

Chair / DG Report

While in some rich countries lockdowns and rapid vaccine rollout have dramatically reduced pandemic progression, the number of global COVID-19 cases and deaths has been hitting record heights, with most of the latest increase coming from South Asia.

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response concluded its work with a damning report that found that COVID-19 was "a preventable disaster." The coronavirus found a world vulnerable to the worst effects of a pandemic despite warnings from experts and a string of recent global health threats, from SARS and Ebola to Zika. Circumstances have not improved in the past year, the panel said, noting that "the system as it stands now is clearly unfit to prevent another novel and highly infectious pathogen, which could emerge at any time, from developing into a pandemic."

Calling COVID-19 "a terrible wake-up call," the panel issued a string of recommendations, including a request for high-income countries to provide at least 1 billion vaccine doses to middle-income countries and more than 2 billion doses by the middle of 2022. The panel is also urging the formation of a Global Health Threats Council and a system for outbreak surveillance that is based on full transparency.

We are seeing so many organisations (GFATM, UNAIDS,...) looking to re-define themselves as key to pandemic preparedness and response. IPPF MAs remain SRHR focused, with some contributing to mobilising communities and vaccine rollout. Most of the Secretariat offices are closed, with staff working from home.

This provides the backdrop for the news of the brutal cuts to the UK government's support for global sexual and reproductive health and rights we flagged in our April update. Much effort has gone this month into upping the pressure (in advance to UK hosting the G7 in June) and adjusting to the dramatic new reality, which has not even respected existing contracts.

We know we will have to continue to operate in a difficult environment. Austerity and increasing demand for services present enormous challenges. The significant loss of funding for IPPF - totalling around £72 million (approximately \$100 million USD) - will mean massive reductions to the U.K.'s flagship WISH (Women's Integrated Sexual Health) and ACCESS programmes. Without additional funding,

IPPF will be forced to close services in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon, Uganda, Mozambique, Nepal and Lebanon and may be forced to close services in an additional nine countries, withdrawing support for SRH services from approximately 4,500 service delivery points globally. Sadly, it will also mean the loss of over 480 IPPF staff supporting SRH service delivery in these UK FCDO supported countries. Equally, the cuts to UNFPA RH Supplies will result in significant contraceptive commodity gaps, making it more difficult for our Member Associations to source affordable contraceptives and other RH supplies and maintain sustainability of services.

To their credit most other governments – who provide us with extremely valuable core support – have confirmed or increased levels of funding for 2022, allowing us to present the indicative planning figures you see in the C-FAR report. Resources available for core grants to MAs will remain stable while we are looking to increase resources available through stream 2.

We are encouraged that as we move ahead with governance reform (now focused on supporting the Member Associations in their efforts to optimise governance and accountability) we will have opportunity to pause, and ensure that our governance better links to and represents the communities and people we serve. We will also be launching an Advancement of Women in Leadership Scholarship. It will enhance career pathways for women, offer an academic route for leaders at mid- and senior-levels and build on the diverse leadership across the Federation. This and a renewed effort to support the development and implementation of new, agile performance and management systems to help modernize the Secretariat and Member Associations will keep us busy through the year.

We are most excited by the launch of a Member Association-led consortium working towards “Enabling and Delivering a Gender Transformative Programme on Medical Abortion Self Care”. We are delighted to see the speed at which we are re-establishing our programming footprint in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a new regional office across Colombia and Trinidad & Tobago. This will redress some of the racial inequalities seen in our earlier set up.

We are very much looking forward to a disruptive, inclusive process to design our new strategy for 2023-2028. As one of the largest global providers of SRHR, and a force for progressive policy change and rights, IPPF has a responsibility to deliver a strategic framework that will confront, re-think and re-imagine the idea of sexual reproductive health and rights for all.

IPPF welcomed the news of President Biden's decision to repeal the harmful Global Gag Rule (GGR) which contributed to an increase in unintended and high-risk pregnancies, unsafe abortions – culminating in unnecessary maternal deaths. But we recognise this is a bare minimum. We will not rest until we get a permanent repeal that prevents the harm of the constant yo-yoing and the

return of the most abusive elements of the policy with every returning Republican Administration.

Whilst the Gender Equality Forum (June, Paris) provides an opportunity to signal the strength of our intent to challenge power imbalances with a deeper feminist, gender-transformative and inclusive lens; we recognise the limits of more promises and pledges.

We will work to interrogate our business model; seeking solutions for sustainability beyond political cycles and with a view to being better prepared for the inevitable crises that lay in front of us, including the looming climate crisis.

We recognise that defenders of sexual and reproductive rights will continue to suffer the attacks of those seduced by macho politics. Those who stand in the way of sexual and reproductive freedom will find us ready: IPPF will continue to advocate and provide services, no matter what anyone does to try and stop us. We will only get stronger.

This challenging context for our work makes our joint task of developing a next compelling strategic framework for IPPF even more crucial. Tougher terrain for SRHR means tougher terrain for us at IPPF. And figuring out how we can travel across that ground, and far into the future, effectively, safely and sustainably is perhaps the most important responsibility that we have as a Board, DG and senior team.

There is no end in sight at this time to global uncertainty. However, we can be sure that it means we must choose IPPF's next set of strategic priorities carefully, not only for what we commit to deliver in terms of SRHR, but also in terms of how we will operate, how we will generate and distribute our income and in respect the partnerships and governance systems that we will need to hold this Federation together.

This year, under the leadership of C/SIP's advice and with a close eye to the turmoil in the world around us, we are undertaking a strategic grappling with those various elements of IPPF's future. And next year, we will take the resulting recommendations forward to the General Assembly, in the form of a new 2023 -2028 Strategic Framework. Given that is one of the most important responsibilities we have, we need to set aside sufficient time together to do it well. With that in mind, our proposal for your approval is that we add-in an extra Board meeting to the schedule that we approved in March.

To be held in late September, the additional Board meeting would not follow the usual agenda but instead be dedicated to only three items, which are interconnected:

- Full feedback from RRA on the results of the Board assessment and then discussion about what those findings mean for our future ways of working.
- A joint session with C/FAR on risk management and mitigation (i.e. financial, programmatic, reputational and other risks) and what that means for the future.
- A joint session with C/SIP on the next strategic framework and options regarding possible future priority areas, themes and challenges. That session which would also build on the first two agenda items, would be an early check point with C/SIP and a first major opportunity for the Board to express its own views about future directions and possibilities for topline priorities.

We propose giving two hours to each item, which would make our September meeting slightly shorter than usual. We hope that overall this proposal makes good sense to you and very much look forward to discussing this at our June meeting.