

'LET'S COME TOGETHER'

Q&A SERIES WITH THE IPPF TRUSTEES

In conversation with

Surakshya Giri



An MA volunteer, Surakshya Giri was a Youth Champion at the Family Planning Association of Nepal from 2018 to 2019 and has been an active youth member for the last five years. She is a Teacher and is currently studying for a Masters of Counseling Psychology at the University Tribhuvan University.

Amongst the skills required for the Board of Trustees, Surakshya can point to knowledge of youth networking and youth action, leadership in SRHR and peer-to-peer service delivery. Surakshya is under 25 years old at this time.

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

I currently work as a Mental Health Counsellor for children and adolescents in an NGO. Before joining the IPPF Board, I was a youth member at FPA Nepal since 2014.

When the Secretariat circulated a vacancy announcement for a youth member of the BoT, I applied for it and got selected. In addition to my role at the BoT, I am also a member of the Membership Committee (the Membership Committee makes recommendations to the BoT on applications to membership of the Federation) and the Anti-racism team, which is a working group of the BoT composed by trustees dealing with issues related to racism.

I am also the Chair of SARYN - South Asia Regional Youth Network.

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

The key mandate is to provide strategic direction, governance, and oversight for the Federation's activities and initiatives. This involves making decisions that align with IPPF's mission, vision, and values and ensuring that the organisation effectively works toward promoting SRHR globally.

The BoT is responsible for setting strategic priorities, guiding policies, ensuring financial sustainability, and representing IPPF to stakeholders, partners, and the public. Ultimately, the Board plays a crucial role in steering IPPF's efforts to improve SRHR services, education, and advocacy around the world.

From a youth perspective, what are the SRHR 'wins' in recent years from the South Asian (SA) region?

The SA region has witnessed a radiant tapestry of victories in SRHR from the viewpoint of its youth. Glorious strides include the successful dissemination of comprehensive sexuality education, the blooming of awareness regarding contraception, and reduced stigma around discussing SRHR topics such as abortion, sexuality, etc.

Member, Board of Trustees

Also, greater availability of youth-centric healthcare services, and enhanced advocacy for gender equality and reproductive rights.

What are your aspirations for your term at the BoT? What changes do you like to see at the affiliates?

My aspiration would be to achieve the strategic vision we have recently determined through the strategy. Working towards IPPF's global reach on its services, fostering collaborations and affiliations, envisioning global inclusivity by prioritizing youth needs and engagement in decision-making, embracing technological advancements to enhance the reach and impact of IPPF's programmes, making SRHR information and services more accessible and also having financial sustainability.

The changes I would like to see are safer, more confidential youth-centric health services, more innovative approaches to enhance the reach of services in the post-COVID-19 era, and more engagement in evidence-based practices, data management, etc.

Mental health challenges can heighten reproductive health vulnerabilities. Why is it important to pay attention to the connection between mental and sexual health? How can IPPF contribute?

Mental health issues can lead to behaviours that increase sexual health risks, such as unsafe sexual practices or reduced access to care. Conversely, sexual health problems can contribute to mental health struggles due to stigma, shame, or relationship issues. This intricate interplay underscores the need for a holistic approach to well-being.

IPPF can improve awareness of the mental-sexual health connection by reducing stigma and fostering open interactions, training healthcare workers to notice indicators of mental distress and giving appropriate assistance alongside sexual health services.

IPPF can offer safe spaces for young people to share their problems and gain access to resources. IPPF can provide integrated services that address both mental and sexual health.

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?

The key priorities would be;

Strengthening CSE programmes by tailoring them to various age groups and cultural contexts, Addressing the intersection of SRHR with other crucial issues like poverty, climate change, and migration and recognizing the interconnected nature of these challenges, Expanding digital platforms to provide accessible and inclusive SRHR information, telehealth services, and resources, especially in regions where physical access is limited, Charter and rebranding, Enhancing youth engagement and leadership in the decision-making processes, recognizing that young people's voices and needs are central to shaping effective SRHR programmes and policies.

We can involve young people in programme design, decision-making, and implementation processes to create initiatives that resonate with their realities and Strengthen collaborations with other NGOs, governments, and institutions to leverage combined efforts and resources for comprehensive SRHR advocacy. I would like to see us move away from generic solutions and instead emphasize localized strategies considering cultural, social, and economic diversity.

You have experience in youth networking/action and peer-to-peer SRH service delivery. Can social media and internet-based movements also lead to tangible reform, or is fieldwork still the better mechanism?

A synergy of both mechanisms: The most effective strategy frequently combines social media and internet-based movements with fieldwork. Fieldwork gives depth, context, and the personal touch required for long-term change, while online platforms may raise awareness, mobilize supporters, and generate momentum.

The synergy between online and physical initiatives is powerful in today's interconnected environment. Social media may quickly raise awareness and provide a venue for voices to be heard, whereas fieldwork provides the nuanced understanding and long-term relationships required for long-term change. A comprehensive approach that capitalizes on the strengths of both systems is likely to have the most significant and long-term impact.

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

1. Digital health approaches
2. Sports, climate and SRHR
3. Youth-centric health services
4. Mental health and SRHR

When considering replication, MAs/affiliates must tailor the programmes to their unique cultural, social, and regional settings. What works effectively in one place may require modifications to be effective in another. Collaboration with local communities, beneficiary involvement, and identifying individual requirements are key to successfully duplicating or modifying iconic programmes/initiatives.

'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? How do you see the new Federation's strategy guide its work?

A more cohesive approach would be fostered by regular participation through collaborative conversations, shared goals, and open communication channels.

Outcome:

Single Vision: Increased engagement would match the BoT's strategic decisions with affiliates' on-the-ground realities and aspirations, ensuring a single vision.

Making Informed Decisions: Increased interaction enables the BoT to make choices that are influenced by several viewpoints, expanding their grasp of issues and possibilities.

Mutual Support: Solidarity encourages collaborative problem-solving and resource sharing, enhancing affiliates' ability to implement effective initiatives.

The new Federation strategy will direct its activities through encouraging collaboration, responsive decision-making, and a cohesive worldwide movement. IPPF guarantees its actions are relevant, responsive, and well-coordinated by merging BoT viewpoints with affiliate experiences. This results in a more effective realization of its purpose for global sexual and reproductive health.

In conversation with Surakshya Giri Member, Board of Trustees

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

Thank you, IPPF, for being a symbol of hope for many, a change agent, and a guardian of progress. Every life you touch, every decision you have made, and every service you give helps to make the world a better, healthier, and more equal place.

Your commitment has the potential to change cultures, break down barriers, and inspire future generations.

Thank you for being champions of hope, standing by those in need, and making a lasting difference in the lives of so many people.

You have given hope to relive a life to many young people. You have redefined their lives.



Name three things you consider yourself to be very good at.

Multitasking, Empathizing and Cooking.

Who would you consider to be your "hero", and why?

My parents, they inspire me. My mother's love for learning; she hasn't given up on university education. My father's love and care towards us.

Would you rather be invisible or be able to read minds, and why?

Read people's minds as it would help me understand people more and help them if needed.

If you could host a talk show, who would be your first guest and why?

Malala Yousafza for her dedication towards advocacy of girls' education and women's rights.

What are some new skills you would like to learn?

How to play all musical instruments, financial management and learning all languages so that I do not have to use a translator while attending IPPF meetings!

What do you think you will be doing 20 years from now?

Being involved in social service and counselling, making a difference in people's lives.

Do you have a question for Surakshya?

Write to: governance@ippf.org