

Nicaragua's trade unions today

- Key role and influence in political, social, economic life
- Highly valued and respected
- Consulted on key developments such as National Poverty and Human Development Plan 2022-26
- Seats at all government commissions – health, race, education etc.
- Around a third of the FSLN's National Assembly seats held by unions
- Fully support government as they have benefitted hugely from the transformation that has taken place in Nicaraguan society since 2007



The neo-liberal years 1990-2006

- Health, education, energy and telecomms privatised
- Public sector decimated, close to collapse – two thirds of public sector workers lost their jobs
- Unemployment stood at 70%
- Trade unions saw their rights stripped away
- Those who were in work received low wages or found themselves in precarious employment and strikes to defend workers' rights were commonplace
- Trade union membership plummeted – membership of public sector union UNE fell from 40,000 to 6,000

The neo-liberal years continued

- Unions not registered
- Neo-liberal governments created parallel unions, yellow unions that were used as scab unions to undermine the real unions which represented the rights of the working class.
- Collective bargaining agreements disappeared or were deregulated, affecting the real wages of workers and their families and significantly worsening living conditions.
- Teachers were poorly paid, earning significantly less than the basic cost of living and worked in difficult conditions, with many schools having fallen into disrepair and class sizes ranging from 50 to 80 pupils

Trade union rights restored post 2007

- The privatisation of health and education was immediately reversed and the FSLN government supported union demands for decent wages and conditions.
- Collective bargaining agreements restored and respected
- Right to strike, right to organise and collective bargaining are enshrined in the constitution
- Salary and minimum wage increases take place each year (tripartite negotiation – this year 7% covering nine economic sectors)
- Low paid health workers have a right to receive an annual solidarity bonus as well as government subsidies for energy and transport
- Education is regarded as a right not a privilege and the education sector has seen significant advances for teachers, not only in terms of pay but also much improved working conditions
- Levels of unionisation have increased – membership of FNT is 800,000
- Growing movement + focus on women and young people





Education in
the neo-
liberal period



Education
now

Self-employed workers

- May 2009 – the government implemented a Presidential Decree saying that there should be no eviction of self-employed workers from their public workplaces
- Established consensual management agreements in public places with the municipalities and coordination with the national police to ensure the safety of workers
- Stopped proposal to increase pension age





Trade union rights in Nicaragua

- Nicaraguan trade unions operate freely
- Unlike some other countries in Latin America, not a single trade unionist has been oppressed, imprisoned or killed since 2007
- ITUC report – Global Rights Index 2021 – re attacks on workers rights
- <https://www.ituc-csi.org/2021-global-rights-index>

Further information

- www.nscag.org
- Email: nscag@nicaraguasc.org.uk
- Twitter: @NSCAG_UK

