

CENIT (Integrated centre for children and young people)

CENIT enables working children to break the cycle of poverty and create a brighter future for themselves and their families for generations to come. CENIT focuses interventions primarily on education and vocational training, and also offers health and social care and psychological support to children, young people and their families. CENIT assists approximately 700 children each year. The staff team is made up of approximately 40 local employees and a similar number of local and foreign volunteers.

CENIT was founded in 1991 by a group of Nuns from the congregation *The Sisters of the Good Shepherd*, who were shocked by the proliferation of working children in and around the markets of southern Quito. Initially CENIT concentrated attention on girls, as they were found to be more vulnerable than boys and more likely to suffer physical and/or sexual abuse. In addition to the average 8 - 12 hour working day, girls are often expected to carry out domestic chores at home and to have caring responsibilities for younger and/or disabled siblings. Traditionally, Ecuadorian families are less likely to send their daughters to school. However, with experience, CENIT has come to understand that the most effective way to help these girls is by working with the whole family, and opportunities are now open to boys and girls on an equal basis.

ViaNiños supports the following projects at CENIT:

Educational programmes: street outreach work, primary school, vocational high school and homework sessions. The street outreach programme operates in markets where there is a high concentration of working children. Volunteers and outreach workers establish contact with the children and their families and encourage them to get involved in CENIT's programmes. ViaNiños funds the salaries of a number of teachers, outreach workers and a coordinator and educator for the homework sessions. ViaNiños also provides scholarships for 23 students. These students receive \$20 per month which covers the costs of their school materials.

Health programmes: the clinic provides consultations, onward referrals and treatment to the children, their families and other community members in need. Based at CENIT, the clinic also runs an outreach clinic, which takes healthcare into the community and coordinates public health campaigns. There is also a dental programme which provides children with dental care and educates the children and their families about dental hygiene. ViaNiños funds the materials and medicine necessary for the day to day running of the clinic.

Social and psychological care: many children have suffered physical and/or emotional abuse and come from complex family backgrounds. CENIT social workers and psychologists work with the children and their families to support them overcome difficulties and grasp the opportunities that CENIT offers. As well as intensive one to one support for children, adult education and social support programmes are designed for parents to engage their commitment and support which is key to CENIT's success. ViaNiños funds the salary of one social worker.

Production workshops: CENIT produces hand-made crafts. Lovely greeting cards are made from recycled paper and real flower petals. Leather and textile goods such as wallets, pencil cases and shoulder bags are also made by the children and young people. These workshops provide the children and young people with new skills as well as enabling them to earn some money in a safe working environment. ViaNiños helps by selling these products in Europe.

If you have further questions, please email us at info@vianinos.de!