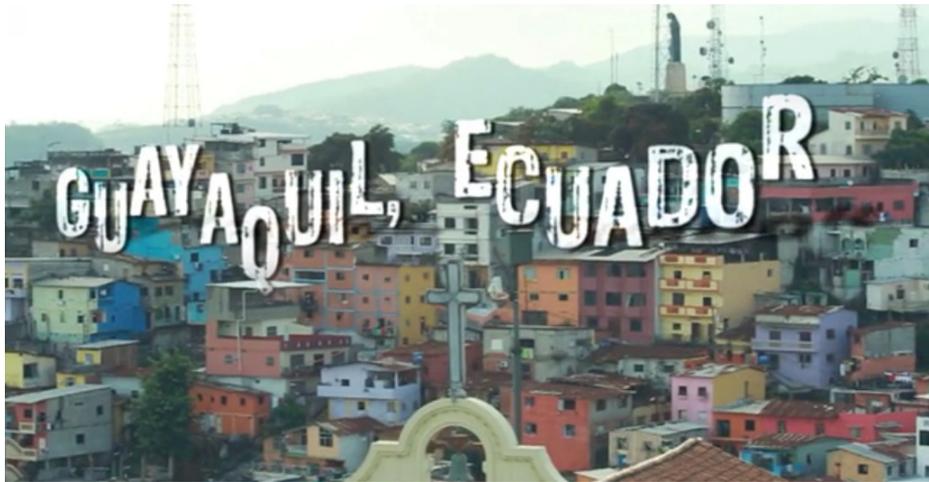


Sofia's story



In Ecuador, one out of every four women has been the victim of sexual violence, according to research carried out by Paz y Esperanza. Sofia, a 45-year-old housewife, is just one of the many victims Paz y Esperanza has helped.

Sofia has seven children and lives in a neighbourhood of Ecuador's largest city Guayaquil which has high levels of poverty and violence. On 20 January 2013, Sofia was walking near her home when a man on a motorbike pulled up beside her and tried to force her to climb on. When she resisted, he grabbed her round the neck and she lost consciousness. When she woke up she pleaded with the man not to harm her but he raped her. She went to the police but the man had fled. She was subsequently signed up to a witness protection programme.

On 1 October 2014, the rapist turned up drunk at Sofia's house and started threatening her. He exposed himself to her and threatened to kill her and her children for reporting him to the police. Sofia called the police and the man was arrested. The legal process to prosecute the man then began, including numerous onerous examinations and hearings.

"Every day I wake up and the sense of fear is like a shadow over my life".

Tamara Amsing, a French student working with Paz y Esperanza, met Sofia on the last day of the court case. Sofia said she still receives threats from the rapist's family and she is scared something will happen to her family, especially her eldest daughter: "Every day I wake up and the sense of fear is like a shadow over my life. I am scared to walk near my home and every time I hear a motorbike my heart stops. I can't move to another area as I don't have the money. Before this happened I used to dress well, wear make-up and look after myself but now I try not to draw attention to myself."

This is the reality many women in Ecuador face. The physical and psychological consequences of rape are life-changing. Injustice is rife and many perpetrators of sexual violence are never brought to justice.

Bravely Sofia decided to pursue justice. With the help of her family and psychological, legal and pastoral help from Paz y Esperanza she pursued the case and her rapist was found guilty and imprisoned.

PAZ Y ESPERANZA'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY!

Paz y Esperanza will be celebrating its 20th birthday in January. To mark the occasion we would love to raise £20,000 to send to the offices in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia so they can carry on their amazing work.

We will be launching our campaign in the New Year, but please get thinking about what you can do to help us fundraise. Maybe you can run 20 laps of your local park, bake 20 cakes and sell them to raise money or sell 20 items cluttering up your house on ebay?

Tamara said: "Sitting next to Sofia, I see a courageous woman who exercised her rights to achieve justice. Let's pray for the survivors of sexual and domestic violence that Paz y Esperanza helps, may we be a source of blessing during the process of restoration and empowerment that we offer, may God help us to be light and bring justice to places where darkness prevails."

Sofia is one of the many people that Paz y Esperanza Ecuador is supporting to rebuild their lives and to pursue justice. The staff are also working with the churches to raise issues of the level of violence and ways that churches can get involved in preventing it from happening and supporting those who have suffered.

Micah 6 v 8: 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'.



Director of Paz y Esperanza Ecuador, José Vincés, promoting the organisation

PLEASE PRAY:

- For the staff and volunteers working for Paz y Esperanza in Ecuador, including Director José Vincés.
- For Sofia and all victims of sexual and domestic violence in Ecuador. May the perpetrators be brought to justice and may the victims receive God's healing.
- For our vision to expand the work of Paz y Esperanza UK, including finding more trustees and raising more funds.

BOOK A SPEAKER for your small group or church, to equip you to stand alongside those silenced by oppression and injustice across Latin America.

Email gdavies@pazyesperanza.org

TO GIVE visit <http://www.justgiving.com/pazyesperanza/Donate>

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