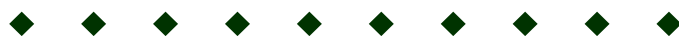


PROJECTS ABROAD ARGENTINA

LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT



Social Projects				Monitoring Human Rights
CeCAM <i>Girls Correctional</i>	Felisa Soaje <i>Girls Home</i>	Paulo Freire Escobar <i>Boys Correctional</i>	Quisquisacate <i>Girls Home</i>	Fundación G.A.N.A.S
Community Advocacy		Educational Activities & Office Research		
Blas Pascal neighbourhood		Human Rights Workshop	Legal Research Project	

Hola!

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2014! The Law & Human Rights project here in Argentina celebrated its first birthday on January 1st. We would like to thank all volunteers who have been a part of the program in the past year for all of their hard work and contributions to the program. We could not have done it without you!

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.

There have been a lot of new girls coming to CeCAM. All of them seem to get along well; we didn't feel any tension between them. This month, we have been trying to talk to the girls to get closer to them and to help them by knowing each other a bit more. At the beginning of the month, we also attended the physical education class with them, which was really fun. Although the girls sometimes complain, they all participate to the lesson and laughed a lot with the gym teacher.

Christmas time is probably a difficult moment for the girls, as most of them don't get to see their families. For that reason, we decided to make Christmas cards with them, so they could give it to someone they care for. During that activity, we realized that even though the girls didn't really show their feelings, they were indeed a bit sad during that period, missing their loved ones. We tried helping them with the making of the cards, helping them to draw, cut or color in whatever they needed. The girls seemed to like that activity, because they asked us if we could do it again, even though there was no special occasion.

By the end of December, summer holidays have started, so the girls don't really have activities planned during the day. As we have more time with them, we have started a new project: they asked us if we could paint a mural. Given that the girls seemed to enjoy the activities involving arts (such as the Christmas cards), we thought it might be a good idea; furthermore, this activity could help strengthen relationships between the girls, creating a kind of group. This also appeared as an opportunity to talk about human rights with the girls. When we started asking them what they would like, they all agreed on a quotation: « Hay que ponerle actitud a los sueños de la vida ». This sentence, meaning more or less that you should do everything to make your dreams come true, seemed really appropriate. While making a draft of the mural, we started talking about what were the dreams of the girls; most of them answered with simple things such as; peace, a nice family and security.

We are currently working on the mural, thinking about details such as the colors we are going to use and who is going to draw what. The girls are all really involved in this project, in their own, sometimes cheeky way.

QUISQUISACATE AND FELISA SOAJE

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 Felisa Soaje, another residential facility. There the girls are provided with meals and accommodation and attend school 5 days a week. Volunteers meet with the girls on a weekly basis.

In the past month, girls from both the Quisquisacate and Soaje Care Facilities have continued to participate in a Breathing Course held on Tuesday Nights. The course is a way for the girls to develop and practice skills to deal with their emotions in a positive way, and it provides a medium where they can share their thoughts, hopes and experiences from the past week with the group, without fear of judgment. The girls, under the guidance of an experienced instructor, participate in a combination of yoga techniques and relaxation skills, which are generally preceded by



some group based games such as '7 Up', which definitely foster some competitive Argentinian Spirit between the girls and the other volunteers! The Breathing Course continues to be a highlight of the week for the girls and hopefully the number of girls participating will continue to grow.

To celebrate the last scheduled course of 2013, the girls went with their instructor to the Plaza where they all had dinner together, which was undoubtedly a great way to end the year, for all involved!

Towards the end of December, both the Quizquis and Soaje girls participated in making cards for Navidad, for their friends, family and house mothers. The girls put hours into carefully crafted pictures of Christmas trees, presents, and Papá Noel, and were very excited to present them to various loved ones, including a few lucky volunteers! Many of the girls come from difficult backgrounds and this time of year has the potential to be quite trying. However, all the girls were able to periodically leave their respective care facilities for Navidad and spend it with friends or extended family members.

In January the girls have the opportunity to go on Summer Camp together, where they join with other facilities to spend in nature and relax before starting the year again in February.

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.



The last weeks of the year in Freire has been really quiet because of Christmas and New Year and we didn't have that many boys coming, but since it turned January we have had a lot more boys every day.

The main topic of January in Freire is "a safe and healthy environment" and as a part of that, we will be painting a mural in the garden, symbolizing a safe and healthy environment. Since all of the plants we have in the garden are placed just in front of the wall we will be painting, right now we are working hard in the garden to prepare another place for the plants, and move them so we will be able to stand in front of the wall and paint it without ruining any plants.

January is summer in Argentina, which means holiday! It is also seen as the typical month of summer-holiday and because of that, we are arranging a whole-day trip every Thursday during January for the boys in Freire, so they can enjoy the summer too.

On the trips, we are taking the boys to different places in the Sierras that are surrounding Córdoba, and they really seem to enjoy it! We are trying to go somewhere near the rivers or other places with water so the boys can go swimming and get cooled down, and just enjoy the summer.

While we are all playing and having fun we try to talk a bit to the boys about different things related to a safe and healthy environment – an example could be why not to throw garbage in the nature, which they clearly enjoy doing every time they get the chance, although I am not sure if they are doing it just because we tell them not to.

Until now, we have had two trips – on the first one we went to Cuesta Blanca where one of the employees has a house close to the river. We stayed the



whole day enjoyed the river, the pool, played a lot of ping-pong and made some really good burgers for lunch.

On the second trip we went to Alta Gracia, where we had a big picnic with homemade sandwiches, in a park near the river, and the boys went swimming and fishing in the river. The trips have been a huge success, and it is a pleasure to go with the boys because they are all so happy and they really seem to enjoy getting a bit outside of Córdoba!

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 Cordoba. 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.

For most of us, New Year's Eve usually means party with friends or family, celebrating the New Year with a nice meal and champagne. This year, when Victoria, our coordinator, suggested us we could help homeless people before going to party, it sounded like a really interesting experience. The idea was to help another organization, Fundación Ganas, give food to homeless people in Córdoba. Fundación Ganas is doing it twice a week and the volunteers of Projects Abroad sometimes help with it or interview the homeless people to understand better what their needs are.



Projects Abroad volunteers didn't have to prepare anything before going, but Victoria thought it might be nice to give the people a little present to celebrate the end of the year. Thus, during two afternoons, we made little New Year's cards we would give to them with a chocolate.

When we arrived on New Year's Eve, a lot of people were waiting, all of them seeming to be in a good mood. When Luís, the director of Fundación Ganas, came a bit later, adults started queuing for the food, children started coming to get Christmas presents and we started giving out our chocolates too. Everywhere, people were smiling, wishing happy New Year, saying thank you; some people even offered to share their food or drinks with us. By just listening to these voices, you wouldn't think they belonged to people who, for some of them, have been struggling for years to get a job or a shelter.

Once we were finished on the square where Fundación Ganas usually works, we went for a walk in the streets, looking for other people who might like a hot meal. There, the feeling was the same: everyone



was grateful, always nice to the volunteers, wishing them all the best. Most of the homeless people we met know Luís and seem to trust him; some of them were also really interested by the work the volunteers were doing, but also by the volunteers themselves, asking each one where they come from.

Although it was not a usual New Year's Eve for us, it turned out to be a nice experience. Sharing these moments with people who don't have anything was touching, truly rewarding and at the same time really enriching.

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 **Victoria Marton**, the Law & Human Rights Program Manager.*



It is a pleasure for me to announce that after four long months of hard work two communitarian alarms have been installed at the Blas Pascal community. It is very important to clarify that the alarms are not directly connected with the police station. The alarm system only works if the neighbors are committed to work together and willing to share and trust others in order to fight crime in the neighborhood and to protect their safety.

As you may imagine in accomplishing this goal, we had to work in detail on the creation and formation of a protocol, which all who paid for the alarm, would comply to. This started with the explanation of the very basic buttons of the remote control, and continued to discussing possible situations and how the neighbors should act and what to do. The alarm requires everyone involved being fully committed and this point was stressed throughout the past months.

Successfully we were able to establish all the necessary specifications for every one of the protocols assigned to the different neighbors connected by the same alarm network.

When everyone was on board and ready, we organized a meeting to deliver the remote controls and a packet of information with the protocol to all neighbors involved. To celebrate, we toasted and shared a tasty snack for the holiday season.

I have to be honest when I say that even though the police assured us these kinds of projects work in marginal neighborhoods, it is not always guaranteed to work! Each community is different and has its own needs and characteristics, and it is a big project to take on. You will never be 100% sure of the results until it is actually done and working.

So, after about 4 weeks of the alarms being installed in the neighborhood, I am happy to say that this seems to be the most useful idea we could ever have had!

As of yet the neighbors have not yet had to sound the alarm, (except only on New Year's Eve and as a cheap, convenient, loud replacement for fireworks), the alarms are working as "deterrent device", playing the role of scaring those who used to rob, gang, fight and race in the neighborhood.

So, amazingly all those neighbors who trusted us on this crazy and innovative idea are feeling not only safer but also more peaceful and relaxed considering from one day to the other those "disrespectful" started to respect them or at least the big white box with a loud speaker and a red light hanging on their heads!

Big enormous thanks to all the volunteers who participated actively in this project and you know what? This is changing people's lives!



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

LEGAL RESEARCH PROJECT

By Holly Cordell, Australia

The Legal Research Project I worked on during my time in Córdoba involved two stages. The first task was to make a comparative analysis of three countries, Argentina, my home country of Australia, and a third country, in the area of administrative detention for non-criminal acts. In Argentina, focusing predominantly on Córdoba, Australia, and Georgia, I investigated the prevalence of detention for misdemeanors or acts that are not considered to be indictable offences, and whether there were similar provisions in each of the three countries. I discovered that there were similar parallels between Georgia's Code of Administrative Offences and the 'Codigo de Faltas de la Provincia de Cordoba', or Misdemeanors Code. Protections under Georgia's Code of Administrative offenses are weaker and often vague compared to similar safeguards under Georgia's Criminal Procedure Code. The severity of the penalty for administrative offences, where someone can be imprisoned for up to 90 days means that, according to international law, a person should be afforded the same rights to due process and fair trial protections as they would be under prosecution of a criminal charge. The Georgian Code of Administrative offences are often used as a tool of social control to detain political activists or those opposing the government. In Córdoba, the Police act as the only sovereign applier of the Misdemeanors Code, which grants them much wider powers than those granted in the field of criminal offences. As in Georgia, there appears to be a large margin of discretion for the police to arbitrarily detain people, particular young people from the lower socio-economic areas of Córdoba. Police regularly detain teenagers and young people under the illusion of a 'breach' of an article of the Code, although often this is simply a tool to run an antecedent check while he or she is detained.

The second part of the research task was a more general look at the motives behind preventative detention in general, and a comparison between the outcomes of preventative detention versus detention for crimes that have been actually committed. There is no standard, internationally agreed-upon definition of preventative detention. The argument for preventative detention is based around the notions of risk and protection of the community, balanced with the individual liberties of the person. My conclusions were that the risk of the use of preventative detention as a weapon of oppression and the violation of rights of the person are not outweighed by the benefit of safety to the community. However, there is a considerable amount of legal reasoning to suggest otherwise and therefore its regulation is of utmost importance to the International Community.

WORKSHOPS

About every two weeks the Law & Human Rights volunteers hold a workshop open to all volunteers. The workshops address a variety of topics and aim to teach all volunteers about important themes related to the work the Law & Human Rights volunteers are doing both in Argentina and on a larger scale.

On the 2nd of January Sophie Locandro (Australia) and Stine Hansen (Denmark) held a human rights workshop about crimes against humanity. With two weeks to prepare, the girls found it to be a bit difficult to concentrate about focusing on the workshop, since there were many activities going on for Christmas and the New Year.

Sophie had did some work on human rights back in Australia so she had a very good idea about how to handle



it, and I let her do the leading while I was trying to catch up with my research. We got many materials from Martin to help us get an idea about how we should present the subject and to get a better insight in what Crimes against humanity is.

We started our presentation with short definitions and a description of the consequences of each of the crimes; crimes against humanity, terrorism, war crimes, genocide and grave breaches, which mainly are the same types of crimes but which it is really important to be able to separate from each other since they have different consequences. Example: Does the state have a duty to prosecute in case of terrorism, war crimes or genocide – while in case of crimes against humanity and grave breaches, the state does not have a duty to prosecute, which means that many of the persecutors of these crimes never gets to a trial.

Next, we tried to give some examples of the different crimes, but it was really difficult since we discovered that in a lot of cases the persecutor has been committing more than one type of crime at the same time.

We ended up discussing the effects of amnesty, exile and asylum; why in some cases there was chosen peace instead of justice, and why they could not get both.