

When Praying for People to Receive Christ Isn't Enough

María Ursula Scheelje Cossios and CBN Latin America are putting an end to malnutrition and child prostitution in some of the poorest, hardest-to-reach places on the planet.

Scheelje started working for CBN 25 years ago, when she took a job as a receptionist in the Lima offices. She worked her way up from receptionist to principal director of CBN Latin America in Peru and Bolivia. For a long time, she says, CBN focused on television programming, including counseling call centers and prayer lines.

"But during all that, I felt something was missing," Scheelje said. "Something was wrong. We were missing something. Because we would pray for people to come to Christ, we would pray for their needs, but that was all that we did at the time. The needs were so great, and the people who were calling in needed so much more, more than just prayer."

Scheelje wanted to provide solutions to their problems, rather than praying that others would. So seven years ago, CBN's Peru office started projects for humanitarian aid. They built wells in remote areas like the Amazon rainforest and jungles. They invited doctors and dentists from the United States for short-term medical missions trips. They even created an official partnership with the Peruvian Armed Forces for military escorts—"literally on military cargo ships or helicopters," Scheelje said—to reach remote villages that lack roads.

One of Scheelje's proudest accomplishments is a children's village created in Iquitos, Peru. Iquitos is notorious for child sex tourism. Predators travel from around the world to get children as young as 4.

"We came across kids that were 5 and 6 years old that had

already been sexually abused,” Scheelje said. “So when I heard that, it just really touched my heart, and we decided to build a [home] there. It’s a whole village that we’ve built. It’s not an orphanage. We want the kids to still be raised by their parents, but it’s a safe place they can come after school. We teach them biblical basics, we feed them and we help them with homework and schoolwork. Right now on a daily basis we’re feeding over 200 kids just in that village.”

The children’s village was originally only open four days per week, but the children wanted to come every day. Then whenever they came, they never wanted to leave. Some parents even asked staff to take their children for good, because the village could care for them better than the parents could.

In August, Scheelje’s team set up another house in Lima. This shelter houses women rescued from homelessness and prostitution. Many of these women are just teenagers. The house isn’t even fully finished yet, and already 21 women call it home.

“We don’t just want to pray for people’s needs, but we want to be the hands and feet of Jesus to meet their needs as well,” Scheelje said. “So we do want to pray with them, and we want them to know about the new life in Jesus Christ. But one of the best ways to do that is to demonstrate it with the work that we’re doing, the humanitarian aid relief that we do.”

To any believers interested in supporting the ministry, Scheelje says they can contact her at uscheelje@ or give to the Peru ministry through the CBN Latino website.

“The true fast is not just to not eat food, but to also give food to the hungry, to provide shelter and care for the orphan,” Scheelje said. “We’re so good at the religious and the spiritual things as a church inside the four walls of the church, but it’s a weakness when it comes to outside. But [we] simply follow the example that Jesus showed us in the three

years that he did ministry here on this earth, which was to go to where the people are—to where the hurting are, where the sick are. Blind eyes were opened. Paralytics walked. It's a worldwide need, but [it's time] to get out of the comfort zone of your own home and of your own church and see what the majority of the world lives like and goes through." {eoa}