



The Right to Play in Nicaragua

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First Part:

“Children and Young People Defending our Right to Play”: English translation of a report by the children’s action-research team from the village of Samulalí, Matagalpa

Second Part:

Update and reflections on the campaign (from an adult perspective)



Children and Young People Defending our Right to Play



Children and Young Defending our Right to Play

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The Children and Young People Defending our Right to Play campaign is supported by Playwords magazine and its readership in the UK, CAHRA and ACLAIM in Dublin, Ireland, and voluntary donations from friends in solidarity.

We are children and young people from the community of Samulalí #2 in the District of Matagalpa. We are children aged 6 to 13, supported by young volunteer community educators (Promotores and Promotoras).





We are organising a
campaign to defend
our right to play.

To play is our right according to what it says in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 31

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Also the Nicaraguan Children's Rights Code
(Law No. 287) guarantees our right to play.
Let's look at Article 51:

Article 51

The state, municipal authorities, autonomous regional governments and civil society will develop sports, cultural and recreational programmes for children and young people, making available the necessary resources and facilities. The family, the community and the school will support the implementation of these programmes.

For us, play is important:

- Because it makes us feel good.
- It also helps us share and express what we feel.
- For personal development.
- It helps us make friends.
- We learn to relate to one another.
- It helps us have more confidence and respect.
- It helps us not to be shy.
- Boys and girls can relate to each other.
- It enables us to have communication in the group.
- We learn to relate together, not just children, also young people and adults.
- To feel respected.
- We learn to share games, because not everyone knows the same games.

And because it is our right.

We have done research on children's play in our community. We want to share our findings with you:



We did a survey of children's play in the community:



Where do children play?

- In school
- At home
- In the community
- In workshops and training courses
- In churches (when they have community activities).

When do they play?

- In the recess at school
- Sometimes at home in the afternoon or evening.

Who do they play with?

- Classmates
- Brothers and sisters, cousins
- Sometimes with our mothers and fathers
- Sometimes with other children who are our neighbours
- Friends
- With the Promotores/as and other kids in workshops.

What do they play with?

- Bats and balls, spinning tops. Many games don't need anything to be able to play them.



We analysed the factors that limit girls' exercising their right to play, from a gender perspective:

- The society limits us, and also our own parents. For example when a group of boys and girls are playing, the parents say, "Don't play with the boys. Girls are apart".
- They discriminate against us in sports, because only boys play. There are sports like baseball and others where the boys hit the ball at the girls so they'll leave the game. They don't take us girls into account simply because we are girls.
- The parents believe that boys have more rights, and they give them more freedom than the girls.
- Women take on more responsibility in the house. In many houses the girls look after their young brothers and sisters while the boys play.
- This means we are being discriminated against unfairly, because we are all equal and we all have the same rights.

We compiled a list of traditional games that the children in our community know:



Games known by the children

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Cuartel (barracks, den) | 14. La banderita (the flag) | 25. Béisbol (baseball) |
| 2. Landa (tag) | 15. La muñeca de vestido azul (the doll in the blue dress) | 26. Fútbol (football) |
| 3. Congelado (freeze tag) | 16. Enano gigante (giant and dwarf) | 27. Voleibol (volleyball) |
| 4. Araña (spider) | 17. Rayuela (hopscotch) | 28. Los pollitos de mi cazuela (the chickens in my cook-pot) |
| 5. Lobo (wolf) | 18. Gallina ciega (blind hen) | 29. Lápiz hablante (talking pencil) |
| 6. Reloj dolipana (? clock) | 19. El mundo al revés (the world upside down) | 30. La lechuga (Lettuce) |
| 7. La cebolla (the onion) | 20. La cola (the tail) | 31. Las adivinanzas (Riddles) |
| 8. Los colores (colours) | 21. Doña Ana | 32. El escondido (Hide and seek) |
| 9. El listón (the ribbon) | 22. Los apodos (nicknames) | 33. La silla pica (stinging chair) |
| 10. Los pollitos (the chickens) | 23. El aceite (Oil) | 34. El conejito Ilesulón (the little ? rabbit). |
| 11. El rey manda (the king commands) | 24. Mirón (on-looker) | |
| 12. La pájara pinta (the speckled bird) | | |
| 13. Arroz con leche (rice pudding) | | |

Many of these games have a song or rhyme. We are going to record these games so we have a record of this part of our culture.

We collected memories of the old people about how children used to play in times past.

The games that old people remember from their childhood are:

Zancones (stilts)

Espadas de palo * (wooden swords)

Trompo (spinning tops)

Bola (bowls)

El escondido (hide and seek)

Caballito de palo * (hobby horse)

La zorra * (the vixen)

La gallina ciega (the blind hen)

El coco (the coconut)

Mirón mirón * (on-lookers)

La tinaja (the clay pot)

La cola de ardilla * (the squirrel's tail)

Ponerle la cola al burro (Pin the tail on the donkey)

Juego de canicas (marbles)

Mundo al revés * (the world upside down)

El palo lucio (the shiny stick)

Some of these games (marked *) are seldom played these days.
We want to rescue these games.

Our conclusions:

- Through play we can learn to develop our minds and teach what we know to our friends.
- Play is important to share ideas, make friends and build confidence.
- To play and to share is to feel free.
- Play is life, play is health: **Let's make the most of it!**



- As children we want to play freely and have fun because to play is our right.
- We have to defend the right to play because it is an important right for everyone.
- We all have the same rights. Boys and girls have the same right to play, whatever kind of game it might be.
- Not just children have the right to play, also all young people and grown-ups, men and women, because we all have the right to play.
- Men and women, children and young people with gender equality and equal rights.





Our proposals

- We are defending children's right to play, and we want all children, boys and girls, to be able to play freely and have fun together.
- There should be more research into the topic of children's play.
- Our parents must respect our right to play.
- There should be campaigns and talks to defend the right to keep on playing.
- From our community we want to take our campaign to the District Children and Youth Committee.
- We want to start a national and international campaign to defend the right to play.

¡Muchas gracias!



Translation from the original Spanish by Harry Shier

Part two: Update



There are now three children's action-research teams:

- Samulalí
- Yasica Sur
- Tuma-La Dalia

Each team composed of children aged 8-12 from rural communities. All children in this area work picking coffee at harvest time. Most do other farm work and/or domestic work throughout the year.

Each team is supported by teenage Promotores/as, previously trained by CESESMA in community education skills, children's rights etc.



Each team has carried out an investigation of the state of children's play in their respective communities, using a similar approach, but with different emphases:



- The Samulalí team emphasised gender discrimination and play; no coincidence that some of the young Promotoras involved are also leaders in the girls' and young women's Network.

- The Yasica Sur team focused on the right to play and child labour; many of this team live and work on coffee plantations



What have they achieved since?

Samulalí team:

- Presented their report at a Community Assembly in Samulalí.



- Requested and were granted a hearing at the Municipal Children and Youth Committee in Matagalpa.



- Presented their report to the Committee who subsequently agreed:
 - to distribute a leaflet on the right to play campaign to other NGOs in the area;
 - to support the hanging of a campaign banner in a central position in Matagalpa town;
 - a donation of sports equipment (offered by Matagalpa's police chief).



- Sent their final report to the International Play Association: Defending the Child's Right to Play, who used it in the "*Importance of Play*" position paper, and recognised the Samulalí children as part of the Expert Resource Group for this project.





Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Defendiendo nuestro Derecho a Jugar



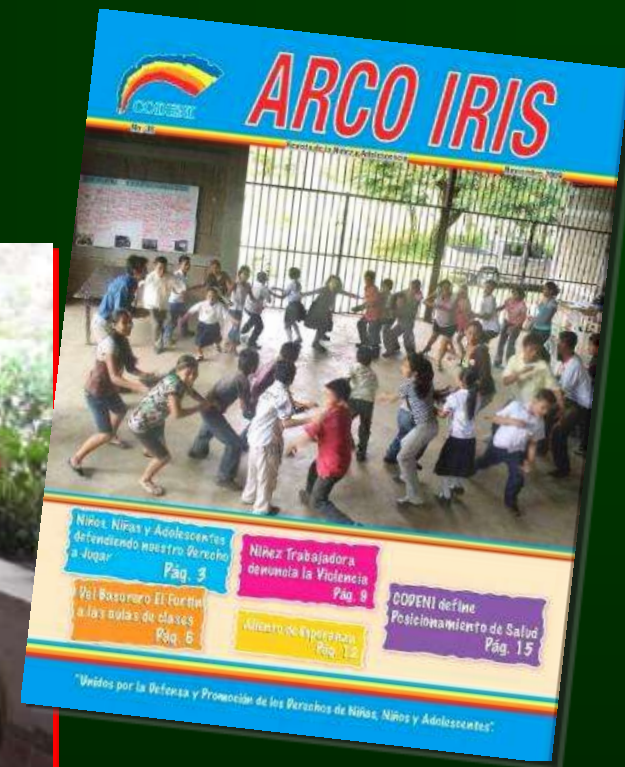
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felicidad, y una vida sin violencia***



- Designed two campaign banners, which were professionally painted, thanks to sponsorship from Common Threads in the UK. After being premiered in a street parade in Matagalpa, one was hung in Matagalpa town and the other outside Samulalí village school.



- Turned their report into an article published in “Arco Iris”* magazine, November 2009.



* “Arco Iris” (Rainbow) is a quarterly magazine on children’s rights issues published by CODENI, the Nicaraguan Coordinating Committee of NGOs working with Children and Youth

Yasica Sur team:



- Presented their report at a Community Assembly on Santa Martha coffee plantation, also attended by a delegation of young people from Fermanagh Youth Council in Northern Ireland.

- Requested and were granted a hearing at the Municipal Children and Youth Committee in San Ramón.



- Presented their report to the Committee who subsequently agreed:
 - to include the Right to Play as a theme in their work programme in the municipality;
 - To hang a campaign barrier in one of the main streets of San Ramón town outside the school.



Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Defendiendo nuestro Derecho a Jugar



*Para salud, educación, desarrollo,
felicidad, y una vida sin violencia*



- Designed a campaign banner. Two copies were painted (again with Common Threads sponsorship). One now hangs outside the primary school in the centre of San Ramón town and the other in La Corona village in the heart of Yasica Sur.



*“Defending the Right to Play”
campaign banner at Carnival
parade in Matagalpa town.*

El Tuma-La Dalia team



Formed more recently. Carried out research programme and produced final report, but they haven't presented the report yet.

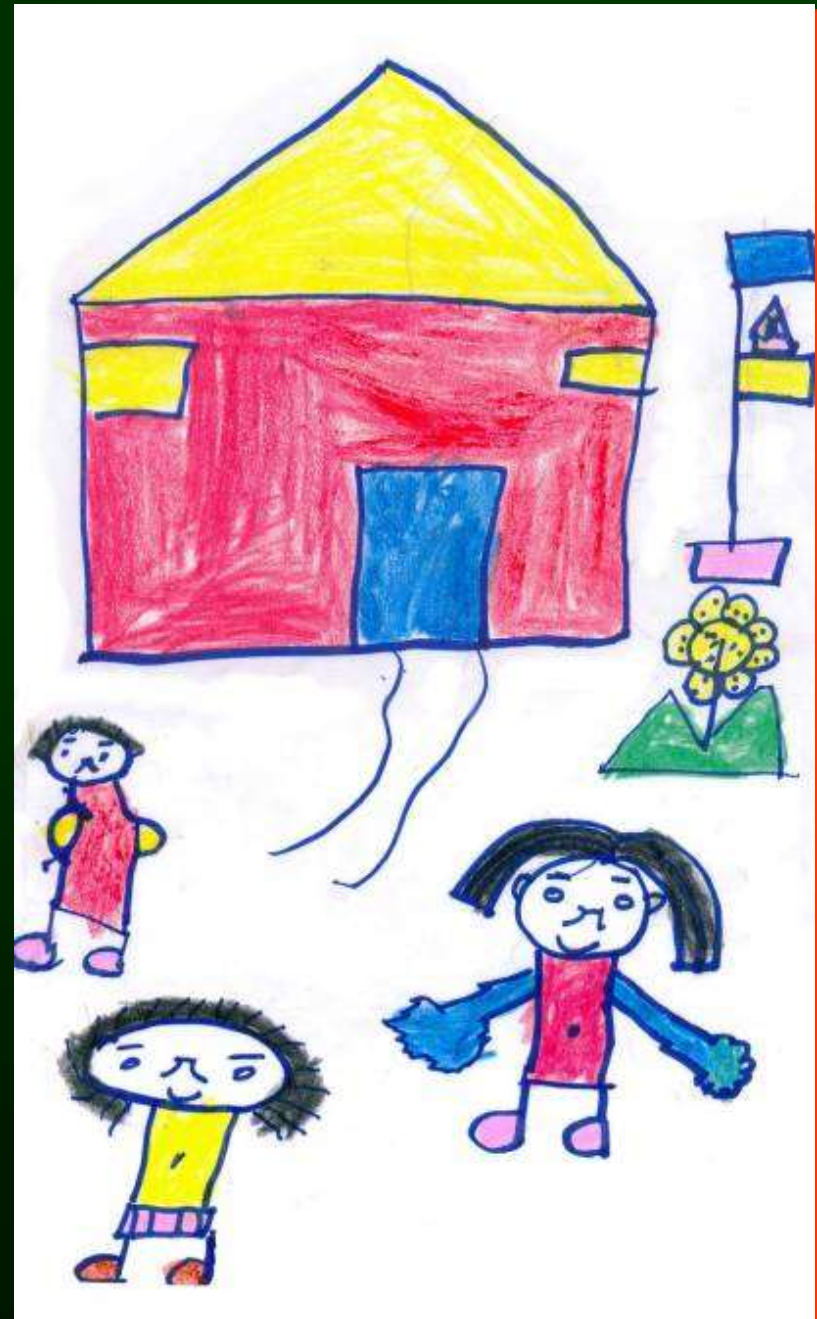
The campaign is having some effect at different levels:

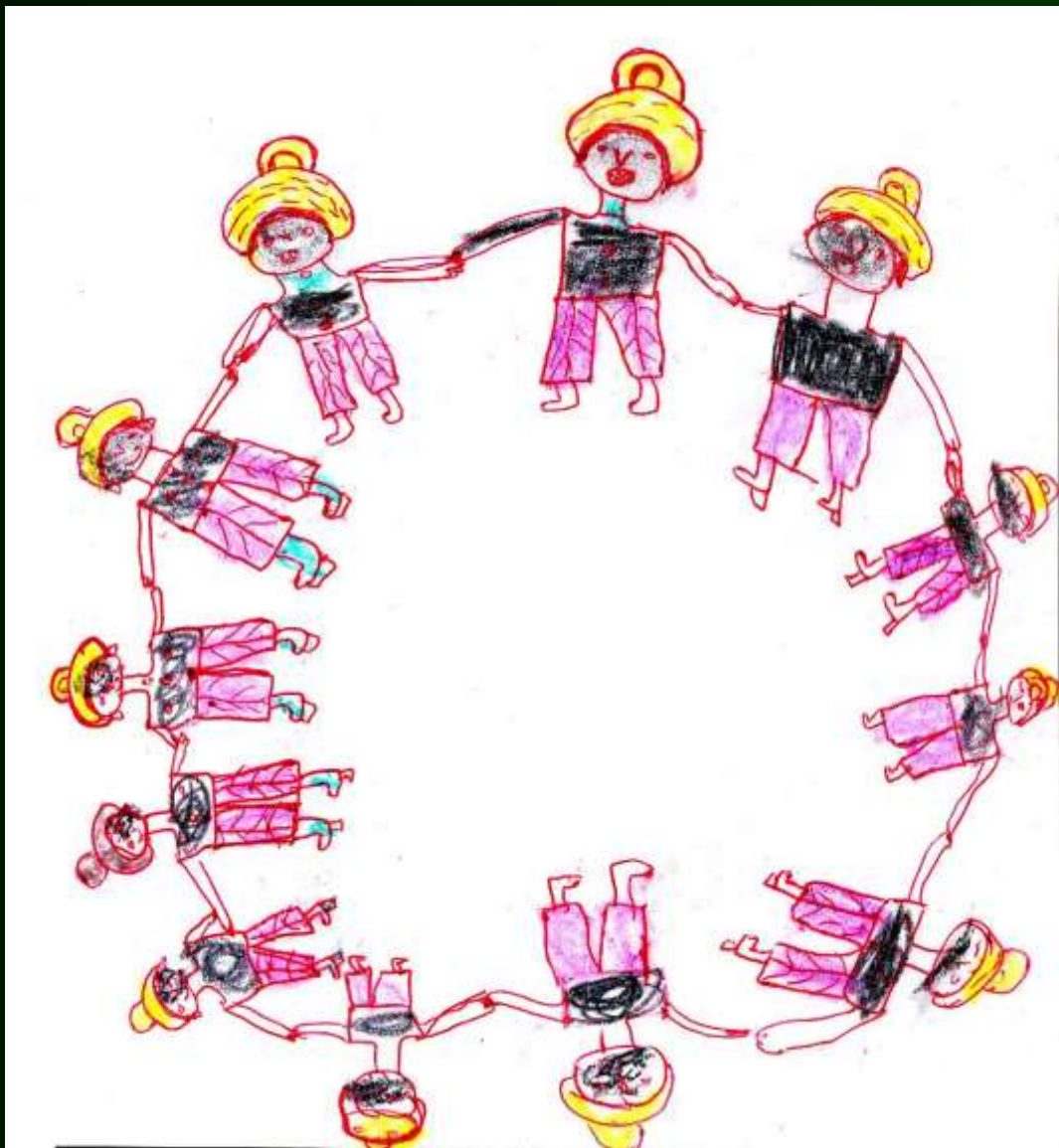


- District Children and Youth Committees recognise that the Right to Play needs to be on their agenda.
- National Coordinating Council of NGOs (CODENI) putting the Right to Play on their agenda, and other NGOs besides CESESMA starting to take an interest.
- Media taking notice (this article in a national newspaper, “*What are we playing at?*”, inspired by the children’s campaign, won a prize in a UNICEF competition for journalism on children’s rights issues.

The children's plans for 2010:

- Continue awareness-raising in their home communities.
- Continue pressure on Municipal Children and Youth Committees to follow through.
- Gathering of the three Action Groups to share experiences and plan next steps together.
- Produce a single final report as a booklet or leaflet for mass distribution.
- Use the media (radio and TV) to promote the campaign.





- Departmental “Right to Play” forum in Matagalpa.
- National “Right to Play” conference in the capital, Managua.
- Produce a child-friendly “Children and Young People Defending our Right to Play” action pack, maybe in partnership with IPA, linked with global consultation and push for UNCRC General Comment.

Conclusion: Things to think about

- Does any of this have any relevance to children in Wales (or the rest of the UK)?
- Do children in the UK want to do research? (bearing in mind you don't need all of them, just enough to form a team).
- Action-research:
 - (a) Research the issue
 - (b) Develop proposals to change what needs to change
 - (c) Develop a campaign
 - (d) Carry it through.
- How to facilitate these processes.



Thanks for listening



¡Muchas gracias!