

## Tackling child trafficking in the Amazon



**Jorge Arboccó - Director of the San Martín office of Paz y Esperanza in northern Peru**

We interviewed Jorge Arboccó, Director of the San Martín office in northern Peru, about the challenges facing children during the second wave of Covid infections and how Paz y Esperanza is responding.

Official deaths figures due to Coronavirus in Peru stand at 60,000, although unofficial estimates are almost triple that number. It now has one of the highest per capita rates globally.

With small and medium businesses severely affected, an additional two million people have become unemployed, adding to the ten million who were already working in the informal sector and seasonal labour.

According to Jorge, *“During this past year we have seen an increase in trafficking of children. The consequences of this increased unemployment and challenges of finding food for the family in the current restrictions have provided conditions that are ripe for targeting vulnerable children.”*

Many stories have a common thread. The families are poor and the parents struggle to earn a living in their local area and feel compelled to travel further afield. They send their children to live with relatives. The children need to earn their keep and also to try and save money for their families, most of whom depend on this additional income even in more normal times. The children, usually in their early teens, end up doing hard manual labour in agriculture or construction. They end up exhausted and feeling abandoned by their parents and this is when the traffickers target them.

*“They are tricked into travelling to other provinces with the offer of their own place to live, a decent job with good money to spend on themselves and a life free of the hard labour. Feeling unloved by their parents, they see an option of a different life. However, they soon realise that most of these jobs are illegal and exploitative, including drug harvesting and trafficking, illegal logging and prostitution”*

Paz y Esperanza has set up a network with the local education authorities and schools to try and prevent trafficking, help children think through the choices that they are faced with and to deal with the emotions they are experiencing.

*“Here we bring Paz y Esperanza’s work of transforming society with accompanying and comforting those who have been affected by abuse and injustice”, says Jorge.*

Due to restrictions around going into schools, they have moved to training teachers through online seminars, which has had the benefit of reaching many more teachers and schools. They have helped teachers in skills of listening to pupils who feel abandoned by their parents and are emotionally vulnerable, as well as in supporting children to be able to speak with their parents and to work out together options for work that are suitable for age and life stage.

They have also been helping teachers and children to be more aware of techniques used by traffickers, and to expose and prevent trafficking when they see it.

*“Recently one of the teachers in the district of Awajún told us that a young lady had been targeting the girls, asking for their phone numbers and addresses and asking them to meet her in a bar to discuss options to work in sales in Lima, again with promises of good clothes, food and a house. The teacher was able to prevent any trafficking before it started by talking with the children and showing it for what it is.”*



**Yank**, 14, is part of the Regional Network of Students against Trafficking in San Martin, supported by Paz y Esperanza, which has trained teachers and raised awareness of the dangers of trafficking and how to prevent it. He says: *“before being part of the project, I’d heard of issues of trafficking from the TV or radio. After joining the group I learned a lot more and realised I needed to tell my friends and family, to share information with them and to speak in class.”*

### 10th Anniversary Celebrations - 16th June 2021

Paz y Esperanza UK is celebrating its ten year anniversary this year. We would love to invite you to a meeting in some central location in order to be able to celebrate together and to give thanks for all that PyE has achieved in the last 10 years across the continent, and the part that we have been privileged to play in it.

However - some things are not possible, as we all know, and meeting en masse and travel are still limited. So we shall meet again as we have in our recent webinars, with each of us in our living rooms.

Please join us. **7.30pm on Wednesday 16th June.** There will be music, photos, contributions from PyE Peru, supporting churches and individuals. It is not an event to be missed.

Please register your attendance with us at [gdavies@pazyesperanza.org](mailto:gdavies@pazyesperanza.org)

**Oxygen for Andahuaylas** - Last month we highlighted the initiative that PyE in Peru have joined, in order to fund the provision of oxygen generating equipment for the Andahuaylas province in southern Peru. Andahuaylas has reported the greatest number of deaths from Covid-19 anywhere in Peru. Thank you to those who have already contributed to this appeal, an amount of around £1,500 has already been received. The fund is still open and the need is urgent. Please contribute at: <https://www.justgiving.com/pazyesperanza>