

Agenda Item 2: IPPF Footprint

Summary:

The IPPF Board will help guide the Secretariat in its effort to expand IPPF's footprint strategically and meaningfully into a new decade. This paper outlines the key reference points and considerations for determining IPPF's future membership footprint. It addresses strategic imperatives, current footprint, country context, and risk factors.

Action Required:

The Board to note the paper and use it as reference to guide their discussion.

Introduction

In a federation that has grown organically over seven decades, the issue that we currently face is *how* to remain relevant into the next decade. The Board has stated that IPPF must continue to have a global remit. The board has also supported a shift towards a more agile process of membership renewal, with faster exits and admissions. In continuation of the Board's reflections on the state of the world, this session looks at how the federation adapts and expand in ways that matter, and in ways that will equip us to meet the demands of the future. This paper presents some important questions to consider that link who we are, for whom we are, where we are, and how we are.

Who we are

IPPF is a Federation. A federation operates differently to an INGO, a global coalition, or a franchise. It is a systematic "coming together" of likeminded but independent entities who share a mission, common values and agreed standards. It is held together by agreed governance structures and a professional secretariat that maintains the collective interest at regional and global levels. The secretariat serves the Member Associations (MAs) and their mandates. It ensures the continued visibility of the global brand and supports delivery. It raises and redistributes funds. And it works to improve capacities at all levels through learning and sharing.

There are different ways of belonging or part-taking in the federation. The most invested form is membership. IPPF operates a tiered membership system that caters for organisations with different setups and capacities; and that aims to strike a balance between inclusivity/flexibility and adherence to essential membership standards. The first entry point for members is through the associate membership category.¹ When meeting all relevant

¹ The system requires organisations to comply with five sets of criteria with one related to constitutional and governance checklist. Each set contains 20 checks to be performed where a compliance with 80% of them at the time of review is required to be admitted as an Associate Member (AM).

standards of membership, an organisation is accredited to Full Member Association (FMA). There can only be a single Member Association in any given country.²

Outside of the membership system, the federation operates with a form of affiliation called collaborative partners (CP).³ The term refers to a formalized partnership held by the Secretariat, mostly, at national or regional level. The partnerships are developed and maintained by the Regional Offices. In countries where there is an MA, national level partnerships are by default the domain of the MAs.⁴ Where there is not collaborative partners are often, but not always, the first step on the ladder to membership.

For whom we are

IPPF has always been about the provision of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to those most marginalized in society, with women and girls at the core.

As the Federation embarked on the development of our current Strategy, one of the key priorities encouraged by the Board was to push boundaries and to have difficult conversations. As a result, *Strategy 2028* is more deliberate in addressing the question of who we serve. IPPF's care is centred on people, specifically reaching those who are marginalised and excluded, (e.g. LGBTIQ+ communities, sex workers, and youth in their diversity), migrants, those in humanitarian crisis...

Although IPPF does not yet track this organisational data, it is known that the great majority of our MAs are "professional" (rather than "community") non-governmental organisations that identify primarily as health care providers and/or human rights/feminist advocates. With a more speedy "renewal" (entry/exit) process, the question is whether we should continue seeking the same type of members or rather deliberate aim for a more diverse Member Association base comprised of both professional and community (led) organisations. In the Americas and Caribbean Region (Paraguay), for example they are moving with an incoming partner that is sex worker led. In the Africa region (Zimbabwe) with a youth led organisation. This brings some obvious advantages but also new risks and, if they are to progress to full membership, probably adjusting accreditation standards.

Where We Are

The term Footprint describes IPPF's formal presence in the world. The term covers both the membership and collaborative partnerships. IPPF's footprint is not a constant and has always been in flux. Since 1952, when eight family planning organisations formed the Federation, the membership has ebbed and flowed in accordance with resources, needs, and strategic priorities. In the last 20 years, the total number of MAs has varied from 147 in 2002 to 116 in 2024 (see graph in Annex 1). The recent drop is partly the result of partial departure and rebuilding process in the Americas and Caribbean. The footprint nevertheless

² The only (partial) exception so far is Belgium, where the one member association is in reality a coalition of two organisations (one French and one Flemish) sharing a single membership. They were admitted as such in 1955.

³ Affiliate is the collective term used to describe Collaborative Partners, Full Member Associations, and Associate Members.

⁴ The main exception concerns government relations in donor countries. The Secretariat must have a direct line to governments to secure funding for the federation. There are other exceptions that depend on mutual agreement with the MA.

remains large. Out of a total of 195 official UN countries in the world (including two non-member observer states), IPPF's current footprint extends to 150 countries (member associations in 115 countries and collaborative partners in 35 countries⁵).

According to the IPPF Affiliation List, a total of 55 organisations exited the federation since 2002, of which 52 were MAs and two were CPs. At the same time 52 organisations joined, of which only 25 as members).⁶ They left for a variety of reasons. The most frequent was resignation (54%), followed by expulsion (35%) and finally closure of the organisation (11%). In most of the countries they were replaced by new recruits. Countries where IPPF is no longer present include Angola, Gambia, Iran, Iraq, Myanmar, Russia, Türkiye, and Uruguay. Several of these are countries hostile to an SRHR agenda, and it is difficult to locate an MA or CP that can operate safely and freely here— let alone ones that can meet IPPF's membership standards.

There are still some countries that have not had an IPPF presence in the past two decades. Several of these are ultra-rich states and tax havens, e.g. Andorra, Brunei, Kuwait, Monaco, Oman, Turks and Caicos, the Vatican State, or Qatar. But there are also countries at the other end of the scale, such as, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Somalia, Timor Leste, Turkmenistan. These countries have considerable unmet needs in SRHR access, SGBV, and criminalisation of abortion and of people on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity.

How We Are

Strategy 2028 has a drive to 'grow' the footprint (Strategic Pillar 4, pathway 2). The envisaged growth is not just defined as an expansion of the number of organisations added as MAs or CPs. Rather, "growth" is defined as adding nourishment of ideas, political access, capacities, impact, and drive in the form of different, if strategically relevant, types of organisations.

The recruitment of MAs is done today in a way that is proactive and strategic. Key recruitment factors include organisational mission, risk factors, self-sustainability, and ability to meet membership standards. But it means that the type of members has remained relatively homogenous: Leading national SRHR NGO in their respective country, with relatively low risk, low maintenance and high outputs. Of the current 116 national organisations that are associate or full members 75 percent are NGOs and 25 percent are membership organisations. The large majority of members (89%) have service delivery points or clinics.

The MAs' focus within the broad spectrum of SRHR varies. The focus is identified through six predefined thematic priorities.⁷ All members have primary and secondary thematic priorities. The data shows that MAs have an overwhelming (90%) primary focus on general SRHR including contraception. By comparison, seven percent have advocacy as a primary focus. The highest *secondary* priority is Youth / CSE (34%), followed by advocacy (32%). Only five members have an identified focus on abortion and then only as a secondary priority. This does not mean that organisations do not work on abortion or other thematic priorities, but it does not feature prominently enough to be considered their 'identity'.

⁵ There are duplicate CPs in Bangladesh, Hungary, and Poland.

⁶ This does not include affiliates of CFPA in the Caribbean that are current in the process of joining. Also, two organisations, one in Bhutan and Chile, re-joined IPPF. They are not included in the 55.

⁷ The six areas are: 1. Advocacy/Norms shifting, 2. General SRHR, 3. Abortion, 4. HIV/AIDS, 5. Humanitarian 6. Youth/CSE.

Nevertheless, a third of MAs (32%) prioritise both advocacy and delivery of care, indicating their size and national importance. In recognition of the homogeneity of the MAs, there was, in 2022, a change to the admission criteria which allow for organisational registration types such as not-for-profit trusts and social enterprise to be considered.

The profile of national collaborative partners (which mainly exist where there is no MA and aspire to become one) is not significantly different.

Guiding Questions and Key Considerations

The federation is poised to take the next steps towards growing its footprint. A decade from now, the next generation of leaders will push IPPF forward. What sort of federation will they be leading? To help guide the secretariat with these pivotal decisions, we look to the board to provide guidance, ideas, and solutions in three specific areas:

Type(s) of organisation

IPPF has traditionally aimed to bring in a leading SRHR NGO in each country, with a preference for larger more conventional organisations. In future, should we rather be seeking a broader range of organisations in the federation, which could mean selecting some community based grassroots (e.g. LGBTIQ+, sex worker, youth led) organisation. What are the pros and cons and how would you guide such decision in a particular country?

Risk Appetite

What risks can we accept when admitting new members? Grassroot community-based organisations do not always comply (or want to comply) with the organisational standards we hold for more traditional NGOs, and they may be less “stable” over time. On the other hand, they can be more agile and flexible. How would we adjust systems to opening up our membership? Do we introduce different criteria for different types of organisations, or will that be complex to manage? And will it risk loosening up of the admission criteria, which have been essential for maintaining donor confidence and access to all important unrestricted resources?

Working in Adverse Countries

In countries like Russia, Iran, or Iraq, it has proven very difficult or even impossible to find a CP or an MA. This is not only a question of their ability to meet our criteria. It is mostly about the high risks associated with our pro-rights and inclusivity agenda. Even in countries like Angola, which is not as hostile to SRHR, it has not been possible to attract an organisation. Considering the above points, how should we go about expanding into these highly restricted contexts?

Annex

Annex 1. Membership 2002-2024

Total MAs by Year, Month and Region

