

CASE STUDY

June 2022

UNITING THROUGH THE POWER OF FOOTBALL IN ARGENTINA

PROJECT INFORMATION

Locations

 **9**

Córdoba, Corrientes, La Plata, Mar del Plata, Saavedra, Salta Base Camp, San Juan, Santiago del Estero, Villa Crespo

Implementation Period

 **15 months**

February 2021 – April 2022

Trainers

 **2**

YABC trainers from the Costa Rican Red Cross coached online on YABC & F4D sessions, tools & methodology

Facilitators

 **90**

25 facilitators completed the YABC & F4D online Training of Facilitators and transferred the knowledge to 65 support facilitators

Participants

 **460**

children and youth between 5 to 18 years old as well as their parents/ caregivers, residing in communities that are in a situation of vulnerability and/or structural exclusion, participated in the YABC & F4D Hybrid Curriculum and additional educational sessions

Micro-Projects

 **8**

community-based Micro-Projects were successfully implemented in parallel to the Hybrid Curriculum

People Reached

 **9,410**

community members directly served and reached through the Micro-Projects, including 2,000 members of Indigenous Communities. In addition, more than 900'000 people were reached through the 'Jugar es un Derecho' campaign.

**ARGENTINA**

Football represents a strong component of the Argentinian identity. The *Juventud en Movimiento: Deporte e Inclusión* pilot project implemented by the Argentine Red Cross and its strategic partners demonstrated in practice the great potential of football to provide hope and opportunity, foster integration and reinforce community bonds. The overall project not only transformed people at the individual level — by enhancing their active listening, empathy, non-violent communication, and critical thinking skills — but **transformed entire community dynamics, breathing new life into neighborhoods.**

Micro-Projects Thematic Areas



Country Overview



General Context

In the Southern Cone region of Latin America, Argentina has high levels of poverty with about 45 per cent of people living under the poverty line.¹ A predominantly young population coupled with **highly populated urban areas, political volatility, economic instability** and changing socio-demographic structures exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities and contribute to **higher rates of violence**, including gender-based violence, which is an increasing concern in the region². This juncture is only aggravated by high levels of **inequality and exclusion**, as well as the lack of access to basic services, including healthcare.

With regards to health, **non-communicable diseases** such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases are the most common. Other concerning issues among youth include widespread **alcohol and psychoactive substances abuse, gender disparities and domestic violence, unintentional teenage pregnancies, as well as mental health concerns**, which are often left unaddressed, including depression, anxiety and suicide – a major cause of death among young people aged 10 to 19 years old³.

The Covid-19 Pandemic and its Impact on the Project

In order to effectively contain the spread of the virus, one of the world's longest lockdowns was imposed in Argentina, with a severe impact on its economy and society. The prolonged closure of schools, businesses and public spaces **increased social inequality** and significantly increased the rate of young people dropping out of school.⁴

Due to the health emergency and the associated restrictions, all phases of the pilot project were subject to some degree of adaptation: the Training of Facilitators had to be **rapidly digitalized and delivered online** instead of in person, delays occurred in the procurement and transportation of the materials for the Micro-Projects' implementation and the budget had to be constantly re-adapted due to **inflation** exacerbated by the pandemic.

1 IFRC Regional Plan for Southern Cone and Brazil in 2021, 2021, p.2. Link: https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/Southern_Cone_Plan_2021.pdf

2 Lopez, O. Thomson Reuters Foundation. Femicides in Argentina reach 10-year high under coronavirus lockdown, 2020. Link: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-women-trfn-idUSKBN22V05H>

3 Ibid., 2021

4 Ibid., 2021

Project Implementation Overview

Inception and Training of Facilitators (ToF)

The Argentine Red Cross strategically chose to pilot the project among vulnerable and excluded communities that were often unfamiliar with Red Cross Red Crescent services, especially in the field of youth development. In addition to the selection of the implementation locations, the inception phase focused on the **identification of local, strategic partners and building strong collaboration with stakeholders.**

In May 2021, the ToF was delivered online over 8 days by 2 YABC trainers from the Costa Rican Red Cross, becoming the first global pilot of a YABC & F4D online training. The trainers received specific coaching from the IFRC and GA on F4D, new YABC digital activities, and on additional sessions and tools related to Project Cycle Management; Protection, Gender and Inclusion; Psychosocial Support and First Aid; and Child Safeguarding policy and practices. The core team of 25 YABC & F4D facilitators that were initially trained, then transferred their knowledge to **65 additional youth** through in-person meeting and practice of YABC & F4D activities, for them to act as 'support facilitators' in the delivery of the Hybrid Curriculum.



Online Training of Facilitators delivered by YABC trainers from the Costa Rican Red Cross in May 2021.

Source: ARC

Hybrid Curriculum and Community-Based Micro-Projects Implementation



football 4
development

A distinctive trait of the pilot project in Argentina was the **parallel implementation of the Hybrid Curriculum and the Micro-Projects phases, involving entire families and communities**. Based on the needs identified and expressed by the communities themselves, additional sessions/workshops were integrated with a **specific focus on First Aid, Sexual and Reproductive Health Education, Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), Holistic Health Promotion including Nutrition and Mental Health, Adolescent Suicide Prevention, Conflict Resolution, and Parenting skills**. Among the YABC & F4D activities, a focus was put on those addressing non-discrimination and violence prevention given the high rate of intra and intergroup violence present in some communities and identified by the community. Due to the very young age of some participants, the facilitators constantly adapted the Hybrid Curriculum to ensure a positive and effective impact on the children, whilst ensuring integration of child safeguarding policy and practice.

The 8 community-based Micro-Projects were decided by and with communities in collaboration with local partners, as well as aligned with the long-term strategy and vision of ARC. The planning of the Micro-Projects served as an opportunity to build solid relations and trust with the community, and ensure the involvement of the children, youth, and their families in the curriculum. The Micro-Projects focused on the refurbishment of infrastructure for the promotion of safe access to sports and quality education. **The aim was to improve and create safe spaces for community engagement in physical and educational activities, to reduce violence, and enhance social cohesion, inclusion, dialogue and quality of life.** The creation of these community-led recreational spaces helped in

“*removing the invisibility cloak from those communities and neighbourhoods that used to be forgotten.*”

Nahuel Saleme, YABC & F4D Facilitator from La Plata.



Hybrid
Curriculum
and Micro-
Projects Parallel
Implementation

Source: ARC



This parallel implementation modality ensured the successful delivery of the overall project as the creation of safe spaces and conducive learning environments (which were otherwise non-existent or not fit for purpose) was an **essential pre-requisite** to run deeply transformative educational and sport activities with 460 individuals.

Project Monitoring and Evaluation

ARC constantly supported and accompanied the youth and branches involved in planning and implementation through regular online and/or in-person meetings. A field visit by the Costa Rican YABC trainers was conducted in January 2022 to strengthen the capacity of the facilitators and to support the transfer of knowledge to youth from other branches. During an IFRC monitoring and documentation visit from Geneva in May 2022, several **evaluation focus group discussions** were held to collect feedback and testimonies of children, youth, families, community leaders, local stakeholders and strategic partners, ARC facilitators and staff.



Highlights of the Project

Before, we were meeting at the supermarket and not even greeting each other. There were divisions in the neighbourhood, which was dead, while now it's back to life. Now we are together, we are a team!"

Rocio, trainer of the female team of Defensores de City Bell football club, La Plata



- **Intergenerational Approach, Holistic Programming & Transformation at Community Level:** As a result of the needs-based community approach, a **strong Protection, Gender and Inclusion & Comprehensive Health Promotion approach** was integrated in the curriculum through additional sessions targeting **parents, caregivers, teachers and trainers**. Parents recognised the profound impact the workshops had on them, making them more calm, open-minded and conscious parents. Positive change was also observed at the entire community level, as demonstrated by families (including mothers) playing football together in the revitalised clubs, the reduction in violence, and strengthened gender equality and inclusion among youth;

now, male and female youth are not only playing together on the football pitch but mixing up and talking to each other outside the pitch – before they remained separate."

explained Nadia, a mother of 2 girls involved in the project in Villa de Mayo neighbourhood.

- Engagement of Indigenous Communities:** In the humanitarian camp in Salta Province, the activities were integrated into a broader humanitarian and development intervention supporting **34 Indigenous Communities**. This complemented and strengthened the existing actions aiming at providing access to safe water, sanitation, and health services, creating and improving livelihoods, **reducing ethnic divides and (domestic) violence, as well as promoting gender equality, intercultural dialogue and inclusion** among the different communities living in the territory, bringing them together and co-creating a strong bond and space of trust.
- Key Local Partnerships:** A key ingredient of the project's success in Argentina was ARC's **long-term, integrated and multi-sectoral programming and approach**. ARC engaged with and worked alongside several local, strategic partners: **community leaders, local municipalities and NGOs, schools and teachers, police, health care and sports managers, sports associations and local football clubs**. These partnerships resulted in several formal agreements for the long-term use of public space for educational and sports activities. Engaging with local stakeholders was part of the wider strategy to extend humanitarian support to a broader population, **ensuring sustainability of the project** through its integration into existing local programmes – such as the “Valores en la Cancha” (i.e., “Values in the Football Pitch”) project developed and delivered by ‘River Plate Foundation’ – **one of the most popular football clubs in Argentina**.
- Communications Campaigns:** ARC organised strong communications and awareness-raising campaigns and launched viral challenges on social media **reaching more than 900,000 people** across the entire country and beyond with the tag **#JugarEsUnDerecho** (i.e., “To play is a Right”).⁵ The key messages focused on the promotion of a culture of non-violence, peace and inclusion, the positive role of youth and sport, as well as the **right to play and access sport and education**. This effectively contributed to engaging the communities involved in the project as well as a broader audience.
- Branch, Youth & Volunteering Development:** *Juventud en Movimiento: Deporte e Inclusión* was the **first externally funded youth project at a national scale for ARC**. The youth volunteers played a key role in the whole project management cycle acquiring new capacities and expertise. The **ARC National Youth Commission** were engaged in strategic planning to integrate the YABC & F4D methodology and activities in other youth programmes to foster peer-to-peer exchange at branch level. **ARC branches not yet involved in the project have expressed a strong desire for future engagement** in a potential second cycle and are already planning to implement the YABC & F4D Hybrid Curriculum to revitalise and strengthen their youth programmes.

Reaching more than
900,000
 people

⁵ Find out more information on the “Jugar es un Derecho” Campaign here: <https://youtu.be/bGj7eSdzc8>

VOICES FROM THE PITCH

“ After the flooding that happened in 2018, our Indigenous Community here in the Salta Province was strongly and negatively impacted. Our houses were destroyed, our animals died and many of our people lost everything they had. So, when the Red Cross came to help us by providing clean water and helping with other problems, we were grateful. What makes the difference is that the Red Cross has integrated into our community, they came and stayed here with us. They are here when we need them.

We are really thankful for the new community health clinic; they take care of our health issues and facilitate transportation to the hospitals for the more serious cases. Other things that we have worked together with the ARC has been things like nutrition, health of the community, helping parents with new skills, addressing issues of violence between men and women. And now there are also these activities for the kids who are happy to learn and play, earlier they were doing nothing. ”

‘Caciques’ (Community Leader in Wichi language) Gabriel Mendoza, from Quebrachal.



Caciques Gabriel Mendoza, Community Leader from Quebrachal and a Mother & Community Member from Santa Maria

Source: ARC


“ As a mother, I can say that our children are always a big concern for us. We were scared for their safety from violent people and animal attacks; they could not walk around by themselves at night, it was very dangerous. The construction of the football pitch here in Santa Maria, and its lighting, brought safety to our community: the space is illuminated in the evening and our children are safer. ”

A reassured mother in Santa Maria, referencing the project.

“ I see this new area (the pitch) as a space for gathering for everyone. Now we see our ('Indigenous') children playing together with 'Criollos' children (from white/European descent) while before they did not use to mix. It is good to see that our children can play together and overcome any division. Our older children can now come and play in the evening, they channel their energy and use their free time here instead of being exposed to violence and getting trapped into dangerous habits/risky behaviours, like drug and alcohol abuse. The Project has given us a broad and safe space to be, so thank you to the Red Cross. ”

'Caciques' and Community Pastor Sarmiento Eduardo, from Santa Maria.





“ Participating in the educational workshops positively changed my way of behaving as a mother: I am calmer and more understanding in the way I interact with my children and learned to cook delicious, healthier meals. I am also more open-minded; I can now accept and truly respect diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. ”

Nadia, a mother from Villa de Mayo.

“ Our children are challenging the more conservative aspects of our thinking and helping us see things in a different way. ”

Gabriela, another mother.

“ As facilitators what we have seen has been a real change in attitude, a growing respect between children, especially towards girls. This project allowed for an equal opportunity space to be given between boys and girls, which has positively impacted women's confidence in the community. Here we have a big discrepancy in opportunities between boys and girls; usually girls are made to grow up too fast, they have added responsibilities to take care of their younger siblings, as well as high numbers of teen pregnancies. One of our group of trainees mentioned their dreams for the future: “we would like to create a team for the girls, we did not play football before, it was only for the boys – we would like to create our own team with a name and play. This sport and this space is for everybody to play”. This really shows the change of mindset that this project has brought to our community. ”

Luli, YABC & F4D co-facilitator volunteering with ARC in the Salta humanitarian base camp.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 14 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.



The Generation Amazing Foundation (GA) is a human and social legacy focused organisation that launched in 2010 during Qatar's successful bid for the 2022 FIFA World Cup™. GA operates its sport for development programmes in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Qatar's National Vision 2030, to promote sustainability, inclusion, and gender equality. GA's unique methodology utilises the power of football to impart crucial life skills including communication, leadership, teamwork and compassion to youth and communities in need across the globe. Since its launch, GA, in collaboration with key partners, has reached and positively impacted over 1 million lives in 35 countries and counting.