



HOPE IN A TROUBLED REGION

'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.' 1 Corinthians 12:26

The countries where Paz y Esperanza works - Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Brazil, El Salvador and Argentina - face many challenges. One of these, which affects every aspect of life, is deep-rooted corruption.

Corruption can be defined as obtaining personal benefit at the cost of harming, either directly or indirectly, the rights of others. It involves obtaining an advantage through the exercise of power, including deception, dishonesty and exploitation.

Corruption became rife in Latin America during colonial times, when those in the centres of power established and legitimised dishonest and immoral behaviour. Over time, these practices became embedded in many aspects of culture and society.

Currently, the polarisation of political views and the actions of powerful, often violent, cartels are further undermining democratic institutions across the region. This is taking a heavy toll on public policies, human rights, social justice and quality of life.

Urgent intervention

José Vínces Rodríguez, Director of Paz y Esperanza Ecuador, says, "The greater the corruption, the greater the poverty and inequality. The Covid -19 pandemic made everything worse, as the health systems weren't able to cope and people became socially isolated. Add to this political unrest, rising levels of violence (particularly against women), child recruitment into gangs and impunity for the most powerful, and you can see why life is difficult for so many people in our region."

José continues, "The problem of corruption requires urgent intervention by all social actors, including Christians who, through their faith and their churches, are fundamental to achieving the necessary change. When churches join together to stand up against corruption and injustice, great things can be achieved. This is where we see hope."

Hope in Christ

Nina Balmaceda, CEO and President of the USA branch Peace & Hope International, agrees. She says, "The hope of the Gospel is a force that drives us to do good and resist injustice. A life of hope in Christ actively participates in transforming the world. We are invited to collaborate with God's renewing work, even amidst adversity."

"Individuals and communities exercising their rights and responsibilities, and properly functioning public institutions, are the best ways to prevent abuse of power and other expressions of injustice. Paz y Esperanza brings churches together to serve those who are suffering, heal wounds caused by the abuse of power and violence, and cultivate hope, justice and peace."

Answered prayers

Martha in Bolivia was wrongly imprisoned and spent two years behind bars, separated from her children. She says, "I thought the world had forgotten me. But my prayers were answered when the lawyers from Paz y Esperanza came to help. They didn't just appeal my case until I regained my freedom, they helped me to realise that God still has a plan for my life. Today, I am back with my family and I have peace in my heart."

Reflection from PyE Argentina

We can be ambassadors of the good news of resilience. We can be churches committed to truth and justice. God weeps with every child and teenager who suffers any form of abuse. God grieves at our indifferent gaze, when we turn a deaf ear and fail to put ourselves in the shoes of the most vulnerable. Every life is sacred. Let us commit to being close, with watchful eyes and attentive hearts, acting with care, anchored in the hope of restoration. May we always be ready to believe any account of rights violations or injustice that needs to be heard.



Paz y Esperanza Peru, the founding branch of the PyE movement, celebrated its 30th anniversary earlier this year. Much has been said by organisations and people across the region about their initiative during a time of great danger, and their willingness and ability to share their vision with others, such that now there is PyE in 7 other Latin American countries tackling issues affecting their own communities.

We in the UK celebrated the 15th anniversary of our launch event on 22nd June this year.

Thank you to those who have accompanied us all the way since then, and also those who have joined us and been inspired by the vision and commitment of our partners across the continent.

The '**Quinceañera**' is a coming of age celebration in Latin American cultures for a girl's 15th birthday. We hope that we here in PyE UK have come of age!

The photo shows the founding Trustees and our visitors from Peru at the launch



Two (very different) events for you to support our Trustees -

Graham Gordon is carrying out a 2 mile swim along and around the Serpentine in London's Hyde Park raising support for PyE UK on Saturday 19th September. Splash off at 2.50pm.

Details for financial contributions will be announced with our update next month.

Jude Collins will be preaching at the Mission Sunday service St Margaret's Church, Warnham, West Sussex, RH12 3QW on Sunday 18th October at 10am.

Supporters and visitors most welcome at both events.