

Board of Trustees
19-20 June 2025

Refers to
agenda item 2.2

Agenda Item: IPPF Governance Reform Review – “Chapter Two”

Summary:

Following IPPF’s governance reform in 2019/20, a Review of the Reform process was conducted which provided important insights for the new Board of Trustees and the Secretariat to support the changes. Five years on, IPPF commissioned a second Review to assess the impact of the governance reform on the Federation, its Membership Associations (MAs) and the communities it serves.

This summary presents an overview of the findings and the key learnings. Additional detail is provided in the full report, available on request.

Action Required:

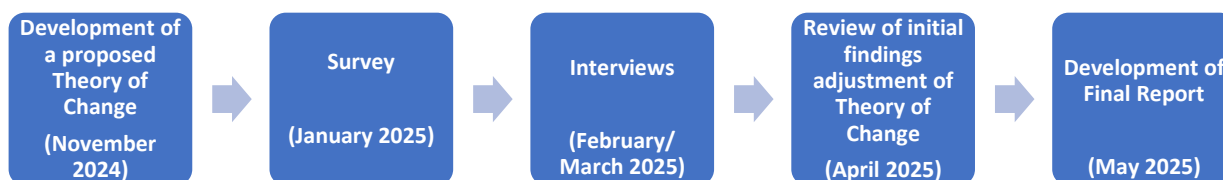
- The Board to note the report

The objective of this Review is to examine whether the Reform and resulting changes in global governance are having an impact on MA functioning, donor trust, IPPF operations, on reaching the most excluded communities and, importantly, to establish whether it is helping to save more lives.

This Review aims to benefit the General Assembly by providing insights about the impact of the governance reform, and the scale of change possible and necessary to remain relevant in a very challenging environment. Additionally, as IPPF prepares for the succession of the Director-General (DG) in 2026 and the Chair of Board of Trustees (Chair) in 2026, the Review will help the Board understand what the new DG and Chair can build on and help anchor feminist leadership on the Board.

Methodology

The Governance Reform Review was run by an Independent Review Team commissioned by IPPF. The methodology agreed for the review included:



The purpose of the Theory of Change (ToC) was to align on a shared understanding of what initiatives, and short and medium term outcomes were expected to contribute to achieving the ultimate goal of the reform. The ToC provided the framing of questions to be explored through the survey and interviews.

Participants

Participants in the review were selected either because they were involved in the reform or because they were part of a target group. Participants included members of MAs, Board of Trustees (BoT), Nominations and Governance Committee (NGC), Reform Commission, Reform Transition Committee, Directors' Leadership Team (DLT) and other Secretariat staff, Youth and donors.

The Survey achieved a 66% response rate (49 out of 74 invitees participated), multiple MAs from each Region were invited and 21 responded. There was a 86% response rate for the interviews (24 out of 28 invitees taking part). At least one MA from each Region was invited to participate and 7 responded. Five of the Federation's largest donors were invited to participate and all responded.

Why Change?

During the course of the Review, participants emphasised the importance of recalling the structural changes that have taken place to ensure everyone has the same understanding of the governance reform and why it took place.

Leading up to the reform, there was an unclear division of roles and responsibilities between different levels of governance and the Secretariat was significantly fractured, diverting focus away from serving MAs in line with IPPF's strategy. MAs had concerns about lack of transparency and information, accountability, too much distance between MAs and the Governing Council (the lead authority at the time) and believed IPPF was not working effectively as a federation. These concerns were shared by youth networks, partners, the Secretariat and donors. There was no mechanism to hold global or regional governance accountable leading to a culture of mistrust and conflicts of interest.

A tipping point occurred in 2019, due to serious allegations of fraud, abuse of power and safeguarding issues, responses to key stakeholders were being hampered, there was intensive negative press coverage due to inadequate responses from the Federation and major donors were expressing concerns about IPPF's future. This highlighted the structural weaknesses of IPPF's governance and financial model. A radical approach was required and IPPF decided to change, by choice for choice. The governance reform introduced significant structural changes, which are set-out in Appendix 1.

Theory of Change (ToC)

The ToC sets out the reasons for reform, the planned initiatives and expected outcomes and impact of the reform including how the reform has:

- Contributed to saving lives, promoting dignity and freedom
- Made the Federation more accountable, agile and modernised to meet the challenges of the 21st Century
- Enabled the Federation to respond better to the communities it serves and advocate more strongly for sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice
- Enabled radical culture shifts and better alignment of practices which reflect IPPF values.

Findings

The scale and pace of the reform changes have been huge and had significant effect on the efficiency, culture and reputation of the Federation, which has been felt at every level of the Federation. The findings validate the ToC overall with majority agreement from participants in the Review that initiatives taken to reform the systems, structure and processes have enabled the Federation to make significant and radical shifts forward, that the Federation is far better equipped to face external challenges, that governance reform has opened the door to further opportunities to evolve and progress.

Key findings:

1. Governance reform is contributing to saving lives, particularly through the creation of Stream 3 which shows 833,000 people reached between 2022-2024 and 42.3m clients reached in humanitarian settings between 2021-2024. This was enabled by quicker, mission-focused decision making by the BoT and responsiveness of the Secretariat working together. Examples were provided to illustrate support for those groups previously left behind demonstrating the desire to promote dignity and freedom.
2. The Federation is more accountable, more agile and modernised to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. There was a direct link made between the belief that IPPF's reputation in the sector has improved and that MAs and the Secretariat have more confidence in the future of IPPF because of the reform. However, respondents from every group say the reform needs to be accelerated at MA level to bring about the changes needed to ensure sustainability.
3. Governance reform is contributing to the Federation being more inclusive, reaching marginalised communities and advocating more strongly for sexual reproductive health and justice. There is strong support for bolder advocacy of LGBTQI+ rights and activism and a need to more clearly articulate IPPF's stance on this. Some MA respondents emphasised the importance of keeping a balance between this and advocacy for sexual health and reproductive health and rights for women and girls, and supporting how this is extended to marginalised communities.
4. There have been radical cultural shifts and better alignment of practices which reflect IPPF's values because of the reform. The majority of MAs feel a better sense of belonging and greater involvement in decision-making through the General Assembly. Opportunities to improve how the Federation can act in a more unified way were identified through greater horizontal engagement between MAs and MAs understanding how to hold the BoT accountable.
5. BoT is trusted to act in the best interests of the Federation because of their skills, demonstration of IPPF's values and focus on the mission. Respondents agree the Board works effectively with Management to deliver results, holding the Secretariat to account. Putting professional support, systems and processes in place to build a pipeline for governance and getting the recruitment of governance roles right were identified as priorities, as was establishing an external mechanism to evaluate governance performance.

6. Financial stability is seen as a challenge because of the changing funding environment. The majority of all respondents linked financial stability with the resource allocation process and financial oversight brought in as part of the governance reform, identifying it as a significant improvement. Opportunities to review the process and support MA sustainability through greater MA to MA collaboration were identified as priorities.

7. The majority of IPPF respondents believe donor trust has increased because of the reform. Donor respondents strongly agree that reform has led to a significant increase in trust leading to continuation of funding and the Federation being seen as a leader and used as a role model in the sector.

8. Youth involvement at every level was seen as a significant positive within the Federation with governance reform providing the opportunity for youth representation and inclusion in leadership and decision-making. However, there are some challenges to meaningful participation identified by both Youth and others (MAs, BoT, Secretariat) creating barriers to navigating the formal structures.

Overall, survey responses were very positive with high percentages in agreement. Where responses indicate lower levels of agreement or higher levels of disagreement the full report identifies the barriers and challenges that underpin the issues and opportunities to improve.

Two variances to the ToC were identified through the Review: 1) as part of the changes to governance structures, it was assumed global governance succession planning would take place. However, this was identified as a gap; and 2) there was an assumption that changes to global governance would influence stronger MA governance. Although the implementation of global policies and Board oversight of safeguarding and financial conduct validated this in part, resistance remains to governance change at MA level which needs to be overcome to complete IPPF's reform

Key Learnings

During interviews, participants were asked to reflect on the learnings for IPPF as a result of Reform. This feedback has been incorporated into key learnings developed by the Review team and summarised below:

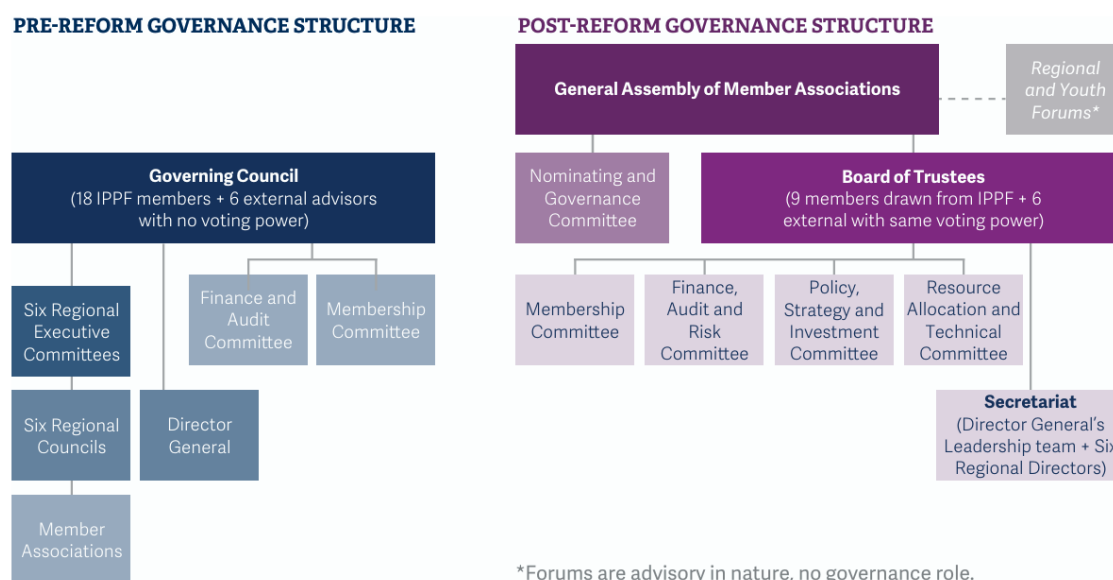
- ❖ Shifting governance from internal representation to a united Federation focus has removed harmful politics and vested interests, and enabled a bold, collaborative stance rooted in open-mindedness and mission-first thinking.
- ❖ A professional, skills-based and diverse Board has strengthened governance practices, strategic decision-making and organisational standing, despite initial challenges.
- ❖ Strengthening Board governance now requires deeper investment in induction, professional support for recruitment and performance review, structured succession planning and training to help build a pipeline of future leadership.

- ❖ Removing regional governance has increased agility and fostered unity, more strategic and fearless collaboration across the Federation.
- ❖ Strengthening how MAs hold the Board to account at the General Assembly and between General Assemblies requires a structured approach beyond written communication.
- ❖ Continuously evolving governance at global and MA level is critical; considering the principles of governance reform to help strengthen governance at MA level, guided by a visible plan, more facilitation of the process where it adds value and stronger leadership development to sustain focus and progress.
- ❖ Engagement of MAs in the reform process has fostered belonging, alignment and ownership; sustaining governance reform will depend on their active participation in shaping regional/global agendas and working together on priorities.
- ❖ Radically transparent communication, active management and commitment to decolonisation has built donor trust and positioned the Federation to help shape a more equitable future for the sector.
- ❖ Youth bring critical innovation and bold ideas to governance but need clearer roles, structured support, cultural change and engagement at MA-level to fully contribute.
- ❖ Feminist leadership values have emerged in Board practices, signalling governance reform as a catalyst for deeper cultural and leadership transformation.
- ❖ Transparent, reformed resource allocation supports impact but in these challenging times, accelerating and enhancing MA collaboration on sustainability initiatives, deeper conversations about where the money flows, how the funding is enhancing MA delivery capacity and how financial oversight and leadership is being developed at a local level would be beneficial.

Appendix 1: Pre/Post Reform – What Changed?

Diagram 1 shows the previous and current governance structure with the key changes implemented.

Diagram 1: Pre/post reform governance structure



The governance reform introduced significant structural changes.

- The pre-reform Governing Council, made up of representatives from 18 IPPF MAs and 6 non-voting external advisors, was replaced by a General Assembly of Member Associations as the highest authority for the Federation and a newly established Board of Trustees, which included 9 IPPF internal members and 6 external members, each member with equal voting power.
- In the post-reform structure, a Nominating and Governance Committee was created to oversee the appointment of board members and to review and report on the performance of governance, shifting emphasis from representation to skills based selection.
- The reform eliminated the six Regional Executive Committees and six Regional Councils, each overseeing one of the six regional directors, streamlining governance and consolidating leadership under a Secretariat composed of the Director General's leadership team including the six Regional Directors.
- Several committees were restructured or added:
 - The Finance and Audit Committee became the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee
 - New committees such as the Policy, Strategy and Investment Committee and the Resource Allocation and Technical Committee were introduced.
 - The Membership Committee was retained
 - Regional and Youth Forums were established as advisory bodies with no formal governance role.