



Memo Victim MARIA LIZ ROBLEDÓ – Argentina

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My name is Liz Maria Robledo, I was born and live in the Baigorrita province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Baigorrita is a town with about 1900 inhabitants, where agriculture is the most important activity. The production model implemented both here and elsewhere in our country is what has led to my testifying in this Court.

In 2012 I became pregnant with my daughter, born on April 23rd 2013 in a medical centre in the city of Junín. A few minutes after Martina's birth and after putting her to feed, she choked and was taken to the neonatal unit. A few hours later, doctors informed me of her disease: oesophageal atresia with a tracheoesophageal fistula. A name I had never heard before, but this was the congenital malformation my daughter had. Her only chance of survival was an operation to seal the oesophagus and close the connection with the respiratory system.

It took a 4-hour operation and 22 days of recovery in therapy, breathing with a respirator and other intensive care treatments.





The first year of Martina's life was spent undergoing tests and treatments related to her condition, mostly under difficult circumstances in which different viruses and bacteria repeatedly infected her airways.

In one of the appointments with the paediatrician, a year and a half later, I was told that another baby in my town had been born with the same disease as my daughter, and the paediatrician had treated her in the same Medical Centre (as Martina).

She asked me some questions and permission for my daughter's case to be passed on for a study within Renac (National Network of Congenital Anomalies), operating in the Abraham Piñeyro Hospital in the city of Junín, and whose head doctor is Dr. Jorge Herce.

In the same appointment, the paediatrician asked me if during my pregnancy I had been in contact with any toxic substances or herbicides. At that moment, I recalled images of all the pesticide packaging beside the dividing wall of my house, next door's barn which had pesticides inside, and the daily coming and going of fumigating machines to the plot beside my house.



Lote lindero con carro con envases de agrotóxicos. En este lugar también era estacionada la máquina fumigadora.



Detalle de carro con envases de agrotóxicos (fondo de lote lindero a mi vivienda).



Algunos envases que se encontraban en la pared medianera de mi vivienda.



Galpón en lote lindero donde se encontraban agrotóxicos.

After telling the doctor, she informed me that the mother of another child had also been exposed to pesticides and that the malformations of both children

were most likely to do with this substance: neither of us (mothers) carried the genes that would lead to this malformation. She added too that statistically the data could not explain two cases in less than a year and a half among a population of about 1900 inhabitants.

When I returned to my village, I got in touch with the mother of that baby. She told me that next to her house (on some waste ground and separated from her home with a piece of fabric) they brought and cleaned fumigating machinery. The smell was very strong, but she did not know that it could damage her health or that of her children and family.

It was at that point I realised the damage done and the ignorance in which we found ourselves. Lack of knowledge and ignorance, which are no accident. It is scripted, produced, encouraged and promoted by multinational corporations and their accomplices (among which the State), to make their disease and death-plagued businesses successful. Businesses that poison and kill without compunction. The State endorses these practices, does not legislate, regulate or control them, and continues to open our country's doors and talk of big business and major progress in the development of agriculture, to the detriment of health. This is because the most prized asset continues to be money. It does not promote health; it only sees the economic "benefits" of this production model.

Meanwhile, many mothers, many families live in this situation of "normality", if we understand normality as the condition which best matches the actual situation or what is found in the natural state. We live surrounded by jars (containers) of pesticides left next to our house, our "normal" life involves seeing fumigating machines on our streets, spraying a liquid that we believe is harmless (because that is what advertising companies sell and that is generally the information that we are offered in the mass media). Here, normal is seeing storage areas in different parts of populated areas. Normal is hearing that many young people get sick and even die of cancer, or children with leukaemia and who unfortunately died. Normal is hearing the "silence" of professionals or lack of commitment to sign and substantiate a diagnosis. Normal is seeing how we fumigated at 50 metres (either on bordering parks or fields). Normal is using herbicides to kill some plants and leave the soil "clean". Typically, when teaching environmental pollution in different schools, this POISONING and its health consequences are not mentioned. Normal, is keeping quiet, ignoring.

Normal or natural is our continued suffering, not fighting, not speaking out, and suffering this abuse in silence, this manipulation of information.... What is expected is that "normally" we should be "accomplices" of a model that makes us sick and kills us.





Depósitos de envases en terrenos dentro de la zona poblada de la localidad.





Fumigación a menos de 100 mts. de una vivienda, en terreno lindero a zona poblada.

Today normality in my life and my daughter's means seeing the on-call doctor every 15 to 20 days because of recurring respiratory illnesses. We also have consultations with specialists (pulmonologists) and preventive treatments for airways infections with different drugs. These are part of our daily lives. My daughters "normal" is being unable to attend kindergarten (last year on medical advice she did not attend it the entire year). This year she has been house-bound for 4 months, unable to continue developing social skills in primary, as she could have done if she hadn't been affected during pregnancy by these toxins left for years next to my house, if that fumigating machine had not been parked in the plot beside our house, if our country had a law that would prevent the use and abuse of agrochemicals.

It hurts mothers, not just our body where we hold the anguish and helplessness caused by what we have suffered with regard to our children's health, but our conscience also weighs upon us. When the conscience hurts, action is taken. For my daughter, for many children who are with us and even more for those who are not, for future generations ... we are beginning to walk a different path. If it does not exist, we will create and build it. When we become aware, when we gain the knowledge, there is no going back. That's why my pain is focussed on positive action: I went to places where I can help raise awareness; I approached the General Viamonte Environmental Forum to get information and do work and collaborate with them, as part of this struggle that is so difficult where we live.

Today my daughter is here, with us, with me. Of course, she does not lead a "normal" life, but she is here, and that's reason and motivation enough for a mother.

Our experience, our pain must be capitalised on. We need to plant our seeds in different areas. This requires no herbicides or models that threaten health. This requires all our human capital so that the new seed grows in the new generations as a founding and transforming element. A place where our people, the people of the world are no longer affected by sickness and death by poisoning, where no more accomplices / victims exist. Where the defence of life prevails over economic interests of the companies that have manipulated us for so many years. Where our rights are no longer violated and where we can grow, live and eat healthily and relate to one another in harmony with nature.