



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ECUADOR

According to CEIMMEⁱ, 68% of Ecuadorian women have experienced Domestic Violence (DV)

In Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas, Ecuador, the charity “Vida en Abundancia”(with CMS), works with “La Primera Iglesia Bautista”, to relieve the suffering caused by DV.

The Pastor, William Solórzano alerted the congregation to the topic, something not spoken of within the church. Some church members have suffered abuse for years. The message is “Say No” , and we sense a sea change in attitudes.



The charity was able to employ and train a women’s coordinator, Blanca Cifuentes. She started working in Laura Flores, a community built on a disused municipal rubbish dump. During the first talk tears came to women’s eyes as Blanca defined abuse. In this macho culture there is a saying, “if he hits me or if he kills me, he is still my husband”.

We are teaching the total unacceptability of this, the short and long term impact of DV on children; we encourage women to find the strength to break free of a life of fear and servitude.

The charity offers support in accompanying women to the relevant government bodies. The women often draw back from denouncing their husband, through fear of what he will do, but also fear of destitution. In Ecuador only about a third of women are in paid employment.ⁱⁱ New laws are supposed to ensure women receive money from estranged husbands, but these laws are difficult to enforce.

Another problem is that there is often a relationship of codependency. Even if a woman does decide to leave the home, the likelihood is that she will return, rather than face life alone. We have learnt that a woman may have to experience a domestic crisis many times before she will make the definite decision to leave.

What then, can we do?

We have been working in the area of building women’s self-esteem through teaching them who they are in Christ. We combine this underlying theme with teaching practical skills. Ornamental crafts, cards, jewelry, chocolate making, we teach whatever can be made on a small outlay and can be turned to a profit.



Another key strategy is education. Where women have the obvious desire and aptitude, we encourage and actively support their attendance in Weekend Schools. We give Adult Literacy classes; we invite outside speakers to talk about Health and Hygiene, Nutrition, Family planning and so on.

Jill Ball, Sept '13.

Life in Abundance (Ecuador) Trust

UK Charity registration number: 1106851

Another way of breaking generation cycles of abuse is through working with the children. We set up an after school homework club. The Baptist Church in Laura Flores has a busy Sunday School. The children receive unconditional love and acceptance, while learning good values, and seeing godliness modeled.

Of course, none of this is enough. We are only touching the tip of the iceberg. Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas has a population of nearly half a million, and we are working with at best dozens of women. Realizing the limitations of our ministry, early this year we set up a working party to devise a Five Year Plan to develop the scope and effect of our work. Coming out of this we organized a conference for pastors in the town to learn about DV in Ecuador, and how they can be a part of positively impacting change. The vision is for churches throughout the town to be strategic places of help for women in abuse. We have planned a series of talks to different groups. A tele- amigo service is being set up, where distressed women can call and get immediate counsel.

In Luke [4:18](#) Jesus announced that he had come to set the captives free, and this ministry is a small manifestation of that.

ⁱ Centro de Estudios e Investigación Sobre el Maltrato de la Mujer (CEIMME), a centre for study and research of violence against women, published in 1991, indicates that for the country as a whole, the percentage of women victims of domestic violence is 68

ⁱⁱ . According to the International Labour Office (ILO), in 1990 women made up 26.4 per cent of Ecuador's active labour force. ILO data also indicate that 18.3 per cent of all Ecuadorian women were part of the labour force in 1990 (ILO 1993, 20).