



# Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) Annual Report January to December 2019

*for social and economic justice in Nicaragua*

## Acknowledgements

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 goods from our shop, attended our events, participated in fundraising events or on stalls, and volunteered their time on the Board of Trustees and other committees.

We particularly acknowledge the extraordinary dedication and commitment of Stella Embliss, NSC's fundraising and membership co-ordinator for more than 30 years, who left the organisation in October 2019. Stella played an exemplary role in sustaining the organization, often through very challenging times.

## Summary

Our key priorities in 2019 focused on consolidating and developing solidarity with organisations that form part of the Nicaraguan Council for the Social Economy, a sector that employs 70% of the working population. We carried this out through presenting their perspective on the impact of the 2018 attempted coup, their key role in sustaining the country, particularly during the April – July 2018 road blocks and their subsequent collaboration with the government in rebuilding the social and economic fabric.

## Solidarity with Nicaraguan co-operatives

We collaborated with Bristol Link with Nicaragua (BLINC) on the visit of Junieth Leiva, who was in London and Bristol during Fairtrade Fortnight in February and March representing the Co-operative Union SOPPEXCCA who export Fairtrade coffee to the UK market.

This was a continuation of NSC's work on Fairtrade, co-operatives and climate justice started in 1993 that has made a significant contribution to building solidarity between Nicaraguan co-operatives and UK promoters and consumers of Fairtrade products. Our work has acted as a catalyst to organisations such as the BLINC who, as a result of speaker tours originally organised by NSC, have invited women farmers from SOPPEXCCA to Bristol every year for the past ten years for extensive programmes of talks and visits to schools, colleges and businesses.

During her stay in London, Junieth took part in a public meeting, an event organised by the Camden Fairtrade Network promoting coffee, visited the Financial Conduct Authority where SOPPEXCCA coffee, and a Farmers market where SOPPEXCCA coffee is sold. Junieth particularly highlighted the importance of Fairtrade in empowering women, and building sustainable livelihoods. She also stressed the importance of SOPPEXCCA's work in involving younger generation of farming families into the co-operatives and climate change mitigation measures.

As an associate member of the Fairtrade Foundation, we promoted their campaigning actions and used this space to promote a Nicaraguan perspective on co-operatives, Fairtrade and building sustainable livelihoods in the context of climate change.

The importance of linking UK organisations with their Nicaraguan counterparts is illustrated by this quote from a UK organic farmer commented when meeting a SOPPEXCCA representative:

*"Despite the fact that we live thousands of miles apart we share common interests, values and a vision of the future that protects people and the planet."*

## Solidarity with the Council for the Social Economy

The Council for the Social Economy is a federation made up of small and medium businesses and farmers, street sellers and others who are self-employed, and co-operatives. For a sector with thousands of members living a hand to mouth

existence, the failed coup of 2018 was particularly devastating. At the same time, it was the farmers who make up this sector who continued producing food that enabled the country to survive the three-month long road blocks that paralysed the country.. It is also this sector that subsequently worked with the government to reactivate the economy. toreactivate

For this reason, we published a series of articles, a video and a briefing based interviews with street sellers, small farmers, and leaders of the small business and federation of co-operatives explaining their perspective on the failed coup and the impact it had on their members. We also highlighted ways in which the government strengthened this sector through support for technical training, organizational development, and setting up a nationwide network of street markets. This work was particularly important, as it is a perspective completely absent from all mainstream coverage of Nicaragua.

## Solidarity with the Rural Workers' Association (ATC): Agroecology, land rights 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 toward food sovereignty, or the right of peoples to define their own food systems that will grow healthy and culturally appropriate food for local consumption. The UK Landworkers Alliance is the UK affiliate of La Via Campesina.

In July 2020, NSC began developing a new initiative to work with the ATC to raise awareness and build UK solidarity for their work as an organisation representing 47,000 Nicaraguan campesinxs. In particular, we focused on their agroecology and food sovereignty programmes and started disseminating information and networking to lay the ground for a UK speaker tour by ATC representatives in 2020.

Worked carried out:

- Participated in a delegation to Nicaragua organised by Friends of the ATC in July to participate in celebrations of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution and to gain an understanding and build ties with the ATC.
- Published articles and interviews on our website and social media promoting the work of the agroecology and food sovereignty work of the ATC particularly focusing on the Latin America Agroecology Institute (IALA).
- Organised events, participated in seminars highlighting the work of the ATC, built relationships with the Environmental Network for Central America and the Landworkers Alliance

Our members and supporters contributed £1,455 in funds for our solidarity work in the UK and to enable the ATC's first students to complete their practical experience.

## Celebrating 40 years of UK – Nicaragua solidarity

In June, we marked NSC's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the publication of a special edition of our magazine Nicaragua Now and a celebration event in London. At the event and in Nicaragua Now, we highlighted the following:

- The way in which Nicaragua became a beacon of hope regionally and internationally. In Latin America, the Sandinista Revolution represented the fulfilment of dreams that had been brutally destroyed in a CIA-backed coup in Chile six years previously.
- The role of hundreds of thousands of people from around the world who participated in a global movement to support the Sandinista Revolution and to condemn US aggression. NSC, set up in 1978, was one such group.
- Outlined the story of the tens of thousands of people in the UK, particularly in the labour movement, who have contributed to sustaining solidarity through four decades of profound political change in Nicaragua, the UK and globally.

We dedicated both the event and the publication to the Nicaraguan people and organisations with whom we have worked, and their commitment, against enormous odds, to building a society based on social and economic justice, free from outside interference.

As part of preparing for the celebrations, we re-organised our extensive archive of materials and collected case studies illustrating the work of twin towns and testimonies from solidarity activists involved in our work at different periods.

## Twin towns support

We continued working with the 10 towns and communities in the UK with twinning links in Nicaragua through assisting them with communication with their Nicaraguan partners, attending and promoting their events, and facilitating cross twin towns communication. In the care of the Bristol Link with Nicaragua collaborated with them to bring a speaker from Nicaragua to Bristol and London during Fairtrade Fortnight.

## Co-ordination of Nicaragua input into Latin America Conference

More than 50 speakers and 500 participants attended this 15<sup>th</sup> annual conference organised by the Cuba and Venezuela solidarity campaigns. The key themes for 2019 were the current political and social realities in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the context of reactionary forces both internally and from the USs government under Donald Trump. National Assembly member Raquel Dixon highlighted the Sandinista government's successes in infrastructure development and poverty reduction programmes. We also organised two seminars on Nicaragua: one on Trump administration destabilisation and another on Nicaraguan initiatives to combat climate change.

## Fundraising and Sales

2019 was a year of significant transition with the departure of Stella and onboarding of a new fundraiser, Brittany, in Autumn. Over months of long evenings and occasional weekends, Stella worked to organise and update systems and train a new staff member. Stella's remarkable efforts helped ensure a smooth transition, leaving NSC in a good position moving into the future.

The total raised through fundraising and sales in 2019 was £35,113, compared to £20,913 in 2018. A further £6,396 was made in 2019 through claiming Gift Aid. NSC received a generous legacy of £11,000.

Income through Workers Beer Company (WBC) and Festival Republic was £4,328. As noted in 2018, there have been reduced opportunities for festival work following the major setback WBC suffered. Nonetheless, income generated from festival work in 2019 is an improvement on the £1,347 earned in 2018.

NSC held two appeals, of which 20% of funds from the second went to the Latin American Agroecology Institute (IALA) in Nicaragua, a school organised by the Rural Workers' Association (ATC) to train youth in sustainable farming and leadership. The remaining funds from both appeals were for our general work.

NSC had 4 runners in the London Marathon and 2 runners in the Royal Parks Half Marathon, who together raised a net £9,078. The Loteria was phased out in Summer 2019 upon Stella's leaving. Spanish classes continued; many thanks to our teacher, Dante, who stepped in during Summer 2019 to take over from former teacher Luis, who sadly passed away.

Sales made £3,580, and the *Gift for Nicaragua* on the catalogue raised £530 for IALA. This is the third consecutive year sales underperformed, as we hope to make at least £5000 from this activity. Our sales strategy will be reconsidered in 2020.

## Membership

Through a complex polarised period in Nicaragua, a key part of our work was disseminating articles, news updates and briefings to our members and supporters up to date by reflecting the perspectives of our partner organisations and our own UK solidarity work. In our special issue of Nicaragua Now to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary we paid tribute to the tens of thousands of people who contributed solidarity with Nicaragua and themselves benefitted so much from it.

Income from affiliations and donations (this excludes donations to appeals or sales) was £22,340 as against £21,987 in 2018. At the end of 2019, 80% of individual members were paying their membership fees by standing order compared to 74% in 2018. In 2019, there were 24 individual memberships lapsed, compared to 17 lapsed memberships during 2018, the year of political unrest. There were 9 new members over the year (12 in 2018).

| Membership                             | Dec 16     | Dec 17     | Dec 18     | Dec 19     |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Individuals                            | 440        | 404        | 401        | 386        |
| Wales NSC, twin towns and other groups | 14         | 14         | 14         | 14         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           | <b>454</b> | <b>418</b> | <b>415</b> | <b>400</b> |

## Staffing and Governance 2019

**NSC Staff:** Stella Embliss (until 31 Oct 2019), Brittany Oakes (from 15 Sept 2019), Helen Yuill and Susie Steven.

**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. 2019 Board members: Dave Cosgrave, Francisco Dominguez, John Drewery, Rita Drobner, Bob Hardie, Nick Hoskyns, David McKnight, Steve Sweeney, James Poke and Andy Waterworth.

### Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC)

**Address:**

86 Durham Road  
London N7 7DT

**Email:** [nsc@nicaraguasc.org.uk](mailto:nsc@nicaraguasc.org.uk)

**Web:** [www.nicaraguasc.org.uk](http://www.nicaraguasc.org.uk)

**Tel:** 020 7561 4836



Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign



@NicaraguaSC-UK

NSC is a company limited by guarantee with  
charitable status No 1106881