

## Fighting for peace?



*Seven out of ten Bolivian women suffer from domestic sexual or physical abuse*

'Machismo' (chauvinism) is a cultural problem in Latin America where women are often seen as the property of their husband. Many children grow up in environments where violence is the norm and they then go on to be abusive when they are adults. Paz y Esperanza is trying to break this cycle by educating leaders, parents, children and teenagers that domestic violence is simply not acceptable.

**Bolivia is the country with the worst problem of physical violence against women in Latin America and the country with the second biggest problem of sexual violence against women after Haiti.**

Between 2008 and 2012, 450,000 cases of violence against women were reported to the Bolivian authorities. The judicial process normally lasts between two and three years and the vast majority of cases fall by the wayside. Only 27,000 cases were processed and only 96 cases ended in a prison sentence for the perpetrator.

### Norma's Story

Norma, aged 36, lived with her husband for 15 years. He subjected her and her three children to a life of violence, insults and threats.

**"He drank nearly every day and when he got home he verbally abused us.**

**He hit me in front of my children and said I had another man.**

**One day he arrived home drunk and in the middle of an argument he set fire to our house."**

Eventually the aggression became so frequent and intense that she and the children risked death. Desperate and scared, Norma, a devoted Christian, managed to escape and seek help from her pastor.

Paz y Esperanza helped Norma to leave her home and report the case to the authorities. They also provided psychological and spiritual support. Norma has a new home with her children and now leads a women's group at her church.

There is a lot to be thankful to God for as Norma can now start a new life free from violence and abuse. Progress has also been made in that some schools have allowed Paz y Esperanza staff to educate students about domestic violence. Leaders of local churches have also sensitively supported women and children who are the victims of domestic violence.

University students are volunteering for Paz y Esperanza and providing a lot of support to the team. Paz y Esperanza recognises that despite this progress, much more needs to be done and so they are engaged in campaigning work on a national level.

## BREAKING THE SILENCE

In March 2013, the Bolivian government published a potentially ground breaking new law, (Law 348) with penalties for all those who carry out violence against women. However, this new law has not yet been implemented. The reasons for this are numerous. There is a lack of resources at local authority level, the government has a backlog of judicial processes, many judges and government officials are corrupt, and there is a general lack of interest in cases of violence.

In the last four years, 354 cases of murder against women were reported in Bolivia. According to police, 140 cases have been reported so far in 2013. Paz y Esperanza is campaigning for the law to be implemented.

Eva Morales, Paz y Esperanza Bolivia explains,

**'Our work is about promoting social justice and defending human rights among children, women and indigenous people. We provide psychological, social and legal help in cases of sexual abuse of children and violence against women and promote healthy relationships through workshops for teenagers, parents, school teachers and church leaders.'**



**'We are outworking our vision to build the capacity of local church leadership, to reach out to the vulnerable and needy in their communities.'**

For this vital, life transforming work to continue both prayer and financial support are required. Please could we ask you to consider giving to Paz y Esperanza's work either through a one off gift or monthly donation? A very generous anonymous donor has agreed to match any gift (up to £2000) which is given before Christmas. Please go to the 'Get Involved' section of the website for further details.

[www.pazyesperanza.org/uk/](http://www.pazyesperanza.org/uk/) Thank you.

### PLEASE PRAY:

- For Reina and her two children, who are currently in a halfway house to escape domestic violence. Pray that the authorities will arrest Reina's husband.
- For Mery, aged 24 with four children, that she will not abandon her children, despite the trauma she has suffered. May she feel God's love and peace.
- For financial support for the Paz y Esperanza Bolivia projects in 2014.

**BOOK A SPEAKER** to visit your group to equip you to stand alongside those silenced by oppression and injustice across Latin America. Email [gdavies@pazyesperanza.org](mailto:gdavies@pazyesperanza.org) to explore this option.

(To stop receiving these updates email [unsubscribe@pazyesperanza.org](mailto:unsubscribe@pazyesperanza.org))