



*Paz y  
Esperanza*



## Building a brighter future in Colombia

This month we are focusing on the exciting projects being carried out by PyE Colombia following an update from director Giovanni Gomez Molina.

In **Granizal**, an informal settlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) located in Medellin in Antioquia department, the team has been working with a number of groups, including women, young people and Venezuelan migrants. They are involved in a project creating a community museum where community members can share their memories. Many of the people in Granizal have had to leave their homes because of the armed conflict in other parts of the country and have suffered violence, bereavement or injury. In 2021 the PyE team started running workshops where they can create art and weavings and they hold exhibitions of their work. Through the art, they can express themselves and the significant moments in their lives.

Giovanni told us: *"These women have a lot to offer society and the world. This is a way they can connect with each other and in the group space they can find hope and restoration."*

In another area of Medellin, **La Nueva Jerusalem**, the team have been building relationships with churches and other organisations working in the community and getting to know local leaders. They are working with a group of 30 older people, who have been victims of the armed conflict, and 40 young people.

Giovanni said that there is a window to help and influence the young people between the ages of 12 and 16 as after that many start doing informal work or even choose to join armed groups. *"We seek to give them different opportunities and alternatives as a way of building peace long term."*



A young artist at work

As in Granizal, the team run art workshops and introduce them to mediums such as photography and plastics. One of the projects involves sewing images of importance to each individual such as a person's place of peace or the faces of family members.

Giovanny mentioned the story of a 13-year-old girl who came to the workshops who was helped through the trauma of losing her cousin after he was murdered. He said: "*Bit by bit the young people open their hearts and start to heal.*" He also mentioned the ripple effect of the work as those involved pass on what they have experienced and learnt as they want to share their stories as well as potentially create art projects in other parts of Medellin.

In **Uraba**, a rural area also in Antioquia, the team has been working with 12 evangelical churches and 27 pastors and leaders as part of a project called '*United by Co-Existence*'. The training includes discussions and practical help on how the church can transform communities and care for neighbours. It has been a difficult time for pastors during Covid, as many felt isolated and in need of extra support for themselves and their congregations. The pandemic has highlighted a domestic violence and mental health crisis and PyE is providing psychological support, including to one pastor who lost his wife to Covid.

**Please pray for the small team as they continue this fantastic community work. May the Lord give them strength as they work with very vulnerable people in areas affected by armed conflict. May He also grant physical and spiritual resources**

**On 19<sup>th</sup> June, Colombians went to the polls for the second round of presidential elections.**

**Gustavo Petro**, the former mayor of Bogota and ex-rebel fighter, has become Colombia's first left-wing president.

Mr Petro, a current senator, defeated the right-wing construction magnate Rodolfo Hernández in the run-off election. Figures show he took 50.5% of votes, defeating his millionaire rival by a close margin of around 700,000 ballots.

The result marks a major change for the country, which for decades has been led by moderates and conservatives.

**Please pray for Gustavo Petro as he takes power.** During the campaign he has pledged to fight inequality by providing free university education, pension reforms and high taxes on unproductive land. His promises of inclusion and addressing poverty have resonated with this deeply unequal country.

He also pledged to fully implement a 2016 peace deal that ended a 50-year long conflict with the communist guerrilla group, Farc, and to seek negotiations with the still-active ELN rebels.

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