

NICARAGUA NOW

**Nicaragua
Solidarity
Campaign**

Issue 6
Spring/Summer 2016



**Climate
Justice:**

**Nicaragua's
example**

**Intergenerational
solidarity in
Sheffield & Esteli**

**The mutual
solidarity of
volunteering**

**Women Free
Trade Zone
workers**

**Reducing waste,
reducing poverty**

UK–Nicaragua solidarity



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NICARAGUA NOW

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Cover photos: Fairtrade producer Ana Maria Gonzalez at the Frenchay School in Bristol, one of 15 schools she visited during Fairtrade Fortnight

NSC activist Gay Lee with London marathon runners Rodrigo and David who raised funds for NSC and medical supplies for a hospital in Managua.

Design: Tom Lynton

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign has taken all reasonable care to ensure that the information contained in this edition of Nicaragua Now is accurate on the stated date of publication. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, unless otherwise stated.

Nicaragua, elections, and the US

Nicaragua presidential and National Assembly elections will take place on 6 November, two days before the US presidential elections.

What impact is US destabilisation of the region likely to have on the outcome?

On 1 May, 1985 President Ronald Reagan issued an Executive Order declaring that Nicaragua constituted 'an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security...of the US'. He went on to declare 'a national emergency' and impose a trade embargo. This was one of a toxic array of destabilisation tactics to oust the Sandinista government by creating a climate of confusion, fear, doubt and chaos. This destabilisation was the punishment for having challenged US power and implemented economic and social reforms to overcome chronic levels of extreme poverty. 30,000 Nicaraguans lost their lives in this so called 'low intensity conflict.'

The global and regional political context has changed dramatically but the US goal remains the same: the removal of governments that it doesn't like. In Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina and elsewhere, the US is attempting to re-establish its hegemony by exacerbating political polarisation, instilling fear, discrediting political institutions, and questioning the legitimacy of elections. In Brazil this included fomenting a quasi-coup. As in the 1980s in Nicaragua, the US message is that the solution to crises is to

oust governments.

How are regional upheavals likely to affect the Nicaraguan elections?

The Sandinista government returned to power in 2007 mindful of the disastrous consequences of war, hyperinflation and economic collapse of the 1980s. Nine years of pursuing policies of promoting macroeconomic stability and poverty reduction have resulted in a politically and economically stable country. Economic growth in 2015 was 4.9% and predictions for 2016 are 4.5%. Poverty decreased from 42.5% in 2009 to 30% in 2014. Extreme poverty was reduced from 14.6% to 8.3%.

An April opinion poll carried out by M&R Consultores indicated 70.3% approval of the government's performance and 22.3% disapproval. The same poll showed 59.1% support for the Sandinista Party (FSLN), 9.8% for the Liberals, while 31.2% declared themselves independent.

Inevitably Nicaragua is perceived by the US as 'guilty' by association with Venezuela and other ALBA countries and there will be some level of US interference in the elections. US interests in Central America lie in promoting strong trading relations and investment, stemming the flow of drugs, and preventing migration to the US. Pragmatically, destabilising a much strengthened Nicaragua is not going to contribute to these goals. Nevertheless, given the US elections and regional developments we should remain vigilant.

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) and NSCAG work with Nicaraguan organisations and social movements fighting for social and economic justice by promoting and seeking support for their activities. We carry this out through *speaker tours of the UK by representatives of our partner organisations

*facilitating mutual solidarity between UK and Nicaraguan trade unions *organising events to raise funds and awareness about Nicaragua and our partners' work *publishing news, briefings, articles and online updates *providing support for Wales NSC and 12 towns and communities in the UK with twinning links in Nicaragua

Get in touch, get involved

NSC www.nicaraguasc.org.uk

NSCAG www.nscag.org

[f](#) Nicaragua-Solidarity

[t](#) NSCAG_UK

Wales NSC www.walesnicaragua.wordpress.com

Twin towns and other groups with projects in Nicaragua www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/solidarity/twin-towns

Briefings on the Nicaraguan interoceanic canal: www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/resources

Weekly bulletins of news from Nicaragua: www.nicanet.org

Paris Climate Agreement: a success or monumental fudge?

According to UN general-secretary Ban Ki-Moon the Paris Climate Change Agreement was 'a monumental triumph for people and our planet...setting the stage for ending poverty.'

However, many countries, including Nicaragua, expressed profound concerns that the Agreement will not solve global warming problems but simply pass them on to future generations.

Nicaragua has refused to ratify the Agreement as doing so would mean being complicit in an Agreement that will lead to a 'catastrophic three degree increase in global warming' because the 'largest polluters lack political will and ambition' to address the most pressing issue facing the planet and humanity.



NSC's climate justice campaign

Building a broad based popular movement nationally and globally will be critical to instilling greater political will and ambition on the part of our government. Our climate justice campaign will contribute by producing and promoting campaigning

materials and organising speaker tours to highlight Nicaragua's vulnerability to climate change, commitment to renewable energy, and the government's international campaign to promote climate justice.

Further information: www.nicaraguasc.org.uk

Myths and Truths about the Paris Agreement (COP-21)*

1 MYTH The Paris Agreement will limit the rise in average global temperatures to between 1.5 and 2 degrees this century.

TRUTH The voluntary carbon reduction commitments made by countries in their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) will 'lead us to a world with a 3 degree increase in global temperatures this century.' This is more than 50% above the target of 2 degrees and 100% more than the 1.5 degree target.

2 MYTH The great achievement of the COP-21 is that the INDCs of more than 147 countries are based on the principle of universal responsibilities.

TRUTH The INDCs are based on the principle that "we are all responsible for climate change and we all have to contribute to the solution." This means there is no apportioning of blame on the largest polluters, historically responsible for the highest levels of emissions.

COP-21 invented the concept of universal responsibilities to nullify the concepts of 'historic responsibilities' and 'common but differentiated responsibilities' (CBDR), central to the UN Convention on Climate Change. INDCs based on voluntary 'universal responsibilities' will be a failure. The only solution is to have an obligatory quota system based on historic responsibilities and common but differentiated responsibilities.

3 MYTH It was a great victory for the countries most affected by climate change to have the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage included in the document.

TRUTH A compensation mechanism for countries suffering from the deaths, damages and losses caused by climate change is critical. However, this must be based on countries historically most responsible for the problem compensating those suffering the consequences despite having played no part in their creation. Although the Agreement includes US\$100bn annually for

compensation starting in 2020 there is no obligation on any country to recognise a compensation claim and no financing has been earmarked to cover the costs.

4 MYTH The Paris Agreement is not enough by itself but it opens the way to dealing with climate change in due course.

TRUTH The outcome is similar to the rescue by governments of the banks which caused the financial crisis, passing the bill for the crisis to workers, pensioners and taxpayers. In Paris, the rescue was of the countries that have caused global warming, passing the cost to those least responsible who will die in the largest numbers unable to make good their losses, much less adapt to the increasing intensity of climate change.

The Paris Agreement is not enough because it does not transform nor even inconvenience the neoliberal corporate-based model of production, consumption, finance and lifestyle, which is unsustainable.

* Summary of a paper by Paul Oquist, Nicaragua's chief negotiator to the Paris Summit

'Yes we want work... but dignified work'

Nearly 110,000 workers are employed in Nicaragua's Free Trade Zones (FTZs), over half of them women. **Liz Light** talked to **Sandra Ramos**, director of the Maria Elena Cuadra Women's Movement (MEC) that has been defending women's employment and economic rights for the past 22 years. MEC works with over 25,000 women in the FTZs and a further 95,000 in barrios, rural communities and with domestic workers in five departments of Nicaragua.

Since returning to power in 2007, the FSLN government has embarked on a programme that combines economic stability with extensive infrastructure and social programmes aimed at improving the lives of the 50% of the population suffering chronic and persistent levels of poverty. Encouraging foreign investment in the FTZs is an important part of this strategy. The mass employment opportunities are a lifeline for a country that, despite significant advances, still suffers from widespread unemployment and poverty. Foreign owned factories are drawn to Nicaragua because of attractive tax incentives, a reputation for being relatively safe, and the fact that wages are the lowest

in the region.

In general the jobs on offer in the FTZs are low skilled. However they are a vital source of employment in a country where there are few alternatives other than the insecurity of informal self-employed work and migration.

As Sandra Ramos points out, "unfortunately Nicaragua continues to be a producer of raw materials and cheap labour. We don't have heavy industry that would help create better qualified jobs. The government is opening technology training centres, but there is a large gap between technical education compared to university education. The challenge is for technical education to be included in national development policy.

A qualified workforce would attract better investment for qualified jobs that would improve standards of living. Until then the FTZs will continue to be the salvation for thousands of unemployed Nicaraguan women and men."

While accepting that job creation is vital, MEC is very critical of the working conditions in some of the factories. Factors that have a very damaging impact on health include constant noise and vibration, toxic chemicals and a lack of safety equipment, resulting in muscular-skeletal disorders, respiratory problems, and eye, ear and skin disorders.

Sandra Ramos points out that "repetitive work for long hours causes illnesses which can become more serious because the long term effects are not being diagnosed properly. The lack of specialist doctors and preventative policies also means that many health issues are not being detected. The Ministry of Health needs to oversee this." She added that many of the companies are not fulfilling their obligations for access to health services; others are not complying with Nicaragua's employment laws.

Violations of employment laws including sacking pregnant women, sexual harassment, having pay docked for taking time off to take children to the doctor etc, and the limiting of access to toilet facilities.

MEC uses the slogan "Empleo sí... pero con dignidad" (Yes we want work... but dignified work). Sandra explains: "We have a team of lawyers, legal defenders and volunteer women leaders inside the factories and in communities. We provide legal services, teach women about their rights and promote their economic and political empowerment by training leaders and promoting the participation of the women in defence





MEC's 18th National Convention, March 2016 where 600 members debated the advances and deficiencies of workers' rights, equal opportunities, occupational health and job security, and their implications for women workers and human rights in Nicaragua.

of their rights. We are fighting for the right to dignified employment, the right to access credit and own land, the right to participate in decision making. Our volunteer promoters are women with a political commitment to fight for the rights of other women. We see empowerment in this way, first as an individual commitment but it also has to be collective."

MEC as an organisation has successfully influenced government legislation on violence, employment rights and equal opportunities, and managed to position women's rights, including therapeutic abortion, in public debate.

Although MEC is not a union, it is part of a broader network of defenders of workers' rights. MEC communicates with the government and national unions through the National Committee of Union Women co-ordinated by the CST-JBE union, a member of the National Workers Front (FNT). MEC works with the CST-JBE on issues such as the rights of women workers in FTZs in Central America, and helps to train CST-JBE's male union leaders on the subject of violence.

At least half of the companies in the FTZs do not allow unions. However, the Ministry of Work (MITRAB) now has a vice-ministry that oversees FTZ affairs and supports workers. MEC coordinates with this vice-ministry and the National Commission of FTZs (CNZF) to raise demands relating to workers' rights and conflicts resulting from companies abandoning the country. Other government initiatives include reforms to the Labour Code and the introduction of oral proceedings in the Labour Court which has reduced hearing times from five years to two years.

Sandra notes "MITRAB still needs to provide greater follow-up and monitoring of workers' rights. Companies need to be held to account for bad practices such as black listing union organisers, the non payment of social security benefits, and the elimination of workplace gender violence."

In the meantime MEC continues to fight for equality. Sandra concluded: "MEC is a house with open doors. We will defend and accompany women whether they are organised in unions or not, because everybody has rights."



The UK based Central America Women's Network (CAWN) has worked with MEC for over 12 years on defending the labour and economic rights of Nicaraguan women. This has been carried out through capacity-building, advocacy work in Europe, the organisation of speaker tours and the publication of research based on MEC's work.

Further information:

www.cawn.org

Electricity, roads, water and 'buen vivir'

On a visit to Bluefields **Brian Mack** interviewed **Johnny Hodgson**, FSLN political secretary for the Southern Caribbean Autonomous Region (RACS), about changes in the region over the past ten years. Johnny served as Mayor of Bluefields in the 80s and worked with the NGO Action Aid for nine years.

What are the most important achievements of the last ten years on the Coast?

Well, as you have seen, materially the Coast has changed a lot. For the first time we have a development strategy from 2007 to 2020 with 15 detailed programmes, but as well as the material I want to emphasize what we call 'buen vivir' – living well. If you don't feel happy in your community and with the other regional communities, if you are not healthy and living in harmony with the rivers and the forests, what do all the material things mean?

The major projects are electricity, water and roads. Just imagine, we have never had roads to the region but we are building four roads to the Coast - of the 400 kms

to the Pacific side from Bluefields we have 320km paved and it will be finished in 2017. In 2018 we complete the road to Pearl Lagoon, and in 2020 the one to La Cruz de Rio Grande ...they will be the best roads in Nicaragua. There is good and bad even in a road and that is why we have to always think about 'buen vivir' as well.

In 2007 only 25% of houses had electrical connection and in many places this meant one light bulb would come on at 6pm and go again at 9. Every month we are connecting a new community even though none of them are economically viable – tomorrow we are connecting two more.

On Saturday we are having a ceremony to hand over 30 new houses on Rama Cay [a small island in Bluefields Lagoon, home

of the Rama ethnic group] – you won't recognise Rama Cay, all the houses are new and have water and even sewers. In 2007 not a single town on the Coast had a sewage system.

Traditionally the Caribbean Coast has always felt that it has been ignored and exploited by the central government. Has anything changed?

In 2007 only two Costeños worked in central government – even the Diputado [MP] was from out of the region. Now we have members of the National Assembly directive board, the Supreme Court of Justice, and the Supreme Electoral Council as well as ministers and vice ministers. Francisco Campbell is the Ambassador to the US. ...you could say we are practically running the country!

You emphasise the importance of the environment but there are threats of violent opposition to the canal* which could damage the 'buen vivir'.

... it is not so on this side of the country. I have been at all the meetings with the Rama/Creole communities; we even consulted with communities not near the route of the canal. The Territorial Assembly has 63 members; of the 56 present at a meeting on 10 January, 50 voted in favour. The only territories that are not unanimous are Monkey Point, Bankukuk and Greytown. Before that Assembly there were community meetings which are minuted as demanded by the UN convention and they were around 90% in favour.

The Rama will lease some of their territory to the canal but will re-gain control of land they are losing every day to the agricultural frontier. I think the Rama were dying out and the canal could save them. They will have control and income from the lease of the land. The consultation was a beautiful process and beneficial whether the canal goes ahead or not.

*the proposed 161-mile inter-oceanic canal across Nicaragua



Johnny Hodgson, FSLN political secretary for the Southern Caribbean Autonomous Region

Walking alongside other people is when we are most human

Raleigh International



Nicaraguan volunteer **Pedro Ocon** describes the lessons in life he learned from living and working with the rural community of San Marcos 2 in Matagalpa with 12 other Nicaraguan and British volunteers.

Three years ago, I made an important decision that took a lot of strength, the strength to get up and leave urban life. However, when I met other young Nicaraguan volunteers and saw the desire and enthusiasm they felt to create conscious change I realised that we could be the first ones taking a step in the right direction.

The 45 families living in San Marcos 2 opened their doors to us, to the place that would be our school of life and our home for ten weeks. Green mountains, the refreshing rain on sunny days, nights full of stars, the sound of birds at dawn, the noisy monkeys in the afternoons, anecdotes and wisdom and the kindness of the people- just some of the things that

made San Marcos 2 the perfect place to learn and grow.

This community was facing problems caused mainly by bad management of natural resources during the intense heat of a summer drought. ANIDES, a local organisation that works on conservation and resource management programmes, partnered with Raleigh International to ensure we focused on appropriate issues in the community. Our work included constructing eco-latrines, eco-stoves, dykes, water filters, and facilitating workshops on personal hygiene, water, health and sanitation.

However, it was not that local people intended to destroy their land but that they needed the land because it gives them their harvest. Working with them, I

never stopped feeling that it was me who was receiving the greatest lesson.

I didn't want to miss any moment of this experience. I wanted to feel present at all times and hear the stories of community members who have a close affinity with nature, a sense of protecting your neighbour and coming together as a community. They taught me that electricity, internet, phones and all this technology is not a necessity. That it is more important to work on the land, cultivate and harvest food for the next season. That the food the community planted and nurtured is the same food I can so easily pick up in a supermarket in the city. It is important to understand the journey that this food has come on, the struggle people face to get it to the shops in Managua. The true meaning of volunteering is to learn from the community, to take one step forward with them to empower them to become sustainable and one step forward in your life as an individual.

From the first moment I arrived in San Marcos 2 to when I left my host family in tears, I knew I could never forget the place that gave me a warm and loving family and a group of brother and sister volunteers. I didn't go to San Marcos 2 to change the world or become an expert in sustainable development or add volunteering to my CV. I didn't go for the UK volunteers, to practice my English language skills or the cross-cultural exchange. By working, living and breathing alongside rural people in my own country, I learned the most important lesson of my life.

Pedro was a member of a Raleigh International team of British and Nicaraguan volunteers. They were part of the UK government funded International Citizenship Service (ICS) that provides volunteering opportunities for 18 – 25 year olds to fight poverty at home and abroad.

Further information:

www.volunteercs.org

www.raleighinternational.org

Reducing food waste, reducing poverty

Liz Light describes the work of Comamos Juntos - Eat United, a UK charity working to combat food poverty in Managua with the support of market vendors and a network of volunteers.

Even though Nicaragua is the second poorest country in Latin America, markets and supermarkets throw away vast amounts of perfectly good produce at the end of each day.

Seeing this waste while volunteering in an impoverished rural Nicaraguan community prompted Katie Alesbury, inspired by her time volunteering with the FoodCycle project in Bristol, to put into practice the same principles in Managua. FoodCycle combines volunteers, surplus food and spare kitchen spaces to create nutritious meals for people at risk of food poverty and social isolation.

In Managua Katie explained "I started finding out how much food is wasted and why, what kind of food it is and if the vendors would be willing to donate rather than throw away the food. The idea was really well received, and I was surprised and touched to see so much local support. From this, the seed sprouted and the project has grown to where we are today."

Eat United is a group of vendors, volunteers and community leaders who rescue and share food. Known as Comamos Juntos ("Let's eat together") their slogan is 'food waste and food poverty should not coexist'. Twice weekly, volunteers collect, sort and distribute donated food while community leaders share the food among those who need it in three communities in Managua:

- Villa Guadalupe is a suburb where the Spanish government supported a project to re-house families who lived and worked on the biggest rubbish dump in Nicaragua, La Chureca. Eat United provides food for the community kitchen, feeding 50 -70 children.

- In Villa Reconciliacion Eat United works with the Ananda Marga Education Centre



Lunch at the Ananda Marga school, Villa Reconciliacion, Managua

where 80 children attend weekly cooking classes and enjoy a healthy lunch.

- In 2006 a group of 20-30 ex-sugar cane workers affected by Chronic Kidney Disease caused by working conditions, set up a camp in front of Managua's cathedral to protest their rights. Eat United visits them twice a week to share nutritious food vital for their condition.

Since 2013, Eat United has rescued and distributed over 25,000 kilos of food to 200 people twice a week. In 2016 they aim to double those amounts by increasing the number of food collection points and sharing with three more high-risk communities. They are also working on a re-distribution network and hope that their model can be used in other developing countries.

Run entirely by volunteers all their funds have so far been generated through events, campaigns and fundraising.

"Food re-distribution is high impact with low overheads" says Katie. "We believe



that with support and resources we can give people access to healthy fresh food on a much greater scale, and divert lots of food waste in the process."

Maria, a community leader in Villa Guadalupe, agrees. "I hope that the project grows and continues to look after the kids. Many kids come here because there isn't any food at home. We're also giving them the example of sharing - when they grow up, they'll go on to share with others."

Further information:

www.comamosjuntos.org

comamosjuntos@gmail.com

eatunitednicaragua@gmail.com

Comamos Juntos - Eat United Nicaragua

Eat_United

Sharing stories across continents and generations

Coralie Hopwood of the Sheffield Esteli Society (SES) describes an innovative intergenerational storytelling and book project linking the two towns in England and Nicaragua.

I wanted to look at ways that older people in both our communities could get involved in the relationship between our towns. Unlike our younger supporters, it was unlikely that they would be able to travel, access the internet, or get connected through social media. I also think it's important to value the knowledge and experience of older people. Involving young people seemed a good way to pass on some of this experience and encourage sharing between the generations.

The Sheffield group was made up of secondary students from Handsworth Grange Community Sports College who interviewed older people from their community, many of whom were relations of theirs. The Estelí group consisted of young people from Proyecto Iniciativa Colibrí in the barrio Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who interviewed older local women.

The young people were integral to the project so that there would be an exchange of perspectives and a transfer of experience within and well as between our towns. We wanted to create links between the young people and the older people that would last beyond the project and could lead to future activities together. Their role as interviewers and storytellers was to recount the story of the person they had interviewed.

Coordination was challenging as there were so many participants and at the outset each group had different priorities and time availability. We managed to make it work through sticking with it even when it looked doubtful we'd be able to do it. The fact that the participating groups in both towns were very enthusiastic and motivated helped to drive the project.

The stories from both towns were translated into Spanish and English and then compiled into a book to carry them into the next generation and beyond, and to allow them to be told in both cities to children and older people alike.

Further information:

For the past 30 years the Sheffield Esteli Society has been promoting links between citizens of the twin towns collaborating on projects to do with education, environment, health and children and young people.

📧 www.sheffieldestelisociety.org.uk
✉ sheffieldestelisociety@yahoo.co.uk
📘 Sheffield Esteli Society
🐦 SheffieldEsteli

A free downloadable copy of 'Tales of Two Cities' is available on the SES website. Hard copies are available for £6.50 including p&p. Contact via email as above.

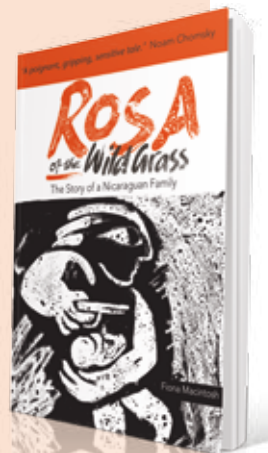
BOOK REVIEW BY RACHEL HICKMAN

Rosa of the Wild Grass; the Story of a Nicaraguan Family

By **Fiona Macintosh**
Published by Latin America Bureau and Practical Action Publishing, 2016

Rosa of the Wild Grass is a wonderful read that provides a gripping account of one family's struggles spanning the past fifty years. Rosa's unwavering positivity and determination to support her family and her community is reflected throughout the book; and the shared history of her family reveals an in depth account of life under the Somoza dictatorship, the Sandinista Revolution and the Contra War. This book is a must-read for anyone wanting an engaging and moving account of Nicaragua's history since the 1970s.

Available for £10 incl p&p from
📧 www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/shop/



The compilation of the stories of older people 'Tales of Two Cities' was launched in Sheffield and Esteli on 9 March. In Sheffield students from Handsworth Grange Community Sports College and older people from the Handsworth district gathered in the Town Hall where the Lord Mayor, Talib Hussain, and Gabriela Urrutia from the Nicaraguan Embassy congratulated them on their participation in the project. In Esteli participants took part in a launch event at the FAREM University, pictured below. At both events some of the stories were read and images projected of the storytelling process in the other town.



UK-Nicaragua Solidarity

600 million Latin Americans live without nuclear weapons, why can't we?

NSC and Viva!Bradford supporters joined the CND anti-Trident demonstration on 27 February to highlight the fact that nuclear weapons have been banned in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1967. This commitment was reaffirmed in March 2016 by all 33 countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). The ban is one of the most comprehensive in the world, prohibiting the testing, use, manufacturing, production and acquisition as well as the receipt, storage installation and deployment of nuclear weapons.

RIGHT A giant Nicaraguan woman (gigantona) carried our message on the demonstration



Helen Yuill

Swindon Ocotal Link (SOL) 25th anniversary celebrations

Jake Holland, a young friend of SOL, went to Ocotal to help young people with circus skills, a very rewarding visit for all concerned.

Two friends from Ocotal, Jorge Calderón, a doctor and poet, and María José, a folkloric dancer, visited Swindon from 29 April to 17 May to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the twinning. Their programme included cultural events, school visits, a civic reception, a May Day celebration, and observing the count at local elections. Nicaraguan ambassador Guisell Morales also attended the civic reception.

To mark the anniversary SOL has updated a book of tried and tested Nicaraguan recipes compiled by Gillian and Helen Wallis based on ideas from friends in Ocotal. Lots of people in Swindon have contributed by trying out recipes, taking photos, planning the new layout, and finally the publication. It's a small book, but carries with it a lot of love and enthusiasm! We are selling it for £5, all proceeds to Ocotal, naturally.

Further information

www.solswindon.co.uk

Marathon runners raise funds for medical supplies and NSC

Congratulations to Rodrigo, David, Jaime and Frank for completing the London Marathon on Sunday 24 April. Our three Mexican runners wrote: "Thank you for the opportunity you gave us to run this spectacular race. It's certainly the most exciting marathon we have

ever taken part in and we are so happy that the money raised will make at least a small change for the people in Nicaragua."

Part of the proceeds, together with donations from UNISON George Eliot Hospital branch, UNISON Wolverhampton branch and UNISON West Midlands region, will fund medical supplies for a Managua hospital.

Join the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign

**Nicaragua
Solidarity
Campaign**

We are dependent on our membership to carry out our work. Show your support by joining us and/or encouraging your union branch to affiliate.

**Complete this form or join online:
[www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/
get-involved/](http://www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/get-involved/)**

**Individual £25/£7.50
Trade union branches £50
Trade Union regions £75**

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|-----------|----------------------|
| Name | <input type="text"/> |
| Address | <input type="text"/> |
| Telephone | <input type="text"/> |
| Email | <input type="text"/> |

I enclose £ for membership £ as a donation **Total:** £

Cheques payable to **NSC** (if individual) or **NSCAG** (if trade union)

Return to: NSC, 86 Durham Rd, London N7 7DT

Women Fairtrade coffee farmers visit Lewisham and Bristol

Ana Maria Gonzalez from the co-operative SOPPEXCCA and Ivania Calderón Peralta from CECOCAFEN visited Bristol and the London Borough of Lewisham respectively during Fairtrade Fortnight.

Ivania visited schools, businesses, and met Lewisham councillors, officials and staff as part of the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the Lewisham – Matagalpa twinning link. In addition Ivania took part in a debate on Fairtrade

and an International Women's Day event highlighting the benefits and challenges of Fairtrade particularly for women farmers. Lewisham is a Fairtrade Borough and Matagalpa a major coffee growing region at the forefront of the co-operative movement and Fairtrade in Nicaragua.

Further information:
Interview with Ivania:

📄 www.cawn.org

Lewisham – Matagalpa Link, Nicola Marven:

✉ international@lewisham.gov.uk



Ivania Calderón with the mayor of Lewisham, Sir Steve Bullock

Nicola Marven

Bristol Link with Nicaragua (BLINC) welcomed Ana Maria Gonzalez who spoke passionately about the positive benefits of Fairtrade on her community in the highlands of Jinotega and helped to launch the new 100% Nicaraguan Fairtrade coffee from SOPPEXCCA, called appropriately enough, Perkee!

Ana reached an estimated 3,000 school children through the Bristol & South Gloucestershire Fairtrade schools programme, inspiring future generations to help expand and promote the Fairtrade model. In addition the BLINC Facebook page helped to reach a further 800 people and thousands more via Twitter. Ana was guest of honour at International Women's Day events, including BLINC's talk and social evening at popular Bristol Chilean cafe La Ruca, where entertainment was provided by Bristol-based French singer-songwriter, "Cécile".

Ana Maria Gonzalez picking her coffee



SOPPEXCCA

Further information:

📄 www.bristolnicaragua.wordpress.com

📘 [bristolnicaragua](#)

🐦 [blincistas](#)

Bequest secures future for educational projects

A bequest in 2015 enabled the Nicaragua Education, Cultural and Arts Trust (NECAT) that works in Leon to buy its own centre with a large auditorium. This has opened up many more possibilities not least a sustainable rent free future! A grant from the Oxford Leon Association and a Dutch organisation is being used to build separate spaces for the after-school learning programme and

workshops. Children attending the after-school programme receive support with their schoolwork and enjoy other educational activities such as painting and reading.

In addition, NECAT is working with the local Perla Norori Medical Centre on a new primary health care education programme for teachers, medics and children.

Further information:

📄 www.necat.org

Youth enterprise project launch in Masaya

The Leicester – Masaya Link Group (LMLG) and local partner the Association for Integral Community Development (ADIC) have launched a two-year training programme to develop enterprise skills among young people from two rural communities in Masaya. Building on ADIC's work with women farmers to develop business skills and market their products, the project hopes to encourage young people to stay in the area and contribute to the local economy.

The programme aims to strengthen the employability and incomes of 100 participants from families that have been involved in ADIC projects. It focuses on equipping them with the capacities and business vision to market locally grown products by providing opportunities to market traditional fruit products within the commercial food sector and helping them to gain experience and expertise in packaging, labelling and public health requirements. The project is co-funded by INTERTEAM, a Swiss NGO, with the LMLG providing £6,900 over two years.

Further information:

📄 www.leicestermasayalink.org.uk

✉ lmlg@leicestermasayalink.org.uk



LEFT The NECAT mobile library is a specially constructed tricycle that contains scientific experiments, reading materials and other resources which are taken to schools lacking library facilities.

NECAT

UK solidarity making a difference

NSCAG trade union co-ordinator **Louise Richards** explains how projects funded by UK trade unions are strengthening the trade union movement in Nicaragua.

Nicaraguan trade unions have become an effective and influential force in the country since seeing their rights restored by the FSLN Government in 2007. They have representatives in the National Assembly and over the past few years have successfully achieved increases in salaries, the minimum wage and improved pensions. However, significant challenges remain. These relate to succession planning, the position of women in unions and lack of financial and material resources. With the help of UK trade unions, these problems are being overcome.

UNISON is supporting a two year project for the public sector union UNE. The project has established a trade union

training school to provide capacity building for union leaders. The first round has trained 559 union members, 76% of whom were women and 50% young people. The training has put UNE in a better position to negotiate on behalf of its members, with more workers joining the union as a result.

The self-employed workers' union CTCP has also benefitted from a training programme funded by TUC Aid. The project began in May 2015 and aims to promote women's leadership and participation in the union. One of the main challenges faced by self-employed women is that most of them work a 12 hour day and the majority are also single mothers with the double burden of

child care and domestic responsibilities. The project has encouraged more active participation by women in various activities and helped them to gain in confidence and find solutions to problems which had limited their participation. Workshops have served to break with the idea that women can only take on certain roles within the union and cannot aspire to key roles.

Another project, supported by the NUT and UIA Charitable Foundation and run jointly with Computer Aid International, has provided computers to the National Workers' Front FNT. This has enabled the FNT to set up a computer laboratory through which trade union members have acquired the skills needed to improve their access to employment, increase their income and enhance their effectiveness as trade unionists.

Further information:
www.nscag.org

In partnership with UNISON's West Midlands Region, UNISON –through its International Development Fund – is supporting a capacity building project for the health union FETSALUD.

The project is designed to build the knowledge and skills of women and young members and aims to improve the effectiveness of trade union work and empower women and young people as leaders. In December 2015, 113 young members graduated, following completion of one of the course modules on Union Organising and Labour Rights. The project is entering its second phase, with the aim of training union members working in regions not yet reached.

Yenifer Castillo Lopez, nursing auxiliary, Hospital Aleman and youth secretary of the Karl Marx branch of FETSALUD commented: "The course was an unforgettable experience, something new... We've learned all about the history of unionism, its origins and objectives, how to negotiate collective bargaining agreements... Personally the course has really helped



Young trade unionists at the celebration of the completion of a course on Union Organising and Labour Rights.

me as I was always very quiet and shy and now I have more self-confidence and the capacity to speak out. I know that I can

demand more of myself and that I will always fight for the rights of my fellow workers.'

Liz Light