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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025: ANA IRENE DELGADO (PAN)



The International Olympic Committee's theme for International Women's Day 2025 is #SportForAllWomenAndGirls. Why is it important to provide equal opportunities for all women and girls in sports worldwide?

Providing equal opportunities for women and girls in sports is essential to fostering empowerment, health and progress. Sports have played a significant role in my life, helping me build confidence, leadership and resilience. I believe every girl should have the same chances as boys to develop these qualities.

Equal access to sports also promotes physical and mental well-being, creating healthier communities. Moreover, it opens career pathways — whether as athletes, coaches, or administrators — and contributes to economic and social advancement.

Too often, women have faced barriers to participation, but breaking these down allows us to pursue our dreams freely. By supporting women in sports, we also create strong role models who inspire future generations and drive social change.

How much progress has been made in gender equality in sports, and what challenges remain?

Growing up in Panama, I was fortunate to have a mother who instilled in me the value of independence and leadership. I have seen positive change in gender equality in sports — more women are in leadership roles, and organisations like UIPM are making strides in representation.

However, the wider world of sports still has a long way to go. Many female athletes continue to receive less funding, media coverage and institutional support than their male counterparts. Leadership positions in sport remain predominantly male, and cultural biases still discourage many girls from participating in sports at all.

While progress has been made, we must continue working towards a truly equal playing field.

As a sports leader, how motivated are you to show women and girls that there are pathways in this field?

I am deeply committed to showing women and girls that there are opportunities in sports leadership. Representation is key — when young girls see women leading, they believe they can do it too. This drives me to actively advocate for equal resources, mentorship programs, and better policies.

I also aim to challenge outdated narratives that have historically discouraged women from fully engaging in sports. Beyond physical activity, sports instil confidence, teamwork and resilience — qualities that help women succeed in all aspects of life.

My goal is to make a lasting impact by ensuring that sports become an inclusive space where all women and girls can thrive.



What are the main inequalities affecting women and girls in sport today?

Women in sports, both in Panama and globally, still face significant inequalities. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of female representation in leadership roles, despite the fact that women make up a significant portion of the workforce.

Female athletes often receive less funding, fewer sponsorship opportunities and minimal media coverage compared to men, limiting their career prospects. Cultural norms and stereotypes continue to discourage girls from pursuing sports.

However, I am proud of initiatives in Panama, such as the Gender Parity Initiative and policies promoting equal opportunities, which aim to address these issues. While these are positive steps, there is still much work to be done to achieve full gender equality in sports.

What policies or actions can help address these inequalities?

To reduce gender inequalities in sports, I believe we need strong policies and actionable steps, including:

- Equal funding & resources: ensuring financial support for female athletes matches that of male athletes.
- Media representation: increasing visibility and coverage of women's sports to enhance recognition and support.
- Female leadership in sports: setting quotas and creating leadership development programs to encourage women's participation at decision-making levels.
- Equal pay: ensuring that female athletes and professionals receive fair compensation for their work.

- Encouraging girls' participation: promoting school and community programs that introduce girls to sports from an early age.
- Challenging cultural barriers: running awareness campaigns to break gender stereotypes and encourage female participation.
- Safe & inclusive spaces: implementing strict policies against harassment and discrimination in sports.
- Mentorship & development: establishing mentorship programs that connect young women with experienced female leaders in sports.
- Accountability & monitoring: requiring sports organisations to report on their progress toward gender equality goals.

By implementing these measures, we can create a more inclusive sporting environment, ensuring that future generations of women and girls have the opportunities they deserve to succeed.

By continuing to advocate for these changes, we can make meaningful progress towards a fair and inclusive sporting world.

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About the author

Name: Ana Irene Delgado

UIPM position: UIPM Vice President

Other professional / elected positions: Ambassador of the Republic of Panama, Vice President of Pan American Fencing Confederation, President of Panama Modern Pentathlon Federation, former member of Parliament in Panama.

Biography

Ana Irene Delgado, Panama's Ambassador to the Organization of American States, has held numerous distinguished political roles, including Ambassador to the UK and Ireland, Iceland and Norway, and Senator of Panama (2019-2024). As a pentathlete, she was Pan American youth champion and Central American champion, also excelling as a fencer with medals at the Bolivarian and Pan American Games. In sports governance, she served as Vice President of the International Fencing Federation (FIE) and led sustainability and ethics initiatives. A lawyer and economist, Ms Delgado is a partner at Solis, Endara & Delgado who founded an NGO supporting education in Panama and champions legislation fostering private-sector support for sports. President of the Panama Modern Pentathlon Union (UPPM), in 2024 she made history when elected as one of UIPM's first two female Vice Presidents.