



NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN ACTION GROUP (NSCAG) Annual Report 2016

Trade Union Delegations

Two national unions decided to send delegations to Nicaragua in 2016. The first was from the National Union of Teachers NUT in Jun and comprised Christine Blower, former General Secretary and now International Secretary of the NUT and Samidha Garg, NUT International Officer. The visit was hosted by Nicaraguan teachers' union ANDEN and followed on from a visit to the UK in January 2016 by ANDEN General Secretary Jose Antonio Zepeda. The main purpose of the visit was to re-establish and strengthen relations between the two unions and for the NUT to learn about ANDEN's work and education policy in Nicaragua.



During the visit, the delegation learned that an important priority in Nicaragua is improving the quality of the teaching of English. A number of discussions took place around this issue during 2016, leading to the development of an exciting initiative to send a group of teachers from the UK to Nicaragua to work with Nicaraguan teachers of English as a second language.

NUT delegation to Nicaragua visiting Santa Rosa School, Managua .
Sign reads: All children are born to be happy
Photo: Liz Light

The second visit was by UNISON in December 2016. The delegation comprised Paul Glover, Chair of UNISON's International Committee, and Nick Crook, UNISON's International Officer, accompanied by Louise Richards from NSCAG. The visit was hosted by public sector union UNE and an extensive programme of meetings was arranged, including meetings with health union FETSALUD and higher education union FESITUN.

The delegation was keen to see the projects which it supported throughout 2016 – a capacity building project for women and young people in FETSALUD and a trade union training school for UNE – and was very pleased to be able to take part in some of the courses and speak to a number of participants. Following discussions with FESITUN, the delegation also agreed to consider support for a new project around workplace bullying and violence against women in the workplace.



Some young members of FETSALUD attending one of the UNISON sponsored courses

The delegation also took the opportunity to meet with self-employed workers' union CTCP, now the fastest growing trade union in Nicaragua due to the high level of 'informal' employment in the country. The CTCP has also benefitted from a project supported by TUC Aid to promote women's participation and leadership in the union.

UK Trade Union Solidarity

Responding to a request from UNE, we launched an appeal to support a project to improve the homes of the poorest public sector workers, many of whom have inadequate washing or cooking facilities and roofs which are unsafe or do not keep out rain. The project was extended following the devastation of Hurricane Otto and received an outstanding response from union regions and branches, raising £2500.

An appeal for medical equipment for FETSALUD also generated widespread support, in particular from George Eliot Hospital which is twinned with Nilda Patricia Hospital in Nicaragua, and from UNISON's West Midlands Region, which is also twinned with FETSALUD.

UNISON also supported our Summertime Raffle, and UNITE has continued to give generously to our appeals in addition to offering free rooms at its Headquarters for our events. As in previous years, we were present at all of the major trade union conferences and we were particularly pleased that UNISON invited representatives from UNE and FETSALUD to attend their National Delegate Conference in June.

Nicaraguan elections

The end of 2016 proved to be a particularly busy time due to the fact that Nicaraguan elections took place in November. In the run up to the election, we worked together with the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign to keep members informed of developments and produced a joint briefing on the relation between combatting poverty and the likely outcome of the elections.

Our appreciation

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to NSCAG's work, whether a trade union individual, branch, region or national office. We are also extremely grateful to the volunteers who have staffed our stalls at trade union conferences around the country and to those who have assisted us with translation work throughout the year. A full copy of the NSCAG accounts is available on request from the office.

Affiliations

Ten national unions were affiliated at the year-end: BECTU, BFAWU, CWU, FBU, GMB, NUT, RMT, UNISON, UNITE and USDAW. The number of affiliated branches and regions is very similar to that of last year and now stands at 114 (there were 117 in 2015). Four trades councils are also affiliated.

Affiliation breakdown by union:

| | Dec 11 | Dec 12 | Dec 13 | Dec 15 | Dec 16 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| CWU | 16 | 14 | 13 | 15 | 12 |
| GMB | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| NUT | 6 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 8 |
| RMT | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| UNISON | 20 | 21 | 24 | 24 | 36 |
| UNITE | 27 | 23 | 18 | 57 | 51 |
| USDAW | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTALS | 72 | 68 | 65 | 117 | 114 |

Staff: Louise Richards

NSCAG Executive Members: Dave Auger , Dave Cosgrave, John Drewery, Rita Drobner, Bob Hardie, Ken Rustidge, Andy Waterworth

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group, 86 Durham Rd, London N7 7DT

Tel: (020) 7561 4836 Email: nscag@nicaraguasc.org.uk Website: www.nscag.org

Facebook: Nicaragua-Solidarity Twitter: @NSCAG_UK @NicaraguaVisit