

PROJECTS ABROAD ARGENTINA

LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT



Social Projects				
Basta de Trata Human Trafficking & Trade	Quisquisacate Girls Home	Felisa Soaje Girls Home	G.A.N.A.S. Homeless Foundation	CeCAM Correctional Facility
Legal Team		Community Advocacy		
Legal Clinic & Research		Blas Pascal Neighbourhood		

SOCIAL PROJECTS

BASTA DE TRATA

AUGUST

Presentation on labour human trafficking

This month the collaboration between Projects Abroad and the NGO Basta De Trata focused on the preparation of a presentation about human trafficking and especially labour human trafficking, for a group of immigrants who have come to Argentina looking for a job and in general better living conditions. Since it is mainly these kinds of people who are in danger of becoming victims of labour human trafficking - the so called "modern form of slavery" - it was important for us volunteers to focus on how to recognize this phenomenon, how to prevent it and where to find help in case of need. The day of the presentation is next week therefore most of the work has already been done, there is plenty of information and we just have to make the presentation the clearest and most effective we can. It consists of an introduction about the general concept of human trafficking, its definition and then a deeper focus on labour human trafficking with the help of stories and experiences told by those who have been victims.



Later on the presentation will discuss the visible indicators to recognize labour human trafficking as well as few useful questions to make everybody more aware of it. Thirdly, we will focus on Argentina in particular: where this phenomenon mostly takes place, which are the sectors where those people are exploited the most and what is the real legislation about this issue. We will finally give contacts of organizations and hotlines that are very useful both when somebody is a victim and when he or she just notices strange and suspicious behaviour.

SEPTEMBER

Basta de Trata at Nuevo Progreso

Projects Abroad has joined forces with the organisation Basta de Trata to hold an event concentrating on labour trafficking. Basta de Trata has a lot of experience in this domain as they specialise in helping people who have been victims of human trafficking. Labour trafficking is just one type of human trafficking but one which affects people living in poorer areas, especially those who do not have the legal right to work in Argentina (i.e. they do not have a work permit). It is an important topic to discuss because once a person has become a victim it is very hard to escape.

Therefore, we are putting on an event on Saturday 11th October 2014 to educate the residents of Nuevo Progreso on how to avoid becoming a victim of labour trafficking. A couple of volunteers have been going out to Nuevo Progreso to promote the upcoming event. It has been a good chance to learn more about the community.

The presentation aims to centre on the labour trafficking warning signs as well as the steps one can take to avoid falling into the trap. We will also be giving out useful contacts and hotlines for people who believe they might be a victim or know someone who might be or if they have any general concerns. We hope this will be a success and we may look into holding the same event in another neighbourhood soon.

A month in Quisquisacate – an unexpected reality (Anna Panarella)

I arrived in Quisquisacate at the beginning of August 2014. I started working with the girls with two other volunteers, both from the United States. I am sure I will never forget my first day there: I do not know if one should have some expectations before entering in that place, but what I do know is that any worries one might have can vanish immediately. In fact, the girls always welcome the volunteers with huge smiles, hugs and kisses. It is possible to see that they really care about our coming and our activities which is inspiring.

Working in a place like Quisquisacate it is not always easy or predictable. In fact, this facility hosts 10 girls, because the courts, after having considered many other possibilities such as the custody of the children in other families or their own relatives, decided that this was the best choice for them after they suffered for sexual abuses in their original families.

What is to be remembered, is that our aim there is not about make the girls have fun three times a week, which could be way easier given that their ages are between 10 and 15 years - but is rather more about giving them the right tools to understand themselves and the world around them better; it is about giving them hope despite their past stories; it is about teaching them that they must have self-esteem and trust in other people.

In order to achieve all these tasks the key is **patience**. We have to consider that we are dealing with children and never forget it, because the way of dealing with problems can vary a lot from the way we are used to. It is not possible to sit on a chair and start speaking about friendship, for example, because we would rapidly lose their attention. It is much better, instead, to plan other activities to do at the same time.

We planned many activities in order to develop their self-esteem, their concept of friendships and healthy-relationships. For example, we watched a movie together, Disney's *The Princess and the Frog* and then we organised a game to speak about the themes of the film. Another successful activity was to make them write their feelings about other girls of the facility which permitted their creativity and friendship to literally explode.



Furthermore, I find that it is not always needed to have a perfectly organised plan. In fact, it happens sometimes that the existing relations between the girls disturb the activity planned. For example, it is possible that they do not want to do anything together because they argued during the day. In those cases it might be better to talk with them in order to understand what is going on and establish a good relationship with them.

I find that Quisquisacate surprises me day after day. Working with those children can be very beautiful and really hard at the same time and the atmosphere can change in a very short time. This makes this experience challenging, but for sure the girls, with all their dreams, smiles, hugs and hopes are worth the effort.

All the girls that live in 'Quisqui' sadly lack the innocence typical in children. Some of the girls have been abused, some have lived with domestic violence, others are orphans and have been abandoned because of poverty etc.

As many of the girls come from backgrounds with unstable family structures, they are at a high risk of being victims of further human rights abuses in the future, and potential unemployment.

We strive to provide activities and opportunities for the girls to live "normal lives" as children for example, helping them build their self-esteem, teaching them about healthy relationships and informing them of their rights as a child, girl and of their general rights as a human being.

This month we have been focusing on healthy versus unhealthy relationships – It was both surprising and encouraging to learn that all the girls know the difference between the two!

In order to maintain the girls' attention, all the activities regarding healthy and unhealthy relationships have included fun and interactive games with a touch of depth and seriousness and the result of participation has been fantastic, more than half of the girls participated in each activity!

In October we are planning on educating the girls about healthy versus unhealthy lifestyles as many of the girls are not at a healthy weight. We will continue developing fun activities in order to get the girls' attention and hopefully the amount of participation will increase as well.

Fortunately this time of year is characteristic of beautiful weather, which makes it possible for us to plan more outdoor activities in which we can implement sport games and challenge their fitness etc.

SOAJE **AUGUST**

Felisa Soaje is a residential care facility for girls between the ages of 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. The volunteers at the Law and Human Rights office meet with the girls on a weekly basis.

This month at Soaje has been something of a rollercoaster. With the continuing influx and outflow of both volunteers and girl residents developing relationships with these girls can be hard.

One of the most positive aspects that I have found, however, is that, on the whole, the girls are more than happy to accept the volunteers who come to see them, which is lovely to see.

Having just finished the sexual education workshops with the girls (which were extremely successful as we saw a couple of weeks after when we were *still* getting asked sexual health questions!) we decided to move forward with teaching the girls about human and children's rights.

Despite usually being very receptive to the workshops, this week we were disappointed to see the girls pay much less attention. However, despite their lack of interest in our topic, we were delighted to see one of the two girls laughing and chatting with another, as she was fairly new and had had a lot of trouble adjusting to life in Soaje.

For the rest of the month with the girls we plan on re-addressing their career goals and aspirations, and helping them map out in their own minds an idea of what they need to do to achieve these goals. With the four new girls arriving last week, the dynamic of the group will undoubtedly change again, so we will look forward to the challenge!

SEPTEMBER

'A strong unity'

The girls have been living at Soaje from anywhere between a few days to a few years. When the girls turn 18, they are either moved to another facility or are reunited with their parents/family depending on the decision of the court.

Like the girls from Quisquizacate, many of them come from backgrounds with domestic violence, abuse and unstable family structures. Unfortunately they don't have a happy and innocent childhood to look back on, but instead they have been forced to deal with a lot more difficulties and heartaches than anyone deserves!

The girls are all in their teens and a lot of us know just how problematic, hard and emotional that is. The thought of a two digit number of teenage girls under the same roof sounds terrifying to anyone, but these amazing girls have an incredibly and admirably strong unity together. They care for each other and there is a very nice and positive energy between them. Although they all have "heavy luggage to carry around", it is truly amazing to watch their caring support and love for each other; they stick together and are a strong team!

We aim to provide activities and opportunities for the girls to live normal lives as teenagers, and conduct human rights educational programs to empower the girls, help them with their self-images and self-esteem. This month we have been focusing on healthy relationships as these girls are at the age where they start having relationships. It is critical for these girls to know what is healthy and take care of themselves in these vulnerable situations. It is crucial that they know their rights as young women, that they do not repeat family history and that they have the knowledge and strength to break the vicious cycle!

There has recently been a horrible case here in Córdoba where a woman unfortunately died and the daughter miraculously survived. This horrible case is about domestic violence, about women's rights and male chauvinism, about the police actions or rather their passivity in relation to the case, about corruption and politics. The girls at Soaje were all emotionally moved by it and they still follow the case closely. We, the Human Right's Team, attended a huge emotional demonstration in the centre of Córdoba supporting the mother and daughter, demanding justice for them and women in general and adding the injustice of the corruption of the government and police to the agenda. We wished the girls at Soaje could have joined us, but our request was unfortunately declined.

In October we will focus on the girls' realistic future aspirations, visions and goals in regards to education, careers and jobs. We will help them prepare CV's, cover letters and applications as well as teach them about appearance, prepare them for interviews, how to act and what to wear etc.

I feel incredibly privileged to be let into the lives of these wonderful girls and to be allowed to try to influence them in a positive way. I wish with all my heart that I can manage to help them and make a difference for them, they truly deserve it!

Demonstration: “Justicia para Paola y Martina”

Monday the 29th of September the organisation Basta De Trata and Projects Abroad joined a very emotional demonstration in the centre of Córdoba.

In the week prior, Paola Acosta and her daughter Martina (one year and nine months old) disappeared and were found days later in the sewer in Córdoba. Sadly it was too late for Paola, but little Martina miraculously survived – she is now well and has left the hospital to be with her family.



Unfortunately the police refused to help the family to search for Paola and Martina during the critical first 48hrs, arguing that Paola had ‘just run away’ and taken her daughter with her. The only suspect in the case is Gonzalo Lizarralde, Martina’s biological father, who is now awaiting his trial.



Hundreds of people, Paola and Martina’s family and friends, political organisations, NGO’s and residents of Córdoba, joined forces walking in the streets of Córdoba with banners, candles, songs and music, frustration, compassion, unity and love. It was truly amazing and powerful, emotional and beautiful, everyone was very moved by the case and about human rights and justice in general.

At the end of the demonstration, Paola’s sister stood in front of all of us talking, yelling and crying about her sister and little niece, about the suspect Gonzalo Lizarralde, about the police, about corruption, about violence and male chauvinism. It was a very emotional. We would like to encourage all future volunteers to join demonstrations here in Córdoba - It is such a powerful experience of unity and love.

If you would like to read more about the case, click on the link below:

<http://www.lavoz.com.ar/interactivo/interactivo-el-caso-de-paola-y-martina>

FUNDACIÓN G.A.N.A.S AUGUST

As an organization committed to aiding the vulnerable, Foundation Ganas aims to provide food, and clothes to homeless people in Cordoba. It is on the basis of extending opportunities to the homeless that Projects Abroad volunteers seek to actively help the Foundation Ganas. Each week volunteers help the staff of Ganas by distributing food and clothes, as well as gathering personal details. These include asking for contact details as well as asking what items (such as shoes and clothing) the people may need.

When one volunteers with Ganas, what is most evident is the dedication and commitment of the staff as well as Projects Abroad volunteers. The staff is consistently active and always on hand to give assistance to the homeless, which is why meals are swiftly distributed to those in need each week. Projects Abroad volunteers are also very active in interacting with the homeless and asking the people about their needs such as food, clothes, shoes and medicine. With this strong effort to communicate with the homeless through questionnaires, Projects Abroad volunteers help to concentrate Ganas’ resources in helping the vulnerable.

In order to maximize Ganas effectiveness in feeding and clothing the homeless, a possible idea would be to send volunteers further afield within the city to attend to more homeless people and discover what their particular needs are. With Projects Aboard volunteers recording more questionnaires, more homeless people across Cordoba would have a direct link of communication with Ganas, to help them with food, clothing and shelter. Overall, it is a credit to volunteers of both organizations that food and clothing is consistently distributed to those in need, considering that Ganas is entirely run by volunteers.



SEPTEMBER

Hearing about how difficult it is to stand before a homeless person, wanting him/her to give answers to our interviews for research, we considered what could be done to create a more friendly and relaxed atmosphere between the “interviewer” and the homeless person.

We decided to start the interview by introducing ourselves and Projects Aboard, ensuring the person that we understand living on the street, must be a hard and stressful situation to be in and explaining that we are present in order to offer some basis help e.g. getting an ID number, medicine, clothes etc and that in order to be able to help we will need some information, then asking if they are ready to proceed to the interview.

The Ganas handbook has been reorganized so that an index has been added in the front of the handbook with reference to the pages in the handbook. The text itself has been organised similarly and the subtitles have been made more visible. Wherever you are in the handbook by the numbers you will be able to check if you are in the right page.

In this way it will be easier to navigate through the handbook to find a solution to the problem in hand.

CECAM ARTICLE AUGUST



This month CeCAM has seen a lot of new girls come in. At the beginning the volunteers were working with only three girls, but by the end this number had risen to eight or nine. Not all the girls participated in all the activities, so it was still manageable.

We finished the sexual education workshop and it was a success, the girls were all genuinely interested in the information we gave them, and although the guards did not allow us to do the final lesson, I think the girls definitely learnt a lot.

We also did self-esteem exercises with the girls and talked about ways we can raise our confidence, or make ourselves feel better when we are down. This was good because the girls had a lot of nice things to say about each other, and really enjoyed decorating their compliments sheet.

We also started teaching Italian and English to the girls, which they are very interested in, because so many of them would like to travel when they get out of CeCAM. We did not do structured lessons, but we asked the girls what phrases they would like to know, and taught them in that way. I think the girls are really enjoying learning other languages.

We then did a general human rights day, where we went through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which led us onto our next activity, because the girls told us of some of their experiences with the police, and it was really quite terrible. As a result, we decided to do an exercise on police powers, and we talked about our rights, and what the police can and cannot do. I had not realized before how much of a problem there is in Argentina with the police. This was a really good opportunity for the girls to open up to us about their experiences, but it was also quite shocking as nearly all of them suffered from some form of abuse at the hands of the police.



LEGAL TEAM

LEGAL CLINIC & RESEARCH

In 2014 a Federal Law prolonged the period for asking for a pension especially for the vulnerable people in Argentina, who might not have been able to work enough years (30) to be entitled to a pension.

A fact sheet regarding the new possibility is in the process of being made in English for the volunteers and in Spanish to give to the people whom we meet e.g. in our legal clinic in the township Blas Pascal.

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

BLAS PASCAL

SEPTEMBER

Blas Pascal is a mixture of governmental housing and makeshift housing. The government bought and owns the land so there have been problems due to this; the government sees Blas Pascal and neighbouring barrios as a piece of land, not a community. It is not only for the residents of Blas Pascal but also for residents of the neighbouring barrio Nuevo Progreso (a Peruvian and Paraguayan area).

The Law and Human Rights Office has been working with Blas Pascal on an array of topics to educate and empower them to create goals to help improve their quality of life.



We have been working on creating a commission for the area. As of yet, there are no street names in this area but we have been working on trying to change this among other things. It is a long process but we are now seeing some light at the end of the tunnel.

On Wednesday evenings at 6pm in the Copa de Leche Community Centre, Blas Pascal holds a meeting that the whole community can attend. Back in March of this year, Projects Abroad initiated these meetings. These meetings give the members of Blas Pascal the chance to air their grievances. Recent issues have involved disturbances from teenagers in the area as well as noise complaints.



Also, on a Thursday evening at 6pm in Copa de Leche Community Centre in Blas Pascal, Martin, along with any legal volunteers, holds a free legal clinic. This is open to the entire community and gives them an opportunity to discuss any legal worries they may have. The majority of the cases recently have been to do with housing rights and employment issues. The legal volunteers assist by taking notes, which are used as a reference back in the office.