

annual report



Every person is created to flourish

But the burdens of violence and injustice fall heavily on the shoulders of marginalized communities. The vicious cycle of poverty and mental illness threatens the wellbeing of us all.

Now is the time to catalyze community-owned mental health initiatives that break the cycle and empower the most vulnerable among us to thrive.



Brio advances global mental health and wellbeing through design and collaboration with local leaders and organizations.

Through partnership, training, and resource creation, we are building a world where marginalized communities lead our collective liberation.



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Dear friends,

In Malaysia, there is a saying: "Sedikit-sedikit, nanti jadi bukit."* Little by little, the hill is formed. This metaphor is so important when we find ourselves tackling challenges as far-reaching and complex as global mental health. An inspiring vision calls us forth, yet our new reality is built by moments— countless conversations, creative collaborations, agile adaptations, and meaningful moments of pause.

For me, the latter offers a chance to reconnect with deep, humble gratitude. Working with extraordinary leaders and teams across the globe to cultivate flourishing in their communities is one of the great honors of my life. In the well-meaning social change sector where impact is all too often confused with importance, I am reminded that this work, at its core, is a manifestation of our deepest values and convictions.

And as it changes the world, it changes me. The compassion I see offered, and am learning to offer, toward the pain of the human experience, is becoming a gift I can also give to my loved ones, my community, and myself. How can it not? If our mission is essential to our vision for the world, then we are included in, not exempt from, its transformative power.

2021 was a challenging and clarifying year for us. As the pandemic continued its dynamic, unrelenting march across the globe, we stood with our partners and their communities in creating brave solutions for healing and flourishing. And despite the inescapable uncertainties of the future, our efforts this year yielded resounding certainty in several significant ways:

Yes, people know when their perspectives and experiences are truly valued, and they find healing in being heard.

Yes, celebrating marginalized identities in the design of mental health initiatives yields meaningful results and dignified participation.

Yes, flourishing is possible even in the hardest of circumstances, especially when people reconnect with their deepest values and act upon them.

Mental health and wellbeing continue to be one of the most widespread and complex issues facing the world today. But 2021 showed us that there are tools and pathways ready to be shared and adapted the world over. Little by little, we will get there together.

With courage,

Daisy Rosales

Co-founder and Executive Director

^{*}Thank you to our partner in Malaysia (page 13) for sharing this expression with me.



how prio works

our activities



We Collaborate:

designing mental health initiatives with local community organizations through deep, multi-year collaborations.



We Equip:



training and resourcing social-sector organizations to advance wellbeing in their systems, strategy, and culture.

We Share:

creating tools, materials, and case studies from the front lines of mental health and wellbeing innovation.

our approach



Human-Centered Design centering participants' values and experiences in the creation of locally-driven programs



Acceptance and Commitment Training: an adaptable therapeutic framework that helps individuals and communities develop psychological flexibility



Liberation Psychology:

actively dismantling the legacy of internalized and external oppression to experience healing, values-derived action, and collective freedom



highlights of 2021





In a year characterized by continued pandemic disruption, Brio persisted in its commitment to our partners' communities through projects advancing mental health and wellbeing. The following highlights reflect a deeper story of the creativity, moral imagination, and accompaniment we practice together with our partners everyday.

In the early months of the year, we designed and validated contextualized scales for evaluating children's enduring capabilities with Kshamtalaya Foundation in Rajasthan. Through listening, co-creation, and field pilots, these measures are now used to understand how thousands of children in tribal communities are progressing in important skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, expression, and community engagement.

Simultaneously, we began our 6-month Wellbeing Spaces with Acumen Fellows in India, where we practiced psychological flexibility together through some of the most tragic moments of the pandemic. One participant said, "I used to think mental health was just one thing, but now I realize it is something I must consider if I want to make a real impact in communities."



In the spring, we launched a project with two partners in Ecuador, Casa Victoria and Quito Eterno—both grassroots organizations dedicated to marginalized populations in the capital of Ecuador. The result of months of planning and design, the program Historias que sanan focused on helping adolescents develop personal resilience by celebrating their indigenous ancestry and telling their stories using narrative therapy practices. Through the summer, the second phase of the program, Salidas que alientan, continued exploration of participants' personal and communal values, as well as their significant connection to nature.

Throughout the year we trained partner teams across Latin America and Asia in developing skills in leadership, storytelling, data analysis, culture building, and strategy. We helped them find ways to bring resources to their initiatives during a time when funding flowed freely toward some issues and dried up for others, while community needs only became more urgent. We also spoke at numerous trainings, social impact gatherings, and universities about global mental health and community collaboration. In the summer, Brio was awarded the Pfizer One Young World Scholarship for its contribution to global health during the pandemic.



As the year progressed and more partners revived their programs, we continued to offer spaces for reflection, strategy, and design. With the help of Rishika Mohanty, our Yale School of Public Health summer intern, we implemented a comprehensive needs assessment with our partners in Malaysia, HumanKind. The needs assessment spanned numerous interviews and focus groups, allowing the team to center the experiences of women who belong to marginalized tribal and refugee communities. In Mexico City, our partner Casa Xitla carried out their 5th cohort for burnout prevention and care dedicated to families of disappeared people and human rights defenders. Brio supported the program's acompañantes with reflective spaces throughout the program to continue to learn from the experience.

Emerging from these projects and experiences is the growing conviction that mental health promotion not only works, but also makes deep collaboration possible at the community level. While it takes time to implement new initiatives across larger systems and structures, it is beginning to occur. And most importantly, these initiatives continue to center the liberation and joy of marginalized communities— because that is where innovation happens.



our approach to impact

Each of our partnerships stands for a commitment to community-centered design, where wellbeing initiatives are first created to respond to what matters most to participants— then built for effectiveness and scalability. Meanwhile, our partners seek not only individual transformation and healing, but also the transformation and healing of systems, cultures, and environments. This vision for a narrative shift, with meaningful concrete implementation, continues to be the ultimate path by which we advance global mental health and wellbeing.



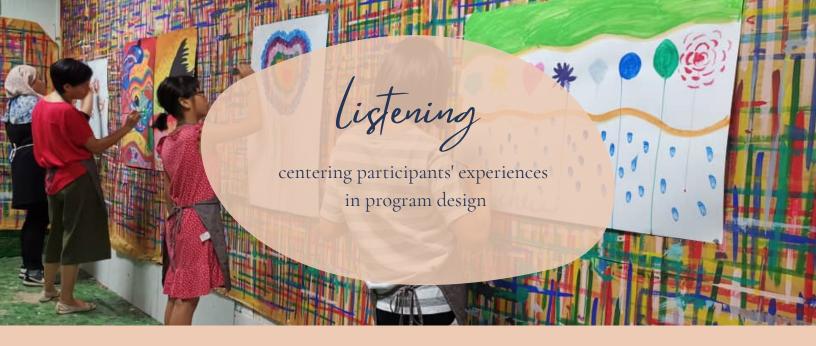
8000+

direct participants accessing programs and resources through partnerships

450,000+

impacted through meaningful leadership support and local systems change





Pam Guneratnam, a Malaysian psychologist, founded HumanKind to help marginalized communities cultivate mental health and wellbeing in new and creative ways. In addition to offering low-cost counseling, they also work with local organizations to deploy effective mental health support programs, especially for children and women.

This year, Brio and HumanKind collaborated to design and launch a comprehensive needs assessment to understand the mental and emotional experiences of tribal and refugee women. Over the course of 6 months, the HumanKind team interviewed female leaders and community members about what matters most to them, what gets in the way, and what it looks like to live with meaning and purpose despite life's challenges.

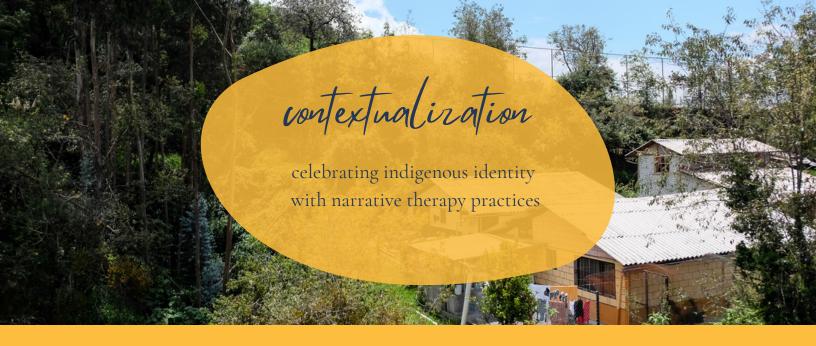
While needs assessments can be labor- and time-intensive, they center participants in the design of new programs to assure that their personal and communal values are integrated and honored. Participants expressed their deep appreciation for being listened to: "I am so grateful that someone really wants to know about us, and that someone is thinking of us," one focus group participant said.

"We need each other in order to activate our gifts and to achieve our common dreams. This means we begin with listening... to where the felt need is and how can we use the strengths and assets already present to address the challenges and barriers to mental, emotional and social wellbeing."

- Pam Guneratnam, HumanKind

In a world where too many services are created for marginalized populations without their input or leadership, listening and true collaboration can both recognize the inherent dignity of participants, and increase program engagement and effectiveness.

These insights will flow into the design of a wellbeing skills training program to help local women increase psychological flexibility, allowing for more values-oriented action, in 2022.



Long-time community leader Alicia Durán-Ballen and her team at Casa Victoria have served the low-income neighborhood of San Roque in Quito Ecuador for more than 15 years. Throughout our dynamic partnership with Alicia, we have supported processes of engaging with local families whose intersectional migrant and indigenous identities lead to painful experiences of systemic marginalization.

This year, Alicia invited a local grassroots advocacy group, Quito Eterno, to join in creating a program for local adolescents during the pandemic, to both reflect on their own stories and to celebrate their ancestry. Brio collaborated with Casa Victoria and Quito Eterno to integrate these important aims with supportive narrative therapy practices. In addition to gathering input from the youth in Alicia's community, we invited suggestions from local leaders as to what outcomes matter to them. "Make sure the community benefits, too," one leader said.

So as part of this process of developing their own narratives, participants also shared their family's stories as a part of *la narración comunitaria* (community dialogue)— sharing both joy and sorrow during a difficult time, and how together they have overcome these challenges.

"I'm so glad the youth were able to come together, look inside themselves, and share with each other during this really difficult time in their lives."

- Alicia Durán Ballén, Casa Victoria

The participants enjoyed the program so much— and demonstrated a measurable increase in personal resilience on an adapted version of the Connor-Davison Resilience Scale— that Alicia invited Brio to help design and launch a second program this summer. This time, the focus was to help local youth identify their personal values and dreams for the future, while rooting in their connection to the land and nature.

The program opened with walks to natural locales significant to their ancestors, and closed with them building kites in the traditional way and flying them at the top of the local hill.



Kshamtalaya Foundation works with local schools in the state of Rajasthan, India, to advance learning, governance, and wellbeing for children and educators. Since Spring 2020, Brio has partnered with the Kshamtalaya team in numerous ways, including creating new programs, and building systems to cultivate wellbeing in effective ways within their context.

One of our first collaborations, *Hausla*, is a wellbeing audio program initially developed in the early days of the pandemic to help rural educators and families access contextualized mental health support through radio. Over the past year and a half, *Hausla* has developed into one of our most successful, scalable programs.

In addition to demonstrating a significant increase in emotion awareness and regulation, and a decrease in stress, the program is beloved by users who report personal transformation after participating.

During the height of Covid's peak in India, users shared the audio portion of the program with family and friends who were ill as a source of calming comfort.

"Through local partnerships we are able to create a support system for each other. The hope to support teachers is first as beneficiaries of practices and skills: to experience benefits in personal and professional life they will be more equipped and empowered to create the same, not just for their children, but also their families and communities."

- Pooja Singh, Kshamtalaya

With the hard-earned trust of local officials, the Kshamtalaya team took *Hausla* to the next level in 2021. Through an MOU with the government, they trained nearly 300 officials in Rajasthan's state offices: the State Council of Educational Research and Training and District Institute of Education and Training. These officials oversee the 400,000 teachers in Rajasthan— an example of how effective, contextualized mental health promotion can reach people at scale through systems.

In 2022, Kshamtalaya will create a manual for teachers to practice and implement wellbeing promotion strategies in the classroom. Brio is thrilled to be on board with our partner in developing this new resource, which is set to roll out to all teachers in the state with a successful pilot.



As the third year of the pandemic begins, there remains little doubt that mental health and wellbeing are one of the most critical issues facing our world. And yet while urgency can help to catalyze collective action, we continue to prioritize long-term, deep impact that goes beyond a crisis response. Change and transformation, both individual and collective, require a commitment to continued dialogue and collaboration— even under immense constraints.

In 2022, Brio will work with existing and new partners to demonstrate how to cultivate psychological skills across communities facing adversity. At the heart of our strategy:

- Designing with marginalized communities and voices at the heart of new initiatives
- Centering collective liberation in dialogue with evidence-informed practice for psychological flexibility
- Bringing successful and beloved programs to scale through local system implementation
- Experimenting with moving catalytic capital toward the highest potential projects

We hope you will continue to accompany us on this exciting journey. And we thank you for the ways you have helped us cultivate flourishing for everyone.

Co-Founders
Daisy Rosales, Executive Director
Agron Rosales, Director of Mental Health

Board of Directors Jennifer Guerra Aldana Jihye Gyde Jasmine Park



