

# PROJECTS ABROAD ARGENTINA

## LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT



Social Projects					Legal Team
CeCAM <i>Girls Correctional</i>	Felisa Soaje <i>Girls Home</i>	Paulo Freire Escobar <i>Boys Correctional</i>	Quisquisacate <i>Girls Home</i>	Basta de Trata <i>Human Trafficking &amp; Trade</i>	Legal Clinic
Monitoring Human Rights		Community Advocacy	Educational Activities & Office Research		
Fundación G.A.N.A.S		Blas Pascal neighbourhood	Human Rights Workshop		



Hola!

We are back on track with our monthly report and as always have a lot to share! Volunteers have been making great progress in each of their placements. The Legal Clinic is busy with many new cases and the weekly meetings in the Blas Pascal community have been positive as they have been able to resolve and come to an agreement on various issues. Read on for more details!

Muchas gracias to all who contributed to this month's newsletter!

## SOCIAL PROJECTS

### CECAM

*CeCAM, (Centro Correccional para Adolescentes Mujeres) is a correctional facility for young girls aged 14 to 20, who committed or were involved in serious crimes. Usually the institution houses about fifteen girls.*

The girls and volunteers of CeCAM completed their alfajor fundraiser in late October, so in early September the girls learned that they had raised 510 pesos. The girls next worked together to brainstorm a list of what they wanted to buy. Volunteers first brought them the hair curler they really wanted, and they were thrilled. The next week, volunteers brought all the makeup items the girls had requested with the extra money – lipsticks, mascara, eyeliner, an eyelash curler, and more. They were again ecstatic that we had brought exactly what they asked for, and they promptly gave the volunteers makeovers before starting to put the makeup on themselves. This project highlighted the value of hard work, as they earned the money and reaped the rewards. Also, the beauty products help raise their self-esteem in a difficult, seemingly endless situation of incarceration.

The girls were usually in a good mood and fun to talk to or hang out with. One day, volunteers attended their P.E. class and participated in aerobics with them, which everyone enjoyed. Volunteers also started bringing a newspaper to the girls each time they came. We were initially surprised by how interested they were in the newspaper – the girls really appreciate having something to read and learning about the outside world.

As always, there were challenges at CeCAM this month. A couple of new girls came in, and one of the new girls also escaped. There were cliques and fights among girls at times. But generally the girls who've been there a long time are getting more permission to leave and more freedoms, which is a great step for them. We tried to be a constant presence offering as much as we could, even if all we could offer on some days was companionship and maybe a tub of ice cream to share.

### QUISQUISACATE

*Quisquisacate is a residential care facility for girls between 7 and 14 years old. They have been removed from their homes by the order of the courts for different reasons such as abuse, poverty and abandonment. At the age of 14 they are moved to another facility or they may return to their families if the court decides so.*

Each time we go to Quisquisacate we plan an activity for the girls in order to teach them about their rights, the right to education for example. It is not always that easy, as some of the girls cannot read, which requires us to think creatively in a way to do the activity and so that everyone can participate.

Most of the staff at Quisquisacate have no formal training to work with youth in such a situation and therefore do not do much with the girls apart from caring for their basic needs such as meals etc. They do not give much attention to the girls or do activities with them. This can be frustrating at times, because the girls are not allowed to go outside on their own, and it seems like they are being punished while they didn't do anything wrong. Keeping this in mind makes the volunteers weekly visits that much more important.





## FELISA SOAJE

*Felisa Soaje is a residential care facility for girls aged between 14 and 17. The girls living there have been ordered by the court to reside there as their biological parents have been deemed unfit or incapable of caring for them. The girls are provided with meals and accommodation and attend school 5 days a week. Volunteers meet with the girls on a weekly basis.*

Volunteers organised several workshops to educate the girls and hopefully help improve their future prospects. During one such workshop, we read excerpts in Spanish from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech. We used his words to spark a discussion about the importance of not discriminating against people based on their skin colour, religious identity, or other factors beyond our control. We also gave the girls the opportunity to discuss times when they have been treated unjustly, and what can be done to correct injustices.

In another workshop the volunteers focused on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. We discussed the food pyramid, healthy diets, and the importance of exercise, among other things. The girls seemed to be engaged in this activity, and came up with some thoughtful responses to the questions the volunteers had prepared for them.

Volunteers try to strike a balance between educational, informative activities and more relaxed, fun ones. One day, we brought nail polish and hair accessories and had a beauty day, which the girls enjoyed. The girls also seem to be fond of art, so we have brought markers and paper for the girls a few times so that

they can create collages and drawings for themselves and their friends. Additionally, we sometimes buy the girls pastries and take them to the plaza, where we can all enjoy some fresh air and chat freely.

Another important element of the Soaje girls' month was a course on respiration and relaxation techniques. Instructors came to Soaje and to Quisquisacate several times to lead the girls and volunteers in various exercises aimed at teaching the girls how to respond calmly and non-violently to stressful situations. The girls seemed to benefit from the course, as some of them remarked that they had been practicing the techniques between the sessions.



## PAULO FREIRE ESCOBAR

*Not to be confused with Paulo Freire of Villa Cabrera, this Paulo Freire is an institution whose role is to provide a safe and beneficial environment for youngsters who have had problems with the law. This article was written by **Vicente Biancardi da Camara** from England, who has been working at the centre for the past 2 months.*

As I write this article, sitting in an empty classroom, I feel the difficulties of working with juveniles are somewhat exemplified in the vacant chairs that surround me. While on some days the turnout can be nothing short of stunning, on days like these I am left with an uneasy feeling of chagrin, a worry that I have somehow been unable to reach these kids at a time in their life when they most needed it. This sense of failure does not come from an overextended feeling of self-importance – as someone who has a limited grasp of Spanish I know my capacity to communicate effectively with these boys is somewhat impaired. This sense of shortcoming comes from knowing that on other, better days I can and have made a small positive difference. Even if it is only providing information, or sometimes a little motivation, these changes are visible and provide immense satisfaction. The fact is that the feeling of accomplishment that one gains from being asked sincere questions by a kid who, by all reports, usually sits in a corner in silence, beats the anguish that comes on slow days when the kids want to do nothing more than mess around and play computer games.



Getting the kids to involve themselves is definitely a challenge, and thankfully the staff at Freire, who have years of experience and have accompanied the boys through from the time of their detention to the present day, are most often able to steer the boys in the right direction through various activities. Watching how they controlled difficult situations in my first few days allowed me to plan my workshops and activities accordingly and, all in all, this contributed to their success. I also understood that, because the boys are supposedly mandated to be there, their level of involvement in activities can be low, and as such it's important to create activities with low attention spans in mind, whilst all the while keeping the focus on instructing the boys in their rights and duties. Their view of enjoyment and education seems to be dichotomized, and so we tend to make them talk and work on projects that retroactively make them realize that they have learned something about their rights.

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## MONITORING HUMAN RIGHTS

### FUNDACIÓN G.A.N.A.S

*Fundación G.A.N.A.S is a non-profit organization that provides food, clothes, and friendship to the homeless living in and around downtown Córdoba. They have been working in the streets of Córdoba for the past six years, and in the past two months the Law & Human Rights volunteers joined to help.*

Working at FundaciónGanas has been an eye-opening experience. While we all have seen homeless people on the streets, few people sit down and talk with them, and this is exactly what the census project at Ganas has led us to do. At the time of writing, Projects Abroad has been responsible for 97 interviews over the course of the last 4 months, and this has brought to our attention the wide variety of people living on the streets. Some are lifelong bachelors; others have large families of more than 7 children. Some know only how to read and write, and others have university degrees. Some are miserable and want all the help they can get, while others are quite happy living on the streets and want nothing more than the occasional free meal. Their personal stories are all different and, while almost all are saddening to hear, they highlight the individuality of each person.

Now that we have completed the research part of the census, we are sorting through the data to retrieve patterns and see what kind of role Projects Abroad can play in making these peoples' lives better. We can work to bring identity documents to those who have lost them, give instruction to those who need it and work with the government to provide those who need a job with a way to acquire it. We have already brought bag loads of clothes for men, women and children, but more are still needed, and while Projects Abroad cannot give pensions and subsidies directly to these people, we try to help in any way we can.



All in all, Ganas is a very enjoyable experience. All the interviewees are almost always very willing to answer our questions and there is an immediate sensation of having accomplished something.

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## COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

### BLAS PASCAL

*Blas Pascal is a peripheral community of government and makeshift housing built in 2009. Prior to the existence of the slum, the residents were living in shanties along the river; however in 2003 they successfully petitioned for proper accommodation arrangements. There are approximately 100 families living there. The Law & Human Rights Office has started a community project, with the goals of educating and empowering the neighbours in their goals to help improve their community and improving their quality of life.*



For the members of Blas Pascal community, October was a crucial month for many ongoing concerns.

There are still problems with the lack of water pressure in the neighbourhood, but thanks to the collaboration of the neighbouring Nuevo Progreso community, this problem is almost resolved.



Unfortunately, during the month of October, there have also been escalating cases of delinquency and crime. The neighbours are more and more concerned for their safety and the security of their homes. But there is good news: Projects Abroad has been in contact with some police officers and we are now working with the police to help the community to feel more secure.

Additionally, over the course of several weeks we talked to the neighbours about the possibility of buying a community-wide burglar alarm system as a first step to fight crime and illegal activity in the neighbourhood. At the beginning, the community members were unconvinced because they did not want to pay for the alarm, but now, thanks to the collaboration of the police and further research by Projects Abroad volunteers, they seem to be interested in buying it. They have been evaluating the maps of the community to see how big of an area the alarm would need to cover and to see how this can be done. We hope that by the end of November we will be able to resolve this crime issue and continue to work together for the needs of all the neighbours.

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## LEGAL CLINIC

*Every Thursday our Law & Human Rights volunteers hold a free legal clinic in the Blas Pascal neighborhood. The clinic runs for about 2 hours, and members of the community come seeking advice for a variety of issues from domestic violence, visitation rights, advice regarding pensions, and much more. Volunteers listen and take notes on the case, and throughout the week they research the case and prepare a response for the client the following week.*

In October many people residing in Barrio Blas Pascal came to our legal clinic looking for legal advice. One client complained about a lot of gas coming from her neighbour's house that made her feel sick. She was also worried that the gas could harm her children's health and burn her own house. We reassured her about the nonexistence of the risk of fire. She wanted to issue her neighbour, but we told her initiating a cause is very expensive and we advised her to invite the other part to a negotiation meeting.

Another woman came to us to tell us that her daughter is working in the informal market and is being mistreated, that's why she wanted to leave her job and unsuccessfully asked her boss to earn her salary formerly. She also said that her son was arrested for robbery in 2006, but the victim coming to the police station to identify the perpetrator said she had mistakenly said that her son was guilty. She came to us, because he still has a criminal record that caused problems with his boss who requires a good behaviour certificate. He looked for a lawyer in order to erase the record, but the lawyer found costs of 5000 pesos. We informed her that, as the record is not a definitive one (her son was not convicted), her son could go to the Federal Government and ask for the certificate without paying anything to the lawyer.





In another case, the woman who sold her son's bike which was then used to commit a crime, came to the legal clinic because she was afraid her son would have problem with the police. She also wanted to know how her husband could apply for a disability retirement. Her husband Jesus is 52 years old and has contributed for 28 years. He worked in construction but had an accident that resulted in damaging his hip, and then had surgery. He also has osteoporosis, that's why he can no longer work and is receiving money from his employer (was even promoted). We went to the neighbours house, who told us about the motorcycle accident she and her son had and asked us how to get compensation. Martin said that the dynamics of the accident must be clarified and her son has to show the license the motorcycle to the police.

Finally, a young client, (22 years old), told us about the problems with her ex-husband, who refused to let her take her things in their house. She was particularly concerned about her university record book which she needs for university.

During this month we have been doing some research for another case regarding child abuse that has been going on since September. We have been providing assistance to the family who was starting a criminal procedure against a perpetrator known as "Querellantes" who is known for abuse against minors.

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## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### THESIS

My name is Francesca Zingarelli and I am a volunteer at the office of Law and Human Rights. I am also here to write my final thesis, which will allow me to graduate (master in Foreign Languages for International Communication) in Italy next March.

The Law and Human Rights coordinator, Victoria Marton, is my tutor for the thesis. She will be an official member of the commission during my thesis presentation, considering and evaluating all my work done during my five months here in Córdoba. I have been here for three months already. The first month, I spent my time just working for the human rights office and studying the history of Argentina. After spending weeks reading and studying, Victoria and I decided the main topic of my thesis. It will be an experimental thesis about the last military dictatorship in Argentina, from 1976-1983. My hypothesis asserts that in Italy and in Europe in general, many people do not know anything about Argentina's last military dictatorship, because of the censorship at the time. To see if my hypothesis has value or not, I created a survey about the dictatorship and sent it to people in Italy and Europe.

### WORKSHOPS

#### Topic I: A Look at Human Rights

*By Vicente Biancardi da Camara*

**Vicente Biancardi da Camara** (UK) and **Noortje Wolff** (Holland) were given the task of creating and running a Human Rights Workshop for other volunteers. Admittedly a challenging task, the difficulty lay in running a workshop that was informative for the participants who did not really know about human rights, all the while keeping the presentation engaging for the Human Rights volunteers who necessarily knew quite a bit about the subject. I have always felt that workshops have to have a high level of engagement to achieve the desired effect: after all, the point was to get the participants to discuss the subject in a way that made them reflect and learn from each other, and this would be difficult if people let Noortje and I lecture them for two hours. We thus decided to create activities by which people had to link pictures to the human right violation that was being depicted and also, after a brief explanation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, prioritize 5 of the 30 human rights. The discussion then evolved into what human rights the volunteers felt were not respected in their home countries.



What was great about this activity-oriented workshop, as opposed to a lecture, was that Noortje and I learnt alongside the participants about the human rights situation in other countries. Because most of the volunteers hailed from different areas of Europe, most of the answers were homogenous, and yet this served to reinforce the notion that there are a few human rights that are persistently ignored throughout even the most progressive and developed countries in the world. When we asked the volunteers to prioritize 5 human rights above the others, the answers were also surprisingly similar: almost all volunteers put the right to equality and the right to a family in their top five list, highlighting the fact that there are some things that we are programmed and conditioned to care about above all else.



All things considered, I left the workshop knowing more about the “human rights situation” across the world than when I en-

## Topic 2: Genocide, War crimes and Crimes against Humanity

This month, for the first time held a workshop on a more specific topic and was prepared for the Law and Human Rights volunteers but was opened up to all volunteers, regardless of their project.

For this first workshop, **Lea Watrin** (France) prepared a presentation on genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The point of this workshop was to explain the differences between these three concepts and how is it possible to bring justice after these crimes. The last part of the workshop was dedicated to understanding how all these aforementioned concepts can help us understand what happened in Argentina during the Dirty War, as well as the ongoing trial of the military’s working at La Perla at the time. La Perla being the biggest clandestine detention, torture and execution centre used by the militaries in the Province of Cordoba.

As a Law and Human Rights volunteer, Lea believes that it is key for us to think about these concepts and how they tie into the country we volunteer in, as it allows us to get a better understanding of both our projects and the people we are surrounded with. Opening this workshop for other volunteers seems only natural for anyone interested in learning about Human Rights concepts and the country they volunteer in, which is very important.

Overall it was an excellent workshop and very informative!

