2021 REPORT
Celebrating & sharing our PASSION for TABLE TENNIS!
April 6, 2021, marked the seventh World Table Tennis Day (WTTD) and the second one in times of Covid-19 and its forcing measures and restrictions all around the globe. Nonetheless, the Table Tennis family did not lack determination, flexibility and creativity to organise memorable physical, digital or blended WTTD events.

The originality of the events had no limits: from Russia, where a Table Tennis table was set up on top of a fortress, to a two-hour event with dance, music with adapted lyrics to promote FEMpowerment and a generational Table Tennis game with female-only participants in Argentina, to a drawing contest in the Slovak Republic, to first time events ever held in Cambodia and Korea DPR.

With female empowerment being the focus of WTTD 2021, inclusion was also shown by the specific topics of the events. There were a lot of events seeking to make Table Tennis more accessible to women and girls and raising awareness of gender inequalities such as in Tahiti or Nigeria. Iran went one step further by helping children in a child labour context and those coming from a background of illegal immigration, to find a way out of their situations using our sport.

As a novelty in 2021, we piloted our first ever WTTD Promoters Initiative in order to support dedicated people around the world, thus creating an impact on gender equality through Table Tennis in their local communities.

WTTD also proved its popularity and universality through the ITTF Foundation's very first online main event: A 24-hour stream with live and pre-recorded sessions offered a variety of fun-filled, sweat-inducing and educational possibilities for everyone, everywhere. My sincere gratitude goes out to all WTTD 2021 Promoters, organisers and passionate table tennis players, as well as to the three entities of the ITTF Group: This year went down in history as a significant milestone since gender balance and female empowerment in Table Tennis have been addressed comprehensively and holistically for the first time across the ITTF Group by introducing various activities, events, and actions, always shining the spotlight on women in Table Tennis.

Together we are stronger. Together we can move forward. Gender equality and inclusion, are we there yet? In a nutshell: No. But we are proud of every step we’ve taken. We will continue and deepen our work towards achieving this goal and we are happy to count you in.

“Engage, speak up, step up, be focused, be strong, be determined and be you. Let’s #FEMpower all year long, not only on the March 8 or April 6.”

Leandro Olvech
ITTF Foundation Director
lolvech@foundation.ittf.com
313 EVENTS and HOME CELEBRATIONS in 99 COUNTRIES and TERRITORIES

*This number includes the 24-hour live stream.

Watch the WTTD 2021 Celebrations video here!
These numbers do not include the 24-hour livestream.
On the day, where we all share and spread the love for our sport, we did not let anything dampen our WTTD-spirits. Instead, we were bringing the event to everyone, everywhere who could not organise an event themselves or who wanted to go beyond their own event to celebrate April 6.

Together with the whole ITTF Group, we organised a 24-hour online stream on April 6 from 12:00am to 11:59 (UTC+1), which included seminars and presentations on gender equality in and through Table tennis, iconic Table Tennis matches and various live sessions:

- Meet-and-greets with Table Tennis idols Liam Pitchford and Clarence Chew;
- Workouts to stay physically active with Elke Schall and Rachael Milligan;
- Coaching sessions to improve skills with Paulina Vega & Andy Pereira, Emeric Martin, Rashid Omar & Majd Ablooshi, Sarah de Nutte, and Segun Toriola in Spanish, French, Arabic and English respectively;
- And entertaining sessions with Adrian Leigh and Adam Bobrov.

The online stream was shared on all ITTF Groups’ Facebook accounts and the ITTF Foundation’s YouTube account with a total reach of 381,898 people making the ITTF Foundation’s first online main event popular and universal, but also showing the long way to go towards achieving gender balance and equity.

**Top 5 Countries and Territories watching**

1. Philippines
2. India
3. Pakistan
4. Cambodia
5. United States of America

**Gender of Viewers**

- 95.75% male
- 4.25% female
In order to achieve a more profound and lasting impact on gender equality, the Promoters Initiative has been established for the first time since the WTTD’s creation. The idea behind it was to have people worldwide, who are passionate about Table Tennis and social issues such as gender inequality. Because ultimately, the people who are there know best where the problem points lie, what barriers exist in their federation, club, culture and community, and perhaps how best to overcome them. With the support and guidance of the ITTF Foundation, almost 50 dedicated women and men took part in this initiative to spread the spirit of the WTTD even further and to contribute to the empowerment of girls and women in their home countries and territories through their events.

In total, the initiative counted on 47 Promoters across 34 different countries and territories. From dedicated young female student players to workers from sports-related NGOs or presidents of clubs and associations, the initiative offered us a diverse range of people and backgrounds eager to make a positive and lasting change in their communities.
One aim of the initiative was to create an opportunity for involved women to host a WTTD event to feel empowered by assuming the responsibilities of organising and running a WTTD, while also being a role model for younger girls and women in the club or community. At the same time, the Promoters were expected to contribute to spread awareness of gender inequality through their ideas for the WTTD, to raise awareness in the community and to find approaches to solve the problem. One of these points is, for example, the overall low participation of girls and women in Table Tennis (this applies to players, coaches, umpires and administrative positions). Many Promoters have made it their goal to encourage more female players to join a club through their campaigns and events, but also to make boys and men aware of why and how they can get involved in order to contribute to gender equality.

We would like to thank all our Promoters who have contributed to raising awareness of girls’ and women’s disadvantage and gender inequality. We thank all female Promoters for their commitment and passion, and for being an inspiration to other girls and women in their community. We thank all male Promoters for their commitment to FEMpowerment, because only together we can overcome such barriers and see positive social change in the long term.

Gender of Promoters

- 68 % female
- 32 % male
Through a series of reports, the Promoters have provided information on their starting point and what female participation looks like in their clubs or organisations. They also provided details of their events for WTTD and an evaluation of their own reach and impact through their own female empowerment projects for April 6.

The Before
Through those reports, we discovered that prior to WTTD 2021, female players made up on average 19% of all players in the organisations or clubs. Regarding the distribution among coaches, about 25% of coaches were women. This data highlights once more the existing gender inequalities in sport. The discrepancies are even more evident in the leadership positions in the respective sports institutions; only 16.5% of executive or other leading positions are held by women. Fewer women in decision-making positions can have a direct impact on lower percentages of women in other positions such as coaches, umpires, administrators or the players themselves.
The first step to successfully tackling each culture’s and community’s individual challenges is to analyse the existing issues and barriers. The biggest perceived problem described by 41% of the Promoters was the lack of infrastructure for women within Table Tennis. In many places, there are not enough opportunities and longer-term career prospects for females in Table Tennis. Furthermore, getting access to the sport is often challenging. This aspect also includes imbalanced structures in clubs, such as insufficiently developed girls’ training or programmes. The second major challenge is that of enduring stereotypes. Such stereotypes include traditional role expectations (women are responsible for the household and children) as well as prejudices about women and sport – for instance, that Table Tennis is not a “feminine” sport or that women should not play sport to begin with. In third place is the fact that Table Tennis continues to be a male-dominated sport. This can be particularly frightening for young girls, as many are afraid that male counterparts will be favoured anyway. This results in a lack of self-confidence and the fear of being discriminated anyway. This aspect directly relates to the insufficient structural support and promotion of women in Table Tennis. The last significant barrier is the lack of role models. As it is the case in many other sports, women are underrepresented in the media and news coverage, which leaves many young girls and women no space to dream. The lack of women in leadership positions in clubs and associations is also related barrier. On the one hand, women leaders are a role model and inspiration for others, on the other hand, they can also push more for the development of female players and related opportunities.
GOALS AND SATISFACTION
In addition to the overall theme of contributing to UN SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and the WTTD spirit of being Popular, Universal and Inclusive, we asked each Promoter to set themselves a personal goal for their event. The goals they chose were tailored to the conditions and needs in their respective communities. Looking back on their own progress, 55% of the Promoters reported having successfully achieved their own goal, 4% were partially successful. Out of the feedback, 10% stated that they were unfortunately not able to achieve their goal because local Covid-19 measures simply did not allow for the execution and celebration of the WTTD they had envisioned. Despite this, Promoters rated the impact they had on the community through their events in terms of FEMpowerment on a scale of 1 (not at all satisfactory) to 10 (very satisfactory) with an average of 8.
DIGITAL CELEBRATION AND REACH

Many WTTD organisers were forced to postpone or adjust their events due to the pandemic and its respective health guidelines. Hybrid celebrations were one way to still reach many participants while staying physically distanced. For April 6, 32% of the Promoters included digital activities or campaigns in their WTTD event, including broadcast on national television, social media campaigns, online Table Tennis master classes or interactive online forums on gender equality. Thanks to the great work and ideas of the 47 Promoters they reached more than 6,000 people directly through their events – 59% of the participants were female!

**Reached Participants**

![Graph showing the gender distribution of reached participants.](chart)
This positive impact also translated into other areas. As many of the Promoters complained about the underrepresentation of female players in their clubs prior to WTTD, recruiting new female players was a priority for many Promoters. Based on the feedback received, they were able to recruit on average 21 new female athletes in their clubs. However, it should be noted that in many places the clubs and training facilities are fully closed due to lockdowns, making the signing-up of interested girls and women not possible at the moment.

614 girls or women signed up

21 average number of new female players per Promoter’s club
EMPOWERMENT OF AND THROUGH PROMOTERS

The goal of this initiative was not only to increase the number of female players, coaches and other important positions within Table Tennis, but also to provide an opportunity for men and especially women to take the opportunity to organise and run an event. Out of the 32 female Promoters, 72% said they felt empowered by the responsibility of being a WTTD Promoter. Among the male Promoters, 14 out of a total of 15 reported that they felt like they empowered women and girls in their community at the moment.
Gender equality is an important and critical issue in today’s world and one that matters a lot to the ITTF Foundation. As a result, it has become the focus of the 2021 edition of the WTTD, which included the celebration of not only the International Women’s Day on March 8, but the whole Women’s History Month of March.

First of all, we re-activated the Inspirational Women Series – a collection of interviews that spotlights women from our Table Tennis community to inspire others to not only make their dreams come true, but to help other girls and women to follow their dreams no matter how big or small they might be. Starting in December 2020, every three weeks an interview was shared, changing to a weekly article during March. Additionally, we started two social media campaigns from March 1 leading up to April 6 highlighting FEMpowerment and increasing female media presence:

1. Inspiring quotes from female (Para) Table Tennis players;
2. A call for FEMpose pictures to show either how strong and fierce girls and women are or how people from other gender identities support the FEMpowerment movement.
However, the highlight of the Women’s History Month truly was the Conference on gender equality and FEMpowerment in Table Tennis on March 8 organised by the ITTF Foundation and ITTF High Performance and Development. The live panel discussion welcomed 86 participants – not only from different continents, backgrounds or positions, but also from other International Federations and sport organisations – listening to five prominent guests sharing their wisdom:

- **Ingmar De Vos**: IOC Member & IOC Women in Sports Commission Member & FEI President
- **Rita van Driel**: IPC executive & Agitos Foundation President & IPC Women in Sport Committee Chair
- **Petra Sörling**: ITTF EC Vice President of Finance & BoT Chair at ITTF Foundation
- **Funke Oshonaike**: Founder of NGO “Funke Oshonaike Foundation” & 6x Olympic Table Tennis Player
- **Mónica Liyau**: Founder of NGO “Impactando Vidas” & 2020 TT Dream Building Fund project winners & 1x Olympic Table Tennis Player

The panellists provided the audience with interesting insights, advice, thoughts and know-how, including personal experience with gender (in)equality that is unfortunately still very much present on different levels and also within different areas across sports.

53% female participants

Watch the recording of the Conference here!

“We must empower women and this must be done with men, not against them. Let’s build bridges rather than walls!”

Sarah Hanffou, ITTF Foundation ambassador

**FEMpower THROUGH TABLE TENNIS**
Thank You

مـَتَيَّح

Так

шешк

Gracias

Noxumt

Mahalo

Dziękuję Ci

Obrigado

고마워

고마워

Ngiyabonga

Мерси

Thank You

Большое спасибо

Ahsante

Мултумесц

धन्यवाद

ευχαριστώ
Join World Table Tennis Day 2022

It’s been exciting for us here at the ITTF Foundation and we look forward to seeing what ideas our community has in stock for next year.

www.ittffoundation.org
www.ittffoundation.org/programmes/tt4all/world-table-tennis-day