Every day, Agnes Phiri Kornika wakes up at 5:00 in the morning to pray for the rural women of Zambia. She prays for women who have 16 children, for women struggling with unwanted pregnancies, for women who have no access to family planning. Then, she puts on her dancing shoes and does something about it.

Agnes, Aggie for short, has six children of her own between the ages of 39 and 11 and has been a midwife for 34 years; she knows a thing or two about reproductive health. Her passion for serving the underserved has brought her to the far reaches of rural Zambia.

"My family lives in Lusaka, but at the moment I am in an eastern province of Zambia, where I am helping, or rather saving, the rural women with a long-term family planning method," she says.

Aggie provides family planning counseling and insertion of long-acting reversible contraception, namely intrauterine devices (IUDs) and implants. She considers her work for PSI’s local affiliate, Society for Family Health (SFH), her God-given profession not only because she is committed to helping women take control of their reproductive health, but also because she is a gifted communicator. She speaks multiple languages and has a way about her that puts people of all backgrounds at ease.

"I don’t really have a problem in communicating with anybody, be it young, old or middle aged. They find me accommodating, and I also find them accommodating. Because of this relationship, something just comes in me," she says.

Aggie holds a flip chart that she uses to help educate women and men about long-acting and reversible methods of contraception.

Aggie takes an active interest in the women she serves. She talks extensively about one woman she met. This woman had been pregnant 16 times. "A rural woman gets married at 14. This rural woman, at 42, had been pregnant half of her life. Because her children were dying of malnutrition she kept on producing every year," Aggie says.

"I was really affected; I’ve never seen a sixteenth child from the same woman and man in my life." Aggie counseled the woman on her family planning options, and she chose an IUD, which Aggie inserted. Both the woman and her husband came back to thank Aggie and have served as role models for other couples in the community by dispelling myths around IUDs.

While access to family planning can be a matter of life or death, Aggie educates women and men in a positive and engaging manner, through dancing, singing and by talking about the real reason people need family planning: sex.

"I've come to discover that in a woman's life and a man's life the best thing is sex...so as a part of my sensitization, I always
say that what you have to enjoy is your sex,” says Aggie. “I tell them to enjoy sex with the partner God has given you rather than you trying to find satisfaction from someone else. And this has also helped them to maintain their relationships. Even the men have come to appreciate it; they come personally to say thank you.”

Aggie discusses how using long-acting reversible methods of contraception will help relieve a woman’s anxiety about becoming pregnant, thereby freeing her from worry during sex.

"With this long-term family planning method, which is never forgotten, you can go anywhere anytime. You won’t forget to take your pill; you won’t forget the date of your next injection because you already have the device in you. That brings a lot of comfort to a lot of women."

Aggie’s smiling face and upbeat personality undoubtedly bring a lot of comfort to a lot of women as well. In these rural areas, SFH, working in partnership with the Ministry of Health, is one of the only organizations that has been able to successfully increase informed demand for and use of IUDs.

"I would say our program is doing the best and it is the best, especially for rural women. It has never been done there."

For Aggie, there is no uncertainty about how these rural women view SFH’s program. “When you see them dance, you know they really appreciate the service.”