



Servants in Faith and Technology /
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The Hidden Victims of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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School closures have affected 4.6 million children in Ecuador. There are children and adolescents who are in vulnerable conditions in their homes and face threats such as maltreatment and sexual abuse.

According to official statistics, 1 in 10 women in Ecuador was a victim of sexual abuse as a child or adolescent. More than half of the 17 million Ecuadorians are women.

The actual level of child abuse is more serious than official statistics reveal, as 1 in 4 victims in Ecuador "never" reported it. The victims remained silent out of fear of the consequences, out of shame, out of helplessness or out of fear of threats.

Sixty-five percent of cases of sexual abuse are committed by family members or people close to the victims. Of the family members who abused, almost 40 percent abused the same victim several times and 14 percent did so systematically.

However, these statistics are only the "tip of the iceberg" as there are also male children who have been victims, but the figures are not known. Of the total cases of sexual abuse, only 15 percent were reported and only 5.3 percent prosecuted.

Additionally, child sexual abuse and the distribution of pedophile material on the Internet has skyrocketed during the pandemic, which has accentuated child abuse in Ecuador by more than 50 percent, as this generates large revenues for networks of sex offenders, who have found a



At several of our project sites in Quito, including Velasco pictured above, workshops for children and youth were held recently to combat sexual abuse. Please pray for these Ecuadorian children—the hidden victims of the pandemic

great opportunity to access a wider group of potential child victims in the current health emergency .

Child violence and abuse is another of the **social pandemics** caused by COVID-19.

Prevention against child violence and sexual abuse is very important. That is why in the projects of Villaflora, Guamaní, Machachi, Velasco and Cutuglahua, a prevention campaign was developed against violence and child abuse. They named it *Children are of Christ – They are not touched!* (Many of our mission team members have served in these churches that were planted through SIFAT graduate Anita and her husband Pastor Rafael's leadership and ministry.)

In total, around 700 children ages 6 to 18 attended. The children learned through games, music and didactic material about their body privacy and how to break the

silence. The children received a t-shirt with the campaign's theme written on it: *Los niños son de Cristo – No se los toca*. We want this message that children are of Christ – they are not to be touched to be read permanently by all the people around the child.

Thank you for your support of SIFAT. Because of the *SIFAT Doctor in your House* donors, SIFAT Ecuador was able to sponsor the t-shirts for 50 children in the Velasco project. SIFAT medical teams from Centerpointe Church in Palm Bay, Fla., have been providing care for this impoverished neighborhood for several years and have developed a close relationship with the church leaders and community there. Please continue to pray for all of the children and their families who may be suffering in silence during the pandemic.



Each participant received a t-shirt that read Children are of Christ—they are not to be touched. The churches hope this message will be seen regularly in their communities.

Construction Resumes in Aida Leon



Thank you to everyone who has given so generously to help our Aida Leon project in Ecuador. Originally, this church waited 10 years for our teams to arrive to begin construction of a new building to give its afterschool program much needed classrooms and bathrooms, as well as a cafeteria space, professional kitchen and offices. In 2020, we were preparing to finish this project. We all know the pandemic's effect on our plans and the uncertainty of the future. But, we also know that as the lockdowns and safety regulations ease, the children will return before our teams can travel. Now more than ever, as Dr. Roberto and Monica shared above, these children need a safe haven, where they will receive hot meals, Bible lessons, school tutoring and positive social interaction.

A \$10,000 matching fund started this fundraising effort, and we have raised about \$45,000 so far. We hired unemployed laborers from the community to work alongside our foreman Miguel, and the church even organized work days to pour the roof.

Although we wish we could be there in person to see this building through its completion, we know that the church is being encouraged through the generosity and prayers from our SIFAT family.