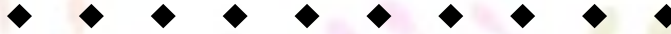


PROJECTS ABROAD ARGENTINA

LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS

...recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

—Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948



WHAT'S INSIDE...

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The Law & Human Rights Office in Argentina seeks to address human rights abuse problems, and tries to help all people understand their rights.

We attempt to address the entire framework surrounding human rights law in Argentina, inter-relating and encompassing three main goals: to raise awareness of human rights (Education and Awareness); to monitor vulnerable areas (Human Rights Monitoring); and to resolve human rights abuses (Abuse Resolution).

The office has organized a program composed of different projects. Each project is orientated to work with specific problematic areas related to

Human Rights Abuses which refer to certain individuals, groups, families or communities abused or in need of assistance.

We are committed to teamwork; meaning that we strive to share information, knowledge and ideas, to study together, help the partner organisations, and in some cases to plan and intervene as a team.

During their time in Argentina, our volunteers are involved in researching and collecting documents which support the project they are working on, compiling reports, translating documents, checking English text and editing and translating reports. On top of this, volunteers are also involved in planning projects with specific activities for a community or institution (intervening with beneficiaries).

Our office is four months old now, so we are still trying different projects, methods and techniques. We are also looking for new associate partners, with the aim of working together.

We are extremely grateful to all the volunteers who have already joined us in this first period, and patiently made their contribution.

We all together work on a day-to-day basis and together we always try to come up with new ideas to create a better program. We are waiting and anxious for new volunteers to come!!!

Remember any person can play a role in achieving people's rights fulfilment... and the work, or the word of only one person to help others can change a life.

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKSHOPS!

One of our objectives as an office is to educate Projects Abroad volunteers about fundamental rights, human rights abuse in Argentina, and possible interventions or actions to be taken in cases of working with individuals, families or communities that are victims of abuse.

We encourage Law & Human Rights' volunteers to educate and empower not only victims of abuse, individuals, families, groups, or communities in need of assistance (recipients) but also staff partners and Projects Abroad volunteers (working in other projects).

It is important to consider that our volunteers are working with people of all backgrounds, especially people who have had family issues (abuse, violence, low incomes). This was the main topic that we spoke about in our first workshop.

The Law & Human Rights volunteers held the second workshop where they discussed the rights of children and adolescents. The volunteers discussed the real life application of these rights in Argentina and their application in their specific placements. Common themes included the value of education, a



secure family environment and support networks, and building awareness and education at an early intervention stage. Volunteers developed a workshop to explain these ideas based on De Bono's theory. Each white hand represented a right, each black hand represented the consequences of not having that right, each yellow hand represented the policies that are in place, each red hand represented the importance of having that right and each blue hand represented where we can go from here. Volunteers explained the significance of each hand and stuck it on the wall, making a tree that represents the current situation for children in Argentina.



OUR PROJECTS

BLAS PASCAL

Blas Pascal is a peripheral community of government housing built in 2009 by the Cordoba government, as well as an inner community of makeshift housing built by the dwellers themselves. Prior to the existence of the outer slum, the residents were living in shanties along the river; however in 2003 they successfully petitioned for proper accommodation arrangements. The families along the river were divided into 4 groups and 1 of these groups formed the outer slum. In total there are approximately 100 families living in the slum.

Blas Pascal is located behind the University of Blas Pascal and at the end of Rafael Nunez, about 45 minutes from the centre. The estate is built in a square formation with the outer slum on one border and a large green area at the other and next to the outer slum is a park (*plaza*) and the salon (*consejo territorial*). Projects Abroad has been working for a while now with this community. We own a Care Project called *Copa de Leche*, the community is grateful for the work that our volunteers have done there.

The Law & Human Rights Office in Argentina is starting a community project in this slum. Following the same goals that we have in the general program of the office (educating and empowering, monitoring and abuse resolution), but considering all the necessary specification about methods and techniques needed for community level intervention.

What we've done is diagnose the situation about abuse, needs and general context through different visits, observation, interviews, participation in tasks

at *Copa de Leche*, and reunions with neighbours.

Some of the results that we are still analysing: while education in Argentina is legally compulsory until the age of 17, many children simply cease attending school due to drug problems and other delinquency issues. There is a limited monitoring process. This leads to further problems i.e. a cycle whereby children never complete their education, never leave the community, have children, and repeat the cycle. Most of the people residing in Blas Pascal are either full time homemakers or transient workers (i.e. they work for a single day for a set amount, with no guarantee of further work). There is a serious lack of legal representation in the community: people living in Blas Pascal feel that they are unable to obtain legal assistance or government assistance with regards to problems in their neighbourhood. For example, obtaining land titles, obtaining legitimate access to water and electricity etc.

Possible resolutions: developing an after school program for the adolescents and other members of the community, with movie nights, sports placements, various classes; liaising with professional organisations to develop workshops with topics such as drugs, family / domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, pre-pregnancy care, post-pregnancy care, sex education, and creating a mentorship process. Also liaising with licensed lawyers to provide legal advice, and assisting the community to access government channels to make their views known.

Our volunteers are working pretty hard researching, analysing, describing, observing, getting in touch with necessary people in the government to clarify specific information for the neighbours.



LA CASA DE RONALD MCDONALD

The Ronald McDonald House Charities is an NGO whose objective is to provide comfort, safety and advocacy in a home-like environment for families with critically ill or injured children. They prioritize places in the house for families who have to travel to obtain treatment, to those who cannot afford to stay in a hotel or hostel. As the families live far away and as the children need a lot of medical attention, sometimes at short notice, the service the Ronald McDonald House Charity provides is invaluable to these families. It enables them to seek medical attention easily when there is a need as the houses are situated next to the hospital. It also provides them with a temporary home, food and support, giving the families a peaceful and serene setting. The Ronald McDonald House Charities are spread all over the world, covering 52 countries with nearly 322 houses.

In the Ronald McDonald House in Córdoba there are seventeen rooms and the children range in age from babies to fifteen years old, however, the majority of the children are really young. As can be

expected, there are many families who wish to live in the house and there is a long waiting list at all times. The rooms are allocated on the basis of the need of the family and how sick the child is.

The Law & Human Rights Office Argentina just recently began developing a project in this institution. Our objective is to teach and empower the children about their human rights, specifically as children, for example the right to education. We aim to educate them so that they will not forget about their rights and to empower them so that they will strive to defend their rights in the future. We run a workshop every week, focusing on one or two rights. However, as the children are young we try to make the workshops entertaining and engaging, by playing games to illustrate our message. The people who run the house support our project and the parents of the children are also interested in our objectives.

CECAM CENTRO CORRECCIONAL PARA ADOLESCENTES MUJERES

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.

In Argentina, young people under the age 18 cannot be judged like in some other countries (France or United States). Indeed, when adolescents are arrested, they meet a minor's judge, who decides for their fate from the moment they are arrested until the time they get their freedom, ergo they do not get a "real sentence."

While spending time at CeCAM, the girls have the obligation to continue their studies (specific programs for inside the facility and for every girl), to follow some art courses (ceramics, painting, drawing) and participate in different activities. One a year the institution organises a market where the girls may sell their artworks or objects they produce. They are able to earn money from

their own work, give some money to their families, and save some other for new materials.

This centre works as a place where the staff try to motivate them all the time. They themselves define the institution as a place which is giving them a second chance.

The Projects Abroad Human Rights Office in Argentina is brand new (around 4 months), we have been working at CeCAM since the beginning, trying to educate and empower the girls about their rights. We have already had 4 volunteers at the placement.

Our most recent volunteer Anael Le Bihan shared her experienced with us: "My work is to help them to regain confidence and especially to show them that it is possible to choose a different way other than drugs, robbery or prostitution. My job is to listen to the girls, and to show that I don't judge them, but on the contrary, that they can also teach me different things."



In this sense, I have established the principle of giving and receiving; I do something for you, and you do something for me in exchange. It seemed to motivate them and is rewarding for them. Also the girls I work with don't have knowledge of their rights and they don't understand the fact that they have rights. For example, some youth told me "the police were without a warrant and when I was arrested, they hit me very hard." When I said that's not normal and is not supposed to be like that, they said they feel they cannot do anything about

it. In fact, my role is mainly to inform them about their rights, but especially to make them think and question the situations in their previous life."

The project's objective continues to be educating the girls on her rights, and is being fulfilled though painting a mural about women's rights. We have been designing the plan with the girls and art teachers and finally we all agreed: we will draw a map of the world and all around it, women from all backgrounds and races, making a circle, in their hands they have signs with the description of women's



rights.

How are we going to achieving this mural? We all agreed to create a fundraising event, we organized two "Dirty Days" where we baked *alfajores* (pastries very traditional of Argentina) with the girls at CeCAM and we asked all of the volunteers in Argentina to help us bake and sell the pastries. The girls really worked hard and we were able to cook double of what we were expecting to do at the beginning!

The following Saturday, with other volunteers, we pre-

pared the *alfajores* and the packaging before going to sell them. The volunteers walked house by house offering the *alfajores*. The experience ended up being a success! The volunteers sold all *alfajores* in 1 ½ hours and raised enough money to buy all the necessary materials for the mural.

What is being done now? This week our volunteer at the institution bought all the materials and the girls already began with the first tasks to paint the mural!

PAULO FREIRE CENTER

This is a project being developed in an institution called Paulo Freire - a Brazilian educator, philosopher, and influential theorist of critical pedagogy. This particular institution is located approximately 8 minutes from the Projects Abroad Office in Cordoba. The institution is one of correctional services that seeks to help reform young boys who have committed criminal offences. The institution serves as a better alternative to prison for these young offenders as they are given a chance to not only change but also to contribute positively in society whilst also being educated and thus empowered with knowledge.

The age of the boys ranges from 12 to 19. All of them come from impoverished backgrounds. This is not necessarily the requirement for being admitted to the institution but, as anywhere else in the world, poverty and crime have a strong correlation. The children who are a part of this program still however reside with their respective families and thus, this becomes more like a school for them.

The institution aims to show the boys that there is an alternative. One of the ways they do this is by taking the boys to a bakery and teaching them how to bake. If they are taught a skill then it makes it possible for the boys to find employment and start

earning some money. Also, working gives the boys a sense of purpose as they are baking bread, which is to be sold out on the streets.

The project we are developing in this placement encourages the volunteers to form a rapport with the children in an attempt to gain not only their trust but also to gain an understanding of the circumstances that they live under, and to plan activities that would help empower them with not only working experience but also knowledge of what their rights are.



Felisa Soaje is a residential care facility for girls aged between 14 and 17. There is room for 20 girls although at this time there were only 9 girls residing there. The girls are provided with meals and accommodation and attend school 5 days a week in either the morning or afternoon sessions. However, they are not permitted to leave the facility without a chaperone at other times for safety reasons.

Felisa Soaje is not an orphanage, so all the children living there have generally been ordered by the Court to reside there as their biological parents have been deemed unfit or incapable of caring for them. The children have been living there full time for anything between a few days or a few years, and until such time as they are moved to another facility or are reunited with their parents/family (a decision of the courts) they will continue to live there until they turn 18.

Argentina's Law & Human Rights Office is just be-

ginning to get involved with this institution and the girls living there. That is why we have been evaluating the situation and the possibilities to work with the girls in a long term project.

From all of the different days, games, activities and informal chats that we have shared with the girls and the staff members of the institution; and after some research, analysis, and writing that the volunteers have been doing we can say that: the children have all come from either violent or conflicted backgrounds and from poor families so while they all seem to be really smart kids with big ambitions (policewomen, lawyers, directors, veterinarians) they may not have the belief in themselves that they need to get there. There is of course the issue of transitioning out of the facility – many of them end up living back with their families, or become homeless. A secondary issue is that because they aren't permitted to roam freely around there is limited entertainment they can have while inside the institution.

Potential interventions identified by volunteers: It would be good to provide them with a pathway to success i.e. design long term goals, link them up to trade schools, apprenticeships, scholarships, part time university and to reduce the potential future rate of unemployment. They also need to be "entertained" so that they enjoy and make productive use of their time in the facility. We would recommend that workshops be done on a regular (monthly) basis on bullying, violence, male / female relationships.

