



International  
Olympic  
Committee

## **IOC GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CHAMPIONS 2024**

<b>WORLD WINNER:</b>	Elizabeth Pike, UK
<b>WINNER FOR AFRICA:</b>	Syra Sylla, Senegal
<b>WINNER FOR THE AMERICAS:</b>	Patricia María Malik de Tchara, Argentina
<b>WINNER FOR ASIA:</b>	Dunya Abutaleb OLY, Saudi Arabia
<b>WINNER FOR EUROPE:</b>	Lubomira Kozanova, Slovakia
<b>WINNER FOR OCEANIA:</b>	Annett Edmondson, Australia

### **PROFILES OF THE WINNERS**



## **WORLD WINNER – ELIZABETH PIKE, UK**

**Elizabeth Pike** is a professor in the sociology of sport, whose work focuses on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in and through sport. In her role at the University of Hertfordshire, UK, she leads the Sport and Social Inclusion Research Group (SSIRG), which provides a research-led approach to social inclusion in sport, making knowledge accessible to inform policy and practice, with a particular focus on promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion. She has been a guest speaker across all continents, sharing evidence and experience to further advance gender equality in sport.

Elizabeth is the co-founder of the Anita White Foundation and leads the Anita White Fund. She is the Research Lead for the International Working Group on Women and Sport (2022-2026); has been the Project Director for the Women in Sport High performance pathway (WISH) since 2019; and her expertise was recognised in her election to the Board of the International Sociology of Sport Association (2008-2019), which included a term as President (2010-2015).

### **Anita White Foundation/Fund (AWF)**

Elizabeth is the co-founder of the Anita White Foundation, and served as its chair from 2011 to 2017. The Foundation aims to support the education and development of female leaders from countries where women face particular challenges. She established and managed the **resource allocation** of Catalyst Grants in excess of GBP 11,000 which supported women in 11 different countries to develop programmes to increase opportunities for women and girls to **participate** in sport and/or have **leadership** opportunities.

Elizabeth also established a partnership with the Tanzanian National Sports Council to support the participation of women leaders in three regions of Tanzania: Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Ruvuma. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/447780685296242/>).

In 2024, Elizabeth worked with the International Working Group on Women and Sport to continue the work of the Anita White Foundation by setting up the Anita White Fund to provide **resource allocation** to increase investment in the development of women's sport through two grants: the Anita White Catalyst Grant, and the Cath Sweet Award focusing on leadership: (<https://iwgwomenandsport.org/programmes/anita-white-fund/>).

While chairing the Anita White Foundation, Elizabeth also established a partnership with Females Achieving Brilliance to develop the Women's Sports **Leadership** Academy (WSLA), which provides development opportunities for women leaders around the world. To date, the WSLA has a total of 456 graduates from 76 countries. The Academy was shortlisted for the 2019 Beyond Sport Award for Gender Equality (<https://www.wsla.co.uk/>).

### **Women in Sport High Performance Pathway (WISH)**

Following the successful launch and delivery of the WSLA, Elizabeth led the pilot of a **WSLA** programme for high performance coaches from 2019 to 2021 supported by Olympic Solidarity and six International Sports Federations. This was developed into the Women in Sport High Performance Pathway (WISH) for the 2021-24 Olympic cycle with the continued support of Olympic Solidarity. She was the Project Director for this programme throughout this time, and to date, 120 women from 59 countries/NOCs and 22 sports/International Federations have joined the programme. An evaluation of WISH published on the programme's website (<https://www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/life-and-medical-sciences/business-support-and-consultancy/wish>) states that the participants describe the programme as "life changing" and "transformational".



### Promoting the Inclusion of Older Women in Sport

Elizabeth has been awarded Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grants to deliver research projects to better understand how to grow the **participation** in sport and physical activity of older women in the UK and Japan, and also physical activity for people living with dementia.

She was an invited member of the international research team that produced a Consensus Statement on Physical Activity and Ageing (<https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/bjsports/early/2019/05/02/bjsports-2018-100451.full.pdf>).

### International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG)

Elizabeth is the current Research Lead for the IWG UK Secretariat (<https://iwgwomenandsport.org/>), having previously been contracted to write the successful bid to bring the IWG Secretariat to the UK for 2022-2026. She was part of the research team that was commissioned to produce the 2014 and 2018 Progress Reports for the IWG ([https://www.iwginsighthub.org/iwg-lead\\_ership/resources](https://www.iwginsighthub.org/iwg-lead_ership/resources)). The 2014 Report provided the foundations for an updated international treaty on women and sport (the Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration - <https://iwgwomenandsport.org/brighton-declaration/>), which has been signed by approximately 600 organisations globally, committing to 10 principles for full gender equity in sport. These principles include **participation, leadership and resource allocation**. In 2024, Elizabeth published a book outlining the achievements, and promoting future directions for, the IWG and the international women and sport movement (<https://iwgwomenandsport.org/new-book-on-the-impact-of-iwg-globally-out-now/>).

### Voluntary Board Membership

- Member of the Board of the International Sociology of Sport Association 2008-2019 (<https://www.issa1965.org/>)
- Member of the European Non-Government Sport Organisation's EQUIP (Equality in Practice) Expert Advisory Panel in a voluntary capacity (<https://www.engso-education.eu/projects/equip/equip-experts/>).
- Member of the Global Observatory for Gender Equality and Sport's Experts Group (<https://genderequalitysport.org/group-of-experts/>).
- Voluntary member of the UNESCO Group of Friends supporting the development of the Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan for gender transformative sport policies and programmes (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390590>).

### Supporting Women in Leadership

- Regular mentor on the Aurora Leadership Programme (<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/programmes-events/developing-leadership/aurora>).
- From 2017-2022 she voluntarily served as panel chair of the AWF's Celia Brackenridge International Research Award (<https://idrottsforum.org/call-for-applications-the-celia-brackenridge-international-research-award-call-ends-may-28-2021/>).

Some of those she has mentored have progressed to hold significant posts in:

- Norway (Dr Lucy Piggott - <https://www.ntnu.edu/employees/lucy.piggott>)
- South Africa (Dr Nana Adom-Aboagye - <https://researcherprofiles.sun.ac.za/29351-nana-adomaboagye>)
- UK (Dr Bethany Simmonds - <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/dges/staff-profiles/listing/profile/bes88/>)
- Switzerland/Zambia (Dr Lombe Mwambwa - <https://lombe.org/>; <https://genderequalitysport.org/about-us/>).



## WINNER FOR AFRICA – SYRA SYLLA, SENEGAL

**Syra Sylla** is a former sports journalist and gender equality advocate from France and Senegal, renowned for her commitment to empowering women through sport, particularly basketball. Syra founded Dakar Hoops (Senegal) and Ladies & Basketball (Paris), organisations that use basketball as a socio-educational tool to help young girls and women realise their full potential. Her work is recognised for its positive impact on the representation of women in sport and for encouraging many young girls to take up sporting activities. Syra is frequently invited to panels and institutions to share her experience and act as a role model for young girls, particularly black girls from immigrant backgrounds. Today, Syra is in charge of digital communications for the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee.

**Portrayal:** In 2014, her commitment to women began to materialise with the creation of the Ladyhoop news website, a platform dedicated to the promotion of women's basketball, which came into being to fill the gap in the visibility of women's basketball and promote female players. More recently, her journalistic work has continued with the *Women Sport Stories* podcast, dedicated to top-level sportswomen.

**Participation:** In 2016, Syra created the Ladies & Basketball association, which promotes access to, and the emancipation of girls and women through, basketball and sport in general. Additionally, she created the Dakar Hoops association in 2022. Dakar Hoops aims to promote access for girls to sport, particularly basketball, and endeavours to be a major player in the development of basketball in Senegal, using sport as a catalyst for social change. The vision is to create an engaged, educated and emancipated community of empowered girls and women, focusing on the inclusion and socio-professional integration of girls and young people through basketball.

The 1000 Stars Campaign (2024) was one of the initiatives of Dakar Hoops which aimed to raise funds to secure 1,000 basketballs, which were distributed to 1,000 young girls in 10 towns in Senegal. The goal of the project was to encourage and strengthen the practice of basketball among girls and women, but also to use basketball to raise awareness of girls' personal development and encourage their empowerment. Some 103 people took part in the campaign through donations. Seven companies/organisations became financial and/or technical partners of the campaign. The ball is a symbol to help them achieve their goals with confidence and competencies development.

Syra has organised multiple other initiatives and projects, including Dakar 3x3 Hoops, Women Empowering Girls, the training and recruitment of young disadvantaged girls in Dakar Hoops, the Each One Teach One educational programme, etc.

**Leadership:** In 2024, Syra started a Female Leaders in Sport Skills project to enhance the skills of 10 female coaches and introduce 10 girls to refereeing. The goal is to increase the number of women in sports professions that are considered male-dominated and in positions of responsibility. This leadership programme helps to support and inspire women leaders in the field of basketball. Twenty women from different countries (Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco), including four young girls identified during the 1000 Stars campaign (see above), have been trained in coaching and refereeing techniques, as well as in leadership roles. GIZ, the camp's partner, provided training in the use of sport for development.



## **WINNER FOR EUROPE – LUBOMIRA KOSANOVA, SLOVAKIA**

**Lubomira Kosanova** is a member of the Slovak NOC's Equal Opportunities Committee and Sports Committee, a former International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) Women's Committee member, and a pioneer for women and girls in ice hockey. She is also a former elite ice hockey player who started playing in 1990 when it was not a typical sport for girls/women. The playing career came with its challenges, but Lubomira played for eight years and wanted to demonstrate to girls and women that it was possible for them to play sport. She also worked for the Slovak Hockey Federation where her main focus was promoting women's and girls' ice hockey in Slovakia and abroad. Since 2011, Lubomira has led campaigns such as the IIHF World Girls Ice Hockey Weekend and regional tournaments like "Hockey Galaxies" to encourage young girls to engage in hockey.

**Participation:** During her role as a member of the IIHF Women's Committee, Lubomira focused on increasing girls' participation in sport through the IIHF World Girls Ice Hockey weekend and on developing girls' ice hockey through girls' tournaments called Hockey Galaxy.

**Leadership:** Having noted the underrepresentation of women in coaching, leadership and managing roles in sport, Lubomira's other initiatives and projects focused on retaining and returning former players to the game and actively participating in the development of women's hockey in Slovakia. Examples of those athletes who became coaches: Olympian Nicol Lucak Cupkova, Iveta Fruehauf (Karafiatova) and many others. Zuzana Moravcikova and Edita Petrusova (Rakova) have successfully worked as managers of national teams through initiatives spearheaded by Lubomira. Her initiatives have also focused on actively involving retired and current players in various girls' events, such as recruitment and tournaments, and passing on experience to younger generations. During the IIHF High Performance Camps, she was on the organising staff and worked on integrity workshops for younger players.

**Knowledge sharing:** As a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Slovak NOC, together with her colleagues, she worked on many projects aimed at sharing knowledge on the importance of gender equality with public sports entities at national level.

**Portrayal:** In her role as a member of the Slovak Olympic Committee, Lubomira promoted women and girls role models in the media to demonstrate that sport was for everyone, including women and girls. She actively participated in a discussion on Slovak radio on "Why teenagers quit sports early", a topic that is important to understand in order to come up with solutions. In 2024, she participated in the Olympic Festival in Bratislava, which was organised alongside the Olympic Games in Paris. During the festival, various discussions took place on the topic of equal opportunities and removing barriers between disadvantaged groups of male and female athletes.

**Resource allocation:** For Lubomira, her current focus is mainly for women's hockey to have the same conditions as men's hockey. Even though she has managed to carry out a huge amount of work, women's hockey is still not considered an equal sport in Slovakia compared to men's. Whether it is in the areas of financing, conditions for performing sports, or financial evaluation, etc., it is still unequal.



## **WINNER FOR ASIA – DUNYA ABUTALEB, SAUDI ARABIA**

**Dunya Abutaleb** is a taekwondo Olympian, the first Saudi woman to qualify for Olympic Games on her own merit. Dunya overcame adversity to compete in her first Olympic Games, at Paris 2024. She is a resilient and hardworking athlete, who defied the odds by training and practising a sport from which women were barred from competing since the age of 8 in Saudi Arabia. She qualified through the Asian qualifiers, and this achievement was celebrated by the Saudi Minister of Sport, Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal.

**Participation:** Dunya began practising taekwondo at the age of 8 during a time when opportunities for girls in sport were limited in Saudi Arabia. She overcame societal barriers and demonstrated that obstacles to participating in sport can be overcome with perseverance. She became a visible role model, inspiring many young Saudi women and girls to engage in physical activity.

**Portrayal:** Dunya believes that women and girls should be given more opportunities in sport, and their visibility across different media should be increased. Her high level of visibility through various media platforms has raised awareness of the inequalities that women face in sport. She has featured in extensively both local and international media outlets, including Reuters, The National, and Saudi Gazette, highlighting her role as a pioneering figure for women in Saudi sport. Her strong media presence has led to open discussions to challenge traditional gender stereotypes as she is presented as a strong, capable and ambitious female athlete, promoting a narrative that women can excel in competitive sports and represent their nations globally. She has also graced the cover of *Vogue Arabia* twice, further elevating the visibility and representation of women in sport. Dunya has redefined the narrative around women in sport by presenting herself as a strong and capable athlete, countering stereotypes and empowering women and girls to see themselves as equally deserving of representation in competitive sports.

**Leadership:** As a role model for gender equality, Dunya devotes her time to mentoring young athletes, including coaching a young female athlete aspiring to become a taekwondo star. She demonstrates a profound commitment to advancing gender equality and inclusion in sport, inspiring a new generation of female athletes in Saudi Arabia and beyond. Receiving the Best Arab Achievement Award and recognition from national leaders amplified her status as a leader in sport and gender equality, inspiring a wider audience across the Arab world.

**Resource allocation:** Dunya's historic qualification as the first Saudi woman to earn an Olympic spot in taekwondo highlighted the potential of female athletes in the Kingdom. This milestone, alongside the multiple medals she has won throughout the years, has encouraged increased investment in women's sports, leading to enhanced training programmes and support for female athletes. This is all part of the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee's strategy, announced in 2021, to support sports federations where each federation gets a reward whenever their athlete wins a medal or qualifies for any Olympic or regional games or international or regional professional competitions. Greater investment in women's sports has expanded opportunities for girls and women to pursue athletic careers by providing them with access to better training programmes and resources. This shift demonstrates the growing recognition of the potential and capabilities of female athletes, inspiring more women to enter and thrive in sports.



## **WINNER FOR OCEANIA – ANNETTE EDMONDSON, AUSTRALIA**

**Annette Edmondson** is an Olympic bronze medallist, three-time world champion, two-time Commonwealth Games champion and now retired track and road racing cyclist. She launched Paradigm Shift Sports, a sports management company aimed at empowering and providing opportunities for female cyclists, and has taken on the role of Assistant Race Director for the Santos Tour Down Under.

**Resource allocation:** Through Paradigm Shift, Annette aims to inspire, guide and empower female athletes to challenge the current paradigm, reach their potential, and help positively shift the opportunities of the entire women's peloton. Her goal is to assist female professional cyclists by improving working conditions and to eradicate some of the barriers that she encountered in her career as a professional cyclist. Resources are not allocated equally to male and female athletes. To date, she has managed and assisted 28 female cyclists (including nine development riders), from nine different countries, across five continents by finding them teams, negotiating their contracts, advising on how to navigate complex scenarios, assisting with relocation, visa or insurance applications, etc.

Annette has advocated for the improvement of financial contractual terms for most riders (including financially by up to 172%). She helped one particular rider to negotiate her contract after her stellar start to the season. Annette succeeded in renegotiating a 165% increase on year one, and a 175% increase on the rider's second year with the team. This shows the importance of advocating for equal and fair resources for women in sport. Annette also created 23 new individual sponsorship, partnership or ambassadorship deals, which made a huge difference for the riders.

**Leadership:** Annette has mentored over 30 riders on a pro bono basis on a range of topics, including leadership competencies, personal development, race tactics, career transition, living overseas and how to navigate becoming a professional cyclist. Additionally, as her way to develop future leaders in sport, she partnered with SAAB and PSS and created the "Women in Sport Scholarship", a scholarship designed to financially assist developing female athletes whilst studying. SAAB will provide a business mentor in their chosen field and, to some recipients, flexible undergraduate employment opportunities. This aims to give athletes greater opportunities in sport by removing some financial barriers, and providing a personal network and industry experience to assist after retirement in their leadership journeys.

**Portrayal:** In 2023, alongside a fellow assistant race director, Annette worked to elevate the women's race to UCI World Tour Status – the highest status and equal to the men's race. They increased financial support for women's teams and improved the race course for women, where, in two of the three stages, the break was caught in the final kilometre. Through their efforts, they also ensured the race finishes were as close to the city as possible to increase crowd numbers and visibility. They utilised the men's race for exposure and designed the women's race to finish on the same day as the men's started, to overlap and benefit from the traditional crowds of the men's race. This all aimed to improve the visibility of women and showcase role models for fellow women and girls.



## **WINNER FOR THE AMERICAS – PATRICIA MALIK DE TCHARA, ARGENTINA**

**Patricia Malik de Tchara** is a physical education teacher, coach, national head of referees, head of the South American Referees Commission, the first woman in Argentina to qualify as an International Referee Elite for Handball. She is also Chair of the Commission on Women, Gender and Diversity of the Argentine Handball Confederation. Patricia is a pioneer in the Americas region and in the world of handball, having become in 1989 the first Argentine woman to be an international referee in her sport and the third worldwide, visibly enabling access for other women and training new generations.

**Leadership, Coaches and Technical Officials:** Women are underrepresented in leadership, coaching and officiating roles in Argentina and globally. As a pioneer in these roles and most of the time as the only woman, Patricia initiated multiple training programmes to develop women in coaching, leadership and officiating roles. She created Argentina's National Referee Promotion Training in 2002, which still run to date, training over 3,000 female referees and coaches over 22 years and empowering women in technical and leadership roles. She also led the designing of gender inclusion policies in sports officiating, through various ways, for example, implementing quota places for women technical officials.

**Representation and Portrayal:** Through her training and development initiatives, Patricia has been at the forefront of advocating for more women and girls to be given the visibility they deserve and encouraged their fair and balanced representation in the media. She has spearheaded an initiative called "Equity in Communication". The goal of the initiative was to raise awareness of the representation of women in the media, help promote women and girls role models, and demonstrate that women are capable and should be celebrated equally with their male counterparts. Patricia is a regular speaker at sports conventions, particularly the Women in Sports Summit organised by the Argentinian Olympic Committee.

**Resource allocation:** The unequal allocation of resources is common in sport in Argentina and globally. Patricia, in her role within the Handball Federation, has advocated for and led in the development of investment programmes and funding for training on inclusive policies for coaches and referees since 2002. She has also spearheaded the design of policies and strategies for equity in resource allocation for men and women at national sports events.

**Gender-based violence:** Patricia's work also focuses on gender-based violence and the protection of women and girls in handball, while providing training. She created an internal working group for the creation of the Prevention Protocol, a tool to advise, guide, train and carry out actions in the face of gender-based violence and/or discrimination of women and girls, in order to guarantee fair policies for handball with a gender perspective.