



Public forum 'The justice that does not come'

## Women gain confidence and strength in Ecuador

*'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'*

*Psalm 91:2*

Please be aware that the following story contains references to gender-based violence that some readers may find distressing.

'My name is Arely, and I am 41 years old. I am a wife, mother and grandmother. My story is marked by a difficult childhood, filled with violence within my own home.

'From a very young age, I witnessed the physical and emotional abuse my father inflicted on my mother and sisters. Those moments left deep wounds. Many times I tried to defend my mother and older sister, and for doing so I was also beaten. I grew up surrounded by fear and pain.

'While still a student, I fell pregnant. Despite the criticism, ridicule and humiliation, I found strength wherever I could and managed to finish my studies. However, my dream of going to university was thwarted by a lack of support and a reality filled with hardship. Although I always appeared strong, I often cried silently, carrying frustration and pain.

'My life began to change when I attended events [organised by Paz y Esperanza in partnership with local churches] that taught me to see myself in a new light. The true awakening happened in community workshops, where I learned about my rights. There, I reclaimed my voice, which had been silenced for years.

'I understood that no one has the right to humiliate me or decide my life for me. I learnt that violence is never the fault of the survivor. With courage, and despite all the obstacles, I resumed my university studies.

'Today, I support other women in my community, helping them defend and believe in themselves. I am a more confident woman, aware of my worth and my rights. I transformed my pain into strength, and my silence into an outstretched hand for others.'

### Shining the light of Jesus

Arely is just one of many women gaining confidence and strength through the prayerful, life-affirming work of Paz y Esperanza in Ecuador.

- + Over the last few years, hundreds of women have gained new skills and understanding of their rights
- + friendships and networks offering mutual support have been formed
- + thousands of men, women and children have marched through the streets and taken part in other public events to call for greater legal defense of women's rights, and an end to gender-based violence

Gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and femicide remain serious issues in Ecuador. But thanks to your support and prayers, a growing number of women, like Arely, now have new hope for a better, safer future.

Arely concludes: 'My story is an example of resilience, struggle and self-love. Despite everything, I continue to strive so I can help other women defend their rights and believe in themselves.'



The 'You are Not Alone' campaign is helping women and girls affected by gender-based violence to know that they are seen, heard and supported. Here in the UK we cannot show our solidarity by marching through the streets of Guayaquil, but we can stand with them in prayer and financial support.

Click on this link to contribute to support the work of Paz y Esperanza:

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

A number of churches include Paz y Esperanza as part of their portfolio of support. We are always available to visit churches to share more of the vision and highlight areas where PyE is making a difference in people's lives. It can be part of a Sunday service or a mid-week group. Just contact us on: [uk-enquiry@pazyesperanza.org](mailto:uk-enquiry@pazyesperanza.org)

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