

Earthquake in Ecuador: “Fifth Week”



Prevention of infant sexual abuse post-earthquake in the communities of Pedernales

In this fifth week the emergency team of Peace and Hope Foundation continued to bring humanitarian aid: food kits, hygiene kits, water filters and portions of the word of God to the areas affected by the earthquake in the towns of Manta, Portoviejo, Bahia de Caraquez, Canoa, Pedernales, New Pedernales and Chamanga. A pastoral service was provided and programmes of psychosocial support and prevention of child sexual abuse post-earthquake were developed, along with workshops on the use of water filters.

"We have seen that with this aid we provide to the people they are strengthening their emotional, psychological and spiritual state. They have confidence in their neighbour who is helping them and in themselves to get ahead and they are not alone; Peace and Hope together with its strategic partner churches, pastors and volunteers are accompanying them," said Alfonso Lopez, Coordinator of the emergency team of Peace and Hope Foundation.

It should be noted that treatment was provided in individual cases, in terms of emotional support, to people who are being affected in the short, medium and long term by the disaster and the constant aftershocks. Likewise, we worked with boys and girls in Manta, Portoviejo and the communities of Pedernales giving them practical tools to prevent sexual abuse, since they now share common spaces with outsiders in shelters, a situation that puts them at risk. On the other hand, in the 2 earthquakes of magnitude 6.8 on 18 May 2016 which was felt

strongly in Pedernales, we were the first providers of psychological aid. The first reaction of some people was to cry, others were screaming, some were in state shock, but were given water and were reassured. We coordinated with officials of MIES and the SOS Village hostels in Jama and Pedernales in order to unite our efforts in this psychological support.

"People who we have served before are now safer. Through the psychological first aid provided we were able to stabilise them in a short time, now they have tools to stabilise themselves through relaxation techniques. On the day of the earthquake we were looking for shelters to provide psychological care," says Tania Rada, Psychologist at Peace and Hope Foundation.

Our support in this fifth week specifically consisted of the following: Donations of 140 water filters (1 filter per family consisting of 5 members), 2,500 hygiene kits. We also provided 6000 food rations as well as psychosocial and spiritual support to 159 people, of which 104 were children.

Actions are being performed through coordinating efforts with the Inter Evangelical Diaconal Red - REDI, and the Christian Emergency Committee – CCE.



Coordination with an official of ACNUR

Prayer Points:

1. Families/relatives of the 663 people who have died – that God can strengthen and comfort them.
2. People injured – that they recover and are restored.
3. Families in shelters – for them to have a protection system to prevent sexual abuse of children.
4. Economic Recovery – in order that jobs can be generated in the fishing and tourism industries, as well as in trade and in micro family and community craft projects.

5. Programmes of public and private psychosocial support – (due to constant aftershocks) that people can be strengthened in their emotional, psychological and spiritual state.

6. Churches – that those acting as houses of refuge may have the strength to serve and assist the communities that have lost everything.



Psychosocial support to those affected, within the shelters of Jama y Pedernales

Testimonies of love and service: Because I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me.



William Castro, pastor of the church “Agua Refrescantes” de Bahía de Caráquez with his wife, Andrea Carranza Jiménez, leader of the church.

"It was very sad and painful. We were reviewing music with some musicians in the church, there were my two children and my husband, when the shaking began. We fell to our knees and could not stay stood upright. It was a horrible thing, as a mother the first thing I did was cover my children and put myself over them, I said even if I fall it doesn't matter to me. The lights went out, we managed to leave the church, we were afraid of the light poles and wires falling on us. People announced a tsunami warning, we ran with all our strength to our house and continued walking towards a high place of the city, to a plane. Everyone was there with what they were wearing, some without shoes. We spent all night enduring the rain, we covered ourselves with a parasol. We kept calm and reassured our children. They were very frightened, currently they can't be alone, they are afraid. The next day we toured the city and it made us sad that many people were left with nothing, houses and fallen buildings, many people died, of what was Bahia nothing remains, everything was destroyed. There was no communication, no light, we were left wondering about people. We are currently working with people, sharing the gospel, people began to gather in the church. We speak as an area affected by the earthquake," commented one of those affected by the earthquake, Andrea Carranza Jiménez, leader of the evangelical missionary church "Agua Refrescantes"—Bahía de Caráquez.

"Our lives as a pastoral family have changed a lot, as spouses and parents, it has been a blessing; many people opened their hearts to the Lord and are receptive to the word of God. We have served as spiritual help, we are identified with the city, serving him. On 17 May we had been married for 13 years and, as we were serving, we forgot our anniversary. God is great and has allowed us to pass through this ordeal, he gave us strength to help people. I feel satisfied and pleased to serve the Lord in this way, I never imagined that I had it within me, this service, to give, to motivate people, to give myself completely to people and the community fully. The Lord has awakened this love and passion for people," says Andrea, excited.

Her husband William Castro, who is the pastor of the Church also tells us: *"The earthquake has caused a terrible psychological effect on our lives so that people sleep with their shoes, with their shoes on, with a flashlight in hand with their mobile cell phones. We are living with this expectation, we keep guard every two hours, thinking about people who sleep deeply in order to awaken them. Any noise seems to us that it is an earthquake, a passing vehicle, move a chair and we jump. As a parent I have to be the bravest of the house, but I also crack before them and they have to be strong. At night-time I try to make my children sleep, I pretend to be asleep so they sleep, but actually I'm awake, worried about what might happen, we are in the street, in the church."* Despite this, they maintain hope and have realised that this earthquake was a wake-up call to the earth and also to the heart - their hearts have changed: *"now we have a real pastoral heart, we are concerned about our brothers and the community, showing a smile, a true love".*

"From the day of the earthquake, the church has served as a shelter for 16 families in the community, at first people passing were giving aid but that stopped, and thank God who allowed us to become friends with Peace and Hope Foundation, who gave us provision and we have an assured supply this month. We are hoping to gradually return to normal activities, and for the economy to be revived, to return to jobs and to keep going. We have not lacked food and we can celebrate at every breakfast, every lunch, every dinner; we feel that comes from the hand of God," says William.

"The Foundation is providing us with a psychologist for three months, who will be here constantly, they have also provided food, and we feel that the Foundation is giving us a spiritual covering. They delivered food kits that were distributed to the church and the

community, we are doing the great mission and great commission: For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me. We have been able to give others a hand, we have been able to help others, with the support of the Foundation, and the church are doing our bit", William said.

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