

# TOGETHER WE CAN

# 2. 2024



## Investigaciones Biomédicas



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## Profamilia Board of Directors 2024-2026

Dr. Ana Navarro was re-elected as the President of Profamilia's Board of Directors. She will be accompanied in her 2024-2026 term by Susi Pola as Vice-president and Millizen Uribe as Alternate Vice-president.

Melba Barnett and Ivelisse Rosario were elected Treasurer and Alternate Treasurer, respectively; Francisco Álvarez as Secretary, with Radhiva Pérez as Alternate; while Víctor Rosario, Yildalina Tatem and Amelia Vicini are Members and Jocelyn Caminero, José Delancer and Rosalía Piña are Alternate Members.

The nominating committee also selected Nicole Pichardo as Representative of the priority populations, in this case Youth.

**The Board of Directors is the body responsible for establishing the policies of the institution, adjusting its actions and procedures to the provisions of its bylaws, the mandate of the General Assembly and the regulations.**

# Initiative against Gender-based Violence



Profamilia and the Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz, together with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, join forces to strengthen the framework for the protection of rights and a comprehensive response to gender-based violence in the Dominican Republic.



“Violence against women and girls is also a problem of systemic and structural human rights violation, including the fundamental right to life, which cannot be pigeonholed in the statistics of common violence because it is much worse and is usually perpetrated by someone close, a person we trust,” assured Ana Navarro, President of Profamilia’s Board of Directors.

The proposal “Strengthening the framework for the protection of rights and a comprehensive response to gender-based violence in the Dominican Republic” seeks to strengthen the comprehensive national framework for the prevention, care, penalization and eradication of gender-based violence in the country.

The actions of this initiative are expected to contribute to the improvement of mechanisms, tools and knowledge in the health, justice and police sectors, as key entities in the care pathway for survivors of gender-based violence, as well as in the legal framework, programs and policies.

This joint effort is expected to promote the application in public and private spheres of the protocol of the national norm on gender-based violence in health; train a hospital team to properly address GBV cases following a guide and specific instruments; and to reinforce the route for case referral.

This ongoing project has included activities such as a training course for police officers specialized in dealing with violence against women and domestic violence, as well as a training course for psychologists and the technical team of the Forensic Interview Centers.



# 50 years as a benchmark for research in sexual and reproductive health



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The Biomedical Research Unit, one of the main institutions dedicated to reproductive health research in the Dominican Republic, is celebrating its 50th anniversary. It has been half a century of uninterrupted work in the development of new contraceptive methods.

Founded in 1974 and located in Profamilia's Evangelina Rodríguez clinic in the capital's Luperón neighborhood, the unit has been a pioneer in contraceptive technology research, contributing to major scientific advances in this field.

One of the main achievements of the Biomedical Research Unit is the publication of all these studies, contributing to the global literature on reproductive health with more than 140 publications in the most prestigious international journals of worldwide circulation. In addition, more than 100 conferences have been given

in congresses and meetings, both national and international.

The unit has been instrumental in the development and validation of contraceptive methods, such as the levonorgestrel intrauterine device (Mirena), as well as subdermal implants. These methods have transformed women's access to highly effective, safe and long-acting contraceptive methods. "When we started, the options were limited, and the main challenge was to change women's view of contraception," Brache explains, recalling the initial reluctance due to popular myths about contraceptive methods.

The biomedical research unit is currently conducting a study aimed at developing a biodegradable etonogestrel contraceptive implant that does not have to be removed. The current available implants are removed once



Staff of the Biomedical Research Unit and the Evangelina Rodríguez clinic in the 1980s. In the photo: Frank Álvarez, Vivian Brache, Ana Sofia Tejada, Sorangela Peña -Motica-, Adelaida Frías and Mirtha Mondesí, among others.



Staff of the Biomedical Research and the Evangelina Rodríguez clinic, in the 1970's. In the photo: Vivian Brache, Ana Sofia Tejada, Sorangela Peña -Motica- and Adelaida Frías, among others.



Equipo actual de biomédica junto al doctor Frank Alvarez (EPD).

their effectiveness period ends. The removal procedure requires trained medical personnel.

A biodegradable implant, which does not need to be removed, is expected to improve global access to this type of long-acting, highly effective contraceptive. This phase 1 clinical trial is the first study to evaluate the pharmacokinetics, safety and tolerability of biodegradable contraceptive implants (Casea S).



# Articulation for dignity and freedom



Núcleo de Apoyo a la Mujer (NAM), the Office for the Development of Women (OPDM) and Profamilia, with the support of the European Union, presented the initiative, “Promoting the Human Rights of Women to a Life Without Gender Violence”, identified as “Articulation for Dignity and Liberty”, to be implemented in the provinces of Santiago, Hermanas Mirabal and Duarte.

The project focusses on improving the access to education for the prevention of gender-based violence and to health services and justice, as well as making more effective the critical path of care for survivors of violence.

The project’s actions will be focused on awareness-raising and training in the justice and health sectors and in those areas that women affected by gender violence must navigate; as well as in spaces dedicated to strengthening care for women victims and penalization of the aggressors.

The launching was made in Salcedo, Hermanas Mirabal province. In the first quarter of implementation, internal staff training processes, meetings with key actors from civil society and local public officials (health, education and government sector) were carried out, as well as a diagnostic study of the articulation spaces to strengthen the path of care for violence, the Gender Imaginary Study.

# Satellite phones: technology that can save lives in disaster zones

Satellite phones, as the name suggests, are communication devices that use satellites in orbit to establish telephone connections, allowing them to function in areas where cellular coverage is non-existent or limited.

In line with the 360 resilience model of the Clara Lionel Foundation and the commitment of the Information Technology Disaster Resource Center (ITDRC) to promote resilience through technology, redundant, high-capacity and high-speed satellite internet services were implemented and installed at three Profamilia locations in the Dominican Republic: the Central Office, Sabana Perdida Clinic and Rosa Cisneros Clinic.

The Caribbean region is especially vulnerable to tropical cyclones, flooding and seismic activity, events that cause disasters that can have a significant impact on energy and telecommunications infrastructure.

The installation of satellite antennas has provided a long-term solution to improve communication between locations, ensuring that Profamilia can continue to operate efficiently, even in remote or difficult-to-access areas.



## Profamilia and AECID present new project

Profamilia and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) will execute the project, "Incidence and strengthening the access to services to ensure the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights of the population in the Dominican Republic", which aims to increase the access to sexual and reproductive health services for the population in the Dominican Republic, from a rights perspective, without discrimination or exclusion, with special attention to people with disabilities, youth and women victims of violence.

With this, we would be ensuring an actual exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, with particular attention to groups at risk of exclusion, through political advocacy, education, quality services and reduced access barriers.

This project hopes to strengthen the articulation of civil society actions so that sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) are considered in legislative debates as well as to increase the political will of relevant officials in the Ministry of Public Health (MPH) to develop and implement a plan and



other initiatives to ensure policy implementation, as well as strengthening the access to sexual and reproductive health services for people with disabilities at all Profamilia institutional clinics.



# Sexual and reproductive health and other medical care services for people in vulnerable situations

When the Profamilia Mobile Health Unit (MHU) arrives in the community of Mojarra in San Isidro de Guerra, Santo Domingo East, a woman stands out who wants to be one of the first to be treated. "I work as a janitor and I have to ask for permission to come here, because this is the opportunity to have many tests, such as Pap smear, breast check, even an HIV test if I need it, in addition to other services."

The noise of an electric generator, the chairs placed in an arbor, and the mobile clinic vehicle alert the neighborhood, who are waiting because they have already been notified by the health promoter that the health unit has arrived in the community.

"I came to have my pap smear, because it prevents vaginal cancer," says another user, who describes her day-to-day life since dawn between working, caring for her four children and doing housework, which leaves her little time to go to a health center that is far from her area. "Here it is easier for me to take care of my health as a woman," she points out.

"I also think that everyone should take advantage and get tested for HIV, which is free, because faces we see and hearts we don't know," she points out, referring to the fact that no one knows the HIV status of others, even their own partner if they have one.



Mojarra is one of the 64 communities that every year gets 5 to 6 visits by the Profamilia MHU, which in addition to providing sexual and reproductive health services to people in extreme poverty, also work for the prevention of gender-based violence.

The services of the Mobile Health Unit are possible thanks to the donations received by the institution and the special support of the Dominican Government. Between January and October 2024, more than 5,320 people were treated free of charge, both through the MHU and in the institutional clinics.



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TOGETHER WE CAN is a publication by the Communications and Image Management to share information on the implementation of the institution's social projects.

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