

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC)

Annual Report January–December 2006

Nicaragua
Solidarity
Campaign

'NSC has always been present in the lives of Nicaraguans. Their work is about human relations between small producers, particularly coffee farmers, in Nicaragua and consumers in the UK. NSC has been a bridge facilitating knowledge, understanding and relationships between these two worlds sharing homes, food, happiness, problems and dreams of building a better world where all people can come together on equal terms.'

Fatima Ismael, SOPPEXCCA, an association of coffee cooperatives that NSC has worked with since 2001

What we do

NSC works in the UK to support organisations in Nicaragua committed to social and economic justice. We carry this out through organising study tours to Nicaragua, speaker tours in the UK, campaigning and lobbying activities and distributing reports and briefings. We also support Wales NSC and 13 towns and communities with twinning links in Nicaragua. The focus of our work in 2006 was on Fairtrade and the development of an education campaign.

All work on trade union linking and US interference in the Nicaraguan elections was carried out through the non-charitable company limited by guarantee Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group. See separate report.

Introduction – Gay Lee, chair of NSC

I became secretary at the AGM in 2005 – and also acting chair. I want to say a huge thank you to Jane Freeland for her hard work as Chair before me. Her knowledge and experience of Nicaragua has been, and continues to be, a great gift to our work.

With a Sandinista government in power Nicaragua has joined the group of countries in the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), which provides an alternative economic alliance, much aided by Venezuela's oil resources. Hopefully this alliance will provide a

counterweight to DR-CAFTA in putting people and equality before the interests of global capitalism.

2006 was a year of consolidation of our campaigning activities, and the beginning of a strategic shift towards more project work for which we will seek grant funding.

We worked on governance issues putting in place a risk management strategy and evaluating the first year of our Strategic Plan.

In 2007 we will be continuing with the agreed campaigning and project work with twin towns on education (given a fillip by the new government) and on building support for women fair trade producers. Fairtrade is now a huge, sometimes controversial economic and social phenomenon world-wide and we feel proud to be a part of it from the Nicaraguan perspective.

We welcomed two new staff members to the Managua office: Julian Guevara as field worker and Liz Light as the finance and administrative worker. Many thanks to Paul Baker, who resigned at the beginning of 2006. This office provides the vital link between the grass roots organisations in Nicaragua and the UK.

Finally I would like to thank the staff and the members of the Board of Trustees and Sub-Committee and other volunteers who contribute to so many areas of our work – in the office, on stalls, at festivals... we wouldn't still be here after nearly 30 years if it wasn't for their dedication to NSC and Nicaragua.



Janixce Florian from NSC's partner organisation Soppexcca, at the Bishop Challoner School, Tower Hamlets, London. Janixce's visit was funded by DfID.

Key Achievements

- We kept our members, supporters and the general public informed about developments in Nicaragua and our solidarity work through a revamped website, *Central America Report*, weekly news bulletins and regular members mailings.
- We helped to strengthen links among Nicaraguan women coffee producers through facilitating DfID funding for a very successful forum of 65 members of Flores del Café (women coffee producers' movement.)
- We raised the profile of Nicaragua and fair trade through our participation in the Fairtrade Foundation and locally through the work of twin towns, with written articles, and presentations around the country by participants in fair trade study tours
- We successfully maintained NSC's traditional funding base and secured grants from the AW60 Trust and the DfID office in Managua.

Fair trade campaign

'NSC's work has been vital for the cooperative organisations, linking us with the international market, working to achieve through fair trade prices the social, political, organisational and environmental demands of our communities, and the visible integration of women in work and in life. NSC represents for organisations of small producers our solidarity ambassador. This is why we appreciate NSC...'

Fatima Ismael, SOPPEXCCA

Nicaragua Context

The instability of coffee prices in the world market has meant that Fairtrade has made a significant contribution to greater security for small-scale producers organised into co-operatives. As one coffee co-operative director said, 'Fairtrade is not just a chance to get higher incomes but also to have contact with consumers...We can change the relationship between consumers and producers and the relationship between prices, so that it is a relation that allows us to live.' However, in 2006 coffee prices on the 'free' market began to rise to the point where the Fairtrade price is only marginally higher than the market price, resulting in producer demands for higher Fairtrade prices.

UK Context

Our stakeholder status in the Fairtrade Foundation (FTF) opened opportunities nationally and locally to promote the perspectives of Nicaraguan producers on fair trade. The Nestle launch of its own Fairtrade coffee in October 2005 highlighted the dilemma of how to expand the Fairtrade market without the original ethos of fair trade as part of a wider movement for trade justice becoming lost.

Partner organisations

In Nicaragua: SOPPEXCCA, CECOCAFEN, PRODECOOP, (Coffee co-operatives), CAFENICA (umbrella organisation), Flores del Café movement of women coffee producers)

In the UK: Fairtrade Foundation (NSC is a charity stakeholder), Wales NSC, and twin towns.

Activities

- We helped to strengthen links among Nicaraguan women coffee producers through facilitating DfID funding for a very successful forum of 65 members of Flores del Café (women coffee producers' movement.) The Forum produced an action plan, which included increasing the participation of women producers in decision-making in coffee co-operatives and international coffee organisations. NSC will continue to work with Flores del Café through supporting them in developing an application for further funds to strengthen their movement.
- We continued to build links between Nicaraguan fair trade producers and promoters/consumers of Fairtrade products in the UK. Janixce Florian from SOPPEXCCA visited England, Scotland and Wales during Fairtrade Fortnight and spoke at 6 public events attended by a total of 1,440 people. Janixce also visited 8 schools. This included an event jointly organised with Latin America Bureau to launch our fair trade film *Coffee – Take it fairly*. We have since sold 120 DVDs and 45 videos of the film.
- We used the example of Nicaragua to highlight the benefits and shortcomings of fair trade for Nicaragua women coffee producers. We carried this out through the talks and presentations by study tour participants who visited Nicaragua in August 2005. In addition to the film mentioned above we published and distributed an information leaflet on the benefits of fair trade for women that complemented the film.

Board of Trustees

NSC is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors/Trustees, which develops NSC's overall strategic plans and monitors activities and outcomes. We completed a review of the first year of the strategic plan and planned activities and outcomes for the rest of 2007.

2006 Board members

Ruby Cox, Rita Drobner (Treasurer), **Jane Freeland, David Godson, Robert Hardie, Gay Lee** (secretary and acting chair), **Christine Oddy, Martin Roger** (Vice-Chair), **Bernard Roome, Jessica Russel, Nikki Russel**. Our thanks to Nikki who resigned as of November 2006.

NSC Staff

London Office

Stella Embliss, Debbie Mace, Helen Yuill

Managua Office

Paul Baker (until Feb 06), **Julian Guevara** (from Feb 06), **Liz Light** (from Feb 06).

NSCAG

Samantha Maher

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

- We continued our participation as a stakeholder in the Fairtrade Foundation in particular highlighting the controversial issue of the increasing involvement of transnational companies in Fairtrade. The danger of Fairtrade's phenomenal success means it is increasingly attractive to large corporations but this threatens to dilute Fairtrade's original aims. We endorsed a complaint made by Baby Milk Action to the Advertising Standards Authority about an advertisement for Nestle Fairtrade Coffee that we believed made exaggerated claims.
- In December 2006 our pilot project on fair trade funded by DfID came to an end and we began working with the Nicaragua women producers movement Flores del Café on a follow-up project.

Developing the Education Campaign

'In Nicaragua there are ideas about how to change and advance in the field of education, what is missing is the political will to organise and the discussion about how to implement the change.'

Miguel de Castilla Urbina, Sept. 2006

(then Co-ordinator of FLAPE – Nicaragua, now Minister of Education)

Nicaraguan context

The election results prompted a rethink of our campaigning given the possibility of working with a government committed to improving education. Education Minister Miguel de Castilla, a former leader of the Forum for Education and Human Development (FEDH), was central to a progressive new Education Law and a National Education Agenda signed by all parties in 2006. In power, his first act was to abolish 'school autonomy' and 'voluntary' fees, putting an end to creeping privatisation. This caused a surge in school

enrolments but also revealed the extent of underfunding: 2,000 new classrooms and 4,000 new teachers are needed. Ortega has also declared his intention to renegotiate IMF curbs on education spending, especially teacher salaries.

Partner organisations

In UK: town twinning groups and Oxfam's campaign on public services

In Nicaragua: ANDEN (Nicaraguan teachers union) and the FEDH

Objectives

To develop an education campaign that provides practical grass roots support in Nicaragua, creating examples of good practice that the government can take up and sustain. We will work with twin towns to raise awareness of the relationship between education and poverty reduction, and raise awareness of obstacles to the Millennium Development goal of a complete primary education for all Nicaraguan children by 2015.

Activities

- Consultation with twin towns regarding a project to develop after school clubs. After further consultation in Nicaragua, the project will be presented to appropriate funding bodies in 2007.
- An education workshop at the 2006 AGM resulted in the setting up of an Education Working Group.
- We participated in a joint public meeting with Oxfam and UNISON as part of Oxfam's international campaign on public services
- We planned an urgent action campaign, to coincide with the negotiations of a new IMF economic programme with the Ortega government.



Only 20 of every 100 children who start primary school complete all the years, The Millennium Development Goals state that by 2015 every child should complete primary school.

Raising our profile

Activities

- Membership of the editorial board of *Central America Report* (CAR), which produced and distributed two issues in 2006.
- Nicaragua Network Hotline distributed weekly to interested members and supporters.
- The website kept up-to-date and developed and more widely used as a source of information on Nicaragua and our solidarity activities. Online sales are also increasing.
- Provision of speakers and organised workshops at trade justice and fair trade events.

Community theatre project

In April five people participated in our second community theatre project working with Nicaragua community theatre groups in Achuapa and Leon. Emily Hunka summed up the success of the visit:

'I had profound experiences working with El Largarillo in the Achuapa region in a remote village with limited electricity and running water. Staying with families and working with the theatre group there was one of the most memorable experiences of my life... It was brilliant to see 'political theatre' in action – theatre about the immediate experiences of people in the community.'

Emily Hunka, participant in community theatre project

Collaborating with other organisations

- We participated in a Latin America conference in London in 2006 organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Justice for Colombia and the Venezuela Information Centre.
- We donated \$700 from the Nicaragua Support Fund towards a campaign in León warning of the dangers of drinking alcohol adulterated with methanol. Some 10,000 leaflets were distributed. The work won plaudits from the regional health authority.
- We donated £400 from the Nicaragua Support Fund to the Mayangna Girls School scholarships fund.
- We participated in regular meetings with NGOs working on Central America to co-ordinate our work.

Support for Wales NSC and twin towns

We supported Wales NSC and twin towns by:

- providing information on the situation in Nicaragua, news bulletins, *Central America Report* and our campaigning work
- collaborating with towns working on fair trade in the organisation of local programmes for Janixce Florián who visited the UK during Fairtrade Fortnight

- providing space for twin towns to exchange ideas and information through the organisation of a twin towns meeting. This also served to exchange ideas on how twin towns could become involved in the education campaign

Financial summary

Our gross income on all activities was £129,181 representing a small decline from the £132,141 income of 2005. Our gross expenditure was £123,917 an increase from the figure of £114,436 of 2005. This gave us a net income of £5,264 compared to £17,436 the previous year. For a full set of audited accounts please contact the NSC office.

Fundraising & sales

- In 2006, income from affiliations and donations was £28,764, proceeds from an appeal £3,568, donations to organisations in Nicaragua £9,817, donations from sales customers £790 and Gift Aid £8,180. Total income from affiliations, donations and Gift Aid was therefore £51,119.
- We received a grant of £570 from the AW60 Trust towards the cost of holding a meeting of twin towns as part of developing our education campaign.
- We spent £7,934 of a grant from the DfID office in Managua a DFID grant received in 2005 for work on fair trade.

Fundraising activities

Other fundraising income totalled £17,395. Activities included Spanish lessons, the lotería, film night, London marathon, sales and work with the Workers, Beer Company. We provided 103 bar workers to work at 10 events, raising £5,447. Sales raised £6,396 plus donations of £790 as mentioned above.

Membership

Our efforts to ensure greater income stability through encouraging more members to pay by standing order have been successful. At the end of 2006 63% of individual members were paying by standing order compared with 51% at the end of 2005. However, although 40 people joined in 2006 this did not compensate for those who didn't renew their membership.

Membership	Dec 04	Dec 05	Dec 06
Individuals	670	712	585
Local groups & Wales NSC	16	16	14
Project-based groups	0	1	3
Trade Unions: national, branches, regions & TUC's	118	102	99
All groups	134	119	116
TOTAL	804	831	701

Please see the NSCAG Annual Report for more detailed information on trade union affiliations.