

**Agenda Item 3.5-c**

**Summary**

Policy 4.17 has been updated to reflect developments on the issue of the climate crisis and sexual and reproductive health and rights both internal and external to IPPF since the last iteration of the policy, which was adopted in 2011.

The Policy has been updated in parallel to the development of an IPPF external position paper on the climate crisis and sexual and reproductive health and rights and in alignment with its contents.

Ownership of Policy 4.17 was transferred from the humanitarian team to the Central Office advocacy team earlier this year.

Policy 4.17 has been rewritten entirely, which is why a version of the existing Policy with tracked changes is not provided.

**Next plans and timelines**

- 1) Updated Policy 4.17 is submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval at its 17-18 November meeting.

**Action Required**

The Board of Trustees is asked **to approve** the updated Policy.

# SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

## Introduction

1. IPPF affirms that the climate crisis<sup>1</sup> is one of the greatest challenges of this time and that its impacts undermine the achievement of sustainable development<sup>2</sup> and the enjoyment of human rights<sup>3</sup>;
2. IPPF recognizes that the climate crisis is underpinned by grave injustice and that 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;<sup>4</sup>
3. IPPF notes that some countries and regions are more severely impacted by the climate crisis than others, and that 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>5</sup>
4. IPPF underlines that due to deeply ingrained, systemic discrimination, women and girls are at a higher risk of experiencing harmful effects of the climate crisis and that where women and girls are exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as on account of their ethnicity, disability or migrant status, their vulnerability is heightened even more;<sup>6</sup>
5. IPPF acknowledges that the impacts of climate change, which include a rise in temperatures and sea levels as well as increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, are expected to increase over the remainder of this century,<sup>7</sup> which will further heighten the likelihood of humanitarian crises and displacement.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy 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. See Zeldin-O'Neill, S (2019) 'It's a crisis, not a change': the six Guardian language changes on climate matters. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/16/guardian-language-changes-climate-environment>.

<sup>2</sup> See United Nations General Assembly (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A/RES/70/1. Available at: [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E).

<sup>3</sup> See United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures (2019) Safe Climate - A Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment. A/74/161. Available at: [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30158/Safe\\_Climate\\_Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30158/Safe_Climate_Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>4</sup> See Oxfam (2020) Confronting carbon inequality – Putting climate justice at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery. Available at: <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621052/mb-confronting-carbon-inequality-210920-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>5</sup> See IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 151 pp. Available at: [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR\\_AR5\\_FINAL\\_full.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> See United Nations Human Rights Council (2019) Analytical study on gender-responsive climate action for the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of women - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A/HRC/41/26. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/26>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## Intersections between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis

6. IPPF stresses that the climate crisis threatens the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights and that adverse effects may include:
  - a. Disruption of access to sexual and reproductive health services, such as in the aftermath of extreme weather events<sup>8</sup> or as a result of slow onset effects of the climate crisis, including increased water scarcity<sup>9</sup>;
  - b. Further harmful impacts on maternal and other sexual and reproductive health outcomes, such as due to increased heat exposure<sup>10</sup> or saline contamination of drinking water from rising sea levels<sup>11</sup>;
  - c. Increased incidence of sexual and gender-based violence and child, early and forced marriages during humanitarian crises and displacement<sup>12</sup> that are driven by the climate crisis;
  - d. Heightened risks for the rights and health of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics, who are often more severely affected by disasters due to their frequent marginalization.<sup>13</sup>
7. IPPF notes that addressing gender inequality and other forms of marginalization is critical to reducing vulnerability to climate change and an important element of climate change adaptation;<sup>14</sup>
8. IPPF stresses that sexual and reproductive health and rights are essential for achieving gender equality,<sup>15</sup> health, and well-being and for overcoming marginalization and thus for strengthening individuals' and communities' resilience and capacity to adapt to the climate crisis;
9. IPPF highlights that 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;
10. IPPF remains firmly committed to human rights, including the reproductive rights framework adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See International Women's Health Coalition, Marie Stopes International, IPPF et al (2019). A shared agenda - Exploring links between water, sanitation, hygiene, and sexual and reproductive health and rights in sustainable development. Available at: <https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/A%20Shared%20Agenda.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> See Bekkar, B, Pacheco, S, Basu, R et al (2020) Association of Air Pollution and Heat Exposure With Preterm Birth, Low Birth Weight, and Stillbirth in the US – A Systematic Review. JAMA Netw Open. 2020 Jun; 3(6): e208243. Available at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1001%2Fjamanetworkopen.2020.8243>.

<sup>11</sup> See Khan, AE, Ireson, A, Kovats, S et al (2011) Drinking Water Salinity and Maternal Health in Coastal Bangladesh: Implications of Climate Change. Environ Health Perspect 119:1328–1332 (2011). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1002804>.

<sup>12</sup> See UNFPA (2015) The State of World Population 2015: Shelter from the storm - A transformative agenda for women and girls in a crisis-prone world. Available at: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/State\\_of\\_World\\_Population\\_2015\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/State_of_World_Population_2015_EN.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> See J. C. Gaillard, Andrew Gorman-Murray & Maureen Fordham (2017) Sexual and gender minorities in disaster, Gender, Place & Culture, 24:1, 18-26, DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2016.1263438. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2016.1263438>.

<sup>14</sup> See IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report.

<sup>15</sup> See IPPF (2015) Sexual and reproductive health and rights – the key to gender equality and women's empowerment. Available at: [https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/2020\\_gender\\_equality\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/2020_gender_equality_report_web.pdf).

1994<sup>16</sup> and the sexual rights declaration adopted by IPPF in 2008<sup>17</sup>, and the achievement of gender equality;

11. IPPF believes that the promotion of contraception as a strategy for climate change mitigation through a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from reduced fertility levels instrumentalizes women's and girls' bodies, places emphasis and responsibility for the tackling of the climate crisis on those least responsible for contributing to it but most severely affected by its impacts, and is a deeply unjust and harmful distraction from countries' responsibilities to address the structural drivers of the climate crisis;
12. IPPF emphasizes that 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>18</sup>

### **IPPF priorities for advocacy and engagement (Implementation)**

#### *Internal capacity-building*

13. IPPF will strengthen its own capacities to work on the climate crisis, including through learning from others engaged in the climate space.

#### *A strengthened evidence base on interlinkages between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis*

14. IPPF will contribute to strengthening the evidence base on the links between sexual and reproductive health and rights and the climate crisis through documenting learnings from its own work with communities impacted by the climate crisis, including in humanitarian response.
15. 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, including through seeking partnerships with research organizations and through calling 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.

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<sup>16</sup> See UNFPA (2014) Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development – 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. Available at: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme\\_of\\_action\\_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme_of_action_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> See IPPF (2008) Sexual rights: an IPPF declaration. Available at: [https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/sexualrightsippfdeclaration\\_1.pdf](https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/sexualrightsippfdeclaration_1.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> 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. See World Bank data on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (metric tons per capita). Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC>.

*Sexual and reproductive health and rights as critical to climate change adaptation and resilience*

16. IPPF will support individuals and communities to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis through its service delivery in settings affected by the climate crisis, including through humanitarian action.
17. 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, and 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.
18. IPPF will advocate for recognition and support of a broad sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda in these contexts rather than a narrower focus on some aspects of it, such as contraception, only.

*A focus on human rights and gender equality*

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

*Partnerships and space for civil society*

20. 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.
21. IPPF 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.

*Mitigation of climate change and environmental impacts*

22. IPPF will work to address and reduce its own carbon footprint and environmental impacts through environmentally sustainable organizational policies and practices. IPPF will in particular:
  - a. put in place an Environmental Management System for the IPPF Secretariat to be better able to manage the impact of its operations on the environment;
  - b. set clear objectives for improving its environmental performance and for reducing its carbon footprint, and review its achievement against these regularly;
  - c. publish information on its environmental performance at least annually;
  - d. support IPPF Member Associations in the development and implementation of environmental risk mitigation strategies for their operations, with a view to strengthening processes and fostering a culture of sustainability across all levels of IPPF.

23. IPPF will further emphasize the particular responsibility of high-emission countries to take decisive steps 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.

*Approved by Governing Council in May 2011*

*As proposed for approval by Board of Trustees in November 2020.*

