Panama: Adventists take to the streets against violence and abuse

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Thousands of Seventh-day Adventist took to the streets of David in Chiriqui, Panama, on Aug. 23, during a peaceful march against the prevalent violence in the western city of the Central American country.
Thousands of Seventh-day Adventists marched against abuse and violence against children, women and the elderly on Aug. 25, in David, Chiriqui, Panama.

The activity brought together more than 1,000 church members, pathfinders, students and teachers who held banners and posters and played instruments during the 3-kilometer march through the main streets in downtown David. Church leaders and employees joined in the march wearing T-shirts which read "Together let's say No to Violence".

Marchers were joined by Governor of Chiriqui Aixa Santamaria along with representatives from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, National Institute for Women, National Secretary for the Disabled, local police chief and other community leaders.

Governor Santamaria thanked the church for the activity which goes along with the efforts by the government to combat the prevalent violence in the city.

"We have to say no to the abuse and no to violence in the home," said Pastor Braulio Concepcion, president of the West Panama region as we welcomed the audience.

"Abuse in the home against children and women are increasing more and more in our society here in Chiriqui," said Concepcion. According to Concepcion, there's a program run by the church to desensitize its students across the Adventist schools and church members across its temples on what abuse is.

"We are focusing on educating our members on what constitutes abuse and how to identify it to address it properly," explained Concepcion.

The march and program was carried live through Adventist run radio stations and was covered by the local media.

Other provinces in the west region in Panama also organized marches against violence on the same day, he added.

Pastor Elvis Ramirez, a young district pastor, reminded the audience about the escalating violence in the city and the hope we find in God.

"The Saviour of the world is the greatest Peacemaker of all times," said Ramirez. "Helpless children are the most abused by adults such as parents, uncles, grandparents, siblings and caregivers," he added as he called for government leaders and those gathered to join efforts in promoting peace and watching out for the vulnerable in the community.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in West Panama has nearly 50,000 members worshiping in 128 churches.