



Commission for Women's Chess Report

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WOM Commission has continued to expand its work throughout 2026, building on established programmes while strengthening international partnerships, educational opportunities, research, professional development, and initiatives designed to increase the participation and visibility of girls and women in chess.

As this year was designated the Year of Educational Chess, our activities placed a strong focus on education, inclusion, community engagement, professional development, and leveraging chess as a powerful tool for empowerment and social impact.

Throughout the reporting period, the Commission continues to advance a range of key initiatives, such as ChessMom, educational seminars for women, the Women in Chess Representation, Development and Participation Survey, while also strengthening collaboration with other FIDE Commissions and international chess organisations.

The Commission has also continued to broaden the geographical reach of its work, with activities and partnerships spanning Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Middle East and Oceania.

Queens' and Princesses Online Chess Festival 2026

The Queens' Online Chess Festival 2026 reached a significant milestone during the reporting period, becoming the largest edition of the festival to date.

The month-long festival took place from 1–29 March 2026 and included the Queens' Women Open Tournament and the Unrated Princesses' Tournament.

A total of **991** participants took part in the 2026 edition. The festival continued to provide competitive opportunities alongside developmental incentives for young players.

The winners of the 2026 Queens' Festival were:

- 1st: IM Deysi Cori — Peru
- 2nd: WCM Khadija Khalilova — Azerbaijan
- 3rd: WFM Sachi Jain — India

The Princesses' Tournament winners were:

- 1st: Joana Maria Pinholi Martins de Souza — Brazil
- 2nd: Sarah Qiu — USA
- 3rd: Modi Janis — India

The festival also incorporated developmental opportunities. The winner of the Queens' Final received an invitation to the 2026 FIDE Chess Olympiad together with a USD 300 prize, while second and third places received USD 200 and USD 100 respectively. Top performers at the qualification stage were also offered training sessions with former Women's World Champion **GM Antoaneta Stefanova**. The Princesses' Festival also provided trophies, vouchers, and



training opportunities, reinforcing the festival's commitment to nurturing the next generation of players.

The continued **partnership with DGT** also provided prizes for the youngest participants, including a DGT Pegasus and travel bag for first place and DGT 1500 chess clocks for second and third places.

Queen's Gambit Challenge

The Queen's Gambit Challenge is an online initiative to empower female players and assist national federations with building competitive women's teams.

The programme ran from April 2025 to June 2026 and provided structured training for players at beginner and intermediate levels, with the third stage focusing specifically on national women's teams preparing for the Chess Olympiad.

The third stage commenced on 25 April 2026 and focused on preparing the national women's teams of **Bermuda** and **Antigua and Barbuda** for the 46th Chess Olympiad.

A particularly significant outcome is that both federations are sending a full women's team to the Chess Olympiad for the first time, representing an important development milestone for women's chess in these countries.

The completion of the Queen's Gambit Challenge represents a meaningful continuation of WOM's broader strategy of supporting developing federations and increasing the number of countries with active and competitive national women's teams.

ChessMom Project — Supporting Chess-Playing Mothers

WOM has continued preparations for the ChessMom project at the 2026 Chess Olympiad in Uzbekistan. Following the positive experience of the 2024 Chess Olympiad in Hungary, the initiative has been expanded to provide greater support to professional chess players who are mothers, helping them continue their competitive careers without having to choose between motherhood and participation in elite chess.

For the 2026 Olympiad, we expanded the eligibility criteria. While the 2024 pilot project was open to mothers with children under one year of age, the 2026 edition includes mothers with children under two years of age. This important enhancement reflects our continued commitment to making international chess more inclusive and family-friendly.

Selected Participants for the 2026 FIDE ChessMom Project

WCM Karen Julissa Figueroa Figueroa – Barbados
WFM Patricia Evarista Castillo Peña – Dominican Republic
WGM Beatriz Irene Franco Valencia – Colombia
GM Marie Sebag – France
WIM Bayarmaa Bayarjargal – Mongolia



Robyn Julian Klaasen – South Africa
WIM Zenia Corrales Jiménez – Mexico
GM Elisabeth Pähtz – Germany
WIM Elisabeth Hapala – Austria
WFM Luzia Fernandes Pires – Angola
WFM Razan Alshaebi – Jordan

WIM Onkemetse Linda Francis – Botswana
Sabreen Abdelhameed Mouawd Oraby- Sudan

A total of **13 participants**, more than double the number of participants in 2024.
The programme reflects WOM's commitment to addressing practical barriers that can affect women's continued participation in competitive chess.

The Gender Equality in Chess Index (GECI) and The Women in Chess Representation, Participation and Development Survey

Research continues to be an important pillar of WOM's work.

The Gender Equality in Chess Index (GECI), led by WOM member GM and PhD in Economics David Smerdon, provides a comparative measure of gender equality within the international chess community.

The index assesses three principal dimensions:

1. Gender Participation
2. Gender Performance
3. Gender Progress

The second edition of the GECI ranks 119 federations, with all regions showing improvement compared with the 2023 edition. The full 2026 report has been published on the WOM website.

The Women in Chess Representation, Participation and Development Survey is a global survey designed to understand better the experiences, representation, participation, and development of women and girls in chess. It seeks to gather meaningful data on the opportunities, challenges, barriers, and experiences that influence women's involvement and progression across all levels and areas of the chess community. The findings will help identify gaps in participation and representation, while providing evidence to guide more effective policies, programmes, and initiatives that support women in chess. Ultimately, the survey aims to give women a stronger voice and help build a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for women and girls in chess.

Together, these research initiatives provide an increasingly important evidence base for understanding participation and inequality in women's chess and for informing future policy and programme development.



Seminars and Professional Development for Women

Professional development remains an important component of WOM's work, particularly in areas of chess administration, officiating and tournament operations.

FIDE Arbiters' Seminar for Women

The FIDE Arbiters' Seminar for Women was organised jointly by WOM and the Norwegian Chess Federation, in cooperation with the FIDE Arbiters' Commission.

The seminar attracted 23 participants from 21 countries, while more than 70 applications were received, demonstrating significant global demand for professional development opportunities for women arbiters.

International Organizer Seminar

The FIDE International Organizer Seminar was held in Oslo, Norway, on 30–31 May 2026. The seminar was led by experienced chess officials and provided further opportunities for women to develop professional skills within chess administration and event organisation.

The 230th Internet-based FIDE Arbiter Seminar was held from 10–12 July 2026 and was offered free of charge to women, with English as the language of instruction. The seminar brought together 22 women from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, providing participants with the opportunity to fulfil the requirements for FIDE Arbiter norms and titles in accordance with the FIDE Regulations for the Titles of Arbiters.

The seminar was led by IA Panagiotis Nikolopoulos (Greece), FIDE Lecturer, with IA Marco Biagioli (Italy) serving as Local Assistant Lecturer. IA Anastasia Sorokina (Australia), FIDE Lecturer, served as Technical Assistant Lecturer, while Yilmaz Kartal was the Technical Organizer

This continuing programme demonstrates WOM's commitment to developing women not only as players, but also as arbiters, organisers, technical officials and professionals within the chess ecosystem.

Montenegro – Mediterranean Chess Championship

The 2026 Montenegro Open – Mediterranean Championship was held in Budva, Montenegro, from **4–11 July 2026**, bringing together more than 250 players from around the world. The main competition featured nine-round Swiss-system Open A and Open B sections, alongside Mediterranean Rapid events for U20 and U14 players and an Open Blitz tournament.

As part of its commitment to advancing gender equality in chess, our Commission (WOM) provided financial support to equalise the prize fund for the Women's Mediterranean Championship with that of the Open Mediterranean Championship. Consequently, the top three women received the same prize amounts as the top three players in the Open section: €3,000



for first place, €2,000 for second, and €1,000 for third, bringing the dedicated Mediterranean Championship prize fund for both sections to €12,000.

This initiative represented a practical step towards greater equity and recognition for women's achievements in chess, demonstrating how targeted financial support can help promote more equitable conditions within major chess events.

The championship concluded on 11 July, with the final round and closing ceremony attended by FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich, who presented awards to the leading finishers and officially declared the Montenegro Open and Mediterranean Open and Women Championships closed.

Women's Chess Marathon

The Women's Chess Marathon is a global initiative to promote greater participation, visibility and opportunities for women and girls across all areas of chess. The initiative builds on the successful global marathon organised by WOM in 2025, which brought together more than 1,000 participants worldwide through tournaments, training sessions, workshops, exhibitions and community activities.

The 2026 Women's Chess Marathon took place on 20th of July, coinciding with International Chess Day, and provided the opportunity to highlight the contribution of women to the chess community while encouraging federations and organisers to create meaningful opportunities for women and girls to participate in the game.

Chess4All & All4Chess

Chess4All & All4Chess remains one of WOM's principal global initiatives, aimed at encouraging participation and creating opportunities for girls and women across different levels and communities.

During 2026, the project has continued to expand its geographical reach. Activities and partnerships have included locations in Africa, Europe, Asia, the Americas, the Middle East and Oceania, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Nepal, Kenya, Uganda, Kazakhstan, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Venezuela, Armenia, Spain, Poland, Saint Lucia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Botswana and South Africa, among others.

This broad geographical footprint demonstrates the Commission's continued effort to make women's chess more visible and accessible internationally.

Global Celebration of Women and Girls in Chess

The 2026 global celebration continued under the theme: "Visible, Connected, Worldwide."

The initiative brought together tournaments, exhibitions, festivals, workshops and community activities in different parts of the world. Key activities included the **XV Radzikowska Memorial** in Poland, the Futures Tournament at the **Prague Chess Festival**, a simultaneous exhibition with former Women's World Champion **GM Alexandra Kosteniuk** in Saint-Tropez, the



“Primeiro as Damas” celebration in Manaus, the International Women’s Tournament in Weisenborn, Germany, and the Qazaq Queens Chess Fest in Kazakhstan.

The activities collectively contributed to WOM’s objective of increasing the visibility of women and girls in chess while strengthening connections between organisers and communities internationally.

Chess for Protection Project (Girls Chess Club in Kakuma)

The Chess for Protection programme remains one of WOM’s flagship social-impact initiatives, implemented in collaboration with UNHCR. WOM is proud to contribute through its ongoing support for the Girls Club in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. The project resumed from early this year, thanks to great cooperation with Chess Kenya and colleagues from UNHCR.

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.

The programme extends beyond chess instruction. Girls are given opportunities to interact with successful women, read and discuss books, participate in creative activities and develop supportive relationships with role models.

World Refugee Day Activities

In recognition of Refugee Awareness Month and World Refugee Day, FIDE and WOM organised special chess tournaments on 20–21 June 2026 for members of the Girls Club and the wider chess community in Kakuma Refugee Camp and the Kalobeyei Settlement.

Equipment support has also strengthened the programme. DGT and Hans Pees donated 100 chess clocks, while Gift of Chess provided 100 chess boards, helping to ensure that participants have appropriate equipment for training and competition.

The **Kakuma refugee team**, which includes members of the Girls Club, is also preparing to participate in the 2026 Chess Olympiad.

Expansion to Cox’s Bazar

In June, FIDE explored the possibility of expanding Chess for Protection to Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, in cooperation with the NGO Movement in Refuge.

A delegation visited refugee camps, schools, community centres and local chess organisations and engaged with government representatives, UN agencies and development partners.



Approximately 300 young people participated in chess activities across refugee camps and host communities, with particular attention given to engaging girls and developing future girls' chess programmes. Gift of Chess plans to provide 100 chess sets to the Cox's Bazar refugee community.

Social Media and Communications

WOM has continued to place increased emphasis on digital communication and the promotion of women's chess through social media.

The Commission currently uses four principal communication channels:

- WOM website
- X/Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram

The July activity presentation reported significant audience growth across WOM's social media and digital platforms, including increases of 25%, 64% and 333% across the measured areas.

This growth reinforces the importance of digital communication as a tool for increasing the visibility of women and girls in chess and for sharing the impact of WOM initiatives with a global audience.

The Commission's priorities for the remaining months of the term include the completion of the following initiatives

Seminar Programme

- August — International Arbiter Seminar
- September — FIDE Arbiter Seminar
- October — Advanced Swiss-Manager Seminar for experienced arbiters and pairing officers

The October seminar is scheduled to be conducted by IA Michael Joseph Pagarán, with a focus on advanced Swiss-Manager skills and pairing operations.

Women's Chess Event in Italy- Veneto Queens' Academy

As part of our efforts to support women's events globally.

The Veneto Queens' Academy is a new women's chess development initiative of the Veneto Regional Chess Committee, launched with the support of FIDE and in collaboration with Mitropa Chess Academy. The initiative is designed to strengthen the development pathway for promising young female players in the Veneto region by **providing year-round training** throughout the sporting season for selected girls across different age categories, up to Under-20.

Participation in the Academy is free of charge for the invited players, with selection carried out by the Veneto Regional Chess Committee based on the players' potential and previous achievements. The programme is intended to **provide talented girls with sustained access** to



structured training and development opportunities, helping them progress competitively while creating a stronger pipeline of female players within the region.

The official presentation of the Academy is scheduled for **12 September 2026 in Asolo, Italy**, and will include a conference and a simultaneous exhibition for the participating girls, I (WOM's Chair) will be in attendance. The initiative follows the Power Moves project organised in Veneto in collaboration with FIDE in 2025 and represents a continued commitment to developing women's chess at the regional level.

The Veneto Queens' Academy is particularly significant as it demonstrates how targeted, long-term investment in promising female players, rather than one-off events, can contribute to sustainable development and greater representation of women in competitive chess.

This continuing programme demonstrates WOM's commitment to developing women not only as players, but also as arbiters, organisers, technical officials and professionals within the chess ecosystem.

FIDE WOM Community Chess Weekend – Matosinhos, Portugal

The FIDE WOM Community Chess Weekend is scheduled to take place in Matosinhos, Portugal, on **5–6 September 2026**, as a community-focused initiative aimed at promoting chess as a tool for education, inclusion, empowerment and social development, with a particular emphasis on women, girls and families.

The event will be held along the Matosinhos seafront promenade, in the vicinity of Matosinhos Beach and the Matosinhos Tourist Information Office. The two-day programme will run from 10:00 to 17:00 and will be free and open to the public, offering a range of activities designed to introduce new participants to chess and encourage greater community engagement.

Planned activities include **open chess sessions and Learn Chess workshops**, a children's chess drawing competition, family-oriented chess activities, and a women's simultaneous exhibition, ideally featuring a FIDE Woman International Master or International Master. The programme will also provide an opportunity to showcase the work and initiatives of the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess (WOM) and encourage greater participation of women and girls in chess.

A key component of the weekend will be an educational seminar entitled “**Chess as a Tool for Community and Civic Education.**” The seminar will explore the broader social impact of chess, including its potential contribution to gender equality, social inclusion, support for children at risk, autism and neurodiversity, refugee integration, rehabilitation through chess in prisons, inclusion of persons with disabilities, active ageing and community development.

The initiative will also strengthen collaboration between FIDE WOM and local authorities and chess stakeholders in Portugal, demonstrating how chess can extend beyond competitive sport to become a practical instrument for education, community building and social empowerment.

I will also be attending the event and participating in the programme, representing the Commission and supporting its objectives of increasing the visibility and impact of women's



chess at the community level. The event is expected to provide an important platform for engaging new audiences and demonstrating the role of chess in creating more inclusive and connected communities.

Highlighting Women in Chess Education In celebration of the Year of Chess in Education, we launched a social media initiative showcasing women from around the world who are actively involved in chess education and the impact they are making in their communities.

Chess Olympiad Media Coverage – During the Chess Olympiad, we will be capturing and sharing photos of all the women's teams, as well as conducting short interviews where possible. This content will help increase the visibility of women's chess and strengthen our social media presence, working in conjunction with FIDE's Media Team.

The 12th Judit Polgar's Global Chess Festival

To be held on 26 September. FIDE WOM has signed the partnership agreement to repeat last year unique format and setting of the RubikChess competition. We are 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.

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 our affiliate **FIDE commissions**, our **councilors** and **members** for their invaluable guidance and commitment.

A sincere appreciation is extended to our **FIDE WOM Supervisor and Deputy Chair of the FIDE Management Board, WGM Dana Reizniece**, for her invaluable mentorship, consistent support, and active engagement, all of which have greatly contributed to the Commission's work and progress.

Through the collective efforts of WOM, the Commission continues to advance initiatives that create meaningful opportunities for girls and women around the world, using chess as a vehicle for development, empowerment, inclusion and positive social change.

I would also like to thank the **FIDE President, FIDE Council**, and **FIDE Management Board** for their continued commitment to women's chess and for the valuable resources and support provided to enable the Commission to implement its programmes and initiatives.

Tris-Ann Richards
FIDE WOM Chairperson