
CSSF Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk

Conflict-sensitive GEDSI Analysis Nicaragua

Submitted: 01/10/2024

Assignment Code: WPS081

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Direct Audience: British Embassy San José

Suggested Internal Distribution: LATAC embassies, Americas Department, Education and Gender Equality Department

Confidentiality Status: None



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Abstract

The purpose of this assignment is to develop a Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion Analysis for Nicaragua to enhance the post's ability to deliver on the United Kingdom's equality priorities and to respond effectively to the experience of women and girls and other minority groups. The thematic areas explored include disability rights, LGBTQI+ rights, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities' rights, educational attainment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, child marriage, and women's political and economic participation. This report is based on a secondary literature review and comprises global statistics portals and databases, a review of synthesis products, reports, briefs, statements and third sector reporting, and (academic) publications. In the context of democratic backsliding, authoritarian rule, political repression, and increasing international isolation under Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front/ Daniel Ortega's presidency, posts need to centre the commitment to 'do no harm' and avoid backlash to minority and vulnerable groups and support (to the extent possible) civil society efforts to navigate the closure of civic spaces, while building momentum for accountability for human rights violations.

Summary

The purpose of this assignment is to develop a Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Analysis for Nicaragua to enhance the post's ability to deliver on the United Kingdom's (UK) equality priorities and to respond effectively to the experiences of women and girls and other minority groups. The thematic areas explored include disability rights, LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex+) rights, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities' rights, educational attainment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage, and women's political and economic participation.

This report is based on a secondary literature review and comprises global statistics portals and databases, a review of synthesis products, reports, briefs, statements and third sector reporting, and (academic) publications. Among the limitations encountered are key data gaps, limited availability of recent data, and data reliability, as well as the instrumentalisation of information.

The democratic backsliding, authoritarian rule, political repression, and increasing international isolation under Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)/ Daniel Ortega presidency shaped this GEDSI analysis and reveals a pattern of selective gender equality and inclusion advances, while perpetuating and exacerbating structural inequalities for people with disabilities, the LGBTIQ+ population, and Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

In terms of **disability rights**, Nicaragua relies on a robust disability public policy and delivers a comprehensive and centralised service provision for people living with disabilities. However, the closure of civic spaces has restrained the operational capacities of local disability organisations, while limiting partnerships with international organisations to respond to the specific needs and interests of people with disabilities.

Nicaragua's legal framework safeguards some **LGBTIQ+ rights**, but advances heteronormative policies rooted in politicised Christian values. In practice, LGBTIQ+ people continue to risk abuse, violence, and hate crimes, and face state violence as part of a crackdown on political dissidents who mobilise against the government.

While the collective rights of **Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples** are enshrined in the political constitution of Nicaragua, these ethnic minority communities face continued systemic discrimination and disproportionate poverty rates. The violent attacks and illegal encroachments on their traditional territories by mestizo settlers and violent gangs, paired with state persecution, result in intimidation, exile, and political marginalisation and have a decidedly gendered impact on women.

Official data on primary and secondary **educational attainment** shows similar levels between girls and boys, while data on adult education indicates a perpetuation of gendered division of labour, with more women enrolled in teacher training, commerce, and services, while men dominate in agriculture and forestry, industry, and construction. The education sector is impacted by the political crisis, which has led to the closure of universities and crackdowns on students.

A legal framework on **sexual and reproductive health and rights** is in place, resulting in positive indicator results. However, the public policy put forth is outdated, while in practice, a socially conservative perspective is maintained. Information and data are patchy. Prevalence of **GBV** in Nicaragua mirrors patterns in the wider region. Despite the existence of a legal framework, the lack of adequate enforcement leaves women unprotected. The 2018 social unrest exacerbated diverse forms of violence against women, with the government of Nicaragua not only failing to protect women but also actively involved in violence against the organised women's movement.

Indicators on **women's political representation** show that Nicaragua excels when women align with the government's position; however, the mobilisation of women's opposition is criminalised and advances to gender equality are obstructed. In terms of **economic participation**, women are involved in a context of growth, but not development, while also being held back by patriarchal dynamics.

This report finds that the post's ability to deliver on the UK's equality priorities will depend on diplomatic, policy, and programming positioning. Centring on the commitment to 'do no harm' and avoid backlash to minority and vulnerable groups, posts need to: refrain from legitimising the status quo, acknowledging the selective progress on equality and inclusion indicators; support (to the extent possible) civil society efforts in country and in the diaspora/ exile to navigate the closure of civic spaces and partnerships with the international community; and raise awareness on accountability with regards to human rights violations, persistent systemic discrimination, and respect of the rule of law.

Introduction

Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to develop a GEDSI analysis for Nicaragua to enhance the post's ability to deliver on the UK's equality priorities and to respond effectively to the experience of women and girls and other minority groups. The thematic areas explored include disability rights, LGBTQI+ rights, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities rights, educational attainment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, GBV, child marriage, and women's political and economic participation.

Methodology and Tools

Understanding Nicaragua as a conflict-affected country in the Latin America and Caribbean region, this analysis consists of a review of existing secondary evidence. It refrains from directly engaging with stakeholders in the country after considering risks to potential key informants within a context where dissent is repressed.

The review of existing evidence comprised global statistics portals and databases, a review of synthesis products, reports, briefs, statements and third sector reporting, and (academic) publications, using a literature mapping matrix (see Annex 1). In mid-June 2024, the author of this GEDSI analysis undertook a light stocktake of FCDO's existing work to explore relevant programming, policy, and diplomacy efforts and interests to advance GEDSI, as well as facilitated a milestone meeting at the mid-point of this assignment.

Limitations

As anticipated, democratic backsliding and the autocratic governance restructure by the Ortega/Murillo presidency impacted both the availability of data and the instrumentalisation of information.

- **Data gaps:** Nicaragua's increased international isolation contributed to limited reporting against international standardised development indicators and submissions to United Nations (UN) treaty bodies. With regards to gender equality, UN Women notes that as of December 2020, only 37.7 per cent of indicators needed to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a gender perspective were available in Nicaragua, with gaps in key areas such as unpaid care and domestic work, information and communications technology skills, and women in local government. In addition, many areas — such as gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women's access to assets (including land), and gender and the environment — lack comparable methodologies for regular monitoring of the annual statistics published. Closing these gender data gaps is essential for achieving gender-related SDG commitments in Nicaragua (UN Women, [Women Count Portal](#), Nicaragua).
- **Limited availability of recent data:** The systematic review of datasets, statistical portals, and academic research points to continued use of outdated

information on population data¹ and an overreliance on the last [Demographic and Health Survey for Nicaragua](#) (INIDE – ENDESA, 2014), which was conducted by the National Institute of Development Information at the Ministry of Health, collected in 2011–2012 and published in 2014.² Hence, the analysis in this document also draws on data from before 2019 as, in many cases, this was all that was available. As a result, parts of this analysis risk being outdated.

- **Data reliability:** Nicaragua ranks well on other indices built on composite indicators capturing the formal existence of legal frameworks and representation in numbers, such as those relating to women’s participation, reduction of gendered inequalities, or disability inclusion. These indices refrain from adequately contextualising data, resort to exceptions to the rules, or flawed enforcements to silence opposition and dissidence. Described as a ‘ranking versus reality’ dilemma, this obscures the very real struggles faced by women in Nicaragua, where structural discrimination and GBV persist. The government’s celebration of punctual advances needs to be complemented with fact-checking to capture the whole picture.

Brief Context: Nicaragua

Over the past several decades, Nicaragua’s Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) political party has tightened its control over the executive, legislative, judicial, and electoral functions of the government, resulting in the suppression of dissent and political repression. Since FSLN leader Daniel Ortega was elected president in 2007³ — he is currently in his fourth consecutive term — there has been an erosion of democratic institutions and the country’s political system has become increasingly centralised and authoritarian ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)).

In April 2018, civil unrest and mass anti-government protests triggered by the announcement of social security reforms (increased taxes, reduced pension benefits) resulted in violent repression, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, disappearances, and torture. In accordance with investigations by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), between April 2018 and July 2019, 355 people (340 men and 15 women) were killed ([Organization of American States, 2021](#)), with more than 100,000 people subsequently fleeing violence or being sent into exile ([GJIJA, 2023](#); [Freedom House, 2024](#)).

The consolidation of power and constraint of political rights and civil liberties are exemplified in the Sovereignty Law (2020), which provides a framework to arbitrarily detain, investigate, and ban individuals from running for or holding public office, effectively leaving dissenters stateless, stripping people of their nationality, removing birth certificates, removing academic records, expelling prisoners as ‘traitors’, and confiscating assets ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)). The run-up to the November 2021 elections (which failed the Organization of American States’ standards to qualify as ‘free and fair’) was accompanied by increasing arrests of anti-Ortega political groups, the

¹ As example, the Foundational Well-being: End Gender-Based Violence and Elevate Human Capital World Bank Gender Landscape for [Nicaragua](#) does not display any data after 2011.

² Instituto Nacional de Información de Desarrollo, Ministerio de Salud, 2014. Encuesta Nicaragüense de Demografía y Salud (ENDESA) 2011-2012. Managua, Nicaragua.

³ President Ortega’s first presidency was from 1985-1989.

exclusion of the opposition political parties,⁴ and persecution of leadership figures ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)).

Between August 2022 and September 2023, Nicaragua revoked the legal status of more than 2,000 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), bringing the total closures to 3,394 since 2018 ([Amnesty International, 2023](#)). The systematic human rights violations and closure of civic space resulted in the increasing political and economic isolation of Nicaragua from the international community.

Despite its many challenges, Nicaragua navigates international pressures and sanctions ([BTI, 2024](#)) and has demonstrated improvements on various indices between 2007 and 2023, including disability inclusion and a reduction of gender inequality ([World Economic Forum, 2023](#)). The country now ranks seventh among the 146 countries in the global ranking of reductions in gender gaps,⁵ making it the only Latin American country among the top ten countries in that ranking ([World Economic Forum, 2022](#)).

⁴ In the 2021 elections, opposition political parties were excluded from the electoral process, as the Citizens for Liberty Party, the Democratic Restoration Party, and the Conservative Party were arbitrarily cancelled earlier that year by the Supreme Electoral Council (CETCAM, Moncada).

⁵ This ranking reflects relative progress compared to men within the country rather than absolute gender equality (Wade, 2020).

Findings and analysis

1

Disability Rights

Nicaragua relies on a robust disability public policy and delivers comprehensive and centralised service provision for people living with disabilities. However, the closure of civic space is limiting the involvement of international organisations and partnerships that aim to support the advancement of rights of people with disabilities in Nicaragua. Since 2022, most dedicated international NGOs have ceased operations in the country.

Non-discrimination is inscribed in the country's political constitution and Nicaragua has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Building on the FSLN's past, particularly the role of veterans of the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution, many of whom were wounded and left with disabilities and chronic illnesses, Nicaragua developed a robust disability public policy framework, endorsing people with disabilities as "full and equal citizens".

Over the years, the disability rights movement became increasingly divided, as disabled FSLN veterans claimed special priority status over other Nicaraguans with disabilities for access to state services and social benefits, which became further politicised into pro- and anti-government camps. The Foreign Agent's Law (September 2020) also undermined international partnerships with disability rights organisations, such as Humanity and Inclusion, which ceased operations in Nicaragua.

In accordance with official data from Nicaragua's submission to the CRPD (2019), in 2018 there were 138,698 people with disabilities, of whom 51 per cent were men and 49 per cent were women. Disability classification shows that 39 per cent had physical disabilities, followed by 25 per cent with intellectual disabilities, and 12 per cent with visual impairments. The majority of people with disabilities, 45 per cent, were over the age of 60, followed by 25 per cent of the 40 to 59 age group. There were 4,505 children with disabilities under the age of six (2,400 boys and 2,105 girls). The Ministry of Health provides a centralised disability service programme called [A Voice for All](#), including medical care, benefits, and services.

Despite comprehensive service provision, discrimination against people with disabilities is widespread in Nicaragua, with limited access to schools, public health facilities, and other institutions. Under Nicaraguan law, two per cent of public officials should be people with disabilities, but the quota is not respected and there are few employment opportunities for people with disabilities ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)). While Nicaragua's CRPD submission highlighted measures to enhance equal opportunities for women living with disabilities, including through collaboration with disabled women's associations,⁶ different UN entities stressed the negative impact of forced closures of women's rights

⁶ This includes the Federation of Differently Abled Women, the National Network of Women with Disabilities, and the Nicaraguan Institute of Blind Women.

organisations on women living with disabilities (UNCRC, [UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights \[OHCHR\], 2024](#)). The UNCRPD noted with grave concern that women detainees with disabilities might have been subjected to sexual violence in detention centres, while women with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities are locked up and isolated in their homes and exposed to physical violence and verbal abuse ([OHCHR, 2024](#)).

2

LGBTIQ+ Rights

Nicaragua's legal framework safeguards some LGBTIQ+ rights, but advances heteronormative policies rooted in politicised Christian values. In practice, LGBTIQ+ people risk abuse, violence, and hate crimes, and face state violence as part of a crackdown on political dissidents who mobilise against the government.

In an effort to establish legitimacy for the FSLN and appear to be modern, progressive, democratic, and revolutionary, the Ortega administration publicly emphasised a pro-LGBTQI+ stance ([Bayard de Volo, 2023](#)). Nicaragua's legal frameworks safeguard the basic rights of LGBTIQ+ people: since 2007, same-sex sexual activity is legal, but same-sex marriage is not, as Article 72 of the political constitution states that marriage is between a man and a woman (April 1987). Similarly, same-sex couples are not able to have civil unions or adopt a child. Furthermore, non-binary gender identities are not recognised, and there is no right to change one's legal gender, but gender affirming care is legal as of 1997 ([Equaldex Portal](#)). Discrimination based on sexual orientation is banned in certain areas, such as employment and health services, although it is illegal for LGBTIQ+ people to join the military. The Equality Index on LGBTIQ+ rights gives Nicaragua a score of 43/100 (with 100 being the most equal), in legal rights terms it gives 49/100, and public opinion towards LGBTIQ+ people gets 37/100.

With regards to violence, research indicates that hate crimes committed against LGBTIQ+ people, including murder, appear to be lower in Nicaragua than in the broader Central American region, though LGBTIQ+ people continue to be at risk of systematic abuse from their families, communities, and public institutions (Smith and Fraser, 2022). LGBTIQ+ groups in exile report that most acts of violence against LGBTIQ+ people are perpetrated by state institutions, such as the Ministry of Health and the national police, which also stigmatise them on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity ([Mesa de Articulación LGBTIQ+ en el Exilio, 2022](#)).

While oppression of LGBTQI+ groups declined during the early years of the Ortega administration, creating more space for organising, the involvement of LGBTIQ+ people and groups in the 2018 social uprising in Nicaragua — which brought the civilian population together to demonstrate publicly against the government — resulted in harsh repression, violence, and exile ([Mesa de Articulación LGBTIQ+ en el Exilio, 2022](#)). From the perspective of dissident LGBTIQ+ people, the closing of spaces is particularly dire. With increasingly limited opportunities to organise and advocate for their rights, they are deeply vulnerable to the anti-LGBTQI+ agendas of both the authoritarian Ortega government, which was once left-leaning, and the right-wing conservative groups that comprise its formal opposition.

3

Indigenous and Afro-descendent Collective Rights

While the collective rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples are enshrined in Nicaragua’s political constitution, these ethnic minority communities face continued systemic discrimination and disproportionate poverty rates. The violent attacks and illegal encroachments on their traditional territories by mestizo⁷ settlers and violent gangs, paired with state persecution, result in intimidation, exile, and political marginalisation and have a decidedly gendered impact on women.

Nicaragua acknowledges the collective rights of seven Indigenous Peoples⁸ in the Political Constitution of Nicaragua (1987). It also voted in favour of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(2007\)](#)⁹ and ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 ([ILO, 1989](#)), also known as the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention that focuses on protecting the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples.. Approximately eight per cent of the population identifies as Indigenous or Afro descendant (World Food Programme, 2024).

In terms of persistent structural discrimination, Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples face disproportionate poverty rates, limited education and employment opportunities, and general disregard for their collective territorial rights, as highlighted by the Alliance of Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples of Nicaragua in their report ‘[Under Internal Colonization, and in Danger of Extermination](#)’ (2020). During health-related emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the aftermath of hurricanes Eta and Iota in November 2020 (which caused landslides and floods that displaced thousands of people in parts of the Caribbean), the Nicaraguan government failed to respond in a timely and adequate manner to the needs of these communities.

Despite the existence of two autonomous regions in the northern and southern Caribbean coasts and recognition of these communities’ right to self-government and titling of their territories, which has been upheld by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, violent attacks against Indigenous and Afro-descendent groups and individuals and illegal encroachment on their traditional territories persist, significantly increasing after the 2018 crisis (UN Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua, [Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)). In recent years, open attacks from heavily armed criminal gangs of settlers, including illegal cattle ranchers who surround the territory and dispossess community members of their traditional lands through systematic violence, have increased ([Amnesty International, 2023](#); [Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)). Between August 2022 and June 2023, OHCHR recorded eight violent attacks on Indigenous peoples, especially in the Mayangna Sauni, a territory of the Bosawás Biosphere Reserve

⁷ The concept mestizo refers to people of mixed European (primarily Spanish) and Indigenous ancestry, which form the majority of Nicaragua’s population, with estimates suggesting they comprise over 80 per cent of the country’s inhabitants ([ViaNica](#)).

⁸ Three of Nicaragua’s seven Indigenous Peoples live in the Pacific, central, and northern regions: the Chorotega (221,000), the Cacaopera or Matagalpa (97,500), the Ocanxiu or Sutiaba (49,000), and the Naho or Nahuatl (20,000). The Caribbean (or Atlantic) coast is inhabited by the Miskitu (150,000), the Sumu or Mayangna (27,000), and the Rama (2,000). Other peoples who also enjoy collective rights, according to the Political Constitution of Nicaragua (1987), are Afro-descendants, also known as “ethnic communities” in national legislation. These include the Creole or Kriol (43,000) and the Garífuna (2,500) ([IWGIA N/D](#)).

⁹ It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world, and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous peoples.

([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)). These attacks resulted in fatalities, displacement, and destruction of means of survival ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)). According to the Center for Justice and Human Rights of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, since 2015, some 40 Indigenous people have been killed, 47 injured, 44 kidnapped, and 4 disappeared in cases related to land invasions ([OHCHR, 2020](#)). Settlers have taken approximately 21,000 hectares from the Miskitu people and forcibly displaced around 1,000, presumably serving forestry and mining interests ([OHCHR, 2020](#)).

Differential Impact of Settler Attacks on Women

While Indigenous communities on Nicaragua's northern Caribbean coast have faced threats, kidnappings, torture, and arrests, women are also differentially affected. In the first six months of 2023 alone, there were over 643 reported cases of violence against Indigenous peoples, including death threats, kidnappings, and torture ([Radwin, 2024](#)).

Women and girls were victims of sexual violence, community members' houses were burnt, and families were forcibly displaced (HRC, 2024). At least 58 cases in protected communities involved sexual, psychological, or physical violence against women in 2023 ([Radwin, 2024](#)). Due to this constant danger and harassment by settlers, women and children are forced to remain isolated and confined to their homes. Furthermore, new diseases are appearing in Indigenous communities, and women are being separated or excluded from communal and territorial governance structures ([IWGIA, 2024](#)).

The role of the Nicaraguan government is problematic: the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua determined that state authorities had not only failed to implement effective prevention measures to protect the life and integrity of members of the ethnic communities but also instrumentalised settlers to reconfigure and ascertain control over communal lands and their exploitation ([UN Human Rights Council, 2024](#)). Furthermore, the government failed to conduct prompt, impartial, and effective investigations, and publicly denied the responsibility of settlers for the crimes identified. It even prosecuted members of affected communities for some of the crimes, imposing harsh penalties ([UN Human Rights Council, 2024](#)). The only people who have been convicted in the attacks, which have been systematically perpetrated against Indigenous communities for almost a decade, are eight Indigenous forest rangers, with 25 others being pursued by the national police (IWGIA 2024). The government recurrently fails to comply with the orders of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, be it the release of Indigenous authorities or introducing protective measures for Indigenous groups.

Therefore, the government is a central actor in perpetrating human rights violations ([Amnesty International, 2023](#)) when targeting leaders and activists with convening power, including those who were particularly vocal in their criticism against the government and/or their defence of land and environmental rights. Repressive acts included harassment, threats, criminalisation, arbitrary detention, confiscation of property, and prohibition from entering the country. As a result, many leaders and activists have felt compelled to go into hiding and/or flee the country ([UN Human Rights Council, 2024](#)). Death threats have forced some Indigenous authorities into exile, and the government has prevented some from returning to Nicaragua.

Furthermore, since March 2022, the authorities have cancelled the legal status of over 100 Indigenous and Afro-descendant organisations and political parties upholding

Indigenous interests, as seen in the case of the YATAMA party¹⁰ ([UN Human Rights Council, 2024](#)). During the 2021 presidential elections, YATAMA left the alliance with the FSLN and, in October 2023, was stripped of its legal status by the Supreme Electoral Council. The Ortega government also detained the party's main leaders, with some of their whereabouts currently unknown ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)).

¹⁰ YATAMA (Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Aslatakanka, or 'Sons of Mother Earth') is an Indigenous political party which, in the context of the 2021 presidential electoral process, left a years-long alliance with the FSLN.

4

Educational Attainment

Official data on primary and secondary educational attainment shows similar levels between girls and boys, while data on adult education indicates a perpetuation of gendered division of labour, with more women enrolled in teacher training, commerce, and services, while men dominate in agriculture and forestry, industry and construction. The education sector is impacted by the political crisis, which has led to the closure of universities and crackdowns on students.

Limited comparative data exists on educational attainment in Nicaragua on global development datasets, and when selected indicators are available, they are very outdated (mostly from the early 2000s). Existing official Nicaraguan data published in the Annual Statistics Report in Spanish is not readily used to inform global comparative statistics (reason unknown). According to official Nicaraguan data, the rate of education enrolment shows **fairly equal gendered** enrolment rates in **early childhood education** (50% boys/50% girls), **primary education** (52% boys/48% girls) and **secondary education** (50% boys/50% girls). The rate of out of school children in primary and lower secondary education is 5.2 per cent for girls and 7.8 per cent for boys ([UN Women, Women Count, Nicaragua](#)). 2022 data demonstrates a total **percentage of school abandonment** (the percentage of children who drop out of school between each educational tier) of 6.2 per cent (7% boys and 5.5% girls) in secondary education, and a total percentage of abandonment of 5 per cent (5.6% boys and 4.4% girls) in primary education (see Table 1 below). In terms of **percentage of passed** (primary and secondary school graduation), girls have a slightly higher pass rate: 98.5 per cent compared to boys at 97.6 per cent in primary education, and 97.6 per cent compared to 95.3 per cent for boys in secondary education.

Modality of the Education System/Area	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Special Education	3,657	2,339	1,336
Early Childhood Education	254,104	127,158	126,946
Primary Education	872,148	453,386	426,204
Secondary Education	500,424	250,036	250,388
Adult Education	117,149	55,355	61,794
Teacher Training	5,632	1,538	4,094
Technical Education	45,252	24,060	21,192
Technical Capacity Building	356,371	114,000	242,371
Superior Education	125,150	53,757	71,393

Table 1: Initial enrolment by sex, according to modalities of the education system and area of residence 2022 INIDE – Annual Statistics Report 2022 (2023).

Overall, there is a **higher enrolment of men in** special education, for children with disabilities (64% men compared to 37% women) and technical education (53% men,

47% women). Further breakdown of enrolment in technical education (see Table 2 below) shows higher enrolment rates in agriculture and forestry for men (65% men and 35% women) as well as industry and construction (80% men and 20% women). However, in commerce and service women dominate with enrolment rates of 40 per cent men and 60 per cent women.

Overall, there is a **higher enrolment of women** in adult education (47% men, 53% women), teacher training (27% men, 73% women), technical capacity building (32% men, 68% women), and superior (tertiary) education (43% men, 57% women). It is important to note that while women have access to different branches of education, this has not yet translated to equal economic opportunities or elimination of gender-based discrimination in the workforce. The higher educational attainment for women has not been fully reflected in areas like equal pay or representation in leadership positions.

Department and Speciality	Total	Men	Women
Agriculture and Forestry	6,618	4,293	2,325
Sector Industry and Construction	10,620	8,518	2,102
Sector Commerce and Service	26,954	10,788	16,166
Total	44,192	23,599	20,593

Table 2: Enrolments in technical education by sex, by training sector and department, INIDE 2021 (2022).

The **adult female literacy rate**, which is the percentage of women aged 15 and above who can both read and write with understanding of a short, simple statement about their everyday life,¹¹ is lower than in Latin America and the Caribbean, but is nearly the same among women (82.6%) and men (82.8%) ([UN Women, Women Count, Nicaragua](#)). A deeper explanation for the reasons for this pattern could not be identified.

Information on gender, disability, and social inclusion is outdated and patchy. In terms of **Indigenous and Afro-descendent groups**, a Pan American Health Organization report ([PAHO 2021](#)) highlights that while barriers to education have been described as one of the main causes of exclusion, Nicaragua (and Panama) has a more favourable situation in terms of young Afro-descendant people aged 18 and 24 compared to their non-Afro descendant peers. Discrimination in education is also highlighted in contexts in relation to Indigenous Miskitu girls, who report language barriers when it comes to participating effectively in high school and being accepted by their peers ([Plan International, N/D](#)). In terms of **disability and education**, Nicaragua has developed educational resources for diversity centres to strengthen institutional capacity to adapt, guarantee, provide, and reproduce educational material in Braille; support the inclusion of students with special educational needs; and train and build the capacity of 32,070 mainstream and special education teachers.¹²

The **political crisis** extends to the educational sector as the government attempts to crackdown on student-led protests. Similar to other countries, youth are among the driving force in protest movements against, for example, authoritarian rule and the closure of civic space, due to losses in economic and social opportunities. This has resulted in the closure of universities, removal of academic records, stripping students of

¹¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. UIS.Stat Bulk Data Download Service. Accessed April 24, 2024. <https://apiportal.uis.unesco.org/bdds>.

¹² The Ministry of Education has provided training to 32,070 mainstream and special education teachers through the following courses: Strategies for Engaging in Inclusive Education (22,119 teachers); Basic Course in Nicaraguan Sign Language (1,033 teachers); Methods for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments (322 teachers); and Teaching Strategies for Working with Young Children (8,596 teachers). Source: Government of Nicaragua, submission to CRPD (2019).

titles, expelling students as 'traitors', pressuring them into exile, and confiscating assets ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)).

Modality of the Education System	Percentage of Passed/Approved			Percentage of Abandonment		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Special Education	99.4	99.5	99.3	0.7	0.2	1.5
Early Childhood Education	100.0	100.0	100.0	3.4	3.7	3.2
Primary	98.1	97.6	98.5	5.0	5.6	4.4
Secondary	96.5	95.3	97.6	6.2	7.0	5.5

Table 3: Percentage of Passed/ Approved vs. Percentage of Abandonment by sex, in modality of the education system INIDE – Annual Statistics Report 2022 (2023), Ministry of Education, Department of Educational Statistics.

5

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

A legal framework on sexual and reproductive health and rights is in place, resulting in positive indicator results. However, the public policy put forth is outdated, while in practice, a socially conservative perspective is maintained. Information and data are patchy.

International indicators from 2022 confirm the extent to which country laws and regulations guaranteed full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care and information and education on maternity care to women and men aged 15 years and older stood at 100 per cent ([SDG 5, UNStats](#)). This high rank indicates that a legal framework exists but does not engage with the quality of laws in terms of women's bodily autonomy or women's rights. This is particularly evident in the case of abortion, which is criminalised, carrying prison sentences of up to two years for women and six years for the medical professionals who perform them. Furthermore, the legal frameworks fail to allow for safe abortion to save a woman's life and/or to preserve a woman's physical and mental health in case of rape or incest, owing to a foetal impairment, for economic or social reasons, or on request ([World Health Organization and UNFPA, 2021](#)). Consequently, the ban forces women and girls to continue unwanted pregnancies, putting their health and lives at risk ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)). These socially conservative policies, including restrictions on women's reproductive rights, result from a tacit alliance between the government and the Catholic Church hierarchy ([BTI, 2024](#)) that result in restrictions on freedom for women/ girls to make decisions about their reproductive health, and also restricting access to services ([Christian Aid, 2018](#)).

While the rate of adolescent pregnancies has decreased in Nicaragua since 2010,¹³ the country has the [second highest](#) pregnancy rate among adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean. Nearly [30 per cent](#) of girls and female adolescents who entered into an early union (which encompasses couples without a formally registered marriage certificate) became pregnant within the same year. In 2022, 84 of every 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19 gave birth in Nicaragua. A [2020 UNFPA study](#) found a direct and high correlation between pregnancy and child, early and forced unions among Nicaraguan girls and female adolescents ([Girls not Brides, 2024](#)). Among the reasons for early pregnancy is a lack of information and comprehensive sex education and persisting traditional gender norms, as well as rape and sexual abuse (inside and outside the home) ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)).

While Nicaragua's maternal mortality rate¹⁴ has improved in recent years and is nearly the same as the regional average, it remains high. According to the Pan American Health Organization, 20 per cent of all maternal deaths were adolescent mothers, 98 per 100,000 live births. This is compared to the neonatal mortality rate of 10.2 per 1,000 live births ([World Health Organization and UNFPA, 2021](#)). Overall, the World Bank Economy Profile for Nicaragua indicates that as of 2020, 78 women die per 100,000 live births due

¹³ United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects (Database).

¹⁴ Maternal mortality ratio is the number of women who die from pregnancy-related causes while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination per 100,000 live births. Source: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group, and UNDESA/Population Division. Trends in Maternal Mortality 2000 to 2020. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2023.

to pregnancy-related causes in Nicaragua, with the ratio improving from 169 per 100,000 live births in 2000.

6

Gender-Based Violence

Prevalence of GBV in Nicaragua mirrors patterns in the wider region. Despite the existence of a legal framework, the lack of adequate enforcement leaves women unprotected. The 2018 social unrest exacerbated diverse forms of violence against women, with the Nicaraguan government not only failing to protect women but also actively involved in violence against the organised women’s movement.

NGO reports describe gendered violence in the ‘post-conflict’ context as widespread, and GBV against women as worse today than during the Nicaraguan civil war (1981–1990), citing high levels of femicide and the rise of male-dominated narco-trafficking gang culture ([Christian Aid, 2018](#)). This is compounded with the crackdown on the organised women’s movement since 2021, as well as the dismantling of the support and protection networks for women victims of violence through the cancellation of the legal status of more than 300 women’s organisations and the confiscation of the assets of several of them ([CETCAM, 2024](#)).

Available information on standardised indicators of physical and sexual violence is largely outdated, stemming primarily from the last Nicaraguan Demographic and Health Survey conducted in 2011–12.¹⁵ Approximately one in four women in Nicaragua, or 22.5 per cent, have experienced a **lifetime** of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence ([Global Data Base on Violence Against Women](#), UN Women). Physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence **in the last 12 months** stands at 7.5 per cent in Nicaragua (of the total female population). With regards to non-partner sexual violence, there is no reliable and up to date information on Nicaragua, though at 11 per cent the region has high rates of lifetime non-partner sexual violence, almost double the global average of 6 per cent for women aged 15 to 49 (World Health Organization and UNFPA, 2021).

The Nicaraguan annual statistical report (see Table 4) lists a range of GBV in different crime categories and focuses on police effectiveness in investigating the crimes, as per police definition (rather than survivor accounts). However, in contrast to the NGOs’ reports, this is likely to amount to an undercount.

Crime	Crime Category	Reported	Resolved	% of Police Effectiveness
Femicide	Felony	19	19	100.0%
Sexual Abuse	Crime against liberty and sexual integrity	1,165	955	82.0%
Aggravated Sexual Assault		14	13	92.9%
Rape		356	295	82.9%
Rape of Girls Under 14		679	593	87.3%
Aggravated Rape		232	217	93.5%
Sexual Harassment		75	55	73.3%
Assault (Estupro)		259	208	80.3%
Incest		1	1	100.0%
Intimidation/ threat against a woman	Crime against liberty	2,828	2,630	93.0%

¹⁵ Instituto Nacional de Información de Desarrollo, Ministerio de Salud, 2014. Encuesta Nicaragüense de Demografía y Salud (ENDESA) 2011-2012. Managua, Nicaragua.

Table 4: Reports registered and resolved, percentage of police effectiveness by crime category 2022 INIDE – Annual Statistics Report 2022 (2023).

Nicaragua has had contradictory approaches. Although it passed a **comprehensive law** to protect against violence (Law 779, of 2012),¹⁶ which identifies various types of violence (including femicides) and the settings in which it occurs (ECLAC, 2021), there is limited enforcement (Smit and Fraser, 2022). Furthermore, there is a lack of policies for the protection and prevention of violence against women ([CETCAM, 2024](#)).

On the one hand, the government does not adequately address the crime of **femicide** and has weakened the legal definition of femicide to capture only cases of intimate partner femicide committed by the woman's partner or former partner (ECLAC, 2021). This means that the murder of women based on their gender by third parties who are unfamiliar with the victim are not registered, relegating this crime to the intimate partner sphere. The annual femicide rate remained unchanged, with 21 women killed in 2019, 22 in 2020 — amounting to a rate of 0.7 per 100,000 women (ECLAC, 2021) — and 19 in 2023. Geographically, most femicides in Nicaragua have occurred in the capital city of Managua, the mountainous province of Matagalpa, and the Atlantic Coast region ([Neumann, 2021](#)). Since 2014, independent monitoring organisations have strongly contested the Nicaraguan government's official statistics concerning femicide, claiming that they are undercounting women's deaths ([Neumann, 2021](#)).

On the other hand, **state violence against women is also prevalent**, resulting in a gap between the existence of laws and their implementation, especially in the administration of justice ([CETCAM, 2024](#)). Between 2018 and 2022, two factors had a significant influence on rates of femicide: the socio-political crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. ([CETCAM, 2024](#)). State violence used against women in particular, contributes and exacerbates other forms of violence. Displaced Nicaraguans in recipient host countries, such as Costa Rica, report that access to protection mechanisms is difficult and, in many cases, displaced people face institutional violence, discrimination, and xenophobia ([CETCAM, 2024](#)).

Child Marriage

Nicaragua has committed to eliminating child, early, and forced marriage by 2030 in line with the SDGs target 5.3. Child marriage is a **largely hidden problem in Nicaragua** ([Bransky et al., 2017](#)), with **35 per cent of women** in Nicaragua being married or in a child, early and forced union before their 18th birthday¹⁷ and **10 per cent of women** before the age of 15 (Girls not Brides, 2024; UNICEF/UN Stats Database; INIDE-[ENDESA 2011/2012](#)). Complementary studies suggest that this is largely an undercount and broader estimations suggest that 55 per cent of girls entering into early marriage are from poor rural areas, compared to 36 per cent in wealthier urban areas (Population Council, 2013). The primary underlying drivers of child marriage in Nicaragua include the informal nature of unions and normalisation of adolescent girls entering into unions with adolescent boys of a similar age, which usually goes unreported ([Girls not Brides, 2024](#)). Although the legal age to marry is 18,¹⁸ legal representatives of girls and boys can give permission to marry at 16 or 17 years old, motivated by poverty, discriminatory gender norms, teenage pregnancy, and a lack of educational opportunities (UNICEF 2016; Bransky, et.al. 2017).

¹⁶ Ley Integral Contra La Violencia Hacia Las Mujeres, Law 779.

¹⁷ In comparison, 19% of men in Nicaragua are married or in a union before the age of 18.

¹⁸ Nicaragua, 1904. Civil Code, Title ii, Chapter I, Art. 100.

7

Women's Political and Economic Participation

Evidence from indicators suggests that Nicaragua excels on women's political representation when aligned with the government's position, while criminalising women's opposition mobilisation and obstructing advances to gender equality. In terms of economic participation, women are involved in a context of growth, but not development, while also being held back by patriarchal dynamics.

Political Representation

After Rwanda and Cuba, Nicaragua is the third highest rated country for women's representation in parliament out of 193 monitored countries ([IPU Parline, 2024](#)). The proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of parliament increased from 9.7 per cent in 2000 to 53.9 per cent in 2021 and to 51.6 per cent in 2023, higher than the average in Latin America and Caribbean (35.7%) and other lower middle income countries (23.2%).¹⁹ Nicaragua's parliament has a total of 91 seats, 49 of which are occupied by women ([IPU Parline, 2024](#)) while the following two parliamentary committees are led by women: the [Committee on Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs](#) and the [Foreign Affairs Committee](#) ([IPU Parline, 2024](#)). The underlying reason is a conducive legal framework, as Nicaragua passed electoral laws on gender quotas in 2012, which may have helped shift cultural attitudes about women's roles and capabilities (Wade, 2020), though it needs to be noted that it is mostly women who tow the government line who are the ones promoted, which contributes little to the advancement towards de facto gender equality, beyond what the government deems relevant (see above).

Women in official opposition roles have been detained and stripped of their legal accreditation, and anti-government stakeholders are not allowed to run for office. Meanwhile, there are accusations that women representatives are failing to advance legislation that supports women's autonomy and rights. In turn, women's grassroots participation in protests and social mobilisation, whether in response to the pandemic or for humanitarian assistance,²⁰ is not acknowledged as political participation ([CETCAM, 2024](#)). The repression of the organised women's movement has been varied and systematic; it includes sexual violence as a form of torture, assaults, attacks, threats, imprisonment, soft torture, persecution, harassment, exile, banishment, deprivation of nationality, and confiscations, as well as digital violence and persecution ([CETCAM, 2024](#)). State violence is intended to 'punish' women for daring to challenge authoritarian and patriarchal power, and to serve as a demonstrative example to all of Nicaraguan society ([CETCAM, 2024](#)).

¹⁹ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (www.ipu.org).

²⁰ In November 2020, when hurricanes Eta and Iota hit the Caribbean coast, women human rights defenders, especially those working with Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, took charge of the relief and humanitarian aid actions in the face of the destruction caused and the lack of governmental assistance ([CETCAM, 2024](#)).

Economic Participation

In recent years Nicaragua has registered a stabilisation of the economy,²¹ though it has been described as ‘growth without development’, resulting in limited improvement in quality of life for the majority of the population (CETCAM, 2023). Although Nicaragua’s National Bank²² indicates that the economy continues to show a growth trend, the succession of multiple crises has affected economic activity in key sectors as well as employment and people’s purchasing power (World Food Programme, 2023).

With regards to **women’s economic participation**, according to Women, Business and the Law (WBL, 2023),²³ Nicaragua scores 86 out of 100, higher than the regional average across Latin America and Caribbean, which is 81. When exploring **labour force participation data** — which is the proportion of the population aged 15 and older that is economically active — since 1990, female labour force participation has increased. Compared with labour force participation in the lower middle income group, the gap between men and women is lower in Nicaragua (ILO, 2024; Gender Data World Bank, 2024). For 2022, there is a gap of more than 20 percentage points in labour participation rates between women and men, rising to more than 35 percentage points in rural areas (National Institute of Development Information, 2023; see Table 5).

Indicators	National			Managua (excl. urban rest)			Rural Rest		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Global Participation Rate	67.3	80.3	56.1	64.4	72.9	57.6	70.5	89.2	52.4
Gross Occupation Rate	65.4	78.1	54.5	62.2	29.8	56.0	69.6	88.4	51.6
Net Occupation Rate	97.3	97.3	97.2	96.5	95.8	97.2	98.8	99.1	98.4
Employment Rate	47.6	55.0	40.7	48.1	52.0	44.7	47.2	59.1	35.4
Open Unemployment Rate	2.7	2.7	2.8	3.5	4.2	2.8	1.2	0.9	1.6

Table 5: National Institute of Development Information indicates for quarter 4 (October-December 2022) — INIDE — Annual Statistics Report 2022 (2023).

Furthermore, in 2024, Nicaragua scored 0.64 in the gender gap index for economic participation and opportunity, indicating that women are 36 per cent less likely to have equal participation and opportunities in the economy compared to men (Gender Gap Index Nicaragua, 2024).

In terms of **wage equality**, the score was 0.55, showing a 45 per cent gender gap in wages for similar work (Gender Gap Index Nicaragua, 2024). Nicaragua does not have applicable provisions mandating ‘equal remuneration for work of equal value’ (WBL Index). Despite high rankings, the economic gap between men and women remains the highest in Central America. Women earn significantly less than men and often face segregation in the labour market (Wade, 2020). There is no information available on the

²¹ This is a result of a free trade agreement with China (EIU, 2024).

²² <https://www.bcn.gob.ni/divulgacion-prensa/presidente-del-bcn-expuso-panorama-de-la-economia-y-perspectivas-para-2023>

²³ Women, Business and the Law (WBL, 2023) presents an index covering 190 economies, structured around the life cycle of a working woman. In total, 35 questions are scored across eight indicators. This includes mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets, and pension.

proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work by sex (calculated as a percentage of a 24-hour day).²⁴

Despite some progress, gender gaps, GBV, and disadvantageous social norms facing women and girls persist, and gains in human capital of women and girls remain untapped ([Gender Data World Bank, 2024](#)). Some of the **challenges** that persist to ensuring women's equal participation in the labour market are noted below.

The **lack of childcare support and the burden of domestic responsibilities** limit women's ability to engage in economic activities. Women often have to balance these responsibilities with their work, which can restrict their participation in the labour force. There is 'no paid leave of at least 14 weeks to mothers' (Work Code, Art. 141); the government does not administer 100 per cent of maternity leave benefits (Law of Social Security, Art. 88 and 89, Work Code, Art. 141); there is no paid parental leave (no applicable provisions could be located); and there are no periods of absence from work due to childcare accounted for in pension benefits (WBL Index). Furthermore, UN Women data indicates that the proportion of mothers with newborns receiving maternity cash benefit is 17.8 per cent ([UN Women, Women Count, Nicaragua](#)).

With regards to **vulnerable employment**,²⁵ overall, it has improved for women in Nicaragua since 1991. Workers in vulnerable employment are the least likely to have formal work arrangements, social protection, and safety nets to guard against economic shocks and are thus more likely to fall into poverty. Vulnerable employment among women in Nicaragua was 45.3 per cent and 32.5 per cent for men in 2022. The rate of vulnerable employment is similar for men but higher for women in Nicaragua compared to the average rate in Latin America and the Caribbean.²⁶ A significant number of women in Nicaragua are employed in informal sectors, where they have less job security, lower wages, and limited access to social protections such as maternity leave. Furthermore, UN Women data indicates that the percentage of the employed population making an income that falls below the international poverty line (aged 15+) amounts to 7.9 per cent for the female population, compared to 16 per cent of the male population ([UN Women, Women Count, Nicaragua](#)).

Women in Nicaragua face significant challenges in **accessing land and other resources**, including natural resources, which are crucial for agricultural development and economic security. Despite legislative reforms aimed at improving women's land rights, cultural and institutional barriers continue to limit women's ability to own and control land (Wade, 2020). Furthermore, women in Nicaragua have limited access to credit and financial resources, which restricts their ability to start or expand businesses. This financial exclusion is compounded by a lack of technical assistance and support for women entrepreneurs. **In 2021, 21.6 per cent of women and 30.9 per cent of men in Nicaragua had a bank account.** The female rate in Nicaragua is lower than both Latin America and the Caribbean and the lower middle-income group. Account ownership denotes the percentage of respondents who report having an account (by themselves or together with someone else) at a bank or another type of financial institution or report personally using a mobile money service in the past 12 months.²⁷

²⁴ National statistical offices or national database and publications compiled by UN Statistics Division. The data were downloaded on 3 December from the Global SDG Indicators Database: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

²⁵ Vulnerable employment is contributing family workers and own-account workers as a percentage of total employment.

²⁶ World Bank, World Development Indicators database. Estimates are based on data obtained from International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT at <https://ilostat ilo.org/data/>.

²⁷ [Global Findex Database](#) 2021, World Bank.

Data is not available for Nicaragua for share of business owners by sex (percentage of total business owners) (World Bank, 2023).²⁸

These barriers highlight the complex interplay of cultural, legal, and economic factors that continue to impede women's economic participation in Nicaragua.

²⁸ Source: World Bank's Entrepreneurship Survey and database, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/entrepreneurship>. Downloaded on 29 November 2023.

Conclusion

This light GEDSI analysis of Nicaragua is to be read against the backdrop of democratic backsliding, authoritarian rule, political repression, and increasing international isolation under the FSLN/ Ortega presidency. The UN Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua, mandated to investigate alleged human rights violations since April 2018, has reasonable grounds to believe that the State of Nicaragua is responsible for serious, systematic, and widespread human rights violations and abuses and other violations of international law based on political grounds against members of the population opposed to the government or perceived as such ([UN Human Rights Council, 2024](#)).²⁹

Reliable information and data is patchy, outdated, and, when available, often not in alignment with international standardised development indicators, particularly in relation to demographic, health, and gender equality data. UN Women stresses that as of December 2020, only 37.7 per cent of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective were available (UN Women, Women Count portal). While the formal improvement in relation to some indexes — for example, on reducing gender inequality, women’s political representation, and disability inclusion — has garnered international attention, staff at post need to go beyond the snapshot indicator to view the full picture. While advances are made through the consolidation of centralised government programmes, this is to the detriment of independent and dissident civil society efforts (those critical of the government) and, paired with advancing a socially traditional and conservative agenda, the impact is limited in terms of attaining gender equality and rights for women, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. While legal frameworks exist, it is important to be wary of the patchy or selective application thereof dividing into support of pro-government expressions and silencing of anti-government efforts.

Recommendations

Tangible action to enhance the post’s ability to deliver on the UK’s equality priorities and to respond effectively to the experience of women and girls and other minority groups will depend on diplomatic, policy, and programming positioning. Reflecting on the Latin America and Caribbean region’s renewed commitments to gender and equalities,³⁰ UK efforts to take a transformative and intersectional approach to support, protect, and empower women and girls, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples and communities, children, poor and vulnerable people, and excluded communities are significantly curtailed in Nicaragua. Mindful of the post’s interest and commitment to 'do no harm', the recommendations below provide tangible entry-points on how post can advocate for gender equality and women’s, LGBTIQ+, and Indigenous and Afro-descendent rights without causing harm or backlash to minorities, staff, and partners.

²⁹ The wide-ranging number of rights are: non-discrimination; freedom from torture; liberty and security of person; fair trial and due process of law; effective remedy; liberty of movement; right to a nationality; recognition as a person before the law; freedom from interference with privacy and family; freedom of opinion and expression; freedom of conscience and religion; peaceful assembly; freedom of association; participation in public affairs; education and academic freedom; work; social security; and an adequate standard of living.

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/latac-renews-regional-commitment-to-gender-and-equalities>

Selective progress on equality and inclusion indicators: While acknowledging advances in terms of selective gender equality aspects, posts need to be mindful about the ‘ranking versus reality’ constraints, acknowledging that women’s rights and gender equality efforts in Nicaragua are stagnant and experiencing backlash. Hence, with ‘do no harm’ principles in mind, post need to refrain from legitimising the current situation.

Possible entry points include:

- Engage with the Government of Nicaragua and relevant ministries on the existence of gender-related SDG data gaps, and advocate (with others) for the implementation of a population and health census that reflects standardised development indicators, and liaise with partners at UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA, and World Bank as custodians of global data portals, as well as with donor entities interested in funding such a population and health census.
- Seize entry-points to advocate for specific gender equality and women’s rights concerns that are not perceived as contentious or overly political by the Government of Nicaragua, including teenage pregnancy, early and forced unions/ marriages, and trafficking in people. This may entail supporting research efforts and knowledge creation, including stakeholders that continue to operate with a low profile and those outside of Nicaragua.
- Engage with points raised in the March 2024 report, ‘Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Reviews Reports of Nicaragua in Absence of a Delegation’ (UN [CRPD, 2024](#)), which questioned Nicaragua on violence against women and girls with disabilities; emergency protocols for persons with disabilities, including for major storms; the persecution of activists with disabilities; and attacks against Indigenous people with disabilities, among other issues.

Closure of civic spaces and partnerships with international community: The Sovereignty Law (2020) and Foreign Agents Law (2020) led to the closure of civil space and contributed to democratic backsliding, with the closure of thousands of non-governmental and independent organisations advocating for the rights of, support to, and services for women, LGBTIQ+, people with disabilities, and Indigenous and Afro-descendant groups. Possible entry points include:

- Explore avenues to ‘hold the line’ and safely support groups and collectives that continue operating with a low profile inside Nicaragua, as well as groups formed in exile.
- Expand partnership with likeminded diplomatic missions and other stakeholders in the international community on how to engage collectively vis-à-vis the Government of Nicaragua, and at regional and international level.
- Support efforts by leaders and organisations of women’s, LGBTIQ+, disability, and Indigenous and Afro-descent rights, as well as human rights defenders and climate activists and students in exile/ in the diaspora, to amplify their voices, networking, and visibility on social media.

Accountability with regards to human rights violations: Speak out for accountability for state violence as a result of the 2018 civil unrest, which led to a death toll in the hundreds, particularly at international fora, such as IACHR, UN, and regional convenings. Advocate for the protection of collective Indigenous and Afro-descendent

communities under attack and demand prompt, impartial investigations. Advocate for the release of political prisoners in line with the IACHR ruling.

Systemic discrimination and rule of law: Respect the 1987 Political Constitution and in particular the collective rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Ensure that in the event of climate-related humanitarian crises, the differential needs of Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities are taken into consideration:

- Call for the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities in Nicaragua.
- Resource and amplifying voices of women's, LGBTQI+, Indigenous and Afro-descendent and disability rights defenders inside Nicaragua and in the diaspora.
- Support the participation and leadership of young women, including Indigenous, Afro-descendent, and LGBTQI+ people in community-based efforts, territorial governance, networking, and exchange.

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Global Statistics Portals

UN Women	Global Database on Violence Against Women
World Health Organization	Global Database on the Prevalence of Violence Against Women
UN Women	Global Gender Equality Constitutional Database
IPU Parline	Global Data on National Data Parliaments
UN	WPS Security Council Reports
World Bank	Gender Data Portal
World Economic Forum's	Global Gender Gap report/ Index
The Disability Data Portal	The Disability data portal
Disability Evidence Portal	Disability Evidence Portal
Social Development Direct	Disability Inclusion Helpdesk
UN	UN Treaty Body Database
Equaldex	LGBTI Rights in Nicaragua
BTI Transparency Index	Nicaragua Country Report 2024
Freedom in the World	Nicaragua
Gender Equality Index 2024	Nicaragua
UNDP 2022	Human Development Index
World Bank 2024	Nicaragua Gender Landscape
ILO 2024	ILO Modelled Estimates and Projections database (ILOEST)
UN Women	Women Count Nicaragua