



Supporting children affected by the pandemic

As the UK emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, Latin America remains in the grip of the disease. While children have not been as physically affected as adults, there have been many indirect consequences. These include increased poverty, missing out on education and poor mental health. It is thought that hundreds of thousands of children across Latin America have lost one or both parents. This will inevitably affect the health and economic future of the next generation. Lockdowns have also caused an increase in domestic violence. In this newsletter we focus on some of the work that Jose Vincés and his team at **Paz y Esperanza Ecuador** are doing to help families.

The team has investigated the experiences of children living in the northwest of Guayaquil, the country's second biggest city, during the pandemic. They interviewed 200 children and looked at how their rights had been affected, including the right to education, health, food and water, protection against violence and recreation.

In one interview Lesly, aged 17 said: *"In my family there are seven children and I am the only one studying because both my parents lost their jobs because of the pandemic. We don't have money for food or for a computer. I study using a mobile phone and sometimes I don't understand the work I have to do. My right to education and that of my siblings has been compromised."*

Juan Carlos, aged 7, said: *"My parents are worried all the time. My dad lost his job and they are angry with me all the time. They hit me for fighting with my brothers."* Many other

children talked about how family life has become more difficult with tensions running high often as a result of a lack of money to buy essentials.

One of PyE Ecuador's ongoing projects in Guayaquil is called '**Healthy Families, free from violence**'. The project supports families to try and create healthy relationships at home and make people aware of their rights and what the Bible teaches. One training programme focuses on women with the aim of understanding their rights, bringing issues of domestic abuse out into the open and preventing domestic violence happening in the first place. These women have been teaching other women and have specifically focused on new challenges during Covid-19.

PyE is also working with 40 young men aged between 16 and 26 teaching them about issues such as the consequences of gender violence. The team runs workshops for children about their rights. It has provided psychological help to about 30 survivors of domestic violence and child sexual abuse.



Another group significantly affected by the pandemic has been **Venezuelan migrants**. Paz y Esperanza has been supporting 50 vulnerable Venezuelan families and helps them by providing a small amount of money and training to start a business. Some families have also received food and hygiene kits.

The need continues to be great across Latin America and responding to Covid will dominate all the work of Paz y Esperanza in the foreseeable future. Please pray for the PyE teams operating there, that they may be able to identify the needs and help those suffering. Please join us with a regular or one-off donation to this vital work at

<https://www.justgiving.com/pazyesperanza>

Now that churches are planning their winter and spring programmes, don't forget that PyE UK staff are very happy to visit your church, home group mid-week meeting or whatever, to provide more details of the challenges that our colleagues are facing across the region.

Just contact gdavies@pazyesperanza.org