

# Young people and social action: learning from Nicaragua's young coffee workers



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This presentation is about how children and young people organise and participate as active citizens in Nicaragua.

There are three parts:

1. Children's life and work on Nicaragua's coffee plantations.
2. Examples of social action by Nicaraguan child coffee workers.
3. Based on the Nicaraguan experience, three ideas for a Northern Ireland youth action model (which you'll have to develop yourselves).

*....then a break for questions and discussion ....*

**Nicaragua**



The diagram shows a globe of the Earth with continents in green and oceans in blue. A dashed yellow line represents a path or connection between two locations. One end of the line is marked with a red arrowhead pointing to a location in Central America, labeled 'Nicaragua'. The other end is marked with a red dot and a white arrow pointing to a location in Northern Ireland, labeled 'Armagh'. A dotted yellow line also curves around the globe, passing through the same two points.

**Armagh**

A new life in a new country.



I moved to Nicaragua In 2001 ...



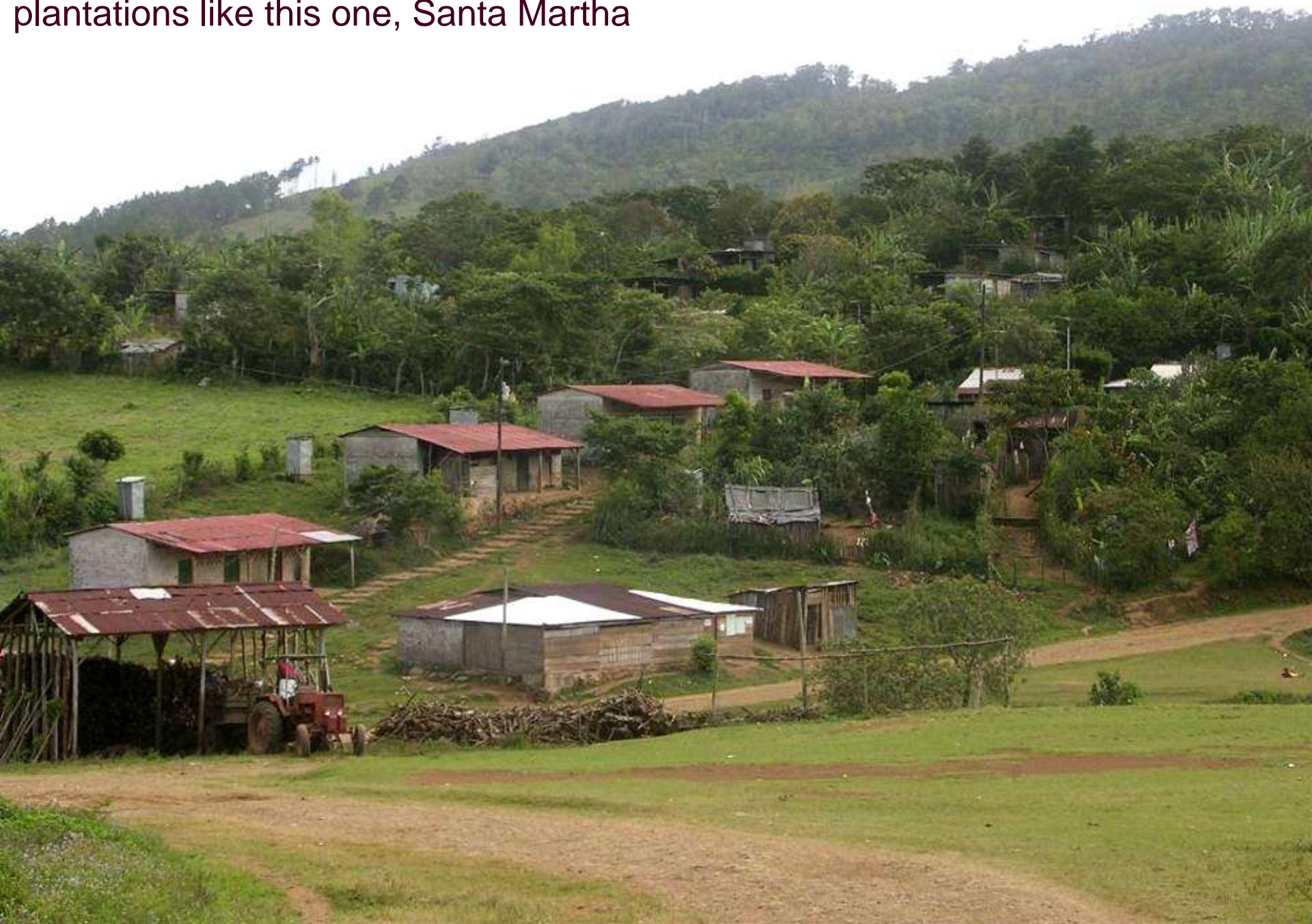
Tropical, rural, mountainous



Coffee is grown in the forests, protected by the partial shade of the forest canopy



Much of it is still produced on large feudally-run plantations like this one, Santa Martha







Harvesting coffee is highly labour-intensive. During the harvest period (November to February) many thousands of children work all day every day picking coffee ...



...and sorting the red and green coffee berries.













Contents of the sacks are measured at the end of each day, and registered workers are paid according to the quantity picked.

Children are not registered and not paid.

The first stage of processing, de-pulping the berries to extract the seeds, is generally done on the plantation.

The beans are then taken off to a processing plant for cleaning, drying and sorting.





They are then exported for roasting and packing.

Most of the added value goes with them. Most of the profit is taken in wealthy northern countries such as the USA and UK.

Meanwhile on the plantation ...

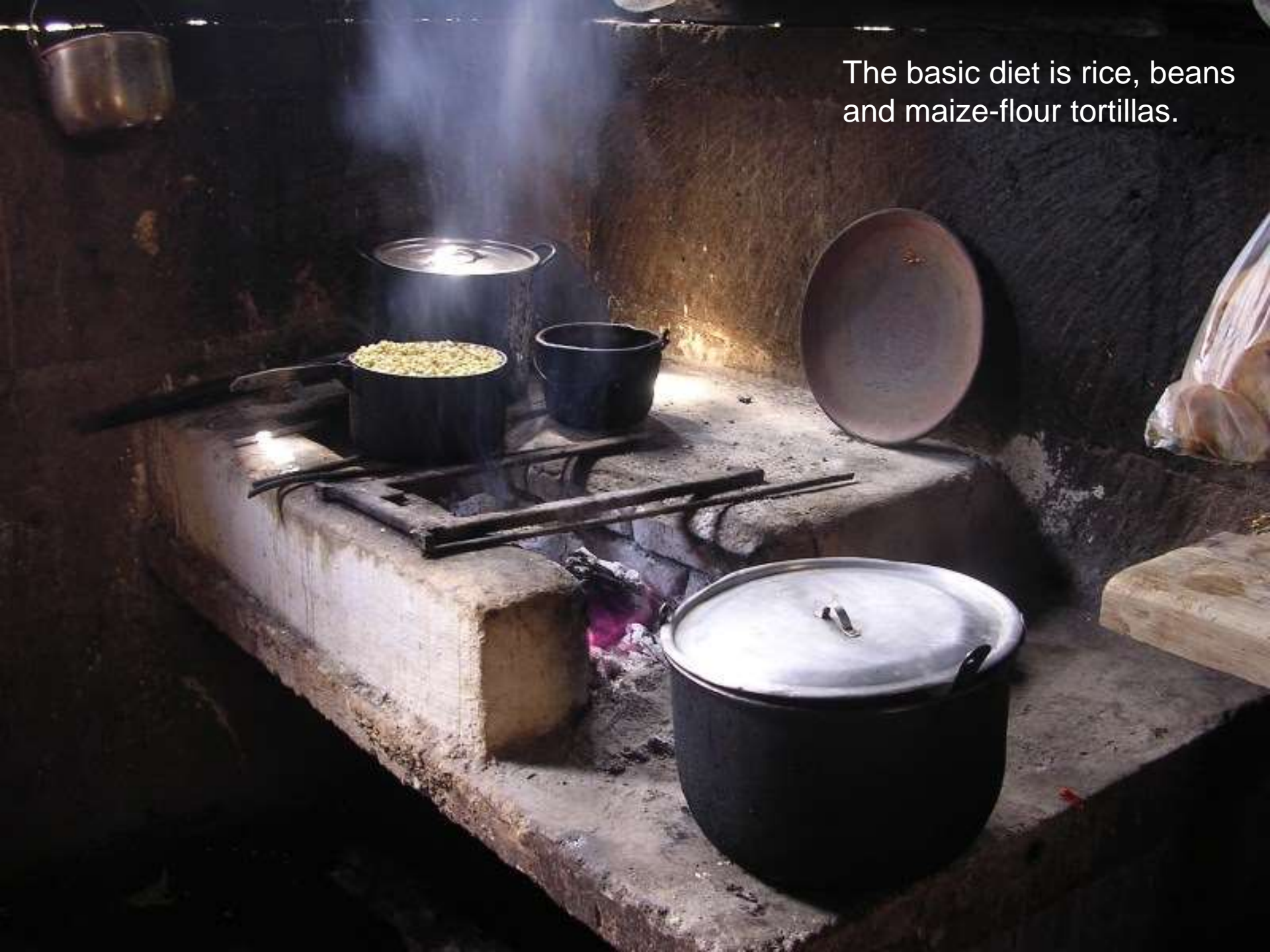
Living conditions are very basic





These are typical family homes

The basic diet is rice, beans  
and maize-flour tortillas.



Primary schools exist in most communities, but are under-resourced, poorly staffed, and often in bad repair



There are no secondary schools in rural areas



## Part Two: Examples of social action by Nicaraguan child coffee workers



Despite the difficulties they face, young people organise and get involved in many kinds of social action



Some become peer educators, sharing knowledge and skills with other young people, for example about organic farming and protecting the environment.





About their rights – especially  
as girls and young women





¿Que es lo que nos gusta.  
de los barones?  
- Son respetuoso  
- Son amables  
- Son respetuosos

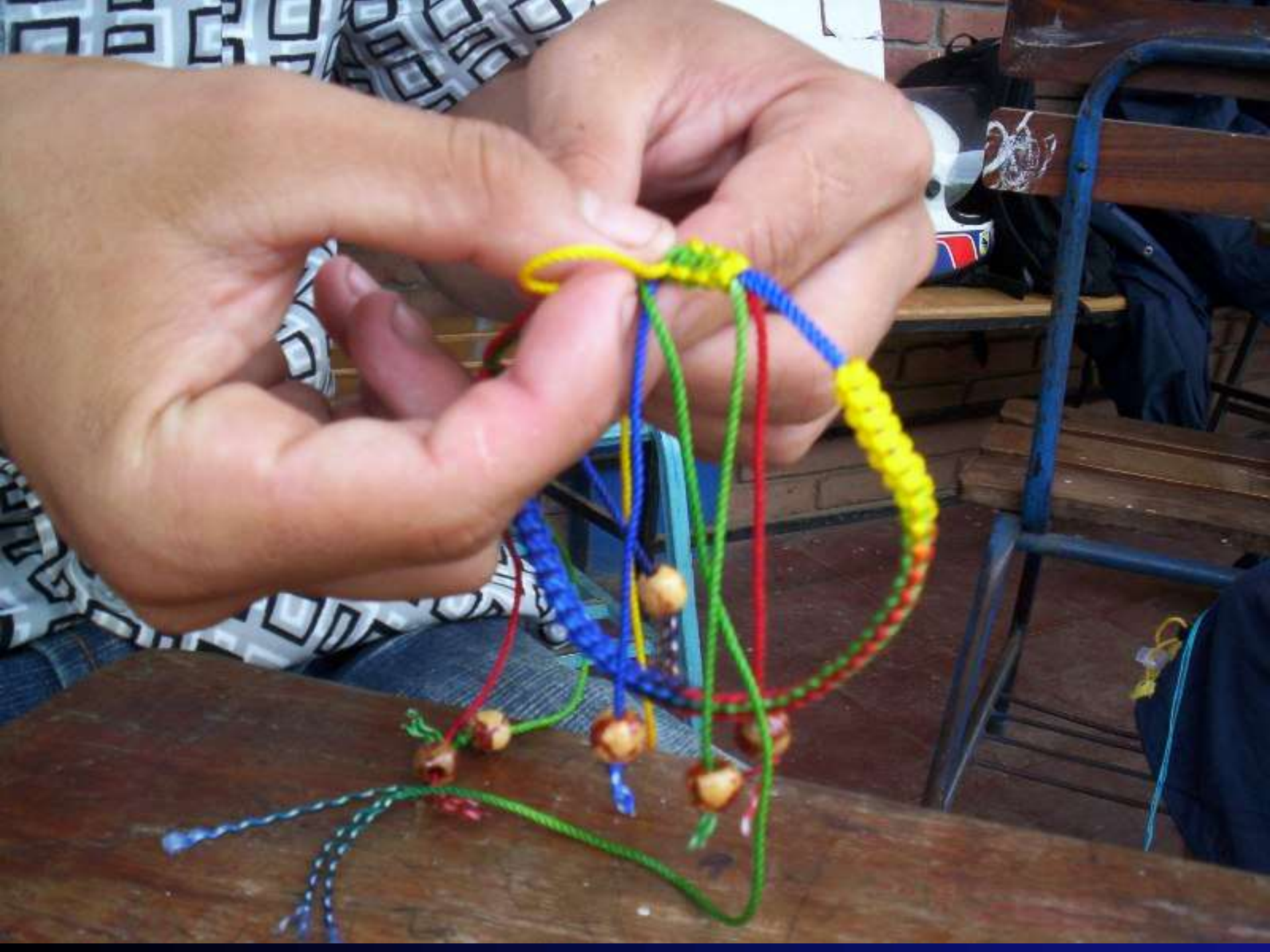
Running children's reading groups



Teaching arts, crafts  
and cultural activities

Crochet













## Producing and presenting a weekly radio programme to promote children's rights









Others join youth theatre groups to raise awareness of social issues like domestic violence or child labour that people prefer not to talk about





“Blows to the Soul” , a play about domestic violence



“Children and Young People Demand a Better Life”

“The Hidden Face of Coffee” performed in the National Theatre, Managua



“No more punishments” performed at the Justo Rufino Garay Theatre, Managua





“Time to Act!”, Festival against violence towards children, Managua, August 2008



Second festival against violence, "We Want to be Treated Well!" ,  
Managua, August 2009

“Los Colibrís” (the Hummingbirds) children’s theatre group from La Lima, performing “*Blows to the Soul*” at the fourth National Festival against violence towards children, La Dalia, October 2010





Some participate in school councils or the school students' union





Some are involved in promoting the right to play and recreation





Preserving and passing on traditional games

## Organising a “Children and young people defending our right to play” campaign



## Campaign banners



“Children and young people defending our right to play, For health, learning, development, happiness and a life without violence.”

Some organise in the Sandinista Youth Movement  
(young socialists)



Some participate in village development committees, water committees, environmental action groups etc.



***Some become researchers, investigating social problems and using their findings to influence adult decision-makers***

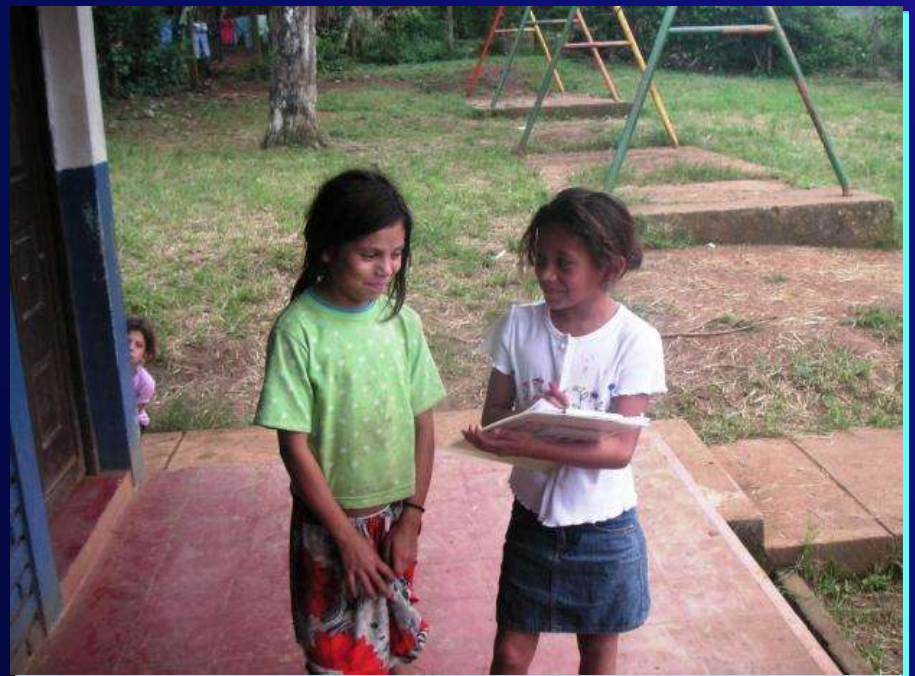
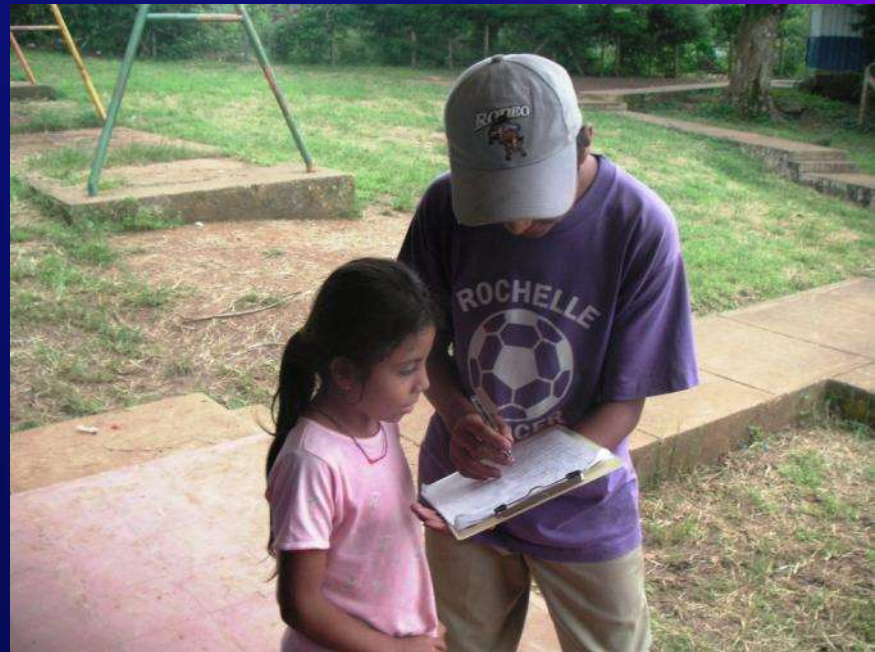


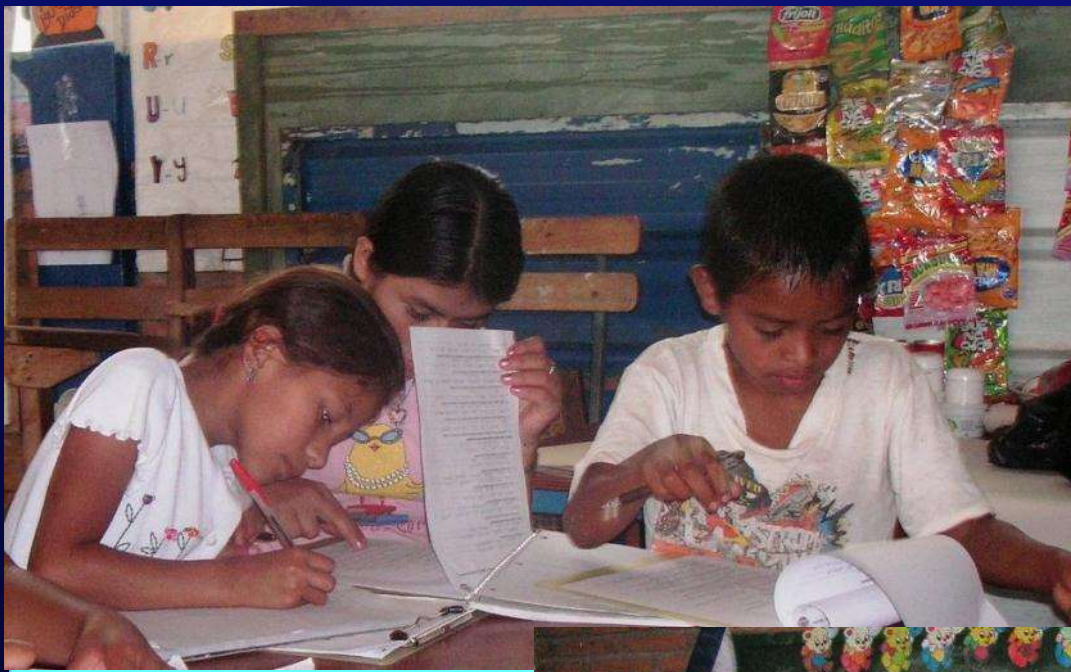
In these photos from 2007, a team of young workers from Santa Martha Coffee Plantation are researching the problem of violence against children on the plantation.

## Preparation



## Field research





Data analysis

Drawing up  
recommendations



## Preparing a final report



- Comunicarnos con nuestros padres
- Confiar en los adultos para poder expresar cuando nos sentimos violentados
- Hablar con los que pegan o maltratan a sus hijos e hijas
- Aconsejar a los demás niños y niñas

## Rehearsing the formal presentation

# Journey to the capital city, Managua, to present their findings at a national conference





A direct challenge to the Minister  
for the Family...

...and to all the conference delegates.



***2009: The Santa Martha coffee plantation Young Consultants' team reforms to research the relationship between business and human rights on the plantation***



## Field research





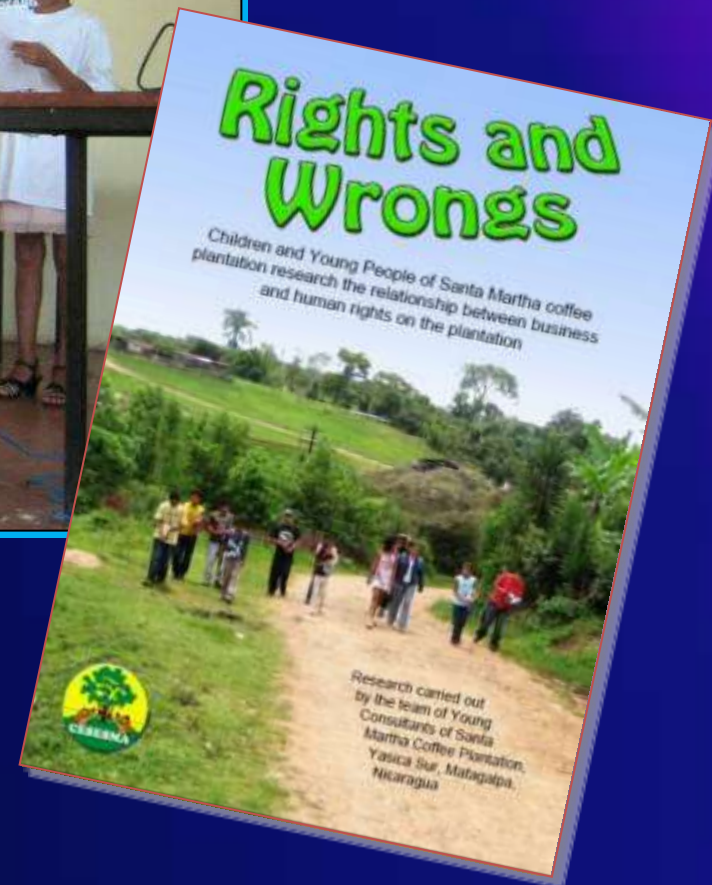
Preparing the report  
and recommendations





Presentation of the findings and recommendations  
at a regional conference in Matagalpa

Report published by CESESMA.



# 2011: Four teams of young researchers carry out their own self-chosen research projects

El Plomo-La Garita-Siare team

Research topic: Respect in the community, and how lack of respect leads to violence.



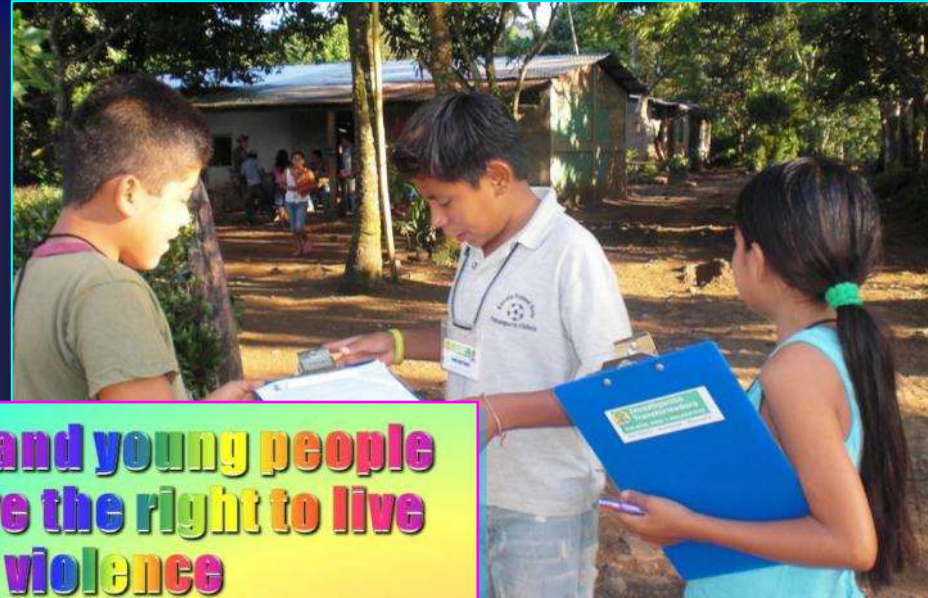
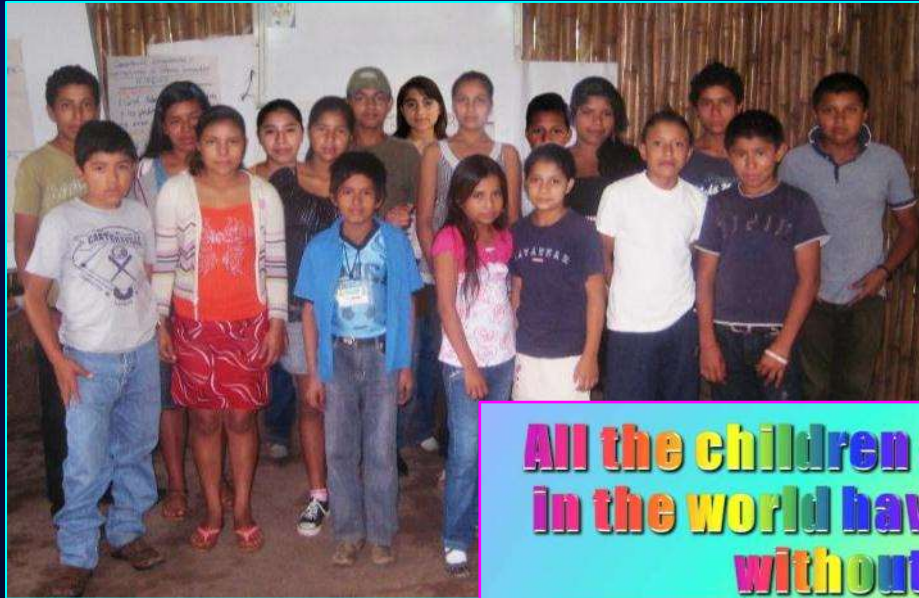
**Without respect there's no trust  
or friendship and that's what  
causes violence**



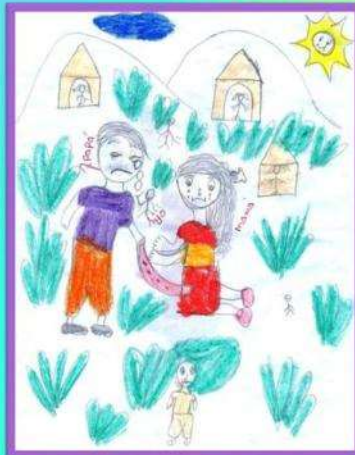
Young researchers investigate the concept of "respect" and how lack of respect leads to violence in families and communities.

## Yasica Sur team

Research topic: The violence that children and young people suffer in the home.



**All the children and young people  
in the world have the right to live  
without violence**



Young researchers helping to  
solve the problem of violence  
that children and young  
people suffer in the home



## Samulali team

Research topic: Parents who hit their children. Why do they do it and what are the alternatives?

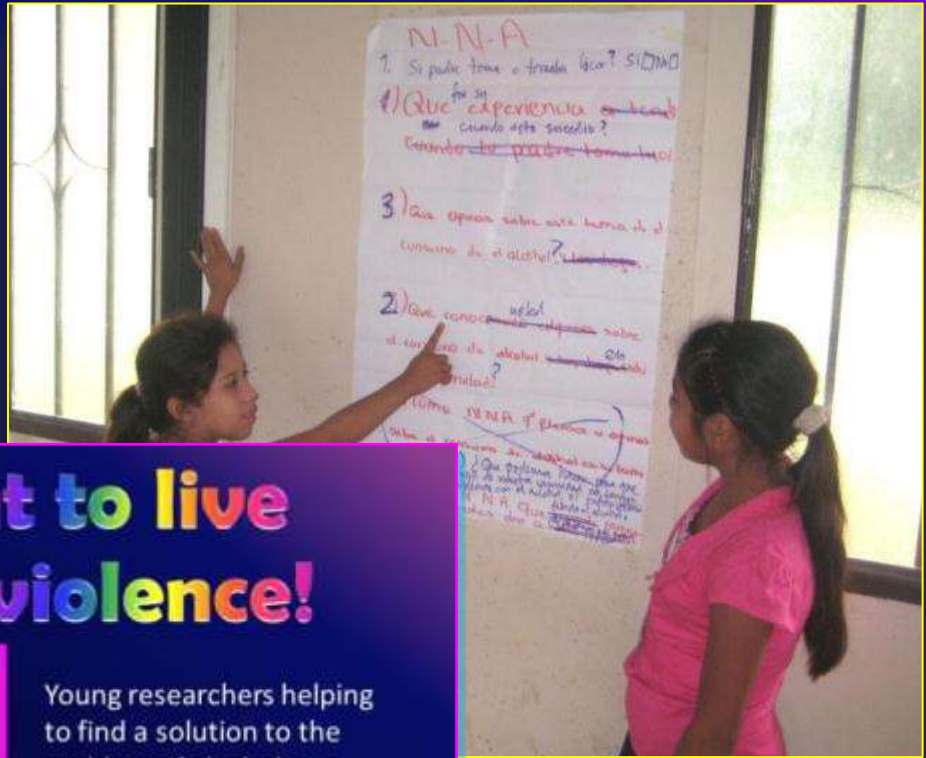


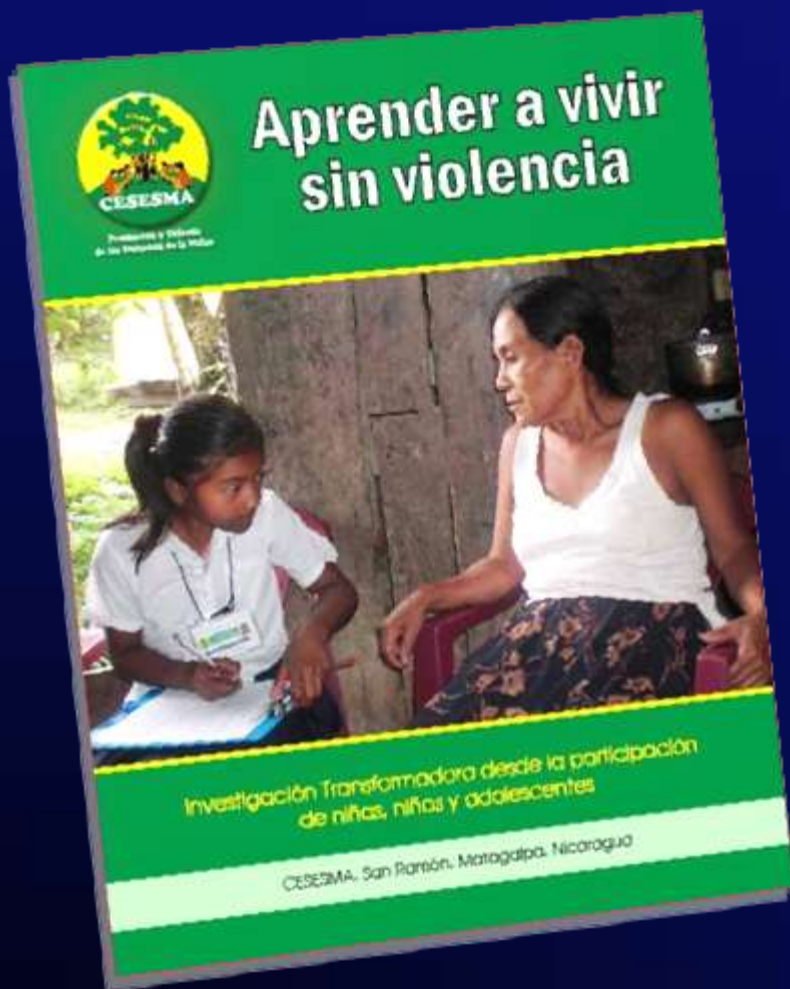
### Girls and boys preventing violence in the home



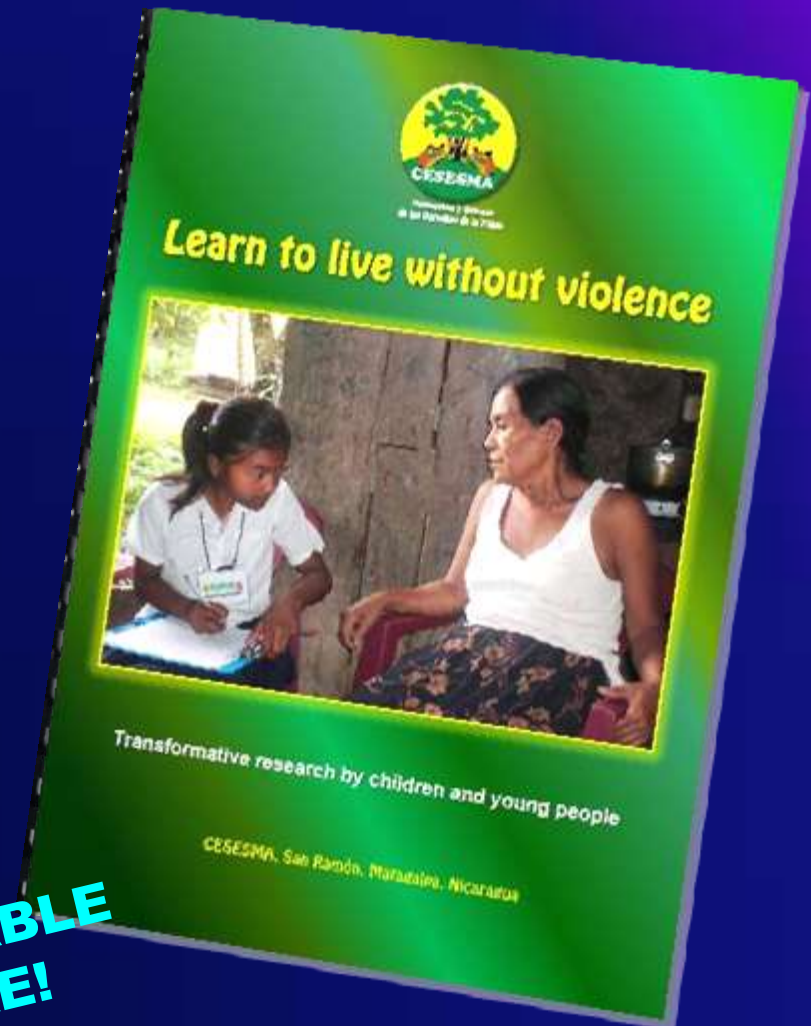
Young researchers helping to solve the problem of parents who hit their children: Their attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of alternatives.







The four research reports were published in book form by CESESMA in Nicaragua in March 2012.



An English translation produced jointly by CESESMA and the University of Central Lancashire launched in September 2012.



**AVAILABLE  
HERE!**

Other groups organise campaigns and lobbies to raise awareness of social issues that concern young people, claim their rights and press the authorities for action.



Environmental march, La Dalia, August 2007

## ***Raising public awareness of the problem of Violence***



The Dragon of Violence, San Ramón, August 2008





Children's Festival, San Ramón, August 2008



“You’re stupid. You’re good for nothing. No to psychological violence”



"If your rights have been violated – don't keep quiet"

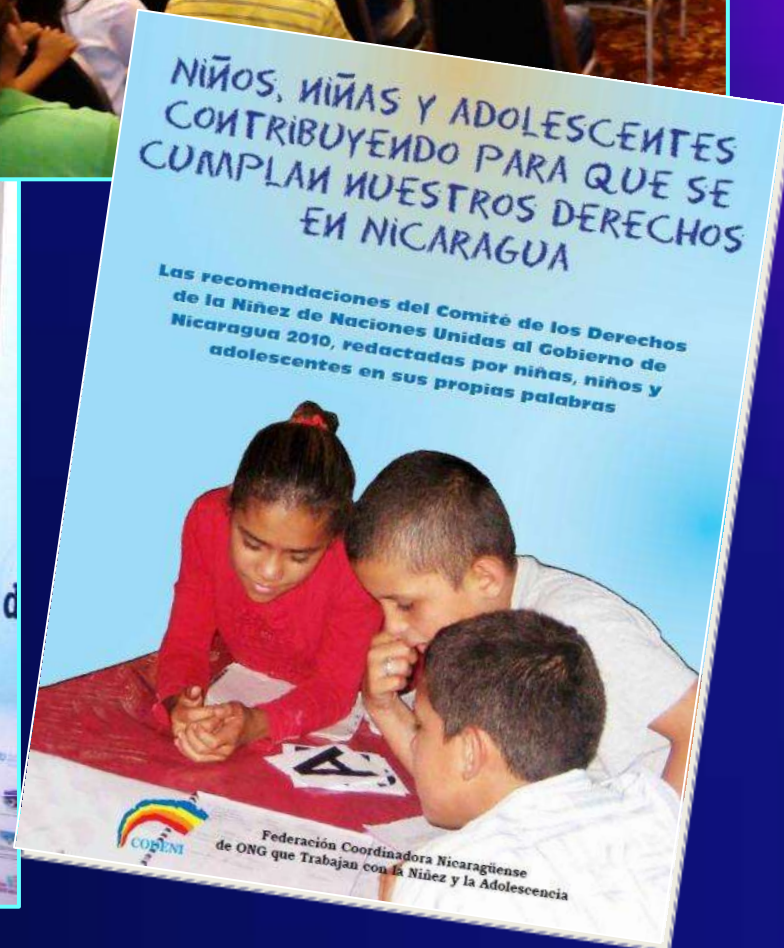


“To live without  
violence is  
possible”

2011: Young consultants produce a child-friendly version of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommendations to the government of Nicaragua as part of a national campaign to push for compliance.



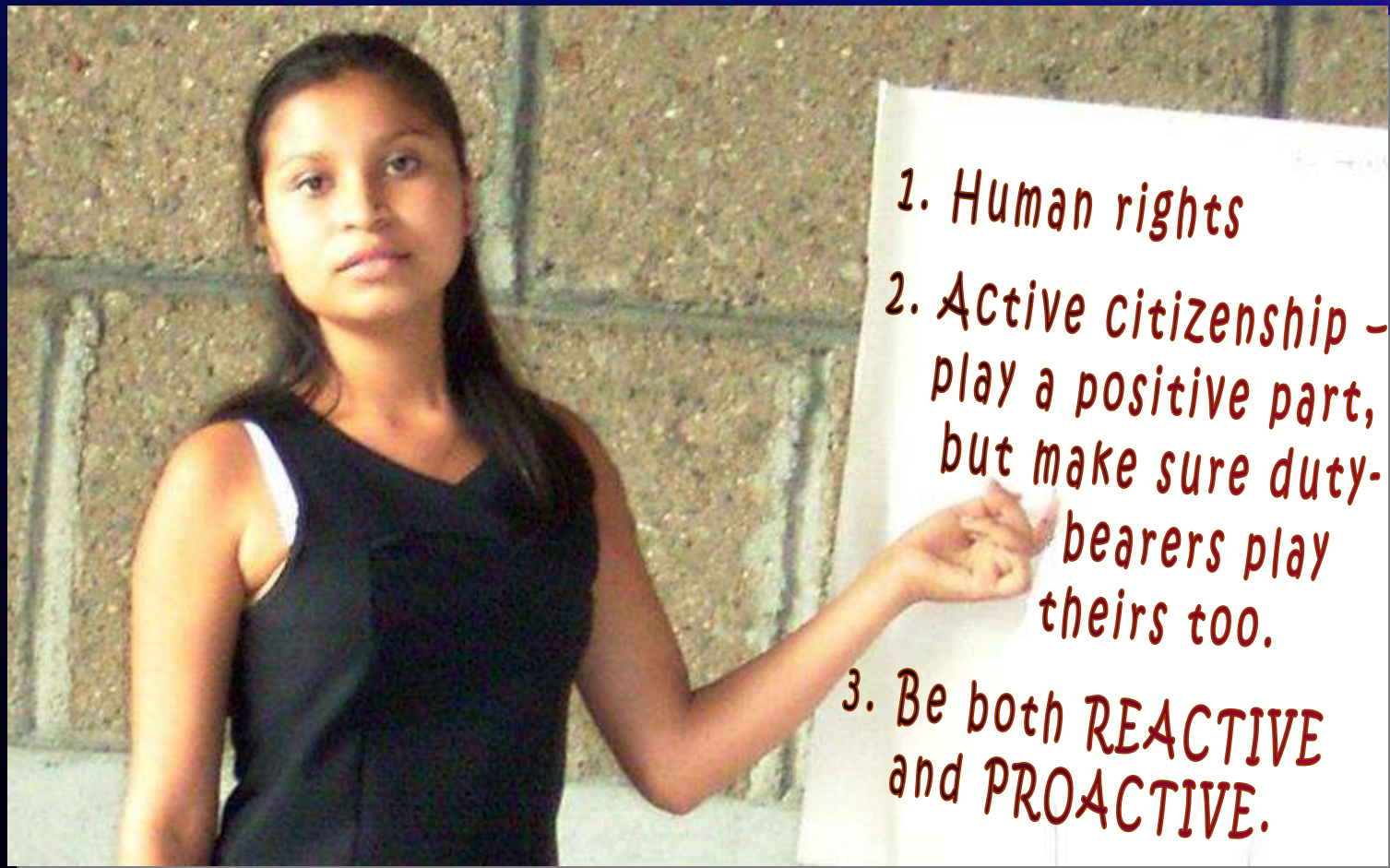
National launch of the child-friendly version, programmed and presented by young people in Managua, August 2012



## Part Three: Towards a Northern Ireland Youth Action Model

Northern Ireland isn't Nicaragua, so importing a Nicaraguan youth action model to Northern Ireland probably wouldn't work. You need to grow your own model here to suit the local climate.

Based on the experience of the Nicaraguan young people, here are three ideas to think about:



## 1. A human-rights-based approach:

When Youth Councils organise campaigns based on human rights, you are not asking for help or asking people to do you favours. If you take a rights-based approach, you are simply claiming for young people what is theirs by right, and at the same time making the people in power (the “duty-bearers”) aware of their obligations.



### *Important note:*

By claiming your rights you aren't avoiding responsibilities, because as rights-holders we recognise our responsibility for respecting other people's rights too.

## 2. Aim to strike a balance between:

**Holding duty-bearers to account:** i.e. demanding an adequate response from government and local authorities to young people's rights claims.

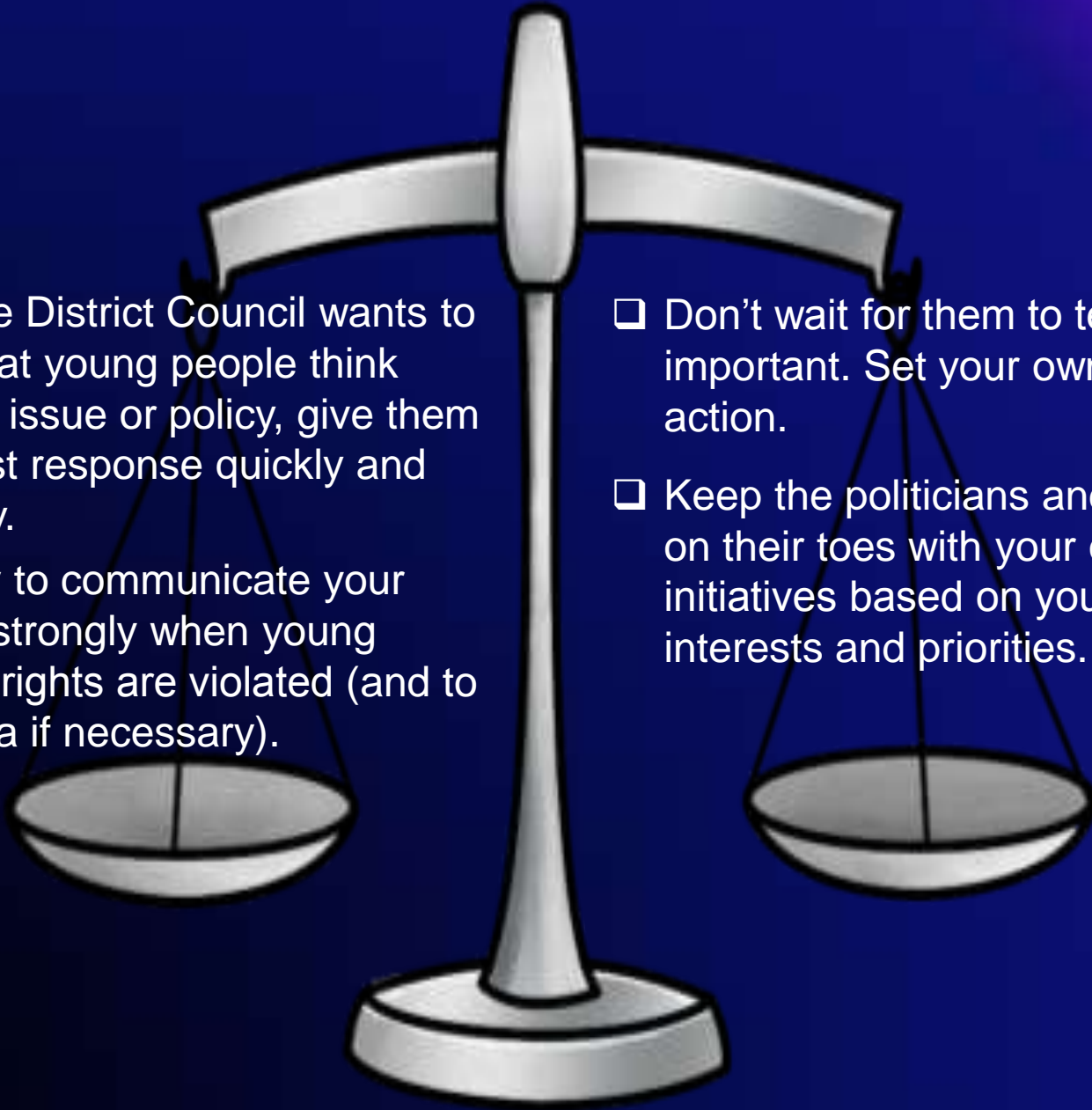
Taking on a responsible role as active citizens to play your own part in promoting and defending rights (**SOCIAL ACTION**).



## 2. Be both REACTIVE and PROACTIVE:

- ☐ When the District Council wants to know what young people think about an issue or policy, give them an honest response quickly and efficiently.
- ☐ Be ready to communicate your position strongly when young people's rights are violated (and to the media if necessary).

- ☐ Don't wait for them to tell you what's important. Set your own agenda for action.
- ☐ Keep the politicians and bureaucrats on their toes with your own self-run initiatives based on young people's interests and priorities.



## *A final thought:*

Youth participation can be abused by the powerful to manipulate and control young people, but it can also be used by young people themselves as a form of empowerment. In your relationship with those in power, are you ready to move from being “*users and choosers*” to being “*makers and shapers*”.



# The End



## Thanks for listening