



Cochabamba.



Fernando and Ana María like each other.

## NOMINATED

# Ana María

**Ana María Marañon de Bohorquez gives Fernando a hug. He was born on the street, the son of drug addicts, and started sniffing glue when he was two. Ana María took care of Fernando when he was four and since then he's been living at her home for street children, El Arca de Rescate de los Niños (The Children's Rescue Ark).**

**A**re you ready, Pepe? Get the pot and let's go!" calls Ana María from the kitchen.

Ana María contracted polio when she was two and has been confined to a wheelchair ever since. In spite of her paralysis she's been helping street children and drug addicts for the past thirty years. Accompanying her everywhere is her loyal assistant, Pepe, a former drug addict.

## Why Ana María is being nominated

Ana María Marañon de Bohorquez has been nominated for the WCPRC 2005 (The World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child) because she has worked selflessly for many years for the street children in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Many children in Bolivia have parents who were once street children themselves. With street life comes violence and drugs. Most of the children sniff glue to help them forget the harsh and loveless world that surrounds them. But Ana María is determined to give the children a chance in life. She has one home for boys, El Arca, and one for girls, Rosa de Sarón. Here the children live with adults, who give them love and security. They can go to school and then learn a profession.



### Mama Anita's soup

"Stop the car!" shouts Ana María.

Two boys, each carrying a jar of glue, are walking alongside the road. Ana María sticks her head out the window:

"Hi! How are you? We're giving out soup, come on."

The boys' faces light up and they break into a run. The car stops a short distance further on in La Coronilla. Within moments people are running from all directions, carrying their rusty pots and pans. Everybody wants to hug



**Ana María buys ingredients at the market to the soup for the streetchildren.**

Ana María.

“Mama Anita, how I’ve missed you!”

A young woman throws herself around Ana María’s neck. She’s high on drugs, laughing and crying almost simultaneously.

“Mariela! How are you, my dear?” asks Ana María with concern.

“All the children call me Mama Anita,” explains Ana María. “Anita means ‘Little Ana’, which is more affectionate than just ‘Ana’.”

“I come here several times a week. Giving out food is a way of making contact with the children. I encourage them to come to one of our homes,” says Ana María.

La Coronilla, a hillside overlooking Cochabamba city, is where society’s discarded live. Most of its inhabitants are wrecked by glue-sniffing, drugs and alcohol. And most survive by stealing, begging or prostitution.

**Nearly burnt alive**

Raul Martinez Corani, 14, has lived on the street for four years.

“I ran away from home,” he says.

Raul quickly learnt how to sniff glue and steal.

“Life on the street is terrible. There’s so much violence and everybody treats us very badly.” Recently Raul had an experience that really scared him.

“I was caught stealing from the market. The vendors – both men and women - tied my hands and feet together and wanted to burn me alive. They were about to pour petrol over me when the police arrived,” he says.

“I’ve never cried so much. I was terrified. Since then I’ve stopped stealing from people.”

Raul now works as a shoe-shine boy and earns 20 bolivianos (2,5 USD) a day.

“I’ve made up my mind;

I’ll return to my family on Monday.”

Ana María says that in Bolivia street children are treated worse than animals. The police are amongst the worst culprits – they beat the children and force them to give them whatever they have stolen. She also tells about a boy who was caught red-handed breaking into a car.

“The villagers cut off his hands and then hanged him to death from a tree.”



**Raul has lived four years on the street, but now he's had enough.**



**All of the streetchildren want to hug Ana María.**



Many streetchildren both have parents who were streetchildren as well as they have their own children who live on the street.

### Three generations

The soup has almost been finished. Ana María takes out bags full of clothes.

“Easy now. One at a time. First, clothes for the toddlers,” she says.

A young mother, Marcela,

is sitting on the kerb with her two children, Carolina, one year, and Eric, three. They’re eating with their hands from a bowl. Carolina and Eric are third generation street children. Marcela sniffs glue between mouthfuls.

“What future do these children have? Many who are born on the street die of disease, malnutrition and mistreat-

ment,” says Ana María.

Bolivia is South America’s poorest country and poverty is the reason why the number of street children is growing.

“There are no jobs. Poverty makes people desperate. Parents take drugs to escape their horrible reality and they mistreat their children,” says Ana María.

In turn the children behave in the same way towards their own children.

Coronilla children and adults live in huts made of plastic bags, without water or electricity. Some don’t have blankets.

“We sleep with our dogs,” says José Miguel Guzman, 12.

The dogs help the children keep warm. José hugs his dog. He smells of glue.

“I ran away from home because my step-father hit me.”

José, who’s lived on the street for two years, is one of the boys who Ana María is trying to get to come to El Arca. But José won’t go.

“I don’t want to,” he says. Ana María sighs. Many

### Refuses help

The ground is covered with rubbish. There is a stench of urine.

Dogs run loose. In La

**José hugs his dog. He smells of glue, which he’s sniffing. José has lived two years on the street and he doesn’t want any help to break away from the street life.**





The boys are playing at El Arca, the home for street boys that Ana María started ten years ago.

Some of the boys at El Arca.



street children refuse help. They don't want to give up their glue and the freedom of the street, despite all its horrors.

"Only those who are motivated and really want to change their lives can come. Otherwise they ruin it for the others," says Ana María.

### Love and education

"Mama Anita!"

Octavio gives Ana María a hug on his way to work. Octavio has lived at El Arca half his life and works at a school for autistic children. He is a trained special needs teacher, but now he wants to study medicine.

"Our goal is to give the children a profession so they can stand on their own two feet," says Jimena, Ana María's daughter and one of the directors at El Arca.

Ana María founded El Arca with her husband Santi ten years ago. Today 40 boys live there, getting the love and education they need to help them break away from street life.

### Young mothers

"Mama Anita!"

The girls run up to greet Ana María whenever she visits Rosa de Sarón, the home for street girls she founded two years ago. Ana María had long felt the girls desperately needed a home to help them get over their traumatic experiences.

"I escaped from an orphanage when I was ten and became a prostitute," says Jhovana.

She had her first child when she was 11 and her second when she was 13. Her two year-old daughter lives with her at Rosa de Sarón, but her son has been adopted.

"Girls who have children on the street can't look after them; they're only children themselves. Here they can learn to become good mothers," says Ana María. ☺

**When Ana María comes to Rosa de Sarón, her home for street girls, the girls are running to greet her.**





Fernando somersaults in mid-air.

# Fernando's last c

**Fernando was born on the streets. His father gave him glue to sniff when he was two and raised him to become a thief. A life like that is hard to give up. After he stole from El Arca, Fernando is given one last chance.**



Fernando hugs his brother Bryan, who also lives at El Arca.

“Whatch out! Get out of the way!”

Fernando takes a running jump, leaps and somersaults in mid-air. His little brother Bryan and some other boys are standing around watching. Mid-air flips are Fernando’s speciality; it’s a trick no one else dares perform.

A Jeep turns off the dirt road to El Arca. It’s a large house in the country surrounded by fields and farms.

“Hola abuelito!”

Ana María calls to Fernando, who runs up and gives her a big hug. Fernando’s only 12, but everybody calls him “abueli-

to” (“little grandpa”).

“I don’t know why. I think it was my dad who started it,” he says. “My dad’s a drug addict. I was born on the streets and mum sold glue for a living. Until dad reported her to the police and she got sent to prison.”

### Sniffing and stealing

“I started sniffing when I was two. My dad gave me glue instead of food. He sometimes got put in prison and I went too as we had nowhere to live. We slept on the street in cardboard boxes and sacks.”

Fernando’s father



**Fernando is playing a game of football at El Arca.**

# chance

taught him to rob at the age of three.

“He told me to steal clothes and training shoes from inside the prison mum was in while he waited outside. When my mum found out I’d been stealing she hit me. She didn’t know that it was my dad who’d told me to do it and I didn’t dare tell her.”

Fernando’s mum beat him whenever he stole, and his dad beat him whenever he didn’t. Ana María saw that Fernando was suffering and wanted to save him.

Fernando was four when he came to El Arca with his older brother, Elmer. Elmer found it easier to adjust as



**Fernando Pinto, 12**

**Likes:** Gymnastics.

**Doesn’t like:** My dad.

**Favourite music:** Requeton (Latin-American hip-hop).

**Dream:** To become a pilot and live with my mothers and my brothers.

**Listen to Fernando’s favourite music at**

**[www.childrensworld.org](http://www.childrensworld.org)**

he’d been living with his uncle. But for Fernando, who lived on the street with his dad, giving up a life of crime was hard.

“At first it went well, but when I started to go to school I played truant and began robbing in town, just for the fun of harassing people,” he says.

The problem got worse when two new boys arrived at El Arca.

“We smoked and sniffed in school. Then we went out mugging. We bought knives with the money.”

## Theft at El Arca

At El Arca, Ana María and the staff had no idea what Fernando was up to.

“I pretended to behave but out on streets I did as I pleased. After a while they

noticed what we were doing and told us to stop.”

At the same time, Fernando and his two friends made plans to steal money from El Arca’s office.

“One night we crept downstairs and opened the window. One boy crawled inside and took 470 bolivianos (about 60 USD) from a box. Then we sneaked to the bathroom to discuss





**After the theft at El Arca Fernando has to earn back all the rights the other boys have. Thus he has no bed, but sleeps on a mattress on the floor. He's also lost his wardrobe and keeps his clothes in a bag.**

**David helps Fernando with his homework.**



what to do with the money.”

The next morning they went to school as usual.

“Then we went off and bought batteries, cassettes and knives.”

But when they returned to El Arca there was pandemonium. Someone had discovered the money was missing and Fernando and his friends were the prime suspects. Directors Jimena and Javier assembled the teachers and the boys for a meeting.

“We were locked up in a

room on the first floor. At night, the other two boys knotted their sheets together and climbed out of the window. They took their clothes and knives and left me on my own.”

### **Last chance**

What was going to become of Fernando? The teachers who'd been working with him for some years wanted him out. They'd had enough of his antics and he was moved to another place for street children. But it closed

down and he was moved to a third place, where he was mistreated and he hated it.

When Fernando's mother heard about what had happened she was devastated. She went to the new place and took him away. She was furious at Fernando for what he'd done. Then she begged directors Jimena and Javier to let Fernando go back to El Arca.

“We didn't sleep for a week over this,” says Jimena. “We've known Fernando since he was little

and we love him very much. But we'd given him so many chances and the teachers simply refused to have him back.”

“It was terrible,” says Javier. “Fernando is a born leader and can be a bad influence on the others. Anyway, we finally agreed to give him one last chance.” ☹



**Fernando is not allowed to sit at the table at mealtimes. Instead he has a stool and a small box as a table. His plate is an old margarine tub and his glass is a cut-off plastic bottle. But Fernando thinks it's fair.**

# I can make it!

**“All set, boys?” calls out David, the teacher. The boys are putting on their school uniforms, polishing their shoes and brushing their teeth. He then gives them some cream to rub into their hands before heading off to school. But for Fernando, school is still out of bounds...**

**I**t's after lunch, and in the dining room Fernando is wiping the floor with a mop. He's wearing headphones, connected to a mobile phone that sticks out of his jeans' pocket.

“A friend lent it to me while he's in school,” says Fernando.

When he came back to El Arca he lost everything that he'd previously taken for granted. Like going to

school. Instead he works alongside his teacher, David.

**“It's fair.”**

“Come on, let's do this room too!” David calls to Fernando, and together they tidy the classroom on the first floor. No one at El Arca knows Fernando as well as David.

“I've looked after Fernando and his older brother ever since they first came to El Arca. That's why I was so disappointed when

Fernando broke into the office. It felt as though I'd failed in my job,” says David.

When Fernando returned to El Arca he apologised to David and the other teachers.

“He said: ‘Please forgive me, I'll change’. And he has. Whereas before he never did as he was told, now he's attentive and helps out when I ask him.”

Fernando helps David with the tidying and clearing out the well as well as helps







**Fernando is waiting for the others to finish their meal so that he can mop the floor. He works hard to get his privileges back.**

out in the kitchen. In return David gives him tuition to help him catch up with school. There's no school for Fernando until he proves himself.

"I'm not allowed to sit at the table at mealtimes, instead I have a stool and a small box for a table over to one side," says Fernando, pointing. "My plate is an old margarine tub and my glass is a cut-off plastic bottle."

He also shows the little bag containing his clothes and belongings in the dormitory.

"I'm not allowed to have my clothes in the wardrobe and I sleep on a mattress on the floor. I'll get my bed back when I've mended my ways.

"I think it's fair. I'm just happy that they let me come back. I've changed and I'm going to get back everything I had before."

### **Wants to be a pilot**

David believes that Fernando will succeed this time around.

"I listen to him and try to understand him, while also educating him. Just being strict won't work because he'll be off like a shot," says David.

"If he takes this chance he could have a great future ahead of him. Fernando is someone people listen to, and with the right support he could do anything."

Ana María also hopes that



Fernando will make the most of his last chance.

"Fernando is an example of how hard it is to break with a life of crime. Sniffing glue and robbing from the age of two must leave its scars. But we'll never give up," says Ana María and gives Fernando a hug.

"My dream is to become a pilot and live with my mother and brothers again," says Fernando. ☺



## Good enough for school?

Fernando's younger brother Bryan goes to school near El Arca. Initially the boys were not welcome because street children have such a bad reputation and the headmaster was afraid they'd cause trouble. That's why El Arca is keen to prepare the boys well before they start school. When they first come off the streets, they are taught by the teachers at El Arca. If they behave they are allowed to start school after six months.



**At La Cancha market, where Ana María buys the vegetables for the children's soup, you can buy at least 30 different varieties of potato, each with its own look and taste. The small orange papalisa is used in soups and stews. The huaico is black and is boiled in its skin.**

## Learn to speak Quechua

Although Spanish is the national language of Bolivia, only two-thirds of the population speak it. Outside the big cities, most people speak one of the three native languages: Quechua, Aymara or Guarani. Quechua was the language of the Incas, but it still survives in the Cochabamba region. Many of the street children who come from the villages around Cochabamba speak only Quechua.



## A thousand words for potato

The street children Ana María feeds love potatoes. 8,000 years ago Andean natives grew potatoes. It was one of the few crops able to withstand the harsh mountain climate.

The Aymara Indians developed more than 200 varieties of potato on the Titicaca plateau, which is over 3,000 metres above sea level. During the Inca golden age

(1476-1534) the potato was worth its weight in gold. People worshipped the "the Potato God". The Quechua Indians, who are descendants of the Incas, are said to have more than a thousand words for potato.

The potato was introduced to Europe in the 17th century by the European explorers returned from South America.

- • • • •
- Hello! Napaykullayki!
- Hi! Raphi!
- How are you? Imaynalla?
- Good Sumaj
- What's your name? Ima sutiiki?
- My name is... Sutii...
- Goodbye K'allakama
- Yes Ari
- No Mana
  
- 1 u'
- 2 iskai
- 3 quinsa
- 4 tahua
- 5 phiska
- 6 so'gta
- 7 khanchis
- 8 pusa'g
- 9 iskon
- 10 chuncha
- • • • •

## Stone potatoes

All over the market are sacks filled with what look like small stones. They are chuños, freeze-dried potatoes. 8,000 years ago preserving food was a problem, and so the Indians came up with a method for freeze-drying potatoes – a process that is still used to this day. The potatoes are spread out on the ground on frosty nights. During the day, a layer of straw is placed over them to shade them from the sun. After a few days, women and children tread on them to squeeze out the moisture and rub off the skin. The potatoes are then placed under running water for a few weeks to remove the bitterness. After two weeks of drying they can be stored for up to four years.





### The birthday present

After an hour of playing games it's time for the big moment – the presents! Edson's celebrating his ninth birthday and blushes as he receives his present. He tears off the paper. A car!

"We never got presents in my family," he says. Edson ran away from home because he was abused by his dad.

Time for Ana Maria's giant birthday cake.

# A birthday party

**It's mid-morning at El Arca and 10-year old Bryan and his friends are hanging balloons and paper-chains from the ceiling. The smell of roasted peanuts and popcorn wafts from the kitchen. Bryan is excited – a birthday party at last!**

**A**t El Arca birthdays are celebrated once every three months. A big party is held for the boys who had their birthdays during the previous months. Preparations take several days: Jimena buys presents for the birthday boys. The teachers help Ana María bake buns and cakes, while

the boys rehearse their performances.

"Pepe! Give me a hand!"

As usual Ana María's baked the world's biggest cake and needs someone to help unload it from the Jeep. It takes two men to lift it. Now it's time to decorate the cake with pink and blue cream. A woman in a sunhat

is helping out. It's Norah Rodriguez, mother of Bryan, Fernando and Elmer.

### Sold glue

"I usually visit once a month and always try to be there for birthday parties and Christmas," says Norah.

"I like it when mum comes to visit. I want to live with her, but she says she can hardly afford to feed herself," says Bryan.

Norah spreads the cream on the cake with a wooden spoon.

"I'd love to take care of my sons, but I'm on the run

from prison," she says.

Norah was sentenced to ten years for selling glue for sniffing. She was reported by Fernando and Bryan's father. She escaped after serving half her sentence and is still wanted by the police.

"I may not be an angel," says Norah, "but I love my sons."

She lived on the streets at the age of 13. She sniffed glue, drank alcohol and got pregnant at an early age.

"Elmer came first. His father beat me so badly that I had to leave him. Then I met Fernando and Bryan's father.



# jelly

“Welcome to our birthday party,” says Javier into the microphone.

Then a group of boys perform a play about life on the street. Bryan and Fernando are in several acts and Norah beams with pride. The final number is El Arca’s own band. They sing and play guitar, charango (a small stringed instrument), drums and zampoña (a sugar-cane flute).



# at last!

He was even worse. He used to slash me with a knife when he was drunk.”

### Beat the sons

Norah admits that she, in turn, abused her sons.

“I beat them; especially Bryan when he was with me in prison,” she says and starts to cry.

Ana María comforts Norah and says:

“You’ve done some bad things in the past, but now you’re showing that you really care about your sons. You’re the only mother that comes to El Arca to visit.”

Bryan comes up and gives his mother a hug. She smiles at him.

“I hope that my sons learn a trade and that we can live together one day,” says Norah.

She’s most worried about what’ll become of Fernando, given the recent theft from the office.

“How I fought to have him accepted back! I really hope he makes the most of this opportunity,” says Norah. ☺



## Abandoned by the parents

All the children at El Arca have one thing in common: they’ve been abandoned by their parents. Bryan, Fernando and Elmer’s mother Norah is special: none of the other mothers comes to visit.

“The hardest part’s not being able to give the kids the one thing they really need – the love of their parents,” says Fernando’s teacher David.

“Yet I’ve never heard of any of them crying about their parents. They hate them. ‘Why did they leave us?’ they ask. I usually say that other things are to blame, like drugs or unemployment, not them.

“One boy wanted me to go with him to see his mother. He hadn’t seen her for ages. But when we got there, she said: ‘What are you doing here? What do you want?’ He looked at me in tears and said: ‘Let’s go; I don’t want to be here.’”

Listen to the El Arca band at [www.childrensworld.org](http://www.childrensworld.org)



**“Mamita! Mamita!”**

María throws herself around Ana María, who’s hardly stepped through the gate of Rosa de Sarón before the girls come running from all directions.

“I’ve never known what a mother’s love feels like. Ever since I was little, my mother said that it’d be better if I was dead,” says María.



The girls are helping out at Rosa de Sarón.

# María fled to

**M**aría bends down to whisper something into Ana María’s ear.

“Yes, of course,” she says and gives a now beaming María a hug.

No one will ever know what this secret was; Ana María is a keeper of thousands of secrets and has never betrayed anyone. That is why María loves her so much.

María was born in the capital, La Paz. Her parents divorced when she was two and her mother moved to Cochabamba with her daughters. She mistreated María regularly and the situ-

ation got worse.

“My mum blamed me for everything and often beat me. I lost faith in myself and everything I did went wrong.

“One day dad said that he wanted to live with us again, but mum said no and forbade me to have any contact with him. I didn’t understand why and I cried.

“I ran away from home and hung around with some of the girls from school, but they were “bad” friends.

They taught me how to sniff glue, drink, smoke and party. To pay for it we became prostitutes. I knew nothing about sex but I went

along with them.”

María was only ten and became increasingly addicted to glue.

“Sometimes I ate, sometimes I didn’t. I wasn’t hungry; I only wanted to sniff glue.”

## Salvation

María was offered a place in a home for street children, but the children there did as they pleased. She slept at the home at night but by day continued her life on the street.

“I had an older boyfriend who threatened and beat me. I was afraid of him and tried

to escape but he caught me and slashed my back with a razor blade.”

Eventually salvation came – in an unexpected form. María’s mother learned that her daughter was in trouble and so she took María to Rosa de Sarón.

María’s favorite shoes.





María is playing twist.



María Marlene Luque Zabaleta, 13

**Likes:** Singing and skipping.  
**Greatest wish:** To meet her dad.  
**Wants:** To become a nurse.



At first, María was very angry but now she has calmed down and she loves Ana María.

# the streets

“I discovered that things were different here. The teachers were kind and very patient,” says María.

María was black with dirt when she first arrived and refused to wash. Just like many other street children she had to learn the basics of hygiene: how to shower, brush her teeth, go to the toilet and wash her clothes. This is the first step for all new girls at Rosa de Sarón.

“María was a real rebel but she’s has changed a lot in just one year. She’ll soon be ready to start school again,” says Ana María.

## Fights

María and a few of the girls are playing with a skipping rope when Betty, one of the educators, calls for assembly. Three times a day the girls all gather to discuss various topics or talk about what’s happened during the day. Eleven girls and six younger children live at Rosa de Sarón and the most trivial matters can explode into major quarrels. Today Julia and Gabriella have been fighting:

“I hate you, Gabriella!” says Julia.

“And I love you, Julia,” answers Gabriella with a smile.

The girls decide on the topic of discussion for that week: hatred. Why do people feel hatred? What does hate actually mean and how do you stop hating? These discussions encourage the girls to get to the bottom of their problems. Like María they all went through horrendous experiences before arriving here. They all have been abandoned by their parents. Most have been beaten and raped on the street, and now they need help to deal with the grief and anger they carry inside.

“Conflicts can never be resolved with hatred,” says

Ana María. “Everyone at Rosa is in the same boat. We live together and must learn to get on with one another. We should show each other love instead of hatred.”

The girls nod, some look down at their feet. Back in her room, María says:

“At first I was very aggressive. On the street I learned to fight and defend myself. I found it hard to obey rules and I was always fighting with the other girls. There were days when I didn’t want to live any more. But here I’ve learned to believe in myself.”



# Jhovana wants a c



Jhovana with her daughter Solveig. Jhovana has lived at Rosa de Sarón for two years, but still often longs for the life on the streets.

**Jhovana never had a childhood. She was four when she became an orphan. She started sniffing glue at ten and gave birth to her first child in the street at eleven. She wants to change her life but sometimes lacks the strength.**

“Mummy! Mummy!”

Solveig, aged two, is getting impatient. She wants a push on the swing, but her mum’s ignoring her. Jhovana is busy playing twist with the other girls and wants to carry on. She reluctantly goes over to Solveig.

“All right, sweetheart. Here we go!”

Jhovana smiles but deep down she’s tired of always

having to play with her daughter. Play, change nappies, breastfeed, feed and comfort. The child takes up all her time and she never gets to be alone. Jhovana is 16 and Solveig is her second child.

#### **Started sniffing**

“I was orphaned when I was four. My parents were alcoholics and my brothers and I

ended up in different orphanages. At the age of ten I became a prostitute and started to drink alcohol.”

After a while Jhovana tried glue.

“I met a guy, Miguel, and fell in love. We sniffed glue together. Then I got pregnant. I was 11.”

Jhovana gave birth to a son but didn’t know how to take care of the baby.

“I was nervous and hit him whenever he cried. We lived on the street. Miguel hit him too. In the end I decided to leave him at an orphanage. He was adopted by a family. After that Miguel and I

argued a lot. He hit me because I had given away our son for adoption.”

#### **The runaway**



**Jhovana has made toys to her daughter.**

# change of life



**Jhovana Rojas Gonzales, 16**

**Children:** One son (4 years old) and one daughter (2). Her son has been adopted.  
**Worst thing about street life:** The insults and the violence.  
**Most difficult thing about Rosa de Sarón:** The rules and learning to get on with others.  
**Likes:** Drawing and writing.  
**Dream:** To study and work with street children.



**Jhovana and Solveig enjoy the freedom of the park. Once a month the girls at Rosa de Sarón go on a trip with the teachers.**

Jhovana was off the street for a while and moved in with an aunt. She tried to give up sniffing glue but her addiction was too strong.

“I got back together with Miguel and he wanted us to have another child. I didn’t, but got pregnant again anyway when I was 13.”

Jhovana gave birth to a daughter and this time she was helped by Ana María and the teachers at Rosa de Sarón to take care of her child.

“It went well at first, but when Solveig was six months old I ran away. To meet

Miguel and sniff glue. I prostituted in order to afford nappies, milk and food for Solveig. After a month I couldn’t take it any more and came back.”

By that time, Solveig was sick. She was malnourished and had been badly sunburnt. Jhovana asked Ana María for forgiveness and promised that she’d change. But she has run away twice after that.

“Life’s hard. I feel like a prisoner and long for the freedom of the street. To do what I want – sniff, steal and meet my boyfriend – no rules.”

## **Determined**

Ana María has known Jhovana for years and is trying to get her to leave her old habits behind.

“I’ve helped many girls in your position. You can change but you must be

determined to do so,” she tells Jhovana.

At Rosa there are three girls with children and one girl who’s pregnant. Here they get to learn to be mothers.

“The girls are very violent towards their children,” says Ana María. “They’re children themselves when they become parents and a life of violence is all they know.

They were all beaten by their parents when they were little. That’s why we must teach them to raise their children with words instead of violence.”

“I really want to change,” says Jhovana, breastfeeding Solveig.

“I want to get through this for both of our sakes. Then I

## **All the girls and the small children at Rosa de Sarón.**





It's still only 7 a.m. and Rosa de Sarón is a hive of activity. Bags are being packed, girls are running around looking for their things. Daniela packs a pair of shorts and a T-shirt instead of a swimsuit. The bus which is taking the whole group to the swimming pool is about to leave.

"Everybody ready?" asks Frederico, a teacher. "Off we go!"

Daniela sits next to her little sister Angela, who's four. They both came to Rosa de Sarón five weeks ago.

"My parents are divorced and mum couldn't take care of us," says Daniela. "She had nine children but three of the babies have died."



Daniela on an excursion with her younger sister Angela.

# Trip allows big sister be a child



**Daniela Loaiza, 9**

**Likes:** Jigsaw puzzles and making bracelets

**Best thing about Rosa de Sarón:** Playing.

**Hardest part:** Not swearing.

**Wants:** To become a police officer.

**Dream:** To live with my family again.

My lovely little brother died two years ago. He hit his head on a pane of glass and died later in the arms of my older brother. We were the only ones at home and my brother was terrified, so I closed the baby's eyes and gave him a kiss on the forehead. I loved him so much. He was only a year old. Then I washed him, dressed him in clean clothes and laid him in a little coffin."

Tears run down Daniela's face as she tells the story. Now she has Angela to look after.

"Before I used to hit Angela because I had so much anger in me."

Daniela was forced to grow up before her time.

"We had to help out with everything at home."

Sometimes mum beat us, but I still love her. She did everything for us."

At Rosa de Sarón Daniela is free to be a child and play.

"I like it here. Sometimes I quarrel with the other girls but it always passes. The hardest part is not using bad language; it still just slips out." ☺

# Spinning my top...



Edson is playing with his spinning top. You wind the string around the top, whip it away and off it spins. Some of the boys can actually catch the top before it hits the ground.



# ...and my Eucalyptus top

Small, squat "hats" fall from the eucalyptus trees, which grows around El Arca. The boys scour the ground looking for the best ones, which they can use as spinning tops. You need skill to spin them. On the count to three, spin the tops, and the player whose top spins the longest wins the game.

## Ramiro's riddle

**Q:** What's populated by coffee beans, has red earth and is surrounded by a green universe?



## No lice allowed!

Selina, Angela and Daniela have the same cool boyish haircut. Their hair was cut off when they first came to Rosa de Sarón because they had lice.

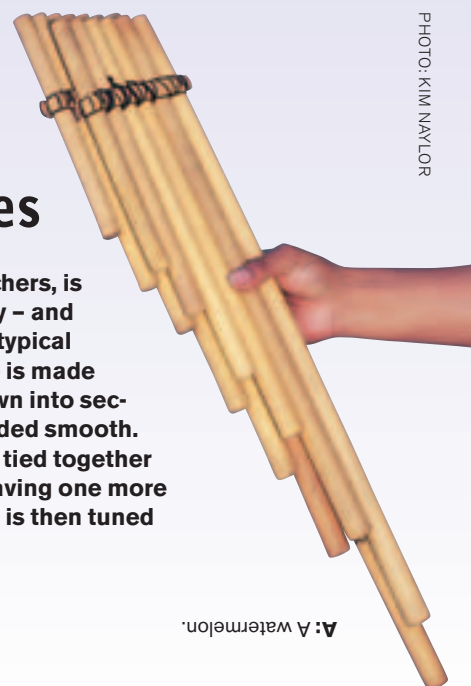
## Tyre sandals

Most of the boys at El Arca have sandals made from old car tyres. They're cheaper and much more durable than normal shoes.



## Zampoña from the Andes

Ricardo, one of El Arca's teachers, is showing the boys how to play - and make - the zampoña flute, a typical Andean instrument. The flute is made from sugar cane, which is sawn into sections, cleaned, dried and sanded smooth. The individual pipes are then tied together in two rows, the upper row having one more pipe than the lower. The flute is then tuned using a special tool.



A: A watermelon.

**“Knock! Knock!”**

**“Get the door, Pepe!”**  
calls Ana María from  
the kitchen where  
she’s sitting chopping  
onions.

**Everybody’s welcome  
at Ana María’s, as  
Fernando found out  
when he arrived for  
the first time at the  
age of four.**

**O**ut on the street a woman and her child are on their way to visit Doctor Lucas. Ana María’s 90 year-old father is still a practising doctor. The poor and sick have been seeking help at the family’s house, located in the centre of Cochabamba, for years.

“In Bolivia, if you don’t have money you die. Street children aren’t even let into hospitals if they fall sick,” says Ana María.

This is why her family has always helped people in need. Here they can get a bowl of soup, be patched up after a fight, or receive a comforting hug. In the court-



**Flori and Ana María are preparing the soup for the streetchildren.**

# Everybody’s

yard grow lemon trees and parrots chatter in their cages. Ana María lives here with her husband Santi, their 12 year-old son Christian, and Ana María’s parents, Lucas

and Adriana. There’s also their maid, Flori, a native Bolivian who has no family; Pepe, an ex-drug addict who is now Ana María’s permanent helper; and Marco and Fernando, two former street children who are now treated like sons.

## **Beaten**

“Knock! Knock!” The knocking at the door never stops. Fernando is home from school. He comes in and gives Ana María a kiss on the cheek.

“Hola Mama Anita!”

“I call Mama Anita mum. My real mother’s called Andrea but she’s not my mum anymore. She comes to visit sometimes but I don’t have any feelings for her. A mother isn’t just someone who brings a child into the

world. She’s someone who takes care of you, helps you, teaches you the difference between right and wrong.”

Fernando came to Ana María when he was four. He was an undernourished, dirty, frightened little boy who only spoke Quechua.

“I come from Potosí, a town far away. My father died when I was two and my mother was unable to take care of us nine children. My older sister took me to a family in Cochabamba. There they beat me and gave me no food. So I ran away. I was only four and I didn’t know what to do. My sister learned that I had run away and found me. She took me to the church where Ana María usually goes and asked her if she could take care of me.”



**Fernando, who used to be a streetchild, and Christian, Ana María’s son, are like brothers.**



**Enrique plays the guitar in El Arca's band.**

because of all the privileges the older boys had.”

Today he's like one of those he used to look up to. There are four groups at El Arca and progressing from one group to the next isn't just a matter of age, but about how you behave and adjust.

“You struggle on, because you want what the others have,” says Enrique.

He and his friends have nicer rooms than the other boys. And more freedom.

“We can go out at weekends as long as we're back by a certain time. We have girlfriends. I was together with a girl for a year but recently broke up with her. When you're in love, there's a greater chance of everything you've built up going wrong. Your girlfriend could, for example, become pregnant.”

### **My dad beat me**

Enrique has struggled hard to go to where he is – to go to school and to get a qualification. He's the first one in his family to be given such an opportunity.

“I come from Mina Acientos, a mining town. My

dad worked down the mines, lost his job and then we moved to Cochabamba. Dad started to drink more and more. My parents fought constantly. Dad hit mum. My brother and sisters and I tried to defend her but then he turned on us,” says Enrique.

“Once when I was eight they were fighting so much that I got scared and ran out into the street. That was the last day I saw my home. I didn't return for fear of being beaten.”

Enrique spent the next two years living on the street. He hung out with the other street children, and began stealing and sniffing glue.

“It was like flying. I didn't think about eating or sleeping. Nothing mattered.”

Overcoming his drug habit has been the hardest challenge for Enrique in his ten years at El Arca. Drugs are forbidden here, but outside they're everywhere.

“Many people at college sniff glue or take cocaine. I've got into trouble several times. But now I've finally made up my mind, with God's help. When I see what

wrecks my friends on the street have become, I'm grateful for the help I've got here.”

### **Brotherly love**

“Our job is to prepare the boys for a life outside El Arca. We want to give them self-confidence, values and an education that allows them to stand on their own two feet when they leave,” says Jimena, who, along with her husband Javier, is co-director at El Arca.

“Learning a trade is the first step for the boys, but we also hope that one day some of them will make it to university,” says Javier.

One boy, Octavio, studied to become a teacher and works in a school for autistic children. He hopes to become a doctor and El Arca will help him go to university.

“My dream is to work



## **Enrique Sehuenca, 21**

**Role models:** Ana María and Papa Lucito (caretaker at El Arca). They're the most loving and brilliant people in the world.

**Likes:** Playing guitar.

**Hates:** Drugs.

**Wants:** To become a mechanic and work abroad so that I can help my family.

abroad as a mechanic and earn lots of money so I can help my family,” says Enrique. “Then I want to get married and have children, but not until I can take care of them. I wouldn't want my children to go through the same things as I did.”

When he was 16 he plucked up the courage to go home and visit his family for the first time in eight years.

“They weren't as pleased to see me as I'd thought they'd be. Dad still drinks and Mum's working herself to death selling soft drinks. But my older brother was happy. He's supporting the family now and said to me: “As you haven't forgotten about us maybe you can help us”. I love him.” ☺

### **Enrique is an expert in bracelet making.**





Enrique is training to be a mechanic. He wants to work abroad and earn money to help his family.

# Enrique got Christmas cake and a future

**It was Christmas Eve when Enrique came to El Arca the first time. He was a ten year-old street child and hungrily gobbled down the two pieces of cake he was given. Perhaps it was that very evening that he decided to strive for a better life. He has now finished school and is training to be a mechanic.**

**I**t's evening by the time Enrique and his friends arrive back from college with the bus. On the way to his room, Enrique shouts hello to Lucito, El Arca's

caretaker.

"I call him Papa Lucito. He and Mama Anita (Ana María) have meant more to me than anyone else. I feel so positive thanks to them."

Enrique is 21 and has spent half his life at El Arca. In two years he'll be a qualified mechanic. He's looking forward to moving out.

"I thought I wanted to be an architect, but then I discovered that I liked lying under a car!"

Some young boys come up and talk to Enrique; the older boys at El Arca are role models.

"I remember how much I respected the older boys when I first came here. They

spoke differently, said 'por favor' (please) and I liked that. I wanted to be just like them, says Enrique."

## **Magical Christmas Eve**

"I was ten when I first came here. It was a magical Christmas Eve. I got two pieces of cake! It was totally different to the other orphanages I'd been to. But I still ran away after three weeks. I always used to run away from places. But eventually I stayed here, mainly



The streetchildren know where Ana María lives and come to see her when they have problems.



**Fernando Chuncho, 14**

**Likes:** Handicrafts – both needlework and woodwork.

**Doesn't like:** Bullying.

**Dream:** Having a job so that I can take care of Ana María when she gets older.

# welcome

## Toys or else!

Fernando spent the first night at Ana María's house.

"I played with Christian and he let me play with his toys. We've been friends ever since."

The next day he was taken to El Arca. But he continued to spend the weekends and holidays with Ana María.

Fernando was by nature a vulnerable child and life at El Arca was tough for him.

"I was the youngest and didn't understand the others as I only spoke Quechua. The older children picked on me and I often got beaten up."

Unfortunately, spending time at Ana María's caused problems for Fernando.

"They bullied me for going back to Ana María's at the weekends. They called me names like 'adoption boy'

and 'fatty' because they thought I got more food there. They told me to bring Christian's toys to El Arca, or else they'd hit me. So I borrowed toys from Christian. I didn't dare say anything to Ana María because they would've beaten me up even more."

## Wants to help Ana María

One day when Fernando was 11 and was returning to El Arca after the holidays, Christian asked his father if Fernando could stay with them for ever.

"No," said Santi. "We can't afford it – we'd have to give Fernando the same things we give you."

"But I don't want anything, I want you to buy things for Fernando!" said Christian, crying. Santi even-



Ana María together with her husband Santi, their son Christian, her parents Lucas and Adriana, her permanent helper Pepe, the maid Flori and the former streetchildren Marco and Fernando.

tually gave in. It was a great day for Fernando – a start of a new life. He began at another school, his grades improved and he's made new friends.

"I'm happy now. My aim is to work as a TV or radio repairman so I can help

Mama Anita when she gets older. I want to repay her for everything she's done for me. Sometimes on my way to school, I see boys on street corners singing for money, and I think to myself: 'That could've been me if I hadn't got to come here'." ☺

