



## The future of Haiti lies in the resilience, strength, pride, and leadership of Haitians.

From doctors who administer long-acting contraceptives to women in the seaside town of Jacmel, to youth who distribute condoms to their peers in bustling Port-au-Prince, to the fiercely brave and talented women who run groups for adolescent girls across Haiti, one thing is clear—the future of Haiti lies in the resilience, strength, pride, and leadership of Haitians.

**IPPF/WHR's Member Association in Haiti, Profamil, is the only Haitian-led organization dedicated to sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and was the only Haitian-led organization working on SRH after the 2010 earthquake.**

Profamil was there for those women when they needed it most, and they continue to be there because of your investment.

It is incredibly powerful and empowering for local people to lead the way to progress. As supporters of IPPF/WHR, you are the invisible champions in this story. **Thank you for believing in the power of local leadership and global partnership.** It is because of your support that women, men, and youth are afforded the health services they want, need, and deserve.

On a recent trip to Haiti, I got to know some of the local leaders at Profamil and the communities they serve. In this report, you will read about the challenges they face and the incredible progress they are making every day. They have themselves to thank for driving change in Haiti, but we have you to thank for believing in them.

## Profamil and Haiti at a Glance

Profamil is the only Haitian-led organization dedicated to sexual and reproductive health.

Founded in 1984, Profamil is a national provider of sexual and reproductive health services like family planning and cervical cancer screenings. Profamil manages four clinics and a mobile health program that serves the most rural communities. Profamil is also a founding member of the Haiti Adolescent Girls Network (HAGN), a collective of local and international organizations committed to providing safe spaces to the country's most vulnerable girls.

### Haiti At a Glance:

- **Population:** 10.32 million
- **Adolescent fertility rate (ages 15-19):** 42 births per 1,000 adolescents
- **Percentage of women of child-bearing age who want—but can't access—modern contraception:** 35%
- **Gender-based violence:** 20% of women report physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner
- **Poverty:** Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas and one of the poorest in the world. Over 2.5 million Haitians live on less than \$1.24 per day.



## YOUTH LEADING YOUTH: JOHN PETER CLEMENT AND PROFAMIL'S VIBRANT YOUTH NETWORK

*"Never stop learning, because life never stops teaching."*

John Peter Clement, a 23-year-old health promoter with Profamil, said these words in front of a group of 20 youth as young as 13 at an after-school program inside Profamil's MLK clinic in Port-au-Prince.

John has been involved with Profamil's vibrant youth network since 2011. He lives in Carrefour, a residential section of Port-au-Prince. The 2010 earthquake destroyed almost half of the residential buildings in Carrefour and most of the hospital. The fact that 78% of Haiti's population lives on less than \$2 per day is only compounded by the fact that in a community like Carrefour, there is very limited access to social services, sanitation, and potable water.

According to John, in his community, some girls already have as many as three children. But John is not without hope. He says that Profamil's program gives him information that he passes along to teach his peers how to protect themselves, along with condoms.

As they do every week, John and the youth group were gathered to discuss sexual and reproductive health and rights. For most of them, this is the only time they will learn accurate information about sex and talk freely with their peers.

On this balmy afternoon, the topic of choice was a hot one: abortion, which is illegal in Haiti. This ignited an intense conversation among the youth. One young person stated that since women took pills and drank teas to abort, Haiti should do what it can to make abortion safe.

After an impassioned conversation, John and his fellow youth health promoters rushed outside to pick up a supply of condoms to distribute in their communities. That afternoon, Profamil distributed 7,200 condoms to the youth promoters—that's



John Peter Clement (left) and Profamil's youth promoters pose for a picture with their boxes of condoms.

### Adding Value: What does your support for IPPF/WHO do in places like Haiti?

IPPF/WHO is an active partner for local Member Associations throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. Our role is to help build the capacity and sustainability of local organizations and leaders. For example, in Haiti, IPPF/WHO recently conducted a technology and systems training for all staff, trained Profamil on a simple and cost-effective cervical cancer screening and treatment model, and helped hire an Executive Director and recruit new board members.

7,200 more opportunities for these young leaders and their friends to avoid unwanted pregnancies that could impact their entire lives.

John is a leader at Profamil and an agent of change in his community—he is a Haitian working for Haitians. John said that Profamil makes him resilient; a resilience that empowers him to keep learning all that life has to teach.





Girl power in action. What do these future lawyers, doctors, engineers, and presidents have in common—The Haiti Adolescent Girls Network.

## GROWING UP GIRL: MOMENTS WITH HAITI'S FUTURE WOMEN LEADERS

*What do you want to be when you grow up?*

I posed this question to a group of girls, ages 11-14, who participate in the Haiti Adolescent Girls Network (HAGN) in Petion-ville, Haiti. Profamil is the founding member of the 18-member network and IPPF/WHR acts as the secretariat, providing administrative and technical support, as well as seeking funds. In short, HAGN is a prime example of what happens when organizations collaborate to create a multiplication of efforts, rather than duplication.

HAGN was founded shortly after the earthquake in response to the rise in violence against girls and women. In Haiti, 25% of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 report physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner. Increasingly, adolescent girls in Haiti have become vulnerable to violence, and are often forced to exchange sex for food and/or shelter.

Surrounded by these girls, I was scared of the pain their stories may hold. Before leaving for Haiti, I spoke with Colleen Larkin, who is the coordinator for HAGN and has worked in Haiti for ten years. One of Colleen's stories stuck with me.

After the earthquake, HAGN had a psychologist speak to a group of 25 girls ages seven to eight about natural disasters in an effort to help them process the experience. As the psychologist began to explain the science behind earthquakes, one girl raised her hand and said, "We're not afraid of the earthquake. We're afraid of the men who come into our tents at night and take our sisters."

But as I spoke with these bright young women, it was clear that they felt safe, and even delighted to sit around a table with me if it meant a chance to talk about HAGN and their hopes and dreams for the future—and also the threats to their well-being that they experienced on a near daily basis.

Carline (11) sported a crisp blue shirt and a bright green bow in her braided hair. She said she appreciates the trainings at HAGN because they help her protect herself and teach her how to live in society. **Carline is a future women's rights lawyer.**

Erlande (14) said she enjoys all the subjects at HAGN and urges other girls to become involved with the program. She said she especially likes the arts and crafts sessions. **Erlande is an aspiring doctor.**

Daina was undoubtedly the most outgoing of the group. She said that her favorite subject is learning about violence against women. Daina is only 11, but she told me the different ways that girls can protect themselves, especially by avoiding large groups of men when walking alone down the streets. **Daina is a future engineer.**

Sophiana (11) exuded girl power energy—an obvious leader. She said she likes all the subjects she learns at HAGN, but her favorite is sexual health. Sophiana has one brother and two sisters.

Her sister, Cristel, is 19 years old and just had a baby. **Sophiana confidently told me that when she grows up, she wants to be the president of Haiti.** I promised her she would have my vote.

As I listened to these young women, I could only think of how incredibly grateful I was that they found their way to HAGN. In the five days that I spent in Haiti, I had not seen one playground or group of girls socializing in the streets. HAGN is that place for more than 1,000 girls across Haiti. Within these walls, they are free to laugh, play, sing, jump, pretend, learn, grow and just *BE*.

But HAGN is more than fun. It is a place where girls are also free to share their experiences so that they don't have to live them alone. They can safely share the things they see in their homes, in their streets, in their communities:

One girl told me of a case where a girl was taken from an alley and raped by her house.

Another girl said her cousin hits his wife when there's no food in the house.

Finally, I was told that someone was raped in the community and gave birth to twins as a result.

This is what this group of future lawyers, doctors, engineers, and presidents see when they are at home.

As we stepped out of the general meeting room into the front yard, the air was full of the laughter of girls and the cool and comforting feel of summer camp. The entire scene was a reminder that despite the harsh realities these girls may face, they can still dream of a bright future. At HAGN, they have trusted adults who nurture and encourage their dreams. They also have a space of their own to grow into the women they want to become—Haiti's future leaders.



A mother and her daughters on the road to Profamil.

## MOVING FORWARD

As a supporter of IPPF/WHR and as a staff member, I returned from Haiti feeling proud of the work we are investing in and inspired by the power of local leadership. Thank you for partnering with IPPF/WHR and standing with local leaders in countries like Haiti. Together, we are each doing our part to make a difference where we can, and empowering so many others to lead the way and make choices that are best for them and their families.

Jazmyn Henry  
Stewardship Officer, IPPF/WHR

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Have questions about this trip report, a story to share, or want to get more involved with IPPF/WHR? Contact Jazmyn: [jhenry@ippfwhr.org](mailto:jhenry@ippfwhr.org) | (212) 214-0209.

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