

# IDB Family Association - Celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## Background and Work of the Former Presidents

In the year 1964, Ms. Ann Upton, wife of the Vice-president of the Bank at the time, began developing the idea of helping the wives of the IDB employees who arrived from Latin America, many times, not knowing the language and who had a hard time adapting to their new environment.

It was for this reason that, along Inés Herrera, wife of the IDB President, and Agnes Wolf, wife of the Presidency Program Adviser, they elaborated a document stating their concerns and suggestions on the subject. They submitted it to the President, Mr. Felipe Herrera, who agreed with them and supported the creation of the Association.

Since its beginnings, the Association focused on supporting the wives of the IDB employees who came to the Washington, DC area to live and on fostering their integration to the new culture.

Years have gone by and we have had 26 Presidents who led the IDB Family Association, working with initiative, responsibility and commitment and answering the needs of the IDB employees' families.

The unconditional support from the IDB Presidents' Felipe Herrera, Antonio Ortiz Mena, Enrique Iglesias, and Luis Alberto Moreno was essential for the Family Association throughout these 50 years. They valued the goal of the Association's work and the benefit it represents for the employees and their families.

We want to give our special thanks to Ms. Martha Salinas de Ortiz Mena, who always supported us and boosted the programs and

events that were undertaken by the "IDB Ladies Committee". Some of these programs were the language lessons and the publication of the Activity Newsletter. She also managed to have the Bank provide administrative assistance to the Association.

Today, when we look back and see the long path we have walked, we want to particularly thank each and every one of our former presidents; who through their work, dedication and effort have made it possible for us to have today a Family Association that has adapted to the needs of what Mr. Enrique Iglesias called "The Big IDB Family".

As we celebrate our anniversary, we remember the late presidents: Ann Upton (1965-1967); Gloria Herman (1968-1969); Agnes Wolf (1972-1974); Gilda Sotela (1974-1975); Marcia Montes (1976-1978); and Nena Sanchez (1982-1984). We would also like to remember those former presidents we have not been able to contact: Ligia Remick (1967-1968); Zoila Olivero (1970-1972); Amelia Correia Lima (1975-1976); and Beatrix Hilbers (1979-1980).

Now we want to transcribe the messages sent by each one of our former presidents. These messages reflect the evolution of the IDB Family Association through these 50 years.

We begin with the message from our Honorary President, Mrs. **Martha Salinas de Ortiz Mena (1971-1988)**: I had the privilege of being part of the history of this Association almost from its inception. Once we identified the "culture shock" as the cause of many problems for the employees, we were able to offer solutions to these problems by organizing conferences and offering support

for the entire IDB family. It was a great pleasure for me to be able to serve in the Family Association as President and to be able to have a real impact in the lives of the employees, who in the end became my own extended family.

**Celia Dominguez (1978-1979)** comments: my presidency in our Association lasted one year and it was very fruitful. I organized several programs with the support of the Executive Committee and the Country Sponsors. We had lunches every month celebrating the different countries with talks on their customs, traditional food, showings of their traditional outfits, and projections. We also invited ensembles and groups that performed traditional dances. In addition to many different programs, I organized an auction with big prizes which was attended by many people.

**Martha Eugenia Calderon (1980-1981):** I was assigned President of the IDB Ladies Association on March of 1980, along with a wonderful team: Lidis Buguña, Suely Breyer, and Philipa Rae.

I think we met the goals set by the Association, but we also were innovators in some interesting aspects: we changed the aim of the Bazaar, it was no longer related to charity and now it had a cultural approach. Each country was present and displayed its "artech" craftwork and that was a great success for our team.

Ms. Martha Salinas de Ortiz Mena was very supportive. On the spiritual area, we were invited to several conferences on Biblical Theology at the prestigious Trinity College in Washington, DC Many members were very excited about this. During the last months of my presidency, the IDB changed headquarters. I certainly remember my days in the Association with joy and a bit of longing

too.

**Martha Arbelaez (1981- 1982)** tells us about her experience in the Family Association: "it was like a second home to me". I started out taking part in the activities and later on as a volunteer in the Neighborhood Committee. Ms. Martha Salinas de Ortiz Mena urged me to run in the election for president in 1981. Our mission's approach was based on the "Moms and Dads Club", providing access to the cultural life in Washington, DC for the IDB families and facilitating the acculturation of the families in the new country.

**Celia Dominguez** wrote in 1984 on "*A review of the 20 years of our Association*": "The success of our Association has always been supporting and guiding the newly arrived wives."

**Luisa Proaño (1984-1986):** shortly after my arrival to the DC area, when my husband came to work for the IDB, I joined the Association. The Association's commitment to assist the families of the IDB employees to get settled in their new environment, called my attention.

Having had the opportunity to work together with a group of volunteers/collaborators, through various committees, and sharing their friendship, good will, work experiences, etc. while creating a diversity of programs for our members, was an invaluable experience to me. Introducing different levels of Spanish, English and French, (children and adults); the three quarter publication of the "Newsletter" magazine, parallel to the monthly "Bulletin"; and, maintaining a direct international communication with our members in the Country Offices, were the result of the hard work performed by the Committees.

Many years have passed since then. I am still blessed to count amongst my best friends some of the members from those

Committees and some past presidents.

I wish the Association many more years of continuous good achievements to come. Thank you very much and congratulations to each of the volunteers for a work of excellence.

**Lilia L.C. Chuecos (1986-1987):** during my term in office, one of my goals was to prepare the members for the demands of living in U.S.A. We decided to offer several courses, an unprecedented initiative back then. We organized courses such as IT, career counseling and acculturation based on information on U.S.A. Our joy and our legacy is that we helped people make friends while also helping them to adapt and have a better life in this country. Likewise, we also helped our members to be active, connected to the American world and to take part in social activities to help other people. Finally, I want to thank the IDB, our board, the different committees, and the volunteers, since it was with their help that we were able to accomplish our goals.

**Elizabeth Corredor (1987-1988)** states that during her term of office in the IDB Ladies Association her main goal was to support the newly arrived members for their adaptation to their new sociocultural reality. With this aim in mind, she organized English lessons, visits to museums and the "Moms and Dads" Club.

She wants to thank the support received during her term from the Bank administration and its willingness to help.

**Robyn S. Merino:** it was between **1988 and 1990** that I was President of this wonderful organization. During this time we changed the name and the function of the Association from "LADIES" to "FAMILY".

We focused on providing activities for the wives, the kids, the "moms and dads", the parents-in-law of the employees, and also the retirees. Our offices back then were located in MacArthur Blvd., Bethesda. Working with Mr. Santaballa, our contact with the IDB, our executive assistant, Zulay Gallager, and our board of directors was a great experience.

**Lidis Buguña (1990-1992)** tells us about the challenge it represented to organize and negotiate with the Bank Administrative Department the moving of the IDB Family Association to its new offices on Democracy Blvd. "We need more room to satisfy the demand for courses and talks for our members".

She also tells us that during her term she contributed with the best of her capabilities, dedication and hard work to accomplish her aims: to fulfill the needs of the associates and the Bank employees.

**Carmen Montalvo:** between **1992 and 1994**, the term when I was part of the Board of Directors of the IDB Family Association, I managed to get a deep understanding of the importance of doing the best we can to help those who become part of this big family and the ones who are already part of it. We began the activities in the new offices with all the equipment we needed and in our daily doing of the different activities I realized the great quality of the team of ladies that joined me in my work. It is worth mentioning that we had the ongoing support from the IDB employees and the warm welcome from the IDB Family Association members. I wish to thank them all yet again.

**Maria Eugenia Aspiazu (1994-1998):** my aim during my term was to answer to the new and growing needs of the families that came

to live to Washington, DC We developed a program of Spanish lessons for kids on Saturday mornings. We offered a service of career counseling to favor the labor reinsertion of the IDB employees' spouses. It was essential for the accomplishment of my goals to count with the support of the Bank Administration during my term. I would like to personally thank Mr. Enrique Iglesias for his interest and commitment with the development and accomplishment of the goals of the IDB Family Association.

We also generated contacts and liaisons with the associations of other international organizations, sharing efforts to accomplish common goals. We supported the development of Family Associations in the Country Offices and organized conferences to motivate and train its members, who travelled to Washington, DC to attend our events.

**Lely Puig Casasco (1998-1999):** in 1998 I was assigned President of the Association. One of the main challenges of my term was to obtain annual funding for the Family Associations in the Country Offices from the Bank, in the same way it funded the Family Association in Washington, DC. I held several meetings with the President at the time, Mr. Enrique Iglesias, as well as with other Bank employees. This goal was finally achieved when I had already completed my term. I had to leave my position before completing one year because of my husband's transfer to Paraguay.

My experience in the Bank's headquarters allowed me to lead the establishment of the Family Association in Asuncion, Paraguay, trying to integrate the families of the local and international employees of the office. In order to achieve this goal we organized seminars, language courses, talks on different issues, visits to exhibitions of well-known

artists, etc.

**Flavia Pensavalle Bès (1999-2002):** during these almost 4 years, I shared different experiences with a wonderful group of people and with the ongoing support from the Bank. I think that the growth and the strength of this Association is the result of member involvement in the ideas they bring to the table; in addition to their time, solidarity, friendship, and dedication to accomplish them.

The wellbeing of the families is always at the core: it is what keeps us together, both in the headquarters and in the country offices. Hence, to the usual programs taking place in the main offices during that period, we added the creation of 19 Family Associations in the country offices, all sharing the same goal.

I want to thank everybody for the opportunity of this experience.

**Aida Luppino Reos (2002-2004):** The Association was for me a place to find friendship, work, learning, entertainment, and solidarity; all of which I had, in some way, left behind when we first got here.

I am a strong believer in family values, and in the Association I found the ideal place to nurture and foster them; and above all, share them. I am proud of having promoted, among other activities, the Book Club, the playgroup for kids and the Tennis Championship for parents and kids.

**Elizabeth Solorzano (2004-2008, 2011-2013):** to understand the importance of the Association in supporting the families and to share this mission is the greatest satisfaction I have experienced as a volunteer. The establishment of the Family Associations in the 26 Latin American countries where the IDB has offices and the attainment of the budget for their operation was one of my

greatest accomplishments as President. This task allowed me to meet members in different countries, and this is something very valuable to me. It makes me very happy to see members taking part in the activities organized by the Association, which in turn, inspire new volunteers to continue with this mission. What else could I ask for?

**Lucia Lopez-Aguerre (2008-2011):** How could I sum up in one paragraph everything we did in three years? Impossible! What I can do is tell you what it meant for the whole team. It was, without a doubt, a huge challenge and we went through some tough times, just like any group of people does. But I can say that it was also a time of huge personal growth. Trying to follow the mission of the Association we created a place to greet each other, to support each other, almost a second home

for many who still remember it. We were all part of a big team effort to realize our dreams and serve our families.

Between 2008 and 2011 we were able to move to our current offices after many negotiations. We needed a larger place to receive the families and to carry out the many activities we organized for an always-growing number of members. But the grand finale of this period was the organization of the Family Associations Meeting in Quito, Ecuador. We were received with such warmth and professionalism. We were also able to facilitate the integration, strengthening and training of the IDB Family Association members.