

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) Annual Report

January to December 2012

Introduction

Two of the highlights of 2012 were a very successful speaker tour by a Nicaraguan woman producer during Fairtrade Fortnight, and our giant woman with her 'Nicaragua, the co-operative way' sash who ensured high visibility at Manchester event to celebrate the culmination of the International Year of Co-operation. A meeting of representative of twin towns highlighted the wealth of events and activities that continue to take place around the UK in solidarity with communities and projects in Nicaragua. Despite an adverse funding environment and the difficulties of keeping Nicaragua on the map in the UK, our membership and income remained stable. Income from affiliations and related donations was £29,005, £5,000 more than in 2011 and the total raised through fundraising and sales was £32,072, one of the highest amounts for many years. We would like to thank our many loyal members and supporters who have continued to support our work so generously.

Nicaragua, co-operatives and fair trade

Speaker tour by Norma Gadea, Fairtrade organic coffee producer, Union of co-operatives SOPPEXCCA. Organised in collaboration with Equal Exchange, 1 – 11 March 2012.



This was a very successful visit in large part due to the fact that Norma is very warm and articulate, had a powerful story to tell and was an excellent ambassador for her community, SOPPEXCCA, and Nicaragua. Norma spoke at Fairtrade and women's day events in Brighton, London, Edinburgh and Peterborough. A total of 350 people including Fairtrade activists, buyers/retailers of Fairtrade coffee, and the general public attended events where Norma was the keynote speaker. In Edinburgh Norma was also the guest of the Scottish Fairtrade Forum and a Scottish Parliament cross-party group on Fairtrade.

Highlights included:

- * **Collaborating with Equal Exchange (EE) in promoting a new brand of Fairtrade organic coffee grown by women farmers.** Norma visited the largest coffee roasting plant in the UK where she spoke to 25 buyers and retailers of Fairtrade products; for the majority this was their first contact with a producer before. The EE organiser explained the significance of the event in promoting the coffee: *'Norma's participation in the Coffee day was essential to its success. So far Equal Exchange's four biggest customers have all agreed to list the full foodservice range which greatly helps our coffee volumes and exposure in new markets.'*
- * **The Scottish parliament approved a motion on Fairtrade and International Women's Day** that congratulated *'Norma on spreading the word and experience of fair trade coffee farmers, and, in Fairtrade Fortnight and on International Women's Day, recognises Norma as someone who is an example to others.'*
- * **Media coverage** included an article and photo with Caroline Lucas MP in an online news magazine for Brighton and Hove; articles in the online Latin America publication La Prisma, and Hands Up media. Norma was interviewed the Christian Aid website as follow up to CA week 2011 when SOPPEXCCA was one of their partner organisations.
- * **Other meetings and visits** included Tools for Self Reliance, an organic farm near Edinburgh, a meeting of twin

towns and NGOs working in Nicaragua organised by Nicaragua Embassy, and a meeting with a Ugandan woman coffee producer.

Norma commented on her visit: *'I enjoyed participating in all the different activities and especially learning about the global fair trade movement. It was fascinating to hear a Scottish government minister speak about all the different types of fair trade product. I really enjoyed meeting other fair trade producers, the opportunities to talk to people, and to exchange ideas and experience as it made me feel like I was in a family and sharing. ... I especially enjoyed the visit to the roaster... as a woman I feel really proud that I could represent my co-operative at an international level and that I was given the opportunity to learn more about the coffee chain. The whole visit was really well organised... I hope that you keep inviting women to participate as it's a real incentive for us women and also a great message of support to the men and the cooperative about our importance and value. Knowledge is power!'*

Participation in Co-ops United International event in Manchester, October 2012, attended by 11,000 people

We participated in this event in order to present a Nicaraguan perspective on the themes of the event. In particular, we highlighted the strength and lessons from the Nicaraguan co-operative movement, the innovative role it has played in the fair trade movement and why Cuba is looking to Nicaragua for advice on setting up second level co-ops.

Key achievements

- * Information that we provided on Nicaraguan co-ops was mentioned in the introductory section of the conference guide and on other websites
- * The three workshops that we organised were attended by 60 people. We focused the workshops on co-ops and fair trade in Nicaragua, the fair trade being promoted through the People's Trade Agreement (TCP) with Venezuela which is part of ALBA, and work that is being done to quantify the unpaid work of women and include it in the pricing of sesame and coffee.
- * High visibility through having a much photographed gigantona with a 'Nicaragua, the co-operative way' sash
- * An article was posted on the Co-op news website based on the workshops we organised on including the unpaid labour of women in the pricing of products
- * Liberation Foods posted a piece on their Facebook relating to Fairtrade Nicaraguan peanuts
- * Contacts made at the event resulted in invitations to speak at a Latin America conference in Manchester and a May Day event in Colchester

Latin America conference December 2012

We organised two workshops attended by 50 people; the first gave an overview of the situation in Nicaragua and the other provided an introduction to the Bolivarian Alliance for the People's of our America (ALBA) using examples of how ALBA programmes are being implemented in Nicaragua to address poverty.

Environment and fair trade study tour June 2012

A group of seven people participated in this trip that spent 10 days visiting organisations working on environmental and gender issues and five days living and working with families on backyard vegetable and fruit plots in the community of Guadalupe Abajo, Matagalpa. One member of the group raised £400 in her home town in Scotland which has been used for to organise workshops in Guadalupe Abajo on pruning of citrus trees and pest control. Although responses to the review of our work (see below) indicated that members and supporters highly value the fact that we organise solidarity trips to Nicaragua, it has become increasingly difficult to find sufficient people to take part in study tours and delegations.

Communications

- regular updates of NSC website and Facebook with news and articles from Nicaragua and information about solidarity events and activities in the UK

- an electronic publication, Nicaragua solidarity news: a round up of solidarity activities around the UK
- publication of two issues of Central America Report (CAR) with articles about developments in Central America and solidarity activities in the UK. The October issue of CAR featured articles about co-operatives in Nicaragua, the theme of our work in the second half of the year

Review of the work of NSC and NSCAG

The review of NSC's work was carried out by an external consultant in spring 2012. We received a very high number of responses: over 100 individual members, staff, Wales NSC and twin town activists, and Nicaraguan partner organisations either took part in postal and online surveys or were interviewed by the consultant. Joint EC meetings of NSC and NSCAG discussed the findings and took action to implement the operational recommendations. This included the following: closure of our office in Nicaragua; employing one part time person in Managua working from home primarily on communications; increasing our support in the UK and Nicaragua for Wales NSC and twin towns; publishing a quarterly newsletter of UK solidarity events and actions; reducing office costs; increasing income through a special funding appeal; and letting out a desk in our office. The next stage will involve addressing more fundamental questions through drafting a strategic plan 2014 – 2016.

Collaboration with other organisations

We worked closely with other organisations that promote solidarity and/or have projects and undertake advocacy in relation to countries in Latin America. This included Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Campaigns, the Environmental Network for Central America (ENCA) and the Central America Women's Network.

Support for Wales NSC and twin towns and other groups

We supported Wales NSC and twinning groups and local groups in Edinburgh, Bristol, Islington, Leeds, Leicester, Norwich, Oxford, Reading, Tavistock, Sheffield, Swindon, the Nicaragua Education, Sustainability & Technology (NEST), and the Nicaragua Education, Cultural and Arts Trust (NECAT) by facilitating transfers of funds, providing information, publishing articles in CAR about twin towns and providing practical support in Nicaragua for groups without representatives. In November we organised a well attended twin towns meeting to provide a forum for an exchange of ideas and experiences, and to identify areas of work where NSC could play a coordinating role in the UK and Nicaragua that would benefit all twin towns and NSC.



Fundraising & Sales

2012 started on a worrying note as our reserves were lower than we would like. Cost-cutting measures were put into place both in the London and Managua offices and a special appeal was made to members which was very successful. By the end of 2012 the total raised through fundraising and sales was £32,072, one of the highest amounts for many years. A further £9,476 was made through Gift Aid and we also gained from renting out one of the under-used desks in our office.

- Once again income from sponsored events rose with our runners in the London marathon and Royal Parks Half Marathon excelling themselves. We had a 2nd film event and made over £6,000 through providing bar workers for festivals. Spanish classes and the Loteria continued to do well.

- Sales profit went up by 15%, partly because of the popularity of the Radical Leaders t-shirt.
- £630 raised through the Gift for Nicaragua on the 2011 sales catalogue and a 2011 appeal was donated to the CJA (Young Environmentalists Network) to help fund the involvement of women producing craft from recycled materials in Nicaragua's Earth Day.
- £1,285 raised by runners in the London marathon was donated to a secondary school in El Viejo and computers were purchased with the money.

Membership

All members receive regular mailings including Central America Report, news from Nicaragua and information about our activities in the UK. We also email our Solidarity News and the Nicanet News to members who request this service.

- Income from affiliations and related donations was £29,005, around £5,000 more than in 2011. There were some generous donations from individuals and several members raised their standing orders.
- We are continuing efforts to ensure greater income stability through standing orders and at the end of 2012 76% of individual members were paying by standing order which is excellent.
- On the down side, there only 6 new members compared with 14 in 2011 and 25 in 2009. The diminishing number of people going on delegations and study tours continues to have a negative effect but it is also the case that so much information is available online that fewer people want to pay to join an organisation.

Membership	Dec 09	Dec 10	Dec 11	Dec 12
Individuals	522	505	470	465
Wales NSC, twinning and other local groups	14	14	14	14
Project-based groups	3	3	2	2
Trade Unions: national, branches & regions, Trades Councils	92	92	76	82
Overseas affiliations (libraries)			4	4
All groups	109	109	96	102
TOTAL	631	614	566	567

All trade union work is carried out through the separately constituted Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (NSCAG). More detail on trade union affiliations is given in the NSC annual report.

Board of Trustees: NSC is governed by a Board of Directors/Trustees, which develops NSC's overall strategic plans and monitors activities and outcomes.

2012 Board members: Carmen Barreda, Debbie Clarke (resigned during the year), Ruby Cox (resigned during the year), Matthew Dodd (resigned during the year), Rita Drobner, Pauline Fraser, Gill Holmes, Bob Hardie, Christine Oddy, James Poke (treasurer), Jessica Russell (resigned during the year), Helen Stathers (resigned during the year).

NSC Staff: *London Office:* Stella Embliss, Mathews Chanza, Helen Yuill
Managua Office: Liz Light, Jaime Miller (until August)

NSCAG staff: Mark Jackson (until May) Steph Henthorne (from June)

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

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