

International Federation Women in Leadership Forum celebrates International Women's Day

IWF Executive Board member Moira Lassen and IWF Women's Commission member Karoliina Lundahl attended a forum about women's role in leadership positions in sports. The forum was held in Lausanne, Switzerland, around the International Women's Day and arranged by International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF).

Guest speakers from summer Olympic sports such as wrestling, rugby, triathlon and weightlifting presented case studies in how the role of women in sports has changed in the past decades. Some decades ago the discussion lied in increasing women's participation in sports. This goal has been achieved as many international federations can show gender equality in athlete participation numbers. However, today's discussion lies within the need to bring women into leadership positions as women's participation numbers are very low in leadership positions as well as working on the field as coaches and referees.

Wrestling presented their case with the crude reminder of happenings of 2013 as the sport lost its Olympic status. The sport had to reinvent itself and it looked for resources within the sport. They focused on bringing in more girls and women into the sport by launching Sport Mobility promotions such as #SUPER8 and #EACHONEBRINGONE. Within the Super 8 promotion they focused on introducing eight different women champions to the world in order to gain awareness about the sport amidst girls; the Each One Bring One promotion focused on that each athlete should bring another athlete to the sport. Another important focus was to include women in the Olympic Solidarity coaching program and because of this there are now 15.5% women on the field as coaches. With great input from women champions of the sport, wrestling regained its spot as an Olympic Sport and has created a new international federation called United World Wrestling.

The successful Social Mobility program in wrestling is based on four basic pillars which can be implemented in other sports. The first pillar is to examine best practices and borrow what's already out there. The second pillar is that one backs up the message with facts and research. The third pillar cries out for turning policies into concrete action. And the last pillar calls for continuous action: KEEP GOING!

IWF Executive Board members Moira Lassen and José Quiñones were guest speakers in the forum. Lassen gave a personal presentation about her life from coming into the sport as a young mother of a weightlifter into the first female board member in our sport. She shared her pathway which at times was troubled as she learned good sports government by putting in numerous voluntary hours into the sport. In the upcoming year Lassen as the Chair of the Women's Commission will present the Executive Board with three important initiatives in order to achieve IOC's Agenda 2020 recommendations: Implementation of a new female weight category from seven to eight in order to promote gender equality; implementation of a mandatory female Vice President position within the constitutional electoral process; and engage the Executive Board to register in the United Nations #HEFORSHE campaign.

Quiñones spoke as the President of Peruvian Olympic Committee about the cultural barriers that women face in everyday life and what the Peruvian Olympic Committee has done to raise the participation numbers of women in sports. He called for cooperation across the playing field - in both women and men leaders - to increase the numbers of women in leadership roles.

This IOC Forum was chosen to be held on the International Women's Day (IWD) March 8. The theme for the IWD 2016 is #PledgeForParity where everyone can pledge to take a concrete step to help achieve gender equality more quickly. As the IWD official website states: "[It can be]... to help women and girls achieve their ambitions, call for gender-balanced leadership, respect and value difference, develop more inclusive and flexible cultures or root out workplace bias. Each of us can be a leader within our own spheres of influence and commit to take pragmatic action to accelerate gender parity."

