

Policy 1.19

1.19 RAISING A CONCERN

Introduction

1. IPPF expects that those working for and representing the organization will act with honesty and integrity including by not discriminating on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, race, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, partnership status, pregnancy or parental status, disability, health or any other personal status.⁴³
2. IPPF recognises that the right to be free from abuse, exploitation and harassment is enshrined in international human rights legislation namely ICERD, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, CAT, CRC, CRPD.⁴⁴ IPPF additionally acknowledges that sexual harassment and abuse are a form of gender-based violence.
3. IPPF is accountable to the communities where it works, its beneficiaries, donors and supporters, as well as to its volunteers, trustees and staff. An open, fair and central complaints and whistleblowing process supports IPPF in creating a culture of speaking up and is an integral part of IPPF's safeguarding approach. Therefore, IPPF Secretariat will maintain the oversight and coordination of all complaints and concerns across the Federation.
4. Understanding, responding to and learning from complaints and concerns is an essential part of IPPF's transparency and accountability processes. Complaints, concerns and feedback allow IPPF as an organization to reflect on and identify how IPPF needs to change and to adapt. IPPF views this process as a positive opportunity to learn, develop and improve.
5. IPPF is committed to protecting its volunteers, trustees and staff from any detriment, victimization, harassment or bullying as a result of raising a concern (whistleblowing). Complaints of any such behaviour will be taken seriously and managed appropriately through the relevant disciplinary process.

⁴³ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

⁴⁴ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, inhuman or Degrading treatment or Punishment, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

6. IPPF is committed to supporting good management practice and a culture of being able to speak up, where volunteers, trustees and staff can raise concerns about their colleagues' and supervisor's conduct informally with them in the first instance and that these concerns will be listened to and taken on board without victimization.
7. This policy is intended to set out the guiding principles and values applicable to all elements of IPPF (its Secretariat, Member Associations, members of the Board of Trustees, Audit Committee, and Regional Forums, and governing bodies of Member Associations). These guiding principles and values need to be implemented through the relevant regional and local policies and procedures.

Purpose and Scope

8. This policy applies to all volunteers, trustees and staff⁴⁶ of IPPF including members of the Board of Trustees, Audit Committee and Regional Forums. Collaborative partners and other partners are required to adhere to this Policy in addition to their own policies and procedures which shall be aligned with this Policy.

Definitions

9. A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction. It can relate to malpractice, the standard of service received from IPPF, action or lack of action by IPPF, or the behaviour of IPPF volunteers, trustees, staff or anybody directly involved in the delivery of IPPF's work, including contractors.
10. **"Whistleblower"** is the term used to describe a person who raises public interest concerns about malpractice whether in their workplace or otherwise, using appropriate procedures.

11. Malpractice

Malpractice includes, but is not limited to, the issues listed below:

- i. Financial wrongdoing including theft, bribery, fraud, money laundering and aid diversion;
- ii. Failure to comply with any legal obligations;
- iii. Bullying and harassment including sexual harassment of another

⁴⁶ "Staff" refers to all paid staff: permanent, fixed term and temporary staff; it includes employees, agency workers, consultants, interns and contractors.

- volunteer, trustee or staff member, but not usually of the whistle-blower themselves;⁴⁷
- iv. Abuse or exploitation, including sexual, of children, vulnerable adults or beneficiaries;
 - v. Breach of IPPF Code of Conduct;
 - vi. Abuse of authority;
 - vii. Danger to the health and safety of individuals or damage to the environment;
 - viii. Improper conduct or unethical behaviour;
 - ix. Activity which would bring the organization into serious disrepute;
 - x. Deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the matters listed above.

12. **Detriment** occurs when an individual is subjected to a disadvantage e.g. losing a job, exclusion, demotion, denial of promotion, blocking access to training, resources etc or a refusal of service or reduction in the quality of service offered or provided.

13. **A vexatious complaint or concern** has no merit and is intended to cause inconvenience, harassment or expense to the organization.

14. **A frivolous complaint or concern** has no serious purpose or value. It may have little merit and be trivial such that investigating it would be out of proportion to the seriousness of the issues raised.

15. **Grievance procedure** is the internal procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints about individual contracts, working conditions or bullying and harassment issues.

How to raise a concern

Incident Reporting Service

16. Where possible, complaints and concerns should be submitted through IPPF SafeReport, IPPF's incident reporting service. Contact details are made easily accessible on IPPF's website.

17. Whistleblowing concerns of staff, trustees or volunteers can also be raised with an appropriate supervisor, director, safeguarding advisor, Union representative

⁴⁷ Such complaints generally being more appropriately raised through the relevant grievance procedure (see **).

or the Human Resources team and/or by using the relevant grievance or whistleblowing procedure.

18. Safeguarding concerns can also be raised in line with the relevant safeguarding procedure.

19. Complaints and concerns relating to fraud can also be raised in line with the relevant procedure.

20. Non-staff individuals may also raise their concerns directly with IPPF through the relevant whistleblowing procedure.

21. To ensure oversight and effective monitoring and learning, complaints will be processed by the Central Office and distributed in line with IPPF SafeReport Procedures.

Anonymous complaints and concerns

22. IPPF would rather receive an anonymous complaint or concern than not have it reported at all. However, it may be difficult for IPPF to investigate complaints and concerns made anonymously, especially if they are not adequately substantiated.

23. Where IPPF is unable to investigate an anonymous complaint or concern, it will nevertheless be reviewed and logged.

24. Whistleblowers should understand that remaining anonymous may affect the ability of IPPF to act on any future claims of unfair treatment which may arise as a result of that whistleblowing.

25. Individuals concerned about being identified are encouraged to request confidentiality.

Guiding principles

IPPF is committed to ensuring that it responds to the actions of individuals who raise concerns or complaints or bring grievances as follows:

Fair

26. IPPF will listen to the person raising the complaint or concern and take the time to understand what the complaint or concern is about, the reasons for it and the outcome the person expects.

27. Complaints and concerns will be dealt with consistently and the persons investigating and making decisions will be impartial. IPPF endeavours to ensure that all its processes pay due regard to the needs of anyone who may have been subject to ill-treatment or abuse and that where a complaint or concern relates to such conduct the needs of its recipient remain at the forefront of any investigation process.

28. No volunteer, trustee or staff will be subject to any detriment, victimization, harassment or bullying as a result of raising a concern.

29. If the person is receiving a service from IPPF, making a complaint or raising a concern will not affect the service they receive.

Confidential

30. All complaints and concerns will be processed, managed and stored in line with applicable policy. Information about a complaint or concern will be provided only to those people who need to know about it, in order for the complaint or concern to be actioned properly. Personal details about the complainant or whistleblower and any alleged perpetrators will remain confidential.

31. Where confidentiality is requested, every effort will be made to maintain this and

identities will not be disclosed without prior consent, unless required by law.⁴⁷

32. Where any identities are likely to or do become known, the implications of this, and any protection or support requirements which flow from it, will be discussed with the individual concerned.

33. The direct report by a whistleblower of concerns to the media or otherwise to organizations outside the IPPF may, depending on the appropriateness of the recipient of the information, negate the whistleblower's rights under this policy and/or under local law.

34. IPPF recognises that non-disclosure agreements do not prevent individuals from making disclosures in the public interest.

Transparent and Accountable

35. IPPF will ensure that the process to be applied to, and the possible outcomes of, the complaint/concern are clearly explained to those involved. IPPF will give clear, evidence-based explanations, and reasons for any decisions made.

36. All complaints/ concerns will be logged and monitored, and anonymized data concerning complaints will be included in IPPF's annual reporting. The types of complaints/concerns received by IPPF, and any implications thereof, will be reviewed by the Director General on an annual basis and reported to the Board of Trustees and externally as appropriate.

37. IPPF will ensure that all feedback and lessons learnt from complaints and concerns contribute to service improvement and staff welfare. IPPF will share information about learning with volunteers, trustees and staff in a confidential manner through a report summary.

Accessible

38. IPPF is committed to making the process of submitting a complaint/concern as easy as possible. IPPF's incident reporting service, IPPF SafeReport, is available in a number of different formats and languages. Support is available to individuals with additional needs on request.

Efficient and timely

⁴⁷ See the Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy

39. IPPF will acknowledge and aim to resolve complaints and concerns in a timely manner, in line with the timelines in the appropriate procedure. IPPF will keep all parties informed of the process and of any delays.

Implementation

40. It shall be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees, Director-General, Regional Forums, Regional Directors, Member Associations' boards and Executive Directors to ensure that Raising a Concern policies that meet the above-mentioned minimum standards are in place and that they are implemented, monitored and reviewed within a timeframe agreed by management.

41. It shall also be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees, Director-General, Regional Forums, Regional Directors, Member Associations' boards and Executive Directors to ensure that grievance and Whistleblowing procedures are in place which are compliant with IPPF's values, and that they are implemented, monitored and reviewed within a timeframe agreed by management.

42. IPPF Member Associations, collaborative partners and Secretariat will:

- i. Ensure their volunteers, trustees, staff and beneficiaries and local communities are aware of this policy and know how to use IPPF SafeReport.
- ii. Adopt and implement complaints and whistleblowing policies and procedures based on the above principles and implementation points below, whilst reflecting local legislation and requirements.
- iii. Ensure all leaders and managers lead by example and promote an environment where raising concerns is encouraged and welcomed.
 - iv. Ensure all complaints are appropriately logged and recorded.
- v. Ensure that responses to complaints and concerns pay due regard to the needs of anyone who may have been subject to ill-treatment or abuse and that where a complaint or concern relates to such conduct the needs of its recipient remain at the forefront of any investigation process.
- vi. Ensure that support is available to survivors (victims) of harm caused by

staff or anyone associated with IPPF, regardless of whether a formal investigation is carried out. An up to date list of local organizations and contacts offering support must be available. This list should include but not be limited to information about legal, counselling, medical and psychosocial support only. Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor (victim).

- vii. Make available evidence of all of the above to the Director General upon request.

Frivolous and vexatious complaints or concerns

43. IPPF may decide not to investigate a complaint or concern if it is frivolous or vexatious. In considering if a complaint or concern is frivolous or vexatious, IPPF recognises that:

- i. Individuals submitting a complaint or concern may be aggrieved and frustrated so the focus must be on careful consideration of the merits of the case and not the attitude of the individual.
- ii. Every complaint or concern must be considered on its own merits. Even if someone has made a frivolous or vexatious complaint or concern in the past, it must not be assumed that any other complaint or concern they submit will also be frivolous or vexatious.

44. Vexatious and/or persistent or repetitive frivolous complaints or concerns submitted by volunteers, trustees and staff may result in disciplinary action. It is important to stress that disciplinary action will not be taken in respect of complaints or concerns that are merely regarded as mistaken or incorrect, and that disciplinary action will only be taken when the nature of the complaints or concerns is such that they can fairly be categorized as malicious and/or harassing and/or brought in bad faith.

45. Complaints or concerns which if brought by staff could result in disciplinary action may, if brought by persons external to IPPF, result in legal action.

Appeal Process

46. IPPF complaints processes contain appeal mechanisms. External review is also available via IPPF's regulator the Charity Commission and the Fundraising Standards Board as well as local regulators.

Complaints and concerns involving the officers at the highest-level of the Federation

47. Complaints or concerns raised in respect of members of the IPPF Board of Trustees, including the Honorary Chair - Board of Trustees and the Honorary Treasurer; and complaints or concerns raised against the Honorary Legal Counsel, members of the Audit Committee, members of any other committee established by the Board of Trustees and the Director General are dealt with in line with policy 1.21 of the Independent complaints panel policy.

Complaints and concerns involving Member Associations, collaborative partners and other partners

48. Where the Member Association, collaborative or other partners carry out their own investigations into matters falling within this policy, the latter shall inform IPPF Secretariat of the outcome in line with the IPPF Safeguarding Procedure.

49. If a decision is made that IPPF need to investigate a complaint or concern about a Member Association, collaborative partner or other partner, that organization is required to cooperate with the investigation and adhere to the IPPF Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy.

50. Substantiated malpractice or failure of a Member Association to follow due process, ensure the implementation of the outcomes and recommendations of an investigation shall engage Section 7 of IPPF Act and Regulations on Suspension and Expulsion of Member Associations and Members of the Board of Trustees.

51. Substantiated malpractice or failure of any partner to ensure the implementation of the outcomes and recommendations of an investigation shall be considered a breach of IPPF's contractual agreement with this partner. This may incur sanctions and termination of contract.

As adopted by Governing Council, November 2018

Last amended by Governing Council, May 2019