

# The climate crisis and sexual and reproductive health and rights

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## ABOUT THIS POSITION PAPER

### Purpose

IPPF's vision is of a world where all people are free to make choices about their sexuality and well-being, without discrimination. This vision is threatened by the climate crisis.<sup>i 1</sup>

As a major healthcare provider and advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights, IPPF is committed to supporting communities to adapt to the effects of the climate crisis while calling for inclusive, human rights-based, and gender-transformative action to respond to the climate crisis and its impacts at all levels.

This position paper describes IPPF's priorities for advocacy and engagement on the intersections of sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis. It highlights what we see as our strengths on the issue as a healthcare provider and advocate and points to the values that will underpin our work in this space.

### Intended audience

The position paper is aimed at both IPPF Secretariat and Member Association staff and volunteers as well as an external audience. This includes existing and potential civil society partners of IPPF, governments, donors, and multilateral institutions.

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<sup>i</sup> This position paper uses the terms climate crisis and climate change interchangeably. IPPF prefers use of the term climate crisis to reflect the seriousness of the issue. The term climate change is used when referring to specific literature and materials on the issue employing this term and to refer to concepts such as climate change mitigation and adaptation.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## What is at stake?

The impacts of the climate crisis on sexual and reproductive health and rights are many. They include reduced or unavailable services in areas affected by disasters, harmful impacts on maternal health due to heat exposure, and increased incidence of sexual and gender-based violence in situations of humanitarian crises or displacement. As the impacts of the climate crisis become more severe, adverse outcomes for sexual and reproductive health and rights will only increase.

Inequalities and marginalization are key factors in heightening vulnerability to the impacts of the climate crisis. Addressing gender inequality and other forms of marginalization is therefore crucial for reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are critical for advancing gender equality and for overcoming marginalization and thus for strengthening individuals' and communities' resilience and capacity to adapt to the climate crisis. Sexual and reproductive health and rights should be an important consideration in measures aimed at enhancing resilience to both the slow onset impacts of the climate crisis and its more immediate effects.

## What does IPPF bring?

**Global presence, local reach:** IPPF is a global healthcare provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, working with and for communities in more than 140 countries. We have an established presence in many of the countries and regions most severely impacted by the climate crisis and prone to disasters and prioritise reaching the most marginalized and under-served communities.

**Humanitarian action:** As local organizations with well-established networks of service delivery points, our Member Associations are uniquely placed to provide a comprehensive range of services in humanitarian crises. We are in countries before, during, and after crises, which allows us to maintain and protect the gains of our work and build resilience over the long term.

**Focus on marginalized groups and gender equality:** IPPF's work is grounded firmly in a human rights-based approach and underpinned by a commitment to advance gender equality. We understand that in order to advance health and well-being and to strengthen resilience, we must address the root causes of inequities and structural barriers faced by marginalized individuals and communities.

## IPPF priorities for advocacy and engagement

- 1. A strengthened evidence base on interlinkages between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis:** IPPF will contribute to strengthening the evidence base on the links between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis through documenting learning from our work with communities impacted by the climate crisis, including in humanitarian response. Complementing this, we will advocate for a strengthened research agenda on the links between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis by external stakeholders.
- 2. Sexual and reproductive health and rights as critical to climate change adaptation and resilience:** IPPF will support individuals and communities to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis through our service delivery in settings affected by the climate crisis, including through humanitarian action. We will further advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights to be recognized and supported as critical to climate change adaptation and resilience by governments and other external stakeholders.
- 3. A focus on human rights and gender equality:** IPPF will champion the rights of women, girls, and marginalized groups impacted by the climate crisis. We will place human rights and gender equality at the centre of our efforts to address the climate crisis and will call on governments and other external stakeholders to do the same.
- 4. Partnerships and space for civil society:** IPPF will advocate for the inclusiveness of climate policy processes, calling in particular for the meaningful engagement and participation of women's and youth groups as well as of groups working with and representative of marginalized populations. We will seek to build partnerships with organizations and stakeholders in the climate and environmental space that support a human rights-based approach to climate action.
- 5. Mitigation of climate change and environmental impacts:** IPPF will work to address and reduce its own carbon footprint and environmental impacts through environmentally sustainable organizational policies and practices. We will emphasize the particular responsibility of high-emission countries to lower their greenhouse gas emissions, and call on high-income countries to provide financial and other forms of support to low- and middle-income countries to respond and adapt to the climate crisis.

# I. BACKGROUND

## a. The climate crisis

Climate change refers to shifts in global and regional climate patterns, particularly from the mid-20th century onwards. The Earth's climate has changed continuously throughout its history. However, there is overwhelming scientific consensus that the climate change that has been observed from the 1950s to today can largely be attributed to increased levels of greenhouse gas<sup>ii</sup> emissions resulting from human activity.<sup>3</sup> Human activity is estimated to have caused an increase of approximately 1°C in global average temperature since pre-industrial times.<sup>4</sup> The past five years are the five warmest on record.<sup>iii</sup> <sup>5</sup>

Climate change leads to a warming of oceans and melting of glaciers and ice sheets and, resulting from this, a rise in sea levels. It further increases the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including extreme heat and heavy precipitation. The effects of climate change are expected to increase over the remainder of this century. However, the scale of longer-term impacts, in the latter half of the 21st century and beyond, will depend on the extent to which greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced over the coming decades.<sup>6</sup>

There are three main pillars of response to the climate crisis. *Climate change mitigation* addresses the root causes of climate change through efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases or to remove them from the atmosphere. The aim of mitigation activities is to reduce future climate change. *Climate change adaptation* relates to processes of adjustment to actual or expected impacts of climate change. Adaptation measures seek to lower the risks posed by the effects of climate change.<sup>7</sup> *Climate change resilience* relates to the "capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation".<sup>8</sup>

The climate crisis and its impacts are one element of the broader dimension of environmental sustainability. This position paper focuses on the climate crisis specifically, but it is understood that both the climate crisis and sexual and reproductive health and rights also intersect with other areas of environmental sustainability and degradation.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

IPPF adheres to the definition of sexual and reproductive health and rights put forward by the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, we understand "[s]exual and reproductive health [as] a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity". We further recognize that "[a]chievement of sexual and reproductive health relies on the realisation of sexual and reproductive rights, which are based on the human rights of all individuals to:

- have their bodily integrity, privacy, and personal autonomy respected;
- freely define their own sexuality, including sexual orientation and gender identity and expression;
- decide whether and when to be sexually active;
- choose their sexual partners;
- have safe and pleasurable sexual experiences;
- decide whether, when, and whom to marry;

CONTINUED OVER

ii Greenhouse gases trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere and thus contribute to global warming. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is the principal greenhouse gas responsible for global warming. Others include methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O).

iii This refers to the 2015–2019 period.

**SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (CONTINUED)**

- decide whether, when, and by what means to have a child or children, and how many children to have;
- have access over their lifetimes to the information, resources, services, and support necessary to achieve all the above, free from discrimination, coercion, exploitation, and violence.”

See Starrs et al (2018) Accelerate progress – sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission.

## b. Inherent injustices

The climate crisis is underpinned by grave injustice. Those that contributed least to the climate crisis are most severely affected by its impacts while also having most limited access to resources to adapt.

There are stark differences in per capita levels of greenhouse gas emissions between countries at different levels of income. The global average amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person was five metric tons in 2014. By comparison, per capita levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in North America were 15.5 metric tons in 2016, while they were only 0.8 metric tons in Sub-Saharan Africa and 1.4 metric tons in Pacific island small states.<sup>10</sup> Major differences also exist in levels of greenhouse gas emissions among individuals belonging to different income groups within countries.<sup>11</sup> It has been estimated that over the 1990 to 2015 period, the poorest half of the world’s population was responsible for only seven per cent of cumulative carbon emissions, while the richest 10 per cent were responsible for 52 per cent.<sup>12</sup> The richest one per cent of people alone were responsible for 15 per cent of cumulative emissions.<sup>13</sup>

The nature and severity of impacts of the climate crisis differ widely across countries and groups of people and are influenced by a range of factors. Some countries and regions are much more prone to experience impacts from the climate crisis than others. This includes low-lying areas and coastal regions, which are at heightened risk of flooding and submergence due to a rise in sea levels.<sup>14</sup> Climate change has been suggested to threaten the very existence of some small island nations.<sup>15</sup> Impacts of climate change will lead to increasing displacement

of people,<sup>16</sup> with the poorest countries and people hit hardest.<sup>17</sup> Within countries and communities, risks from climate change are greater for “[p]eople who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally or otherwise marginalized”.<sup>18</sup> Inequalities in socio-economic status and marginalization resulting from discrimination on grounds of gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, disability, and other characteristics heighten vulnerability to climate change.<sup>19</sup> Inequalities and marginalization also shape individuals’ ability to adapt to the climate crisis.

The climate crisis and its impacts both reflect and exacerbate existing, deep-running inequalities between countries and among communities. It is indicative of how entrenched inequalities stemming from deeply unjust global power relations and societal structures compound to further restrain access to resources and opportunity. Addressing this will require fundamental shifts in distribution of resources, voice, and decision-making power among countries and across societies.

### SUDDEN AND SLOW ONSET EMERGENCIES

The climate crisis can be a factor in both rapid and slow onset emergencies. Sudden onset emergencies are linked to a single, hazardous event, such as floods, cyclones or wildfires. Slow onset emergencies “[emerge] gradually over time, often based on a confluence of different events”.<sup>20</sup> Examples of this include droughts, desertification, and rises in sea levels.

### c. Policy environment

International cooperation is essential for effective measures against the climate crisis. A range of agreements and documents adopted at global level touch upon linkages between the climate crisis and human rights, gender equality, and health, as well as some aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The *Paris Agreement* – a legally binding agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015 – sets a target of keeping the rise in global temperature in the 21st century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit it further to 1.5°C. It also sets “a global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development” and calls on developed country parties to provide financial resources to assist developing country parties with regard to both mitigation and adaptation efforts. It highlights that parties “should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity”.<sup>21</sup>

#### NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS AND NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLANS

*Nationally determined contributions:* Parties to the *Paris Agreement* are required to set targets for national emissions reductions in nationally determined contributions (NDCs), with renewed commitments to be submitted every five years.<sup>22</sup>

*National adaptation plans:* National adaptation plans (NAPs) serve as a means for countries to identify adaptation needs and to develop and implement strategies and programmes to address them.<sup>23</sup> The national adaptation plan process was agreed by parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2010. It was established particularly for least developed countries.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, also adopted in 2015, sets targets across social, economic and environmental areas of sustainable development. One of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is focused on climate change (SDG 13), calling for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, including through a strengthening of resilience and adaptive capacity, while targets on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are integrated into the Goals on health (SDG 3) and gender equality (SDG 5).<sup>24</sup>

#### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 was a defining moment for sexual and reproductive health and rights. It marked an important shift away from the population-focused objectives of the preceding decades and towards recognition of sexual and reproductive health and rights as a human rights issue.<sup>25</sup> The Programme of Action adopted at the Conference defines reproductive rights as “rest[ing] on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health” and as also including the “right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents”.<sup>26</sup>

The *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* includes access to sexual and reproductive health services among measures highlighted as important to enhancing resilience and to empowering people disproportionately affected by disasters.<sup>27</sup> The *New Urban Agenda*, adopted in 2016, points to threats to cities and human settlements from climate change and commits to promotion of universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services with a view to fostering healthy societies.<sup>28</sup>

The UN Human Rights Council has adopted annual resolutions on climate change and human rights, which have explored different dimensions of intersections between the climate crisis and human rights.<sup>29</sup> The resolution adopted in 2018 specifically discussed and called for a gender-responsive approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation policies.<sup>30</sup>

### CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society plays a crucial role in the climate space and has done so for decades. Civil society plays an important part in calling for ambitious action on the climate crisis, including in international policy processes, in raising public awareness on the impacts and injustices of the climate crisis, and in highlighting the needs of marginalized groups and communities affected by it.

Young people in particular have been at the forefront of climate activism. The school strike movement Fridays for Future<sup>31</sup> has sparked worldwide protests and received wide public attention. Young people will bear the brunt of future impacts of the climate crisis and should therefore be at the centre of responses to it.

### INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous peoples are a particularly important stakeholder group in conversations on the climate crisis. Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis as many of them depend on ecosystems that are particularly prone to its impacts.<sup>32</sup> Their participation can contribute important local knowledge to the development of adaptation and mitigation policies and avoid the design and implementation of measures that will further infringe their rights.<sup>33</sup>

## II. INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

### a. Impacts of the climate crisis on sexual and reproductive health and rights

The climate crisis has devastating impacts on the realization of human rights. It adversely affects enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to health, food, water and sanitation, a healthy environment, self-determination, and development.<sup>34</sup> It has major impacts on the advancement of gender equality. Deeply ingrained, systemic discrimination means that women and girls are at a higher risk of experiencing harmful effects of the climate crisis.<sup>35</sup> Where women and girls experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as on account of their ethnicity, disability or migrant status, their vulnerability is heightened even more.<sup>36</sup> Many of the adverse impacts women and girls may suffer in the context of the climate crisis relate to their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The climate crisis can affect realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights in a range of ways. At a quite practical level, the climate crisis can impede **access to sexual and reproductive health services**. Where critical infrastructure, such as clinics and roads, is destroyed in extreme weather events, this can prevent people from accessing health services or make them unavailable.<sup>37</sup> In humanitarian response work, sexual and reproductive health services are often under-funded and under-prioritised.<sup>38</sup> Even where services are available and within reach, women, girls, and marginalized communities may be unable to access them due to existing gender-related and other barriers that are heightened during crisis.<sup>39</sup> Where sexual and reproductive health services are unavailable, maternal morbidity and mortality and other adverse health outcomes increase.

Lack of access to clean and safe water, such as in the aftermath of extreme weather events or due to increasing water scarcity as a result of climate change,<sup>40</sup> can also pose a major impediment. Clean water is critical for ensuring provision of safe and quality sexual and reproductive health services, including during pregnancy and childbirth and for

the administration of certain contraceptive methods. Lack of adequate sanitation facilities and water points in safe locations also increases the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and affects management of menstrual health.<sup>41</sup>

The climate crisis can have a range of harmful impacts on **maternal health**. Recent research, focused on the United States, found significant associations between air pollution and heat exposure related to climate change and risk to pregnancy outcomes, including preterm birth, low birth weight, and stillbirth.<sup>42</sup> Black women were found to be at a higher risk of adverse outcomes than white women, illustrating how exposure to multiple forms of discrimination exacerbates vulnerability.<sup>43</sup> Maternal health can further be affected by saline contamination of drinking water as a result of saltwater intrusion from rising sea levels.<sup>44</sup> Increased salt intake can lead to a number of adverse pregnancy and maternal health outcomes, including preterm births and maternal deaths.<sup>45</sup>

The climate crisis can increase the incidence of **sexual and gender-based violence**. Risks of sexual and gender-based violence are heightened during humanitarian crises and in times of displacement.<sup>46</sup> Both can be expected to increase as a result of more severe and frequent extreme weather events and the slow onset effects of the climate crisis, such as sea level rise. **Child, early and forced marriages** are also more likely to take place in times of crisis and displacement.<sup>47</sup>

The climate crisis may further pose particular risks for the rights and health of **people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics**. Due to their frequent marginalization, sexual and gender minorities are often more severely affected by disasters associated with natural and other hazards.<sup>48</sup> A neglect of their needs in disaster risk reduction policies and practices can further compound their vulnerability.<sup>49</sup> Continued criminalization of same-sex sexual activity in various jurisdictions presents a major barrier to the needs of sexual and gender minorities being acknowledged and addressed.<sup>50</sup>

## **b. Sexual and reproductive health and rights in climate change adaptation and resilience**

Sexual and reproductive health and rights should be recognized as an important element of climate change adaptation and resilience. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are critical for advancing gender equality, health, and well-being and for overcoming marginalization and thus for strengthening individuals' and communities' resilience and capacity to adapt to the climate crisis.

Inequalities and marginalization are key factors in heightening vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.<sup>51</sup> Addressing gender inequality and other forms of marginalization is therefore crucial to reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience to climate change and an important element of climate change adaptation.<sup>52</sup> Advancement of gender equality further strengthens the capacity of women, girls, and marginalized communities to participate in the development and implementation of measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation, which in turn will increase their fairness, effectiveness, and sustainability.<sup>53</sup>

Realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights is crucial for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Sexual and reproductive health and rights interventions are not only essential for health and well-being, but are also critical enablers of women's and girls' access to opportunities across social, economic, and political life, where current gender gaps are stark.<sup>54</sup> Unintended pregnancies, complications in pregnancy and childbirth, unsafe abortions, sexual and gender-based violence, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and reproductive cancers all are major impediments to the health and well-being of women and girls.<sup>55</sup> Addressing these through quality, accessible sexual and reproductive health service provision and advancement of sexual and reproductive rights is critical for promoting the health of women and girls and for enabling their full and equal participation in all aspects of life.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights should be an important consideration in measures aimed at enhancing resilience to both the slow onset impacts of the climate crisis and its more immediate effects. With extreme weather events increasing in frequency and intensity as a result of climate change, disaster risk reduction is an important component of climate change adaptation,<sup>56</sup> which sexual and reproductive health and rights should form an integral part of. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are critical for reducing vulnerability to the effects of crises.<sup>57</sup> Where rights are upheld before disasters occur, they are less likely to be violated during disasters and after they have taken place.<sup>58</sup>

Advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights and, in turn, gender equality requires availability of a broad package of sexual and reproductive health and rights services and information, which should include contraceptive services; maternal and newborn care; safe abortion care; prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections; comprehensive sexuality education; prevention, detection, and counselling for sexual and gender-based violence; prevention, detection, and treatment of infertility and cervical cancer; and counselling and care for sexual health and well-being.<sup>59</sup> Advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights also requires interventions beyond the health sector to address the structural barriers – embedded in social norms, laws, and policies – that prevent individuals from realizing their sexual and reproductive health and rights.<sup>60</sup> It further requires placing particular focus on the needs of marginalized groups, including through addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that prevent them from realizing their rights.

Recognizing the potential for multiple gains in health outcomes, climate change adaptation and resilience measures should seek to integrate a broad range of sexual and reproductive health and rights interventions, rather than focus only on some aspects of it, such as contraceptive services.

### CONTRACEPTION AS A STRATEGY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

Different stakeholders have pointed to contraception as an important intervention for climate change mitigation. The argument is that contraception will reduce fertility, which will lower population growth, which in turn will lead to decreased levels of greenhouse gas emissions. The predominant focus of such narratives – explicitly or implied – is women and girls in lower income countries, where rates of fertility are comparatively high.<sup>iv 61</sup>

Rhetoric and actions suggesting curbs on the fertility of women and girls as a solution for social and environmental ills have a long and dangerous history and still manifest today. Policies and practices driven by a desire to stem population growth have led to countless human rights violations.<sup>62</sup> The International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 marked an important shift away from earlier population-focused objectives to a broader sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda, grounded in individual human rights.<sup>63</sup> The urgency of the climate crisis must not serve as justification for harmful and coercive population control narratives, policies, and practices.

Mitigation of climate change requires addressing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in high-income countries, where per capita levels of greenhouse gas emissions far exceed those in lower income groups.<sup>v 64</sup> Promotion of contraception as a solution for climate change instrumentalizes women's and girls' bodies and places emphasis and responsibility for tackling the climate crisis on those least responsible for contributing to it but most severely affected by its impacts. It is a deeply unjust and harmful distraction from countries' responsibilities to address the structural drivers of the climate crisis.

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iv Projections for future population growth vary.

v Per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in high-income countries amounted to 10.4 metric tons per capita in 2016 compared to 0.3 metric tons per capita in low-income countries. In middle-income countries, per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were 3.7 metric tons per capita.

## III. IPPF ADDED VALUE AND PRIORITIES

### a. What does IPPF bring?

#### GLOBAL PRESENCE, LOCAL REACH

IPPF is a global healthcare provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. We are a worldwide Federation of national Member Associations and collaborative partners, working with and for communities and individuals in more than 140 countries. Through our locally owned Member Associations, we have an established presence in many of the countries and regions most severely impacted by the climate crisis and prone to disasters, including the Caribbean and the Pacific. Our work places particular focus on reaching the most marginalized and under-served communities.

#### IPPF SERVICE DELIVERY IN 2019

In 2019, we delivered more than 250 million sexual and reproductive health services through more than 50,000 service delivery points. With 62 per cent of our service delivery points in peri-urban or rural areas and 82 per cent community-based distributors, we were particularly adept at reaching under-served groups. An estimated 84 per cent of our clients in 2019 were poor and vulnerable. This included 4.6 million people served in humanitarian settings.<sup>65</sup>

See IPPF (2020) *Annual Performance Report 2019*.

Our advocacy is informed by our service delivery and the communities we work with and serve. As national organizations embedded into their local communities, our Member Associations drive policy change and champion the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups at local and national levels. As a globally connected Federation, we further work to effect policy change in support of sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality at regional and global levels. Our large global network of national organizations and dedicated offices in New York, Geneva, Brussels, and Addis Ababa make us well placed to influence intergovernmental negotiations and policy processes in United Nations and other key international and regional fora.

#### HUMANITARIAN ACTION

We have scaled up engagement in humanitarian settings over the past decade and are committed to further expanding our reach to crisis-affected populations in future.<sup>66</sup> As local organizations with well-established networks of service delivery points, our Member Associations are uniquely placed to provide a comprehensive range of services in humanitarian crises, reach the most vulnerable, and work with governments and other partners to enable services. We also place focus on humanitarian advocacy, including through calling for integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights in disaster management policies and plans. Our model for sexual and reproductive health and rights in crises connects the key elements of humanitarian action (prevention and preparedness, response, recovery and resilience) with our long-term engagement in countries. We are in countries before, during, and after crises, which allows us to maintain and protect the gains of our work and build resilience over the long term.

#### IPPF IN THE PACIFIC

IPPF works in nine countries across the Pacific. We launched our Niu Vaka Pacific Strategy in 2018, with the aim of providing tailored support to our Member Associations and strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights outcomes in the region.<sup>67</sup>

The Pacific is among the most disaster-prone regions in the world,<sup>68</sup> exposed to a wide variety of increasingly frequent natural disasters exacerbated by the climate crisis, including cyclones, droughts, earthquakes, storm surges, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions. Atoll nations – only 1–3 metres above sea level – are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels and storm surges.<sup>69</sup> Many of the region's small island nations are experiencing a unique set of health risks and vulnerabilities associated with climate change,<sup>70</sup> with evidence indicating that humanitarian situations are going to increase.<sup>71</sup>

CONTINUED OVER

**IPPF IN THE PACIFIC (CONTINUED)**

Through improving sexual and reproductive health and rights outcomes, our work is helping to support communities in the Pacific to adapt to the increasingly unstable environment. Our Member Associations have unparalleled reach into their local communities, serving the most under-served, marginalized, and remote populations, including those not often reached by other providers. Responding to humanitarian emergencies has become an important part of our work in the region. Our Member Associations remain at the forefront providing life-saving sexual and reproductive health services to communities affected by increasingly frequent natural disasters and crises.

See IPPF (2018) *Niu Vaka IPPF Pacific Strategy 2019–2022*.

**FOCUS ON MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Through the work that we do, we know that sexual and reproductive health and rights are critical to health, well-being, and empowerment. We understand that in order to advance health and well-being and to strengthen resilience, we must address the root causes of inequities and structural barriers faced by marginalized individuals and communities. We know that in times of hardship and when disaster strikes not all are impacted equally, and that healthy and empowered individuals who can exercise their rights are better able to cope with adversity.

IPPF's work is grounded firmly in a human rights-based approach and underpinned by a commitment to advance gender equality.<sup>72</sup> We seek to actively challenge and change harmful gender norms and relationships through both our advocacy and programmatic work and recognize that in order to advance gender equality and overcome marginalization, we must work holistically. We view marginalization through an intersectional lens and strive to address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination – associated with gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, and other characteristics – that prevent individuals from exercising their rights.

**ADDRESSING IPPF'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

IPPF is committed to addressing and reducing its own carbon footprint and environmental impacts through environmentally sustainable organizational policies and practices. We are currently working to put in place an environmental management system for the IPPF Secretariat, which will better allow us to manage the impact of our operations on the environment. As part of this, we will set clear objectives for improving our environmental performance and for reducing our carbon footprint and review our achievement against these regularly. We will aim to publish information on our environmental performance at least annually. Further to this, we will support our Member Associations in the development and implementation of environmental risk mitigation strategies for their operations, with a view to strengthening our processes and fostering a culture of sustainability across all levels of the Federation.

## **b. IPPF priorities for advocacy and engagement**

The below describes IPPF's priorities for advocacy and engagement on the topic of the climate crisis and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Underpinning all of these is a commitment by IPPF to strengthen its own capacities to work on the climate crisis, including through learning from others engaged in this space.

### **1. A STRENGTHENED EVIDENCE BASE ON INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

There is a need for a stronger evidence base on the interlinkages between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis. More and better evidence is needed on how the climate crisis – and responses to it – may negatively affect the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as on how sexual and reproductive health and rights may positively contribute to a strengthening of the adaptive capacity and resilience of individuals and communities to the effects of the climate crisis. In both areas, more attention should be paid to all elements of sexual and reproductive health and rights rather than just specific aspects of it, such as contraception.

IPPF will aim to contribute to strengthening the evidence base on the links between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis through documenting learning from our work with communities impacted by the climate crisis, including in humanitarian response. We will use our global platform to share our experiences and make them available to a wide audience.

IPPF will further advocate for and contribute to a strengthened research agenda on the links between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis by external stakeholders. We will seek partnerships with research organizations and will call on donor governments and agencies to increase their funding support to civil society, multilateral agencies, and academic institutions to examine and document interlinkages between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis.

### **2. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS AS CRITICAL TO CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE**

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are crucial for advancing gender equality, health, and well-being and for overcoming marginalization. They therefore play a critical role in strengthening individuals' and communities' resilience and capacity to adapt to the effects of the climate crisis.

IPPF will support individuals and communities to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis through our service delivery in settings affected by the climate crisis, including through humanitarian action. Through our wide network of service delivery points at community level and in remote locations, we will ensure particular focus on reaching marginalized and under-served groups.

IPPF will further advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights to be recognized and supported as critical to climate change adaptation and resilience by governments and other external stakeholders. We will make the case for sexual and reproductive health and rights to be integrated into policy and implementation processes on climate change adaptation from global to local levels. We will further call on donor governments and agencies to increase their funding support for sexual and reproductive health and rights in relation to climate change adaptation. We will advocate for recognition and support of a broad sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda in these contexts rather than a more narrow focus only on some aspects of it, such as contraception.

### 3. A FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

Responses to the climate crisis must be grounded in human rights and seek to alleviate rather than reinforce existing inequalities. Gender equality should be a key consideration in climate processes and should be mainstreamed across all efforts to address the climate crisis. The promotion of contraception as a strategy for climate change mitigation raises concerns both from a gender equality and a human rights perspective.

IPPF will champion the rights of women, girls, and marginalized groups impacted by the climate crisis. Both our advocacy and programmatic work on the climate crisis will be grounded firmly in a human rights-based and gender-transformative approach. We will work to change harmful gender norms and challenge and address gender and other inequalities exacerbated by the climate crisis.

IPPF will further call on governments and other external stakeholders to place human rights and gender equality at the centre of their efforts to address the climate crisis.

### 4. PARTNERSHIPS AND SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Effective and responsive climate action requires the meaningful participation of civil society working with communities affected by the climate crisis in the development and implementation of policies on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience at all levels, ranging from international to national and local processes. Civil society plays a critical role in mobilizing support for ambitious action on the climate crisis.

IPPF will advocate for the inclusiveness of climate policy processes. We will in particular call for the meaningful engagement and participation of women's and youth groups as well as of groups working with and representative of marginalized populations.

IPPF will further seek to build partnerships with organizations and stakeholders in the climate and environmental space that support a human rights-based approach to climate action. We will in particular aim to partner with organizations working on the intersections of gender equality and the climate crisis.

### 5. MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The climate crisis poses a major threat for sustainable development and the realization of human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. In order to mitigate climate change and reduce its harmful effects, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced to sustainable levels. Reflecting their disproportionate impacts and responsibility for the climate crisis, high-emission countries must take decisive action to cut their greenhouse gas emissions. High-income countries should further provide suitable levels of funding and other forms of support to low- and middle-income countries to respond and adapt to the climate crisis.

IPPF will work to address and reduce its own carbon footprint and environmental impacts through environmentally sustainable organizational policies and practices. We will put in place an environmental management system and publish information on our environmental performance at least annually.

IPPF will further emphasize the particular responsibility of high-emission countries to take decisive steps to lower their greenhouse gas emissions. We will call on high-income countries to provide financial and other forms of support to low- and middle-income countries to respond and adapt to the climate crisis.

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