

'LET'S COME TOGETHER'

Q&A SERIES WITH THE IPPF TRUSTEES

In conversation with

Ulukbek Batyrgaliev



An MA volunteer, Ulukbek (Uluk) Batyrgaliev is a human rights defender, media influencer, and international trainer and consultant on SRHR. Knowledge of youth networking and youth action, leadership in SRHR, digital media, policy analysis, and peer-to-peer service delivery are skills he brings to the table.

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

In 2012, I became a member of the MA - Reproductive Health Alliance of Kyrgyzstan. I served as a peer educator, and by 2015, I assumed the role of Chair of the National Youth Committee. In 2016, I was appointed as a member of the Steering Committee of YSAFE.

The turning point occurred during the 2019 General Assembly held in New Delhi. Deeply inspired by the organization's mission and vision, I decided to apply for a position on the BoT. I joined as an ordinary member. During the Bogota General Assembly, a unique opportunity emerged for me to be the Vice-Chair of the BoT. Recognizing the potential impact this position could have in advancing the SRHR agenda, particularly from a youth perspective, I eagerly accepted the responsibility.

IPPF's willingness to appoint individuals like me to such pivotal positions, both as Vice-Chair and Chair of the Membership Committee, underscores the organisation's dedication to embracing youth and minority groups as equal partners in the pursuit of its mission.

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

The BoT plays a pivotal role in overseeing IPPF's operations and ensuring that the organisation is effectively progressing towards its strategic goals. Central to this responsibility is the commitment to accountability and transparency. One of the primary functions is to monitor and evaluate the implementation of IPPF's strategic plans and initiatives.

It also serves as a check and balance mechanism, holding affiliates accountable for their actions and performance.

Transparency in decision-making and reporting is also a critical aspect of the governing body's role. It ensures that stakeholders, including donors, members, and the public, have access to accurate and comprehensive information about IPPF's activities, finances, and governance.

Vice Chair, Board of Trustees Chair, Membership Committee

The Membership Committee makes recommendations to the Board on applications to the membership of the Federation. As Chair, what does IPPF consider the top three prerequisites that organisations should fulfil to be considered?

It is imperative that organisations conform to the exacting standards delineated in the admission process. They are required to exhibit an unwavering dedication to IPPF's core values, encompassing principles such as human rights, reverence for individual dignity, and the safeguarding of bodily autonomy. Member Associations are drivers of providing person-centred care through their services and engaging in advocacy efforts to advance the SRHR agenda worldwide.

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?

The priorities outlined in our strategy address the evolving landscape of SRH trends across the globe.

It also recognizes the need for international advocacy efforts and the cultivation of alliances with other partners and stakeholders, which is paramount in navigating the multifaceted challenges we face.

However, there is an additional facet that warrants our attention; the well-being and safety of our staff. This concern extends beyond humanitarian contexts and encompasses the realm of mental health in the workplace. It is essential that we undertake a comprehensive assessment to discern the unique needs of our MA staff and volunteers. We must swiftly and effectively provide tailored support to ensure their well-being and enhance their ability to fulfil the mission of advancing SRHR.

You are known as a media influencer and an expert in digital media. Have you had the opportunity to share this expertise across the Federation?

I have participated in numerous round table discussions within IPPF, serving as a moderator on several occasions. While these sessions primarily focused on youth engagement rather than SRH and digital media, they have provided invaluable platforms for sharing insights and fostering meaningful dialogue.

My involvement with YSAFE has predominantly centred on the Europe and Central Asia region. However, my role on the BoT has broadened the scope of my responsibilities to encompass additional regions, including the Americas and the Caribbean, South Asia, ESEAO, Arab World and Africa regions.

I have had the opportunity to engage with diverse communities and stakeholders, facilitating discussions aimed at establishing youth networks in these areas. I am eager to further extend my interactions to other IPPF regions.

Your peer educator journey started at age 12. Should all affiliates follow this model of service delivery? What has your experience been?

Peer education is an invaluable mechanism for disseminating information and fostering awareness of SRHR. However, its implementation must be tailored to the specific cultural and societal contexts of each country. It is crucial for peer educators to exercise discernment and prioritize their safety when determining the 'how,' 'when,' and 'where' of their educational efforts. A comprehensive understanding of the prevailing cultural norms and sensitivities is essential to navigating these contexts effectively. Peer educators must be driven by a genuine conviction of the universal need for SRHR for all individuals, and their motivation should be rooted in a profound commitment to the cause and a sincere dedication to improving the lives of others.

If you had to name some flagship programmes/initiatives you would wish MAs to replicate which ones would those be and why?

The humanitarian efforts in countries such as Syria, Ukraine, and Lebanon are commendable. Also, family planning initiatives in Laos, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. In ESEAOR, we are witnessing innovative approaches to SRH communication through platforms such as chatbots, websites, and social media groups. These tools are proving to be effective in reaching diverse audiences and disseminating vital information.

It is very important to facilitate sharing these successful initiatives with our affiliates. Each affiliate may possess unique tools, approaches, and guidelines that can serve as a source of inspiration for their counterparts. As members of the BoT, we can also contribute to this endeavour by actively promoting and spotlighting the exceptional work of our MAs whenever we have the opportunity to speak at events and sessions.

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

At previous BoT meetings, I have emphasized the importance of fostering robust interaction between our Board and the MAs. I believe that a two-way channel of communication is essential, where both parties actively engage and collaborate. I propose that we strengthen communication pathways to facilitate better understanding of the incredible work that MAs do and for the MAs to better understand how the board is helping to amplify the work of IPPF locally, regionally and globally. By nurturing a culture of open communication and mutual engagement, we can strengthen our unity in values and our collective commitment to achieving key milestones.

At RHAK- Kyrgyzstan, the contribution of youth towards organisational policy-making and service delivery is exemplary. Why should affiliates place young people at the heart of their strategies?

It was surprising and concerning to learn of the challenges faced by some other MAs in recruiting and engaging young people in meaningful roles. This highlights a critical area where we can provide support and share best practices.

I firmly believe that we must actively cultivate partnerships and collaborations with youth. They not only represent the future but also inherently share the values and aspirations of the next generation. Moreover, it is not sufficient to merely implement youth-focused programmes.

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Instead, the focus on youth should be deeply ingrained in an organisation's constitution, policies, and bylaws. This ensures that a strategic and systematic approach is adopted to become a truly youth-centred entity.

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

As dedicated activists, it is not uncommon for us to experience burnout. It is of utmost importance that we prioritize self-care as an integral aspect of our work.

Amidst the challenges and demands of our advocacy work, we may lose sight of why we embarked on this path in the first place. It is crucial to periodically take a step back and reflect on our motivations. Are we solely seeking acknowledgement and applause, or is our commitment rooted in a genuine desire for positive change?

It is important to recognize that we are not solitary warriors in this fight. In times of adversity, it can be empowering to remember that we stand alongside others who, like us, are tirelessly advocating for a better world.



Name three things you are passionate about.

Human Rights, SRHR and Research (on HIV, meaningful youth engagement and pleasure)

What is the one thing that makes the future scary for you?

Totalitarianism and failure of the democracy system.

If you could make/design an App, what would it be?

A virtual assistant, which would be an AI created avatar of myself that would provide answers for SRHR-related questions. I am in the process of designing it!

What would be the law you would introduce if you ruled your country?

Separation of power, checks and balances system in government institutions.

Something about yourself that would surprise people who know you.

I have had bouts of sadness and experienced negative emotions. My friends are used to seeing me smiling all the time. Being yourself can sometimes surprise people.

Who is someone you deeply admire, and why?

The Executive Director of RHAK. She has expert knowledge, has a great personality, deals with challenges bravely and speaks frankly amidst opposition.

Do you have a question for Uluk?

Write to: governance@ippf.org