

# 'LET'S COME TOGETHER'

## Q&A SERIES WITH THE IPPF TRUSTEES

*In conversation with*

## Patrick Mwebesa



Patrick Mwebesa worked in the Africa Regional Office from 2009–2020 as Programme Advisor – Financial & Operations Management, providing technical assistance to the regional MAs.

He brings significant finance experience to the board, along with resource mobilization and risk management.

### 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 am an accountant with a passion for corporate governance. I have had the opportunity to work for the largest NGO in SRHR. I have worked in accounting, audit, and financial management and provided technical assistance to IPPF affiliates across sub-Saharan Africa.

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

The BoT is responsible for setting policy and overall direction for IPPF in the interests of Member Associations (MAs) and the people we serve. The BoT also oversees the activities of the Secretariat. This oversight role is very important.

### What were your key learnings from your time in the Africa Regional Office that can inform decision-making at the BoT?

I learnt about the structure of IPPF, which sets it apart from other NGOs involved in the SRHR field. Our specificity is being both a service provider and an advocate for SRHR.

I learnt about the Secretariat, having worked in the Africa Regional Office, dealing with the Central and other regional offices. I also have a very good idea of how MAs operate, their workings and challenges, and I used to be involved in the resource allocation to MAs.

I was involved in several restricted-funded projects implemented by the Secretariat, the MAs, and other partners. I believe that the above experience and knowledge will be key in my role as a Trustee.

## Member, Board of Trustees

**Establishing diversified funding streams is a must for financial continuity. How can the BoT ensure that all affiliated organisations are also focused on this obligation?**

Most of our MAs are not involved in income-generating activities for various reasons. They are used to receiving funding from IPPF and a few other donors.

The BoT can empower the MAs and assist them in operating a mindset change, which is the prerequisite for MAs to diversify their funding stream and generate income on their own for financial continuity and sustainability.

**IPPF is an INGO, and one of its main programmes is the Social Enterprise Acceleration Programme - SEAP, run by the SE Hub. Does encouraging income generation cause a conflict of interest in the eyes of other entities in the SRHR sphere? How would you justify this?**

Encouraging income generation should not necessarily cause a conflict of interest. It should not mean turning away from those who need our subsidised services the most.

We need to operate a mindset change and also serve different constituencies.

In the long run, we can use some of the income generated to subsidise the services we render to our traditional constituency.

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

One key initiative that comes to mind is the WISH project, mainly because it sought to integrate SRHR services and involved a strong partnership approach.

The more we do in the partnership spirit, the better for the people we serve and the further we can reach.

## 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 to put more resources into our humanitarian work and look at how climate change impacts SRHR. We need to put more resources into partnerships because the stronger the coalitions we work with, the further we can reach.

I know that the resources at our disposal are never infinite and that we need to cut funding and other resources to balance our budgets. We also need to grow and diversify our funding streams in the same vein that we encourage our MAs to do so.

What we need to do less of is not obvious in the context of many unmet needs. We could reduce funding to the more affluent countries to balance our budget based on evidence that the needs in such countries are not the most basic.

We need to review our expenditure and endeavour to be more cost-effective at the Secretariat and MA levels. This could enable the Federation to save and free resources to fund the new areas in which we will get involved.

## '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? What would be the outcome be if so? How do you see the new Federation's strategy guide its work

The BoT needs to work more directly with MAs/affiliated organisations. Some Trustees are volunteer members of these affiliate organisations and already work with the latter.

It is necessary for all Trustees to interact with MAs and know their challenges and how they operate on a day-to-day basis. This doesn't necessarily leave out the Secretariat, which still has a key role to play.

The outcome is a BoT that understands MAs better, faster communication and decision-making. MAs will also better appreciate the role of the BoT.

## Your current line of work is connected to Human Resource Management. Creating supportive cultures for volunteers and staff is a key part of the Strategy. What are some ways that affiliates can adopt to ensure this happens?

Affiliates are already doing a lot in terms of providing a supportive culture for volunteers and staff.

The affiliates could carry out surveys and benchmark with MAs that are doing better, as well as look at what other SRHR NGOs are doing better than us in terms of Human Resource management.

## In conversation with Patrick Mwebesa Member, Board of Trustees

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

The best is yet to come.

We belong to a fantastic Federation with a lot of resources that we need to leverage for the people we serve and our staff.



### What do you believe is your best trait or attribute?

I am very curious and love to learn new skills.

### What is something you are passionate about?

I am very passionate about languages, I am currently learning Arabic.

### If you could have dinner with any famous persons today, who would you choose and why?

Nelson R. Mandela for his great sense of humour and his life struggle to bring justice to his people. Lewis Hamilton is my second best favourite for his struggle, success and influence as a black champion in an environment that does not have many people like him.

### What piece of advice would you give to a younger you?

Be bold, the sky is not the limit; the best is yet to come.

### Any particular skill that you would recommend to everyone to learn?

Financial literacy is very important for all of us.

### Top three bucket-list items?

1. Climb Mount Kilimanjaro. 2. Spend at least three months in an Arab speaking country. 3. Do a world tour.

### Do you have a question for Patrick?

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