

PROJECTS ABROAD ARGENTINA

LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT



Articles

<i>HIV Campaign</i>	<i>Bring Back Our Girls Campaign</i>	<i>Legal Clinic</i>	<i>Soaje</i>	<i>Foundation GANAS Pensions</i>
---------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------	--------------	----------------------------------

CAMPAIGNS

HIV CAMPAIGN

November and December have been two very busy months for the Law & Human Rights office of Projects Abroad Argentina. A lot of activities have been carried out, at the same time as this period always includes the Christmas closing of our various placements. One of the things that we are really proud of during this period was an HIV campaign aimed at the homeless people of Córdoba. In fact, the campaign was probably this year's most successful one.

The idea of the campaign, the research and gathered of information, the study, the expertise, all activities developed during the entire year by different groups of Projects Abroad volunteers who kindly participated and left their knowledge and time, so at the end of the year the campaign was a possible dream!



The campaign preparations started early November already. Together with the Ganas Foundation of Córdoba, volunteers providing food and companionship to the homeless people in the city and another organisation, Cuento con Vos, Projects Abroad wanted to arrange a campaign with the main goal of raising awareness about HIV/Aids among the homeless people in Córdoba. It's necessary to understand that for homeless, worrying about food and shelter trumps worrying about potential virus infections and illnesses.

Therefore, we've to urge them to pay attention to these things. Months of work interviewing the homeless people of Córdoba unveiled that they're drastically more probable of obtaining an HIV infection compared to the general population.

We wanted to work against that by informing the homeless about the *difference* between HIV and Aids, about *how* the disease is transmitted and about *how* to prevent it. Also, we wanted to tell them about *where to get tested* and the fact that HIV testing is anonymous and free in Argentina. In addition to all this, we emphasised the *legal rights* of an Argentinean HIV/Aids infected person, meaning, among other things, free access to medical care for the rest of your life. We also worked with a specific hospital in Córdoba, the Hospital Rawson, that provided us with pamphlets, contraceptives etc. to be handed out to the homeless. Actually, one of our own volunteers went to realise an HIV exam at the Rawson in order to provide the homeless with an authentic résumé about the details regarding the HIV testing process.

Then, to educate the many promoters from Projects Abroad, Cuento con Vos and Foundation Ganas about HIV/Aids, two days of workshops were arranged during the last week of November. The promoters were provided with detailed knowledge about HIV/Aids, the Argentina case and also the details about the Córdoba province HIV/Aids situation, all from a Hospital Rawson doctor specialised on the field of sexually transmitted diseases. Next, Victoria, the Law & Human Rights office program manager, spoke about the main goals of the campaign, about how to proceed when talking to the homeless people and about what to expect about their current knowledge about HIV/Aids.

Finally, we arrived at the dates of the campaign. On December 02nd, 04th and 09th, the promoters went to the plaza where Ganas serves food and the homeless were educated about HIV/Aids. Some promoters stayed at the plaza, some walked around the city centre and some went further away by car to look up the homeless sheltering in other places. All of the people we spoke to received the pamphlets and the contraceptives, and to our surprise, they were all genuinely interested in and not even a bit shy about what we had to say. Most of them already knew something about HIV/Aids, but the majority had no idea that testing and eventual medical care were to obtain for free.

About 300 homeless people were spoken to during the campaign. 300 people that are now more aware of HIV/Aids and most important, how to avoid it. Hopefully, we can repeat this campaign in the future. A big thanks goes to our partner organisations working together with us on this campaign: Foundation Ganas, Cuento con Vos and the Hospital Rawson.



BRING BACK OUR GIRLS CAMPAIGN

By Andra Chisholm

Not until the equality of opportunity in education for both males and females is established will the foundations of war be removed (Kingdon, 2002).



The Abduction that Shocked the World: Introduction and Background

In April 2014, the armed militant Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram, abducted 276 teenaged schoolgirls during the night from their dormitory rooms at their boarding school in the town of Chibok, in Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria. Some of the girls have since managed to escape but according to the terrorist group itself, 218 of the girls remain their captivity (all numbers from BBOG official website). As of January, 2015, they remain missing.

There have been few official statements from Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan as to what is being done by the Nigerian government to search for these girls, or to bring their captors to justice (BBC News, October 2014). Meanwhile, Boko Haram has unleashed a campaign of terrorism and violent attacks elsewhere in Nigeria and refused to divulge the girls' whereabouts. The leader of this terrorist group, Abubakar Shekau, recently stated that the abducted girls have converted to Islam and been sold into marriage with militants (Lestch, 2014), making the need to find them and bring them home at once both more difficult and more urgent.

Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) Campaign

Within weeks of the kidnapping of these schoolgirls, a campaign entitled Bring Back Our Girls began in Nigeria and quickly spread worldwide, with all participants demanding the safe return of these girls to their families and their schools. The campaign includes a Bring Back Our Girls official website, petitions on sites such as Change.org, and Avaaz.org, a Facebook page with more than 235,000 likes, protests around the world, and a popular Twitter hashtag, #BringBackOurGirls. The social media campaign has drawn the support of governments, politicians, organizations such as Amnesty International and the United Nations, religious leaders, ac-

tors, and education and human rights advocates the world over, including such individuals as First Lady Michelle Obama, human rights activist Angelina Jolie, and Pope Francis (Letsch, 2014; Brumfield, 2014). In this paper, Projects Abroad wishes to express our own solidarity and support for the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign; for the missing girls and their struggling families. We stand **with the girls and their families in demanding their immediate release**. Their right to personal security and freedom, and to attend school must be protected and advanced. Their voices have not been silenced, but are raised and magnified through our own.

Education Empowers Girls

The schoolgirls from Nigeria were targeted because they are trying to achieve an education. The name of their abductors, Boko Haram means “western education is forbidden” and the group targets mostly Christians, foreigners, and educated people (Brumfield, 2014). Although educational opportunities for girls and women worldwide have greatly increased in the last several decades, women in most developing countries still receive significantly less education and schooling than men. This disparity calls for urgent change, as there is compelling and extensive that the education of girls and women promotes both individual and national well-being on many levels. (King & Hill, 1993; Kingdon, 2002; Roudi-Fahimi & Moghadam, V, 2003; UNICEF, 2014; United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2014).



The gains women can make from being educated are numerous and profound, and these benefits are far greater than the benefits from other public interventions (such as family planning or social or medical assistance), and they extend into the next generation. The microeconomic evidence is overwhelming that there are strong correlations between a woman’s education and her employment, income, child bearing and rearing choices, health and well-being, and her ability to contribute socially and economically to her own life, and that of her family and society. One study describes education as the single most important determinant of both age at marriage and age at first birth in Middle Eastern and Sub-Saharan African [MENA] countries (Fahimi & Moghadam, 2003). A recent UNICEF report (2014) notes that if all girls had secondary education in MENA countries, child marriage would fall by 64 percent. The benefits of education also impact the next generation, as educated women more highly prioritize education for their own daughters. (Kingdon, 2002; UNICEF, 2014). Thus, the educational disadvantage of women affects not only their own well-being and growth, but also the well-being and growth of the next generation, and the societies in which women live. Everyone benefits when women are educated.

In spite of the extensive evidence linking education with so many positive outcomes, significant disparities remain. A report by UNICEF reveals that an estimated 31 million primary school age girls and 34 million secondary school aged girls were not enrolled in school in 2011 (2014). Gender disparity and illiteracy remain high for women, who are twice as likely as men are to be illiterate in Middle Eastern And Sub-Saharan African (MENA) countries (Fahimi & Moghadam, 2003; Kingdon, 2002). Women still perform two third of all hours worked, earn one tenth of the worlds income, and own less than one hundredth of the world’s property (Kingdon, 2002). Even when education is offered, quality of content is often low, and can reinforce, rather than challenge traditional, limiting roles.

Many countries need to do better in helping their citizens to realize the inherent and societal value of education for women. Education systems need to be more responsive to the specific challenges and needs and of girls and women in relation to curricula and teaching materials, female teacher visibility, gender parity, and cultural and social and attitudes fostered in many places in

the school environment. Girls and women are entitled to full and equal participation in their societies.

Ultimately improving access to and quality of education is the most rewarding investment that a country can make in its girls and in itself.

Malala Yousafzai:

A Powerful Advocate for Education and the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign

A most inspiring and visible presence in the education dialogue - and now the BBOG campaign - has been world renowned girls' education advocate Malala Yousafzai. In October 2012, when she was 15 years old, Malala was shot by the Pakistan Taliban while boarding her school bus in the northwest Pakistani district of Swat. She was attacked because she had publicly championed girls' education. Malala not only survived this attempted assassination, but went on to become an advocate for the empowerment of girls through education, and the youngest winner ever of the Nobel Peace Prize. She was also nominated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu for the International Children's Peace Prize. Her advocacy has led to the ratification of Pakistan's first right to education bill. She has also started the Malala fund to "bring awareness to the social and economic impact of girls' education and to empower girls to raise their voices, to unlock their potential, and to demand change" (<http://www.malala.org/#malalas-story>). Her peaceful and powerful advocacy has instigated a global movement in support of the empowerment of girls through education for girls.

When Malala heard about the abduction of the schoolgirls in Nigeria, she wanted to use her own experience and her increased influence to become a vocal and visible supporter of the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign. She is now bringing worldwide attention to the plight of the kidnapped girls, by travelling to Nigeria, meeting with parents and with girls who escaped the kidnapping to hear their stories. She also met with Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan to appeal for more government action to find the girls.

Malala's decision to stand with the missing Nigerian girls and show leadership is a reflection of her own empowerment as an education advocate, and of her own struggle in successfully overcoming a threat to her own life that occurred because she spoke out in favour of education. On her website and facebook page she has started a new "StrongerThan" campaign calling for all to be stronger than fear, terrorism and violence, and anything else that tries to prevent girls from getting an education. With her, we appeal to Boko Haram, the abductors of the Nigerian schoolgirls, to think about their own sisters, and release the missing girls. These brave girls are less afraid of men armed with guns than these men are afraid of girls armed with books and knowledge. Together with Malala, we claim these innocent girls as our sisters and demand that they be brought back to their families and their schools now.

Marita Veron: Still Missing in Argentina

In 2002, Marita Veron, then aged 23, was kidnapped from the street in Cordoba City, Argentina, while on her way to an appointment. She remains missing to this day. Since Marita was abducted, her mother, Susana Trimarco has dedicated her entire life to finding her daughter, helping other trafficked girls, and working with groups and authorities in Argentina and worldwide in bringing traffickers to justice. Ms Trimarco has taken many personal risks and met with considerable success in finding and saving other girls, recently even assisting the courts in bringing some of her own daughter's traffickers to justice. However, so far Marita herself remains missing.

Fundacion Maria de los Angeles

In 2007, Ms. Trimarco created the Maria de los Angeles Foundation organization (www.fundacionmariadelosangeles.org) aimed at preventing and combatting human trafficking and providing legal, psychological, and social assistance to its victims (Cotton, 2012). Her work has raised the profile of human trafficking issues and realities in Argentina and beyond. In 2008, Argentina passed an anti-trafficking law making the abduction and sexual exploitation of persons a federal offence. The government also created the Rescue Office, under the Ministry of Justice

and Human Rights, to oversee and assist in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of human trafficking crimes; and to provide legal and other forms of assistance to its victims (Cotton, 2012). Since its implementation, close to 3000 girls have been rescued, with the number increasing with each year of its existence. In July 2011 President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner passed a decree banning publication of adult services advertisements in newspapers and magazines in Argentina in relation to the solicitation of people for sex. The Ministry of Security has also denounced police forces implicated in the trade, and has deepened efforts to train authorities to better detect and prevent trafficking networks and assist victims (Cotton, 2012).

Progress is evident, but further modifications to the law are needed to make it more inclusive; and effective enforcement and corruption of police and prosecutors remain of significant concern. Ultimately, Ms. Trimarco emphasizes that “the only way trafficking victims will be released from this subjugation is if there are organizations set up to empower them and inform them of their rights. They need to speak out if they are to reclaim their identity and denounce their perpetrators” (Cotton, 2012). Together with our sister offices around the world, and via community initiatives with anti-trafficking organizations such as Basta de Trata here in Cordoba(Enough Trafficking)(<http://www.bastadetrata.com.ar/>), Projects Abroad desires to join in the efforts to raise awareness of missing girls in Argentina, Nigeria and elsewhere.

Human Trafficking: A Violation of Girls and Their Right to Education

Few realize the extent to which human trafficking, forced abductions, and modern slavery remains the experience of life for millions of people in the world today. The statistics are shocking. According to the Trafficking in Persons report issued yearly by the United Nations, 27 million people around the world, including men, women, and children, are victims of human trafficking (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2014. see also Rasmussen, 2013). More recent reports find the number to be even higher, closer to 36 million (Nguyen, 2014). The global human trafficking market is big business, with an estimated annual turnover of US \$32 billion (Cotton, 2012; UNODC, n.d.). It is second only to (and often connected to) the global drug and arms trades.

The term *human trafficking* is defined by the United Nations as follows: “The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force, or other forms of coercion; of abduction, or fraud or deception; of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability; of the giving or receiving of payments, or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation.”

Given this definition, the missing schoolgirls in Nigeria and Marita Veron in Argentina are clearly victims of human trafficking. These cases of abducted and missing young women reflect the reality that the most common form of human trafficking is sexual exploitation (79 percent), and the victims of sexual exploitation are predominantly women and girls. One in three known victims of human trafficking is a child, and girls make up 2 out of every 3 child victims (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009; 2014). As distinguished from sex workers, trafficked girls are not in control of their own bodies, do not have a choice, do not get paid, and are forced by their traffickers with the threat of violence to themselves or family members (Rasmussen, 2013).

The 2014 United Nations report states that human trafficking in children is increasing worldwide and that girls and women especially continue to be targeted and forced in to modern slavery. Trafficking takes place in all countries in the world; “no country is immune” (November, 2014). In terms of perpetrators, the vast majority of convicted traffickers (72 percent) are male and citizens of the country in which they operate. The cases of the schoolgirls abducted in Nigeria and Marita Veron abducted in Argentina, both reflect this statistical reality as well.

The causes of human trafficking are many. They include for example: high demand for commercial sex and cheap labour, poverty and lack of education or work possibilities, corruption by exploitive authorities who fail to protect their citizens, cultural views and treatment of women (such as *machismo* in South American countries), political and economic instability, war, and persecution due to religious or ethnic beliefs, sexual orientation, or gender (Rasmussen, 2013). Once

LEGAL CLINIC

When you are signed to the Law & Human Rights office at Projects Abroad it is an option to apply to be a part of the Legal clinic.

The idea of Legal clinic is to help people at different placements such as Blas Pascal, Villa La Tela etc. These placements are so called poor neighborhoods where they do not have the opportunity to get help from the government or cannot afford a lawyer if they have a case that needs to be followed.



In general we go to these placements twice a week with the lawyer of the Law & Human Rights office and spend more or less 2 hours. Together with the lawyer there will be at least one volunteer as an assistant. It is possible to be more than one volunteer.

The Legal Clinic is not a meeting for appointments but an open clinic where everybody can come. This means that sometimes there will be 1 or 2 people or sometimes 10 people.

As a volunteer at Legal Clinic you will mostly be signed to fill out the sheets for the people who show up. You will fill out personal information so we are able to contact them if we are going to open a case and represent them. The volunteer will be in charge of bringing the sheets and open as well so make sure to have extra copies.



The cases are very different. It is mostly about pension/retirement and property/house issues. It is the job of the volunteer at Legal Clinic to bring the filled out sheets to the office and either give to the volunteer who is in charge of uploading the case and put in the folder or do it yourself. This is very important because the lawyer of the office should have access to all information of our clients if cases are going to be followed.

The legal area at the Law & Human Rights Office Argentina is definitely growing fast!

SOAJE

Soaje is an institution for girls who have been abused or victims of domestic violence. Currently the house hosts girls from 9 to 17 years old.

Projects Abroad works with this institute with biweekly meetings where volunteers organize recreational and educational activities on various topics, such as self-esteem, self-confidence and confidence in a group, sexual education and defense of human rights.

Working with a group of teenagers is never easy. In this case, the biggest challenge is to gain the trust and the affection of these girls who, in addition to the common problems of adolescence, are dealing with a traumatic past and an uncertain future. That's why one of Projects Abroad's goal is to help these girls to develop the awareness of their own future. What will they do once they get out by the



institute? What are their aspirations, their weaknesses and their strengths? How do they imagine their life in 20 years? Will they want a family, children, a stable job, and why not, will they want to continue their studies?

FOUNDATION GANAS

Article on protocols to help people receive national pensions

As part of the legal work of the Law & Human Rights office the volunteers are developing protocols to help people receive national pensions. In order to write down all the appropriate steps future volunteers have to take when helping people to receive the pensions, the volunteers had to accompany the people to the governmental institutions. This turned out to be quite a long and administrative process. The main pensions are a disability pension, a pension for a mother with seven or more kids, a pension for old people, or people who are in extremely vulnerable situations.



Volunteers Maria and Michelle accompanied a woman trying to get a disability pension. They had to go to the office for National Pensions and request a blank certificate which had to be filled in by a doctor. This woman claimed to have heart problems and hearing issues so in order to request her pension she had to show proof of her medical record. Unfortunately getting the certificate to be filled in by a doctor turned out to be the longest process. Of course the woman needed a medical analysis and due to various problems volunteers had to go to the hospital and accompany this woman several times.

Once the doctor has filled in the certificate we have to go back to our contact person at the office for National Pensions and he has to fill in the final paper work. This is the end of our intervention and from this moment on the pension has been requested. It may take up to seven months for the woman to finally receive the pension, but if she gets it she will receive the money from those seven months of waiting as well.

