

Background has  
white linen texture



# STORIES FOR 40 YEARS

A Commemorative Collection of Stories of  
Accompaniment, Solidarity, & Trust on IPM's 40th Anniversary

Editors: Joseph F. Cistone & Sarah Gauvin

“

*In 2005 I capped my last night in El Salvador at the movie theater, enjoying a comedy alongside Salvadorans who consider razor wire lining the tops of their walls as a status symbol. Sitting in that air-conditioned comfort, munching on popcorn, my mind wandered back to Beatriz's dirt floor and handmade tortillas. She and her community, having so little, embrace life with a mindset of abundance — thankful for the simple things they do have. In contrast, we Americans and the elite of El Salvador seem to operate with a mindset of scarcity — seeking what we don't have and building walls to protect what we might lose. Organizations like IPM, and their Project Partners around the world, challenge us to see the world through the lens of abundance, to find ways to live and work together, so that all the world's citizens can enjoy what we take for granted and teach us how to live in solidarity and love.”*

– **Rick Steves**, Author, Television & Radio Personality, and Friend of IPM



*IPM International Board, Project Partners, Staff and Friends gathered with PBS travel personality Rick Steves at the Breen Center of St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland, Ohio in October of 2014 for IPM's Inaugural General Assembly and 40th Anniversary Celebratory Activities.*

Copyright © 2015 International Partners in Mission

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any form without written consent from an authorized representative of IPM (International Partners in Mission). All photos and content property of IPM.

ISBN: 978-0-692-44126-8

Editors: Joseph F. Cistone, Sarah Gauvin  
Book design: Academy Graphic Communication, Inc.

*Founded in 1974, IPM works across borders of faith, culture, and socioeconomic circumstance with children, women, and youth to create partnerships that build justice, peace, and hope.*

# 40 STORIES FOR 40 YEARS

A Commemorative Collection of Stories of Accompaniment,  
Solidarity, & Trust on IPM's 40th Anniversary

## **Editors:**

Joseph F. Cistone  
Sarah Gauvin

---

## **Acknowledgements:**

James & Sammy Mayer, Paul & Vercile Strege, Bernie Marquardt, Lietta Haenel, Marion Kretzschmar, and all those who created and nurtured the founding of IPM.

Alice & Tim McCarthy, longtime friends of IPM, through whom the production of this collection was made possible in part by the generosity of their Business of Good Foundation.

Our dedicated and passionate 2014 International Board Members: Antonina Aura, Xenia Chevez, Priscilla D'Costa, Beth Damsgaard-Rodriguez, Mark Falbo, Larisa Goldman, Ana Greig, Margie Hojara-Hadsell, Douglas Horner, Jim Kamphoefner, James Keane, Gary Meador, Caroline Mills, Bill Nyasio, Peggy Schaefer, and Joseph F. Cistone, *ex-officio*, and those Directors Emeritus & Honorary Board Members: Paul F. Bente, Tony Dowell, Carol Findling, Sharon Milligan, Zoraida Soza Sanchez, Hina Shah, and David Westcott.

Collaborating Staff & Colleagues of this project, past & present, especially the following: Fátima Benítez, Sarah Emigh-Doyle, Ilze Fender, Rosalie Kell, Erika Murcia, Stephanie Pedicini, Jared Odhiambo, Tina Rosenberg, and Mahesh Upadhyaya.

Particular thanks to Cara Weber, of the College of the Atlantic, who gave significant time and talent in support of *40 Stories for 40 Years*.

---



---

### **Dedication:**

*This collection is dedicated to all contributing Project Partners, Project Coordinators, and Friends of IPM; without the courage you displayed in baring your struggles and successes, this book would not have been possible. Our most humble thanks to all the individuals of the 348 Project Partners IPM has had the privilege to walk with over the last 40 years, to our Founders who possessed the courage to create a new model of mission inspired by a dynamic vision of Partnership across cultural and continental divides, and to the 1,773 Immersion Experience Program participants who have accompanied our Partners to listen & learn since 2003.*

---



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p><b>Preface, By Sarah Gauvin</b> ..... 6</p> <p><b>Introduction, By Joseph F. Cistone</b> ..... 7</p> <p><b>Xenia Chevez Juarez, NICARAGUA</b> ..... 10 Inspired by Hardship, Improved through Education</p> <p><b>ACCOMPANIMENT</b></p> <p><b>Priscilla Nagurai, KENYA</b> ..... 14 <i>Tuseme</i> (Speak Out), By Tina Rosenberg</p> <p><b>Sonya Dias, BOLIVIA</b> ..... 15 My Bubble was No More!</p> <p><b>Gladys Owuor, KENYA</b> ..... 16 Sharing Joy &amp; Sharing Sorrow</p> <p><b>Gaylene (McLeod) Wagon, UNITED STATES</b> ..... 17 Learning a Craft, Upholding a Culture</p> <p><b>Soni Shrestha, NEPAL</b> ..... 18 Partnership Means to Uplift &amp; Empower</p> <p><b>Zaria Omar, KENYA</b> ..... 19 Igniting Partnership, Uniting People</p> <p><b>Concepción Conchita Aída Méndez, EL SALVADOR</b> ..... 20 Embracing &amp; Endorsing Capability</p> <p><b>Arbelia Francisca Conde García, NICARAGUA</b> ..... 21 I Believe in the Capacity of the Human Being</p> <p><b>Flo Saeger, UNITED STATES</b> ..... 22 You Realize that this is the Way People Live All the Time</p> <p><b>Seraphine W. Ngugi, KENYA</b> ..... 23 I would be no Different</p> <p><b>Noorsuba Parvin Shaikh, INDIA</b> ..... 24 More than Money</p> <p><b>Martha Cecilia Arroyave Arbelaez, COLOMBIA</b> ..... 25 I Was Born to Be with the People</p> <p><b>Fulmati Thapa, NEPAL</b> ..... 26 We have the Power to Create through Ideas &amp; Attitude</p> <p><b>SOLIDARITY</b></p> <p><b>Vimala Charles, INDIA</b> ..... 28 On Their Own Legs</p> <p><b>Vicenta Fuentes Gomez, EL SALVADOR</b> ..... 29 Greater Lessons: Learning More than Academics</p> <p><b>Namaraj Silwal, NEPAL</b> ..... 31 One World: Connecting People to People</p> <p><b>Rodrigo Péret, BRAZIL</b> ..... 32 Learning How to Work from the Roots</p> <p><b>Joseph F. Cistone, INDIA</b> ..... 33 On the Waves Where Three Oceans Meet</p> <p><b>Rafael Isaías Valdez Rodríguez, NICARAGUA</b> ..... 34 In the Work, We Learn More</p>	<p><b>Daniben Pochabhai Chauhan, INDIA</b> ..... 35 Making a Legacy Last, By Himatbhai Pochabhai</p> <p><b>Himatbhai Pochabhai, INDIA</b> ..... 36 Connected Like Family</p> <p><b>Joseph F. Cistone, UGANDA</b> ..... 37 With Forgotten Youth</p> <p><b>María “Paulita” Paula Pérez, EL SALVADOR</b> ..... 38 Finding Community through the Revolution</p> <p><b>Shashi Bhushan Pandit, INDIA</b> ..... 39 They Sat with Us</p> <p><b>Medardo Gómez, EL SALVADOR</b> ..... 40 Work of Love &amp; Solidarity</p> <p><b>TRUST</b></p> <p><b>Hilary Kazoora, KENYA</b> ..... 42 Like a Pencil in the Hands of God, By Tina Rosenberg</p> <p><b>Mardi Manary, MALAWI</b> ..... 43 IPM’s Foresight: The First Organization to Believe in Us</p> <p><b>Susan Mutuku Kyule, KENYA</b> ..... 44 Retired but Not Tired: A Lifetime of Passion for Community</p> <p><b>Ellen Hilgendorf-Mead, LEBANON</b> ..... 46 Raising a Family in Lebanon</p> <p><b>Joanne Peterson, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC</b> ..... 47 Dignity Holds the Key to Human Transformation</p> <p><b>Joseph F. Cistone, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA</b> ..... 48 Ghost Towns with Cars</p> <p><b>Jane Sullivan-Davis, CHILE</b> ..... 50 Innovative Service Work: Recognizing Justice</p> <p><b>Jennifer Gualteros Pastrana, COLOMBIA</b> ..... 51 On Becoming a Community Leader</p> <p><b>George Hrbek, UNITED STATES</b> ..... 52 Building Right Relationships in Community through Theater Arts</p> <p><b>Ana Greig, EL SALVADOR</b> ..... 53 <i>Me Mandaron</i></p> <p><b>Leah Shulte, NEPAL</b> ..... 54 Partnership is a Cornerstone</p> <p><b>Hybon Otieno, KENYA</b> ..... 55 The First of its Kind in Kenya</p> <p><b>Gloria Taylor, UNITED STATES</b> ..... 56 Take Your Place</p> <p><b>Carol Findling, UNITED STATES</b> ..... 57 I Agreed, Not Knowing how far [IPM] Would Take Me</p> <p><b>List of Contributors:</b> ..... 58</p> <p><b>For More Information about IPM:</b> ..... 59</p>
--	---

## PREFACE

Although it has taken years of collaborative efforts, and would indeed take a few more to truly capture the full scope of the organization's impact, *40 Stories for 40 Years* began with a vision to personalize IPM's Project Partners through the sharing of individual stories with the greater IPM Family. In upholding IPM's lifelong mission to humanize global poverty and inspire empathy for both the suffering and joy we share as a human species, this individualized approach seeks to showcase 40 years of IPM Partnership with faces and voices rather than reports or projections.

IPM has historically entered into partnership with others under the “two-way street” model of listening and learning, and of teaching and humbling ourselves enough to be taught. In honoring that vision, this book was broken into three thematic sections that reflect the values our Founders instilled now over forty years ago.

- **Accompaniment:** In walking with others and truly allowing ourselves to be immersed in their experience, we allow ourselves to empathize in a much more engaged way. These stories showcase the way in which IPM has accompanied individuals and their affiliated programs.
- **Solidarity:** In supporting one another through fellowship and uniting in a common vision for the future, we gain strength and understanding of our shared experience. These stories illustrate the political and social struggle Partners and Friends have faced, and how IPM united with them physically and/or philosophically.
- **Trust:** In having faith in one another and our capabilities and talents, we eliminate victimization and instead encourage empowerment. These stories reflect established projects and connections where IPM supported the preservation of their integrity.

Representatives from IPM's Latin America & the Caribbean, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa regions were interviewed, as well as those from the United States, other Regions IPM has historically worked with, and participants in our innovative Immersion Experience Program, highlighting the breadth and reach of IPM's life-changing impact over the past 40 years. We have endeavored to present their voices in their raw form, unedited and true to their original intent. A brief abstract is provided to create a context for our contributors' stories, but overall, that sort of information was avoided to allow the qualitative nature of the project to resonate.

In participating in the execution of *40 Stories for 40 Years*, a collection that illuminates 40 years of communities inspired through the vision, passion, and – above all – perseverance and hard work of individuals connected through the global embrace of IPM, I hope the book imparts that it is the people of IPM that make real the authenticity and vivacity of goodness. We hope you enjoy meeting them in the following pages.

Kindly,  
Sarah Gauvin



*Sarah with women of ACOMUJERZA in 2014. Paulita (far left) is just one of IPM's Project Partners who has lent her voice to this commemorative collection of stories.*

## INTRODUCTION



*I felt very strongly that the life in which I grew up  
was not the life that was correct for me anymore...  
in a beautiful, intangible, way.”*

– IPM Immersion Experience Program Participant  
in Kenya & El Salvador

Lives changed forever...Ruined for Life...Having our hearts broken and learning to love again. These words, shared by IPM's Friends and Founders, have stuck with me throughout my tenure with IPM. They may sound daunting, but they reflect the fundamental sense of Accompaniment, Solidarity, and Trust that is at the core of IPM.

I have had my heart broken many times. From the racially divisive Cleveland of my youth, Northern Ireland in 1987, Korea in 1988, and Italy in the early 1990s as an IPM Project Partner, to India in 2005, Kenya in 2008, and most recently by the earthquake in Nepal on April 25, 2015. But I was first, personally and most profoundly, challenged to let my heart be broken by my old friend, the late Dean Brackley, who moved to El Salvador after the murder of six Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter on the campus of the Jesuit University of Central America on November 16, 1989. Dean aspired to be a bridge between the Salvadoran people and all those U.S. Citizens who sought to insert their bodies, spirit, and dollars in the dark space between government policy and the deeply faithful people of a country named for the crucified political prisoner of Rome – arguably the only empire to match the USA in the last two millennia. Dean reminded every IPM Immersion Experience delegate with whom he met that learning to love again was the real task before us. And after countless return trips to El Salvador over the past thirteen years, my Salvadoran colleagues and friends embody this reality daily in the face of material poverty and social marginalization those of us in the Global North can only begin to imagine.

Dean's words echoed well those of IPM co-Founder, Jim Mayer, whose memorial plaque at Augsburg College's *Casa Jaime Mayer* in Managua, Nicaragua reminds us that: Jim taught the Lutheran Church, IPM, and the world that we ought “to be about a process of liberating education, where North Americans are confronted with the global realities of poverty and injustice, and challenged to envision a new society grounded in justice and love.”

It is with this spirit that I am pleased to introduce *40 Stories for 40 Years: A Commemorative Collection of Stories of Accompaniment, Solidarity, & Trust on IPM's 40th Anniversary*. It is also exactly what IPM has sought to humbly represent since our founding, particularly through IPM's signature Project Partnerships and Immersion Experience Programs.

As I write on this blustery evening in Maine, it seems like only yesterday that I climbed off the Fiorenza-Roma train and headed out to navigate the bus system of Italy's capital in search of my new home above a soup kitchen run by Caritas Roma. As a recent Yale Divinity School graduate, grounded in the post Vatican II Catholic Church, my seven years in Rome quickly became an eye-opening and faith-challenging experience.

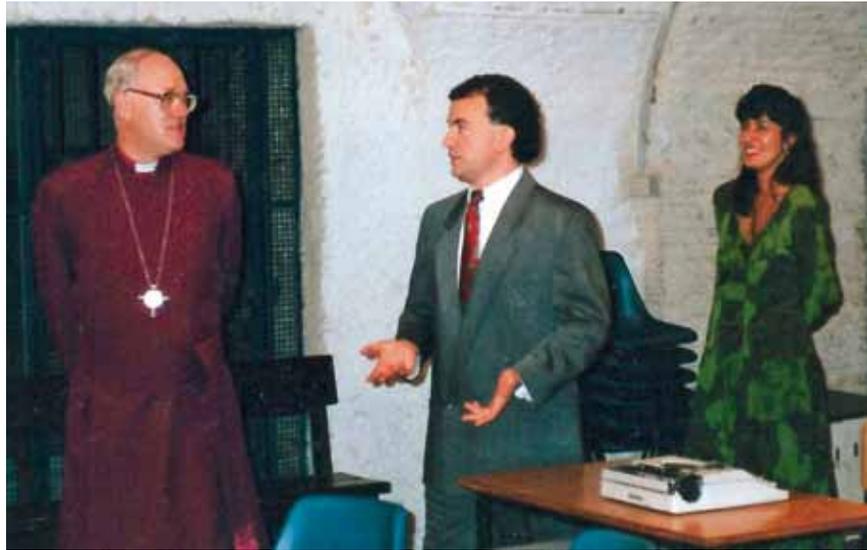
From the Renaissance splendor of the Vatican to the crypt where our inter-religious Refugee Centre flourished, from the memorial constructed for the victims of the Nazi genocide in the Alban Caves to long runs through the ancient streets surrounding the Forum, Rome provoked and refined in me a sense of faith both international and intensely personal. Justice, Peace and Hope—the core aspirations of the mission of IPM—emerged for me more clearly than ever during long distance phone conversations with IPM co-Founder Paul Strege and late nights accompanying a newly arrived refugee family in their search for a “room in the inn.”

For generations of Christians, Rome—like Jerusalem and Mecca for our common Abrahamic faiths, Boudhanath for our Tibetan Buddhist friends, and the Ganges for our Hindu brothers and sisters—was a place of pilgrimage. The inherent richness of its antiquities and the omnipresent sense of religion that pervades the metropolis draws persons from around the world who seek to find their place and their personal peace at the historical center of Christendom.

But two-thousand years of history at the heart of an empire and global church has worn away much of the sheen. The more presumptuous the architecture, the more distant one often feels from the prophetic nature of faith. Wealth and splendor often blur the prophetic nature of our faith traditions. Can we truly be surprised that while the self-obsessed Prosperity Gospel dominates the religious landscape, rabid secularism reigns among many of those young people most passionate about working for change in the contemporary USA?

There is no such blurring among those striving for liberation in Latin America. Some thirty-five years removed from the assassination of El Salvador's martyr-Bishop, Oscar Alfonso Romero, and the rape and murder of four American churchwomen, (two of whom hailed from my hometown of Cleveland, OH), their faith and faith-filled commitment live on. Romero's passion for justice rises again not only through his pending beatification, but in barrio communities like El Zaitte where IPM continues to partner with the faculty and staff of *Patronato Lidia Coggiola*—IPM's largest current Partner in real dollar terms and a continued oasis of education and love in the midst of Salvadoran gangs. The spirit of Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Jean Donovan, and Dorothy Kazel, lives on in the women of *ACACCPAMU*, *ACOMUJERZA*, and *CEPROSI*, among whom IPM has painstakingly replicated the success of *Mujer y Comunidad* in San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua.

*continued on next page*



*Joe and Evelyn Pira of the IPM Project Joined Hands Refugee Centre discuss the plight of refugees in Europe with Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, in 1994 in Rome, ITALY.*

For a young woman confronting gender violence on the banks of Lake Managua to a child forced to hawk fruit on the streets of Ibague, Colombia, a society grounded in justice and love seems very distant indeed! Yet IPM continues to seek out and be sought by those creative, faith-filled individuals and communities for whom partnership within the IPM Family allows them to finally name their own reality and become active participants in their own liberation.

Exposure to such enduring global realities of poverty and injustice remains a core commitment of IPM. Our pilgrimage together—whether through the purchase of handicrafts, donations to IPM Project Partners, participating in Immersion Experience Programs, or the simple reading of this compilation—is one that holds increasing significance for our global community. The opportunity to share our hopes and dreams with others and to humbly uncover that the recipients of our largesse share those same hopes and dreams, is the first, essential, step in envisioning a new society grounded in justice and love.

In 2001, at my urging and with the formal endorsement of IPM’s International Board of Directors, IPM became intentionally interfaith, reflecting more appropriately our commitment to working in just relationships with individuals around the world of all faith traditions. This evolution in IPM’s structure and focus was grounded deeply in my sense that many of the religious and spiritual traditions we encounter amongst are Partners reflect beauty and truth in often unimaginable ways. Such a direction was also undergirded by a growing organizational commitment to ensure that IPM’s efforts are not merely meant to obscure a more traditional, evangelical, mission focus. IPM is well aware that the history of organizations such as ours has often involved a not-so-gently hidden bait and switch. Our goal instead is to mesh the common commitments to justice, reconciliation, and peace present in the religious traditions of our Partners with cooperative interfaith endeavors embedded in hope and love.

After a quarter century working in the international, interfaith, non-profit sector, I am convinced that those called to social action on behalf of the world’s marginalized most often and most effectively work from a deeply rooted faith commitment and from within dynamic faith communities. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dorothy Day, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Thich Nhat Hanh, and Desmond Tutu are just a few examples from the last century. Working in such a faith-based and often interfaith manner is not easy. It surely complicates our mission and challenges our donors with an inclusive vision uncommon in the West. But, in a post 9.11 world, where religious militants cloak their murder of innocent Kenyan students with claims of salvation, this space is where IPM is called to be. And it is among these interfaith, grassroots communities where IPM has chosen to ground our mission and from which we most effectively call “Northerners” to conversion.

IPM currently partners with more than fifty community-based organizations in over twenty countries on five continents from offices in El Salvador, India, Kenya, and the USA. Stated broadly, our mission is to work with children, women, and youth across borders of culture, faith, and economic circumstance to promote justice, peace, and hope. More practically, an indigenized Board and Staff work alongside our Partners to provide seed funding and technical support with the ultimate goal of fostering self-sustaining organizations that work on behalf of some of the world’s most impoverished and marginalized communities. Some 60,000 individuals are touched by the work of IPM and our Project Partners every year, with over \$10 million allocated to this purpose since our founding.

As a natural complement to this work, IPM’s Immersion Experience Program allows donors and friends to be more deeply engaged in their philanthropy and volunteerism, while educating individuals about the realities of the countries in which our Project Partners are working. Seven-twelve day Immersion Experiences to Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, India, Italy, Kenya, Nepal, Nicaragua, Tanzania, and among the Shoshone people of Wyoming highlight the program. During a typical IEP, participants have the opportunity to spend time sharing with and listening to our Project Partners, learning the structure and practices of each Project, and developing a complex understanding of the challenges and successes faced by individuals and organizations in the host country(ies). Participants also spend time visiting sites of historical or cultural significance so as to develop a more profound grasp of the diverse and rich culture of the host country. There is no formal service work to perform, nor are participants allowed to proselytize toward a particular denomination and/or faith tradition. Rather, participants come to humbly learn and, through their active presence—eating, playing, praying, and staying with our Partners and friends—come away with a profound sense of what it means to live in solidarity within an ever-shrinking global community. In short, they hear the first-hand stories that this Anniversary publication seeks to provide each of you.



*Bill Hinkley, Majorie RichterKessing, and Joe as he assumes his role as fourth Executive Director in 2001.*

During my Doctoral work at Eden Theological Seminary in Saint Louis, one of my first interviewees, “Juanita,” (an early-twenties, Jesuit University student in the Mid-West who travelled with IPM to El Salvador) summarized well the sharp distinction between traditional Short Term Mission Trips and an IPM IEP when she told me: “I think what made me feel differently about IPM was that I had so much past international travel experience. The prior experience was a lot of doing... not so much interaction with the community, sitting down with people hearing their stories.”

Throughout her IEP with IPM, which I had the privilege of co-facilitating, “Juanita” found she “spent so much time meeting the people of El Salvador, hearing their stories.” She returned to the United States convinced that while you can physically fix just about anything for someone... giving of your time to listen to them is different and what makes IPM IEPs stand out. I didn’t need “Juanita” to remind me, but I certainly appreciated her clarity of thought regarding how other mission or study experiences are more often about sharing a few crumbs from our table or quantifying the needs of those deemed worthy of pity than actively listening, humbly learning, and actually working for change.

IPM’s inaugural General Assembly—held in Cleveland from October 13-17, 2014—brought together more than forty IPM Project Partners, Staff, Volunteers, and Friends from around the world to reaffirm our commitment to one another and plan for an even more inclusive and impactful future. True partnership is impossible with equality and voice. Those gathered in Cleveland reaffirmed this fundamental principal from which the IPM Family has inspired, immersed, and invested in a vision of partnership imbued with imagination.

I shared in IPM’s 2015 Annual Appeal that on the final evening of my most recent Immersion Experience in Colombia our relatively small delegation gathered in silence and prayer around a small table in our host Diego’s home. He recounted the brutal stabbing of a young women from *Patio Bonito* (an impoverished community on the outskirts of Bogota where his youthful colleagues are working with children on the streets) and of how he and his siblings studied hard and worked ceaselessly to provide a home for their mother and family that their alcoholic father could never provide. Diego’s stories were all too familiar. So much sadness and grief seems to plague our world. A world where a child dies of hunger or treatable disease every six seconds and women are trafficked like armaments and drugs. And yet there we were, around a simple meal of bread and wine—sharing stories, shedding tears, and parting lovingly as newfound friends.

I’m often asked what makes IPM unique. More than anything, it’s transcendent moments like that parting evening in Bogota. The forty stories in this commemorative compilation represent, in a deeply personal and representative sense, the hopes and dreams of the 348 Project Partner Initiatives IPM has nurtured these past four decades and the more than 1750 individuals who have travelled with IPM to hear the stories our pastors, politicians, and pundits often leave behind. While I’ll never forget the hope in the countless Partners’ eyes within which I have seen my own life pass before me, nor the peace-filled power of Diego’s parting embrace, *40 Stories for 40 Years* provides each of us with an opportunity to encounter the life-changing nature of IPM first-hand, change that is rooted in the shared commitment required to remake the world a more just and peaceful place, one life at a time.

Whether you are an old friend or new to the IPM Family, your partnership with us makes all this possible more than four decades after those first gatherings of Jim, Paul, Bernie, and others around a table in Saint Louis, sketching out the future for what IPM has become.

As we enter our fifth decade, the steady, relational presence of IPM reminds our friends and supporters that mission is indeed a two-way street that holds the potential to teach us more than we can ever hope to give from our North American abundance. It is through our active participation in IPM’s journey—the other side of the street if you will—that we encounter the inspiration and imagination of some of our world’s most creative and committed citizens. The continued journey of accompaniment, solidarity, and trust between us is, as IPM’s matriarch Sammy Mayer has said, a light for our world.

Peace,  
Joseph F. Cistone  
*In Honor of IPM’s 41st Birthday, May 10, 2015*

## Xenia Chevez Juarez | NICARAGUA

# Inspired by Hardship, Improved through Education



*Xenia, at left, was selected to be the first feature story of the collection due to the all-encompassing and highly-engaged ways in which she has entered into partnership with IPM, transcending all three areas of accompaniment, solidarity, and trust. An International Board Member, Xenia is now Chair of IPM's new Project Partner Working Group as a result of the Inaugural General Assembly's reorganization of governance to allow more participation from Regional representatives. Xenia also coordinates IPM Project Partner CEPROSI. The project was born from a tri-lateral Project Partnership with ACOMUJERZA and Mujer y Comunidad, funded by IPM and Mary's Pence. Since beginning a partnership with CEPROSI, IPM has disbursed over \$20,000 in project-specific funding to support the program's initiatives in microfinance and holistic health. In 2015, CEPROSI will be the pilot recipient of revolving loan funds from IPM's new Project Partner Investment Fund made possible through the generosity of the OSTARA Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland – a direct outcome of the Inaugural General Assembly of October 2014.*

I was born in Leon City, located in the west side of Nicaragua. I was born there, but my parents decided to move to Managua so I am practically from the capital. Like the dream of all parents, they wanted their kids to be educated, so they worked hard to be able to support the family. My father was a bricklayer, an ability that he learnt empirically by helping his father with that kind of work, and my mother was a housewife. She experienced a lot of domestic violence from her parents during her childhood, so she fought to change that environment and she said that her children would not have that type of life.

There were times when I used to wonder, why is there so much poverty? Because there were periods of time that my father was unemployed and sometimes neither of my parents had work so the struggle felt harder. Since I was the older of my siblings, I had to take on responsibilities and commitments at an early age to the family. I think that was my inspiration to improve my life through education: the struggle of those experiences of daily life [as a child] and hoping to overcome that reality.

I spent all my primary school in a convent with my sister at a Catholic Boarding School for girls while my mother was picking cotton in León, and my parents used to visit us over the weekends. My parents were very respectful of the sacraments of baptism and communion, and I think that those values were useful for me in that I did not want to see it just from a theoretical perspective. I wanted to embrace it from the “Bible perspective”, I used to say, to look for Jesus in the praxis and in the work with the people.

We returned to Managua where I continued studying through high school. We got scholarships because of high grades we were expected to move forward to study in the university. I applied to be admitted in the UCA (*Universidad Centroamericana*) and I passed the exam to study a Nutrition Degree. Because of my family's hardship, I had to work to support my parents. I taught in a school at night to be able to pay my studies at the UCA. During the summer season, my sister and I would accompany my grandma selling dairy products and *tamales rellenos*.

This was during the insurrection, in the municipality that violence was not as hard as it was in the center of Managua, but still, I have bad memories. As a teenager, I listened to the family opinion and the criticism, and I got enthusiastic about the possibility of changing the social structures of our people. I worked as a volunteer during the National Literacy Crusade with the Method of Popular Education to educate adults through social committees in each neighborhood which I was part of for around five years, and I had a good record.

I have been committed with working in communities because of my own personal story, but also because of my friendship with my students during the National Literacy Crusade. I was not just teaching them how to read and write, but also that they could be critical about their own realities and

the reasons why they were living in those situations. I had students who were trying to reintegrate into society, maybe during the day some of them would work, or did other things, because they studied at night. I had to mobilize myself into their communities.

I decided to study nutrition as a career because I identified my whole life with children, and the responsibility of take caring of my siblings made me realize the importance of helping children to not be malnourished. At the UCA, I was writing my thesis and I got an opportunity to work in an organization called CEPA (Centro de Educación y Promoción Agraria), a national non-profit organization I worked with on my thesis of Community Nutrition Monitoring Systems (Sistemas de Vigilancia Nutricional Comunitaria), researching how soy influenced the nutrition of a child's diet.

When I got the opportunity at CEPA, I met my husband, William, because he was a consultant for us. We married after some time, and afterward *CEPROSI* was born. He is one of the founders, but when we were ready to give to *CEPROSI* the vision to work with women, he decided to back us from the outside, but still he is an active collaborator to us. Many colleagues that supported us in the process are amazed to see how we have grown up and how much work we have accomplished.

*CEPROSI* means Center for Education and Promotion of the Holistic Health (for its acronym in Spanish) and its main objective was to work in communities from Nindiri continuing our work from CEPA since the financial aid decreased and there were administrative difficulties. It was complicated at the beginning; we visited communities searching for community leaders that were most flexible in welcoming us and hearing about our interests in working with them. In El Portillo, I met Luisa Gaitan, who now leads *CEPROSI*'s corn husk crafting collective named in her honor. She was a very dynamic person, and mobilized ten women to collaborate as crafters, and that was our first relationship with the people there. We were very open and flexible and asked them: What would *you* like to work on?"

Education is not just the [grade points], but is also living with the people and observing their realities. It is right that each person shape their own life, but among several people united, we are able to reach other objectives and the goals are achieved with more support.



Members of the *CEPROSI* cooperative gather in Nindiri, Nicaragua.



# ACCOMPANIMENT



## Priscilla Nagurai | KENYA

# Tuseme (Speak Out)

By: Tina Rosenberg



*Friend of IPM Tina Rosenberg recounts her experience at IPM Project Partners AIC Girls School and Bride Rescue Project. In 2005, IPM began collaborating with these initiatives in Kajaido, Kenya, where forced childhood brides and young girls at risk for other harmful cultural practices are given shelter and an opportunity for education. Past IPM financial contributions were allocated to their scholarship fund, and many past IEP participants, like the students from Holy Cross (Worcester, MA) pictured with Priscilla to the left, can recall fondly the way the Project is empowering young women and girls in the Region.*

As a freelance writer, in September 2013 I was invited to join an IPM Immersion Trip to Kenya. I met and interviewed many of the current Partners implementing IPM-supported projects there, and observed the critical life-changing work IPM is doing in Sub-Saharan Africa. In May of 2014, International Partners in Mission celebrated its 40th Anniversary. It is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the unique and inspiring stories of IPM's global family.

In Kenya, the Maasai reside primarily in the Maasai Mara, a swath of game reserve measuring over 579 square miles bordering Tanzania to the west. Nearly 850,000 in number, this tribe migrated three hundred years ago from Sudan and soon established themselves as herders of cattle, sheep, and to a lesser degree, goats. As anyone who's observed them will attest, the Maasai men's bright red cloaks (*shukas*), and the intricate, beaded jewelry adorned by both men and women are a feast for the eyes. They are a friendly people, yet equally well known to be fiercely stubborn, proud, and some would say arrogant. Most relevant to this story, the Maasai still follow age-group ceremonies and rituals—the boys disappear in the woods for up to five years to hunt lion; the girls are circumcised and sold by their fathers as child brides, oftentimes as young as nine years old.

For twenty-six years, Priscilla Nagurai was a teacher and administrator at the AIC Girls School Bride Rescue Center in Kajaido. As is the custom, she retired at age fifty-five and proceeded to found HELGA Bride Rescue to augment support for the young Maasai girls. HELGA stands for Humanitarian Efforts for Learning of the Girl Child in Africa. This program provides extended education, fiscal, psychological, and medical council, micro-financing opportunities, and HIV/AIDS testing. More importantly, when the girls need to go to court to plead their case, paralegal advice is provided for free, as, fortunately, the Kenyan government backs the right of these girls not to return home. At this time, HELGA provides forty beds for rescued child brides. At this writing, Priscilla's goal is 1500.

"One day in 2004, IPM just walked into the *Bride Rescue Project* and started supporting us," Priscilla shared. It was the beginning of a heartwarming tale of how IPM can genuinely make a difference in the world. For the last nine years, IPM has been instrumental in helping these young, traumatized Maasai girls discover their own self-worth through the tireless efforts of Priscilla and her devoted colleagues.

But there is more. In 1986, with nowhere else to turn, three Maasai girls ran away to Priscilla's family home for safety. Already ostracized from her community for her work at the AIC school, she embraced the chance to really protect these girls under law by getting twenty-four hour security. By 1987, she, her husband and their three children housed eight girls, and over a five year period, that number of "rescued brides" eventually grew to twenty. Priscilla organized various groups to support her cause earning her the accolade in the Guinness Book of Records "for her determination to fight for girl child education, and for the courage to go against traditions." She has since earned eleven honorary awards for her work.

Priscilla was herself rescued by an older sister who took her from their parental home when she was only six years old. Dedicating her life to the protection and education of less fortunate Maasai girls, she now hopes to form The HELGA Foundation with the help of numerous organizations around the world. From the start, IPM has been a faithful partner in her magnanimous efforts to save the souls of child brides in Kenya, and it was an honor and a privilege to meet her.

Sonya Dias | BOLIVIA

## My Bubble was No More!



*Sonya, at left, worked with IPM as a graduate student in Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University and later as a Staff member for IPM in the 2000s. She writes of the sense of accompaniment she felt, even if for a short time during a site visit, with IPM Project Partner CER-DET (Centro Estudios Regionales para Desarrollo de Tarija), a center for the regional study of development in Tarija, Bolivia.*

**W**hat an honor to be remembered through IPM's 40 years of Partnership. I cherish the time spent working on IPM's mission and hope to someday return to this work.

When I started, Joe [Cistone] had recently relocated the office to Cleveland Heights. At that time, there were around 20 projects, but I watched that number more than double over the five years I worked with IPM. I was able to visit all of the Projects throughout Latin America, Kenya, Nepal, and India, where I saw firsthand IPM's values and mission brought to life by the Project Coordinators. Today, I continue to take inspiration from those strong leaders of faith.

It was exciting to see the relationship between IPM and our Partners grow. Living the Partnership was a dream; we would travel thousands of miles by air and then long distances by dirt roads to connect with our Partners. The welcomes were always breathtaking; the art of giving is truly amazing. The welcome tradition, however it was expressed, usually with song or food, is such a powerful symbol of community. Even in the most remote communities where people first felt shy and curious about us, I was always made to feel at home after just a short time of sharing and getting to know each other. In fact, I had dozens of moments where I would imagine myself staying to live and work at a Project—there was so much to learn and take in and the visits never felt long enough.

One of my shortest visits was with the community *CER-DET (Centro Estudios Regionales para Desarrollo de Tarija)* in Bolivia, a community not very accustomed to visitors. After traveling for days to visit this very remote women's group, we were only able to stay for an afternoon and I felt we barely scratched the surface of connecting, but due to the travel [itinerary], it was all we could do.

We relied on our translators and our friends from the *CER-DET* Staff to interpret the community's struggles and efforts. As time went on, IPM's development of regional offices with locally-led staff allowed for news as well as accompaniment with the Partners to become much easier. Connection and cultural understanding were no longer limited to the site visits or Immersion Experiences Programs, but became a daily passion as I was in constant communication with the local staff. I learned more about the domestic politics impacting our Partners as the movement to protect people's rights—most frequently their environmental rights—grew. Walking the line between my abundant life and hearing the news about water and power cuts or terrible natural disasters, my bubble was no more! My friends in the field were continuing their commitment to their communities no matter what came in their way.

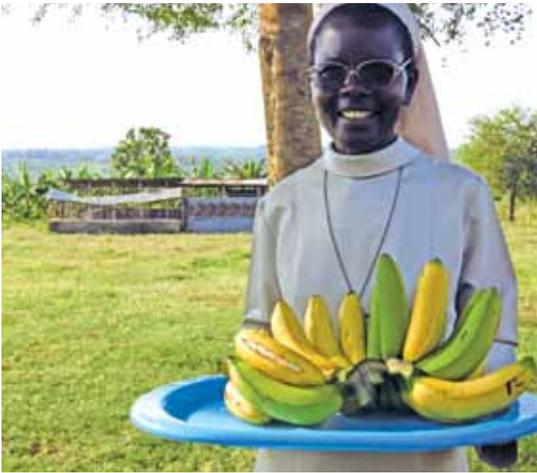
I feel so fortunate to have had these experiences; I would not trade a single moment! I love that I can still feel connected through the newsletters and Facebook! It's great to see those familiar faces and know their own efforts are growing, just as IPM's are.



*Sonya and IPM CEO Joe Cistone at a meeting of the Sub-Saharan Africa Advisory Council.*

## Gladys Owuor | KENYA

# Sharing Joy & Sharing Sorrow



*Since 2008, Sister Gladys, pictured here, has coordinated IPM Project Partner Rieti Agricultural Training, which teaches participating members of the Bondo community techniques for sustainable farming in the region's often arid climate. Growing indigenous crops and raising a manageable amount of dairy cattle, the project offers opportunity to provide food to its participants and their families, and to sell the surplus at the local market.*

**M**y name is Sister Gladys Owuor. I was born on the 15th of August in 1964, one of the greatest feast days in the Catholic Church calendar. I was born in the village of Uranga, west Alego location, Uranga division of the Siaya District in the Nyanza province of Kenya, to Josephat Owuor Jaoko and Jane Atieno. I was born in a very poor community, and as a child, I would see how people were struggling to make ends meet. What one observes as a child does not easily leave his or her mind, and that memory still remains in my mind today.

My father, Josephat, was a polygamist with three wives, one of which was my biological mother. She was blessed with eight children, four boys and four girls. I was the second born. My father was a farmer, and almost all of what we ate could be gotten from our farm. People came to buy milk, eggs, vegetables—anything that could be produced from the soil. Even up to this moment, Dad is able to give me whatever he thinks I need to take to the Sisters in my community. He is aging, but still works on his farm and manages his own life.

I joined Koru Girls Secondary School, because it was my father's wish; there were many children who were still under his care from his brother's side, and he felt responsible for their education since his brother did not have any financial support to educate his own children. My father could not educate some of us and leave others without school, and Koru was near, allowing him to go to the school at any time and talk to the administrator so that the school fees could be paid in cash or in-kind through our farm's produce. He would tell us that nobody is studying for his or her own self, but for his or her own future.

To my three mothers, I thank God for the impact they all had in my life. I stayed with each of them at different times. Most of my time as a teenager I spent with my mother Joyce Anyango; she even accompanied me to the convent. God never blessed her with a child, but she was a mother to me. When we were growing up, nobody knew which child belonged to which mother; we were all united, and whichever mother was in a particular place would take care of all the children who were there.

In 1977, I started learning my catechism and was baptized in the Koru Catholic mission. On the 21st of December in 1983, I joined the congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Saint Anne with four other girls from different parts of Kenya. We did not know each other then, but we were to be as one family from that day on.

I was first connected to IPM through UVIP (Unyolo Village Project) in the year 2003. I was working there as a volunteer for the women groups and the children in various need, aged between five and ten years, with Dr. Peter Onyango, who was then the Director of UVIP. I knew Dr. Peter through my church as youth. He was an ex-seminarian who went to learn in Italy and then discontinued with his vocation. He chose instead to connect with some friends who helped him to start some projects in his home area of the Unyolo Village in Kenya. This was a good idea and I really admired him for that.

It was at the Kisumu International Airport with Dr. Peter that I first met Joe. From this first meeting, I treasured him because of his simplicity; I took him as my Franciscan Brother, down to earth. We started partnering with IPM, and I now work in *Rieti* and I take on most of the responsibility concerning our partnership. Soon after the partnership began, different groups from the USA would come to the village. And they came to know the life in the village: no proper rooms for sleeping, no beds, and some thatched, grass houses. The Immersion Programs have brought so many changes and joy in the life of young and old people in the community. Their support has improved the lifestyle of the community.

In all these instances and others, we feel as one—the oneness that my father and the Franciscan fraternity instilled in me as a child. In all this, we keep moving together knowing that the joy and sorrow of one person is for all. A new women-led program was added to Rieti in 2006 when we saw the real need to involve the community as we stay among them. This was also a way of changing the lifestyle of the community, and in really taking them on as our own. The women's group is called *Chuny Moyie*, which means "A Willing Heart."

The benefit of the women in the project is that they come together as a family to share all their joys and sorrows. We work together to earn a living. Some of the community members have been employed by the Project, and so their living standards have changed for the better.

Around the world, people are increasingly rediscovering an ancient truth: There is only one world for all of us to live in. No person or group has more of a right to it than others. We must live together. In addition, we must ensure everyone enjoys the goodness, and mind that we leave behind a habitable world for future generations.

## Gaylene (McLeod) Wagon | UNITED STATES

# Learning a Craft, Upholding a Culture



*Gaylene is a participant of IPM Project Partner Sacajawea Treasures, a traditional Eastern Shoshone beadwork microenterprise that evolved from a youth outreach program, both coordinated by former IPM International Board Chair, Caroline Mills. Both voices of the cooperative are featured here, along with a photo at left of two of the microenterprise's participants. A frequented site for domestic Immersion Experience Programs, the women of the reservation in Wyoming are hoping to expand their program into the global market by making their beadwork available online.*

I have been raised by my grandfather, raised and lived at Fort Washakie [Wyoming, United States, site of IPM Project Partner *Sacajawea Treasures*] all my life. I went to Mill Creek School, which is now called Wyoming Indian Elementary School.

I've been doing my beadwork since 1974. I was inspired by how pretty other beadworks looked. I wanted to try doing some beadwork. My first project didn't come out right, but I just kept trying. I never gave up. My strength came from my mother because this what she had done all her life.

I am always alone, being alone in doing my projects. My mind is only on what I am beading, and not distracted by anyone. I have worked as a housekeeper, in a hospital, hotels and motels, and in a nursing home in Pocatello, Idaho, working with elders.

I learned about selling my beadwork to Caroline Mills [IPM International Board Chair, *Sacajawea Treasures* Project Coordinator] from my sister. She helps my family put food on the table [through the retail sale of beadwork], and even helped me to get supplies for my beadwork. She is my Project Partnership because she supports me by buying my Native beadwork so I can support my family and my dreams. I'm going to keep up doing my beadwork for the rest of my life.

There are hard times. A lot of people are struggling around the world to make ends meet, and it is hard. I, myself, have been there.



"IPM has opened my eyes to the possibilities of what can be with the Shoshone beadwork. Several have tried to sell their artwork and we are building on their experience to make a difference in the lives of the Shoshone people who bead for a living. We need to tap into the tourist market that drives through our reservation on their way to Yellowstone Park and The Grand Tetons."

– Caroline Mills, Project Coordinator *Sacajawea Treasures*, Former International Board Chair

Soni Shrestha | NEPAL

## Partnership Means to Uplift & Empower



*Soni, leftmost with a young Nepalese school girl, is a Regional Staff member for IPM's South Asia Region, and works mainly with the Calendar Project. Here, she speaks to the culture of a Hindu joint family, also known as an "undivided family" on the Indian subcontinent, meaning that many generations of a family live under the same roof. The property and household income is shared, with familial blood ties warranting a higher household status than marital ties. Her partnership with IPM has allowed her to regularly accompany others in South Asia, and to experience international accompaniment with IPM's Project Partners around the world through the Inaugural General Assembly and Regional Conferences.*

I was born on November 16, 1976 in Bhaktapur, one of the cities of Nepal, and belong to the Newari caste culture. We are a Hindu joint family. I have one brother and one sister. When I was young, we all lived together. Because of my father's job transfer [in mathematics teaching] to Kathmandu, we were shifted to Kathmandu. We received school education and university education there. Occasionally, we went to our hometown for the Dashain festival and the New Year. [Editor's Note: The Dashain Festival celebrates the victory of good over evil in the Hindu religion, and is marked by family reunions and communal gatherings for fifteen days annually in October-November].

My mother and Leah Schulte from St. Louis inspire me to do work with community. I think women have to educate; they have to learn more to support the family because I believe that an educated woman can handle her family well, and she can give good education to her children.

Social Work Institute (SWI) is a local organization which connects with IPM and local women's groups. In my view, [our] partnership means working together and helping to share whatever each knows. In the *Calendar Project*, partnership means to uplift and empower village women. I have seen many changes in village women after introducing the calendar program. Partnership helps so much in community. The regular meetings of the *Calendar Project* helps and benefits women's groups to update [one another] with news, rules and regulations, laws, etc. in community.

In our culture, women have to do household work and men will go outside and earn money. In this small [joint family] society where all relatives live together, we have to get permission from elders if there is something new to do; they don't accept anything that is out of their culture, such as to wear new fashion dresses, or to marry within other castes. We are not allowed to invite low caste friends in our home, and we can't eat together with low caste people. From these small notes, do you understand?

But I want to tell: we don't have to follow the caste system. It is most important to get a good education and to help in the community, country, and in the whole world. IPM is doing a good job all over the world to support women and children. IPM supports me, and gave me a chance to visit India, and participate in meetings with local groups there. At first, I was shy to do leadership, but IPM Immersion Experiences helped me to grow in leadership and the organizing of groups. [Through IEPs] we can share each other's feelings, culture, and programs.

Zaria Omar | KENYA

# Igniting Partnership, Uniting People



*At the Dandora Women's Forum, an IPM Project Partner since 2006, Zaria, at left, helps to facilitate income-generating and investment opportunities for the women living in the slums around the Dandora dumpsite outside the city of Nairobi. In collaboration with an area orphanage and youth group, the project is building community through handcraft production, table-banking, and other activities that encourage social mobility in a region where women once foraged for trash to survive.*

I went to school at Kisumu Manyatta Primary School and received my Certificate of Primary in 1977. I went on to Kisumu Girls Secondary School, and completed my Form Four exam in 1980. Because I grew up an orphan, without a specific house I could live in, I decided to marry my neighbor, who was a teacher that was always kind to me. I am inspired by my community because, as an orphan, it is the community who brought me up and educated me.

I have been leading the women [of *Dandora Women's Forum*] for the last twelve years. We have educated a lot of orphans; we have uplifted the lives of widows and destitute women in our community.

The late Mugabe Were, may his soul rest in peace, first connected us with IPM. They were the first foreigners to come to our community, and we received a lot of respect towards our people [from them]. The first person we met was Joe, who was very happy to see what we were doing. We, as the cooperative of *Dandora Women's Forum*, requested help to build a women's center. We were inspired by the late Mugabe Were, Lucy Wawira, and Joe, who continues to support us. Because we all worked together, the center now exists. We feel organized as a group because the community appreciates what we are doing.

We are now 56 active members, and the women know how to make handcrafts and sell them by themselves so as to eradicate poverty. We decided to start table banking so that we can help other members to learn business skills, like creating and selling handcrafts. We have managed to take the children from the streets and the orphans to school.

We started when we were so poor and, because of our unity, we have managed to encourage the people to work and fend for themselves. IPM has really helped us to support one another in learning to partner together so that we can help ourselves. Partnership is very important to the people. Together with IPM, we have managed to teach our children, who are born disadvantaged, how to work together as a united group, so that we can achieve our goals.

## Concepción “Conchita” Aída Méndez | EL SALVADOR

# Embracing & Endorsing Capability



*Conchita, at left, coordinates IPM Project Partner ACACCPAMU, a women’s cooperative that IPM has accompanied since 2007. As detailed below, from its start the Project and its participants have shown ambition and resilience in the face of hardship, growing to now boast baking and embroidery microfinance operations, a community water source and corn grinder, a collaborative chicken-raising project, and more, with building renovations and other business initiatives in progress through the generosity of Jay & Jenn McNally, Saint Ignatius High School (Cleveland, OH), and others.*

**T**wo of the more important role models in my life have been my parents, because they have taught me the values of respect to others and faith in God. I have taught my children to learn from my parents, to be helpful in the community as they would and to do good for people without distinction of political nor religious views. I like community work, and I have done it for a long time as a volunteer without wanting anything back. I do it simply because I like to collaborate with the people. I keep motivating the women and also the children to get organized to see that to overcome poverty is not that difficult if we are united in seeking social justice.

There are very powerful reasons why my family with many others had to resettle in this community of Armenia. It was during the Fifi hurricane in 1974 when my family lost the house in San Salvador because everything was filling with water in marginalized zone of the neighborhood where we lived. Since that moment, there were huge changes in our life, because after we moved my parents could not find a school to register me in. I never lost my desire for studying, and my dream was always to become an Executive Bilingual Secretary, but I could not continue [my education].

Since I was very young I enjoyed collaborating in the community, and during the earthquake, I organized and prepared the groups that helped to request food for the people of the marginalized zone in Armenia. The people in charge selected me as a representative, and the same people motivated me to participate as a leader and to create a Community Board. I dedicated time to visit the women in their houses and in that way I created influence. Thank God, I got a job with the organization *FUSANMIDJ* (Foundation for Natural Health of Children and Women, Maura, Ita, Dorothy, Jean) as a Women’s Promoter and Community Organizer.

We would not have known IPM if we would not have had this “bridge” that we took advantage of and we are grateful to God for our Partnership with IPM. I am blissful to be selected as the Project Coordinator of *ACACCPAMU*. This started many years ago, when as women we saw the need to have our own Potable Water Project. We had been waiting for forty years that a mayor would propose such an important project. We did not even have a public faucet in this zone; the only one was in the urban center of Armenia and we used to spend a lot of time to carry water from there. The children missed their classes to be able to support their mothers to carry the water, and it was too expensive and made us constantly in the dilemma of whether to buy beans or water.

Seeing that huge need, the first challenge and requirement to get support was to find a plot of land where we could drill for a well. Our story of water struggles was heard by the landowner of the land around our communities, and he offered to donate the space. So I called the Coordinator from *FUSANMIDJ* to share with our donors the difficult situation in which the children were exposed to live in, with respiratory and stomach diseases. We were the third community on the list to get the Water Project support, so we worked hard organizing economical activities for selling typical regional food to save money to be able to pay the lawyer to get officially the Land Deed.

Our group of united women started with fifteen volunteer members. We donated food to give to the workers, and were in solidarity with each other, collaborating between us. In the end, we reached the requirements before the other two communities. It was not a matter of competency, but the fact of being transparent during the whole process was helpful.

As we started the drilling to make the well, we had challenges with interventions from ANDA (National Administration for Water and Sewerage) and the City Hold. The PNC (National Civilian Police), CAM (Corps of Metropolitan Agents), and FAES (Armed Forces of El Salvador) also tried to intervene, saying that we did not have the permission and that they will take us to prison. But it was our vital right, and we had connections with other organizations like the PDDH (Attorney for the Defense of Humans Rights); it was a great alliance and a matter of uniting our efforts.

[The Potable Water Project] is an example that has transcended borders. Our history has been told to many people that have visited us during their Immersion Experience Programs, and thanks to IPM our successes and challenges are recognized. I am always so happy to share about our projects and the benefits of each of them. The Potable Water Project gave us the strength and authority in ourselves to realize that we are capable of reaching our goals. The process took two hard years from 2005 to 2007 and it is a great triumph. We continue administrating and maintaining it.

We have been valued by IPM and the organization does not discriminate for sex orientation, religious views, or any other thing. Some men who were not convinced and disagreed with our initiatives, even when I already was working on the mill [sponsored by IPM] would say: “That corn maze will not work, because those are women who manage it.” Now those men are our customers. Here at the Cooperative, we have demonstrated that we are capable and that we try to improve every day. We can do good when we dedicate time to our communities, and try to lead and foster awareness in other young people so they do not give up.

I will never get tired of thanking God for this blessing of putting IPM in our path. We have learned to work in a most organized way and we are more united. IPM treats us with justice, friendship, and the strengthening of our spirit.

Arbelia Francisca Conde García | NICARAGUA

# I Believe in the Capacity of the Human Being



*Despite hardship, Arbelia continues to be a model leader in her community of San Francisco Libre and at IPM Project Partner Mujer y Comunidad. In just the last six years, IPM has provided nearly \$20,000 in funding, allowing the project to grow to now include a youth-run radio network, a women's reproductive health center, a renovated community space for bilateral learning, and an academic scholarship program. In accompanying Arbelia, IPM has enabled her pursuit to better her life and her community.*

I grew up with a bunch of cousins, and it was a very hard childhood because of the fact that we lived crowded in another's house, but I believe that it also helped us to have a very united family. I have extraordinary sisters! My younger brother, Elder, is more like my older son actually.

We had access to education because, thank God, there was a revolution here in Nicaragua. If it were not for that, being so poor, we would not have managed to study. But during the 80's the education was completely free, though the Ministry of Education was stabilizing in the rural areas, like San Francisco Libre, and was not well-organized. We could have a teacher who just left for two months, which caused us to fall behind in our studies. I graduated from elementary school when I was fifteen years old.

I was the only of four sisters who continued studying through high school. I insisted that I wanted to study and had a desire to learn. So every day, I traveled from a community that was 15km far away from the urban town. I usually walked, and I always got wet with the rain and I think that since then I was diagnosed with arthritis because in the morning I stood in the sun and in the afternoon I stood in the rain.

Despite the difficulties, I got to finish the year, but then I left to work as a domestic worker in Managua, because my older sister was already working there and we had to support the family. I lost three years of study during that time, but still graduated in 1997. I always visited groups in the community as a health brigade and to support in the organizational process. It was in that moment that I got to know a Project of the Antonio Valdivieso Center named "Mujer y Salud" that became later *Mujer y Comunidad*.

I lost communication with *Mujer y Comunidad*, but reached out after I had my son in 1999 because I did not have support from anyone, and was offered an opportunity to support the work as a promoter in the area of nutrition. I became responsible of the Nutrition Program for Children in the Communities, then I continued working with Holistic Health with the Youth from the Communities. Since then I have committed thirteen years with the organization, almost the age of my son!

Nicaragua is a country still considered *machista*; the patterns of the patriarchal system dominate, so the women still face situations of violence whether it be psychological, physical, or any other kind. At *Mujer y Comunidad*, we are promoting a Youth Network against Violence, trying to increase consciousness of gender equity among youth in our communities. It is important because if the girls and boys are taught about gender equality, they are going to have better interpersonal relationships, knowing their sexual and reproductive rights they can choose to have a better life. The most important aspect within the Youth Network is that it is the young people who are doing the work with other young people. *Mujer y Comunidad* is also supporting the women, with educational workshops about their rights so that the women know there is laws to protect them. We often find the women psychological attention with each case of abuse, and a lawyer to support with the legal process.

Our partnership with IPM is worth it because we do not just see the economical funding, but also IPM has promoted regional exchanges between grassroots organizations from different countries, with the goal to keep us all connected and updated about the work that is being done by the others. We even talked about creating networks according to work affinity, so more than getting financial support, we also get to meet other contacts and get to seek any other kind of support. That is what we emphasize within the Scholarship Project; it is not just to give financial support to the teenagers and verify that they have good grades, but to ensure that they are accompanied with opportunities to increase awareness and have a more comprehensive mind.

I believe in the capacity of the human being. I believe that my personal story keeps me motivated, just by being a woman, being poor, and the life situations that I have had to endure. I do not want the youth to repeat the same stories, and I always advise the girls and boys that they should not marry or have kids too young. I always say this to my son: "I am a human being and you will not see in your mother a perfect person, because I am not and from my mistakes I've learnt."

That is why I always share my story. I did not have even a penny to study and now I am an agronomist. I am convinced that to study a university degree opens our mind, to be able to see the world from another perspective. This career has helped me to learn management and evaluation of social projects, and to be able to better understand the community work and experiences that cannot be learned in the university. I had many setbacks and I reached my goal, so if we set goals it is possible to accomplish them. I want a world in peace, without wars, without hunger, where women and men are equals.

Flo Saeger | UNITED STATES

# You Realize that this is the Way People Live All the Time



*Flo experienced the people and culture of Nepal in 2008 in IPM's pilot Immersion Experience Program to the region; she is pictured right-most with Carolyn Crowe, a fellow participant of the delegation. Flo and her husband, Vic, are longtime friends of IPM from Metropolitan Saint Louis. In her contribution, she shares how the act of accompaniment was realized by simply being with and learning from others across cultures in a way that enabled her to understand and appreciate a new perspective on our shared experience as humans.*

I went on the first Immersion Experience Program to Nepal. I had met Leah Shulte before and knew that she had lived in Nepal for many years and had started some of the projects that we would be visiting. The country of Nepal is so beautiful and the people are so beautiful—it was such an experience to see how the people we visited lived their lives there...

We stayed in a village, in the home of one of the Project participants for two nights. The family was multigenerational and this clearly was the home of one of the more wealthy people in the village. There was the grandmother, and I am not sure if there was a grandfather there as well, the mother and father, and their children. There were two girls and a boy, or three girls and a boy, I am not positive. The boy, a young man really, was about twenty and married and he & his wife had just had a baby thirteen days prior.

They went out of their way to make sure we had everything we needed. For example, they don't sit on stools or chairs, they squat on the floor when they eat, but they made sure that we had a table and chairs to eat at—and the amount of food they offered was just incredible! We were able to watch the wife in the morning as she prepared the meals for the day. She would wake up and prepare a fire and start to boil rice, take a head of cabbage and using an old aluminum tumbler, from the 50's or '60's, chop that whole head of cabbage in less than a minute! And they had potatoes about the size of a quarter or a fifty cent piece; they had a whole room full of them and they sold them to other people. We saw the grandmother help to weigh and sell the potatoes. The mother used a scythe, somehow held between her big toe and the rest of her foot, to cut those potatoes in half...so fast it was almost a blur. To see her doing those activities and knowing that this is what she did everyday—that this was her life—and to see how gracious she was, that was truly a great experience.

The experiences you go through on an Immersion Experience Program (IEP)—you never know what is going to happen! We were on our way to a resort area to spend the night and enjoy some of the scenic beauty of the country when the traffic all of a sudden stopped. Soni and Fulmati (IPM regional staff in Southeast Asia) were with us and so Fulmati and Leah went to try to figure out what was up and why we were all stopped. In the distance, we could see these plumes of black smoke in the sky. They found out that prior to our being there, there had been an accident in which a truck had hit and killed someone. The trucking company or the trucker was to pay repatriation to the widow and the widow had not gotten the money. At that point it was uncertain to the women whether the village had been paid and they just hadn't given the money to the woman or whether the repatriation had not been paid at all.

So, in order to try to make this situation come to a head, they started burning tires in the road—that's what all the black smoke was. Fulmati and Leah asked people: well, how long would this go on for? They were told it could go on for days. We knew that this was the only road that was going to get us where we wanted to go, so instead, we turned around and went back to Kathmandu and then did something different in Kathmandu. But again, with the IEPs, you realize that this is the way people live all the time.

[Upon the return to Kathmandu], we saw the long lines of people waiting to get fuel for cooking, because there was a blockade between India and Nepal at the time and fuel wasn't coming through, and that was another reason for some of the "brown outs" (the lack of electricity for many hours each day). It was also at the end of the dry season so their hydro-electric plants were not producing electricity at that point. It's so interesting, seeing how people have to cope on a day to day basis in ways that we, in ways that I, do not often think about.

Seraphine W. Ngugi | KENYA

## I would be no Different



*From 2009-2013, Seraphine (pictured at left) worked with IPM as Project Coordinator to Josera Street Children, a program that works out of a daycare and nursery school and is designed to provide holistic support outside of the classroom to impoverished and abandoned children through counseling, peer support, food relief, and the provision of shelter when available.*

I was born on the 31st of January in 1952 at Riruta in Nairobi. I started school in 1960 at Riruta Primary, and progressed into Precious Blood Secondary School, also in Riruta, until 1970. In 1976, I was employed by the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru as an untrained nursery school teacher. Two years later, I went for a year-long training for nursery school teaching, where I was also trained in family counseling.

During my school days, we used to share our problems to connect with the children who were orphans, single mothers, and others. To my knowledge, if I had grown up with no parents, I would be no different than the children I work with, and this touches me so much and motivates me to continue even when the work is hard.

Currently, I am the coordinator of *Josera Street Children*. The Project mainly targets children who undergo problems such as poverty, single mother households, the loss of one or both parents, neglect, and HIV-positive families and dependents. In January of 2003, I was in the USA with the Council of International Program (CIP) Exchange Program. During that period, I met my Professor, the late Dr. Ralph Brondy, who introduced me to the Chief Executive Officer of IPM, Mr. Joseph F. Cistone, and we entered into a partnership.

Partnering with IPM has given us the opportunity to exchange ideas about our Project, our culture, and our interests. We have had the chance to meet the IPM Advisory Committee, IPM Board members, and members of other various IPM Projects, like *Watoto Wa Lwanga*. We have visited their Project, and have hosted visitors from the USA. I most look forward to the chance to exchange our Project views with others; with IPM, I have been able to share and learn.



*IPM International Board Members travelled to Kenya in 2013 to meet children of the Projects at Josera Street Children and Villa Teag.*

## Noorsuba “Parvin” Shaikh | INDIA

# More than Money



Since 2006, Parvin (front row, center) has coordinated IPM Project Partner HUM (Hindus United with Muslims), an initiative born out of religious-based violence and intolerance in India. Providing a work space for interfaith interaction and an incoming-generating activity for women, as detailed below, HUM provides a poignant example for the alternative and more culturally-sensitive perspective IPM acknowledges through the accompaniment of community-supported programs.

I was born in Ahmedabad Gujarat. My father came from a village in Nagpur Maharashtra. He came in search of work to Ahmedabad. He joined Suryoday Mill (a textile mill) as a *badli* worker, then started waxing cloth as an alternate job. I have five sisters and one brother. I studied till eighth standard, then started sewing work from the age of fifteen to earn money and support myself and the family.

As a child, I used to watch Metmehrunissa [a woman from the community] working at the health center and used to talk to her often. When I grew up, she started meeting me and invited me to join “Pratham”—an educational initiative to teach other children. I was very happy and started teaching children for two hours morning and evening for 400 rupees in the year 1999.

A major earthquake took place in Gujarat in 2001. I went and volunteered to work in Kutch as a health worker for a month. I saw much suffering and pain and did my best to help others.

Then I joined a local NGO for a job in Bhilvas as a file-making teacher to women and also conducting literacy classes. I did this for two years, also working in a women’s credit society.

Then in 2002, a Hindu and Muslim riot took place. I worked day and night in the largest relief camp at 4:00 in the morning to late at night. It was then I took some psycho-social training from NIHMANS, a national mental health institute.

In a workshop conducted by the NGO, CARE, I went to Madhya Pradesh. I met Hasnain, a young Hindu man. He was a youth leader from a Hindu community from Dalit, who used to hate Muslims; [he grew] from conflict to cooperation, from hate to love. I liked his leadership and his change of heart after the violence.

With guidance from Mahesh [South Asia Regional Director], myself, and the community, we formed *Hindus United with Muslims* [IPM Project Partner *HUM*]. When Mahesh first met IPM, he brought them to meet us and we felt warmth and love and concern from Joe and all his friends. We couldn’t believe there were people like you. IPM has brought visitors from different parts [of the world], and the relationships are not money-based, but relationship-based. For the first time we felt we had friends. [In these relationships] we don’t start and stop talking based on money; there is a continuous dialogue.

We worked with a local NGO for a while, but were not happy doing what they asked us to do. We felt too much money was being utilized incorrectly, so we went back to being community organizers. IPM stood by *HUM* in our conflicts and continued to be our friends.

We were happy Joe [Cistone, IPM Chief Executive Officer] asked us what we would like to do. From soap-making, promoted by the local NGO, we went to kite-making, which is easier and not as harmful to the health as soap-making, which causes lung problems and chemical allergies. Joe was the first person from a funding agency ever to ask us what we wanted to do. Most agencies have programs to teach us what to do. No one asks.



Participants of HUM make beautifully-crafted kites to generate income and connect to the International Kite Festival tradition of Ahmedabad, India where the interfaith cooperative operates from.

## Martha Cecilia Arroyave Arbelaez | COLOMBIA

# I Was Born to Be with the People



*Martha, at left, now coordinates two IPM Project Partners, Niños Trabajadores and Ser Mujer, but began her partnership with IPM in 2001. The projects work symbiotically, providing an outlet for both mothers and children to make productive use of their time and a political voice in the eradication of child labor. The children learn crafts and pursue academic interests, while the women attend workshops and trainings in vocational skills to better provide for their families, and to offer support and networking amongst each other. Currently Martha is working with IPM and Marin Lutheran Church (CA) to solidify and expand the Project programming.*

**I** was born in a Catholic home, and faith has a very important role in my process of growing. I learned from the faith of my mother. When I think about her I always picture her helping another person, and in being in solidarity with everyone. We used to help her attend to the people, and it was amazing to see how she did it, because we were a large family of nine siblings. There was always a guest in our home, in our table at the moment for sharing meals. I grew up with that sense of love, compassion and caring for others.

My family passed through a hard situation when my dad passed away because we were still young, and he was the only who had income to feed us. But the Christian Youth Movement I was part of in university was in solidarity with us, accompanying my family during the process. My father used to always say that women have the same right for education. That is one reason why I think it is so important to be supportive in the development of children and youth, because when a human being loses his or her dignity, there is nothing more to do.

I discovered my vocation when I was part of the Christian Youth Movement and we used to visit different public universities in Colombia. We had different powerful experiences and adventures, and I found I was born to be with the people. At the beginning, I thought that to be able to be with the people I should be in the same condition as they were; I used to accompany them in places that were very dangerous, putting myself, my integrity, and my health at risk. But I discovered that was not the right way. To be able to help the people I have to be in a different situation, if I don't tell them through my own life that it is possible for them to change the reality in which they live and have better conditions, I can't help them to get out of that reality.

When I studied in the University, I received a Bachelor in Educative Technology & Communication and began working with *niños de la calle* (children of the street). They did not have family here, and they were immersed extremely in the consumption of drugs. I started to feel a very strong connection to support those kids. Many people thought that I was a social worker or psychologist because of the way I connected with children.

Later in Ibagué, I was working with the Christian group and we used to go to evangelize to the University of Tolima, and I started working part time with the Mennonites in prison increasing awareness against mandatory military service. The Mennonites had a foundation, so they invited me to be part of the organization and they asked me if I would like to work with children, but at the beginning my role was going to be with women. We started inviting [women of the community] house by house, trying to encourage them to participate, and during the meetings the mothers used to bring their children, so my *compañeras* remained with the women and I was able to work with the kids.

We started with dance workshops, and then I used to teach the children how to paint, to make handcrafts, and I started reading stories and books to them that taught human values and leadership. One day we received an invitation to participate in a conference to create the Children Latin American Network; it was the first time that I traveled in airplane, and it was there I met Jane Sullivan. Then the projects were depending financially on the Mennonites Foundation...and I was also having conflicts with the church regarding their mission and I did not agree with it.

[Because of the conflicts], the church decided not support the children program anymore. I talked to the community, to the children and women...and said that this does not mean that we will stop working. We are a family, we are a team, and we all are in this together. I remember that we got together with the social services of another church, saying that they were going to find support for us of \$6,000. I got in contact with Jane, and she told me that she was in solidarity with us, and we organized different activities to sell empanadas and other goods. She invited me to present a project [proposal] to IPM in 1996, and offered to translate the document because she knew the project of *Niños Trabajadores*, so in that way we got to be in partnership with IPM.

We have worked with many children, and we've had the opportunity to find better options for some of the children, in other institutions where they can receive a meal, uniforms, and tools we cannot offer them. When we did the study about the problem of children workers, we found there were more than 300 children workers just in the plaza area of Ibagué! At the very beginning we worked on the street, carrying a suitcase with our work supply until the administrator of the plaza realized how much effort we were putting into our work with and for the children and he offered us a tiny space near the kitchen area. Four years ago, the administrator of the plaza changed and the new one did not permit us to stay using that space, so we now have a space near the plaza after a request process with the city through the support of a human rights attorney who observed our work and we presented our reports to. We have adequate space, but we are still working on improving the space for the children and the women of *El Centro de Formación para la Paz*. We give workshops in other communities about how to prevent child workers, abuse, and human rights.

We all are social beings and the social work is a common work, so I can do just what part I can, and I am sure life is guiding me to the things I can do. I believe that we need to humanize, that we all need to go back to the simpleness of life to find richness in something so simple and complex as to learn to breathe. I know that if I am here today it is because God, life, and the universe brought me here to learn various things that I will need, and that I will share it and use it when it is the right moment.

Fulmati Thapa | NEPAL

## We have the Power to Create through Ideas & Attitude



*Fulmati, pictured rightmost with IPM Staff member Ilze Fender, is a participant of IPM's Project Partner, Calendar Project, coordinated through the Social Work Institute. As she writes, her personal ambition and ability to organize in her community makes her a wonderful candidate for IPM's new Fellowship Program developed as yet another expression of accompaniment during the Inaugural General Assembly and 40th Anniversary Celebration hosted in Cleveland, Ohio in 2014.*

**M**y name is Fulmati Thapa, and my birthday is on 25 of September, 1968 and I was born in Bandipur Village. I work in personal development with the *Calendar Project*, a Partner with IPM. We discuss the *Calendar Project* with visiting IEP groups, often sharing how the program is not only how we save and make money, but also is a place to talk about rights and women's rights and development. Making money is important for our families, but deciding what to do with it is also important for our families and children.

When I started, I had no idea or role model, but began to see my mother as a role model because she always gave inspiration to me. She used to say: "You can do it". So I follow that, and took the social work training [at the Social Work Institute], and since then I am committed to work in the community.

I took my education in a government school in my home village. Like a village child, I passed my childhood without any facilities, and played in the wild forests and in the field, grew the food and cut the grass. My mother didn't stop my education, so I struggled [to balance] this program and work.

When I was just twenty-five years old, I started the one women's group in my village, a savings and credit group. That time was not easy for me. Anywhere and everywhere, I faced problems because women and men alike were in a critical political situation as they fought for democracy. Now, now the women's group has grown to a very big size. We started as just twenty women and built our organization. Today we have 843 involved in this organization.

The women and communities involved receive different types of benefit. Women learn about their capability, skill, and power. We face so many challenges. Women were considered weak; they could not do anything without male support. In Nepali society, the female is dominated by male. So male does not like for the women to go away without male permission. The work women do is not easy for them, but they use these [skills learned in the group] to develop the community themselves.

We are developing generation by generation. We care for our elders and honor them in our society. But as we care and feel for others, we also must care for ourselves; I do and have interest in working to save myself, because if you save yourself, you are better able to save others. We have the power to create through ideas and attitude, and we can use them to proceed and to understand. Some [ideas] are useful, some are not, but that does not stop us. We continue to share. I share ideas all the time.

Partnership with IPM means what we have and what they have [is the same], with both sides sharing with each other not only for money. We share culture, thought, programs, education, technical support, etc. We both are committed to the work in the Partnership, and want to be clear about our vision and mission.

But it is also about coming together to change the world—our world and yours.

# SOLIDARITY



## Vimala Charles | INDIA

# On Their Own Legs



*Dr. Vimala Charles passed away in March of 2014, and has been succeeded by her eldest son, Dr. Paul Jesudian, in relation to her life work & dedication to the charitable, not-for-profit Kanyakumari Trust Hospital. Her legacy will not be forgotten. In addition to the seed-funding and solidarity referenced in her account of the 2004 tsunami, she coordinated IPM Project Partners Mary Jenkins Hospice Center and Dr. Charles Nurse Training from 2001 until her passing. In its initial year, Dr. Vimala reported that 12-15 outpatients visited daily to the IPM Project Partner Mary Jenkins Hospice Center, which provided pain management, radio therapy, chemotherapy, nutritional aid, and emotional care for terminally ill cancer patients. She is pictured at left speaking at an infant and child wellness event put on by the Trust Hospital in 2013.*

**F**or a long time, with IPM's help, the local *Mary Jenkins Hospice Center* was able to help many people have a comfortable life as long as they lived. When the Christmas 2004 Tsunami took away lives of people along with their belongings, all of us were grief-stricken.

Yet we had contacts and had worked among some of the Tsunami areas for more than twenty years. A comprehensive health care project, founded by my husband Dr. S.X. Charles, served the socio-economically backward along the coastal areas of Muttom, Kadiappattinam, and Kodimuna. Families for generations were well known by us. The Tsunami was like a blow to our own family.

Most heartening was the spontaneous helping hand extended by IPM. Within hours of the disaster, they came forward with their help. Mrs. Shilpa, one of the Staff of IPM who had been with us earlier to see our work, phoned me to find out whether we were safe and promised to help in whatever form would be useful to those affected. Together, we were able to provide medical help and to move the families to safer places. Our hospital was filled with the affected families. Safe there in spite of their losses, they ate from the same kitchen. Clothes and other basic needs were distributed.

On the third day, one-by-one they returned to see their homes. Only remnants of their belongings remained. Children were lost. A mother and child were missing. Some bodies were not discovered until three or four days later.

But IPM help was available. They asked what type of help they could give, like housing, clothing, education, medical care, etc. Help came through so many agencies: bundles of clothing, various food items, cooking facilities, and even recreational items, like TV and radio, became available from government and non-government sources. But when we asked community representatives what they most needed, they requested primarily for help in getting them back to work—not to feed them, but to help them get started on their own legs.

One hundred families were selected for this kind of assistance through IPM. Money was made available. A qualified person was selected to do the follow-up and counseling for the families. At the end of nine months, the beneficiaries were doing well, and had even gathered a small amount of savings.

We are thankful to IPM for their thoughtful concern and prompt, timely help that became a boon for these families.

Vicenta Fuentes Gomez | EL SALVADOR

## Greater Lessons: Learning More than Academics



*In 1986, Vicenta's children became beneficiaries of IPM Project Partner Lidia Coggiola's Conchita Scholarship Program, which it still facilitates today along with its Preschool/Kinder Program and Reinforcement After School Center. Since partnering with IPM in 2005, the Project has expanded to include a community garden and farm, recycling and clean water advocacy, an initiative to revive traditional El Salvadoran folk culture, and extensive academic support through the generosity of the Carfagna family, Hyland Software, and others. As told by Vicenta, pictured here with IPM CEO Joe Cistone, the Project far exceeds its programmatic benefits by offering a safe space to learn in an area notorious for gang activity.*

Since I was very young, I got the call to participate actively in the communities, to work with the children. I loved to belong to groups as the Clinic and Church Group; I was a leader and health promoter. Both my husband and I were leaders. He is called Pedro Fuentes Gómez, but nine years ago he passed away.

We moved in 1986 to Zaragoza. Living in Zaragoza, we got fully involve in the Parish, and the priest gave us a scholarship for all the kids we had, thus was how we got to send them all to the school. As a pastoral agent, I used to gather the people and coordinate the worship with a prospective Christian Ecclesiastic Community. Monseñor Romero was a great friend of us; he was the god father of Pedro, and he celebrated the mass of my husband's confirmation in the parish of Zaragoza. It was an honor to have known him, to have hugged him, and to have participated in the mass that we celebrated for my husband's confirmation.

My husband always supported me; he used to take care of our sons and daughters at home, and that is why I was able to accept work with Carlos Díaz [IPM Project Coordinator, *Lidia Coggiola*]. He would speak publically for me when I could not; it is a great weakness I have always had. Monseñor Romero said to me once: "If you cannot do it, leave it to your husband. It is enough that you accompany [those you support in your work], hence the Lord has directed you to accompany Pedro on the same path of God, for it requires faith and you have to be with him."

I see God in the children; they have given me the strength so far.

---

My children would become beneficiaries of the Scholarship Program from the *Patronato Lidia Coggiola* in El Zaité. At the very beginning we started with 35 children—girls and boys—with an unstoppable demand, because every day there were trucks coming with more people from different places around the country. We used to receive many people to register children and youth, but we did not have extra "quota" (*cupo*).

We started with the program "Bread and Milk" that gave [the additional children and youth] some food and a free appointment to check their weight. A lot was bought where three classrooms were built with bamboo. By that time I was a Popular Educator, received training with an organization called "ASISAN."

While the project grew, we received visits by the Armed Forces. Once they all came, marching, and the children were scared. I told to one of them:

"Look, we have this program in order with activities and we cannot [have you] interrupt the classes."

"But *how* do you work here?" he asked.

*continued on next page*

## Vicenta Fuentes Gomez | CONTINUED

“We work with the children that are displaced from different zones around the country.” He was wanting to know if they were kids of the guerrilla, which I did not know and never asked; the only thing I knew was that they are orphans and had the right to defend their life.

That afternoon, I went to Priest Jaime to share all what happened and to ask advice on how to proceed.

“Be calm,” he said. “We will write a letter and make copies to post on the school building, and we will send one to the City Hall and one more to the National Guard Base.” With his support, we succeeded in having our work continue, and the first promotions of kindergarten students were achieved, making the people from the community very happy.

---

I believe that the Project has grown a lot because the attention to the children is personalized. The education that we provide includes love and caring we give to the children. They come not just to learn academics; they are also provided a snack for breakfast, which helps the children because sometimes they do not have anything at all to eat at home. Carlitos really cares for the children’s food.

We recently have included a program for recycling plastic bottles. Both children and parents bring bottles every weekend, and the other day Carlitos told me that he sold all the plastic bottles collected and he got US\$12.00! We clean the community and the school gets in return a little money.

We also have a Youth Environmental Club whom were trained on issues regarding the environment, about the natural resources of water and others. My advice on changing the world is that from the time they are young, the youth learn to organize and care for everything that is for the common good. I want to invite the youth to do things for the benefit of all the people and the world. Even though [at *Lidia Coggiola*] we give support to the youth to grow [in this way], they are always exposed to vices and leisure. We work similarly to prepare the parents so that they can promote good values, and learn how to have fluent communication with their children. As it is said, first we must change ourselves to be a role model so that others can also change.

Namaraj Silwal | NEPAL

# One World: Connecting People to People



*Namaraj, at left, works with IPM Project Partner Calendar Project's coordinating organization the Social Work Institute, established in 1987 by Jesuit Priests from the USA. Seeking to serve and mobilize Nepali people through social work training, the institute partners with IPM to bring opportunity for community collaboration and social discussion to women in an area where gender inequity can discourage their participation in political and social discourse.*

I was born in a small rural village in the Nuwakot District of Nepal, and have experienced the hardship of village life and beauty of living in the village. I still remember the way I started my schooling in the village, writing only on the stone slate. To receive paper and pencil was a great opportunity for us those days. We did not have lots of toys. We used to play with the natural clay, stone, etc. The greatest enjoyable time for me was to go to the forest with my friends to collect fruits. I still remember that we used to have only two-three pairs of clothes, and only once in the year, during festival time, we used to have new clothes.

By seeing the basic needs of my fellow villagers, my desire to serve my own childhood community grew stronger. I have seen injustices done in the village and have experienced the gap between rich and poor. These experiences have always created a desire in me to be a lawyer and to bring justice to my own people, so I left home and came to the capital city: Kathmandu.

There I worked in a government office in a lower position and did my law studies from the Nepal Law campus. I used to read different philosophical books, biographies of great personalities to enhance my knowledge. There was a search for inner satisfaction and I was not satisfied with my law studies; I wanted to serve the people through grassroots [initiatives].

During that time of discernment I came across Jesuit Priests who had started the Social Work Institute. I enrolled myself for the nine months of social work training. During the training period I work with many people from different walks of life. I saw the endless commitment of Jesuit Priests who could work for more than eighteen hours per day. It was a really turning point in my life to get into social work with my law profession. I completed my diploma in the Social Work Course, and also completed a Community Development course in the Philippines. I wanted to know more of the sociology and anthropology of Nepal, so I studied Master's degree in sociology from Tribhuvan University Nepal.

I am working for the Social Work Institute and its office is in Kathmandu. Even though I am based in Kathmandu I spend 80% of my time with the rural community. Initially, I was involved in organizing the people in my own community for two years. I also got the opportunity to work at Social Work Institute as a hostel in charge and also to work with the needy children in the Child Sponsorship and Youth Environment Therapy programs. Our moto is "Training Youth to Serve." The organization trains youths from rural areas of Nepal and also initiates the development activities through trained young social workers in their respective communities. The program's training focuses on transformation development and people-led development.

Before initiating the [IPM *Calendar Project*], we had lots of discussion with the groups and community-based organizations. We found that the main cause of the problem of inactive community groups is members of the groups are shy, and some are not able to express their feelings towards the friends. The calendar posters became tools to initiate the discussion and reflection on members' own behavior.

My experience with IPM is that it really tries to bring the best out of people. It helps communities to mobilize their own resources. It also creates an atmosphere of creative thinking and ways to deal with the issues. Now those groups where we implemented the calendar discussions are very confident, able to mobilize local resources, even some become women leaders. It also helps to decrease the domestic violence. Women are able to express their problems and get solutions. Family level income is increased; child enrollment at school is increased. Now we are working with 2000 women and children that are most vulnerable in western part of the country.

We all live in the one world, and how ever we want to be different from one another, [it isn't so]. The value of respecting each other is the value of living your life fully. We all are connected with each other through media and globalization. For me, IPM Project Partnership mission is to connect people to people, and create an environment to learn from each other and appreciate each other.



*Namaraj facilitates a community discussion using a calendar created by participants of the Calendar Project, meant to encourage open dialogue across boundaries of gender and caste.*

Rodrigo Péret | BRAZIL

# Learning How to Work from the Roots



*Rodrigo, pictured at left, founded the Agro-Ecological Resource Center (AFES) in 2002. Since its founding, IPM has provided \$18,442.00 in financial support, and has worked alongside Rodrigo in solidarity as a public voice for ecological justice and landless peoples' human rights. AFES and IPM are supporting urban agriculture and homeless people's occupation of public space in Uberlandia, Brazil. Rodrigo, a new member of IPM's International Executive Board in 2015, continues to represent Brazil's landless movement in the United States and around the world.*

**M**y name is Rodrigo and I am a Brazilian. I was born in Belo Horizonte in the state of Minas Gerais to a middle class family. I have three brothers (but one passed away at the age of four because of cancer) and four sisters. My father was a director and professor at a university and my mother worked as a geographer, but after she got married she took care of us. I am 57 years old and a Franciscan, but I like people calling me by my name; I am a brother, not a priest.

I studied civil engineering, and when I graduated in 1979, I left my home and decided to live in the periphery of the city of Minas Gerais in an industrial area with metal workers. This was during Brazil's military dictatorship, and it was there that I saw reality from another perspective. I was moved by Francis of Assisi in his way of living Christianity and getting to know others.

During that time, when I was changing or transforming my life, I encountered a union movement struggling for a new and transformed society... I also worked on the periphery of Belo Horizonte focusing on the defense of Humans Rights in impoverished communities. Later, I went back to Minas Gerais and worked there with the rural workers. This all started with a Bishops' conference (*Comissão Pastoral da Terra*) and ever since I have been involved in the defense of the earth, a struggle for agrarian reform, or a *luta pela reforma agraria*. I learn how to work from the roots; I did not go to a school [for agriculture], but I did a course at the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra*.

[I work with] agro-ecology and water issues, but always from the perspective of organizing, with the goal of empowerment of the communities. [I want] for them to have strength and intervention in the State, to propose public policies, to try to change the correlation of forces. [IPM Project Partner *AFES*] is accompanying directly 2,000 families struggling for the agrarian reform.

I met Joe Cistone, many years ago, I think it was in the 90's decade in Italy. We used to talk a lot about the struggles of the workers, and he stayed in touch, learning more about our work on the ecological field, and there the support of IPM started. IPM has contact with collectives and base-communities, and it works throughout cooperation and education. Now the next step should be putting those organized groups in the international discussions and dialogues, because with the General Assembly, IPM could start participating more in the social forums.

I want to invite you all to live small...we have to understand that this fight [of environmental justice] is not to be recognized as just a distribution of a common resources, but as a way of living together in a common existence between humans and nature. It is good for us, but more important for nature itself. The planet is not just where life happens; we are just a small part, capable of destroying but, also capable of doing.

When I worked with the committee of Justice, Peace and Ecology, I was responsible for the worldwide coordination of a program in Rome. One time, I visited the house of a farmer in a community from Japan. I remember he had two altars, one was Shintoist and the other Buddhist. Thinking maybe the man is from one religion and his wife from the other, I asked him from my Western perspective: "Which God do *you* pray to?" He responded with simplicity: "We, the Japanese, are very generous with the Gods."

Joseph F. Cistone | INDIA

# On the Waves Where Three Oceans Meet



*The following piece originally appeared in the May 2005 issue of Forging Connections after the Tsunami of December 2004 devastated southeast India, as shown partially in the photo here. With funding from the Singing for Change Foundation, Joe and Mahesh Upadhyaya, IPM's Regional Director for South Asia, (third from left) spent considerable time working alongside Doctor Vimala Charles (second from left)—a longstanding IPM Project Partner from nearby Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu—to develop an appropriate long-term response, particularly in the interfaith village of Muttom. The stories of Mary and Ponnarasi are two of the most powerful written about in the history of IPM.*

When I was a young boy my grandfather came home one day with the newest Sears utility shed...on May 24th, I returned to Grandpa's shed once more. Except this time it was in the small coastal village of Muttom, on the southern tip of India, near a holy place for India's Hindu majority and for the minority Christian and Muslim fisherman as well. It is just a few kilometers down the coast where the Tamil say three "oceans" meet—the Arabic Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. And it was to Muttom, a once proud village of 5,000, that the December Tsunami came to India with all its force. Today, almost five months to the day later, one large sheet metal shed—divided with curtains, covered by cheap black plastic tarp, without running water or facilities, and crawling with all manner of bugs—is meant to hold some 384 men, women, and children.

In a space no larger than Grandpa's shed Mary now lives with her brother, a fisherman without a boat to take to sea, her elderly parents, and her younger siblings. Mary's face is the distinctive yellow of turmeric, pasted on to counter skin rashes and her body is gaunt from too many mosquitoes and not enough potable water. Imagine sharing four portable latrines with 384 others (and these only arrived a few short weeks ago!) and no running water. Consider what it must feel like to be an eighteen-year-old young woman protected from the sun and monsoon rains by the type of black tarp my grandfather used to use to cover his pool in winter, and separated from your gaping neighbors by the same cotton sheets that used to divide our shed into boys and girls. Mary had lost countless friends and virtually all her possessions, but she was with her family and they were about to receive a new boat and a chance to begin again. Mary was one of the "lucky."

Ponnarasi was not...a vibrant twenty-two-year-old, training as an Assistant Nurse Midwife with IPM Project Partner #502 *The Mary Jenkins Hospice Center*, Ponnarasi lost many members of her extended family during the December 26th Tsunami. Her father passed away on April 18th from the lingering effects of aspiration pneumonia—a form of pneumonia one gets from long periods under water. Ponnarasi shared with me one of the most heart-wrenching stories I have ever heard. She witnessed a young mother, clinging to the ceiling fan with one hand and her newborn child with the other as she watched her older child wash out to sea. Imagine your sister and her children screaming for help, just beyond your reach and a second outgoing wave washing them away...only to have her body drift ashore a day or so later, bloated, bruised, and virtually unrecognizable, but still grasping your nephew's hand.

As I stood on the beach of Muttom in a place where some 300 homes had been washed away and the remains of shattered catamarans littered the beach, the waves echoed memories of all those young children rushing out to gather the sea shells the Tsunami undertow had left behind, and then being torn away when the next Tsunami wave arrived with all the force of an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale.

The people of Tamil Nadu are known for their passion for the sea and lust for life. When one asks why they are so animated, the Tamil fisher folk invariably respond over gulps of tea: we are like the waves on the sea. The Tsunami waves of December were unlike any that the coastal people have ever known in their millennia seeking out a livelihood near the sacred place where the three oceans meet. While privileged to live with them for a week in May and to help them imagine a better future with the funding for boats and nets and the technical assistance and training IPM shall provide, my heart was carried on those same waves. And having come to know these remarkable people, I'm quite sure I'll never be the same.

## Rafael Isaías Valdez Rodríguez | NICARAGUA

# In the Work, We Learn More



*Don Rafael, at left, coordinated IPM Project Partner Teen Night School from 2001-2014, helping the school to boast a 90% retention rate in the Barrio Jorge Dimitrov where unemployment and illiteracy were rampant. Under his leadership, the program evolved to include home visits and support outside of the classroom from its original roots in 1998 as the project School for Everyone, coordinated then by the Christian Women in Action organization. In total, over sixteen years, IPM provided over \$84,000 in programmatic funding.*

**M**y name is Rafael Isaías Valdez Rodríguez; I was born in Managua in October, 1942. I come from a family of extreme poverty, but with efforts, my five brothers and I have managed to move forward and excel. I got to work more with people since I became a member of a Christian Ecclesiastic Community known as San Juan Apostol (CEB), which is settled to east of Managua. Many human beings in Latin America have served as role models; I can name few of them such as Che Guevara, Camilo Torres, Monsignor Romero, Carlos Fonseca Amador and many others. They are not Christian militants, but they come from other philosophical tendencies. Their life example and giving has been to me an encouragement to keep moving forward.

The first person that I met from IPM was Joseph Cistone. Later on there were many more, but with whom I have had the most contact has been with him. The first impression was good, because I had a stereotype—as the Americans have stereotypes of us the Latinos, we also have stereotypes of the gringos—of the arrogant, self-sufficient guy. When I saw Joe Cistone, I thought, he is a tranquil man, simple, nice, and a very good person. I even joked with him.

We began our partnership when the need arose to support the neighborhood of Barrio Jorge Dimitrov. We could not eliminate the poverty, but at least wanted to raise the quality of life of the people there by improving their education, especially the younger ones. There was a study done in 2002 on this neighborhood, and we have a map with points which establish specific social situations of the area, either be it crime, violence, prostitution, drug use, and other risk behavior. The determined geographic points where different levels of violence existed were many. This mapping was done in 2002, but though things have changed, it was a very dangerous neighborhood if you look where the *Teen Night School* project was located. All the students were coming from different geographical locations in the neighborhood, and among many were armed fighting and rioting.

We decided to work in this neighborhood, because it was a place that was close and it was a place that meant a challenge for us to go see what we could accomplish. When I started to get to that area, I did not come by car. I walked with the risk of being robbed, but when I had done several visits, I lost the fear and people recognized me. At first when I came to give Bible class once a week and I would leave after the class, the students would tell me that they were going to accompany me to the bus stop. They did as if they were my bodyguards, and they did it for a while, until I told them it was not necessary anymore.

Through the duration of the project, I saw people who managed to overcome. Not only youth, but also adults. There was a person who was an accountant and another who worked in trade that improved [their positions]. There were some girls who studied and made it to college; there were others who failed to study for a university degree, but after earning a high school degree, gained admission to the School of Police Walter Mendoza and graduated.

That has been the impact it has had in part. Many girl students even attended the school with their kids, because here in Nicaragua another problem is child maternity. Girls under thirteen are already giving birth to children, and they did not have the opportunity to attend in another school. At the *Teen Night School* they came with their children and could study, because they did not have to worry that there was no one at home to babysit their kids.

I've worked with different issues, specifically with domestic violence and sexual violence. We also work in the issue of masculinity, the topic of juvenile leadership, and in the democratic empowerment of people to be able to learn more about their rights and duties. Our lines of work are with a focus on citizens' participation. We support education and we already have almost eighteen years working on providing scholarships to young people, especially from Jalapa, one of the poorest municipalities of Nicaragua. Because job opportunities in this country are very low, there is a fairly large population of the unemployed. The challenge is to make sure the students graduate and then to help them to get jobs. The work is the best experience; while working we learn maybe more of what we learn while studying. The academy gives us the theoretical knowledge, but the work puts that theory in practice and is where we learn more.

A part of my world vision is to foster the culture of our people...I whom have traveled around the world tell you: from one airport to another there are no differences, only in the size. The spirit to be in solidarity, the spirit brotherhood, the spirit of fraternity, and also the willingness to love others has to grow among us. For me, the most important in life is happiness for others...if it is to improve the quality of life of others, I am happy!

## Daniben Pochabhai Chauhan | INDIA

# Making a Legacy Last

By: Himatbhai Pochabhai Chauhan



*50 years ago, Dalits were not treated as human beings. Superstitions, bad practices, child marriage, illiteracy, and addiction prevailed in Dalit communities because of this degradation. Daniben's son, Himat, Project Coordinator for the Pochabhai Foundation, tells his family's story: the legacy of his father's martyrdom—namesake of the Pochabhai Foundation—and his mother who showed incredible strength and solidarity for her husband's vision of a non-discriminatory caste system in India. She is pictured above at left, in conversation with Sister Abhilasha, right, in India.*

**D**aniben was born in Mahiyari village of Tarapur block of Anand district in Gujarat state, on the 20th of April in 1956 in a Dalit family. She was the first child among six children of her parents. She was deprived of primary education due to poverty and responsibility to cater to her young brothers and sisters. At that time, the Dalit community was unaware of the importance of education, and particularly, girls were neglected from education. She spent her time taking care of her siblings and helping her parents in the agriculture labor work.

At the age of twelve, Daniben was married in an arranged child marriage, as was the custom in the region. Her husband, Pochabhai, joined the Behavioral Science Center, an NGO in a movement for the Dalit's rights. He was courageously raising his voice against all injustice and inhumanity to his community. He was also mobilizing other youth to join with him. But as Pochabhai was spending more of his time with the movement work, Daniben had been laid with double the responsibilities of wholly managing the agricultural work, the child-rearing, and household activities at her in-laws.

In the 1980's, Dalits of the Golana village were facing the problem of land rights, with nowhere to build houses for their families. Near to their locality was the Panchayat wasteland, so Pochabhai and his supporters approached the Panchayat and District Magistrate to allocate the land to the Dalit people. But the Darbar community would not tolerate it because they did not want the land given to Dalits. They insulted them and refused them.

On the 25th of January in 1986, the Darbar community attacked the Dalits, killing Pochabhai and three of his supporters and injuring 26 others. They wanted to stop the movement and Dalits standing up for their rights. At the time, Daniben and Pochabhai's youngest daughter was just six months old.

Daniben prayed for strength to cope with the situation. During the time of the hearing against the Darbars, she played a vital and courageous role. Without fear, she gave witness and identified the killers of her husband and her testimony supported the case to punish eleven Darbars with life imprisonment. Her actions showcased the strength of women to all, setting an example for others, and she later, along with relatives, would be invited to become members of NGOs that were involved in the fight for Dalit rights.

Daniben fed her strong desire to do something for her community by working for issues of human rights, youth education, safe drinking water, and disaster mitigation. As she became more involved with social work activities, she felt the need to form her own NGO, and did in 2008 under the Bombay Public Trust Act. Under the banner of the IPM Project Partner, *Pochabhai Foundation*, she works in a more organized manner, and can expand her area of work with other poor communities in the surrounding villages of Golana.

## Himatbhai Pochabhai | INDIA

# Connected Like Family



*Pochabhai Foundation has been an IPM Special Project since 2010, coordinated by Himat, son of its founder, and works with the oppressed Dalit caste of India, specifically in asserting their land rights and providing support to the nomadic Jat tribe. Through the generous support of Hank and Mary Doll, recent initiatives include the provision of water filters and basic home necessities like blankets, and support for a vocational training program for women in cosmetology. At left, Himat addresses a crowd at the annual memorial event in Gujarat to celebrate his father's life and martyrdom.*

I was born in Dalit Family. I am a third child of my parents out of five children. We lived in village with extreme poverty, without electricity and water supply and not a proper road. We have a strong caste system and we have to live in our caste cluster, with separate wells for each caste.

My father was always busy with rights-based work, and that's why I didn't get much time to spend with him. My mother took care of the home and cooking and working in the fields.

I pursued my primary education in Golana village. I wasn't attending regular class in school and getting many complaints from teacher to parent. So they put me in a Catholic boarding school in Khambhat.

When I was in fifth standard, my father was killed by [a member of] the Darbar caste because he was a leader of Dalit movement. He was helping the poor people to get their rights to their lands, and he was helping them to fight for justice.

After that incident, I felt [I had] to do something for Dalit people, and also wanted to finished the remaining work of my father. But due to my younger age, and [my desire to] continue to study, I couldn't.

After the Golana massacre, my mother was disturbed mentally and economically. Many organisation and N.G.O came forward to help my village, but my father's unfinished dream [of Dalit and caste justice] wasn't coming through. After my brothers and sisters and I became adults, we established the *Pochabhai Foundation* with my mother.

I talked to many people about the *Pochabhai Foundation*, but didn't get success. One day I met Mahesh [IPM South Asia Regional Director] and he promise to help, and advised me in how to set up an NGO. I got courage from him. Through Mahesh I have been [connected] with IPM for the last five years. Many IPM visitors came to Golana, and helped [to build] a foundation for primary education to the Jat children.

Recently *Pochabhai Foundation* is working in Tarapur and Khambhat villages to develop environment, land, Dalit rights, and education. We are thankful to IPM for their help and support. IPM helps us, not as a donator, but through giving information as our family.

## Joseph F. Cistone | UGANDA

# With Forgotten Youth



*The following article appeared in the June-August 2007 issue of Connections. In this piece IPM's CEO, Joseph Cistone, recounts his travel to Uganda where IPM was developing an important regional presence, particularly in Gulu where the Lord's Resistance Army had wreaked havoc for years. Joe and IPM's local consultants, pictured at left, spent considerable time with the Saint Monica's Girl's Rehabilitation Center where the subsequently proclaimed "CNN Hero," Sister Rosemary, was ministering with young women and children who had escaped from forced service in the LRA. The stories of Rose and Victoria are horrific, but IPM's partnership with them provided a seed of hope for their future and their children. Our partnership with Saint Monica's—including Sister Rosemary's later travel to speak at IPM's Annual Luncheon in Cleveland—was also an excellent learning opportunity for IPM to discern our appropriate presence in East Africa and how to work alongside children and youth who have been the victims of extreme emotional, physical, and sexual trauma.*

Rose, Victoria, Sister Rosemary, and I sat down in the Saint Monica Girl's Tailoring Centre's office and began to chat. The ride from Kampala to Gulu had been calmer than a year before. A tenuous "peace" was holding between the Ugandan government and the so-called Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and some sense of stability, if not hope, was in the air. Uganda's forgotten youth are coming of age far from home in refugee camps that overwhelm Gulu's colonial infrastructure and breed further trauma and discontent.

The Centre, a new IPM Project Partner in the Youth category, was one ray of light. Rose, Victoria, and I had just met an hour or so earlier, as Sister Rosemary showed off the Centre's new sewing machines and introduced my travel companions and I to some of the young women whose stories continue to break her heart—and try her patience! Rose and Victoria had agreed to share their stories with me privately and now Rose was having second thoughts. It wasn't a question of trusting this white male to keep her secrets (if Sister Rosemary said I was ok than I was definitely ok!) but what about the rest of the world?

Victoria interrupted: "Rose, no one can give us trouble now...the world should know what has happened to us." Rose agreed: "I'd like to narrate for you how I was abducted and spent my life in the bush." I had first heard the Liberation Theology mantra Voice of the Voiceless at Holy Cross in the mid-1980s. Perhaps never had my role been so clear...

Rose's nightmare began at thirteen. Her mother had remarried and she was sent to an orphanage/boarding school near her grandmother's home. One fateful evening in 1994 she had gone to stay with her Grandmother and was awakened in the middle of the night by a group of 11 men. Rose and the other children and youth were divided between the "ugly", who were immediately killed, and the "beautiful", twelve in all, who were forced to march.

After a few kilometers many of the marchers began to cry and ask to go back. The LRA members would ask those who wanted to leave to step out of line and then fell upon them with machetes and pangas (a crude, bludgeoning instrument made infamous in the Rwandan genocide). Then the commanding officers started to divide the youth up amongst themselves for combat training, servitude, and sexual exploitation. Rose is indeed beautiful and she was given to a commanding officer who eventually forced her to go with him all the way to the Sudan. Her clothes were taken, she was raped repeatedly, she was driven by thirst to drink her own urine, and forced to kill others by hand.

Her nightmare continued for almost ten years during which she carried out orders she still struggles to comprehend and gave birth to three children—children she resented so much at times that she neglected and tried to abandon them. In 2003, hungry and exhausted, Rose was on patrol with her children in tow (now age one, the latest born of an abusive relationship in the refugee camp, through age nine) when her group of LRA members encountered Ugandan soldiers. Rather than run she hid by the road and eventually made her way to the home of an old man who accompanied her to a center for children in Gulu which led, in time, to St. Monica's.

Rose told me stories of tactics and strategies that clearly implicate other governments in the horrors of Northern Uganda and the Southern Sudan. She shared details I'm not sure I'll ever be comfortable trusting with anyone but my closest colleagues and friends. But most importantly, she quickly pleaded with me to share her story with all of you.

When I visit with IPM's partners in Gulu and with marginalized and impoverished young people around the world, I invariably share with them something I learned in my own youth: faith allows us to be both connected to this world and to transcend the physical realities of it. Rose's deep, spiritual center—which so clearly shines through in her smile on the cover of this special issue of *Connections*—allowed her to survive when most of us would have simply given in. Neither she nor I can justify some of what she was forced to do, but I know that if it is IPM's mission to promote justice, peace, and hope than it is our role to stand alongside Rose in any way we can so that she can transcend her horrific past, become the subject of her own history, and create a future for her children.

Thank you for reading along and allowing IPM to accompany Rose, Victoria, their children, and the youth of our world.



*Original cover photo of Rose that accompanied this feature in 2007.*

María “Paulita” Paula Pérez | EL SALVADOR

# Finding Community through the Revolution



*Paulita, pictured rightmost with IPM Staff member Alyssa Bovell, is a founding member of IPM Project Partner, ACOMUJERZA, who began working with IPM in 2003, enabling the purchase of their first sewing machines through initial seed funding in partnership with the St. Noel Church of Willoughby Hills, Ohio. Growing since then to now include twenty-nine active members, the name of the project changed from Mujer y Comunidad to ACOMUJERZA to reflect its legal cooperative status. Their motto is: “Artisans of our own lives.”*

I was born in Canton San Antonio, Monte San Juan, Department of Cuscatlan. My family is very religious; we have always been involved in religious activities. We have a lot of faith, and we we’re taught in faith by our parents and grandparents; we were taught we have God’s love. And that by having God’s love we have to have love for others. We have always been a very close family but due to the problems, like injustice, we had to leave our houses and the place where we were born; I was eighteen years old when we left our house.

We are a very loving family; we have tried to live close to each other. My parents, mostly my dad, was the leader of our community, the people loved him because he brought a lot of people together in meetings in our canton. At the meetings, we would read the Holy Bible and then we reflected about those readings; and that is the reason we were persecuted, for reading the Bible and for being gathered in our community. In those gatherings we saw how much our people needed, and I remember my father organized the people in our community and they came up with a project. There were homeless families and so they developed a project for building 18 houses for the people. These little houses were made out of mud, soil and wood, that is how they built them, and roofs were made of grass...we were living in community and that was what my father always taught us, to be organized, that the more organized we are the more strength we have.

When someone did not have enough food, we would share our food with those families...we practiced solidarity a lot; it is something that comes from family—my grandparents taught my father to always be in solidarity. The life in the cantons is very nice, because families help each other; but by the beginning of the war people used to politicize our actions.

I remember when we organized this protest march. We came to San Salvador, specifically to the Agricultural Development Bank to demand lower prices for the materials used for agriculture, and higher wages for the people who worked at the coffee plantations. The army massacred this march, this happened in 1977. We took the route 38 bus and the army massacred the bus thinking they would kill all the Protestants. Many of the survivors were taken and killed nearby San Salvador’s volcano. Only eleven of us escaped, my face was all burned from the bombs they threw at the bus and I had shattered glass on my body. I felt like I was going to die that day; a lot of people were hurt like that.

My mother was tortured; they put quicklime on her eyes and then blindfolded her so she couldn’t see what they were doing and to make her feel terrified. While they were torturing her they kept threatening her with the murder of all of her children if she refused to tell on my father. Those were such difficult times. My brother, Jose, was only seven years old when this happened. My sister, Francisca, disappeared for a month and fifteen days. We didn’t know where she was kept and we didn’t receive any news from her, but still we were able to find her. It was not just my family, a lot of people disappeared by that time.

Mrs. Vicenta [of IPM Project Partner *Lidia Coggiola*] had a friend who was selling a land lot at Altos del Rio in Zaragoza. And that is how we moved from Mexicanos to Zaragoza; my father built the house we live in now. Right after we settled in Zaragoza, we started to coordinate with the church; my father was a very close friend of Father Miguel and through him we made our first contact with IPM. I remember [them] telling me “*Chayito* [a nickname], it’ll be good if you came to the meetings I attend.” I accepted and through those meetings I met the women of *ACOMUJERZA*.

By remaining faithful and being conscious of our neighbors’ reality is how we help each other. Mine is an experience of faith: I told my [former] director that I desired to learn a craft, and then I prayed to Monsignor Romero so my occupation could be embroidery, cutting, and sewing. I prayed so I could learn it, teach it, and practice it. I have learned and taught my craft to many people, and I have taught it without conditions, just for the sharing and learning.



*Paulita sharing her gift and passion for embroidery with an Immersion Experience delegation from Loyola University Chicago.*

## Shashi Bhushan Pandit | INDIA

# They Sat with Us



*Shashi coordinates IPM Special Project India Waste Workers Organization. Since 2010, IPM has worked in solidarity with its participants as they advocate and organize for the social, economic, and political rights of waste pickers, many of whom are in-country migrants to the city of Delhi. Pictured at left leading a public demonstration, Shashi is a dynamic community organizer and champion of the workers' rights.*

I was born in Bhojpur district of Bihar. I came to the city of Delhi for my studies and completed my education by working in a factory as a laborer. While studying for my Masters in Hindi, I became part of student politics and was inspired to organize those who are poor and deprived in society [stand up] for their rights. This was in 2001.

In 2002 I joined Sajha Manch, a city-based organization, and got the opportunity of working with slum dwellers and learning about their issues and problems. From 2003 to 2006 I worked with a NGO on a project with waste pickers on their behalf. By then I had a strong call to organize and mobilize for [waste picker] rights, and so co-created with the workers the All India Waste Workers Association. We worked on a number of issues particularly related to livelihood and social security. We have more than 15,000 who are with us today, and have grown, not only in size, but also in impact.

Slowly and surely we started working on issues related to women, children, youth and the elderly. We have helped more than 4000 children to get admission in government schools after teaching them in our mini classes and also by getting them identity cards. Very often, [people relocating to the city] have no identity cards, or do not have the money to go back to their village to get one. So their children don't get admission in schools. But with our efforts many are now able to. Our efforts for the children built trust with the community.

Most workers [of the Association] are from distant villages of the country and come to Delhi seeking work. Unable to get good work, they take to waste picking for survival. One day, Mahesh introduced us to "Mr. Joe and Sir Hank Doll." We were pleasantly surprised when they turned up in the middle of the dumps, and sat with us and got to know our struggles and living conditions. The direct face to face conversations we had convinced us that we were not alone and that there were people around the world who are concerned about us.

The *India Waste Workers Organization* [as the association is known as an IPM Project Partner] believes that we can create a new society—not just locally—but globally, if people from different parts of the world come together and see every problem as "our" problem, and join hands in solving them. We felt this whenever other IPM visitors came and met us.

We express our solidarity and oneness with IPM not only for today, but invite it for the future also. Mutual respect and partnership are so important, and I am happy to experience that.



*Mary and Hank Doll, rightmost in photo, are remarkably generous in their passion and dedication to Projects like the India Waste Workers Organization, and are pictured here with Dr. Vimala Charles (center) in India.*

## Medardo Gómez | EL SALVADOR

# Work of Love & Solidarity



*Bishop Medardo Gomez was arrested and threatened with assassination in 1984. His arrest was a result of the solidarity he and IPM showed during El Salvador's Civil War. Six years after his arrest, the offices of the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection were bombed. He is pictured here, fourth from left, with the first scholarship-based Interfaith Immersion Experience delegation, made possible through the generosity of Hank (pictured second from left) and Mary Doll.*

**M**y name is Medardo Gomez. I'm the Bishop of the Lutheran Church in El Salvador. When I think of IPM, I have to mention that it is a historical institution of solidarity, love, and service in the name of God for the suffering and the poor. I'm mentioning this because during the war, there were many social issues in the country and some of them are still present.

You can imagine the social problems we were facing in the eighties when the war had been declared. In 1980, the Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, was murdered. There were many churches that admired Romero's ministry, one of them the Lutheran Church. Even though we were a small church at the time, we followed Romero's ministry and continued his mission along with other churches. It was a difficult mission to follow because we were targeted as communists and rebellious; we were being persecuted because we were working for and with the poor, and that wasn't seen with good eyes in those times. For the people in power, it was a sin to work helping the poor and, as a result of this vision, many people were murdered, including Monseñor Romero.

He was labeled as a communist. Then, the Jesuits were assassinated as well in 1989, for the same reason, many people, and also churches, were persecuted because we were helping the victims of the civil war. We had a lot of necessities in 1983.

In that same year, I was abducted by the Death Squads. I disappeared for three days, they tortured me and held me captive in a clandestine prison. After those three days, I was moved into a public prison by the National Police. I was told not to declare that I was in a clandestine prison being tortured.

It was because of the intervention of many institutions and international organizations that I was liberated. Among those organizations, demanding freedom for those held captive, was IPM. When I was finally set free, I asked for help and accompaniment to continue my mission. That is how I started working directly with IPM, because IPM was one of the Christian organizations that committed to support the victims of the war. IPM definitely saved many lives; they supported our work with the refugees, and the victims of the war. We built a temporary home for the refugees and the place is still there. There is a historic memory of the moments that IPM was working with us hand to hand helping the most needed.

IPM helped when we needed to attend the homes and visit the refugees, we used to bring staples and we gave accompaniment during protest for peace and many marches. When the Peace Agreements were signed, the church was present, and we know that it wouldn't have been possible without IPM's help. They helped this country reach peace, and we know that we still have a lot of work to do in matters of reconciliation.

I'm very happy to see that you are gathering these testimonials because the work that we had with IPM saved many lives; it was a work of love and solidarity.

# TRUST



Hilary Kazoora | KENYA

# Like a Pencil in the Hands of God

By: Tina Rosenberg



*Tina spent time with Brother Hilary, at left, on the 2013 International Board & Friends Immersion Experience in Kenya. Established in 1990 as a small children's center for orphans by the Brothers of St. Charles Lwanga, Watoto Wa Lwanga has been an IPM Project Partner since 2010, where Brother Hilary directs the academic and recreational programming for the beneficiaries of the project. Additionally, Watoto Wa Lwanga is now offering youth empowerment and vocational training workshops, food relief, and home support services to the children's families and to the community.*

**T**his past September of 2013, I had the honor of interviewing Brother Hilary Kazoora. We were both in Nairobi attending the IPM Regional Sub-Saharan Partners Conference. I had just returned from visiting *Watoto Wa Lwanga*, a monumental project he founded on the skirts of Kibera, one of the largest slums in the world.

*Watoto Wa Lwanga (WWL)* literally edges Kibera, and strategically so. Brother Hilary's goal was to serve the slum's children (80% of whom are orphaned), and the destitute families that reside within this vast neighborhood by providing a school (presently K-12), a vocational center, and a facility and clinic for mentally challenged and special needs children. All attending students receive counseling by a professional staff, a social evaluation, and the promise of an education and/or vocational training. A university is in the planning.

One really has to experience *Watoto Wa Lwanga* to appreciate the ambitious breadth of this project. In Kibera, where over 800,000 live, there is no water, no sewage treatment; domestic and gang violence are an everyday occurrence. That a single visionary has managed to change the lives of nearly 2,000 children a year is staggering. And it is not just the kids, their families are counseled, supported, trained, and if necessary, foster families are sought for the abandoned. Furthermore, every day busloads of kids are delivered from upcountry and *WWL* welcomes them, integrates them into the community, even following up on them when they return home. At present, IPM provides water for the school community seen in three enormous tanks as you enter the grounds. There is no single resource more important in fighting disease and replenishing the bodies and souls of these children, especially since the Kenyan government only pipes water in for the duration of two hours once a week.

I asked Brother Hilary, a native of Uganda, where he sought his inspiration. "I met Mother Teresa once," he shared. "She was so full of love for others. I was called by my religious order of the Brothers of Saint Charles Lwanga to work with poor children, and she was my inspiration."

"Wait," I interrupted. "You met her? What was she like?"

"She was a simple woman," Brother Hilary quietly intoned, "like a pencil in the hands of God writing a love letter to the poor." A pencil to write, he expounded, has to first be sharpened. Then once held by one inspired by God, the help and support will come. Further, accepting mistakes is humility; one can turn the pencil upside down and erase them. Be simple, hold the pencil of love, receive criticism, erase your mistakes, carry on.

"No human is an island," he reminded me. "Society must help. At present the Kenyan government contributes only drops of water, so we must look elsewhere." Brother Hilary has raised funds from all over the world to support the ongoing and growing needs of *Watoto Wa Lwanga*. "It is not difficult," he mused, smiling, "when people see what we are hoping to accomplish here."

I have often reflected upon my time with Brother Hilary Kazoora. How is it that true visionaries always seem to exude such inner calm, such unquestioning self-assuredness that their path is ordained? I suppose when you hold the pencil of love in your hand, the world of possibility is limitless.



*Children beneficiaries of Watoto Wa Lwanga receive food and nutritional support in addition to access to education.*

Mardi Manary | MALAWI

## IPM's Foresight: “The First Organization to Believe in Us”



*Since 2003, Mardi and Dr. Mark Manary, shown here on the ground in Malawi, co-coordinate IPM Project Partner Project Peanut Butter. The ingredients for the nutritional supplement are grown in Malawi soil, and the production and packaging is done at factories in-country, echoing IPM's firm belief that solutions to global inequity should come from and be organized by the indigenous people, with foreign aid acting merely in partnership until the initiative can be self-sustained. Since the implementation of nutritional supplement programs like Project Peanut Butter, recovery rates of children suffering from malnutrition have increased from 25% to 95% globally.*

**I**PM has been a constant source of financial assistance and advocacy for *Project Peanut Butter*. We have been very appreciative of this support. In the beginning, IPM was the first group to support and encourage the work of *Project Peanut Butter* (outside of our families, friends, our church, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, and our parent's churches).

In 2001, Dr. Mark Manary, myself, a registered nurse, and our children, Megan and Micah, began the research on a peanut-based food and home-based therapy, which would become the internationally recognized standard of care for severe malnutrition. In the early days, after the research money was gone, but before the World Food Programme, World Health Organization, and UNICEF approved our food, RUTF (Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food), as the “standard of care”, we were determined to continue the work. We had the evidence that our peanut-based food was dramatically changing lives. We had increased the recovery rate for severe malnutrition from 27% to 90%. We knew we had the solution, but we just had no money.

Then IPM picked up the cause. Not only did we receive funds through IPM, but IPM supporters told their friends of our work. *Project Peanut Butter* was able to stay afloat and build a program. We are able to increase the number of clinics we provided with the RUTF treatment.

Today, *Project Peanut Butter* has spread to three national programs and set up smaller programs in ten other countries. IPM was the first organization to believe in us. For that, we are truly grateful.

Susan Mutuku Kyule | KENYA

## “Retired but Not Tired”: A Lifetime of Passion for Community



*Susan (left) coordinates at IPM Project Partner Kandula Community Project, an Emerging Project that transitioned to the Regular Project list in 2010. Most recently, through the generosity of the Camiener Foundation, IPM's Partnership has supported the expansion and construction of school facilities, with the hope of completing eight new classrooms by 2020. Her dedication and ambition allows IPM to walk with her in complete trust of the Project's continued progress.*

On June 24th in the year 2004, I was invited to talk at a conference in Nairobi at the Ufungamano House. By then I was the Chairperson for 46 women's groups in Mbooni. At the conference, I met Dr. Ralph, Joe, and IPM's Sub-Saharan Regional Coordinator at that time, Lucy Wawira. We shared stories and became friends, and that resulted in the partnership that prevails right now as I speak.

Serving the community has always been a part of my life, and I believe that trait was passed on to me by my late father. I was born and brought up in Kangundo, which is a 45-minute drive away from Nairobi. I attended school there, and later attended a teachers' training college called Shanzu in Mombasa at the Kenyan Coast.

It is while I was a teacher that I noticed that my passion for the community, especially for the children, grew more and more. It fostered in me the goal of offering a special class for the children with disabilities in the Kyangoma Primary School, where I served for fifteen years. I noticed that the rights for the children with disabilities were not taking the course as it should be. I had registered 45 children for the first class, and I am happy to say that among the pioneer students, there is one now at the Nairobi University studying for a Bachelor of Commerce in Business Administration.

Since I retired in 2001, I always say: “I retired, but am not tired.” I am involved in various activities that raise living standards for the women and children in Kandula, the village where I married. We discuss the different issues affecting our community, and we encourage each and every woman to start an income-generating activity like selling paraffin, or other small retail consumable products like matches, soap, and even vegetables. Currently, the women are doing basket-weaving.

In 2012, IPM organized week-long training with an expert basket weaver so that the women of our cooperative can meet the international standards. In the Kamba community, basket-weaving is a tradition. Every mother must give her daughter a basket on her wedding day. We have a women's cooperative of twenty-three women. (We were twenty-five, but two women have passed away). We weave the baskets and sell them in the market at the shopping center called Kikima. We also sell to our visitors through IPM. 20% of the money received from the sales is retained for the cooperative, and the women take home 80% of the money to buy basic commodities in their homes and to support their families. The retained funds are used where needed in the *Kandula Community Project*. They help us to buy books and pencils and other teaching materials in the two schools we run for small children, or we use the money to pay the teachers.

Since IPM came to our village, people have appreciated the wonderful work they see and they are able to give the little they have for the sake of the future despite the difficulties they face. For example, when IPM gave funding towards the building of two schools, they also contributed something small, and even gave of their energy to make sure that we will achieve the objectives of the entire community. Once, I had approached a certain lady who lives nearby; she is a widow and then she was living in a ten by ten feet house. I asked if we could assist her in building a good house. She accepted and said that it was a dream come true, as the house she had could not accommodate her and her six children, so she agreed to sell a portion of the land for the school to be built. With IPM, we built for her a three-roomed house, and with the remaining funds we started building the Kandula Nursery school that we now call St. Mary Gorrete Primary, one of our two schools.

We have plans to extend the classes to accommodate students who will be promoted to Class Two next year. We now need to ask the community to support in making some bricks, because this would be the simple way that they could contribute to the education; I understand that asking for money is sometimes not what they are able to pay based on their daily earnings. I appreciate that a good percentage have come to understand the things we are doing are for the whole community. Despite the challenges we experience, I thank God who gives me the strength to do all I have to do.

## Why Immersion Experience Programs Matter

In 2007, we received our first group of Immersion Experience participants from Holy Cross in the USA. They visited our village with Sonya Rice, and the trip allowed them to see for themselves the needs of our community. The main problem at the time was access to water for domestic use, and this was affecting most people. The children were not spared; the parents could spend most of their precious time between the hospital and their homes seeking health attention due to the water-borne diseases.

We shared with Sonya about starting pre-primary school here in our village. I knew the problems the children around here were facing: walking long distances to school, and some are too young to trace their way back home, being very tired to the extent of sleeping beside the road, and, worst of all, the dangerous terrains to school. The children were being taught under a tree, and during the rains it was bad. There was a teacher in the nearby that used his sitting room as a classroom to the children during that time.

In the conversation, Sonya asked me if I could initiate a project of a school. Through IPM, we received funds to buy cement, roofing materials, and to pay laborers, and so we started a school here next to Thii Catholic Church. The school is now called Thii Nursery school, and in 2009 the Riechard family from USA witnessed the launching of the school. Holy Cross groups continue to play a vital role in our well-being—they even brought us balls for the kids to play with while in school!



*Immersion Experience Program participants in Kenya.*



*The direct engagement of IPM Donors & Friends as highlighted by Susan was evidenced in 2009 on an Immersion Experience Program (IEP) to Kenya which included the late Dudley Sheffler (farthest right, standing), an instrumental figure in piloting scholarship funding opportunities for IEP participants.*

## Ellen Hilgendorf-Mead | LEBANON

# Raising a Family in Lebanon



*Ellen Hilgendorf-Mead and her late husband, Dennis Hilgendorf, pictured here, were the honored recipients of the 2014 Mayer-Strege Award in conjunction with IPM's 40th Anniversary celebration in our founding city of Saint Louis. Awarded for her dedication to IPM Project Partners, especially in Lebanon and the Middle East, Ellen is a former IPM International Board Member, is close with the founding Mayer and Strege families, and remains a vibrant figure in the IPM Family.*

**W**e left for Beirut, Lebanon in August of 1963 along with our two year old daughter, Denell. Right away, [my husband] Dennis became immersed in language study at the British Language Center in Shemlan, Lebanon—a well-known school for intense study used by British diplomats. He knew Arabic well by the time the two year course was finished. During the following years, Dennis was active in writing correspondence courses, TV & radio programming, visiting every Middle Eastern country along with every church and mosque in Lebanon to talk over their strengths and weaknesses. This entailed drinking a LOT of strong Arabic coffee. Our family enjoyed Arab food and the family oriented Arab culture. It was the best place to raise a family, and four more children were added to our family over the years: Eric, Heidi, Rindala, and Nicholas.

I became a hostess for all the guests Dennis invited to our home. I was a trained teacher, having attended Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, IL, so in between having children, I became a substitute teacher at the American Community School our children attended. I also taught nursery school for six months at Beirut University College when a teacher did not return from the United States after Christmas break. The nursery school was a training facility for future teachers.

The Jim Mayer family visited us on their final trip from India back to the United States. Marie remembers I served them Cheerios for breakfast and what a treat it was for them! Paul Strege was our area secretary after Bill Reinking died. He was a peer, guide, and a good sounding board for Dennis. Dennis kept contact with PIM (Partners in Mission) as through the years they continued to support the work in Lebanon. Eric, our son, remembers Paul helped find funding for his dissertation research trip to Jordan.

Paul & Jim visited us during the civil war in Lebanon to try to help Dennis re-evaluate his call and whether it was still valid to be in the Middle East under such circumstances. We came back to the United States for a six month R&R, but during that time Dennis died of a heart attack. I stayed in Hickory, NC where he passed for four more years. Eventually, I married a good friend/classmate of Dennis' called Arden Mead, which entailed moving to St. Louis, MO where he was pastoring, but that's another wonderful story...

Joanne Peterson | DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

## Dignity Holds the Key to Human Transformation



*Joana (left) coordinates IPM Project Partners at El Cercado Community Development, Women's Nutritional Program, and Agricultural Nurseries, a series of collaborative project initiatives in El Cercado that focus in education and leadership training, health and nutrition, reforestation, access to clean water, and women's empowerment. With nearly three decades of history in partnering with IPM, most recently in 2014 Joana has able to benefit her work through the gift of significant funding made possible by the efforts of an IPM IEP delegation, who saw need in the community and banded together to enable the purchase of an innovative aqueduct purification system.*

I'm from Buffalo, NY, but in one sense I'm more Dominican than North American because I've been here longer than in the States. I've lived in the DR for about thirty years now. I originally came in 1982 to learn Spanish, and decided to look for volunteer work for a low-wage job and stay for three years—but I ended up staying for thirty! Now this is my home. I have two adopted daughters: Linda Miriam is 21 years old and Gloria Isabel is thirteen years old. I stay here because of the work that I do, but also because of my two beautiful daughters.

I have been working in the Southwest part of the country along the Haitian border, and have had the wonderful opportunity to work with four Catholic parishes, even though I'm Lutheran. That's actually how I connected with IPM a long time ago. I had the great opportunity to begin working with Bob Wennerstrom, the Streges, and the Meyers about 26 years ago. IPM started funding my project...I am an organizer and a planner, so my main job is to help organize the different communities, [mainly] Christian-based communities and small faith communities that take responsibility to look at the reality of their surrounding community, analyze the problems and causes on a sociological, economic and theological level, and then begin to look at a plan to better their community. We work in the areas of health education, agriculture, and economic development.

[Among many other community-driven and led initiatives], a project that we are doing is in the area of education...this popular education method focuses not just on teaching people how to read and write, but it relates to their environment. The chapters that they study focus on topics such as land, farming, water contamination, health problems, political problems, and organization. The idea is that if people can begin to look at their surrounding realities and analyze the problems, then they can begin to become agents of change and help to improve their surroundings. Once they become empowered as a group, they can begin to work on community development in their particular region. The important thing is that they begin to build self-esteem and an increased dignity; [it is] more than just learning to read and write. It's an empowering method with the emphasis on liberating the people, while at the same time, focusing on community development and developing literacy.

All this work that we do [is for an] end result to train people and to help change lives. We are looking for human transformation. When you change the way people look at themselves—from having no self-esteem and no dignity to beginning to see themselves as people that can make a difference together—there is a human transformation that happens and that is what we are looking for. We want people to see themselves as agents of change, and to see themselves as different people, so they can stand up straight, look you in the eye, and feel empowered. That empowerment comes from within. Part of it comes from their spirituality and their faith, but the other part comes from being involved with these projects. They see their own gifts begin to come out, and they begin to see themselves differently.

Part of the whole approach in training and forming people is to help them take responsibility for their own lives in their community. Every year we do an evaluation; we have a social ministry committee with people representing areas of education, economic development, health, and agriculture in their Christian-based community. They meet every month to coordinate the projects and advocate on their behalf.

Also on a yearly basis, [Project Partner participants] come to gather and evaluate their progress. They look at the obstacles that they have met, and [share] their hopes and dreams. They learn a planning method; I can now say the community members are experts in planning. This is part of sustainability. One day, of course, I will pass on, and now that the community has organized [multiple] projects, they can replicate their plan [methods] across many projects. Once they learn how to plan and dream they can do it every year.

Because I'm so far away from U.S. society and from the main current in the Dominican Republic, it gets a little lonely. Knowing that I can come together once a year with other IPM Project Partners [through IPM Regional Conferences], and knowing that I will be challenged because IPM seems to be on the cutting edge, [creates] a special relationship with other Project Partners in Colombia, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. We also talk sometimes via the internet, and I have special memories of the different people that I have met. Knowing what they are doing helps to motivate me. And through IPM Immersion Experiences, I keep in touch with what is going on outside of our little community of El Cercado. The people that come are always so sensitive and really believe in social justice, so it's a pleasure to host the Immersion Experience delegations, along with the people that IPM sends along.

## Joseph F. Cistone | BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA

# Ghost Towns with Cars



*In this piece originally featured in the March 2002 edition of Forging Connections, IPM CEO, Joseph Cistone, reflects on his first trip back to Bosnia and Herzegovina with IPM. Joe had worked extensively to stop the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia during his tenure with the Franciscan Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Office in Rome during 1995-1997. While Joe's return trip to Sarajevo was somewhat heartening, life in the Bosnian countryside remained tense and troubling. The image of "Ghost Towns with Cars" became a lightning-rod for IPM Volunteers, Rich & Karen McCann, and others to work to help ensure that Bosnian Handicrafts became self-sustaining. The image of women weaving as a form of catharsis and healing, as shown in the accompanying photo of a participant in 2003, became a model for how IPM's international work could be replicated in the impoverished and marginalized communities of Northeast Ohio (for which the Cleveland Foundation provided important early funding) and Metropolitan Saint Louis. The cooperatives subsequent contract with an Italian clothing firm was one of the great success stories of IPM's early twenty-first century Project Partnerships.*

The sun sets quickly on the mountain road from Sarajevo to Tuzla. Greeted by a taxi driver in an unmarked Volkswagen Golf, we quickly left the airport and headed for the hills—the same hills from which Serbian forces bombarded this former Olympic city for years on end. As we make our way out of Sarajevo, I'm struck once again by the sheer beauty of Sarajevo's natural setting and how far the city has seemingly come since my last visit in 1997.

A few minutes outside the city boundaries and into the surrounding mountains, it is clear that while some things have changed, most have remained the same. The higher we climb the poorer the road. I comment to my colleague, somewhat half-heartedly: "Without a guardrail in sight, we'll plummet a few thousand feet if we slide off the road. The good news is that the snow drifts are so high on all sides, we'll probably get stuck before falling if we don't run over a landmine in the process."

As we climb higher, the setting sun outlines an increasing number of abandoned homes and villages apparently still void of humanity. A stray dog wanders the road, an occasional farmer moves his cattle to avoid our oncoming car, and large Mercedes, driven more often than not at highly unreasonable speeds, practically forces us over each approaching cliff.

Tuzla may lie only a few hundred kilometers northeast of Sarajevo, but the drive takes us well into the evening. Some of the towns we pass remind one of footage I recall from the years after the Second World War—the burned ruins of pockmarked homes, a few men huddled on a corner, an occasional old woman struggling along the side of the road. Most resemble the all-too-familiar ghost town, with not a soul in sight and the sinking sense of discomfort at the thought of what must have occurred to drive the inhabitants away.

As we arrive in Tuzla, the scene changes rather dramatically. American and other military personal are everywhere. Hulking industrial dinosaurs spew toxic chemicals into the air and onto the snow. The "Big Hilton" that will be our home for the weekend reminds one of an Italian *penzione* that has seen much better days.

As we head out for the evening with our host, Leila Radončić of *Bosnian Handicrafts*, the cold and ice-covered streets reminds one that despite the temperate conditions throughout most of North America this winter, winter has indeed still come to some parts of the world. We sit down over a cup of Turkish coffee to listen and to learn.

*Bosnian Handicrafts* is one of IPM's new projects in 2002. With its inter-faith origins and its clear focus on providing a small sense of self-worth to its program participants, it reminds me of many of the stories I have read in Paul Strege's *How Small is Small?* Clearly, the knitting is about much more than income—it's about regaining a sense of purpose in a world torn asunder by a type of conflict most had thought impossible in Europe at the end of the twentieth century; it's about finding common ground with other women who have suffered like horrors but whose difference in belief happens to be what most recently defined one as an enemy; it's about the simple catharsis of knitting, delicately working one's hands while dreaming of a brighter future.

As the survivors of Srebrenica, and other less-known tragedies in the effort to ethnically cleanse Bosnia and Herzegovina, work together and share a cup of coffee, one's particular creed seems far less relevant than one's faith in God and faith in the future. Catholic, Muslim or Orthodox—and more often-than-not some combination thereof—*Bosnian Handicrafts* affirms IPM's project criteria. By dealing with the root causes of suffering the program participants have had to endure in an ecumenical and holistic manner, *Bosnian Handicrafts* is charting a sustainable course for the future. A future where all Bosnians may once again come to rejoice in their diversity and commitment to one another.

Some thousands of kilometers away in Western Kenya, children orphaned by HIV/AIDS struggle to stay off the streets and complete a meager education. The Kenya *UVIP Society*, a new IPM Project in 2002, seeks to provide practical and sustainable alternatives to the cycle of death and destruction wrought by this global pandemic.

Despite what some on the radical fringe of Christianity or social thought would want us to believe, AIDS is not some Divine vengeance or Malthusian solution to overpopulation, but a curse on the poorest of the poor spread by ignorance and the unwillingness to allocate the appropriate medical and material resources to the world's most vulnerable—children.

The ghost towns of Western Kenya, like so much of the so-called “developing world,” are brought about by poverty and despair. Orphaned children are forced to roam the streets and often sell their very selves to ensure another day's survival on the bottom-rung of the world's poor. According to Peter Onyango [*UVIP* Project Coordinator], the way so many of these children and their surviving parents roam his hometown and its neighboring villages would make even a ghost town be an improvement; at least there would be some sense of finality.

Yet, into this void, Peter has leapt and helped create a remarkable, multi-faceted program that is bringing life back to his village and hope for the children of *UVIP*. Like Lejla and the staff at *Bosnia Handicrafts*, in his corner of Sub-Saharan Africa Peter also exemplifies the type of individual with whom IPM seeks to partner and the type of project we continue to identify and select for funding and technical support, bringing Ghost Towns back to life.

While disputes between disparate faith communities is certainly a leading cause of so many of the world's conflicts, personal faith, and faith-filled action, is inexorably an integral part of the cure.

In Bosnia and Kenya, among Muslims and Christians, and around the world, this is what makes IPM unique: a new vision of the world in which dialogue and collaboration, rather than armed road blocks and demining personal, are the hallmarks of a healthy and safe community.

## Jane Sullivan-Davis | CHILE

# Innovative Service Work: Recognizing Justice



*A former International Board Member, Jane, pictured at left, currently collaborates with IPM as Project Coordinator for Back to School in the Anhui Province of China. Her feature reflects on her time witnessing the work of EPES, a partnering organization to IPM from 1982-1986 and again from 1992-2000. In its initial phases, Director Karen Anderson stated that Founder Paul Strege and IPM (then CLM) were key in the success of the project's launch. The initiative worked in health education during a tumultuous time in Chile's history, and by 2002 had directly served over 10,000 residents of the country's barrios.*

I was an overseas staff person for my church for eighteen years, living in four different countries in Latin America. Of those eighteen years, ten were in Chile [1988-1997], where I became acquainted with the work of *Education Popular en Salud (EPES, Popular Health Education)*. I learned that Christians Linked in Mission (CLM, predecessor to IPM) was one of the first groups to support *EPES* when it was getting started. I remember hearing stories about CLM from my Chilean and U.S. colleagues at *EPES*, like Karen Anderson, an ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) missionary. I didn't work directly with *EPES*, but through working abroad for my church and Church World Service, we worked in solidarity with *EPES*.

CLM walked with *EPES* during some very, very difficult years when both organizations were just getting started. *EPES* was defending people's rights at a time when there was much repression from the military dictatorship. CLM then walked with *EPES* again as Chile emerged into democracy in 1990. *EPES* then continued, and continues today, as a non-profit foundation in Chile.

I was witness to *EPES* working within the movement for justice in Chile, especially around women's health. These were times when promoting women's health, or women's right to health, was seen as subversive, and the women who were the health promoters were vulnerable to violence because of speaking out for women's rights. Yet *EPES* and the grassroots health promoters continued forward, educating their neighbors about the health needs of women, and sharing their conviction that access to good health and health care is a basic human right.

One campaign that I really liked was about the respect that women deserve as they access health care services. In the few public clinics that existed in the first years of the work of *EPES*, women were educated that they should go for a gynecological exam once a year. However, when they would go for the exam the clinicians would say: "Okay, undress from the waist down and stand in line." And they would have to stand there, nude from the waist down. So one of their [*EPES*] campaigns promoted a more respectful relationship between health care professionals and patients. The slogan was: "My name is Maria, Not Mamita."

In recent years *EPES* was instrumental in the leadership in the Chilean national campaign against smoking in public areas. I think it is safe to say that the Chilean anti-smoking legislation would not have happened without the hard work of *EPES* and many other groups like *EPES* in mobilizing grassroots public support.

It is only a committed organization that seeks to support efforts like *EPES* that challenges systems of poverty and injustice. IPM was open and was supportive. I think that IPM always has gone deeper than other organizations in addressing root causes of problems, and recognizing the justice issues involved in doing service work. There are justice elements in every program that IPM supports because that's sort of their own organizational roots... isn't that part of what got them in trouble with the Missouri Synod to begin with?

This commitment was something that the members of the Board in the late 1990s and early 2000s were very aware of. IPM was cutting edge in its priorities and activities, and I would hope, and I trust, that it still is innovative and cutting edge. IPM is not the run of the mill foreign aid organization, but rather lives out new ways of relationship with its Partners around the world. It was an honor to serve with IPM as a Board Member.

Jennifer Gualteros Pastrana | COLOMBIA

## On Becoming a Community Leader



*Jennifer, at left, works with at Centro de Formación Para La Paz, offering professional support to both IPM Project Partners Niños Trabajadores and Ser Mujer, working closely with their coordinator. Through the IPM network, she is honing her leadership skills and supporting the programmatic activities of the projects.*

I did my graduate studies in Sociology of Culture and Cultural Analysis in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and I'm currently working on the thesis for the degree, but I lived most of my childhood in the city of Ibagué. It was there that I became familiar with the *Centro de Formación Para La Paz* (Center for the Formation of Peace).

They organized several projects that sought to educate children on topics such as leadership, values, rights, coexistence, and peace. At the *Centro de Formación Para La Paz*, we recognize that it is valuable to work to strengthen communities, making people recognize it is possible to improve their lives, their neighborhoods, and communication in their homes, such as identifying problems and possible solutions.

I consider myself a leader because I teach tools to communities so that they can identify and develop their communication and management skills in order to have spaces for healthy living. When the *Centro de Formación Para La Paz* gave me an opportunity to work with them nine years ago, I developed into a leader. My task was to organize recreational and educational activities that teach the children to make good use of their free time. The territories can be so violent that our communities are living in. But I believed it is possible to contribute to the construction of a better world, bearing in mind the hope and satisfaction generated by acknowledging the difference in importance from where we are and with whom we share the experience with.

*Ser Mujer* has approximately 30 women who attend the center and participate in workshops on self-esteem, entrepreneurship, and human rights. Our desire is that communities of women manage to solve their own problems through solid empowerment as social actors. A group of women organized as a partnership, mutually supportive and achieving through teamwork, generate higher incomes for their families. Of course, empowerment and other individual elements also help in your optimal personal development.

I know Martha Arroyave [IPM Project Coordinator] as a female and professional role model, and I admire her commitment and dedication to the communities that the organization works with. IPM is a family in which we share thoughts, hopes, and hard work; it allows us to meet with sister projects and understand first-hand the realities that other countries are experiencing, and thus creates in us initiatives to improve our own work. I've always felt part of an organized group in working with IPM, who takes into account our ideas and opinions. It has been very important to have professional people as resources, especially people committed to countries like ours, with violent and difficult realities.

This is what enables us to gather ourselves and feel alive: We want to continue progressing in the improvement of community. As a group, it inspires us to share positive thoughts of prosperity and change, believing that communities can improve their neighborhoods and family environments for themselves, and that they consider [improvement] necessary and valuable. We believe that all people can develop social skills that will lead to the creation of more fair and friendly environments. Faith and being steadfast in our work helps us to move forward, because more than a job, the *Centro de Formación Para La Paz* is part of my life project.

George Hrbek | UNITED STATES

# Building Right Relationships in Community through Theater Arts



*Now retired, George, pictured at left, has served as a Lutheran Pastor across the Midwest, and was active in the Civil Rights Movement and Cezar Chavez-led farm workers' movement. Upon relocation to Cleveland, George became involved in IPM Project Partner Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry, advocating for the low-income urban population of the city and organizing programmatic developments and resources that enable socio-economic mobility. George and his wife, Stephanie Morrison Hrbek, now run a community theater in Cleveland's thriving Gordon Square Arts District, continuing a lifelong commitment to community partnerships that build justice, peace, and hope. A lifelong friend to IPM and one of its founding Partners, George was honored at the 2014 Richard E. Sering Awards as part of the Inaugural General Assembly and 40th Anniversary Celebratory Activities.*

I was invited by Joe to accompany him on a trip to El Salvador, where the Central American Project Coordinators were having a retreat... The goal was to bring together the leaders to build relationships of mutual support, and I was asked to give a talk on Paulo Freire [Author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*] at the retreat before we went around and spent time with the Partners across El Salvador.

I remember we traveled up into the mountains to visit a small village. The entire history of the village was painted on this long wall—their history in a mural. It showed what their life was like before the soldiers came and killed hundreds of people; it showed how the people of the village had fled to Honduras where they were forced to live in exile for a number of years. When they were finally able to return to their village, they had to rebuild it. A part of this rebuilding was the construction of a theater—a youth theater—and the painting of the mural. There was an open theater, an arts center, and a park towards the center of the community. I was so impressed by what those folks had done to rebuild their village and their commitment to the arts.

The building of the theater really resonated with me since my wife and I are involved with the theater here in Cleveland. While in El Salvador, I thought how great it could be to connect the theater I am with in Cleveland and the one in this village in El Salvador. We want to bring some of the young people involved in theater in Cleveland to meet the young people in El Salvador, for them to spend time together and then to work on some kind of joint performance for the entire village to enjoy.

In Cleveland, our motto is “Building Right Relationships in Community through Theater Arts”; this trip would build [relationships with] our global community. In [community-based] theater, the productions are not the end result. Rather, the end goal is the relationships that are created as a result of the productions.

The first two weeks [of our theater productions] are spent building personal relationships, sharing our journeys and getting to know each other. And then we begin to address whatever issues are inherent in the production that we decide to do: so for example, if we were to do *RENT*, there are a lot of issues to explore there. We also bring in outside people who have been involved in those issues, whether it's clients or services providers, who spend time with the cast and stage crew making it a holistic educational and community-building experience.

Bringing some of the youth from our experience in Cleveland to El Salvador would continue the goal of bringing together diverse people to share their lives and their stories with one another—supporting each other and building supportive communities.



One of IPM Project Partner *Lidia Coggiola's* most recent and exciting opportunities in El Zaito, El Salvador is “Xilot”, a group designed to maintain traditional cultural values through dance, folktale, and artistic expression. *Xilot* translates to “seed”, in reference to paying due homage to the beginnings of El Salvadoran roots and the desire for the community to gather in celebration of the country's rich heritage. The group performs and promotes their value of El Salvadoran traditions, and functions as a creative outlet for youth to focus their minds and energy despite the surrounding violence in their community.

## Ana Greig | EL SALVADOR

# Me Mandaron



Ana is a member of IPM's International Board, and Project Coordinator to NUTRAVIDA, a soy cooperative, since it began partnership with IPM in 2007. Recently, the project has explored alternative and better culturally accepted forms of soy, like tempeh, and offers computer training courses to the community. She is pictured to the right of IPM's newest Regional Staff member, Fatima Rodriguez Pacas, at the March for Life, Peace, and Justice in El Salvador.

I cannot to this day remember how Joe and I met. As you know, Joe is very inquisitive and friendly, and he asked a lot of questions on the Project since his first visit—I think it might have been a group from Creighton University that he first brought down here—and that's how I started my friendship with IPM. And that's how I have always looked at it: as friendship, as family. They have certainly walked with me for many years, and I with them, throughout a lot of different changes, and they have been supportive to me, not only fund-wise or economically, but in friendship and moral support.

I decided when I was in high school that I was joining the Peace Corps. I'd have to say *me mandaron a El Salvador* (I was sent to El Salvador). In talking about motivation, I'm not a person that easily throws the towel in, and maybe because it seems to be God's plan; He wanted it to be this way and I've assumed it's going to be a lifetime commitment to mission and the work and the people themselves. It's just like being on a journey; we are what we are here—history writers in El Salvador—and certainly, as a Maryknoll Sister, I've had a very important history in El Salvador. I'd say my relationship with the Salvadoran people has been the best experience here.

The reason why the Project [NUTRAVIDA] started is that the Parish of *El Buen's Pastor*, the Maryknoll Fathers, Sheila Mathews, and I received a lot of request for *viveres* (victuals) and just coincidentally we were doing an assessment to see what we wanted to do here as lay missionaries. We received this week-intense course of soy preparation from PNS, from the director of Fudesa at Antigua Cuscatlán. I still maintain my friendship with them she is very pleased that she planted the seed in fertile land; she's a wonderful lady. It was with that workshop and due to the requests of people that we decided, "Why give away *viveres* (victuals) when you can teach people how to make something nutritious and have this product?" And that is how the whole thing started.

We went through the first ten years with many changes. We were trying to get into public schools, sell in the university. We went down a hundred different paths, but we always maintained anywhere from 150 to 250 people every day because it was a service to the community. I firmly believe that everyone has the right to nutrition, especially children 0 to 5 years. I'm very happy that we're able to offer this resource to people.

Making soy products is labor intensive, so we formed NUTRAVIDA in 2007. Soy beans are not available in-country, so we had to legally get them in and start commercializing our products with the hopes that we would become self-sustainable [from the profits]. It has been a great experience for all of us, and different doors are open. I think we have very good soy products and at the same time there's a soy cooperative that certainly has had its own struggles but it is still functioning, it started in 2008. And we also have the cafeteria program which started four years ago and has been a very helpful tool too. But I think more and more that what it comes down to is being able to offer it as training and education, that we have the product here, and it's great to offer people what they ask for the elderly or for the families with lower incomes and to have those resources to help this people, it's a nice thing to have.

I would like to put this more into the hands of the Salvadoran women. For the most part, they don't need me. I'd love to see this office space be theirs, to buy it, so regardless of what happens, there is still a base here and so they can continue operating. I just got a request from students from *Química y Farmacia* (Chemistry and Pharmacy) because they're working with soy. They asked me if the women would be interested in a two to four day technical assistance on how to make and package tofu and tempeh...these are things that I think we should take advantage of. The other thing is that we need to work on capacity and commercialization, maximizing our capacity and always work as a team to accomplish this kind of things.

Through the years of mission, I've had countless challenges, rewards, successes—my good days, my bad days, it all goes in. I truly believe in this, and I always say to the new missionaries: We come with the questions, not the answers. That's very important to me, to have that mentality. I don't come here to put something the way I want, because the people here know what they need, and if they own it, it's going to be a lot better and it won't go away as soon as you leave.

I was talking to a group of young people the other day and I told them this: We're given gifts to share, and there's a lot of truth in the statement, "Live simply so others can simply live." I don't see that in the States as I do [in El Salvador]. You don't necessarily need to have all the money in the world; you don't have to be the most gifted person in the world. But always remember that you can be part of the team to make this world a better place.



Ana has a lifelong passion for nutrition, especially in relation to the healthy growth and development of children.

Leah Shulte | NEPAL

## Partnership is a Cornerstone



*Leah, shown here at center with IPM Partners Soni (left) and Fulmati (right), was particularly active as a Project Coordinator to Project Partner OUEST, known prior to its formal partnership in 2006 with IPM as Grow Golphubhanjyang Grow. Over a sixteen year period, IPM's donor network – particularly in Metropolitan Saint Louis and in Illinois through Grace River Forest – designated over \$56,500 to these Projects, as well as to the Social Work Institute, the coordinating organization for IPM's current Partners at the Calendar Project.*

**I**n IPM's 40th Anniversary year, my thoughts center on how partnership truly is a cornerstone of the organization. With the passage of Paul Strege, I am reminded of that bold vision shared between Paul and Jim Mayer in the founding organization, Partners in Mission (PIM). My, what that initial partnership has yielded!

As the central element in the organization's name, Partnership is what IPM is all about.

Foremost, it fosters a connection between and within its Project Partners, schools, churches, and other religious and civic organizations with donors, supporters, volunteers, and stakeholders. The Immersion Experience Programs cultivate this Partnership at another more personal level.

I learned, firsthand, the importance of partnership in Nepal with *OUEST's* program (Project Partner 2006-2010). Our early years as a registered International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) in Nepal resulted in many infrastructure improvements for our fifteen-village working area, but, nevertheless, we had an even broader impact in our latter years of operation as a donor organization, creating our own partnerships with four other Nepali-based Partners. This transformation in operating-strategy resulted from Nepal's civil war, which created increasing bureaucratic burdens, and also from the economic downturn in America and my own personal fatigue. It was a painful process, but a blessing in disguise.

As we began to shift gears from infrastructural programs towards more social-based programs, most of the Nepali NGO partners decided to continue partnership with local groups, resulting in *OUEST's* integration into other organization's programs. Our strongest partner was the Social Work Institute (SWI), with its women's empowerment-related *Calendar Project* (Project Partner 2011-Present). I am so grateful that IPM has continued its direct support to this vital program even though *OUEST* no longer exists in explicit partnership. Through hundreds of women's microcredit groups, SWI's central and district staff educate and raise awareness about key women's issues ranging from legal rights, health, social and economic justice through a simple wall calendar and monthly talks.

I found it so moving to watch these meetings unfold between the women. Often tired from their daily chores or the long walk to the meeting, they crammed together on woven floor mats in smoky, dark rooms in participants' homes—listening, discussing, laughing, their lives changing in slow and subtle, but meaningful, ways. Even more treasured are the memories I have of witnessing these same women's groups in their year-end outreach programs: song and dance programs, rallies through their villages carrying homemade signs and shouting slogans, and my favorite, the outdoor dramas or *natak*.

Put on by the women in dusty schoolyards, these amazing skits entertained and enlightened villagers while delivering powerful messages. I felt so humbled watching how our few meager dollars could support a partnership through this program that would reach the children who climbed trees for a better vantage point above the heads of the spectators on the ground, as well as the barefoot popsicle vendor with his bike-cart who paused to watch.

I can only say thank you to IPM for this lesson on the value of Partnership. It is one I strive to also apply in my personal life to this day. Congratulations on 40 blessed years of good work through linking, connecting, and partnering. Although the organization's name, Staff, office locations, and Projects will indeed continue to change in the future, I trust that the Partnerships will not. I hope and pray that IPM will continue to explore and create new ways to effectively partner in the coming years. Namaste!

## Hybon Otieno | KENYA

# The First of its Kind in Kenya



*Since 2007, Hybon has coordinated for IPM Project Partner St. Martin de Porres, which offers a unique opportunity for special needs children to pursue academic goals. Pictured at left, Hybon has also been an effective and inspirational speaker at IPM Regional Conferences for Sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2009, IPM has disbursed over \$12,000 in funding, and continues to trust in the distinctive work that addresses a crucial need in Kenya.*

**M**y name is Hybon Otieno. I was born on the 31st of January in 1970 in a small village called Nyabondo in the Nyakach District of Kisumu County. I am currently the Principal of *St. Martin de Porres*, a special school for children with cerebral palsy that has partnered with the IPM for the last six years. The Project mainly targets children with cerebral palsy, a condition that manifests itself during childhood, affecting the brain and resulting in motor dysfunction.

During my early days in school, I used to see children with disabilities from Nyabondo Rehabilitation Center (whose administration would later go on to help found *St. Martin de Porres*) being wheeled around the village during weekends for the purposes of familiarization. One day, I got the opportunity to interact with these persons with disabilities as they were moving around Nyabondo; I came to realize that despite their physical disability and intellectual challenges, most of them had the potential to perform several activities like normal children.

During my encounters with these persons with disabilities from Nyabondo, I had the opportunity to make the friendship of Edwin Odhiambo. Edwin suffered a polio attack during his childhood that left both his legs paralyzed. He was to become my best friend when I took secondary education at Nyabondo High School, a school next to the Rehabilitation Center. I used to visit him during weekends, where we could discuss matters on real life skills. It is Edwin who inspired me to love and work with persons with disabilities.

I started school in the year 1977 at a school in Nakuru, Kenya. In 1979, I was transferred to a home school in Nyabondo Village called Kabete Primary School where I did my Certificate for Primary Education (CPE) successfully, and passed well enough to join Nyabondo High School.

By 1990, I was employed as an untrained teacher by the teachers' services of Kenya at a village primary school. I taught in that school for four years, then joined a teacher-training college. I was later posted to a school in my village.

It is in this school where I was moved to get the requisite knowledge and skills needed to teach and manage children with special needs. In the year of 2003, I applied for training in Special Education at the Kenya Institution of Special Education in Nairobi, Kenya, and was offered an opportunity to train there for the next two years. In 2005, I pursued a degree course in Special Education at the Kampala International University in Uganda, and graduated in 2009 with a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education.

Project Partnership is an equal-sharing of ideas, experiences, and opportunities. Our partnership with IPM is such that both partners have an equal stake in the relationship. While pursuing my education, I can very well remember the year 2007, when I was at *St. Martin de Porres*. Sister Gladys, of *Rieti* farm, visited our school with Joe Cistone, the current Executive Director of IPM, together with an IPM immersion group. IPM organizes immersion trips to Kenya, and since we have entered into partnership with them, such visits provide an opportunity for our special needs children to play, chat, and have lively interaction with the immersion groups. I have enjoyed their visits to our Projects and the annual IPM conferences, where I have always been given the opportunity to partner with other organizations to share experiences and knowledge on how to effectively manage our Projects. I have been able to share my experiences with the IPM International Board, IPM's Advisory Board, and, most interestingly, with the IPM Immersion Experience participants.

I dream that our community will one day be self-reliant, and have the capacity to generate its own income for the sustainability of the Project. We have 264 special need children at our school, and the school meal program, supported by IPM, is a big relief for the women and community members because their children receive food through the school. Women have been empowered in the community with the salaries and wages they earn from their employment at *St. Martin de Porres*, and all community members have access to the school's health facilities. As a community, we have always contributed to the Project's development by mobilizing the available local resources.

Our strength comes from the management; we have sound leadership and administration policies which have been our motivating factors. The entire community benefits from the sensitization and awareness programs we provide. Currently, *St. Martin de Porres* is the only cerebral palsy school in Kenya.



*Students with disabilities at a classroom at St. Martin de Porres are given opportunities to pursue academic goals and peer interaction.*

## Gloria Taylor | UNITED STATES

# Take Your Place



*IPM has partnered with Gloria, at left, since 2003 as coordinator to Project Partner Youth Enrichment Program, which operates under the umbrella of Community Women and Hardship (CWAH) in an area of Saint Louis, MO where over 35% of families live on less than \$15,000 annually. Sample educational workshop topics offered to the community through the project include academic success, relationships, community responsibility, nutrition and health, music, photography, and computers. In April of 2014, Gloria Taylor was honored with the 2014 Lifetime Achiever in Caring for the Community Award at the St. Louis American Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Health Care Awards Luncheon.*

**I** worked in different capacities before it led to me starting this not-for-profit [IPM Project Partner Youth Enrichment Program], which was back in 1988. I guess some of the positions I had led to it; there's the culminating factor there.

I worked at Washington University. I was the first African American they hired in a staff position. Engineering was the school that we were in... I was there for a few years and I coordinated the efforts of people coming in and making sure that all the logistics were done. People came in from across the country for various symposiums, and I had to attend the events and help schedule those events and contact the people on campus for their roles and that kind of thing. So it was really pretty interesting; I met people from all around the world.

But in any event, I started this in 1988 and when it started, there was no money...we used to feed people. Of course, you learn very quickly that man doesn't live by bread alone. At this juncture we have, we are now able to furnish their homes, since you can't talk with them about education when they live in dilapidated conditions and conditions that no one deserves to live in. We find them with no beds, kids with asthma and no treatment. It's emotional because you see it and you just can't believe it. People borrowing water to flush their toilet right in the city metropolitan area: how in the world do these things happen?

IPM has always been a supporter of *Youth Enrichment*. Leroy Zimmermann was the vice president at Lutheran Family and Children Services and is the only person I know in my lifetime that can go almost every city, and has, in the United States and still find somebody to stay with. The man is just amazing! Leroy and Sammy [Sammy Mayer, IPM Co-Foundress] and their families went back for years. I had him over for dinner and she came and talked about IPM; I think that's where it began. I said, we need to be a part [of this], to meet these people and see [the work]. She said that [the organization] would definitely be interested in what we were doing...

It was just so interesting to meet these people [of IPM], and Joe is just fantastic. They're just wonderful people. They care, and I think that's the important piece that people see—that they really care, and they share what they take in. That's positive for an organization to be in a position to do that.

We [*Youth Enrichment*] do educational programming, for both youth and adults. [The program] is focused in art, because I think UCLA proved it years ago through research that it's the arts that boost self-esteem, while also corresponding to an improvement in academics. We [partner with] the Institute for the Advancement of Jazz studies during the summer; there are professional musicians that teach there. They keep saying: "One [of these] days, you're really going to pay us!" Now we have a beginner's course for the little ones in third and fourth grade. Some of their schools don't offer music; they don't have Fine Arts. I can't believe they cut it! I said: "Where is that money going?", and the high school band director said: "To the sports."

We also offer youth entrepreneurship; we teach kids basic business so they understand how a business plan works and that their futures may depend on it. Corporate America may not be the direction for you, but if you gain a skill, in whatever area you do, learn it like you are a sponge. You [should] want to learn, so at some point you can perhaps partner with someone else. We can't do everything, so you partner with someone else who complements you, and here is the basics of that. That's important to us.

We are really working hard at health and wellness. We just recently [entered into] a partnership with the University of Missouri St. Louis that agreed to have *Community Women* as a clinical agency for the College of Nursing.

The other [aspect we undertake] is social engagement. I don't think many of these people [we work with] get invited to much. They don't want to be included, because they don't know how to behave. They may not look a certain way, and aren't dressed appropriately. We have the clothes here—that's not a problem—so I take them to all of these events.

Last year I took them to Washington DC. They did very well in the capital...they got to see Rosa Parks in the capitol, and they did very well in raising questions. The Dr. King memorial is very moving. All of the sayings that he has are along the wall—and we always have a quiz. I think a parent told another parent, "She's kind of sneaky; y'all better try to learn something!" We pay for this so we can see what they've learned because that's the whole thing, we want them to know history. You can't talk about them taking their place till they know why we are doing this; people gave their lives to get you an opportunity to get up and take your place.

Carol Findling | UNITED STATES

# I Agreed, Not Knowing how far [IPM] Would Take Me



*One of IPM's oldest friends, Carol, pictured at left, began giving of her time, talent, and treasure to IPM since our founding in 1974. Serving in various capacities over the last 40 years, including service on our International Board and a period as Interim Director, IPM is eternally grateful for her energy and devotion through her words, actions, and commitment to IPM's mission.*

**I**n 1974, Marion Kretschmar from Partners in Mission (PIM), asked if I would be interested in attending a workshop to learn about the work of PIM and how to become a Project Promoter. The workshops equipped people to visit churches, especially those that had left the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, to explain the impact that PIM could have and the new philosophy of what it meant to be “in mission.” There were about eight of us and it was one emotional roller coaster! The Harrison’s from Colorado Springs had a Minni-Winni they drove from Canada to Mexico giving programs all along the way! June Harrison made a banner that said “Bloom Where You Are Planted” used at future workshops for several years. We visited them in CO and she served

baked enchiladas that I still make—and share the recipe! I was interested in the organization, since my family was directly impacted by the split in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and I agreed to attend that first workshop not knowing how far it would take me.

After the workshop, I became involved with IPM by working in northeast Illinois to spread IPM’s mission and check on Partner programs. I set up an office and started telephoning. Early on I met with Reverend Dr. Dean Lueking, then pastor of Grace River Forest Lutheran Church. With his blessing, I embarked on an adventure that took me to North Chicago (on one of the coldest mornings every recorded in the city!) to visit churches and to check on our early projects development. I found that throughout the Chicago area churches were welcoming and supportive of the new PIM program.

When I moved to Nebraska in 1986, my church asked me to take Stephen Ministry training in St. Louis; little did I know this training would complete one of PIM’s many circles in my life. In 1975 Reverend Kenneth Haugk, founder of Stephen Ministries, received, I believe, \$300.00 to further “train trainers in caring for others” as one of PIM’s first projects. Today their website states: “65,000 pastors, other staff, and lay leaders have been trained as Stephen Leaders. They, in turn, have trained more than 600,000 laypersons as Stephen Ministers.” When one thinks of the number of lives touched by this ministry alone, the total is incredible; when looked at as part of the whole IPM picture, the number multiplies exponentially. All of this by one small organization that started around a kitchen table!

There are so many experiences; retreats spent sharing the PIM story, the love of a new family in PIM, and now IPM, are all more than I could have dreamed. However, the time spent in early 2000 has to be one of the most special times. Computers, just starting to be used for communication world-wide, seemed like a daunting way to connect with our 25 partners while we worried about not having enough funds to fill our commitments.

As Interim Director, I learned of the difficulties in transferring funds overseas, unexpected time delays, exchange rate problems, and how to get funds to partners in remote areas. Despite these challenges, we kept the newsletter flowing while I made many new friends, learned new processes, and above all had the wonderful opportunity to work directly with project directors, staff, and volunteers. Marjorie Richterkessing served as the ‘glue’ and took care of correspondence while the expertise of Matthew Carter, David Westcott, and my husband Marty were the ‘miracles’ who believed in the mission. Although I didn’t meet them in person, I formed friendships with the Project Coordinators around the world. We exchanged emails, letters, and telephone calls and were on a first-name basis. Their dedication and perseverance gave IPM strength. Joanne Peterson, in her unfailing and never-say-no attitude in Dominican Republic and Lydia Mansour, director of the *Peace Center for the Blind* in Jerusalem are just two role models of the many who ventured on faith alone, believing that we are here for each other.

I can’t thank my husband, Marty, enough for all the support he gives; he filled in when I was absent from the family during Board meetings and in the interim in Saint Louis, encouraging me when things looked bleak, gave presentations when requested, and continues to support IPM. I’m just happy to have been a part of IPM all these years.



*Clockwise from bottom right, IPM Foundress Sammy Mayer, third Executive Director Bernie Marquardt-Wilde, former International Board Chair Caroline Mills, and Marty and Carol Findling at the 2014 Donor Appreciation Brunch in Saint Louis.*

## List of Contributors:

Martha Cecilia Arroyve Arbelaez  
Vimala Charles  
Daniben Pochabhai Chauhan  
Xenia Chevez  
Joseph F. Cistone  
Sonya Dias  
Carol Findling  
Arbelia Francisca Conde García  
Vicenta Fuentes Gomez  
Medardo Gomez  
Ana Greig  
Ellen Hilgendorf-Mead  
George Hrbek  
Hilary Kazoora  
Susan Mutuku Kyule  
Mardi Manary  
Concepcion Aida Mendez  
Caroline Mills  
Priscilla Nangurai  
Seraphine W. Ngugi

Zaria Omar  
Hybon Otieno  
Gladys Owuor  
Shashi Bhushan Pandit  
Jennifer Gualteros Pastrana  
Rodrigo Péret  
María Paula Pérez  
Joanne Peterson  
Himatbhai Pochabhai  
Rafael Isaias Valdez Rodríguez  
Tina Rosenberg  
Flo Saeger  
Noorsuba Shaikh  
Soni Shreshta  
Leah Shulte  
Namaraj Siwal  
Jane Sullivan-Davis  
Gloria Taylor  
Fulmati Thapa  
Gaylene McLeod Wagon

---

## About the Editors:



**Joseph F. Cistone** has been an IPM Project Coordinator in Rome, Italy, is a past member of IPM's International Board of Directors, and has served as Chief Executive Officer since 2001. Joe provides the strategic vision, leadership, and supervision of all activities, programs, and staff of this interfaith, international, non-governmental organization. Joe pursued his Doctoral Studies at the Gregorian University, holds degrees from the College of the Holy Cross, Eden Theological Seminary, and Yale University, and a certificate in Non Profit Management from Case Western Reserve University. Joe is an active participant on a number of international and national Boards, and has taught and lectured at leading academic institutions around the world. Joe currently resides in Mount Desert, ME with his spouse Alyne Kemunto, and is the proud father of Francesca, JJ, and Kemy.



**Sarah Gauvin** graduated with honors from the University of Maine at Farmington in 2011, where she completed double-major undergraduate studies in Creative Writing and interdisciplinary Sociology/Anthropology. Her senior thesis on the role of speech and press freedom in development was inspired by her study abroad experience in Uganda through the School for International Training in 2010. In 2013, Sarah began working for IPM and has served in administrative, outreach, Project Partner management, communications, and editorial roles. She is currently exploring certification to teach English as a second language, and preparing a manuscript of poems for publication.

---

## For More Information about IPM:

**Write:**

IPM  
3091 Mayfield Road, Suite 320  
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118, USA

**Email:**

[office@ipmconnect.org](mailto:office@ipmconnect.org)

**Call Toll-Free:**

+1.866.932.4082 (United States and Canada)

**Connect:**

[www.ipmconnect.org](http://www.ipmconnect.org)  
[www.facebook.com/ipmconnect](https://www.facebook.com/ipmconnect)  
<https://twitter.com/ipmconnect>

*Founded in 1974, IPM works across borders of faith, culture, and socioeconomic circumstance with children, women, and youth to create partnerships that build justice, peace, and hope.*

---



*IPM International Board Members, Project Partners, Staff, and Friends at the City Club of Cleveland during a strategic planning session at IPM's Inaugural General Assembly in October of 2014.*



While IPM publications provide Project Partner highlights and activity updates, we often discuss our Partners as a collective, addressing the Project as a whole. This 40th Anniversary collection gives names and faces to our Partners by sharing the stories of individual members and Project Coordinators. Additionally, in paying homage to IPM's 40 years of changing lives around the world, stories from Friends, Immersion Experience Program participants, and Staff show the incredible tenacity and expanse of the IPM Family. Essentially, this collection seeks to tell the inspirational personal stories of people that have been immersed and invested in IPM over the past 40 years, and who have influenced us to grow into the organization we are today.

"We very much enjoyed the warm welcome accorded to us at the 40th anniversary celebrations in Cleveland, as well as the camaraderie among all the Partners. We are proud to be associated with this organization that is changing lives around the world in very fundamental ways through sustainable projects and capacity-building."

– Dorothy Nyong'o, *Director, Africa Cancer Foundation & IPM Project Coordinator*

"[Immersion Experience Programs] aim to deepen [participants'] faith by allowing them to experience how their hosts live, get to know their hosts on a personal basis, and resist the urge to fix immediately their hosts' material problems. [Participants] ideally return home from IPM trips with changed perspectives – and with hearts widened by compassion for people who face difficult challenges every day."

– G. Jeffrey MacDonald, *Journalist and Author, from Thieves in the Temple*

"My involvement with IPM over the past several years has been profoundly meaningful for me, my family, and my students. As an IEP participant, I discovered very quickly that the IPM staff is extraordinarily well-informed, supremely conscientious, and deeply committed to genuine two-way partnerships that build justice, peace, and hope."

– Clint McCann, *Professor, Eden Theological Seminary*

"Joe Cistone, the guy who said, 'This is where I belong' in the poverty-stricken urban slums of El Salvador [is] one of my personal heroes. The [Business of Good]'s work in the 2000s also took us to the ghettos of Kenya and Naples, Italy with Joe...the lessons from these experiences will never be forgotten. The very fact that every single service person I met, even in dire circumstances, had a sense of humor reminded me that there is abundance available for me in every moment."

– Tim McCarthy, *Author and Founder of the Business of Good Foundation, from Empty Abundance*

"The IPM Immersion Experience enlightened and inspired me, changed my perspective forever, and made me a better grant maker. Seeing the mutual respect among IPM Partners and Staff, understanding the fierce and appropriate sense of pride the partners feel about their projects, and glimpsing their humble attitude combined with learned skills...The work being done in communities across Kenya gave me hope for deep, meaningful change for the next generations: the education of girls, womens' agricultural collaboratives, child bride rescue... Nothing makes me happier than to see strong, happy, thriving women learning how much they can accomplish in the world!"

– Judith Ranger Smith, *Executive Director, Singing for Change Foundation*



The Business of Good Foundation is an engaged philanthropic organization dedicated to serving those who serve the poor through hands-on capacity-building efforts. Our nonprofit partners build self-esteem and personal empowerment of the economically and socially disadvantaged by expanding access to 1) Education, 2) Employment, and 3) Entrepreneurship.



Founded in 1974, IPM works across borders of faith, culture, and socioeconomic circumstance with children, women, and youth to create partnerships that build justice, peace, and hope.