

World Rugby awards 14 new women's leadership development scholarships ahead of International Women's Day

- World Rugby women's leadership scholarships increase from ten to fourteen in 2019
- More than 100 scholarship applications received globally
- Scholarship to offer women in rugby more opportunity for leadership development

To mark International Women's Day, World Rugby has renewed its commitment to driving inspirational leadership and fast tracking the development of women in rugby on and off the pitch through its successful women's leadership scholarship programme.

Receiving more than 100 applications globally, this year the highly sought-after World Rugby executive leadership scholarships have been awarded to 14 women from different unions, an increase on the ten who were awarded in 2018.

Working in conjunction with the regional associations, who oversee the application process, the scholarship programme will offer more opportunities for leadership development for its member unions and regional associations.

A key strand of the Accelerating the global development of women in rugby 2017-25 strategy, the scholarship programme objectives aim to support talented women worldwide to further develop their rugby leadership potential and ensure that rugby is a global leader in sport.

2019 World Rugby Executive Leadership Scholarship recipients

- **Cate Sexton (New Zealand):** Head of Women's Rugby Development in New Zealand rugby
- **Vela Naucukidi (Fiji):** Women's Development Officer, former President of the Fiji Women's Rugby Women (2007-2012) and current Secretary since 2013
- **Jane Schmitt (Australia):** Director and board member of Queensland Rugby Union
- **Cybele Druma (Papua New Guinea):** Former CEO of Papua New Guinea Rugby Football Union and President of the National Capital District Rugby Union and
- **Gemma Fay (Scotland):** Head of women and girl's rugby with the Scottish Rugby Union.
- **Katharina Kueß (Austria):** Vice President and head of women's rugby in Austria. A player and a coach, Katharina was appointed Women's league coordinator in 2016 and was a founder of the Austrian women's 7s league.
- **Annelies Acda (Nederland):** Rugby Nederland Board member and member of the Women's Rugby Committee of Rugby Europe
- **Irina Arkhytska (Ukraine):** Secretary General for Ukraine Rugby Union.
- **Regina Lunyolo (Uganda):** Chairperson of the Uganda Women's Rugby Advisory Committee and Committee member for the Gender Equality and Diversity commission of the Uganda Olympic Committee
- **Edvige Manga (Senegal):** Deputy Secretary General of Senegal Rugby Union
- **María Fernanda Vázquez Villatoro (Mexico):** Manager and Board Member at Wallabies Rugby Football Club Mexico
- **Lauren Rothwell (Bermuda):** Board Member, Public Relations Officer & National Team Member for Bermuda Rugby union
- **Letizia Alcaraz (Argentina):** Women's Rugby Development Manager of the Northeast Rugby Union

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- **Soledad Galleguillos (Chile):** Development Manager of Women's Rugby and former international player for Chile, coach and educator.

World Rugby Chairman Sir Bill Beaumont: "We would like to congratulate the fourteen successful recipients of this year's World Rugby women's leadership scholarships. Significant strides have been made across the women's game since the inception of the ambitious women's development plan and the scholarship programme has been at the heart of the success story. With an unprecedented number of applications and an increase in recipients this year positive steps are being made forward in our commitment to fast track the development of women in rugby."

Serge Simon, Chair of the World Rugby Women's Advisory Committee, said; "Congratulations to all who have been awarded a scholarship this year. The scholarships programme is a fantastic way of empowering the current and next generation of global female leaders in rugby."

World Rugby Women's general manager Katie Sadleir said: "Ahead of International Women's Day we are delighted to confirm the fourteen recipients of the World Rugby executive leadership scholarships. By supporting women in rugby to access more learning opportunities that will advance their leadership development, we are promoting greater parity within our sport."

Year one of the Accelerating the Global Development of Women in Rugby 2017-2025 strategy has seen important advances both on and off the field including a 28% increase in registered female playing numbers and the implementation of the transformational governance reform which saw the introduction of an additional 17 female positions targeted on increasing diversity of World Rugby Council.

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Notes to the editor:

The purpose behind the scholarship programme is to support talented women to further develop their Rugby Leadership potential. The scholarships are open to women who

- Are currently involved in Rugby at a governance level (Board Member) or,
- Are currently involved in Rugby at a senior management level (third tier and above) or,
- Have the potential to be involved in either a senior management level or Union/Region Board within 2 years.
- The scholarship can be used to support a combination of leadership development opportunities. These may range from; formal or informal education, conferences, workshops, mentoring, secondments, best practice study tours. The components of the scholarship should be individually tailored to meet the professional development needs of those applying.
- Rugby Asia have deferred their 2019 scholarship allocation opportunity until 2020