

# 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			Legal Research Projects	

# Hola!

We keep on working hard in the Law & Human Rights office! Thank you for your ongoing support and for all of the hard work of the volunteers. We hope you enjoy the latest newsletter! to the program.

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## 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.*

A new year a new beginning, and a change in ambience was a lift to morale of the girls and the volunteers. The idea for a mural was slowly turning into a reality; "To make your dreams come true, you have to make them happen" - A message to insight thoughts and dreams once they leave CeCam. For the volunteers it was an opportunity to talk about what the girls wanted later in life. The response, often similar, was the ambition to create their own family, alluding to their craving for stability and security. For the girls, it also gave an opportunity to hear about what the volunteers wanted, offering new perspectives of



other options that lie outside of CeCAM. They often had many questions about where we came from and listened with great interest about our lives. We felt it was imperative to represent family in the mural, and after much discussion we decided to use a tree to be a symbol of family and to include the names of the residents present at the time. The first day we were met with much enthusiasm, everyone wanted a turn to paint, and not to mention they all had new ideas about what to do next. In the following weeks the mural was well underway, and us, the volunteers, had to calm the girls as fights were irrupting, emotions running high alongside the temperature. Further along, involvement was declining, but we got constant support from a few girls for the project and by the end everyone was happy to see a new mural.

Following the completion of the mural we began other activities. We first decided to teach the girls how to write a CV. It was obvious that the activity needed to be more creative, as the girls were not as enthusiastic about it. For the next day we planned a more creative activity, suggesting to the girls to brainstorm what is happening in their current world and what they want in their futures. The girls got involved in this activity opening up to us about what they were struggling with, concluding it into a rewarding experience for both parties. We also discussed it would be very interesting for the girls to tell us about where we are from, we drew maps and brought pictures of the types of dance, music and food from the respective countries and showed the girls where we come from. They also shared their food, dance and the culture of Argentina.

### 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.*

Activities resumed at Quisquisacate in February, and two volunteers, Kristina Rasmussen (Denmark) and Carla Mueller (Germany) began to work there. The beginning was fairly difficult, as the girls seemed to need time to accept new people, so they were slightly distant which seemed a bit like they were uninterested. However, after seeing them more and more, they have started to accept us and the relationship between the girls and us is growing stronger. This is a beautiful process and surely in a few weeks, we will be really close to the girls.



For several hours, the girls participated in making and creating faces and figures from colourful play dough. They seemed to really enjoy this activity, as it allowed them to be creative in a relaxed atmosphere. Music was playing in the background and even though not all girls participated the whole time, they were having fun. However, it is clear, that some girls have difficulties with creative activities or are scared to show their results to other girls or to us, the volunteers. As this is most likely due to a lack of self-esteem, we are working on creating activities for the following weeks to enhance self-esteem.

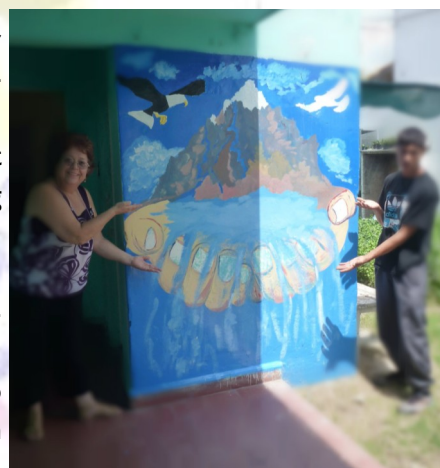
Another activity that the girls actively participated in was making collages. We brought big, blank sheets of paper, along with pens and magazine pages. They were cutting out names, pictures and hearts; and drew small things with the colourful markers. Some even wrote love letters to boys from their school. We brought small candies, which they seemed to love. Therefore we had the idea that next week we will bake something with them, probably Alfajores. This will also be something new to us, as Alfajores are not common in Europe, so it should be really fun. We are definitely looking forward to getting to know the girls better and planning and carrying out creative and fun activities!

## 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.*

During the month of February, Paulo Freire returned for the new year with many new projects and visions for 2014. One of the main projects is setting up a radio station and magazine publication which will be run directly from the centre. This is an exciting new development for everyone involved, however; this month revolves around setting up the centre to be fully operational by March for the coming year.

During the first week we visited a number of families, conducting interviews to assess whether the youths will be able to be enrolled in the school system or placed in employment. If not, they will need to attend the centre for the full year. The rest for the week was taken up by cleaning and renovating the centre. It was great to chat with the young men and share stories and experiences, whilst being involved in the cleaning process and then sharing a meal all together around the dining table. The centre tries to instil a sense of family and belonging so the young men can learn how to socialise and feel part of the community, building their self-esteem. It will be great to follow their progress throughout the coming months.



## 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 returned to Felisa Soaje in February to continue working with the girls in different activities to help teach them about their human rights. During the previous month the girls had summer holiday and traditionally enjoyed their vacation at summer camp. Hence, nothing was planned by volunteers for the Soaje girls during January. However, time goes fast, and suddenly we welcomed February and the girls back to the facility. Hevi Dawody and Charlotte Lowe, are the new volunteers from the Law and Human Rights office that would, during the coming months, work with the girls.

The volunteers were enthusiastic and looking forward to meeting them. The first day at the facility was primarily an introduction day; where the Soaje girls and the volunteers had the opportunity to introduce themselves and to get to know each other more. The girls welcomed the new volunteers with open arms and seemed to be excited to know more about them. Usually the girls from Soaje go to the plaza as a Wednesday activity and, luckily, they wanted to go to plaza during the introduction day as well. This was a perfect opportunity for the volunteers to know the girls better and fortify a relationship with them. They had plenty of time to discuss and talk during the walk and enjoyed some hours at the park. It seemed that the girls liked the day's activity and that they enjoyed each other's company. Since the fundamental purpose is to strike a balance between educational, creative and relaxed activities, the volunteers are required to plan different forms of activities that continually are human rights related. Hence, the week after, the volunteers had planned to let the girls be artistically creative and create collages that reflected their fun times during the summer holiday. The goal was to let the girls be creative in their own sense and interpret it as they preferred. Thus, the result was clearly different but personal and lovely. During the coming weeks, the volunteers will continue to schedule activities that aim to strengthen their self-esteem, their future, their positive thinking and, evidently, their human 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 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.*

The Projects Abroad Human Rights Office helps with the pragmatic part of the association such as participating with preparing meals for the homeless community when necessary. The main objective is to analyse the current situation these individuals are living in, in order to help them in the best and most efficient way possible. The volunteers of the Human Rights Office are currently investigating this through the help of a list of various different questions that have been thoroughly thought out beforehand. They cover a range of fields from full name and DNI, whether they receive social benefits or have a job; to medical questions and HIV tests. This will enable us to classify their vital needs and help us aid them in the most logical and efficient way possible.

There are usually two or three Human Rights volunteers that are assigned to this placement. In the past month these volunteers included Charlotte Lowe, Michelle Ceolin and recently Constantin Louven. The Human Rights Office makes a point of involving all of their volunteers in this project at least once during their stay here.





It is evident that Fundacion G.A.N.A.S is a very popular social placement here and many volunteers are very keen on participating in it. This is essentially due to the fact that there is a real relationship that is formed between the volunteers and the local people. With time, friendships are formed and the volunteers are warmly welcomed and become totally at ease. Being involved in this placement usually leaves the volunteers not only overwhelmed with the various stories they hear, but makes them feel that they are really making a necessary difference. It is definitely an eye opening experience for everyone that has the chance to experience this social project.



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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.*

In February we continued with the weekly meetings with the neighbours of Blas Pascal, Nuevo Progreso and 28 de Noviembre communities where we continued discussions about security, problems with garbage on the sidewalks and the consequences of that, the newly installed alarms, and the ongoing problem of water pressure in the neighbours' houses.



As reported previously, in January we installed two community alarms and neighbours can say that the situation has improved and the citizens overall feel safer. In order to know for sure what changes they have observed and what improvements we can make, volunteers are doing a survey with all the participants on the project. We will come back to you with the results next month!

The next topic addressed the massive amounts of garbage found on the side of the main road that you take to exit Blas Pascal community. The garbage overtakes the sidewalks and as a result the people must walk on the busy road, thus making it dangerous to pass. With the help of Martin and Marcia, we presented a legal claim to the local government, for them to solicit the neighbouring Golf Club

and owners of this land, to take responsibility and clean up the area, making the sidewalk and therefore making for a safer area for people to walk.

Volunteers also helped Martin, delivering door by door, invitations aimed to advertise the free legal clinic we run on Thursdays.

Last but not least, our lawyers, Martin and Marcia, are working hard in trying to find out a legal way formally create the Blas Pascal community as a civil association, where the neighbours would be in charge, in order to be able to rent the saloon we use for the meeting, and use the money for improvements on the building.

# EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

## LEGAL RESEARCH PROJECT

### GENDER IDENTIFICATION IN ARGENTINA AND LATIN AMERICA

*By Charlotte Lowe (France) and Ama Somaratna (Australia)*

The Projects Abroad Law and Human Rights Office makes a point of assigning a majority of volunteers to a research project to work on throughout their work placement in Argentina. The subject of these investigations usually depends on the placement and area that you are interested in, as well as the needs of the office at the time.

I am currently working on a joint Legal Research Project with another volunteer, Ama Somaratna (Australia), on the topic of Gender Identification in Argentina and Latin America. This definitely links to our relative interests and experiences due to the fact that Ama is working at CeCam, a correctional facility for girls between the ages of 14 and 20-years-old, and I am working at Soaje, a residential care facility for girls aged 14 to 17 who have been ordered by the court to reside there as their biological parents are not deemed fit to care for them. Our objective in this investigation is to analyse the development and progress of gender rights throughout the past hundred years, specifically in Argentina and Latin America through key and revolutionary law cases.

#### The Meaning of Gender Identity:

This first section will be essentially an epistemological account of gender with its perplexities such as the differentiation between sex and gender. In addition to this, I will try to depict the development of the meaning of gender throughout the decades and the difference between our contemporary view and the past perspectives and misconceptions. This part of my research will include themes such as biological determinism and feminist ideologies with reference to essentially key philosophers.

#### Historical Context:

There is quite a defined half way line in the past hundred years when it concerns gender identification in Argentinian history. The first part is nearly exclusively focused on women's rights such as the women's suffrage and the right to divorce (which was firstly enforced in 1954 but was put on hold in 1956 after the coup of the "Revolución Libertadora"). It was a thoroughly modern age that had begun during Perón's first two mandates as President concerning not only women's rights, due to the deep influence of his wife Eva, but especially towards the working class. I am keen to deepen my research during the time of the 1940s and the many gender and socio-political issues at the time.

The second part of the past century however, was strongly concerned with gay and transsexual rights such as same sex marriage. This is a very contemporary and topical issue which Argentina has been a strong advocate in contrast with its deep Christian background. This was concretised when, in May 2012, they adopted the Gender Identity Trans People Act; officially letting transsexuals change their gender identity without needing them to change any physical aspect of themselves. This defiant jolt in global history is a progression that even most western countries have not achieved yet.

This last case will be the focus of Ama's legal based research, as well as the key topic in our workshop that we will be doing in the next month.

My aim is to enquire on these complex issues and try and work out the great paradox that is so present in this beautiful country. How can a country be so revolutionary, yet so out-dated when concerning gender rights? How has it made such magnificent progress concerning gay rights, but still abortion is illegal? Hopefully I will achieve an understanding of some of these underlined complexities of this topic.

#### Key Dates:



- 23rd September 1947: Women's Suffrage in Argentina
- 3rd June 1987: Divorce Law in Argentina
- 15 July 2010: Same Sex Marriage Law in Argentina
- 9th May 2012: The Gender Identity and Health Comprehensive Care for Trans People Act

## IMMIGRANTS AND NATIONAL DOCUMENTS

*By Constantin Louven, Germany*

Along with my Human Rights Project, in which I actively commit myself to help and elucidate less fortunate people, I am currently working on a legal Investigation. This investigation usually tends to be of a more academic nature. With my investigation, I am intending to become more familiar with the migrant issues which are increasingly becoming serious in Argentina. A considerable number of immigrants from other Latin-American countries still do not possess any sort of an Argentinian Identification Document. Consequently, it becomes disproportionally difficult to be legally employed, having not only effects on the immigrants but also on the domestic economy. My current and first task is to translate the procedure of how to get into possession of Argentinian documents for each, specific country.