



Celebrating 25 faithful years of Paz y Esperanza

On 19th January, PyE celebrated 25 years since it was founded in Peru. We interviewed Alfonso Wieland, one of the founders and the Latin America director, to talk about the organisation's achievements and the impact it has made on people's lives. We also asked about PyE's vision for the coming years and prayer requests for 2021.



The six founder members of PyE receiving their awards at the 25th Anniversary celebrations

The beginning

Three men and three women, who met while working for the National Evangelical Council of Peru (CONEP), founded PyE in 1996. The founders were all passionate about human rights and on 19th January, in Alfonso's living room, they started an organisation committed to helping those who had been falsely imprisoned or displaced due to the internal armed conflict that Peru was suffering. UK Christian development charity Tearfund backed them and supported them with an initial grant.

Alfonso said: *"The dream was contagious and affected other brothers and sisters in Latin America who were concerned about injustice and poverty. In 1998, we organised an international event on human rights in Lima and we invited many leaders who were involved in the field. We got to know many people and started to visit other countries. The next office we set up was in Ecuador and then Bolivia, Colombia, Chile and Brazil followed. Last year we set up our latest office in El Salvador."*

Key achievements and milestones

Alfonso told us that PyE had represented 250 people who had been falsely imprisoned and secured their freedom. It was also involved in the formation of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission in Peru to share testimonies and set up public audiences to listen to the victims of armed conflict.

"We opened other offices in Peru and expanded our work to include violence and abuse against women and children. In Huánuco we opened a hostel for sexually abused children, which was one of the first in Peru to directly treat this problem. We have helped about 600 children during the last ten years with their physical and emotional recovery. In the Apurímac region, we have helped Quechua speaking people with their bilingual education and now the government is giving money to fund their education. We have helped many people with disabilities and lobbied the government for laws and policies to increase access to education, healthcare and employment. We have also worked with indigenous people to recover their land after they have suffered land invasions."

"The evangelical church has become more open about talking about biblical injustice and human rights and we at PyE have contributed to this conversation. We have had support from some churches, who believe that God calls us to oppose injustice, and opposition from others who have said human rights is a political issue and nothing to do with the gospel."



'Casa del Buen Trato' - children's home in Huánuco



Truth & Reconciliation Commission with PyE representatives

PyE has helped thousands of people

One of the people PyE has helped was a student who was falsely accused of terrorism and sentenced to 25 years in prison. PyE represented him and he was subsequently released. After his release he studied law and worked for PyE for a few years defending other people who had been falsely imprisoned. Alfonso said: *"He rose from the ashes and rebuilt his life."*

In Huánuco, the PyE team helped the mum of a nine-year-old girl who was raped and murdered. They brought the case to court and launched a public campaign and the authorities finally captured the perpetrator and imprisoned him. Alfonso said that PyE has worked with many women who have been abused, as well as women with disabilities, to create communities and leaders and defend their rights.

"It is the biggest reward to see the happy faces of people we have helped and their tears of joy for gaining freedom or overcoming trauma. People have told us they were without hope but with the help of PyE, they have got through difficult times. For example, during the pandemic, one family said that the financial help arrived when they had nothing to eat as they couldn't go out to work due to lockdown restrictions, so it was essential to them to keep going and remain hopeful."

Vision for the future

"Our vision is that PyE brings up a generation of Christians who are totally convinced that justice is part of our spiritual life. We want to see their work bear fruit. In seven or eight years I will probably retire and my dream is to say goodbye seeing a new generation with a voice continuing to work to help the poorest people. I think there are young people who have this fire in their hearts and we want them to have an impact on society in the coming years. May people come to know God through justice."

For your prayers

Let us give thanks to God for:

- the past 25 years and all the leaders who have been raised up during this time.
- for the health of the leaders and for the team working tirelessly for justice.
- that the pandemic has led to staff and volunteers connecting online more in 2020 and growing the PyE family.
- for the new office in El Salvador and pray for its work in 2021.

and please pray for:

- the health of Guillermo and Laura who work with Venezuelan migrants in Peru and are unwell.
- the work of the different offices and the provision of resources required for their work. which will be a challenge with all the demands for funds at the moment.
- the leadership of PyE Colombia as they are expecting some changes this year.
- Latin America as the various countries fight the pandemic.

Thank you to Alfonso for sharing his memories and thank you to our UK community for your support and prayers.
2021 is a year of anniversaries. June marks the tenth anniversary of PyE UK and in July Peru will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of independence.
There is much to celebrate! Mark this special year with your 'Anniversary' one-off or ongoing financial support via <https://www.justgiving.com/pazyesperanza>