

'LET'S COME TOGETHER'

Q&A SERIES WITH THE IPPF TRUSTEES

In conversation with

Elizabeth Schaffer



As an external board member, Elizabeth Schaffer, has been the interim Chief Financial Officer at Amnesty International USA since 2019. Since 1993 she has worked as a Consultant, Coach and Trainer. Amongst the skills required for the Board of Trustees, Elizabeth can point to knowledge of financial control and oversight, senior executive experience, and risk management. She is from North America, currently located in the USA.

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

I am a non-profit financial professional currently working for BDO, an international public accounting, tax, consulting and business advisory firm. I have worked in women's and human rights for over a decade. Before joining the Board, I was the Chief Operating Officer of the Global Fund for Women.

As a result of the IPPF Governance Reforms and the decision to include external candidates on the Board, I was approached by a recruiting firm to join the BoT and be the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (C-FAR) Chair.

One of my assignments with BDO was as a senior advisor to Amnesty International, which is structured like IPPF with a secretariat, member associations, and a similar financial and operational infrastructure. I think that's a significant reason why I was recruited to the Board.

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

The key mandate of the board of an organisation like IPPF, and any organisation of its scale and stature, is to ensure its long-term sustainability and impact.

We must ensure that we keep being a flexible organization that can respond to global threats, as we have been doing.

I appreciate the extraordinary brilliance and fortitude of going through governance reform because many organizations that have the desire fall short of true governance reform.

Member, Board of Trustees Chair, Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (C-FAR)

I believe that there is value in having external board members in partnership with the member association-affiliated trustees.

You have experience working in human rights organisations. Human rights encompass many aspects. In which do you have a particular interest and why?

For me, abortion is close to my heart. I was a child when Roe v. Wade was decided. I remember being a little girl attending marches and rallies with my mother.

It's hard to be feminist and to be focused on human rights and not be focused on reproductive freedom. And obviously, I want to be looking way beyond the US context, and that is why I'm on the IPPF Board. I understand the international and global implications.

Our worldview starts with our individual and family context, and we grow to see the world in a larger context.

In addition to being a Board member at several organisations and holding senior positions in others, you are a Consultant, Coach and Trainer. What are the topics you teach? How has the experience of knowledge imparting been?

I train, coach and consult in the area of non-profit financial management. I believe in strategy first and money second.

Key messages are organisational development, organisational approach, knowing the purpose, and determining how to make the money work.

My greatest expertise is planning and budgeting. My goal in consulting is to help organisations determine their goals and aims clearly and develop financial strategies to support that vision.

Part of the reason for consulting and training is to observe different scenarios and incorporate those into my personal approach. I really do love training; it is lots of fun!

Financial integrity defines the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee of which you are the Chair. Even rushed spending at the end of a project can also be a misuse of funds if it ends up being spent on something that isn't needed and not part of the original plan. How can we develop greater accountability from the ground up?

I think that the greatest accountability is a culture of financial planning and monitoring that is inclusive. The way to drive the most accountability is detailed reporting. The more information that gets reported, the more that comes to light.

Financial control and oversight is your forte. Considering past/present positions in this field, what risks are foreseen for IPPF? What can be done to minimize such?

Reduced levels of funding, emerging conservative political climates, and different opposing fractions coming into power would be some.

The risks are not only in control, planning and accountability but also in resources for our movement. Creative planning and determining when and how to use resources best is how one can exist even in a time of tightening resources.

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?

It is a concern, with the level of change, with what we expect in the funding environment, with the pressure that we have with the increased need for services against a political climate that is not focused on youth.

We need to be able to decide on what we can do collectively because it will be a more effective and efficient use of resources, or if it is best to be done locally, according to the country context or in collaboration with affiliates in the same region.

I feel like that is something that we have not yet mastered.

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

I have less visibility into the affiliate-level programmes than some other Board Members would have, as my role is different.

I can say that governance reform and the strategy development processes are examples of how we're changing as an organisation to think about what we can do and how we can be more powerful collectively than we can be individually.

We try to be a collective and utilize the various Committees strategically, creating greater interaction, solidarity, and movement in the same direction.

**In conversation with Elizabeth Schaffer
Member, Board of Trustees
Chair, Finance, Audit and Risk Committee
(C-FAR)**

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

The work that's being done by the affiliates on the ground is inspirational. The money will come if we can talk about the work. The path to achieving that is planning, communicating and engaging stakeholders in our work.

As C-FAR Chair, I can confidently say that all of that will result in the resources being available.

Start from a place of true conviction, confident in knowing how important what we're doing is, and we will find abundance. It will not be a time of scarcity.



Name three of your strongest skills.

Strategy, Communication and Authenticity.

Who had the most influence on you growing up and why?

My uncle had only sons, but he was a true feminist.

What's been one highlight of your career so far?

I had the opportunity to talk to the European Union about women's rights and funding women's rights, and that was pretty cool.

If you could write a book about your life so far, what would be the title?

'Still learning'

What's your favourite inspirational quote or best piece of advice you have received?

Strategy before action.

A genie grants you one wish; what do you wish for?

The ability to fund every fantastic idea that exists.

Do you have a question for Elizabeth?

Write to: governance@ippf.org