

NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN ACTION GROUP

Linking Nicaraguan and UK Trade Unions



Inspiring Social and Economic Advances in Nicaragua

Since the election of President Ortega and the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) in 2006, Nicaraguan society has been radically transformed. After 16 years of US-backed right wing neoliberal governments during which public services were privatised and trade union rights stripped away, Nicaraguans now enjoy a society where the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable

are prioritised, with 58% of the budget spent on health and education.

One of the first acts of the FSLN government in 2007 was to reverse the privatisation of health and education, with both now seen as a right rather than a privilege for the wealthy. Universal and free health care and education are now provided throughout the country, serving the needs of Nicaragua's population of 6.7 million. The government has an ambitious National Plan to fight poverty

that exceeds the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals. As a result of the introduction of specific policies to combat hunger and ensure nutrition, general poverty has been reduced from 48.3 per cent in 2006 to 24.9 per cent and extreme poverty from 17.6 to 6.9 per cent. The government also provides a safety net to vulnerable groups through subsidies which nullify price increases in energy, transportation and fuels.

Achievements During the Last Sixteen Years

HEALTH

The Nicaraguan government prioritises the health of its citizens and has increased the health budget by 274% since 2006. Twenty-four new hospitals have been built, with twelve more planned by 2026 and over 3000 health centres and health posts have been established. In addition, with free universal health care, women's health has improved dramatically. A network of some 181 'maternity wait homes' (casas maternas) where women can go two weeks before they are due to give birth have led to a fall in maternal mortality from 93 for every 100,000 live births in 2006 to 38 for every 100,000 live births in 2020. Infant mortality has also decreased by 56%.

Nicaragua has a community-based

model of health care with the emphasis on prevention. In spite of not mandating lockdowns, vaccinations or the wearing of face masks, Nicaragua had the lowest coronavirus death rate by far than any country in the Americas, due largely to a widespread community education programme which involved over 5 million house visits. The country now has the highest vaccination rate in Central America, with more than 92% having received two vaccines.

Health fairs are another way that Nicaragua brings healthcare to communities. Each week, about 950 health fairs are carried out in rural areas and on the edge of urban areas. In addition, mobile health clinics tour the country bringing health care to those areas where access to hospitals and health centres is more limited.

ADDITIONAL FACTS

Nicaragua is a world leader in renewable energy, with 70% of its energy from renewable sources (less than 25% in 2006)

Nicaragua has built the best highways in Central America with new roads to all remote areas including two highways to the historically isolated Caribbean coast.

Nicaragua is a pioneer in defence of the rights of its Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, who have communal title to a third of the national territory.

Nicaragua is the safest country in Central America with a homicide rate that went from 13.4 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2006 to 7 in 2020.

Nicaragua has community-based policing which is considered a model for other countries.

Nicaragua has implemented a disaster prevention programme which meant that three recent hurricanes left almost no Nicaraguan deaths, compared with multiple victims in the rest of Central America



EDUCATION

At the start of the school year in January 2023, Nicaragua achieved an enrolment in public education of a record 1.8 million, an astonishing figure for a country with a population of 6.7 million. The last sixteen years have seen an evolutionary transformation of education in Nicaragua, with opportunities expanded for everyone in society. Education is seen as an essential human right rather than a commodity to be paid for and regarded a key factor in the reduction of poverty and economic development. Particular attention has been paid to school infrastructure, with new schools



being built and/or remodelled where this is necessary.

More than 1.2 million children receive free school meals, guaranteeing that no child goes hungry in school. This has contributed to a 68% drop in chronic malnutrition in school age children

since 2007. To complement the free school meals programme, the Ministry of Education also promotes the setting up of gardens in both primary and secondary schools throughout the country. Illiteracy, which was around 22% in 2006, has now been virtually eliminated. Particular efforts have also been made for education in rural and indigenous and afro-descendant communities with an emphasis on preserving their language, education, culture and way of life. In December 2021, the first Indigenous Agricultural University in Latin America was inaugurated, located in the South Caribbean Region of Nicaragua

HOUSING

In 2019, faced with a housing deficit in the country, the Nicaraguan government embarked on a major housing development programme intended to provide thousands of affordable homes for the country's low-income families. From the time it was launched until 2021, the project delivered approximately 3,000 houses as well as



30,000 land plots in urban areas. In 2021, the government added another 3,000 houses – this in addition to granting land deeds to thousands of families, peasants and farmers to ensure that they cannot be displaced. The programme has now been expanded following an agreement made with China and it is anticipated that 12,000 affordable homes will be built over 3 years.

GENDER EQUALITY

In 2022, Nicaragua was ranked 7th in the world for gender equality (World Economic Forum Gender Gap report) with women in more than half of all government positions. Of note is the participation of Indigenous and Afro-descendant women at all levels of national, regional and local government – including the fact that currently both regional autonomous governments are led by Indigenous women.

Over 200 women's police stations have been opened around the country where only female police officers (40% of Nicaragua's national police force) attend women and children exclusively. Nicaragua has passed laws against femicide and violence against women, allowing for stricter sentencing and swifter justice.

A number of government programmes are particularly targeted towards women. \$18 million per year is loaned exclusively to women in low-interest business loans through the Zero Usury programme. Over 23,400 micro and small businesses have been formalised, the majority owned by women, and

over 500 new women's cooperatives have been formed. The Zero Hunger programme provides pigs, a pregnant cow, chickens, seeds, fertilisers and building materials to women in rural areas, benefitting one in every six families in the country and contributing to the nation's food sovereignty – Nicaragua now produces 90% of the food it consumes. Improved access

to basic services has vastly improved women's lives – washing machines, once rare in all but the wealthiest homes, are now common, thanks to the installation of electricity (now reaching 99.3% of the population as opposed to 43% in 2007) and running water (today 91.5% of the urban population have potable drinking water as opposed to 65% in 2006).



For more information, to be added to our mailing list or to join us, see the NSCAG website and follow us on Twitter

 www.nscag.org

 @NSCAG_UK

Nicaragua Solidarity
Campaign Action Group
c/o Space4
113-115 Fonthill Road
London N4 3HH

