

## **SOR DOMINGA BOCCA**

Sor Dominga Bocca is a children's home, which provides shelter for 27 girls between the ages of 6 and 18 years. Many of the girls used to live in the so called „Invasiones“, a slum belt surrounding Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city. This is an area lacking basic infrastructure such as running water and roads. The girls are no longer able to live at home due to domestic violence and abuse.

Sor Dominga Bocca provides a substitute family environment, where the girls can live in safety. In comparison to many other children's homes, Sor Dominga Bocca is relatively small, which enables the staff (four social workers, two psychologists and a cook) to provide the girls with individual care and attention. The main focus of Sor Dominga Bocca's work is to provide psychological support and to integrate the girls into the school system. Girls who have never been to school begin with a course in basic literacy and receive intensive support to help them settle into a class with their peers.

Maintaining contact with the girls' families is an important aspect Sor Dominga Bocca's work. The social workers are in regular contact with family members and seek to strengthen ties between the girls and their relatives. If possible, the aim is to safely reintegrate the girls back into their families. In those cases when this isn't possible, the girls will continue to live at the Sor Dominga Bocca home until they reach adulthood.

A core objective of the organisation is to support these vulnerable girls to progress to further education and training to promote their future security and wellbeing. To date all those girls who have left Sor Dominga Bocca have achieved this. As with any other extended family, the girls maintain close contact with the organisation and staff members.

Sor Dominga Bocca is well integrated into the community and there is close collaboration with other institutions and organisations in Guayaquil, and therefore able to offer a high standard of care. For example, students from the Escuela Politécnica del Litoral, one of Guayaquil's leading universities, volunteer on a daily basis at Sor Dominga Bocca, where they help the girls with their homework.

Sor Dominga Bocca is able to cover most of their running costs due to the regular fundraising events they organise as well as the support of local businesses. ViaNiños supports Sor Dominga Bocca by covering the full time salaries of one social worker and one psychologist. We also cover the cost of the school bus for five girls.