



2024



MISSION SANTA MARIA

ANNUAL REPORT

A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Last year was a particularly difficult year in Ecuador. It began with an explosion of violence (which thankfully subsided), the government then withheld money from the Mission Home creating a food crisis, and later, an energy shortage created rolling blackouts for up to 14 hours per day, for several months.

Although each of these affected us differently, not only us personally, but especially the people we aim to help, you all responded with incredible generosity and kindness. Many people in Ecuador told us last year was the hardest year they have ever experienced, even more difficult than the Covid crisis, which we found so surprising since we witnessed the widespread suffering during that time.

I think people felt that way because they lost hope that their situation would improve. They didn't see a way out from the problems facing their families. So it was inspiring to see you respond generously. With your help, we were able to expand our support across all our programs, which you'll see outlined in the pages of this report. It was beautiful to see your outpouring of generosity when we asked to help feed the children at our home, but we are also proud to share that we increased the help to families of our school, and continue to open new opportunities to young adults in our university and work-study programs.

During this past year, we saw an increase of new donors and donors who quietly increased their support of Mission Santa Maria. In turn, we were able to respond to the needs of families and children here during an incredibly difficult year. You not only responded generously to the children we help, but more importantly, you gave hope to the people caring for them. For this, we are eternally grateful.

Jim



WHO WE ARE

Since 2007, Mission Santa Maria has been committed to helping abused, neglected, and impoverished youth in Ecuador reach their highest potential. Today, our dedication and ability to serve vulnerable children and their families is stronger than ever before.



MISSION

We are dedicated to helping impoverished, abused, and neglected Ecuadorian children receive high quality education with the goal of lifting them out of poverty through dignified, sustainable incomes.

VISION

Help vulnerable Ecuadorian children reach their potential by supporting education, providing for basic needs, fostering post high school opportunities, and building bridges to stable income generation.

HOW WE SERVE

We fulfill our mission through three distinct programs:



ESPERANZA HOME FOR CHILDREN

A sanctuary for children that have survived abuse or neglect and can no longer safely stay with their biological family.



SANTA MARIA DEL FIAT SCHOOL

Where 1,200 students in grades K-12 learn and grow.



POST HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

A chance to earn a university degree, or take part in a work-study program, and change the trajectory of their family history forever.

ESPERANZA HOME FOR CHILDREN

Founded over 30 years ago by a group of missionary sisters from Ecuador, Esperanza Home, or 'the Mission Home', is a sanctuary for children who have been forgotten. Each child arrives through a court order, having endured abuse or neglect. At Esperanza Home they receive not only education, safe housing, healthcare, and psychological support, but most importantly, love and care.

IMPACT IN 2024



69 children

Met all educational needs for children living at the home including provision of uniforms, school supplies, tuition, and homeschooling



\$50,000 Food Fund

Increased emergency food fund to respond to food crisis. Paid for over 6 months of food for all children, caregivers and staff



2 Activities

Enrolled all children in soccer and ballet to benefit from extracurricular activities



5 Staff

Employed 5 staff members to ease caregiver burden and help with tutoring, laundry, cleaning and cooking



7 Washing Machines

Purchased 5 new washing machines and 2 dryers to efficiently handle high volumes of laundry and maintain hygiene in the home



2 Generators

Purchased 2 generators to keep refrigerator and freezer functioning during extended power outages



25 New Fans

Bought and installed ceiling fans for 4 houses to improve living conditions in the hot tropical climate



1 septic pump

Repaired and updated the septic system to safely manage waste and preserve a sanitary living environment



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ESPERANZA HOME: RESPONDING TO A FOOD CRISIS



THE NEED

In 2024, the government withheld crucial funds owed to the Mission Home for over 8 months, leading to a food crisis. Then, for the last several months of the year, the country faced scheduled power outages for up to 14 hours a day, jeopardizing food storage safety.



OUR IMPACT

Thanks to your generosity, we were able to secure enough funding to feed all the children, caregivers and staff at the home through 2024, and bought two generators to ensure that the industrial refrigerator and freezer could function regardless of power outages.



Betty is the missionary caregiver in charge of the kitchen at the Mission Home. Before our intervention, she had to make difficult decisions—reducing meal variety, cutting back on protein, and setting phone alarms in the middle of the night to manually plug in the refrigerator during power outages, all in response to ongoing food crises. Thanks to recent improvements, Betty no longer has to worry about whether her frozen meat will spoil or if she has enough rice to get through the week. She can now focus on what truly matters: preparing healthy, delicious meals for the children in her care.

ESPERANZA HOME: TESTIMONIES OF TRANSFORMATION

VALERIA STARTS A NEW CHAPTER

Valeria arrived at the Mission Home when she was less than a year old. She was showered with love by her caregiver and, as she grew, attended the Mission School. She participated in soccer twice a week and ballet once a week, building friendships and finding joy in her routine. After a five-year legal process, Valeria was officially declared abandoned by her biological parents. Last year, she and her brother were adopted.

As she prepared to leave the Mission Home, Valeria asked Charito, her caregiver, if life with her new family would be as fun as the life she had experienced at the Mission. Charito, though excited for Valeria to start this new chapter, felt a deep sense of gratitude. She had worked hard to create a safe and loving environment, and knowing Valeria had thrived in that space brought her peace.



An Education Interrupted

When Jose arrived at the Mission Home, he, like many children, had experienced significant gaps in his education. At 10 years old, he couldn't read. He was enrolled in our tutoring program, where he worked with Evelyn every day, focusing on vowels, phonics, sight words, and eventually, constructing sentences. Thanks to his hard work and dedication, Jose is now ready to enter the Mission School next year.



SANTA MARIA DEL FIAT SCHOOL

Santa Maria del Fiat school, or 'the Mission School', is a K-12 semi-private school for 1,200 students from the Mission Home, as well as the surrounding community. The school is one of the best in the state, and some students travel 90 minutes one-way by bus to attend.

IMPACT IN 2024



235 scholarships

Gave 235 students from families that could not afford the \$25/mo tuition the chance to attend school



130 uniforms

Helped 130 students with their school supplies, uniforms and books to meet basic educational needs



51 families fed

Distributed monthly food supplies to 51 families experiencing extreme food insecurity



35 headphones

Purchased new headphones benefitting the English and Technology departments



1 new teacher

Hired one new technology teacher to double hours of IT education at the school



40 computers

Received 40 laptops from Revivn to create a mobile tech lab



1,200 students

4 years after implementing our English program, every student is moving up in their English proficiency level this year



1 social worker

Employed one social worker to oversee our scholarship program, conduct home visits, and ensure every student feels supported



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SANTA MARIA DEL FIAT: ENGLISH PROGRAM PROGRESS



THE NEED

Poverty and underemployment are widespread in Ecuador. High school graduates often cannot find stable, full-time work, despite the robust tourism activities in our area. Despite English language classes in all schools, Ecuador rates ninety third out of one hundred countries for English proficiency skills. Before our English program began in 2020, over 95% of our student body tested at the A0 or A1 level of English.



OUR IMPACT

Over the past 4 years we have made comprehensive changes to improve English language studies at the Mission School. We have hired additional teachers to decrease class sizes, moved to an internationally recognized curriculum, and implemented teacher training to focus on getting students speaking in class. As a result, at the end of 2024, 80% of the student body tested at the A2 level of English, and over 15% at B1 or above.



Liliana (left), shares that her English classes used to be “so boring”. Now, English is her favorite subject. She hopes to continue to improve and use her English skills to help her succeed in university someday.



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SANTA MARIA DEL FIAT: A SCHOLARSHIP, A SECOND CHANCE

Joanna is new to Santa Maria del Fiat this year. During enrollment in April, her mother came to the school every day for two weeks, persistently waiting to submit her application. When she was finally told that Joanna had secured a spot in the 3rd grade, her emotions overwhelmed her. Tears of joy and fear filled her eyes. The joy came from knowing that her daughter would not face the same uncertain future as her older sister. The fear, however, stemmed from not knowing how she would afford the tuition. As a single mother earning just \$200 a month—or less—selling homemade ice cream on the beach, the added cost of school threatened her ability to provide enough food for her family. But she was determined to change the course of her youngest child's life.

Joanna's older sister had faced unimaginable hardship in the first months of 2024. A senior at the local high school, her world was turned upside down by the growing gang violence and the increasing presence of drug cartels in Ecuador. In particular, heroin, once rare in her community, began to infiltrate her school. Despite her earlier achievements as a straight-A student with dreams of attending university, she fell victim to the growing crisis and started using heroin at school. In desperation, her mother pulled her out of school, finding an alternative way for her to complete her graduation requirements from home.

Amid this crisis, Joanna's family received a lifeline. After a visit from our social worker, Joanna was offered a scholarship in our scholarship plus program. In addition to tuition, Joanna receives bus fare, her uniform and school supplies, and monthly food provisions for her family. For Joanna and her mother, this scholarship to Santa Maria del Fiat is not just an educational opportunity—it's a chance at safety, stability, and a brighter future.

POST HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

The post high school program aims to bridge the gap between aging out of the Mission Home at 18, or graduating from the Mission School, to finding employment and becoming self-sufficient. The program pays for housing, food, healthcare, and required supplies for each student during their years in university or in a work-study program.

IMPACT IN 2024



27 university scholarships

Supported 27 young men and women pursuing degrees in medicine, law, accounting, teaching and more



11 work-study participants

Gave 11 students the chance to complete a 2 year degree in mechanical engineering while interning at a large shipping port in Ecuador



6 apartments rented

Safely housed students across Ecuador to pursue advanced degrees or job training as part of our post high school program



1 home in Guayaquil

Maintained our home for female university students in Guayaquil benefitting 4 of our university scholarship recipients last year



1 transition program

Maintained our program to supply safe housing to young women that have aged out of the Mission Home before they become financially independent



1 alumna leader

A university program alumna serves as our program coordinator ensuring culturally competent oversight and continuation of this crucial program



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POST HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM: THE VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS



THE NEED

In 2023, over two thirds of Ecuador were inadequately employed, defined as earning less than minimum wage (\$450/mo) and receiving no health benefits. University graduates and graduates from technical institutes earn more and are employed at higher rates than persons with only a high school diploma.



OUR IMPACT

We have formed valuable partnerships with a university in Guayaquil and an international shipping company to offer a variety of post high school opportunities to young adults in our programs. In addition to our longstanding university scholarship program, we now have 11 students enrolled in a two year work-study program, one young man in a driving course, and advanced training courses forming at the Mission School.



ESPOL is considered the best public university in Guayaquil. As a result of the partnership we formed through our work-study program, administrators from the university have been advising the Mission School on what subjects students should focus on to have a higher chance of employment post graduation. Recently, they gave a presentation to female students about women in mining and opportunities in a field that our student body may never have considered possible.

POST HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM: PATHS TO PURPOSE



Marcela

*University Scholarship
Recipient, Social Work Major*

Marcela's childhood was marked by constant upheaval, moving from one foster home to another and spending time in group residential care, often separated from her siblings. But during her adolescence, she found stability when she was placed in the Mission Home with them. For the first time, she experienced the trust and comfort of family—her older siblings and the compassionate missionary caregivers—and it helped her heal. With their support, she graduated from the mission school.

Thanks to an opportunity from our university scholarship program, Marcela felt empowered to pursue higher education. Last year, she graduated with an associates degree in social work, and today she works at a foundation dedicated to supporting adolescent mothers and their babies.



Patricia

*Recently Accepted to our
Work-Study program*

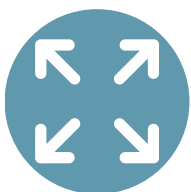
When Patricia left the mission home, she wasn't sure what would come next. With no home to return to and no job to support herself, she began to feel deeply depressed. In her lowest moments, she even considered seeking a romantic relationship, hoping that living with a boyfriend or having a baby might provide the stability she desperately needed. Then, she entered our transition program.

The program offered her safe housing while she searched for work and applied for our work-study program. Patricia says that, almost immediately, her feelings of desperation shifted to a sense of dignity. She now feels empowered to choose her own path in life, no longer feeling forced to settle for what seemed like the only option. Patricia was recently accepted to our work-study program and will begin classes in March, 2025.

LOOKING AHEAD

We are so grateful for your generosity in 2024. In 2025, we hope to continue to build on our program impact, paving the path for vulnerable children in Ecuador to flourish. In addition to maintaining all of our current projects, our goal is to expand services to young adults to foster self-sufficiency in adulthood.

GOALS FOR 2025



Expand post high school opportunities

Our goal in 2025 is to further diversify the opportunities for young adults that age out of the Mission Home and graduate from the Mission School.



Invest in scholarship plus program

The country wide challenges of 2024 significantly impacted the economy. Our social worker has identified many families in need of further assistance in our scholarship program. Our goal in 2025 is to expand scholarship plus recipients by 25%.



Offer mentoring to young adults

Many of the young adults in our programs lack the skills needed to successfully interview or create a resume, hurting their chances of employment despite earning university degrees. In 2025, we would like to offer professional mentoring to our university scholarship recipients and work-study participants.



Increase health education

Benefiting from the skills and background of our leadership team, in 2025 we hope to offer health education at the Mission School and Home to better meet the holistic needs of the children in our programs.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Fiscal year January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Revenue

Monthly Donations	\$177,815
Grants	\$129,800
One-Time Gifts	\$385,834

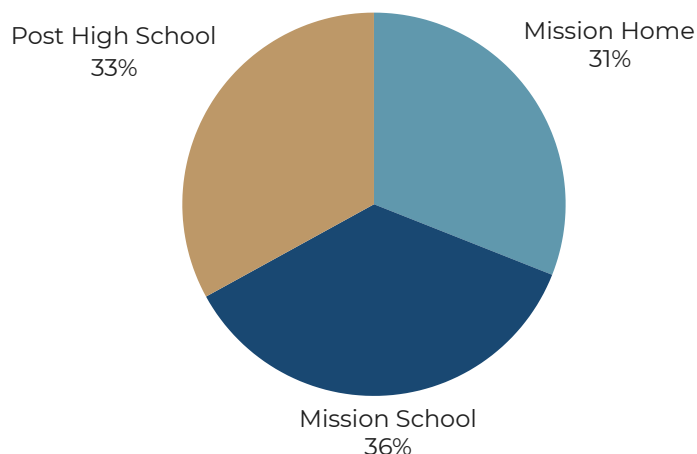
Total Revenue	\$693,449
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Expenses

Programs	\$536,410
Fundraising	\$132,943
Administrative	\$15,989

Total Expenses	\$685,342
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INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM BREAKDOWN



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THANK YOU!