

Nicaragua, global warming and climate justice

“ We will never end poverty if we don't tackle climate change. ”

Jim Yong Kim
president of the World Bank Group



Nicaragua, a small Central American country, epitomises the vulnerability of developing countries to the threat we all face: climate change. However, while Nicaragua is only responsible for 0.3% of global carbon emissions, it is committed to a comprehensive programme to reduce these emissions, implementing mitigation and adaptation measures and taking a strong stand in international fora to put pressure on the largest polluters.

Nicaragua remains the second most impoverished country in the Americas despite significantly reducing poverty in recent years. However, this progress is threatened by its ranking as the fourth most vulnerable country to climate change, according to the 2016 Global Climate Risk Register. The average annual temperature rose from 25°C in 1971 to 26.5°C in 2016.

Impact of climate change on Nicaragua

Increased frequency of extreme weather, including droughts, floods and hurricanes, has already caused irreparable human and economic losses, as well as damaging infrastructure and



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biodiversity. From 2012 to 2015 Nicaragua suffered its worst drought in 44 years, which led to the disappearance of 60% of surface water supplies. This has resulted in declining agricultural productivity, insecure water sources, livestock deaths, farmers being unable to repay debts, and increasing numbers of people migrating to urban areas in search of better living conditions.

Mitigation and adaptation: Ana Maria's story

Ana Maria Gonzalez is one of 650 members of the agricultural co-operative SOPPEX-CCA. She owns an eight acre, organic smallholding in the hills of northern Nicaragua where she keeps goats and grows cocoa and beans, and coffee for export through Fairtrade Markets. She describes the impact of climate change on farming in the area:

“It's far too hot and then we get too much rain straight after dry spells, which ruins our crops. It provides ideal conditions for leaf rust and other diseases, affecting many crops but principally coffee. The impact of leaf rust was similar to an earthquake, as 40% of the 2014 production was affected.”

“The unpredictable weather means that we can't plan our planting or harvesting. When it's too hot or dry we can't plant or fertilise the plants. This means our harvest is smaller and we earn less. It becomes a vicious circle as less income means less investment to combat the diseases that have increased as a result of weather extremes. We end up abandoning

other crops to look after our coffee, our only cash crop and source of income. This can lead to food insecurity as we are not prioritising crops we plant for consumption.”

As the impact of climate change is better understood, adaptation and mitigation programmes are being developed by the government and NGOs such as SOPPEX-CCA. Scientists predict that as temperatures rise, large areas of land will no longer be suitable for coffee, a phenomenon already being experienced by Nicaraguan farmers. However, cocoa grows well in these areas. With the International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO) predicting that demand for cocoa will increase by 30% in the next ten years, SOPPEXCCA, with funding from Christian Aid, is working with 400 farmers on a cocoa conversion project.

Ana Maria Gonzalez, one of the participants, explains: “Cocoa is providing us with a security blanket. It has the advantage of being easy to grow and produces two crops a year. In addition we are diversifying in whatever way we can: we grow oranges and plantains to sell,



GIACONDA PEREZ/BLINC

Coffee is no longer viable at lower altitudes due to climate change. Ana Maria Gonzalez is participating in a coffee to cocoa conversion programme.

and plant other food crops for our own consumption. We are also working on mitigation measures such as reforestation, campaigns against deforestation, planting more shade trees to protect the coffee, and building water storage tanks.”

Nicaragua's renewable energy revolution: leading by example

Ending the country's dependence on oil has been a fundamental commitment of the Nicaraguan government since coming to power in 2007. The government's aim is to 'transform energy supplies to renewables, prioritise efficiency, and achieve universal access to energy.'

In 2007, only 25% of Nicaragua's energy came from renewable sources. By 2014 this had reached 52% due to harnessing Nicaragua's abundant potential sources of renewable energy as part of the government's commitment to a 'green revolution'. The government's target is 90% by 2020.

This 'revolution' has been praised by Inter-American Development Bank president, Luis Alberto Moreno, as 'a model for the world on the shift to green energy.'

Nicaragua's Minister for Public Policy Paul Oquist explains: "If Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the Americas, can make these advances surely the West and the rest of the large emitters can begin increasing their levels of ambition now, in order to save us from a 3°C global average temperature rise."



Nicaragua's vision of climate justice

The 20 most industrialised countries are responsible for 78% of global carbon emissions while the 100 most impoverished countries are responsible for 3%.

Those who are most impoverished are the ones least responsible for climate change, yet they suffer its most serious consequences.

Industrialised countries must acknowledge their historical responsibility for the damage caused and recognise the right of developing countries to be compensated. This is the only scientific, measurable, verifiable and transparent way to approach the question of loss and damage on an equitable basis.

To keep the global temperature increase well below 2°C by pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C in line with the Paris Climate Change Agreement, there must be greater political will on the part of large polluters to dramatically reduce their carbon emissions as a matter of urgency.

“ The technology exists, the capital exists, the urgency exists, what is lacking is greater political will, particularly on the part of the largest polluters. ”

Dr Paul Oquist
Nicaraguan Minister
for Public Policy



“ Climate change is a gross injustice, poor people in developing countries bear over 90% of the burden through death, disease, destitution, and financial loss yet are least responsible for the problem. ”

Dame Barbara Stocking
former Chief Executive, Oxfam



Think Global, Act Local: what you can do

■ Raise awareness of the impact of climate change on farmers in the developing world such as Ana Maria and the urgency of action to cut carbon emissions

■ Take part in national and local actions of The Climate Coalition, the UK's largest group of people dedicated to action on climate change and limiting its impact on the world's poorest communities.
www.theclimatecoalition

■ Join the NSC supporter list to keep up to date with climate justice news from Nicaragua and our activities in the UK

**Nicaragua
Solidarity
Campaign**

NSC works with Nicaraguan co-operatives and other organisations fighting for social and economic justice by promoting and seeking support for their work in the UK.

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