

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

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!

