



Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC)

Annual Report

January to December 2021

Introduction and acknowledgements

Our key priorities in 2021 were two fold: consolidating and developing solidarity links with the Nicaraguan Rural Workers Association (ATC) through the US organisation Friends of the ATC; and working together with a network of young Nicaraguan reporters. The focus of all our work was organisations that form part of the social economy.

In the UK: Our grateful thanks to all our members and supporters who have contributed in so many ways to our work through very tough times. This includes members and donors, those who have purchased items from our shop, attended our webinars, participated in fundraising events or on stalls, took part in Spanish classes, and volunteered their time on the Board of Trustees and other committees and working groups, and took part in Spanish classes.

In Nicaragua we acknowledge our partnership with Friends of the ATC without whose knowledge, energy and close working relationship with the ATC our work would not have been possible.

We also acknowledge the excellent work carried out by a network of 15 long term solidarity activists and young reporters doing interviews and writing articles reflecting the reality of their own lives and what they observe in their own communities. In the jungle of distorted and manipulated international media coverage of Nicaragua this was an important initiative.

All the work reflected in this report has been achieved as a result of the efforts of all those acknowledged above. This is despite the very adverse circumstances in Nicaragua, the UK and globally. Globally, the impact of the pandemic, and in the case of Nicaragua in particular, the failed 2018 coup, US illegal coercive measures, two major hurricanes within two weeks November 2020, and hostile coverage in the international mainstream media.

External and internal communications

A key part of our 2021 work focused on strengthening our internal and external communications.

This included completing and launching a new website, broadening our presence on social media and improving the quality of our publications.

Through regular e-newsletters, we ensured that NSC members and supporters were kept up to date with the work of our Nicaraguan partners and our own solidarity work in the UK.

Continuing work on Fair trade and solidarity with Nicaraguan co-operatives

Since the mid 1990s NSC and subsequently Bristol Link with Nicaragua (BLINC) have had a long standing solidarity link with the Union of Co-operatives (UCA) SOPPEXCCA based in Jinotega. For the past ten years BLINC has organised annual visits during Fairtrade Fortnight by women farmers from SOPPEXCCA and NSC has organised two day programmes in London.

In February 2021, NSC organised a Fairtrade/Climate Justice webinar with BLINC, Bristol Green Ambassadors, and the Fairtrade Foundation. Farmers from SOPPEXCCA highlighted the consequences of the climate crisis, and the fact that there can be no climate justice without social and economic justice. *'Fairtrade is both the bridge and the vehicle that helps to transform the wellbeing of the families of small-scale producers'*. Fatima Ismael, Co-operative Union SOPPEXCCA

Solidarity with the Rural Workers' Association (ATC): Agroecology, land rights, gender equality and food sovereignty

"Agroecology is a revolution! ...we are killing the earth...the most urgent task we face is the search for ways to protect it." Marlen Sanchez, director of the Latin America Agroecological Institute (IALA), Nicaragua.

The ATC is a member organisation of a global movement La Via Campesina that represents over 200 million peasants, small farmers, agricultural workers, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and migrants. Together organisations of this movement struggle towards food sovereignty, defined as the right of peoples to define their own food systems and to grow healthy and culturally appropriate food for local consumption.

In 2021 we again postponed a UK speaker tour by ATC representatives but continued working in collaboration with Friends of the ATC.

- Production of videos linked with articles and webinars on the themes of 'Climate Justice and agroecology' in the lead up to COP26, and the story of the Gloria Quintanilla women's co-operative entitled transforming lives, transforming communities. These materials also linked with Via Campesina organisations in the UK (Landworkers Alliance), North America and other places; Nicaragua Solidarity activists and climate justice activists.
- Linked with this campaigning we published two briefings entitled: *No to agribusiness, yes to agroecology* and *Climate justice, the Nicaraguan perspective*.
- In the lead up to COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021, we used these materials to raise awareness of Nicaragua as an example of a country highly vulnerable to the impact of the climate crisis, to highlight Nicaragua's platform of demands at COP and the measures that Nicaragua itself is taking to mitigate and adapt to the crisis.
- Two major hurricanes hit Nicaragua in November 2020. NSC raised £3,500 which we channelled to the Latin American Institute for Agroecology (IALA) in Nicaragua, an applied training programme/agroecological farming for young people from rural communities to learn leadership skills

Nicaraguan young reporters' initiative

This initiative, set up in September 2021, brought together a very dynamic network of 15 long term solidarity activists and young reporters. The reporters carried out interviews, wrote articles and produced videos reflecting the reality of their own lives and what they observe in their own communities. In the jungle of distorted and manipulated international media coverage of Nicaragua this was an important initiative. These articles were translated, edited and published by NSC and also more widely on different platforms in both Spanish and English.

One of the young reporters commented: *'...it helped us to discover our own communities, to have the opportunity to interview people, and importantly the recognition it gives to interviewees that what they have to say matters.'*

Comments from NSC Board member: *'this initiative is a breath of fresh air, a direct link, an important departure from people in the UK/US writing about Nicaragua, interesting range of topics, powerful personal stories focusing on social and political issues.'*

However, sustaining an initiative such as this has proved a challenge without a Nicaragua based communications co-ordinating role to support the volunteer young reporters and follow up potential leads for interviews and articles.

Twin towns collaboration and support

We continued working with the nine towns and communities in the UK with links in Nicaragua through assisting them with communication with their Nicaraguan partners, attending and promoting their events, and facilitating cross twin towns communication.

The groups as of 31/12/21 were the Bradford Tisma link; Bristol Link with Nicaragua; Friends of Morazan (Bristol based under 5s charity); Islington Managua Friendship Association; Leeds La Concha Link; Nicaragua Education, Cultural and Arts Trust (NECAT); Norfolk/Norwich El Viejo Association; Oxford Leon Trust; Reading San Francisco Libre Association.

During the year the Santa Rosa Fund based in Tavistock took the painful decision to close down after 31 years supporting educational projects in Nicaragua.

NSC archiving project

At the end of 2021 we began a project to digitalise all our resources with a view to preserving a record of NSC solidarity with Nicaragua since 1978 and making resources available on our website.

Our sources of income: fundraising, sales and membership

In 2021 the Covid pandemic had a considerable impact on our fundraising which meant that expenditure exceeded income by £18,218. In previous years we generated income from providing volunteers for festivals through the Workers Beer Company and through sponsored events such as the London marathon.

Unfortunately attempts to secure other income through grant applications to trusts were unsuccessful due to the nature of our work and the fact that grant funding has become more and more competitive.

However, careful financial management over a sustained period meant that we retain strong reserves.

As from the time that NSC was set up in 1978 our main source of income - £24,000 in 2021 – has been from our members and non-member supporters, an illustration of their extraordinary loyalty. We also claimed a further £4,447 in Gift Aid on donations. Approximately 80% of our members pay their affiliations and donations by standing order.

Other fundraising activities included sales, online Spanish classes, appeals and sponsored events.

We transferred £5,300 to Nicaragua for ATC projects including hurricane recovery and to support the work of the Latin America Agroecology Institute (IALA) in Nicaragua.

Membership

Individual members as of 31 December 2021: 386

Twin towns and local groups: 8

Staffing and Governance

NSC Staff: Brittany Oakes (until July 2021), Helen Yuill, Mandeep Gill; Gladys Guisanamo (from September 2021)

NSCAG staff: Louise Richards

Note that all staff are employed on a part-time basis.

Board of Trustees: NSC is governed by a Board of Directors/Trustees which develops NSC's overall strategy and monitors activities and outcomes. 2021 Board members: James Poke (chair); Rita Drobner (treasurer); Rohan Rice; Francisco Dominguez; John Drewery; Bob Hardie; Nick Hoskyns; Carmen Barreda; Julie Lamin; David McKnight; Andy Waterworth

NSC is a limited company registered in England and Wales.

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