“Historic moment” in Peru represents hope for hurting children

Picture this scene: A meeting room in Lima, Peru, full of local Kids Alive leaders, representatives from Peruvian and Colombian child welfare agencies, and trauma-care leaders from Guatemala. But everyone’s attention is focused on the special guests, TBRI® Training Specialist Amanda Purvis, Director of the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development (KPICD) at Texas Christian University, and Dr. David Cross, Co-Founder of Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®). “I feel the weight of the moment,” Cross said, “but I have hope, because I can tell these leaders have a heart for the kids.”

Now, envision a packed auditorium of Peruvian leaders from child welfare, the judiciary, law enforcement, and other NGOs, all focused on vulnerable children and families. Dr. Cross spoke softly about how he had been one of “their” kids, placed in foster care at a young age. Through that experience, he lost his “voice,” and would not regain it until he was a father. But finding that voice allowed him to issue a unique challenge: “Think systems.”

At first, the idea of systems might feel impersonal, but this commitment of the KPICD echoes our emphasis on delivering God’s whole love to the most vulnerable children – because a healthy system protects and promotes individual flourishing. This commitment brought Purvis and Cross to Peru to present world-class training and to dialogue about our growing partnership with KPICD. At the end of the week, Cross declared, “This is a historic moment for Peru.” And indeed, the stories shared and learnings gleaned from this time together will be a turning point in healing hearts and lives.

Kids Alive International is committed to designing and refining systems that serve thousands of children while never losing sight of the unique treasure of the individual child. Thank you for standing with us in Peru and 11 other countries as we work to give vulnerable children hope for a new year, a new decade, and an eternal future.
Onward: Growing the “Three R’s” for a new decade

There’s something downright exhilarating about the entry into a new decade!

When we look back at the changes and the transformed lives during the years 2010-2019, we are filled with awe at God’s great power, and filled with anticipation for what He will do between now and 2029.

It’s also a great time to review our “Three R’s” to affirm that our daily work is continuing to align with our words. Here is a recent account of a young teen received into our ministry in Guatemala, illustrating the “full circle” of hope that your gifts are providing…

**rescue** (v.) to free from confinement, danger, or evil; save or deliver

Maria* had been placed in a government home for sexual abuse victims. That institution, well over capacity, sent her name and profile to us, asking to “off-load” her and some other girls to reduce their overcrowded conditions. Maria was one of 15 girls on a list – we only had space for five. Decisions like these are emotional and difficult.

On paper, Maria would have been easy to pass over. She was 14 and had been “picked up at her boyfriend’s house.” At first glance, we could have been forgiven for thinking this might have fallen into the “consensual” category and we could have moved on to the next profile. But on closer inspection, the situation began to look different, and we couldn’t look away. The “boyfriend” was 23 and there were indications of physical abuse and “grooming.”

Maria came to the Oasis at Kids Alive Guatemala. Rescue accomplished.

**redeem** (v.) to regain possession of something valuable, *at a price*

Maria’s case was then entrusted to our Escuintla Care Center. She was gently but thoroughly prepared for the difficult experience of telling her story in court. Corbey Dukes, Guatemala Country Director, remembers: “On the way to court, where she knew she would be publicly testifying against her abuser, I loved watching in the rearview mirror how she interacted with Julissa Veliz, our Escuintla psychologist. It was easy to see that Maria felt comfortable and cared for by Juli.”

Once they arrived at Ministerio Publico, where the hearing would be held, Corbey was introduced to the head of the MP’s social work department, and she asked him to come to her office. There she thanked him for Kids Alive coming to Escuintla. “Your team is excellent,” she began, and then she laid out her wish list of what she hopes we would do in the future – day care, job training, micro-businesses, etc.

*Name changed to protect privacy*
“You could do it,” she said. “I believe in you. I can trust Kids Alive Guatemala to do it well.”

Maria testified from a cubicle adjacent to the courtroom, with a one-way window. The prosecutor, judge, court secretary, Kids Alive attorney Susana Escobedo, an armed guard, and the hand-cuffed aggressor were all present in court along with Corbey. But PGN (Guatemala’s child protective services) – tasked with being the advocate and protector for the child – failed to attend. They frequently don’t show up, and in fact, they have never interviewed a Kids Alive Guatemala child previous to court. But as legal representative for Maria, Corbey was able to give permission for her to testify.

Maria’s hearing demonstrated why Kids Alive Guatemala children are 10 times more likely to receive justice than the general Guatemalan public. A very well-prepared Maria shared her story with confidence, unashamed of the details.

“Where do you live now?”

“In Kids Alive Guatemala Oasis.”

“How is it there?”

“They treat me well. They have taught me about God and to always say the truth.”

She shared how she had been groomed and then held as a virtual slave for six months under constant sexual assault, physical abuse, threats, and emotional torment.

At the end of the hearing, Maria was asked if she had anything else to share. “I only want justice to be done in my case,” she said calmly.

On Christmas Eve, Maria received her “White Stone Necklace” – a Kids Alive Guatemala tradition to mark a girl who has been faithful to Jesus and herself through her criminal process.

Part of the above definition of “redeem” is “at a price.” The price is often high for our kids, their families, and our dedicated staff who work with them through harrowing memories and extremely sensitive details. But the heart and soul of a child are a “pearl of great price,” and even when redemption comes at a high cost, there is no thought of not paying it.

The steps to restoration are often complex and the path to setting things right can be winding and dangerous. To “bring back to a former or original state” doesn’t mean restoring a child to the situation that caused pain or damage...it means restoring them to the fulness that God intends for them, and walking with them to wholeness.

Whether it’s an orphan rescued from the streets of Zambia...a Haitian, Sudanese, or Syrian refugee in a strange land with no access to food or education...or a “Maria” being restored by the God who makes all things new, Kids Alive and our partners will be there through a new year and a new decade.
There’s a child who’s waiting for you!

Javier and Luan* arrived at Juniper Tree Home in Peru after being rescued from a long history of abuse and neglect. They are slowly learning to trust adults and make new friends.

Elena’s* father died, and her mother suffers from mental illness. The Dominican government asked us to provide a safe home and education for her.

Nizar* is a Syrian refugee in Lebanon; at Dar El Awlad he now has a safe place to live and is receiving a quality education.

What do these children have in common? They need sponsors who will walk with them on the hard road ahead – praying for them, writing to them, and sharing a gift of just $39 a month. Your sponsorship commitment provides:

- Quality Christian education
- Nourishing food
- Clothing
- Health monitoring
- An introduction to the Gospel and faithful demonstration of the love of God
- And for those children who are homeless or without safe shelter, a loving home

In the process, you’ll be able to connect with a deserving child, blessing them and being blessed through reports, correspondence, and yearly photos. Best of all, you’ll be declaring to a precious girl or boy, “I believe in you!” To choose a child to sponsor, go to www.kidsalive.org/sponsor-a-child – a waiting child has been praying for you!

*Names changed to protect privacy