted to overcome this misrepresentation, this misconception about Afghan women because we are seeing that we are never going to be in the league.**

**Friba Rezayee, OLY**  
Executive Director  
Women Leaders of Tomorrow



## Session 6

# Q&A Panel: Current Research Landscape on Women's Health and Sport

### What is the current research on women's health in sport showing?

Panellists discussed the current state of women's health research, what the gaps are, ethical considerations and the importance of inclusive approaches.

Moderated By:



**Dr. Hayley Truskewycz**  
Project Manager  
Global Observatory for Gender  
Equality & Sport



**Dr. Kat Okholm Kryger**  
Medical Specialist  
UEFA



**Dr. Madeleine Pape**  
Researcher  
University of Lausanne

This session brought together Dr. Kat Okholm Kryger (UEFA) and Dr. Madeleine Pape (University of Lausanne) to explore the evolving research landscape on women's health and sport. The discussion challenged oversimplifications about the menstrual cycle, highlighted the need for better data quality and ethical use of health tracking, and emphasised the importance of context, diversity, and empowerment in research. Both panellists underlined that women's health research must move beyond narrow biomedical frames to embrace holistic, interdisciplinary, and inclusive approaches.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Menstrual tracking can be valuable for health monitoring, but misuse of this data raises ethical, privacy, and athlete welfare concerns.
- Research must expand beyond a Global North lens to address structural inequalities and diverse women's health experiences worldwide.
- Empowerment begins with body literacy and normalisation, ensuring athletes themselves—not just institutions—benefit from health knowledge.
- Research must include older women, addressing menopause, which is largely overlooked in sport research, leaving major gaps in understanding women's health beyond reproductive age.
- Also important is research on women's bone health, hormones and pelvic floor issues to support lifelong participation in sport.



**If we look at the history of sport, the menstrual cycle was used or women's reproductive capacity was used as a reason to limit the participation of women and girls in sport.**

**Dr. Madeleine Pape**  
Researcher  
University of Lausanne

## Session 6

# Workshop: Participatory Approaches for Advancing Gender Equality in Sport

### How can participatory approaches drive gender equality in sport?

This interactive session explored how participatory approaches can empower women and girls in sport, giving attendees the opportunity to discuss and apply these methods through practical exercises.



**Dr. Robyn Smith**  
Research Fellow  
Loughborough University

The workshop aimed to deepen participants' understanding of participatory approaches in sports programmes and policies, particularly for advancing gender equality. Led by Dr. Robyn Smith and Dr. Oliver Hooper - researchers from Loughborough University - the session introduced the theory, history, and guiding principles of participatory methods (such as co-design, consultation, and collaboration) and their role in shifting power towards programme beneficiaries.



**Dr. Oliver Hooper**  
Senior Lecturer  
Loughborough University

Drawing from their research and field experience, they demonstrated how participatory practices shift power from institutions to communities, enabling women and girls - particularly those from marginalised backgrounds - to influence programme design, delivery, and evaluation.

The objective was to explore how participatory approaches can address inequalities in sports, foster youth voice and agency, and enhance the impact and sustainability of initiatives for women and girls.

The group work centred on exploring how participatory approaches can be implemented across different areas of practice. Participants were divided into smaller teams, each assigned a case study focusing on one of the following themes: co-design, advisory boards, evaluation, and knowledge dissemination and impact. These case studies served as practical scenarios for applying participatory methods to real-world challenges in sports programmes.



**We come with our own lived experiences, our own privilege. And that can be very different to the women and girls that we're working with on the ground. So it's really thinking critically and asking ourselves some of these tough questions.**

**Dr. Robyn Smith**  
Research Fellow  
Loughborough University

### Key Takeaways:

- **Trust as a foundation:** Building trust and creating safe, inclusive spaces is essential for meaningful participation, especially for marginalised groups such as refugee girls.
- **Early and continuous engagement:** Participation must be embedded from the start of programme design rather than limited to later stages like dissemination or evaluation.
- **Context-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches:** Effective participation requires acknowledging cultural norms, lived experiences, and trauma to ensure inclusivity and relevance.
- **Time and resource investment:** Meaningful participation demands sustained commitment, adequate time, and funding to build relationships and capacity.
- **Ethics and reflexivity:** Organisations must address consent, representation, and power dynamics, ensuring participants have agency over how their stories are shared.
- **Reaching beyond existing structures:** Programmes should extend outreach beyond traditional clubs or institutions to include communities that remain underrepresented.



## Session 7

# Change Making – Shaping the Future of Sport and Gender Equality

### Driving systemic change for women and girls

Panellists discussed the future of gender equality in sport. They highlighted the need for action, investment, collaboration, leadership, and intersectional inclusion to make gender equality sustainable from grassroots to leadership.



**André Oliveira**  
Senior Academy Manager  
Federation Internationale  
Hockey (FIH)



**Patrick Stolpmann**  
Executive Director  
International Council of Sport  
Science and Physical Education



**Primrose Mhunduru**  
Gender Equality  
and Inclusion Manager  
International Olympic Committee



**Prof. Elizabeth Pike**  
Professor of Sport, Health and Exercise,  
University of Hertfordshire &  
Research Lead, International Working  
Group on Women and Sport (IWG)

#### Moderated By:



**Francine Raveney**  
Deputy Executive Secretary  
to Enlarged Partial  
Agreement on Sport  
Council of Europe

This closing panel explored the future of gender equality in sport, addressing persistent barriers and identifying strategies to accelerate systemic change. Moderated by Francine Raveney (Council of Europe), the discussion brought together leaders across international federations, research, and the Olympic Movement.

Speakers emphasised that while progress has been made, for example, equal athlete participation in Paris 2024 and a historic number of women in IOC leadership positions, the next frontier lies in ensuring sustainability, governance, funding, and inclusion beyond numbers. From grassroots engagement to leadership reform, the session underscored collaboration, good governance, and context-sensitive approaches as essential to shaping a more equitable sporting future.

**Key Takeaways:**

- Policy without investment stalls progress – Gender equality frameworks exist, but implementation lags due to limited funding and weak structural support.
- Representation matters, but culture sustains it – True parity depends not just on numbers, but on environments that enable women to lead and stay in sport.
- Collaboration and cultural sensitivity are key – Global progress requires joint effort across IFs, NOCs, academia, and NGOs, with strategies adapted to local realities.
- The next challenge is intersectionality – Inclusion must account for layered inequities such as disability, socio-economic status, and cultural context.

**Primrose Mhunduru**

Gender Equality and Inclusion Manager  
International Olympic Committee

Primrose Mhunduru outlined how the IOC embeds gender equality across its three spheres of influence: as an organisation, as the owner of the Olympic Games, and as the leader of the Olympic Movement. She highlighted Paris 2024 as a historic milestone, achieving full gender balance in athlete participation for the first time in Olympic history. While celebrating this progress, she emphasised that meaningful equality must extend beyond the field of play, calling for greater investment, collaboration, and leadership accountability to close the persistent gaps in coaching, technical, and decision-making roles.



**For the first time, the IOC allocated an equal quota of athlete participation in terms of women and men on the field of play. This has taken 124 years to reach this point, so it's a milestone that has taken very long, but we need to be proud and celebrate it.**

**Primrose Mhunduru**  
Gender Equality and Inclusion Manager  
International Olympic Committee

**Patrick Stolpmann**

Executive Director  
International Council of Sport Science and  
Physical Education

In reflecting on the state of gender equality in sport, Patrick Stolpmann cautioned that progress too often stops at words on paper. Despite a proliferation of policies and commitments, he noted that real change requires investment in the systems and people who make equality possible. Through ICSSPE's projects such as Get Women and Let's Get Moving Together, he highlighted the value of building inclusion from the ground up, linking grassroots participation with leadership opportunities. Stolpmann also pointed to the need for resilience and strategic communication amid shifting political climates, urging stakeholders to stay the course and frame messages that sustain impact over time.

“

**The aspect of intersectionality is that there are various layers of gender equity and inclusion, and gender is just one of those layers.**

**Patrick Stolpmann**

Executive Director  
International Council of Sport Science  
and Physical Education

**Prof. Elizabeth Pike**

Professor of Sport, Health and Exercise, University of Hertfordshire & Research Lead, International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG)

At the intersection of leadership and learning, Prof. Elizabeth Pike believes the systems in and around sport must evolve. Through the WISH Programme (Women in Sport High Performance Pathway), she and her team are building pathways for female coaches that pair leadership training with institutional change, ensuring progress is embedded, not symbolic. The programme's holistic approach links confidence, competence, and courage, while its partnerships with international federations drive accountability in recruitment, development, and retention. For Pike, good governance remains the cornerstone of lasting equality: funding and reform must work hand in hand to produce genuine, measurable change.

**André Oliveira**

Senior Academy Manager  
Federation Internationalé Hockey (FIH)

For André Oliveira, hockey offers a blueprint for what gender equality in sport can look like when it becomes part of a sport's identity rather than an initiative. Since the 1980s, the International Hockey Federation has upheld a 50-50 balance across competition, officiating, and governance, proof that equality can be embedded by design.

Beyond the field, it was highlighted how FIH partners with brands like Nike and L'Oréal to amplify inclusion through campaigns such as Body Confidence, promoting self-esteem and positive portrayals of women and girls. He also underscored that advancing equality globally demands cultural awareness, noting that progress sometimes depends on leading with the game itself to create space for change.

“

**On the coaching side, we're definitely not there. We've been trying to look for partnerships, the latest one with the WISH Programme.**

**André Oliveira**

Senior Academy Manager  
Federation Internationalé Hockey (FIH)

## Reflections From Participants



**I'm hopeful that what we discuss in spaces like this can translate into the work that we do — that's where transformation begins.**

**Dr. Nana Adom Aboagye**  
Research Consultant



**Connecting for Change means recognising that this effort crosses borders and disciplines.**

**Gaby Garton**  
Player Relations Coordinator  
World Players Association



**We had the pleasure of facilitating the workshop; there was great engagement in the room, lots of enthusiasm for the topic, so that was the standout.**

**Dr. Oliver Hooper**  
Senior Lecturer  
Loughborough University



**The Global Observatory is the new kid on the block - it brings us together and gives real potential to make progress.**

**Prof Elizabeth Pike**  
Professor of Sport, Health and Exercise,  
University of Hertfordshire & Research  
Lead, International Working Group on  
Women and Sport (IWG)



**There are very few spaces where such different perspectives and experiences can come together. It's an absolute powerhouse room.**

**Lucy Mills**  
Founder & Chief Catalyst  
Ready Sport Global



**As long as we are in silos, we are not going to succeed. That's why I'm very grateful for the Knowledge Hub the Global Observatory has launched - it creates a platform for all of us to tap into.**

**Dr. Decius Chipande**  
Head of Sport Council  
African Union Sport Council



## Expert and Academic Partners' Meetings

The final day of the Conference brought together the Global Observatory's network of experts and academic partners to align research priorities and strengthen thematic collaboration. Hosted at the University of Lausanne, the Expert Group Meeting convened specialists from around the world to provide technical guidance across three focus areas: Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Women and Girls' Health and Well-Being, and Inclusive and Accessible Data on Gender Equality.

The meeting was led by Griffith University representatives, Dr. Simone Fullagar and Professor Adele Pavlidis, who have chaired the Expert Group for 2025-2026 period. Discussions included an update on the GBV Policy Mapping Project led by Dr. Emily Blake, a presentation by Dr. Kirsty Forsdike (La Trobe University) on developing a typology of GBV in sport, and early input into the Observatory's new thematic area on women's health. Experts worked collaboratively to refine methodologies, contextualise data, and ensure that the Observatory's evidence-based approach remains inclusive and globally relevant.

The subsequent Academic Meeting gathered representatives from eight universities to build on the expert discussions and identify opportunities for research collaboration and shared outputs for 2025 and beyond. The meeting informed plans for tangible deliverables from academic partners that may be undertaken individually or in collaboration, reinforcing academia's central role in advancing data-driven equality initiatives within the Global Observatory's strategic framework.

### Key Takeaways:

- Experts focused on actionable research towards women's health and well-being for 2025 onwards.
- Development of a typology for Gender-Based Violence in sport advanced.
- Academic partners identified new opportunities for future collaborative research and outputs.

### Academic Delegates:

- University of Lausanne (Switzerland)
- Seijo University (Japan)
- Louisiana State University (USA)
- Loughborough University (UK)
- York University (Canada)
- Griffith University (Australia)
- La Trobe University (Australia)

## Shaping the Future Together

The conference closed on a collective note of commitment and shared responsibility. Across all sessions, a clear message emerged: progress on gender equality in sport depends on sustained investment, collaboration, and accountability. Stakeholders reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the systems, knowledge, and partnerships that enable lasting change, while ensuring that every approach remains inclusive of women and girls in all their diversity.

The call to action moving forward is to continue building safe and equitable spaces within sport, guided by evidence, cooperation, and a shared vision of equality that transcends disciplines and borders.

“

**Today we are all affirming that it's really important to keep on investing in the methods and approaches that we can use to do the work together towards safe and inclusive sport.**

**Dr. Lombe Mwambwa**

CEO

Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport





**True equality means dismantling the systematic barriers that have kept women on the sidelines and building structures that empower them to take centre stage.**

**Felicite Rwemarika**  
President  
Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport

# Acknowledgements

## Many thanks to

Conference Participants, Panellists, Moderators, Experts, Academic Partners, Advisory Council members, and Partners of the GO network, including contributing experts and partners.

Relations Internationales de la Ville de Lausanne

Special thanks to the GO Volunteers, Staff, and Colleagues for your dedication, hard work, and successful delivery of the 2025 Conference.

## GO Staff & Academic Support

Dr. Lombe Mwambwa, Mélanie Duparc, Dr. Hayley Truskewycz, Catherine Wieser, Miriam Braskova, Sergio Conte, Céleste Acevedo, Cosima Deluermoz, Lucie Schoch, Benjamin Carr, Bastien Passet, Carole Gomez

With your continued collaborative support, the Global Observatory continues to expand on its mission to advance gender equality for women and girls in all of their diversity through physical education, physical activity, and sport.

With appreciation to our venue host, IMD.

Thank you to our Advisory Council Member, Changing the Narrative in Sport for producing this report.

**Thank you to our Conference partners whose support is vital to the sustainability of our work**



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA



Ville de Lausanne



UNIL | Université de Lausanne



**GLOBAL  
OBSERVATORY  
FOR GENDER  
EQUALITY  
& SPORT**

# Save the Date

---

**28-30 September 2026**

Lausanne, Switzerland

The Gender Equality and Sport+ Conference returns next year. Save the date for Lausanne, Switzerland, 28-30 September 2026. Join leaders and changemakers for fresh ideas, real talk, and meaningful connections that move gender equality in sport forward.

**Global Observatory for Gender  
Equality & Sport**  
Villa Mon-Repos  
Parc de Mon-Repos 1  
P.O. Box 6904  
1005 Lausanne, Switzerland

[info@genderequalitysport.org](mailto:info@genderequalitysport.org)

**STAY UPDATED**  
[www.genderequalitysport.org](http://www.genderequalitysport.org)