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Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) Annual Report January to December 2022

Introduction and acknowledgements

Our key priorities in 2022 were twofold: consolidating and developing solidarity links with the Nicaraguan Rural Workers Association (ATC) through the US organisation Friends of the ATC; and, in the first part of the year, continuing work 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 purchased items from our shop, 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. 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.

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In the first part of the year, 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 through 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, the climate crisis, and hostile coverage in the international mainstream media.

External and internal communications: A key part of our 2022 work focused on strengthening our internal and external communications. This included broadening our presence through our website and 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. We published one online and print version of our magazine Nicaragua Now.

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 short programmes in London. Unfortunately this wasn't possible in 2022 but we continued solidarity contacts with SOPPEXCCA, published regular articles about their work

reinforcing the SOPPEXCCA message that *'Fairtrade is both the bridge and the vehicle that helps to transform the wellbeing of the families of small-scale producers.'*

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 November 2022 we went ahead with a four times postponed UK speaker tour by ATC representatives Marlen Sanchez and Erika Takeo who spent two weeks in London, Bristol, Birmingham and Coventry.

Key themes of their visit were: food sovereignty, agroecology (especially involving younger generation), empowerment of women, land rights, the climate crisis/climate justice, and social transformation.

The programme consisted of meetings and visits (primarily with UK organisations that are part of the Landworkers Alliance, the UK affiliate of La Via Campesina); public events in London, Bristol and Birmingham; universities in Bristol and Coventry; and interviews in Bristol and London for radio and for publications including the Morning Star. Other visits included community gardens, allotments, semi urban farms, farmers markets and a meeting with the Unite Food & Drink section.

Marlen commented: *This was a very important initiative, the opportunity to share with friends in England our experiences of peasant production, youth training on agroecology and the struggles we face against the media manipulation of sectors opposed to the Sandinista revolution. We know that much remains to be done, but in this journey strengthening international solidarity is fundamental in the face of the enemy with much greater force. We thank the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign for having listened to us, but above all for having motivated us to share Nicaragua, building our homeland, sovereignty and above all defying the sanctions imposed by imperialism.'*

Other activities in solidarity with the ATC in 2022 included a stall and workshop at the annual Latin America festival in Wales *El Sueño Existe* on food sovereignty, agroecology in Wales, Nicaragua and Brazil; a stall and seminars at the annual Latin America conference in London in December 2022.

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.'*

The conclusion of the pilot project that came to an end in the first quarter of the year, was that it would not be possible to put it on a sustainable footing without a Nicaragua based communications

co-ordinator to support the volunteer young reporters and follow up potential leads for interviews and articles. This wasn't possible for financial reasons.

Twin towns collaboration and support: We continued working with the nine towns and communities in the UK with links in Nicaragua through supporting them with communication with their Nicaraguan partners, promoting their events, and facilitating cross twin towns communication. The groups as of 31/12/22 were the 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); Oxford Leon Trust; and Reading San Francisco Libre Association. During the year Viva Bradford, the Bradford – Tisma Link, and the Norwich/Norfolk – El Viejo Link closed. This brought to an end decades long solidarity with carried by extremely dedicated groups in both places.

Strategic review to determine the future direction of NSC: This review was undertaken by a working group made up of trustees and members of staff. This was carried out through a SWOT analysis of Board members, other key activists and staff, an away day drawing together the outcomes of the SWOT analysis, further consultation with membership, and contracting a pro bono consultant to help us to the next stage.

NSC archiving project and office clearance: We are hugely indebted to Nigel Price who spent two – three days a week for most of 2022 digitalising and logging the archive resources that we had in our office. We are also indebted to previous fundraiser and membership co-ordinator Stella Embliss for her meticulous work over so many years keeping our resources in order. This includes exhibitions, badges, mugs, t-shirts, posters, photos, banners, flyers, briefings, magazines (Nicaragua Today, Central America Report, Nicaragua Now), reports and other documents. The resources cover the whole of NSC's 44 year history but the bulk of them are from the 1980s. The next step will be uploading these some resources onto the NSC website and other resources onto our internal Cloud network.

This project was inter-related with clearing out our office in preparation for moving to a smaller space in 2023.

We arranged for the Marx Memorial Library to take our collection of books and pamphlets. The Museum of Labour History in Manchester holds some of our resources, the Peace Museum in Bradford and a museum in Amsterdam have our large banners and posters. The archive of Wales NSC is in the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff.

Our sources of income: fundraising, sales and membership: Our fundraising was impacted by the challenges NSC faced as an organisation as outlined in the introduction but additional factors that impacted fundraising were increased competition from other charities, and the cost of living crisis.

As a result, we experienced a decline in affiliations and donations. At the end of 2022 we had 359 individual members compared with 386 at the end of 2021.

However, we were able to rely on loyal support from members and successfully claim Gift Aid on their membership fees and general donations. Approximately 80% of our members pay their affiliations and donations by standing order.

Our online Spanish classes were very successful during the pandemic, but in 2022 it provided difficult to attract new students. Despite this, we decided to continue with the online model to meet the needs of existing students.

On a positive note, two activities stood out as successful fundraisers. The London Marathon generated £8,376, while volunteers at Glastonbury Festival brought in £4,168. Additionally, we generated funds through online and stall sales, as well as donations and appeals.

In summary, although we faced challenges, our dedicated membership and successful events like the Marathon and Glastonbury Festival helped to mitigate the impact and generate funds.

Financial summary: Expenditure exceeded income in the year by £18,165 or by £17,920 looking at unrestricted funds only.

Our income has fallen over the past three years due to the Covid-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, and challenges specific to our organisation. In 2022 we invested more resources into raising funds by increasing the hours of our fundraiser; and undertook a strategic review of the functioning of NSC to address the challenges we face (see above).

We continue to carefully manage our expenditure and as of 1 April 2023 we moved into a cooperative workspace which will result in a considerably saving on rent and other office costs. The strategic review of how we function will also ensure we're using our resources in the most efficient and effective way.

Our unrestricted reserves at the end of 2022 were £24,538 and we seek to maintain this level with a balanced budget for 2023.

Staffing and Governance

NSC Staff: Helen Yuill, Mandeep Gill; Gladys Guisanamo; 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.

2022 Board members: James Poke (chair); John Drewery (treasurer); Francisco Dominguez; Nick Hoskyns; Julie Lamin; David McKnight; Andy Waterworth

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Charity number: 1106881 Address: Space4, 113-115 Fonthill Rd, London N4 3HH