



Young men engaged in 'Masculinity and Rights workshop'

Award winning work making a difference in Ecuador

This month our focus is on the work of Paz y Esperanza in Ecuador. We had a Zoom conversation with director José Vinces, who updated us on their current projects, told us about a recent international award and shared prayer requests.

The team works in Ecuador's second city, Guayaquil, in a poor area where 20,000 vulnerable people live. One of the main projects they continue to run is '**Healthy Families, Free From Violence**'. They run workshops on self-esteem, human rights, contraception and masculinity. Domestic violence is a big issue and the project aims to educate people about their rights in the face of psychological and physical abuse. Other projects include teaching English and offering sessions with psychologists to those affected by violence.

The team has created church pastoral networks with all denominations and **trains church leaders** on how to help community members in emotional, spiritual and practical ways. This has become even more important due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the many issues created as a result of the lack of work, illness and lock-downs, including increased levels of violence and drug dependency. José told us that as a result of the training one pastor, Alfonso Lopez, from the Baptist Church in Flor de Bastion is now accompanying women with the legal process of making a report of violence to the police. Previously these women may have even been stigmatised or ostracised by the church. Church leader Oscar Andrade said: *"PyE trained our children on their rights and now they know they have rights which must be respected. Many children in our community are suffering from violence and the training helps us to help our neighbour"*.



One of the groups of people who live in the area are Venezuelan migrants who have fled a terrible economic situation in their country. Jose and his team run a programme called '**I Am Listening to You Migrant Family**'. It provides training in various skills and helps families with no income start a small business with seed funding. It also provides emotional support and referrals to various institutions if necessary. To find out more about the work with migrants, watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a76O4hvNrOo&t=32s>

The team recently won an international award from Unicef, Arigatou Internacional and Interfaith Alliance for their work on the project '**Listening to the voices of children and teenagers during the Covid-19 pandemic**'. The PyE team interviewed many young people to understand their experiences and to ensure that their voices are heard by local authorities, for example on impacts on their education and wellbeing. José said: *"The award is dedicated to all the children in Ecuador and the world, whose thoughts, feelings and voices need to be heard in public, social, educational, religious and family situations."* The next step is for PyE along with the children to meet local authorities to discuss how the findings will be implemented. What wonderful recognition of PyE's amazing work!

José shared some **prayer requests** for the team and Ecuador. The society has become more violent partly as a result of an increase in drug trafficking gangs and there have been a number of prison riots and deaths of inmates. There are problems with insecurity and corruption. He said: *"Please pray for strength for the team. Many have lost loved ones to Covid. Pray that doors will open as we do our work and we will not come up against too much resistance, such as xenophobia."*

Thank you for your support for PyE. Please join us with a regular or one-off donation at <https://www.justgiving.com/pazyesperanza>

Don't forget, we are all available to visit your church, whether it is on a Sunday or mid-week for a house group or similar. Just contact Gordon Davies on gdavies@pazyesperanza.org to discuss the possibilities..

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