Community Spotlight: Leslie Varkonyi

For IPPF/WHR Chief Information Officer Leslie Varkonyi, sexual and reproductive health is not just a cause; it’s a way of life.

What we do matters to me, not just professionally, but personally. My grandmother died from cervical cancer when I was a toddler, when my mom—a new mother—needed her most. I wish I had known her. The stories my mom told me were filled with humor and love, but a preventable disease took her away. This reminds me of how routine gynecological care is not only a right, but a matter of life and death.

This experience and my work overseas shaped my life, my career, and my philanthropy. I got my first birth control pills from a Planned Parenthood clinic in Arizona, and early on in my career, I had the opportunity to work with indigenous women in Guatemala. I saw firsthand the changes that are possible when women have access to reproductive healthcare. Poverty has so many dimensions, but ensuring that women have the power to decide if and when to have children has a domino effect: women are able to work, provide for their children, and thrive in their physical environment.

I’ve been lucky to work for IPPF/WHR for more than 20 years. One of the most exciting aspects of my job as Chief Information Officer is working with our local partners to set up clinical data management systems. These systems enable health professionals to focus on the needs of our clients rather than paperwork. In the Caribbean, for example, the development of a cervical cancer data module enables our partners to link each client’s exam with their lab results and ensure coordinated treatment and follow-up. Without these systems, many women would slip through the cracks and suffer the same fate as my grandmother.

I became a monthly donor with IPPF/WHR because I see our work in action. The dedication of our partners. The lives saved. The possibilities that open up for women and their families. I know that every dollar I donate, and every hour I work, directly benefits the women, youth, and families who need us most.
Because of YOU, More People Have Access to Life-changing Care

Five Years of Progress Fueled By Your Support: A Final Report on Our 2010-2015 Strategic Plan

Thanks to outstanding supporters like you, IPPF/WHR surpassed the goals of our five-year plan from 2010-2015. Despite challenges in the region, 79% of our local partners across the Americas and Caribbean increased services, with almost half of them more than doubling the number of sexual and reproductive health services they provide to communities in need. Together, we achieved a cumulative average growth rate in sexual and reproductive health services of 14% since 2009. And, with 85 cents of every dollar going directly to programs, we increased services by four million in one year!*

*from 2014-2015

Top Three IPPF/WHR Gains for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

**Cervical Cancer**

**Fact:** The rate of cervical cancer is seven times higher in Latin American and the Caribbean than in North America. It’s the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the region.

**Win:** With your support, IPPF/WHR responds to this crisis by amplifying our local partners’ capacity to conduct early detection screenings for cervical cancer.

**Youth Services**

**Fact:** Today’s generation of youth is the largest the world has ever seen—yet their healthcare needs are not always met. More than 35% of adolescent women in the region are not using modern contraception.

**Win:** IPPF/WHR is helping this generation make informed decisions about their health by providing high-quality, youth-friendly health services, including comprehensive sex education.

**Gender Based Violence**

**Fact:** Violence against girls and women – including sexual violence – is so pervasive that UNICEF said, “the most dangerous place for girls in Latin America and the Caribbean is inside their own homes.”

**Win:** IPPF/WHR was one of the first to create a comprehensive response to violence within the health system. Eradicating violence against women and girls is a key area of expansion and opportunity for investment in 2017.

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**Cervical Cancer Services**

- 2009: 925,000
- 2015: 3,000,000
- A 224% Increase!

**Youth Sexual and Reproductive Services**

- 2009: 2,400,000
- 2015: 5,300,000
- A 121% Increase!

**Gender-Based Violence Services**

- 2009: 200,000
- 2015: 600,000
- A 200% Increase!
Provider Spotlight: Milagros
Community Health Promoter, Honduras

One Family’s Tradition of Family Planning

Milagros is a community health promoter with ASHONPLAFA, our partner in Honduras. She has been operating a family planning stand from her home since 1983. Providers like Milagros work in impoverished communities where health facilities are either of poor quality, too expensive, or simply inaccessible. They battle social norms that prevent women from accessing healthcare and contraception. They empower young people to have a choice and a voice. They persevere.

IPPF/WHR: Why is family planning important to you?

Milagros: There were women in my community who had a lot of children and they wanted to stop having kids—they needed to have a family planning method that was accessible to them [and] close to their houses. This is a way I can help them a little so that they only have the children they want to have.

IPPF/WHR: What inspires you to serve your community after nearly 35 years?

Milagros: There was a girl I helped who wanted to leave her husband. She had three children and wanted to continue her studies, but he wanted more kids. When I first started working with ASHONPLAFA, she came to my house. She started asking [my advice]. At first, she hid the birth control pills from her husband. He finally came with her to talk to me and learn more about family planning, and eventually, she was able to use contraception and finish her studies.

IPPF/WHR: What will happen to the family planning stand when you retire?

Milagros: My granddaughters will manage it. One of my granddaughters is ten-years old. She says “mom they want a one-month injection, it is the brown one” or “the one with the purple cover is for three months.” Everybody—my husband, my children, my son in law—help out. My family says, “Mrs. Milagros, they want pills” or “Mrs. Milagros, they want an injection.” It is a family business.

“He finally came with her to talk to me and learn more about family planning, and eventually, she was able to use contraception and finish her studies.”
IPPF/WHR: What about your dog, Lobo? Is he involved too?

Milagros: Yes, because he barks when someone knocks on the door. We don’t unleash him, he just barks, because people come to the stand even at night. People know that when he is unleashed they cannot come in. They tell me, “last night I came to buy pills but the dog was unleashed, so I left.” Because here, people come at any time—even at six in the morning.

IPPF/WHR: What is your biggest achievement as a health promoter?

Milagros: Being able to help people and serve my community.

“Everybody—my husband, my children, my son in law—help out.”

Give Thanks: Sign Our Card

Happy Thanksgiving! For many families across America, Thanksgiving is traditionally a time to come together and reflect on everything we are grateful for.

Please join IPPF/WHR in showing Milagros and other staff and volunteers across the Americas and Caribbean how grateful we are for their dedication by sending them a note of thanks. Without the efforts of providers like Milagros, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and young people in the region would be denied their basic human right to healthcare.

Visit ippfwhr.org to sign our electronic thank you card by December 1st or sign and return the printed card to:

IPPF/WHR
125 Maiden Lane, Fl. 9
New York, NY 10038-4730

Your hard work, compassion, and perseverance ensure that hundreds of thousands of women, men, and young people throughout the Americas and Caribbean receive the reproductive care and sexuality education they so desperately need.

Thank you for providing lifesaving care and a world of opportunities to each and every one of the individuals you serve.

With gratitude,

Your Name and State
We Stand with Haiti

Last month, Hurricane Matthew—the most powerful storm to hit the Atlantic in 50 years—struck Haiti.

Matthew left behind widespread destruction in a country still picking up the pieces from the devastating earthquake that hit the island in 2010. According to the United Nations Population Fund, the number of pregnancies increased after the earthquake, many the result of violence. The agency estimates that more than 10,000 women in hurricane-affected areas are at risk of sexual violence, and that more than 13,000 women will give birth in the next three months. And the spread of the Zika virus lends even more urgency to ensuring women have access to sexual and reproductive healthcare.

Displaced families need access to basic health services now more than ever. Thanks to your support, our local partner, PROFAMIL, is responding with mobile units to bring critical healthcare to women and their families in the communities most affected by Matthew—the same communities that face high rates of infant mortality and violence against women, and have little access to care.

Thank you for standing with women and girls in Haiti—not only during Matthew—but 365-days-a-year.

Making Every Dollar Count

We are proud of the way we manage our funds. That’s why we strive to operate with efficiency while minimizing fundraising and management expenses. As a result, 85 cents of every dollar we spend goes directly to our programs and services.

“Top-Rated in Reproductive Health, Family Planning, and Women’s Health”  
CharityWatch

“Platinum Participant”  
Guidestar

“Four Star Charity”  
Charity Navigator

85% Programs

5% General Administration

10% Fundraising
YOU spoke and we listened.

Thank you for pushing us to be better. We’re proud of the achievements highlighted in our 2015-2016 Annual Report and we’re happy to report that we made changes based on your feedback.

This year, 80% of the recipients of our annual report received a notification by email, 17% by postcard, and only 3% received the full hardcopy—printed on recycled paper—by mail.

Download your copy of our 2015-2016 Annual Report at 2015report.ippfwhr.org or contact Lloyd Alexander at (212) 214-0278 or lalexander@ippfwhr.org to receive a copy by mail.

Thank You For Another Year of Success!

No tree grows in a forest alone.

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