Supporting Venezuelan migrants as they seek a new life

More than four million Venezuelans have emigrated since 2015 as a result of the critical political, social and economic conditions of their country. This is the second largest group of displaced people in the world after Syria. This month we would like to focus on how Paz y Esperanza Ecuador and Peru are helping these people practically, emotionally and spiritually.

The Venezuelan population faces serious violations of their human rights, both their freedoms and their social, economic and cultural rights, such as the right to health, food, work and education. Public services have collapsed, inflation is sky high, there are arbitrary detentions and excessive use of force by armed forces and a lack of food and medicine. This combination of factors has meant that nearly 3,000 people of all ages cross the frontier every day by means of the Rumichaca bridge on the border between Ecuador and Colombia (see above photo). Migrants cross into Colombia initially and some stay and others migrate across Latin America from there.

PyE has opened a centre at the border between Ecuador and Peru to provide practical and emotional help. A recent visitor said: “I saw thousands of disoriented, distressed and desperate people. There were older adults, pregnant women and single mothers with up to five children. There were many girls and boys who in a distracted and innocent way, oblivious to reality, were playing with balls while their parents tried to sort out paperwork.”
Country leaders see this issue as a low priority and are generally leaving it to NGOs to tackle. PyE teams across Latin America are working with other agencies including the Red Cross to provide shelter at frontiers, help with documentation and ensure children are cared for and entertained. They are also involved in distributing medicines.

The teams have collaborated with Tearfund at an event looking at the Biblical aspect of migration, the role of faith communities in the response to the crisis and receiving input from migrants about their needs and the issues they are facing. These include employment, xenophobia and integration into local communities. Many of the migrants are educated, professional people. You may be a doctor or lawyer in Venezuela but that does not guarantee you an equivalent job elsewhere. You are more likely to find work washing up, cleaning or selling sweets.

PyE Ecuador director Jose Vinces and his family recently took part in a sponsored run called 'Run for the love of justice' to help raise more funds for this essential work.

Please remember these millions of migrants in your prayers and consider giving financially towards the work of PyE in alleviating this crisis. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Find out more from the PyE UK website:  www.pazyesperanza.org/uk