

PROJECTS ABROAD ARGENTINA

LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT



Social Projects				
CeCAM <i>Girls Correctional</i>	Felisa Soaje <i>Girls Home</i>	Quisquisacate <i>Girls Home</i>	Basta de Trata <i>Human Trafficking & Trade</i>	Paulo Freire Escobar <i>Boys Correctional</i>
Legal Team		Community Advocacy		Educational Activities
Legal Clinic		Blas Pascal neighbourhood		Día de la Memoria March

Hola!

We keep on working hard in the Law & Human Rights office! A special thanks to the volunteers who contributed to this month's newsletter. And thanks to the readers for their ongoing support! Happy reading!

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.

It has been another great month with the girls at CeCam. We have become closer friends, and we are having a lot of fun together.



Lately we have been hanging out, baking, eating, talking and dancing. A lot of the girls from last month are out and new ones are coming in. We have spent time to get to know the new ones and got closer to the older ones.

This month we held a sexual education workshop. It turned out to be a big success. A lot of the girls have boyfriends and have a lot of sexual experience, but they have very little knowledge about pregnancy, protection, HIV/AIDS and how it is spread. We started out with a true or false game to settle the level of knowledge. Surprisingly they did not know so much and we got the feeling we could

actually teach them something. They paid attention to us, had questions and talked to each other about the topic.

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.

This month we had a lot of fun in the fresh air. As it became clear that the girls love playing or just relaxing outside, we often brought candies or other sweets and simply went outside the girls' home in the small park. It is great to talk to the girls in this atmosphere and to see them happily running around. In general it is always a good thing to make them run around, as they are not very fit since they never do sports.



As I have been to Quisquisacate many times now, the people working at the girls' institution trusted me enough to go to the big park with them, about ten minutes away from the girls' house. We all got ice cream and sat down to enjoy the sun. It was lovely to see how thankful and excited they were.

We generally focused on planning creative activities this month, as this is an excellent way to boost the girls' self-esteem, since we always tell them how beautifully they draw. With play dough and a lot of paint, everyone could draw, make and create figures and pictures. With finger paint, one big poster in which everyone participated was made. This is now up on the wall and looks happy and cheerful. The girls love painting! There was a great group dynamic.

The 24th of March was a public holiday as it was the official start of the dictatorship in Argentina. We therefore took the chance to talk to the girls about the dictatorship. This was not very successful, as most girls were not interested and did not listen to us. It is always difficult to have activities with serious backgrounds, as they are still so young. However, once the girls listen they are usually very interested! There are only five girls living in the institution at the moment. When working with smaller groups it is easier to talk to the girls privately and they are more focused on their work.

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.

This past month, the new volunteers at the Law and Human Rights office conducted several self-esteem building activities with the girls at Soaje. The first main activity focused on creating a box of dreams (known in Spanish as: *caja de los sueños*) for the girls to anonymously write down their future goals and aspirations. Many of the girls expressed dreams of working and supporting themselves, seeing their families again and even starting families of their own. The box of dreams proved to be a successful “ice-breaker” activity for the girls at Soaje and the volunteers. The volunteers are planning to incorporate this activity into a future workshop with the girls, at the end of their placement.

After a beautiful day in the Plaza, and getting acquainted with one another, the volunteers at the Law and Human Rights office held a self-esteem workshop with the girls. The girls at Soaje answered a detailed questionnaire about their values, how they view themselves, and their relationships with others. The girls actively participated in the questionnaire and were excited to have a discussion regarding the influence of mass media on self-esteem. The volunteers showed video clips and gave the girls magazines to flip through as they discussed the falsification of beauty in the media and the impact this has on societal perceptions of beauty today.

The discussions about dreams, happiness and self-esteem generated through both these activities have enabled the volunteers at the Law and Human Rights office to develop a strong connection with the girls. The volunteers also had the opportunity to celebrate Easter at Soaje by making chocolate Easter eggs with the girls while learning more about their past experiences. Overall, the encounters at Soaje this past month have been mutually empowering for both the girls and the volunteers at the Law and Human Rights office. While the girls at Soaje have been given the opportunity to express themselves and make new friends, the conversations have led the volunteers to have a deeper understanding of various social issues in Argentina, while sharing some laughs over mate, singing songs and learning the dance moves to the Bachata. The volunteers at the Law and Human Rights office are looking forward to spending more time with the girls at Soaje, while engaging in future activities on healthy eating and human rights.

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 **Charles Pritchard (US)** who helped get the radio started.*

Two weeks ago I started working at the Centro Socioeducativo Paulo Freire. “Freire” as it is called, is a place where boys of different ages can go to during the day if they have been convicted of a non-violent crime, instead of going to prison. They do not have to spend the night there, and may go back to their homes as they choose. Freire offers many opportunities to these kids, and at the same time, gives them a way to give back to their communities in different ways. In the past, this meant helping fix neighbourhood toys, repairing bicycles, tending gardens, and other activities. When I arrived, I was told



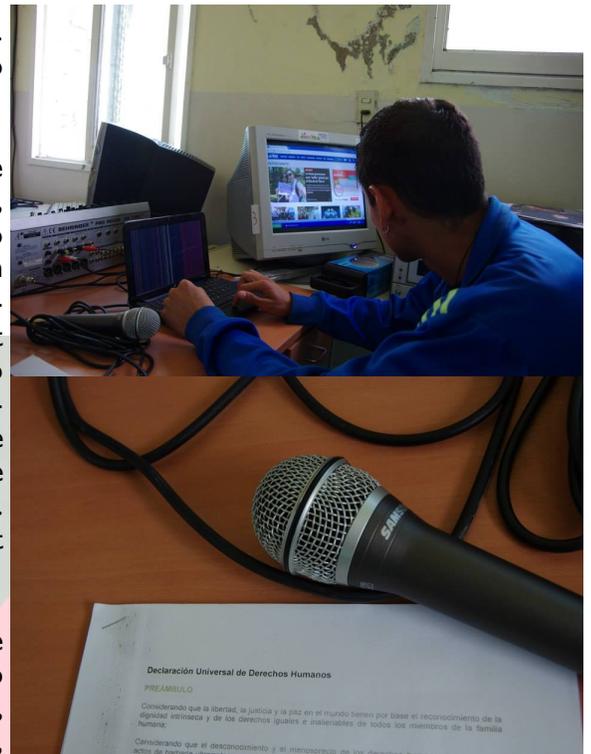
that I was going to be working with the boys on a special project. I would be working with a smaller group of the boys on a radio broadcast, over the internet.

The last two weeks at Freire have been momentous, the online radio was reequipped with two new, functioning microphones, and is now up and running from around ten in the morning to around one in the afternoon. In the beginning the radio station featured commentary and history on the Argentinian group, Patricio Rey y sus Redonditos de Ricota, as well as news about past and upcoming musical events. As of right now, if you tune into the station, you will still hear about musical groups and their histories. The name of the station right now is *Somosvoz*, and the name of the current program is *Sangre Ricotera*. However, in the near future, there will be more than just music on the station. Changes are being made so that the talk on the radio will start addressing other, less light-hearted topics.

After a discussion with the one of the directors at Freire, the boys working on the radio and I will work together to begin to include and cover human rights issues. Over the next few weeks, we are going to work to include personal accounts, experiences, and thoughts on the issues regarding human rights. Together, the boys and the listeners will learn more about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, what the individual rights are, what the rights themselves mean, and how they affect the lives of others as well as our own. We will try to bring personal accounts onto the air, of past experiences with human rights abuses, as well as daily experiences with violations. It's going to be hard at first, but we hope that, over time, through these changes in the broadcast. It will help teach the boys about how they can spot and understand the human rights violations that may exist around them in their daily lives.

Although this process of changing from more rock and roll to less music and more covering of important topics about universal rights may take some time and substantial effort, the change in the long run will be worth it. Many of the boys in Freire and the surround neighbourhoods have not previously learned about human rights. Hopefully, over the coming weeks, we will be able to educate the boys at Freire and their listeners about the importance of human rights, as well as include some music as well.

If you wish to follow the progression of the radio, tune in, or make comments. You can follow the radio's Facebook here at <https://www.facebook.com/Somosvozonline>. If you wish to listen to the radio itself, the address is: <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/somosvoztadio>. Stay tuned over the next few weeks to see the changes we end up making.



BASTA DE TRATA

Basta de Trata (BdT) is a Córdoba-based organisation with the aim of informing and raising awareness about the issue of human trafficking in Argentina. They focus not only on raising awareness, but also on breaking taboos, and informing the community. They hold campaigns, workshops, discussion forums and prevention and assistance programs for trafficking victims.



Basta de Trata is an organization whose primary mission is to generate a path of awareness, visualization and prevention of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Along with their main efforts, this year Basta de Trata has decided to raise awareness on the issue of paedophilia, especially paedophilia on the Internet. In order to explain more about the organization and their campaign, the volunteers at the Law and Human Rights office had a meeting with Mariana, the founder of Basta de Trata. At the meeting, Mariana asked the volunteers whether or not

they knew of any instances of trafficking in their home countries. She began to explain that trafficking is a global issue, involving people in both developed and less developed countries. To capture the issue in greater detail, Mariana showed the volunteers a video that documented the recent efforts of an NGO based in the Netherlands. The NGO created a robot (Sweetie) disguised as a 10-year-old Pilipino girl in order to catch online paedophiles. The majority of the online paedophiles were middle-aged men from developed countries. Recognizing the severity of the issue, Basta de Trata is eager to launch their upcoming campaign with the assistance of the volunteers at the Law and Human Rights office. The campaign will be held in July in the Cordoba city centre. July is a high-tourist season and the organization is excited to have the chance to spread awareness on the issue of paedophilia to a large crowd. Aside from the campaign, Basta de Trata organizes community meetings for different populations who are more at risk to be subjected to human trafficking. The volunteers are excited to get involved with the organization's initiatives.

One of the initial ideas for the campaign, as was discussed at the meeting, is to distribute flyers and put stickers on cars at Patio Olmos. The campaign will also do a demonstration in the area to involve the community. The volunteers of the Law and Human Rights office are currently brainstorming ideas for the overall campaign and the demonstration. The volunteers are currently familiarizing themselves with the interconnected issues on trafficking and are excited to participate in the future meetings with Basta de Trata.

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.

This month was really busy: we had on average 2 or 3 new clients per week.

The cases were about very different issues, such as:

Social security: We helped a few different clients with social welfare (how to get one, or to change the one they already have), and pensions, helping them figure out if they could ask for one, or how to claim them if they can.

Criminal: With the example of a woman who came to us needing information about her brother who was in preventive jail.

Family: We are researching to help a woman who is suing the father of her child, in order to get child support.

We have also been involved in a land property issue when some young men from the neighborhood decided to build their houses on a free space, which belongs to the state and was meant to be a park for the community... But this issue will be solved at the Blas Pascal community meetings!



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. This article is written by Marcia de Ocaña, a Legal Assistant to the Law & Human Rights office.

It's an honour to me to write for the first time the Newsletter Edition.

The volunteers from the Law and Human Rights office work hard and long hours alongside the neighbours of the Blas Pascal and Nuevo Progreso community in order to improve their quality of life. As Argentine citizens, they are entitled to the public services as any other member of the society.

Before we started working there, these communities did not have access to information through viable sources and as a consequence this led to more confusion and problems, rather than solutions. Lacking a proper voice to communicate the needs of the neighbourhood, they could not improve their standards of living by rallying the Government for help. When the Law & Human Rights project was created, it became our mission to help these marginal communities find solutions for the most urgent issues.

We are pleased to share the achievements we have made to improve these communities in the past two months:



WATER PRESSURE:

A serious ongoing problem is that of water. In the summer months when it reached 47° C, the neighbours found themselves with a very small amount of water for their needs, and even some days completely without water.

The United Nations has recognized the basic human right to water and sanitation. “The water supply for each person must be sufficient, continuous for personal and domestic uses. These uses ordinarily include drinking, personal sanitation, washing of clothes, food preparation, and household hygiene. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), between 50 and 100 litres of water per person per day are needed to ensure that most basic needs are met and few health concerns arise”.

There are different and specific issues regarding the water in Blas Pascal: there are some illegal water connections from the surrounding slums that decrease the general flow of water. Some neighbours didn't take care of the limited water that they had and wasted it every day renewing the pool's water.

We faced an enormous challenge with this specific problem: during most of the day, the pressure wasn't enough to reach the water tanks even though they found more than 4.5 meters in height, if Aguas Cordobesas (the provincial company which supplies water in Córdoba city) supplied the mandatory minimum of water pressure, the water at least would have reached the tanks located at 10 meters high.

Thereby, the water pressure was not consistent with the regulatory framework: it wasn't according to the tender conditions of Aguas Cordobesas in order to provide the service and also it wasn't in accordance with the regulations of ERSeP (the specific Provincial Regulator Agency of Public Services).

Our Legal Coordinator, Martin with the help of the volunteers, submitted a legal complaint at ERSeP.

There was a technical inspection to measure the pressure of the water asked by us in the claim, but Aguas Cordobesas didn't appear to control it, and when the inspection's results were ready, they requested another inspection from ERSeP, because the numbers were clearly demonstrating their neglectful actuation. We didn't agree with that because they had their proper procedural time to do that, but they didn't. In spite of that, the second inspection took place and the results were even worse than the first ones.

Conclusively, ERSeP ordered Aguas Cordobesas to fix the problem and a little time after the level of water pressure increased at least 10 points.

We are still struggling in this sense, because we want ERSeP to put a substantial fine into Aguas Cordobesas for their negligence in solving this situation that was prolonged for almost three years and because they were consciously violating the human right to access water and sanity of this community.

ENERGY:

During our weekly meetings with the neighbours, we discussed the problem that the circuits on the streetlights were burnt out, thus leaving the streets dark at night which creates a sense of insecurity among the neighbours, in a neighbourhood surrounded by dangerous slums. The neighbours stressed the importance of the streetlights to be safe.

We decided with the volunteers to file a claim to EPEC (the energy company) as well as the Ministry of Social Development. A week later, the circuit was replaced, but still there were 27 broken streetlights. One more time we submitted a new note in order to ask for their reparation. It was solved in the first week of April. It was rewarding to see the efforts of our hard work!

SIDEWALK



The only street which is the entrance to the Blas Pascal and Nuevo Progreso's neighbourhoods is a long dirt and paved road, boarded on one side by a private golf course. There is no sidewalk for people to walk on when entering or leaving the neighbourhood, and alongside the road there is high grass and large amounts of garbage. It is dangerous for the pedestrians as cars pass by at high speeds. It is the responsibility of the private golf course to build a sidewalk, however the owners deliberately don't build it, despite citations from the city government to clean up the area.

The lack of a sidewalk not only implies a violation of regulations and municipal ordinances but also the lack of maintenance of the adjacent property to the space implies a serious factor of risk to the neighbour's health, violating the locals' constitutional right to live in a healthy environment.

The dirt and the garbage in general, that accumulates each day in front of the golf course and the grass in the place where the sidewalk should be, is a hazard for public health, there are rats and insects which are susceptible to spread diseases. On top of it there are foul odours from the garbage and the absolute lack of aesthetics of this sector are seriously offensive to the entire community of the neighbourhood.

We submitted a formal complaint to the city of Cordoba to try to solve this problem. After several comings and goings on Monday the 14th of April, a bulldozer started working to level the land and cleaning the garbage. This was a big step for us, but our struggle has not ended yet: we won't rest until the side walk is done and the golf course's owners are fined for their indifference.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

DÍA DE LA MEMORIA MARCH



The 24th of March 1976 was the 1st day of the military dictatorship in Argentina: “Día de la Memoria, la Verdad y la Justicia”.

Every year on this day human rights and justice marches takes place all around Argentina, involving the people but also a lot of workers’ unions, political groups, NGOs and communities (Indigenous ones for instance, but we also had the pleasure to see the Blas Pascal community, that we work with at the legal clinic!).

As a law and human rights organization, Projects Abroad and the volunteers attended the march in Córdoba, equipped with a Projects Abroad flag and our green t shirts. Starting from 6pm in the city center, the march went through different arteries of the city center of Cordoba under the slogans "for a united Latin America in popular democracy", “Nunca mas” (never again) and a lot more.



It was a truly great experience for the volunteers: the march was peaceful and had a very festive atmosphere, with a lot of drums, and people singing. In addition to be able to take part in a major cultural experience, it provided the volunteers a great view of part of the historical, political and social landscape through all the different waving flags and signs. It was very positive for the organization as well: people were asking us a lot of questions about Projects Abroad, and the work that we do. Attending the march was a really enriching for all of us!