

When Linda told me about our Relief Society special project, which was to collect items for an orphanage in Peru, I was very excited and happy because I am a Peruvian and when I was a child a group like our Relief Society helped me too. Linda asked to share my experience growing up to help inspire our Relief Society. I grew up in a small town called Huariaca, which is located in a narrow valley in the high mountains about 8 hours by bus east of Lima, the capital of Peru. In my home town we had a school that was sponsored by some evangelic churches from Switzerland and Germany. Many of their members donated money to support this school. I was one of 200 children that was part of this school. My school was very special to me because not only did we learn our ABC's but because we learned about God but in a very different way than we were used to -- as most of the population in my home town was Catholic. At our school, everyday we read the Bible, sang songs, and prayed before we started class. One of the most important things that I learned was that Heavenly Father loves us more than anything and he isn't this God who is only looking for our faults to punish us. I learned how to pray by attending that school. Knowing that Heavenly Father loved me and was always there to help me gave me the strength and faith to continue praying and have the belief that he was ready to help me whenever I needed his support and asked for it.

If it hadn't been for those groups of loving Christians, willing to help children they didn't know in a foreign country that they had never visited, I would not be where I am today. Each one of us can make a big difference in the life of a child far away simply by giving a little item to make his or her life better. If I can touch the life of one child in a similar manner to how my life was touched, all my efforts will be worth it. How I wish I could meet each one of those wonderful people who made such a difference in my life so long ago. Since I can't, I am overjoyed to be able to pass some help along and make a difference in the life of a child. I will give you the thanks that I would have liked to give those wonderful Swiss and German church groups.

Thank you.

My life was made better in immeasurable ways. I still remember tiny details, like the wonderful German story books and Swiss toys they sent, that brightened up my days. They probably had no idea how much those small items meant to me and my classmates. One of the ladies gave me her daughter's bright yellow raincoat and I felt so special and pretty whenever I wore it. I was very proud of my raincoat. The fact that I knew that in addition to Heavenly Father there were other people in the world that loved me made me feel more secure and willing to try and succeed.

Together we will make a positive difference in the life of many children.