

'LET'S COME TOGETHER'

Q&A SERIES WITH THE IPPF TRUSTEES

In conversation with

Rosa Ayong Tchonang



An MA volunteer, Rosa Ayong Tchonang has been an Advisor and Representative of the Youth Action Movement at the National Executive Bureau of the Cameroon National Association for Family Welfare since 2013. Rosa completed her Degree in Administration and Business Management at the University of Yaoundé in 2020. Amongst the skills required for the Board of Trustees, Rosa can point to knowledge of youth networking and youth action; experience of advocacy and working with government; and peer-to-peer service delivery. Rosa is under 25 years old at this time.

Tell us a bit about yourself and what attracted you to working with the organisation as part of the Board of Trustees (BoT)?

I had just obtained my diploma in Administration and Business Management and was a volunteer and a board member of The Cameroon National Planning Association for Family Welfare (CAMNAFAW) when I joined the IPPF BoT.

This opportunity enables me to be a spokesperson for youth. I understand the difficulties, challenges and what they are going through. That knowledge is what I share at the BoT. And in turn, I can share knowledge and learnings with youth in the field.

An important goal of IPPF is facilitating partnerships and collaborations with youth and having youth-focused programmes and service delivery mechanisms.

You being a part of the BoT is an example of how IPPF recognizes the need for youth representation in policy and planning processes. Why is it essential that the affiliates follow suit?

Youth are inclined to talk to other youth. They can express their opinions freely. For comprehensive service delivery, it is essential that this knowledge is incorporated into programmes. So youth representation is a must.

As a part of the BoT, I have gained knowledge of the governance process, human resource management and other vital areas, and it has been an enriching experience.

Member, Board of Trustees

There is no difference between young and adult members of the Board when it comes to work and carrying out our mandate.

I am keen to share this knowledge with my peers. I did this at two events organized by IPPF for youth from affiliates. They had a different view of the BoT. They were almost afraid of them and thought of them as unapproachable.

I shared that transparency and communication are key at IPPF and explained to them the recruitment process of youth members to the Board.

What youth-led action and networking opportunities have you been a part of in Cameroon?

In my country, SRH was a taboo subject and knowledge of it was thought to encourage promiscuity among youth. I was involved in an effort to convince and educate government authorities on the need for SRH as a subject topic in schools.

We launched various campaigns, even on TV. It was a success. They realised our work was beneficial to youth. An SRH curriculum was introduced. The parliament also voted to pass a law to accept voluntarism as genuine work, which was a win for us.

We made an impact. This youth-led campaign proved how youth can be change-makers in the community.

What is the biggest challenge you face as an advocate for health, working with the government?

It was difficult at first to talk about sexual health with government authorities. But we followed a specific strategy.

We identified specific persons to connect with. We even took a personal approach by explaining the importance of them having an understanding of SRH as parents.

We transformed their thinking and influenced them to become involved as volunteers at my Association.

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

Monitoring the activities of the Federation.

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?

I am really proud of what IPPF is today. It is different to what it was in 2020. Communication is key. IPPF has done much to evolve in this regard and has improved its internal and external communications.

IPPF must continue through various channels and meetings to share updates on activities, strategies and decisions etc. There cannot be a situation where an affiliate says, 'We didn't know'. We have to keep informing and communicating with affiliates.

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

When working with affiliates, it is evident that they explore various funding sources and do not depend on IPPF for aid.

The majority of affiliates don't do that. They wait for IPPF financing, and in the meantime, activities halt. It's essential to take the initiative and strengthen funding avenues for continuity in service provision.

Peer-to-peer training is a proven method of SRH knowledge transfer. Sharing of learnings and experiences amongst the affiliates can be vital to improving SRHR delivery and advocacy. Have you had the opportunity to do so?

I've participated in Zoom meetings with different affiliates in learning and sharing sessions. Sharing our successes and challenges on the field can be insightful. One person's experience can help another. Learnings can help build better solutions too.

IPPF should organize many more opportunities like this so that affiliates get to know each other and ensure that it is not the same people participating all the time. Such collaborations will further strengthen the Federation.

'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?

Meetings are one way to do it. Earlier this year, the Africa Regional office invited three Board Members to a meeting. We were there to listen and answer any questions.

I think the Board being represented at such regional meetings is an excellent strategy to 'come together'.

In conversation with Rosa Ayong Tchonang Member, Board of Trustees

What would you say to anyone considering becoming a youth health champion?

Love what you do, keep learning about the subject and be willing to share your knowledge with people who do not know SRH.

Be an advocate. This will help engage more young people and we can share our experiences with each other.



What trait most defines who you are?

Joyful

What is your guilty pleasure?

Food and music.

Would you rather have regrets about actions or inactions and why?

I would regret inaction. I prefer to try and fail than not try and have regrets.

Who is someone you deeply admire, and why?

The BoT Chair, Kate Gilmore. I admire her bravery. She does not marginalise anyone but integrates everyone. She can talk to a whole generation and satisfies everyone she works with.

What would you like to be known for?

As a young girl who loves working and is faithful. A person who can influence the affluent to help those who are not. To be the kind of leader like Kate Gilmore.

What skills do you think everyone should have?

Teamwork and being compliant with rules.

Do you have a question for Rosa?

Write to: governance@ippf.org