It seems like it was just a few days ago that we started 2020 with high hopes for the projects we had in mind. Who would have imagined the changes that a small, invisible, powerful and dangerous substance would cause? But here we continue, facing those changes – and too many tragedies – with resilience and community. Because it’s the only way. The lessons of this period will be with us for a long time. And while we deeply regret the many losses of life, money, and sometimes even peace, we prefer to focus on our gratitude for health, our family’s well-being, and the opportunities that continue to appear through the haze.
A year for defining priorities

For many people, 2020 has been a year of deep introspection, of looking carefully at what is working in our lives and organizations, and where we can improve. At the beginning of the pandemic, which devastated the city of Guayaquil and made Ecuador appear on world maps as one of the most affected countries, confusion reigned for us as well.

But as the weeks went by, the news of increases in gender and domestic violence and the growing needs for mental health support for the entire population, gave us the push we needed to finally make our dream come true.

Our big news: the birth of Fundación Pa’Arriba Ecuador!

The people who have followed us on social media and our other communications channels know that our service in the country, under the name of the “No More in Ecuador” Project, began operations in Ecuador in December 2012. The project began with a song and a symbol and until now it has come to serve over 2,000 people in face-to-face and virtual spaces.

In 2016, in conjunction with another organization, we sought to provide an international legal structure to the project, with a view to taking the methodologies created in Ecuador to the world. That was the year we created Pa’Arriba Foundation, a US 501(c)(3) foundation dedicated to reducing violence. But in Ecuador, we continued to function as a project... until the pandemic and its consequent quarantine gave us the time and focus to define and land our vision.
First, we offered a talk featuring Dr. Adalberto Barreto, doctor, psychiatrist, anthropologist, theologian and international lecturer, founder of the Systemic Integrative Community Therapy (ICT or TCI in Spanish and Portuguese) methodology – a methodology recognized as part of Brazil’s official public health system – which forms the base of our program of our Neighborly Conversations dialogue circle program.

Dr. Barreto was accompanied by Josefa Ruiz, president of ABRATECOM, the governing body of the methodology in Brazil and internationally.

That same day, we had the honor of signing our Basic Operational Agreement as an international NGO operating in Ecuador with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Arturo Cabrera Hidalgo, accompanied by Ambassador Cesar Montaño, Undersecretary of Economic Affairs and International Cooperation, and María Cristina Fuentes, Director of Non-Governmental Cooperation and Evaluation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility. In line with the times, the signing was carried out virtually with a formal event broadcast over Facebook Live with the presence of our closest colleagues and friends of the organization.

November 25, 2020, designated by the UN as International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, marked the beginning of a launch campaign by Fundación Pa’Arriba Ecuador, our new local chapter, within the framework of the UN’s 16 Days of Activism against Gender based Violence. In line with our inclusive, community-based approach, we organized a series of nine panel talks that allowed us to understand the issue of gender-based violence from very varied perspectives that included: survivors, psychologists, lawyers, specialists in crisis management and human rights, sociologists, local and national government, international cooperation, LGBTIQ + community and even athletes.

From each discussion we drew pearls of inspiration to help us recognize, understand and overcome violence. The talks are available (in Spanish) on our YouTube Channel or on the @nomasenecuador Facebook page.

We closed with a flourish on December 10, 2020, appropriately Human Rights Day, with two very important events.
PA’ARRIBA FOUNDATION’S OBJECTIVE

Pa’Arriba Foundation is a US 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose main purpose is to identify and implement innovative prevention and treatment methodologies, community-based support interventions and network solutions to reduce violence in the home, school and society in general, which can be replicated on a large scale and in many countries.

WHAT DOES FUNDACIÓN PA’ARRIBA ECUADOR DO?

As our name implies, we want to elevate an entire country and we know that, to do so, we must work in a systemic way, with the goal of transforming the culture from within and providing the necessary support to generate profound changes from the roots. We seek to build a community of peace, made up of people who are empowered and free from violence. We are confident that this approach will have a positive impact on the whole society and will serve as a model for future regional expansion.

THREE LINES OF ACTION

To achieve our purpose, we have established 3 lines of action, based largely on the work already carried out in the country since 2012.

1. NEIGHBORLY CONVERSATIONS
   DIALOGUE CIRCLE PROGRAM

The Neighborly Conversations Dialogue Circle Program (Conversando con Tu Vecindad in Spanish) underwent a slight name change designed to better reflect its attributes of responsibility, inclusion and its friendly approach.
In November 2020, the program celebrated its 3-year anniversary in a virtual environment, since the pandemic forced this in-person project onto Zoom. The transition, despite some misgivings at first, turned out to be quite easy once certain technological and methodological challenges had been overcome. And while we need hugs — and who doesn’t this year? — having our dialogue circles take place in virtual format has generated certain advantages.

For example, we have been able to receive people from all over Ecuador in our virtual space, when before we could only serve people who could join us in the north of Quito. Participants have also joined in from all over the Spanish-speaking world: Colombia, Peru, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, USA and even from Spain (at 2 in the morning!).

In addition, having the possibility of participating with certain anonymity (without video) has served as an incentive for more people who are afraid to ask for support to come to the circle. In fact, thanks to this transition to virtuality, we have managed to serve several hundred people during the pandemic.

Systemic Integrative Community Therapy (TCI) offers a proven option for building basic mental health networks, fostering community ties, and building resilience. In times like these, when stress, depression, anxiety, and violence have increased, this type of service becomes even more important.

The presence of the methodology in 28 countries, its 32 years of use in Brazil, and now its effective conversion to a virtual methodology, is faithful proof of its effectiveness. We look forward to expanding the program for years to come.
2. PEARL OF INSPIRATION

In each dialog circle, the participants go home with many resources (nick-named “pearls”) that help them realize that wherever there are problems, there are solutions. We started publishing bite-sized versions of this popular wisdom in June 2018 on our social networks.

This year, the development of our new website (www.paarriba.org) has allowed us to expand the concept with a blog dedicated to stories of resilience based on these pearls from our weekly dialog circles. These Pearls of Inspiration, available in English and Spanish, aim to offer an education in life skills that are born of the community to then return to the community. Over time, there are plans to continue expanding this communications-based program, which has the potential to reach a mass audience.
3. OYE SARA (HEY SARA)

Our **8-year-long experience** working with communities in Ecuador has given us insight into a significant gap in the support ecosystem in cases of violence. Specifically, there is a need to identify and maintain **up-to-date information** on the support resources available at the national level.

Over and over again, the participants in our workshops and dialog circles in the city of Quito complained of not knowing where to go to ask for help and, with the pandemic, doubts increased as we had to look for information to make referrals at the national level. And although in the country’s large cities, such as Quito and Guayaquil, there are various support options, in the provinces and rural areas, information was scarce.

This led to the development of **Oye SARA (Hey SARA – Advanced Support Resources System)**, an extremely ambitious and innovative concept that began its life as an internal response to a public need for information. In line with our commitment to optimize the overall efficiency of the support system, we seek to **improve the referral process**, putting in the hands of users from four vulnerable populations (women, children and adolescents, LGBTIQ and human mobility) the data they need to find support options at the national level.

Throughout 2020, our volunteer team, led by mental health expert Carla Zambrano performed the meticulous work of information gathering and mapping of organizations including both public agencies and civil society institutions. By 2021, the project is expected to expand as we continue our search for funds and **public-private-community partnerships** that can make this dream come true.

69.6% of the women interviewed believe that the home is not a safe place for women.

*(Citizen Pulse / CEPAM / Avon, 2020)*
Faced with this complex reality, we want to publicly express our admiration for the creativity of some private and public organizations in their attempt to provide support in the midst of such difficult situations. At the same time, we are left with the great concern that the situation caused by the pandemic has made it impossible for many women to ask for the help they need.

In fact, there has been a significant reduction in calls for assistance to authorities, according to data from the Secretariat for Human Rights (2020), mainly because with the aggressor constantly present, the victims do not have a quick and safe way to ask for help from support agencies. This pushes us even more strongly to seek community and technological solutions that will both curb violence before it reaches more extreme levels and to facilitate the provision of assistance to those who need it most.

76.5% of the women interviewed know of cases of relatives, friends or neighbors who have been violated or killed by their partner during quarantine.

(Citizen Pulse / CEPAM / Avon, 2020)

Although the organizations that work on these issues have said for years that the numbers of femicides, abuse and violence have reached alarming levels - equivalent to an epidemic - the existence of a pandemic such as COVID-19 has exacerbated that reality.

We cannot fail to recognize the extreme situation that having to live 24/7 in confinement with their aggressors has meant for many victims.
ALLIANCES

Having become a legally established foundation in the country is opening the door to many possible formal alliances. Based on how we have advanced in 2020, we believe that in 2021, we will see the signing of many important new alliances. Meanwhile, we continue to maintain informal alliances such as the one we have had for several years with the **Teléfono Amigo Foundation** (a crisis hotline) and a new one that developed this year with the **Café de la Tarde** (Afternoon Coffee) project of the **Tumbaco Municipal Administration** (AMZT, a local office of the City of Quito).

The alliance with the Telefónica Amigo Foundation allows us to offer individual, confidential and free support to participants in the Neighborly Conversations Dialogue Circle Program, as a complement to the group-based community support we offer. In addition, the relationship benefits both organizations through cross-marketing of services. The relationship with the AMZT brings us closer to vulnerable populations in the Tumbaco area of the city of Quito.

In addition, we want to give a special thanks to **Corporación UNIR** for their selfless support in sharing their office space for our fledgling organization, for providing information that can help both organizations finance our work, and for being willing to explore more opportunities for future collaboration.
RADIO PROGRAM

The arrival of the pandemic unfortunately put a temporary halt to our community radio program that had begun to take shape in 2019. However, we are working on generating proposals to resume this activity, since, for some populations of the country, radio is the best way to communicate. We have already identified a technology partner and look forward to being back on the air in 2021 sharing stories of resilience with our Pearls of Inspiration.

SOCIAL NETWORK CAMPAIGNS

Fortunately, the pandemic could not silence us. Because in these tough times, messages of support are even more important. That is why as soon as they locked us in our homes, our team got to work creating videos that were widely disseminated on our social networks, reaching a total of more than 150,000 people.

The topic? In short: resilience.

We sent messages of emotional support, tips for adults to face the emergency and even a guide to facilitate the psychological adaptation of children to the new reality. With this, we hope to have shined a drop of light in a sea of darkness.
MEDIA

We need to get the word out about everything we do as a foundation. This is how we want to influence the transformation of the culture of violence in Ecuador! And although social networks contribute a lot, it is very important to have support from traditional media as well. This is why we want to thank all the Ecuadorian media that have provided us with a public platform this year, and especially those who shared the news of our launch:

- Teleamazonas (Latest news – Hellen Quiñónez)
- Gamavisión (Leonardo Balseca)
- Radio Centro Fm (NotiHoy radio program with Andrés López)
- Radio Sucesos (Ramiro and Reina Diez)
- Public Journalism Platform (Juan Carlos Figueroa)
- Radio Quito
- Radio Concert (Al Día Program, Cristina Peláez)
- Radio Pacha
- Radio La Rumbera (Natalia Rodríguez)
- Radio Vigía
- USCG Radio
- Qué onda, Guayaquil (What’s up, Guayaquil)
- Hablamos las mujeres (Women Speak: Martha Paz García, Miguel Angel Castro, Manabí)
- Hoja de Ruta Radio – Otras Voces (Other Voices Program – Gabriela Vanegas, Quito)
- El Telégrafo Newspaper (society section)
- La Hora Newspaper
- Express Newspaper – Cynthia Flores Rodríguez
- El Norte newspaper
- Super Periódico (Guayaquil)
- Sputnik News

[click here to see the interview on Teleamazonas]
For obvious reasons, face-to-face events were limited in 2020. But this didn’t stop people from getting together virtually, and sometimes, really creative events arose! For example, as part of our participation in the Non-Violent October collective space (in which we have taken part for over 6 years), we were hacked!

It sounds dangerous, but in reality, it was really beautiful. The Música InSitus organization “invaded” our dialog circle with its "2020 Music Occupation festival", providing the participants with a high quality recital and reinforcing the value of music and art in our program.

We want to thank Dr. Anita León, the faculty member-in-charge, Marcelo León, PhD. Department Director, and Juan Lara, PhD., Dean of the School of Psychology of the Central University for inviting us to participate in the V PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE FAIR (CO EXISTIR EN PAZ), where we were able to present our recently-created local foundation before the academic community and other civil society organizations with a new institutional video developed by our internal communication team led by Jaime Mejía.

Finally, we once again want to highlight the series of talks held in honor of our launch that allowed us to listen to various sectors of Ecuadorian society, local and international authorities and our beloved professor Adalberto Barreto from Brazil.
Our growth in both programmatic and communicational terms depends on several factors. Formally domiciling our foundation in Ecuador opens many doors for us, from the possibility of working with university interns, raising funds and entering into alliances. It was a necessary step and we are confident that it will bear fruit very soon in 2021. In the meantime, we have taken advantage of some pandemic-related downtime to train some team members in the skills necessary to improve our operations, such as certifying new community therapists and training a volunteer to help us raise funds from international cooperation.
OUR TEAM

Sometimes we find it hard to believe what can be achieved with a team made up completely of volunteers, but this is how this dream has been built and strengthened from the beginning. That is why we have created a **gratitude list** on our new website that reflects our thanks to all the people that have made this happen over the years. And for 2020 we want to express our specific appreciation to the following people:

Our coordinator **Jaime Mejía**, for his constant and unconditional support, in many facets of the project, including the creation of videos and photographs, community management, general administration, and as an honorary community therapist. **Carla Zambrano**, for her direction of the initial development of the “Oye SARA” project, her contributions as a clinical psychologist, community therapist and even, lately, social networks, in addition to her permanent belief in the project. **Tamara Toledo**, for her mental health “knowhow” and her support in interviews, workshops and decision-making. **Gabriela Sánchez** for her overall support as we passed through the regulatory hurdles needed to domicile our local chapter, Fundación Pa’Arriba Ecuador, for developing international cooperation projects, and as part of a team, in the collection of information for the Oye SARA project. In this last task, she was accompanied by **María José Cevillano** and **Diego Benavides**.

**Zaida Betancourt** our deep gratitude for her support week-after-week as a community therapist, working together to generate this support and learning space. **Orestes Ramos, Arturo Valdivieso, Airam Alfonso** and the entire **Design Republik** team for helping us create our new and beautiful website and advising us on our digital communication work.
Catalina Aguirre, our accountant, for her support on budgets and everything related to finances and administration, including her general advice to grow what was previously just a project into a foundation. Carolina Reinoso and Monserrat Vivero and the partners of Robalino Law, who we thank a thousand times over for their belief in our work and their indispensable pro bono support on the legal front, in a year that required us to make many difficult decisions and prepare highly complex documentation.

María Cristina Fuentes, Director of Non-Governmental Cooperation and Evaluation, and Vanessa Mora of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility (MREMH) for their support in the domiciliation of the Pa’Arriba Ecuador Foundation. Ambassador Arturo Cabrera Hidalgo, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and the entire MREMH team and the Human Rights Secretariat for opening the door to formalize our work in Ecuador.

To all the people who participated in our talks, our videos, our campaigns in favor of resilience and the community, and our dialogue circles, to all the people who donated funds to us to cover our operations. To all of our volunteers. To our friends and members of our community, and last but not least, it’s only appropriate to give thanks to all of the first responders who have selflessly given of themselves to support all of us through these difficult times.

There’s only one thing left to say:

Pa’Arriba! Onwards and upwards!

Sending a much-needed hug and my best wishes for a great year,

Lisa Markovits

President
**HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT US?**

**DONATE**

Pa’Arriba Foundation is a US 501(c)(3) organization. Visit our website to support our cause.

**SEEKING STRATEGIC ALLIES**

There are so many ways to support each other within the context of a public-private-community partnership. All our products and services (social impact communication campaigns, programs, workshops, and workshops) are designed to generate a powerful win-win-win for our allies, the community, and society in general. We believe in social entrepreneurship as a sustainable base for our operations.

**BE OUR VOLUNTEER**

Write to us and attach your résumé. We want your volunteer experience to be something that benefits both you and our project.

**COME TO THE CIRCLE**

Our Neighborly Conversations dialog circle network is expanding. Follow our Facebook page (@ fundacion.paarriba.ecuador) or Instagram or subscribe to our list to be able to inform you via email or WhatsApp of the weekly schedule. For now, circles are available only in Spanish. You can subscribe to our mailing list automatically in the link below.


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