

# 'LET'S COME TOGETHER'

## Q&A SERIES WITH THE IPPF TRUSTEES

*In conversation with*

## Kate Gilmore



Kate Gilmore was appointed Chair of IPPF's Board of Trustees in 2020. She brings to the position experience in strategic leadership and human rights advocacy with the United Nations, government and non-government organizations.

### Tell us a bit about yourself, your journey to being a part of the Board of Trustees (BoT) and what does your role entail?

I have worked in human rights, gender equality, violence against women and in SRHR, from a civil society standpoint through to the UN, where in my last job, I was Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In the field of SRHR, I was Deputy Executive Director at UNFPA, but also, when young, I worked in a hospital where I was responsible for introducing rights-based care for survivors of sexual violence, for those needing abortion services and support surrounding cervical cancer.

It all led me to take up the opportunity to be considered as a Board Member of IPPF just before the COVID pandemic broke out. In May 2020, I had the privilege of being appointed Chair at the beginning of the first terms of the new Board under IPPF's new governance system.

The role of the Board Chair is a little like that of a traffic controller - facilitating the business of the Board, helping its meetings to be well prepared, and ensuring everyone has a chance to participate. But I am very much a trustee in partnership with all other trustees; we take care of each other.

### What do you see as the key mandate of the BoT?

The Board is responsible for ensuring the Global Secretariat's operations are compliant with charity and employment law: protecting data, money, and people's rights consistently is the very bare minimum.

Financial accountability is also a must. IPPF must be fully transparent and accountable for how money is received, promised, distributed, and accounted for.

We must be ready to be scrutinized independently by auditors and by routine inspections, including by our own Committee of Finance.

## Chair, Board of Trustees

Looking after our people is just fundamental - those who use IPPF's services, our staff and volunteers. For the Board, it is essential to have a strong, respectful, supportive working relationship with the Director General, who reports directly to us. The Board holds the DG accountable, but that accountability includes enabling him and ensuring he has the tools, resources, support and trust he needs to perform his duties to a high standard.

We carry out our Board roles also to serve the collective interests of MAs. Hopefully, we're all getting better at fostering the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and support between affiliates, and as a Board, we are very much working to influence and not control, to enable and support and not command.

### How do you see the Federation's strategy guide its work?

The Board is proud of the Federation-wide consultation exercise that delivered the Strategy 2023-2028. It is now our business to ensure its proper implementation. We must also continue to scan the external horizon, anticipate opportunities and threats, and do all we can to enable the Federation to implement the strategic plan with success.

We must be watchful to ensure IPPF upholds core values and fundamental principles, i.e., IPPF must be and be seen to be anti-racist, anti-sexist, working for equality and against exclusion etc. As IPPF champions those principles to the world, we must also apply them to ourselves.

### You joined IPPF in 2020. What would you consider your most inspiring moment in the organization so far?

At the Bogotá General Assembly, when we recognised and celebrated the achievements of a number of courageous and inspiring volunteers and staff. It was beautiful and emotional.

I felt so very fortunate to be present and to know that we are working with such courageous, committed, and determined people. It is an honor to be part of the IPPF community.

The second inspiring moment came just a day later! When the Federation voted as one, unanimously, for the new Strategy. I really felt I was in the presence of history being made.

## Given your background in Human Rights and your passion for fighting inequality, how has this further added value to your role as IPPF Board Chair?

It means I have tried to 'flatten out' the chair role, recalling I am a trustee among trustees. It means holding the chair role in a democratic, transparent and accountable way, not only with other board members but also with the Director General and the Senior Management Team.

From a human rights perspective, it starts with a personal politics of rights. To hold what power you have radically, transformatively – in interactions with my colleagues, when responding to criticism, taking direction from others and stepping to the side so others too lead.

As a Board member alongside other inspiring trustees, that rights framework also helps us to sit up and take notice whenever we see injustice, inequality and exclusion.

## Our world is changing fast. What do you think are the key priorities for IPPF at this time? What should we do more of and less of?

We need less of all forms of internal bickering. We can't afford it. It's why this Board, in this term, will strongly encourage all affiliates to ensure they have good governance systems in place so that there are fewer and fewer occasions when Boards fall into conflict with staff, or lose control of financial resources or fail to support and ensure effective operations.

What do we need more of? We must realize that we and SRHR, more broadly are under attack. The absence of SRH for millions is not a coincidence but the result of organized campaigns by resourceful oppositions. So we need even more courage and daring.

The courage to make love a most powerful instrument for demanding and securing justice. We must ensure that the more people seek to marginalize others based on their sexual and gender identities or needs, the more IPPF will be present. We will be there with love, respect and solidarity. We will stand with those under threat because they are us, and we are they. And because it is to those most marginalized that we are most ultimately accountable.

Better tools, more persuasive messages, more comprehensive evidence, and more organized effort, more secure income, all for more impact! And less time-wasting spent in internal disagreements!

## 'Come together' is the Strategy for IPPF. How can we turn this inward and strengthen the interaction and solidarity between the BoT and affiliated organizations?

'Come together' is a much bigger message – it is what we issue to the world: IPPF must 'come together', and call on others too to come together, visibly, effectively, in solidarity with women, girls, young people, with LGBTIQ persons, with sex workers. With anyone and everyone denied SRHR. From an internal perspective, interaction between affiliates and the Board is essential, but only to the extent that it helps the Federation deliver that solidarity. After all, the Board's primary role is not to be well known but to ensure the Federation works well.

If affiliates experience a high-functioning, sustainable and impactful Federation, it has experienced the Board doing its job.

## In conversation with Kate Gilmore Chair, Board of Trustees

### What words of encouragement or inspiration can you share with affiliates across the Federation?

Thank you for the extraordinary service you provide to communities who, without you, would not have access to even the basics of SRHR. Thank you for those services, that information, education, advocacy and representation. Thank you for that commitment.

Secondly, thank you for working hard to elevate IPPF's adherence to the standards – governance, financial, legal, safeguarding standards – that we must uphold so that we do no harm to others and so that others, including donors, know they can trust and respect us.

The third is a big thank you for being willing to embrace big change. Given the magnitude of change in the world around us, IPPF has no option but to change too. Thank you for coming together through Strategy 2028 so that we can be the change we want to see in the world.



### Describe yourself in three words.

Persistent, Flawed, Enthusiastic

### Pet peeve.

Self-centredness – when people put their personal interests first.

### If you could have a superpower, what would it be?

Kindness – it transforms toxic dynamics.

### If you were to write a memoir about your life, what would you title it?

'Sorry, I didn't mean to'

### A fact that most people don't know about you.

I am allergic to cats. I love cats so that is really annoying.

### Best piece of advice anyone has ever given you.

I am bad at taking advice, but the best advice given to me was "Get up, and get up again".

### Do you have a question for Kate?

Write to: [governance@ippf.org](mailto:governance@ippf.org)