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## Coghlan wants growth to come from grassroots

Grand slam-winning Ireland captain Fiona Coghlan has called for "huge investment" in the women's game at grassroots level.

The disappointing performance at last year's World Cup and the subsequent downscaling of the head coach role to a part-time status did not deliver a positive message for the future of the women's code in the country. Coghlan wants to see more resources for the national team but does not see the establishment of a full-time system as a silver bullet, without a proper foundation.

"Definitely numbers have increased, particularly at under-age level," said Coghlan at the Liberty Insurance Women In Sport symposium at Croke Park.

"I would have been in Clontarf Rugby Club but I didn't know women's rugby existed until I went to college in Limerick.

"So to be back there now on a Sunday morning and seeing

girls from the age of four to 12, it's hugely encouraging and really positive.

"I still think there are gaps in pathways... but that takes time, it's not going to happen overnight... but again, we're playing catch-up to England and the likes of France. Definitely work is being done. Clubs see the value in it.

"People talk about the national women's team going professional. That's great but it's not the solution to the problem. We need something bigger and bolder to have grassroots development. I think, ultimately, the grassroots development will lead to the international success. They do go hand-in-hand because kids will play when they see the international team doing well but I think huge investment at grassroots level in years to come will lead to a successful international team."

**Daragh Ó Conchúir**