



Commission for Women's Chess Report

Q1 of 2026

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Over the years, the WOM Commission has launched various initiatives and events that have highlighted the position of women's chess and women in chess. The projects and research conducted by the Commission has not only helped provide a better understanding and improvements for women's chess but, also, helped vocalize the broader issues of women's rights and place in society.

This year holds special significance as FIDE has officially declared 2026 the "Year of Educational Chess." The WOM Commission is thrilled to align with this theme by focusing on projects that emphasize inclusion, community engagement, and the transformative power of chess in society. We are ready to expand our previous initiatives even further and start new ones.

During preparing this report WOM has been actively engaged on the following projects:

Chess4All - the project's geography for this year: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Czech Republic, France, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Costa Rica, St Lucia, Albania, Nepal, Kazakhstan, Italy and many other locations worldwide.

In the very beginning of 2026, the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess was proud to organize the **first-ever Pia Cramling Cup**, held on **2 January 2026** in Stockholm, Sweden, as part of the historic **Rilton Cup**. Organised in collaboration with **Pia Cramling** and the **Stockholm Chess Federation**, the event brought together girls and women from across generations in a celebration of chess, inspiration, and legacy.

From January 13–17, 2026, a small but deeply meaningful chess workshop took place in Kathmandu, Nepal, bringing together chess, education, and social empowerment in a way that perfectly reflects the values of the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess. Organised by our partner, the **Himalayan Chess Academy** in collaboration with the Junkiri Feminist Library, the Junkiri Chess Workshop engaged 17 children from marginalized communities, **including 11 girls**. More than just a training camp, the workshop demonstrated how sustained access to chess can build confidence, leadership, and a sense of belonging, especially for girls who may otherwise have limited opportunities to participate in formal sporting spaces. The workshop was led by IA / WCM / FI **Monalisha Khamboo**, Nepal's first Women's National Champion and a valued member of the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess. Her presence as a national and international-level role model had a powerful impact, particularly on the girls.

Women Month Marathon

Following the inspiring success of last year's first global celebration, the 2026 edition continued under the theme "**Visible, Connected, Worldwide.**" The goal was simple yet powerful: to increase the visibility of women and girls in chess, strengthen connections between organisers and communities across continents, and highlight the many initiatives that promote equity and opportunity in the game.

Throughout March, a wide variety of events – tournaments, simultaneous exhibitions, lectures, workshops and community gatherings – took place across the world. Each of them contributes to a shared global effort to celebrate women in chess and inspire new generations of players.



WOM was proud to run Women Month Marathon to support and collaborate with events that highlight the strength, resilience, and talent of women in chess. Our key partnerships this year included:

- the Saint-Tropez chess club “Les Fous de la Vieille Tour” who organized a special simultaneous exhibition with the **12th Women’s World Champion, GM Alexandra Kosteniuk on 8th March**. The simultaneous exhibition brought together players from the Saint-Tropez Chess Club and female chess players from across the Côte d’Azur region;
- Women’s Chess Festival in Wrocław, Poland, an event that has firmly established itself as a highlight on the European women’s chess calendar. At the heart of the Festival stood the **Women’s Grandmasters’ Match**, where leading Polish players faced a team representing the rest of the world. Among the Festival’s many events, the **5th Rapid Women’s Chess Tournament – Apolonia Litwińska Memorial** held a special place for the FIDE Commission for Women’s Chess. The Commission has been particularly engaged in supporting this tournament, as it beautifully reflects our core values: inclusivity, opportunity, and development. This is a tournament for all women and girls – titled grandmasters, experienced competitive players, ambitious young talents, and passionate amateurs alike. Thanks to its carefully designed format, every participant competes for something meaningful: qualification to finals, prizes within rating and age categories, personal progress, or simply the joy of competing in a supportive, festival-like atmosphere;
- WOM is pleased to announce its cooperation with the **Budapest Spring Chess Festival 2026**, which took place in **Budapest, Hungary, from 27 February to 7 March 2026**. The Spring Festival is a nine-round Swiss tournament, offering strong competitive opportunities in two groups and aiming to promote women’s chess while supporting players’ development and norm chances. As part of this cooperation, entry fees for all women players are fully waived in both groups, underlining a shared commitment to making high-level chess more accessible and inclusive. In addition to the main tournament, the event will feature several community-oriented activities, including a Women’s Chess Roundtable discussion on 4 March, creating space for dialogue, exchange, and inspiration among women in chess.
- Prague Chess Festival, event where the WOM partnered with organisers to support the **Futures Tournament**, a round-robin event for talented young girls played alongside the prestigious Masters and Challengers sections. For the participants, this meant experiencing a world-class chess environment and sharing the stage with top players such as **Gukesh Dommaraju, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, and Divya Deshmukh**. This year’s Futures event had a very special ambassador – legendary Swedish grandmaster **Pia Cramling**, who met with the girls and their parents to share insights from her remarkable chess career. She also gave a simultaneous exhibition, creating a memorable moment for everyone involved. As part of Women’s Chess Day activities, **Divya Deshmukh** also took on the role of chess instructor, introducing the basics of the game to Czech actress **Aňa Geislerová** in a relaxed and engaging session. The Futures tournament was won by **Kaja Rzdkowska** (Poland), followed by **Christina Jordan** (Switzerland) in second place and **Zuzana Stará** (Czech Republic) in third.



- Another highlight of the global celebrations took place on March 6 with the **Qazaq Queens Chess Fest 2026**, organised by the **Kazakhstan Chess Federation** – a long-standing and highly active partner in promoting chess development and women’s participation in the game. The event brought together players, organisers and guests in a vibrant festival atmosphere that beautifully celebrated both women and chess. With its elegant setting and engaging programme, the event truly reflected the spirit of the Chess Women’s Day Celebration. A special role in the organisation and development of women’s chess initiatives in Kazakhstan is played by **Gulmira Dauletova**, Executive Director of the Kazakhstan Chess Federation and a member of the **FIDE Commission for Women’s Chess**. Through her continued work and leadership, numerous initiatives promoting girls’ and women’s participation in chess continue to grow in the country.
- As part of the March activities, the FIDE Commission for Women’s Chess is pleased to cooperate with the FIDE Social Commission in supporting **the Storytelling & Impact Content Masterclass** – a project initiated and led by the FIDE Social Commission, dedicated to creating meaningful visual content for social and sports initiatives.

Many additional events are planned across the world, including initiatives in Africa, South America and other regions, with further announcements expected throughout the month. Each event – large or small – contributes to the same shared goal: **making women and girls more visible in chess and strengthening a global community that supports and inspires them.**

Queens’ Online Chess Festival 2026 - The 6th edition of the Queens’ Online Chess Festival, a series of continental women’s online blitz tournaments started from March 01-29, 2026, on Lichess online platform. The festival is comprised of two competitions: Queens’ Women Open Tournament (open to all female participants with FIDE ID). Continental qualifying events were running from the 1st till 15th of March and Semi-Final and Final held on March 22nd and 28th, respectively; Unrated Princesses’ tournaments (female players with no FIDE rating) Qualifiers for “East” and “West” with Finals in groups U9, U11, U13, U15 & U17 (for U17 – born on 1.1.2008 or later). The qualification stage held for March 22nd with more than 1000 girls registered from more than 120 countries worldwide, and Finals held on March 29th. The winner of The Queen Festival Chess Tournament will be invited to the 46th World Chess Olympiad 2026 in Uzbekistan.

This year the Queen Festival Chess Tournament offers special awards. For the **Queens’ Women’s Open**: continental titles for the winners of each qualification tournament, **100 USD FIDE shop voucher** for the winners of each qualification tournament, **training sessions with Women Grandmasters** for top performers, a prize fund of **USD 600 for the top three finishers in the Queens’ Women’s Open Final**. For **Unrated Princesses’ Tournament**: **diplomas** for the top three finishers in each age category for both qualification stages of the Princesses’ Chess Festival, **training sessions with Women Grandmasters** for top performers, a physical trophy for the winner of the final, **100 USD FIDE shop voucher** for the final winner, and **50 USD vouchers** for second and third place finishers.

FIDE WOM expresses sincerest gratitude for amazing contribution to the working group of the Queens’ Chess Festival project: General Director: Ozgur Solakoglu (TUR), tournament Director: **Ulkar Umudova** (AZE), Festival Coordinator: Yilmaz Kar tal (TUR), Chief Arbiter: IA Kaussar Bauyrzhan (KAZ), WOM Commission members and **Gulmira Dauletova** our Asian Ambassador of QF 2026 and Kazakhstan Chess federation for the great promotion of the event.



On behalf of WOM I also want to thank Continental Ambassadors of the QF 2025 Aga Milewska , Secretary of ECU Womens Commission(Europe), Thepiso Lopang (Africa) and Martha Fierro (America). We would like to thank **Lichess Platform and its CEO Theo Wait** for the great cooperation and full support of the Queens' Chess Festival.

Seminars for women

- The DGT Board Operator Certification Seminar took place on **3–4 January 2026 in Stockholm, Sweden**, alongside the prestigious and long-standing **Rilton Cup**. The seminar was organised by **DGT (Digital Game Technology)** in cooperation with the **FIDE Commission for Women's Chess**, the **Stockholm Chess Federation**, and the **Rilton Cup organizers**, highlighting once again the strong and growing partnership between DGT and the Commission. A total of **26 participants** took part in the seminar, representing eight countries: Sweden, Mexico, Latvia, Denmark, Iceland, Romania, Portugal, and Slovenia. Particularly encouraging was the strong female participation, with **14 women and 12 men** attending. This outcome reflects the Commission's ongoing commitment to improving gender balance in technical and professional chess roles, including arbiting, tournament operations, and chess broadcasting. As part of this commitment, the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess fully waived the participation fees for all female attendees, ensuring access to high-level technical education and supporting women's representation in areas of chess that remain traditionally male-dominated. The seminar was led by **International Arbiter (Category A) Sotiris Logothetis**, who delivered a high-quality, hands-on programme focused on modern chess technology and event operations. Participants received practical training on the use of **DGT e-Boards and e-Pieces**, event setup through **DGT LiveChess**, live game broadcasting, troubleshooting, and integration with major online platforms such as Chess.com and Lichess. The overall level of engagement and expertise throughout the seminar was excellent, contributing to a productive and interactive learning environment.
- **FIDE Arbiters' Seminar for Women**, held as part of our ongoing commitment to support women in chess and to strengthen female representation and opportunity throughout the international chess community. The seminar was organized jointly by the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess (WOM) and the **Norwegian Chess Federation**, in close cooperation with the **FIDE Arbiters' Commission**, under the auspices of FIDE. The seminar brought together **23 participants from 21 countries**, reflecting the truly international scope of the initiative. Participants represented a wide geographical

spread, including **Uganda, South Africa, Kenya, Cameroon, Lesotho; India, Malaysia, Korea, Nepal, Mongolia; Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Saint Lucia; Georgia, Portugal, Türkiye, Serbia, Germany; and Norway**. The seminar was delivered by a highly experienced and respected team of arbiters. The **Lecturer was IA Nikolopoulos Panagiotis (Greece), FIDE Lecturer, supported by IA Delega Tomasz (Poland) as Assistant Lecturer within the Lecturer Training Programme**. The role of Technical Organizer was carried out by **IA Sorokina Anastasia (Australia)**, FIDE Lecturer, WOM Chair. **With over 70 applications** received from around the world, the level of interest clearly demonstrated both the growing demand for professional development opportunities for women arbiters and the global reach of this initiative.



Unfortunately, due to capacity limitations, we were not able to accept all applicants on this occasion. Encouraged by this strong interest, WOM is already planning to organize **additional arbiters' seminar March 20-22 and July (dates to be confirmed)**, continuing our commitment to creating more opportunities for women in chess officiating.

- **FA WOM seminar**, as part of celebrations of the International Womens' day FIDE WOM is planning to organize the 222nd Internet-based FIDE Arbiters' Seminar from 27 March 2026 to 29 March 2026. The Lecturer will be IA Bansod Swapnil (IND), FIDE Lecturer, and Assistant Lecturer will be IA Karali, Tania (GRE), Lecturer Training Programme. The Technical Organizer is Yilmaz Kartal (TUR). The language of the Seminar will be English. The Seminar will give norms and titles of FIDE Arbiter, according to the Regulations for the titles of Arbiters. FA seminar WOM will offer free participation for ladies from Europe, Asia, and America. For Africa Gift of Chess organizing the special edition of the FA seminar, where wom has a right to register women participants from Africa.

Chess for Protection Project (Girls Chess Club in Kakuma) – One of FIDE's and FIDE WOM's flagship efforts is the Chess for Protection project, launched in collaboration with UNHCR to support refugee communities through structured chess education and opportunity. WOM is proud to contribute through its ongoing support for the Girls Club in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. The project resumed from early January this year, thanks to great cooperation with Chess Kenya and colleagues from UNHCR.

Thanks to a dedicated team of international coaches, the Girls Club continues to grow. WGM Anastasia Karlovich and IM/WGM Salome Melia lead regular online workshops and training sessions for the girls, while FM Sergey Klimakovs has provided in-person coaching in Kakuma. The club operates in four girls' boarding schools and has seen significant participation, with 250 schoolgirls attending chess classes twice a week. The program not only teaches chess but also incorporates lessons on the social benefits of the game, helping the students to build skills which are useful both on and off the chess board.

Anastasia Sorokina, Chair of the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess, visited the UNHCR office in January 2026, where she met with Mr. Alex Novikau, Chief Data Protection and Privacy Officer. The meeting held special significance, as Mr. Novikau was among those from whom the idea behind this initiative originally emerged – a thoughtful reminder of how strong cooperation and shared values can give life to impactful projects. The discussion focused on the Girls' Club, a flagship project of the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess, implemented within FIDE's wider Chess for Protection programme. The Girls' Club members is preparing to take part in the upcoming Chess Olympiad, reflecting the project's steady development and the girls' growing

commitment. In the months leading up to the Olympiad, plans are in place to organize an additional visit by a coach in April and November to further support the teams' preparation, ensuring they are well equipped for both the competitive and personal aspects of the experience. Deep gratitude to Gift of Chess for donation of 200 chess sets to Kakuma camp this year.

FIDE WOM started cooperation with Movement in Refugee, NGO based in Bangladesh and we hope that together and with UNHCR support we could launch this project in Bangladesh during this year.



The Gender Equality in Chess Index (GECI) – WOM member David Smerdon will continue his work on GECI research - an innovative measure developed to evaluate and compare gender equality within the international chess community. It utilizes three essential indicators: Gender Participation, Gender Performance, and Gender Progress. The FIDE Women's Commission, as the creators of the GECI, intend to update these rankings biennially. Second edition of the GECI ranks 119 federations, with all regions showing improvement since 2023 was published on March 8 at FIDE WOM website.

For the following months WOM planning to continue implementation of the following initiatives:

The Queen's Gambit Challenge - the Queen's Gambit Challenge is an online initiative designed to empower female players and help national federations build competitive women's chess teams, led by FIDE WOM. Start of period 3 for intermediates and potential team players. The next phase of the Queen's Gambit Challenge will support National Female Teams preparing for their first Olympiad. Running from April 2025 to April 2026, this program will support federations with limited female participation in chess by providing a structured curriculum for players at beginner to intermediate levels. This program is a continuation of the National Female Team Initiative, which successfully introduced eight new teams to the Chess Olympiad. Participating helps strengthen the national federation's female chess presence, receive expert coaching, and join a community of women who are transforming the chess landscape. The next phase of the Queen's Gambit Challenge will support National Female Teams preparing for their first Olympiad and commence in March 2026. We are expecting to get at least 3 new teams never participating in Olympiad before thanks to this project: Antigua, Bermuda, Belize.

The 12 Judit Polgar's Global Chess Festival is planned to be held on 26 September and FIDE WOM has signed the partnership agreement to repeat the last year unique format and setting of the RubikChess competition, The FIDE Commission for Women's Chess is proud to support the tradition of the RubikChess competition, recognizing its unique emphasis on teamwork, creativity, and gender equality. With each team composed of one girl and one boy, the format reflects the Commission's mission to create opportunities where talent knows no gender and collaboration strengthens performance.

ChessMom pilot project for the 2026 Olympiad – It aims to provide support for professional chess players who are mothers of infants under one year old. The WOM working group Francisco Cruz Arce (Puerto Rico), Sanchez Castillo, Sarai Carolina (Venezuela) and Chen, Mei Fang Dina (Chinese Taipei) did an excellent job last year elaborating for nominations worldwide and chosen participants to travel to Olympiad. The Confederation of Chess for America replicated the FIDE ChessMom Pilot Program to the American continent. I thank FIDE management for

their support and for approving the proposal to raise the age of the infants to 2 years. We hope this initiative will continue to evolve into consistent support for chess-playing mothers. We are excited to see this initiative growing and making a difference worldwide. The expanded support in 2026 offers renewed hope and opportunities for these remarkable chess players and we are looking forward seeing how many participants will join us for the Olympiad in Uzbekistan.

Women in Chess Survey- Ethnic and Racial Diversity – pilot research project run by WOM member Tris-Ann Richard and research assistant Arhan Boyd under the supervision of WOM



member David Smerdon. This survey is planned to be the first global dataset linking women in chess titles to self-identified race/ethnicity, alongside contextual information on access, barriers, and support systems.

We will continue our main project **Chess4All** expanding the women in chess empowerment worldwide. This is one of our main projects which already attracted thousands of women to chess worldwide and we hope we will see even more ladies of all ladies and nationalities joining us. As next step WOM is planning to be present its activities at Chess Party in Stockholm including chess master class and simul by GM Antoaneta Stefanova and Little Star Chess tournament for all interested.

Seminars for women – An IO Seminar is planned to be organized in cooperation with Norway chess federation during the Norway Chess in May-June 2026. Another seminar in cooperation with TRG commission is planned to be organized this year. Participation in all seminars is free for women.

Detailed information about all WOM activities is published at official web-sources:

Official web-site: wom.fide.com

Official Twitter account: twitter.com/fidewomen

Official Facebook account: facebook.com/FIDEwomen

Official Instagram account: instagram.com/fidewomen

The abovementioned initiatives collectively reflect WOM's commitment to empowering women across the globe and improving the prospects for women's chess. The achievements of the WOM are a testament to the dedication, collaboration, and hard work of every individual involved. I extend my deepest gratitude to the **WOM Councilors - Judy Karigu Kiragu, Ken Koort, Tris-Ann Richards, and Paris Klerides**, for their invaluable guidance and commitment. Special thanks go to our project leaders, **David Smerdon** for important research work implemented for women chess community, **Ulkar Umudova and Francisco J. Cruz Arce**, as well as all commission members, whose tireless efforts have been instrumental in driving our initiatives forward. I am also immensely grateful to **Yilmaz Kartal** for his exceptional technical support, ensuring the seamless execution of our events, **Anna Kantane** for every day support and managing WOM website and social media.

I would like to thank the FIDE Social Commission for our daily collaboration—we have worked closely together on many projects. Special thanks to its Chairman, Andre, and to the newly appointed Secretary, Maria Tamkovich, for her support and cooperation on various social women's projects. Sincerest gratitude to FIDE Arbiters' Commission, Trainers' Commission, EDU and Events Commission for cooperation and support of women's chess.

A heartfelt appreciation goes to our **FIDE WOM supervisor, Deputy Chair of FIDE Management Board - WGM Dana Reizniece**, whose mentorship, unwavering support, and daily engagement have been pivotal to the commission's success.



WOM contributions ensure to continue to make meaningful strides in promoting women's chess – truly making a difference for girls and women around the world through chess. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the **FIDE President** and **FIDE Council** and **FIDE Management Board** for the extensive support of women's chess, for allocating resources on our initiatives.

Anastasia Sorokina
FIDE WOM Chairperson