



More girls, playing for longer

Rugby Rising Play — Year Two
2025/2026

RUGBY
RISING
PLAY



Year two: Continuing to rise

Rugby Rising Play is World Rugby's first bespoke girls' participation programme.

It is built to bring girls into the game and keep them there, using rugby's skills and values to build confidence, belonging and opportunity on and off the field, with coaches, officials and teachers supporting them along the way.

Since launching in July 2024, it has grown from a standing start into a genuinely global effort. This report is the Year Two snapshot: the unions we supported, the girls we reached, and the stories of impact well beyond the scoreboard.



32

unions supported

6

regions

Who we supported

In Year Two, **32 unions** were supported across six regions — part of **54 countries** supported over the programme’s first two years.

Africa 10	Asia 5	Europe 10	North America 2	South America 4	Oceania 1
Nigeria	Uzbekistan	Bosnia &	St Vincent & the	Brazil	Solomon Islands
Kenya	Pakistan	Herzegovina	Grenadines	Peru	
Egypt	Nepal	Serbia	Trinidad & Tobago	Chile	
Ghana	Chinese Taipei	Moldova		Costa Rica	
Tunisia	India	Lithuania			
Burkina Faso		Hungary			
Senegal		Bulgaria			
Rwanda		Norway			
Madagascar		Austria			
Eswatini		Czechia			
		Croatia			



Impact

25,162

Total girls that benefitted

975

Total workforce



BEYOND THE FIELD

More than a game

Behind 25,162 girls and a **975**–strong workforce across **32 unions** lies far more than a game. The pages that follow are where these numbers become stories — of confidence gained, communities changed, and girls given a place to belong.

- **Mentorship & safeguarding**
- **Health & wellbeing education**
- **Leadership & belonging**



GOOD NEWS

Stories from around the world

Highlights from ten of the many projects delivered this year.

Bosnia & Herzegovina

Brazil

Bulgaria

Costa Rica

Ghana

Pakistan

Rwanda

Serbia

St Vincent & the Grenadines

Uzbekistan



EUROPE

Bosnia & Herzegovina



Building on last year's success, delivery expanded from universities into elementary and high schools nationwide, backed by an established base of female educators, match officials and volunteers.

1,950 participants
Target 1,500

300 teen players
Target 250

HIGHLIGHTS

- National women's team reformed after nine years — now competing at the European Championship in Andorra.
- Camps delivered in Zenica and at Mount Vlašić, and internationally in Zagreb and Budapest.
- Presented to 20 municipalities in a healthy-ageing campaign and showcased at National Olympic Day.

RUGBY
RISING
PLAY



GOOD NEWS

A free rugby summer school for girls opened in Sarajevo, and a second in Busovača. A six-month programme also launched in kindergartens and schools with the University of Zenica, reaching the youngest girls yet.

A documentary about girls' rugby and RRP in BiH is in development.

SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil



RUGBY
RISING
PLAY

Girls' participation expanded across six clubs in Vale do Paraíba (São Paulo) and Western Paraná, with the RRP curriculum delivered by female coaches under the technical eye of former Olympian Paula Ishibashi.

630 participants
Target 1,800

60 teen players
Target 90

HIGHLIGHTS

- A single school visit in São José produced a regular group of nearly 30 girls — clear demand for girls-only sport.
- Coach Luana balanced coaching with new motherhood, supported by the team and community — a model for retaining women in leadership.
- Despite severe thunderstorms in Foz do Iguaçu, the regional festival was safely moved indoors without losing momentum.



GOOD NEWS

Strong evidence of long-term sustainability is emerging from the previous cycle. A team largely of girls who came through the Rising Rugby T1 project took 3rd in the U15 category at the São Paulo State 7s — and alumna Rafaella now coaches younger girls herself.

EUROPE

Bulgaria



Focused on making rugby safe and fun for girls aged 12–18 through an equal-start academy, with increased paid coaching capacity and a new Instagram presence built to reach teenage audiences.

400 participants

Target 230

9 coaches

Target 5

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ran a two-day camp alongside the Sofia 7s International tournament and took part in National Sports Day demonstrations.
- Increased coach payment secured three male and three female dedicated coaches, plus three more ad hoc.
- A coach and two girls from last year's project represented Bulgaria in an Erasmus sport-and-arts project on gender equality and inclusivity.

RUGBY
RISING
PLAY



GOOD NEWS

One academy recruit was invited into a U18 national-team training camp and has since played friendly tournaments in Sofia, Zagreb and Chisinau representing Bulgaria.

SOUTH AMERICA

Costa Rica



National expansion of women's rugby continued, launching officially on 7 March 2026 with weekly sessions across San José and Limón, in partnership with schools and Cantonal Sports Committees (CCDR).

1,857 participants
Target 2,100

81 players
Target 215

HIGHLIGHTS

- A new partnership with NGO SPY Niña CR extended RRP to vulnerable girls aged 9–12, beyond the project's original scope.
- The launch event brought together current, veteran and former players, strengthening ties across generations.
- A national closing festival is planned to celebrate achievements and build a sustainable community structure.

RUGBY
RISING
PLAY



GOOD NEWS

Students from Colegio Superior de Señoritas and Liceo Luis Dobles Segreda played in their first-ever T1 Interscholastic Rugby Cup, connecting with players from Limón, Pococí and Santa Ana.

AFRICA

Ghana



RRP delivered across five regions — Greater Accra, Central, Northern, Savannah and Volta — combining rugby with mentorship, safeguarding, and menstrual and mental-health education in 20+ schools and community hubs.

1,000+ participants
Target 1,000

20+ hubs & schools
Target 20

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exceeded the national target, engaging 1,000+ girls aged 13–19 across all five regions.
- Delivered menstrual-health and teenage-pregnancy-prevention education with five regional hospitals and clinics.
- 16 coaches, teachers and volunteers completed World Rugby Safeguarding certification; the 2nd and 3rd festivals were staged.

RUGBY
RISING
PLAY



GOOD NEWS

Through the RRP Essay and Creative Art Competition, a student described how the programme changed attitudes at her school — her headteacher now actively encourages girls in sport, while reproductive-health sessions boosted girls' confidence and health knowledge

ASIA

Pakistan



Pakistan ran Rugby Rising sessions and festivals for girls aged 12–20 across multiple regions, alongside training and education strands. The programme received positive feedback from both parents and PE teachers highlighting the growing acceptance of girls' rugby and their willingness to support the continued development of the Rugby Rising Play (RPP) program across Pakistan.

230 teen participants

Target 165

65 pre-teen players

Target 40

HIGHLIGHTS

- Parents and PE teachers reported growing confidence in the girls, and requested further coaching courses and equipment.
- Teachers highlighted the programme's value for teamwork, discipline, respect and leadership.
- Positive feedback from schools and madrasas is driving demand to expand RRP across the country.

RUGBY
RISING
PLAY



GOOD NEWS

More than 40 schools and 20 madrasas were invited to a rugby activity day at the Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad — many girls' first-ever experience of the sport, with strong enthusiasm for teamwork and skill-building.

AFRICA

Rwanda



'Play Rugby, Relief and Rise' brought T1 Rugby to teenage girls across all five refugee camps in Rwanda, pairing rugby skills with English-language training and emotional-healing support.

600 participants

Target 500

9 teams

Target 5

HIGHLIGHTS

- Delivered in all five camps — Mahama, Kigeme, Kiziba, Mugombwa and Nyabiheke — reaching 600 teenage girls.
- Sport teachers were trained alongside RRF coaches, embedding sustainability beyond the project's lifespan.
- Concluded with four tournaments and nine teams on 28 June 2026, bringing refugee and host-community students together.



RUGBY
RISING
PLAY

GOOD NEWS

GS Kigeme B, tournament champions at Kigeme Refugee Camp, pledged to keep playing beyond the project. Captain Adeline Gikundiro, a refugee student herself, said rugby created friendships that might never have existed otherwise: "Everyone smiles when we play rugby." Stories like these capture the true spirit of Rugby Rising Play: a project that set out to build skills and resilience, and along the way, built friendship, belonging, and joy that will continue well beyond the final tournament

EUROPE

Serbia

“Rugby4Her” is a development initiative designed to introduce, engage, and retain girls aged 11–14 to rugby across four regional development centres in Pančevo, Belgrade and Kruševac — using a safe, non-contact format delivered in schools and built on partnerships between clubs, schools and local communities. Its primary objective was to introduce rugby to girls with no previous experience, increase female participation in rugby activities, and create sustainable pathways towards long-term involvement in the sport.

584 active players

Target 350

HIGHLIGHTS

- Five rugby festivals between March and May 2026 became key retention milestones and built a stronger national network for girls’ rugby.
- School-based, non-contact delivery proved highly effective — around 80% of girls in class took part, and 85 girls progressed into structured club pathways.
- A dedicated Coaches Clinic in April 2026 strengthened coaching capacity and the long-term sustainability of the programme.



RUGBY
RISING
PLAY



GOOD NEWS

Two mothers who were unsure whether rugby was right for girls joined their local clubs after watching their daughters grow in confidence — now volunteering, and challenging the same misconceptions they once held across their communities.

NORTH AMERICA

St Vincent & the Grenadines



EmpowerHER Rugby Phase 2 expanded into new schools and rural communities, formalised the 2025 women's league, and began building the female coaching and officiating workforce, targeting 500 active players by August 2026.

355 participants

Target 150

131 active players

Target 75

HIGHLIGHTS

- Schools now receive tailored resources and lesson plans, so teachers can confidently deliver girls' rugby.
- Female-led coaching teams provide role models, encouraging girls who might otherwise hesitate to try rugby.
- Regular school visits strengthen links between education and community clubs.

RUGBY
RISING
PLAY



GOOD NEWS

Several teenage participants from Phase 1 are now assisting delivery for younger girls, and a community festival brought girls from multiple schools together for friendly matches and skill challenges, earning praise from parents and teachers.

Uzbekistan



'Rugby4Girls' delivered RRP across all 11 target regions, combining rugby with confidence, leadership and teamwork training, culminating in an International Women's Day tournament on 8 March.

2,200 participants

Target 2,000

40 coaches

Target 25

HIGHLIGHTS

- 35 newly certified female coaches decentralised leadership to rural and urban hubs — far beyond the baseline of two per region.
- A 10-team National Universiade was added to the calendar to accommodate rapid growth in university rugby.
- A new Women's Rugby-15 National Championship is scheduled for September 2026 to sustain the RRP pathway.



GOOD NEWS

Women's rugby was formally established within the National Guard, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and four state universities — a major institutional breakthrough beyond the project's original scope.

We asked. They answered.

This year we ran our first survey of the people at the heart of Rugby Rising Play: four audiences, online, asking not how many girls are playing but what playing means to them.

416 responses across the four surveys

Players

How much they enjoy it, and what keeps them coming back.

Parents & Guardians

What they notice changing at home.

Coaches

The values and behaviour they see on the pitch.

Delivery Partners

Confidence in delivery, and willingness to evidence impact.



HEADLINE FINDINGS

A resounding yes

96%

of players enjoy taking part

98%

of parents see the values at home

97%

of coaches see respect and passion

89% of players gave the top score, rating their experience “Amazing”.

9 in 10 delivery partners will share their stories as evidence of impact.



The five values, seen from every side

Every survey asked all four audiences how strongly they see rugby's five values in the programme. Across 416 responses, all five score highly.

Passion, discipline and respect lead. Solidarity, at 85%, is the one to keep building.



% rating each value 4–5 stars, across all four audiences (416 responses).

WHAT PLAYERS TOLD US

Joy, and a place to belong

96%

enjoy taking part

89%

gave it the top score, "Amazing"

WHAT THEY VALUE

Teamwork · Family · Support · Respect

Asking for: more games, festivals and team activities.

"We treat each other like family."

— Player, RRP survey

"We support each other, work hard and never give up."

— Player, RRP survey

WHAT PARENTS & GUARDIANS TOLD US

Change they can see at home

69%

attend every week

88%

say their child looks forward to it

WHAT THEY SEE

Confidence · Discipline · Belonging · Friendships

Asking for: regular fixtures and clearer communication with families.

"She's become more social with the other kids, instead of being isolated like before."

— Parent, RRP survey

"A sense of belonging, confidence, and a love of the sport."

— Parent, RRP survey

WHAT COACHES TOLD US

Building people, not just players

97%

see respect and fairness

69%

have seen local initiatives grow

WHAT THEY SEE

Character · Confidence · Discipline · Belonging

Asking for: resources, continuity and regular contact with teachers and parents.

“Rugby has become a safe and empowering space for girls.”

— Coach, RRP survey

“We see them grow as athletes — but above all as good people.”

— Coach, RRP survey

WHAT DELIVERY PARTNERS TOLD US

Confident in what we're building

9 in 10

will share their stories

90%

see integrity and respect upheld

WHAT THEY SEE

Empowerment · Safe spaces · Retention · Collaboration

Asking for: coach training, monitoring tools and cross-border sharing.

"PE lessons gave every girl the chance to try — without the pressure of signing up."

— Delivery partner, RRP survey

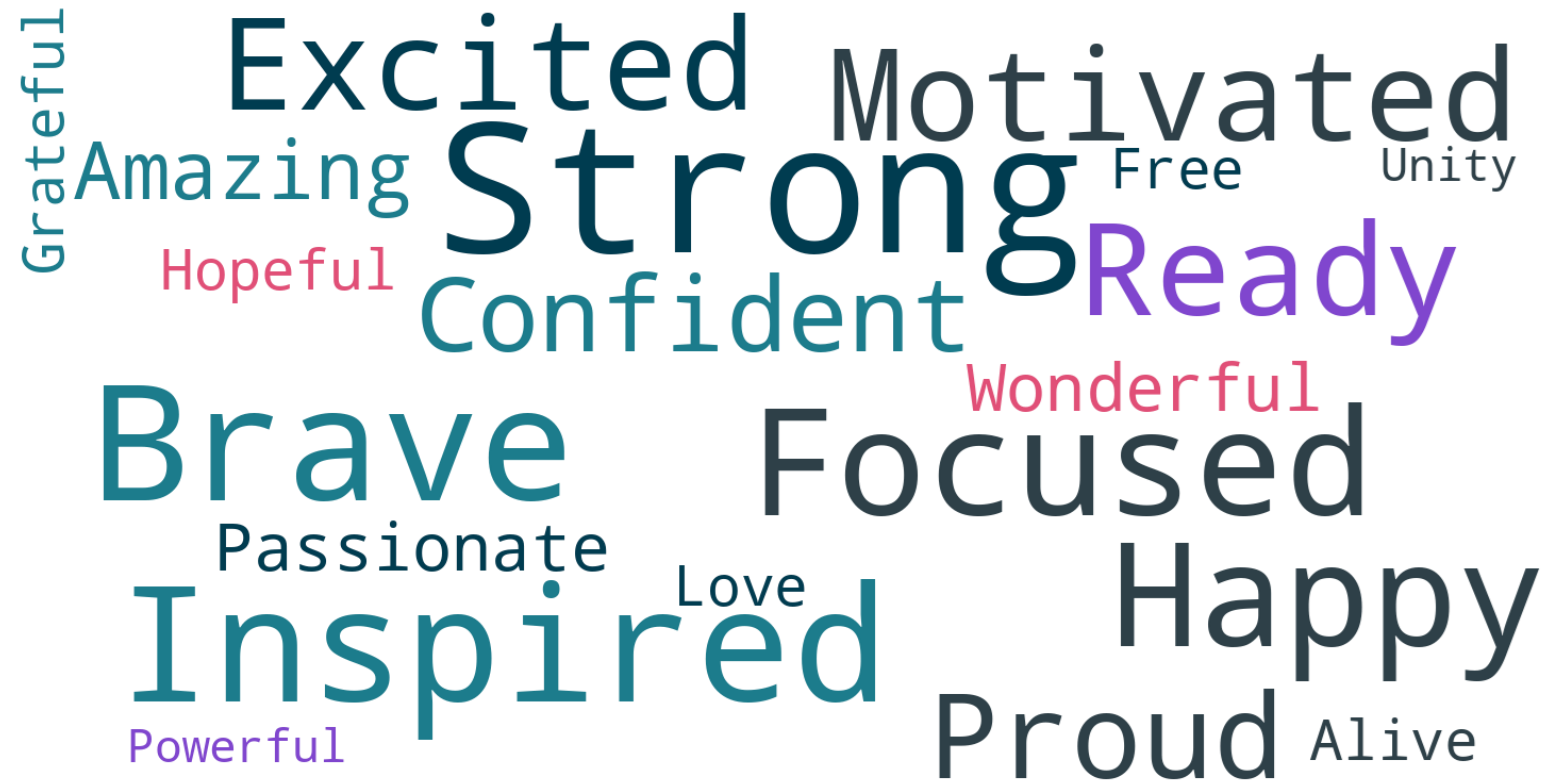
"The clubs are working together, giving girls a safe space to play."

— Delivery partner, RRP survey

IN THE PLAYERS' OWN WORDS

One word for how rugby feels

We asked every player for a single word to describe rugby. The bigger the word, the more often it came back.



What they asked for next

One theme ran through all four groups: keep the joy, and add consistency. Across the surveys, these were the most common asks.

More to play

More games, festivals and tournaments — and team activities beyond training.

Players & parents

A steadier rhythm

Regular sessions without long breaks, and clearer communication with families.

Parents

Support for coaches

Resources, equipment and ongoing training for those delivering sessions.

Coaches & partners

Evidence & connection

Monitoring, cross-border sharing between unions, and greater visibility.

Delivery partners



Rugby Rising Play — Year Two

Just getting started.

54 unions. Six regions. Thousands of girls — and a game that's only rising.

RUGBY
RISING
PLAY

