

# Miriam H. Labbok Award for Excellence

## 2018 Awardee

### **Lourdes Santaballa Mora**

Choosing the awardee for the Miriam Labbok Award for Excellence this year was a difficult task. Among the candidates were many who champion causes across the reproductive health continuum from breastfeeding to birth spacing. They bring energy, integrity, intelligence, and creativity to their work, honoring and building on the foundation that is Miriam's legacy. This challenge speaks to the wonderful work being done around the world to champion causes across the reproductive health continuum from breastfeeding to birth spacing. It is encouraging to read about the energy, integrity, intelligence, and creativity people are bringing to their work and the passions that honor and build on the foundation that is Miriam's legacy.

Among the candidates, the selection committee sought to choose someone who was in the middle of their career; who had demonstrated initiative, and who had a future that could benefit from the recognition of the award.

*Lourdes Santaballa Mora* was selected because her work is vibrant, groundbreaking, and powerful. Lourdes, an activist, community organizer, IBCLC and divorced parent, was at her home in Dorado, Puerto Rico when when it was hit by two hurricanes: first Irma, and then Maria. She took this moment of crisis and turned it into one of action. As she said, she "literally felt like the universe was talking to me in the middle of the apocalypse." She founded Alimentacion Segura Infantil (ASI) to bring support to families with young children who could not make their way to help because of the chaos left in the wake of the storms.

As noted by Agustina Vidal in her letter of support, "I have no doubt that the lesson from ASI will have a long-lasting imprinting in the field of infant feeding during emergencies. In true Miriam fashion, Lourdes' work is groundbreaking and trailblazing. When the emergency has passed, we will have a roadmap on what knowledge and skills communities need to keep the babies safe, a solid roadmap on how they can organize themselves and put themselves at the service of families and babies."

This award recognizes Lourdes' application of the concepts of safe infant and young child feeding in emergencies to a difficult situation while maintaining the vision to grow her organization -- beyond the natural crisis in which it was formed to one that will train peer counselors and lactation consultants for Puerto Rico in more stable times. Both Lourdes and ASI have the potential to continue to have tremendous impact.

Let's all congratulate Lourdes!