

**GLOBAL PROJECT : DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL BANK OF GENETIC DATA AND THE PLAZA DE MAYO GRANDMOTHERS COMPLEMENTARY BANK TO FIND MISSING CHILDREN.**

**PART I SUMMARY**

1- Name of the Project: **Finding and Identifying Children Missing in Argentina for Political Reasons.**

2- Organization Responsible for the Operation: **Association of Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo.**

3- Brief description of the Project: **The project consists of joint actions in the judicial, research, genetics, juridical, psychological, public information, organization areas as well as others. These actions tend to the clarify, discovering the truth about what happened, finding and restoring the children to their legitimate families and providing continued support to these children - grown-ups today- missing or born in captivity during the military dictatorship endured by our country between 1976 and 1983.**

4- Estimated Duration: **Two (2) years after receiving approval of the project.**

5- Total Budget Amount of the Project in US dollars: **One million, three hundred and forty-two thousand and eight hundred dollars (US\$ 1,342,800).**

6- Currency Exchange Rate Used: **1 Argentine Peso = US\$ 1.**

7-Persons responsible for the Project:

**Estela Barnes de Carlotto - President**

**Rosa T. de Roisinblit - Vice President**

**Alba Lanzillotto - Secretary**

8- Address: **Av. Corrientes 3284 - 4to. "H"**  
**1193 CAPITAL FEDERAL**  
**República Argentina**

9- Telephone and Fax numbers: (+ 54-1) 864-3475/866 -1717

10- E-mail: abuelas@wamani.apc.org.ar

11- Date Presented: February 26, 1998

## **PART II.**

### **PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT**

#### **1- Current Situation - Description of the Problem**

One of the principal consequences of the repressive military dictatorship that our country endured between 1976 and 1983, was the forced disappearance of approximately thirty thousand people of all ages and social conditions. This systematic methodology has been repeatedly condemned by the Argentine justice and international fora. 80% of the missing persons were between the ages of 16 and 35, 30% were women and 10% of them (3% of the total ) were pregnant. From that total it is considered that no fewer than **five hundred children disappeared**, many of them abducted with their parents, some of them after their parents had been killed, and others born in the concentration camps where the young mothers, at different stages of their pregnancy, were placed. These offspring are the children of our children, who also disappeared.

From the time these babies disappeared or from the date the mothers were due, we began to go to juvenile courts, orphanages, nursery homes, children's hospitals, in the hope of finding them.

Many of these children were registered as children of members of the forces that acted during the repression, others were left in different places, sold or abandoned in institutions as unidentified children. The missing children were thus deprived of their identity, religion, their right to live with their legitimate families, etc. Summing up, they were deprived of all known national and international rights.

In order to understand the complexity of this tragedy, it is necessary to look back at the circumstances in which such actions occurred. It is about stolen children, not adopted (the child was not given away). It is not about adoption, but of the suppression of the child's identity.



## **Diagnosis**

During these years we have been finding difficulties in trying to locate the children. These difficulties were being resolved according to the peculiarities that each particular case presented or is presenting.

The difficulties implied in the certification of the reported data and in researching the facts to determine that a minor is the child of a missing person are overcome in specific cases with practically no governmental support. In other cases, severe obstacles were encountered when influential people with powerful governmental contacts were involved.

Once proof is gathered that a minor is probably one of the missing children, a legal action is filed. Each child represents a case, and each case means for the lawyers a daily follow-up process throughout the country until the results of the genetic tests are obtained, since these results will definitely decide the integration of the child to its respective family. The long court struggle continues until the child is given back its identity, its family roots, and everything pertaining to the full exercise of its rights.

The need to count on a sure method to prove the identity of these children, whose sex was often unknown, drove the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo to visit universities and hospitals. They also presented their case at scientific events within the country and abroad. With the return of the constitutional system in 1983, a bill to establish a National Bank of Genetic Data (NBGD) of relatives of disappeared children was jointly drafted by the Under Secretariat of Human Rights, the Secretariat of Human Development and the Family, the Secretariat of Minors and the Family of the Province of Buenos Aires, the Secretariat of Public Health and the Environment of the City of Buenos Aires, the Immunology Service of the Durand Hospital of the City of Buenos Aires. In May, 1987, this bill was enacted into National Law No 23.511 with the unanimous vote of all political parties thus establishing the practical conditions to facilitate the identification of our grandchildren even in our absence. Since it is impossible to predict when these children will be found, and considering the present life expectancy in Argentina, this bank should remain in place until the year 2052.

This task has been very difficult. We had to persuade judges, fight Court decisions which did not understand the purpose of undertaking a high

precision scientific program in a State hospital at a time of great crisis in the areas of resources, personnel and supplies. This led the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo to buy the chemical reagent themselves so that the Bank could operate normally, even when the law had determined that this matter should be handled by the Ministry of Public Health.

Notwithstanding the many obstacles we encountered, we have managed, so far, to identify fifty-nine children.

It should be noted that there is no other such Bank in the world. It has not only succeeded in identifying disappeared children, but has also been used in other cases as well. This Bank tests blood types, serum proteins, serum enzymes, and HLA. Scientists have recommended the addition of nuclear and mitochondria DNA, in order to increase the rates of probability to close to 100%.

### **Psychological and legal aspects**

The child that has been illegally abducted will never have access to his history, his birth certificate will be forged, his name and date of birth will be changed. His history will have been stolen from him. This abduction is based on the negation of the law and a pretended impunity. To continue with this situation would mean to maintain the missing condition of these children, depriving them of their **Right to an Identity**, a right which was included in our proposal for the Declaration of the Rights of Children and Adolescents, approved by the United Nations. It also implies depriving them of the truth and justice, and what is even worse, the risk of these actions going unpunished and “NEVER AGAIN” becoming a utopia.

### **Problems**

As a result of the above mentioned, the principal problems we face are the following:

- 1- Location of the disappeared children.
- 2- Reporting and judicial follow-up once it has been established that a child might be one of those missing.



3- Identification of the child by comparison with their presumed family members, who must have their genetic data stored at the National Bank of Genetic Data and at our own Bank for quality control and follow-up process.

## **Description of the Project**

### **a) Objectives**

- 1- To locate every child - a grown-up today- who is missing.
- 2- To complete the information of all the families in the National Bank on Genetic Data.
- 3- To complete the National Bank on Genetics of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo as quality control and complementary data of the former.
- 4- To give back its identity to the missing child.
- 5- To permanently promote activities in order to maintain the awareness of Argentine society, so that a situation such as this may NEVER AGAIN occur.
- 6- To make the events of the past known to the new generations thereby allowing them to continue the search for their identity in the future.

### **b) Principal actions to be taken to attain such objectives:**

- 1- Receiving and investigating filed reports.
- 2- Receiving new reports on pregnant women and abducted children.
- 3- Filing and follow-up of legal cases.
- 4- Working on each family tree, locating each member and their tests.
- 5- Tests and expert's report on each presumed missing child.
- 6- Organization of joint public activities with other agencies and organizations, to contribute to making our work and the events of the past known.

### **c) Terms**

It is mostly about continuing the ongoing actions, in which we have experience. We consider reasonable a two-year duration after the project has been approved.

### **d) Who benefits from this project?**

We acknowledge the missing children and their families as being the direct beneficiaries from the restitution of their identity, finding the truth and

everything that it implies. The Argentine society as a whole is an indirect beneficiary as a result of the establishment of truth and justice, generated by the restoration of the democratic system.

**e) Identifying the main components of the costs of the project.**

- 1- Genetic tests of family members that must be included in the National Bank of Genetic Data.
- 2- Transportation of family members for blood tests, of the technical staff, of the blood drawn for the tests, of the Grandmothers for clarification meetings with reluctant family members, etc.
- 3- Professional fees of the technical group members: lawyers, doctors, researchers, computer technicians, organizers, and their respective staff.
- 4- Communication, transportation and coordination.
- 5- Public information activities.

**f) Project Goals**

By the end of this project the genetic information of all family members in the National Bank on Genetic Data. must be completed. These studies will yield genetic data on: blood types, seric protein, erythrocyte enzymes, HLA and blood banks anticipating future techniques that are presently not being used.

We also hope to complete the complementary bank of our own institution, that stores the information processed at the University of Seattle, Washington for the purpose of auditing and verifying: the correct operation of the National Bank of Genetic Data, the safekeeping of information made available to anyone who suspects that he/she may be a Disappeared Child, the permanent use of the most advanced methods in the world to identify individuals.

According to the number of reports received and through estimates made by our Institution on the total number of Disappeared Children, we think that more than 1,000 people should still be tested to complete the genetic information on all the families. This implies, with repetitions, a total of 1,500 tests done throughout the length of the project.

**g) Methods of Operation:**

To identify and restore the identity of the disappeared children, it is necessary to find them, with the singularities presented by each case. There are three methods of operation:



- a. The grandmothers who had some clues or data on the kidnapping of their children and grandchildren, began their search backed by the institution. This took place primarily during the first years of our struggle.
- b. The investigation carried out on the basis of information volunteered by somebody who either lives close by, works with, or knows of a family who has a child under suspicious circumstances. This method expanded after the restitution of democracy.
- c. The spontaneous coming forward of young individuals who suspect or know that they are the sons or daughters of disappeared persons. It is presently the most common way, considering that the children born between 1976 and 1980 are now between 17 and 21 years old.

To date, more than 6,000 reports have been filed. Many of them were filed through different channels and many refer to the same case, which would duplicate the total number of cases. To that number we must mark for possible investigation 7,914 birth certificates, signed by doctors or midwives linked to the repressive apparatus of the military dictatorship, with addresses that were not registered at the Department of Public Health; home deliveries and registration at the Registro Nacional de las Personas after expiration of the legal deadline etc. In addition to 2,471 adoptions between March 24, 1976, and December 10, 1983, in the Capital and Province of Buenos Aires, a figure which would increase if we took into consideration other regions of the country, during the term of the government de facto of the Military Dictatorship.

Once verified that a child may be one of the disappeared children, a legal action (Civil or Criminal) is brought forth. This is mandatory to obtain blood tests for genetic markers of the child as well as those of its presumed family, the only method available to regain its identity, discover the truth and obtain justice.

#### **h. Main activities and Inputs**

1. Receiving reports of possible disappeared children made known to us through different means: phone calls, letters and in person.
2. Setting up files to be processed by computer.
3. Selection of reports according to a certain criteria of urgency. For example: ill-treated children, people that are ready to leave the country, teenagers that have run away from their homes, etc.

4. Searching for all documents connected to the investigation on the identity of minors such as birth certificates, compilation of graphic and film material of the children under observation, medical files, school certificates, etc. Meetings with people released from different clandestine detention centers to obtain information on the children born in captivity or kidnapped together with their parents that have been seen at those clandestine detention centers. To obtain this information we must often travel hundreds of kilometers to the interior of the country, other times 20 to 100 kilometers in the Buenos Aires suburban area and a few within Buenos Aires itself where our institution has its headquarters. On occasion this can be done by some of our branches in the interior of the country, within their jurisdictions (branches: Mar del Plata, La Plata, Córdoba, Rosario).
5. Careful investigation of each case, to confirm the data received and obtain others offered by schools, neighbors, etc. This is the most complex task, since those that have the children frequently change their addresses and send the children to different schools. To fulfill this task it is also necessary to travel as explained in point d.
6. Printing of publications, posters, notices to help locate the fugitives who have the children in their custody.
7. Preparing legal actions (filing of reports or criminal complaints) and to present them before all the courts in the country.
8. Preparation of civil complaints. Gathering from grandparents (and/or aunts and uncles) all necessary information and the signature before a notary public of a power of attorney to follow up on the case.
9. Researching Civil and Criminal Rights regarding the forced disappearance of minors in Argentina.
10. Reporting accusations in international courts and fora (OAS, UN)
11. Follow-up on the cases. This is a difficult task. It is necessary for the lawyer to verify daily each new development on the file, talk to the judges, contact the district attorney and present the brief required by each case, requests for tests on the minors to be identified and on individuals that belong to the family group. The tests are to be done by the National Bank on Genetic Data (N.B.G.D) In addition having in each case a geneticist, to draw blood samples to build on our own Genetic Data Bank of HLA, mitochondria DNA and nuclear DNA.



### *Tucumán*

- 1 full-time research coordinator
- 2 part-time persons for research and genetic work
- 1 full-time lawyer

### *Mendoza*

- 1 part-time research coordinator
- 1 part-time person for research and genetic work

## **j) Budget for the Project:**

1- One thousand, five hundred (1,500) blood tests will be done according to the above. The cost of materials needed per person, which includes the HLA and the nuclear DNA is U\$S 250.

Subtotal: U\$S 375,000.

2- Transportation and lodging of family members, or transportation to the residence of persons who are house-bound, shipping of blood samples, transportation of the Grandmothers and members of the technical staff, for administration tasks throughout the country, car rental. All trips will be by land except when blood samples need to be transported to distances of more than 500 km, then it will be done by air on the lowest rate available. A monthly average of this item will be of U\$S 6,500.

Subtotal: U\$S 156,000.

## **3- Fees of the Professional teams**

A summary for all branches is as follows:

|                                                       |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1 full-time general coordinator of the project        | U\$S 1,500 |
| 1 full-time research coordinator                      | U\$S 1,300 |
| 7 full-time people for research work                  | U\$S 7,000 |
| 2 part-time people for research work                  | U\$S 1,000 |
| 6 full-time lawyers                                   | U\$S 7,200 |
| 1 part-time lawyer                                    | U\$S 700   |
| 1 full-time physician                                 | U\$S 1,200 |
| 1 part-time physician advisor specialized in genetics | U\$S 600   |

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE FIRST LADY

Phone: (202)456-6266

Fax: (202)456-6244

TO: Mark Schneider

PHONE: 712-4800

FAX: 216-3012

FROM: Katy Button

COMMENTS: Mark - How can we  
respond to this?

Thanks -

Katy



EMBASSY OF THE  
ARGENTINE REPUBLIC  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE

Ms. Melanne S. Verveer  
Deputy Chief of Staff  
Office of the First Lady  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Ms. Verveer:

I am pleased to enclose a copy of a project of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, for the First Lady's information. The Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, is an Argentine non-profit organization whose goal is to find children that disappeared during the Military Dictatorship in Argentina. As you may be aware, during her recent visit to Argentina, the First Lady showed special interest in their endeavors and singled it out as the only organization she would received.

The organization is looking for funds to help them to continue their work and they would be very grateful for any suggestions Mrs. Rodham Clinton, may have on how to proceed and whom to contact.

Thank you very much for helping us further their worthy cause.

Sincerely yours,

  
Diego Ramiro Guelar  
Ambassador

*Calh - we  
need to have  
to mark about  
this.  
Faxed to mark  
11/15*

May 14, 1998

*File  
Argentina*