

'LET'S COME TOGETHER'

Q&A SERIES WITH THE IPPF TRUSTEES

In conversation with

Jon Lomoy



An MA volunteer, Jon spent his professional career as a diplomat, civil servant, and senior manager in the Norwegian and international aid system. He served as Director General of NORAD from 2015–2019 and is currently Chair of Sex og Politikk, the Norwegian Member Association.

The expertise he brings to the board includes the international aid system, risk management and programme delivery.

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

My first interaction with IPPF was in 1985. I was a young aid worker in Tanzania and was introduced to the leader of IPPF Tanzania by a colleague.

I am new to being a volunteer. I have been a civil servant, a diplomat my whole career. We were a major funder for many organizations, and it wasn't ethical for me to be directly associated with them in a working capacity. The interests of Save the Children and IPPF have always been close to my heart. So after my retirement, I engaged with both these entities. I also have a passion for serving persons with disabilities and am the Chair of the Board of an organization affiliated with the UN family.

After retirement, I was asked to join the Board of the Sex og Politikk – IPPF Norway. After a one-year term, I was appointed Chair. Then I joined the BoT, and attended my first Board meeting in Berlin this June (2023). So I am very new!

As a diplomat, diplomacy, also known as the art of dealing with people sensitively and tactfully, would have been the norm. As Chair of Sex og Politikk, following the IPPF mandate, the demand is for us to be 'brave and sometimes angry'. How has your diverse career experience influenced your role as a member of the Board of Trustees? Can affiliates be diplomats and activists at the same time?

To an extent, yes. We must first identify what we are trying to achieve and the objectives and determine the tactics. If our target is to convince others to move the majority, then, of course, we must talk the language of the majority and relate it to where they come from.

Member, Board of Trustees

When dealing with suppressive laws, which some groups perceive as oppressive, it is not easy to ask the oppressed to be patient and diplomatic. To ask them to tread carefully.

As a movement, we should have clear objectives, goals, direction, and values but also talk in a language adapted to each context. Affiliates need to be respected in their assessment of the local context.

Tactical approaches are required to move that agenda in a specific country. We must accept that each country's timeline will differ depending on each issue.

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

That would be; to adopt strategy, set direction and define policies. Also, keep this fabulous movement together by somehow managing/balancing it carefully, defining clear values and combining that with respect towards the locations of the affiliates. The Board is where you can decide how best to strike that balance.

Many MA leaders have started their careers as volunteers. Does it still make sense in the global landscape of SRHR?

In my country (Norway), voluntarism is struggling, not only in our sector but in others as well. It is a battle for people's time, and that is the cause of it becoming more challenging.

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?

An emerging issue in many countries is having an ageing population. What happens to sexuality as people age, what type of needs do they have and are we addressing it as a Federation?

We have a new programme called Ageing and Sexuality which I think is timely. Last year we got support from the Health Director and garnered a lot of positive attention just for talking about it and raising the issue.

A way we can address this as a Federation is step one; determine which other affiliate countries have a rapidly ageing population. Then, see if there is a way to form a group of affiliates to share knowledge, experience and learnings to inspire others. Ageing is rapidly evident in Europe, North America and Asia.

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

I would say the sexual health project for Sami people. (Indigenous population). Profamilia – IPPF Colombia also has this excellent programme for indigenous refugees coming in from Venezuela. There are many countries with indigenous people, which could be an area that can be looked into.

It is uplifting to know that Sex og Politikk has a firm focus on indigenous populations with a unique programme on sexual health for Sami people, the only indigenous population in Europe. Marginalised and excluded persons are a key focus at IPPF. Are there ways that you can push the same priority and inspire other MAs through the BoT to show how it can be done?

One important thing the BoT can do is to keep reminding our colleagues in other MAs about the importance of including indigenous people when we talk about marginalisation and integration. When last year I met with a transsexual indigenous refugee sex worker from Venezuela, intersectionality got a new and deeper meaning.

Secondly, I would underline the importance of working with organisations and institutions that represent indigenous people. In Norway, we have worked with the Sami administration, and part of our work has actually been funded from their budget.

Thirdly, I would emphasise the importance of listening to them and trying to understand the specificities of the challenges they are facing.

Aid and funding is targeted at improving the lives of people around the world. What is your advice to the MAs in a landscape where that can't always be guaranteed? How can the BoT assist?

We need to talk realistically about funding. Affiliates in upper-middle-income countries cannot depend on aid. They have to explore other global funding opportunities or focus on potential local funding sources available to them.

Aid will soon be a scarce resource. The competence and capacity of the organisation as a whole must be more geared towards domestic resource mobilization.

As a movement, we are very good at mobilizing aid money and should continue to do so. But, we must realize that it won't be the primary funding source for an increasing number of affiliates. That means adaptation of knowledge, competence, building capacity, and sharing experience on what has worked in different places with different economic structures.

'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?

It is related to striking a balance. Being a strong, brave and courageous movement, moving the global agenda in a challenging landscape while accepting that organisations in different places work in different ways. In different contexts. The global agenda will translate to local agendas in very different manners.

In conversation with Jon Lomoy Member, Board of Trustees

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

My reflection is what a fabulous global family IPPF is. This unity of purpose and enormous diversity of experience and context is our treasure chest. Seeing diversity not as a threat but as a source of strength and inspiration and learning from each other's experiences is excellent.

Secondly, globally, there is a lot of talk of shifting power. Given our structure and composition, IPPF has the potential to be a global leader in the NGO world.

In developing countries, we have strong affiliates with substantive activities; it's much easier for us to make a reality of a shift in power and influence.



How would those most close to you describe you in three words?

Engaged, Impatient and Kind.

If you could go back in time, what historical event would you want to see?

To experience the fall of the Berlin wall, to experience again the euphoria we had at that time of the possibility of a more united world.

Do you see yourself as a hunter or a gatherer and why?

A gatherer- gathering moments and experiences instead of things.

If you had 25 hours a day, how would you spend your extra hour?

With my grandson.

If you had to teach a class one thing, what would you teach?

Geography

What would you like to be known/remembered for?

Being a nice person to those closest to me.

Do you have a question for Jon?

Write to: governance@ippf.org