



10 November 2021

Dear Friends,

The headline in a recent post from one of my favorite periodicals asked: “What happens when COVID ends?” I was struck by the hopeful naivete of the question? Clearly the author doesn’t sit where I do!

This week, IPM lost yet another dear friend to the still-raging pandemic, the horror of which remains far from most of our “northern” eyes. We may debate when to have our children under 11 vaccinated... We remain frustrated by new variants and so-called breakthrough cases that keep popping-up as vaccination is questioned and masking deemed optional—giving COVID a new lifeline literally every second of every day... We are saddened that, after all this time, we still need to keep our distance from the most vulnerable of those we love... but most of us have truly no idea how bad this pandemic still is.

As of today, more than 5MILLION PEOPLE HAVE DIED! There have been over 251MILLION CASES. In the USA alone almost 757,000 people have died. In EL SALVADOR, a country that claims “success” in fighting COVID, the vastly underreported number of deaths is 3,704 with a huge nationwide spike in marginalized communities right now. In COLOMBIA, where IPM’s Partners are suffering in a particularly harsh way, over 127,000 people have died. In INDIA, a microscopic representation of reality the number of deaths is 461,849. In ITALY, where I first partnered with IPM, 132,491 people have died. In KENYA, where only a small percentage of the population has been vaccinated and national accounting for health care is abhorrent, the death toll is at 5,314 and rising.

These aren’t just numbers, they are lives. Lives taken all too soon from loved ones. Deaths that could have been avoided if our actions matched our rhetoric. The “numbers” are so large that we have become almost dismissive of daily caseloads and death tolls that rightfully condemn the vast disparities in our health care systems worldwide.

The IPM core value of Accompaniment calls us to move beyond disbelief and frustration to action. It’s not enough to simply say we wish we could do more, or we’ll keep you in our prayers. Not enough when our Project Partners and their families remain gravely ill and are unable to be present for the burials of their loved ones. Dear members of the IPM Family are still on oxygen, confined to their beds, unable to get even the first dose of a vaccine.



Don Rafael Carranza (pictured above in his Zaragoza home) is one such person. The father, grandfather, and great grandfather of a former IPM colleague, dear friends, and Project Partner participants, he was incredibly dear to me as well. As I told my faith community this Sunday, every time I hugged *Papito* he reminded me of my own maternal grandfather—same smell, same firm grip, same kind eyes. He was buried overnight and largely alone. His daughter Maria Julia, an IPM Project Foundress and student of the murdered Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel, has COVID and is on oxygen herself as she comes to terms with her beloved father's sudden death. The unspeakable human tragedy of this pandemic has not ended for her family nor for virtually all of IPM's Project Partners and friends worldwide.

More than two decades ago on my first IPM journey to El Salvador and Nicaragua I finally, fully, understood the meaning of *Casa Abierta* by the *il Duo Guardabaranco* in Don Rafael's home. In the subsequent years, over thousands of days with IPM's Partners, I've felt what it means to be welcomed into such an *Open House*:

I want things to be good between me and my brothers and sisters.

From North to South, to the end of the world.

I know how to listen and lend a hand...

Everyone here is human.

What else can color my world, my race?

Inside we have feelings that need sustenance.

If there are good feelings inside they can't stay inside.

Here's my open house.

There's a plate for you on our table.

The tree's shadow for your head.

You're life's an open book at my door...

Open house.

An unconditional friendship, that's your motto.

Earth likes it that we love each other.

Regardless of cultures or flags

Open house.

I'd like to give you some good luck and be your friend until death and distance, won't stop me...

Here's my open house.

There's a plate for you on our table.

The tree's shadow for your head.

Your Life's an open book at my doorstep...

<https://lyricstranslate.com/en/casa-abierta-open-house.html-1>

Despite too many differences to list, there was never a moment when I felt unwelcome in the Carranza home. There was always a shared plate at the table for me and all those who have come to know the family over the many years since we first met. Many of you have joined me in feeling just as at home within the IPM Family, especially including the family of my longtime Indian colleague Mahesh who is still struggling—along with his spouse and mother—with the latent impacts of COVID-19. My fondest hope is that each of them have somehow felt just as welcome in my own home.

For almost five decades, IPM has insisted that color, culture, race, and flags don't divide. We are brothers and sisters that share the same hopes and dreams. This pandemic tragically reminds us that no matter how hard we work, vast difference still exists—in class, income, food security, and access to healthcare. There is much to do, much of which lays beyond the impact of a relatively small organization such as this.

My years in El Salvador, Kenya, and India have taught me that we can all do something. And, if COVID and Don Rafael taught me one thing it is that everyone is welcome in the Open House that is the IPM

Family. Each Partner endowed with a justified claim for a place at our table—where health & wellness is the most fundamental right of all!

I hope each of you will do what you can to step up at this time as we continue to listen, love, and lend a hand.

Faithfully yours,



Joseph F. Cistone
Chief Executive Officer



Here are some concrete suggestions from my colleague Adela Zayas Hernandez, IPM's Director of International Partnerships & Programs, who you can reach directly at: ahernandez@ipmconnect.org on how you can join IPM in offering a place at our table right now!

The World has always been in constant change, but since COVID-19 the transformation we see in social relationships, economy, health, safety, and food security is radical. These changes have brought many needs.

COLOMBIA: There is a great need for job sustainability, for just salaries and income, as well as the re-integration in education, after virtual classes, for many children in different parts of the country, especially in rural areas has become a great need.

Support IPM's local Partners, *The Center for the Formation of Peace and Ser Mujer*

EL SALVADOR: The need for oxygen tanks, hospitalization access for all and education around biosecurity measures has become more important than ever, since COVID-19 cases are significantly growing each day.

Designate your gift for IPM's Emergency Response to the Pandemic—#IPMResponds

INDIA: The need for proper health care and access to medicines for all communities—across Caste and religious expression—is not covered in India and is something our local Staff is working to change.

Support the remarkable work of IPM's South Asia Regional Office

KENYA: The need for food security, access to potable water and adequate sanitary resources like masks, alcohol, and disinfectants, is immense throughout East Africa.

Designate your gift to support the hiring and work of IPM's new Regional Coordinator in Kenya

NICARAGUA: Need for free expression, security for social leaders and government stability. The need for democracy is growing every day.

Support local Project Partners *CEPROSI* and *Mujer y Comunidad*.

As Adela prophetically proclaims: *“As humans committed to peace, justice, and hope we must be aware of the needs around the world, to support the vulnerable, to share their story and to accompany their struggles. This is how we face the constant transformation we are all living during this pandemic, united in solidarity.”*

Want to learn and do more?

- Reach out to Joe directly at 1.866.932.4082 or jfcistone@ipmconnect.org
- Consider participating in an upcoming IPM Virtual Immersion Experience Program with IPM's Director of Education & Immersion Experience Programs, Vicky Jimenez. You can meet Vicky in person when she is in the USA later this year or contact her via email: vjimenez@ipmconnect.org
- Check out <https://www.facebook.com/IPMConnect/>
- Support #IPMResponds at <https://ipmconnect.org/make-a-donation/>
- Please continue to center IPM in your thoughts, prayers, and meditation practices

www.ipmconnect.org