

Board of Trustees
09-10 March 2023

Refers to
agenda item 10

Agenda Item: AOB - ACRO OFFICE

Summary: After the approval of the new Strategy for IPPF, the Secretariat has embarked in a process to ensure that its fit for purpose. Regional Offices are envisioned to be hubs that inspire the Federation to be innovative, bold and to create disruptive alliances with the communities we want to serve. The regional team based in Bogota has been pulled down by the weight of administrative set up functions for almost two years with very limited progress. The paper puts forward the case for moving this location to Mexico City.

Action required: The Board to approve moving the location of the Americas regional office from Bogota to Mexico City while maintaining the Caribbean focused team in Trinidad & Tobago.

After the official separation of the former WHR regional office, the Board, informed by the Secretariat, decided on November 2020, to have one regional office with two locations without hierarchy between the two offices, one in Bogotá Colombia and the other one in Port of Spain Trinidad and Tobago. The decision was made taking into consideration a survey with MAs, the willingness of the MA in the country, an external check of criteria and an assessment of political implications by the Transition Team.

After almost two years, the regional team has not been able to secure the basic functioning of the office in Bogotá. The main challenges have been:

- Legal uncertainty: Administrative authorities make discretionary decisions regularly. Colombia has not signed legal harmonizing conventions such as the XII Hague Convention (Apostille).
- Visas: Despite having hired three different law firms and presenting several times to the Immigration Ministry, the two senior management team members in Colombia currently have a tourist visa and we had had to suspend local contracting. The visa processes have not been lineal, it has become a permanent drain of resources, and the country has changed frequently regulations.
- Bank accounts: Due to the anti-crime and anti-laundry policies that started in the 80s, the bank system is still not modernized, and we cannot open a bank account in dollars. We have not been able to get a solid corporate bank account, credit card or investment alternatives.
- New reforms: The new government focuses on fiscal and labour reform that will impact foreign citizens and international organizations.
- Challenges to recruit: Colombia is not attractive for international staff, and the local labour market is limited. The local MA has had 200 vacancies in the last two years and has the higher rate of personnel rotation in its history. We have similar challenges.

Proposed Action Plan

Move the Americas location of ACRO to Mexico City

- (1) Rationale: This is the time to act and ensure that we are fit for the new strategy; the realignment of the secretariat presents a golden opportunity.

In the analysis done by the transition team, there were some assumptions that have been proved wrong, especially in the visa approvals and trademark. Although in theory Colombia should be easier, the high level of discretionarily of administrative authorities has translated in multiple failed applications and budget expenses. The assessment for the criteria on labour laws was limited to the length of visa process and percentage of employers from abroad. However, in the last application for visas, immigration authorities requested two times the number of nationals working in the organization before rejecting.

According to the external check of criteria developed at the time of the decision-making of the Transition Team, Mexico had a total higher score than the other two alternatives. Mexico has immigration policies that are more lineal and stable with specific lawyers that provide effective services for organizations and corporations to apply for visas. Bank credit services are easier to get once employed and for registered entities.

At the time of the decision, one of the main concerns about Mexico was that WHRO had a secondary office in the MA and had registered as IPPF Mexico. However, IPPF, since then, has been successful in granting protection for all the marks and classes, in fact, even before Colombia. Fos Feminista has decreased its presence in Mexico and expanded its influence in Colombia. At the same time, Mexfam, the local MA, has strengthened its relationship and commitment with IPPF.

Regional organizations and donors such as Ford Foundation and Amnesty International are based in Mexico, which can translate to more traction to make sure that pillars 2 and 3 are addressed in ACRO.

On pillar 4, we can also benefit of Mexico because is a country that is attractive for international staff and has a good labour market; other organizations, such as Ipas, have been successfully recruiting people willing to relocate there. Mexico has policies to attract investment in the country, including international workers, as an engine for the economy.

- (2) Closure: We propose closing the Bogota office following the same calendar as the alignment, allowing people to transition and prepare to move to Mexico. New people will already be recruited, advertising Mexico City and Port of Spain as options.
- (3) Funding needed: Since we are taking advantage of the realignment process we don't expect a significant impact on staff relocation. We will plan the payments to fade out from Bogota and start in Mexico afterward to avoid duplication as much as possible.

We will aim to share the office with the local MA to reduce rent costs but also to create synergies when donors are visiting. The previous office used by WHR is still vacant and offers a competitive space.

Salaries already estimated by the transition team are competitive for Mexico and to attract talent from other countries to Mexico. We are including a charter comparing with a Mexican international organization that has a similar work and used Birches.

Category	Salary Mx based INGO			Salary IPPF ACRO		
	Grade	Min	Max	Min	Max	Grade
Director	D2	87,310	200,000	101,000	162,000	I
Director	D1	58,000	111,000	75,000	120,000	H
Deputy Director	E2	42,500	64,000	55,500	89,000	G
Specialist	S2	30,000	53,200	55,524	88,836	F
Coordinator	P2	14,500	26,000	17,364	28,000	D
Operational support	O2	9,300	14,700	13,356	21,360	C