

TACKLING VIOLENCE, BUILDING PEACE



Christian Aid partner Centro Internacional para Investigaciones en Derechos Humanos (CIIDH) aims to restore the dignity of people who suffered human rights violations during Guatemala's armed conflict. CIIDH supports the National Movement of Victims to demand legislation that would create a national commission for the victims of forced disappearance and other forms of disappearance. In this picture, the relatives of victims gather in front of the National Congress in Guatemala, to support the proposal for the new law.

Introduction

Violence is an obstacle to development in Central America and a significant cause of poverty. The region has high rates of crime and violence, predominantly driven by drug trafficking, youth violence and gangs, and the widespread availability of firearms.

Gender-based violence and 'femicide' are also prevalent in Central America. Meanwhile, young people are often the victims of targeted acts of murder, and as a group they are stigmatised, excluded from development opportunities and denied their essential rights to education and employment: this is due to a perception that all young people are involved in violent gangs.

Our work to tackle violence and build peace

Christian Aid works to protect vulnerable people from violence, to identify and challenge its causes and to transform conflict through peaceful methods.

Our programme supports violence prevention and human rights initiatives, including the promotion of dialogue between citizens, governments and the private sector.

These initiatives give people the power to demand more inclusive policies and practices from the state and businesses. We also aim to secure a stronger guarantee that human rights will be respected, particularly for women and young people.

Our partners operate on two levels to protect the rights of the most vulnerable people: they monitor the human rights situation on the ground and also review the legal institutional framework for evidence of any abuse or denial of these rights. This information is used to lobby for change and for the creation of a legal framework that upholds human rights. Partners also work with other organisations at local and national level, supporting them in their fight for rights and in their efforts to tackle violence.

In Europe, Christian Aid supports the Central America Advocacy Programme (PICA) to influence European Union institutions to take a more proactive role in dialogue on the defence of human rights in Central America.

Christian Aid's work places special emphasis on women and young people. An important aspect of our programme is the prevention of violence against women and girls by the

empowering of groups, including men and boys and faith-based leaders. We support civil society organisations to demand the implementation of laws and policies, and the consolidation of institutions that address violence against women.

The work undertaken with young people includes building trust within their communities and gaining support from local municipal authorities, so that young people are recognised as valid spokespeople and are guaranteed participation in civic spaces.

Our partners in this work

Christian Aid supports human rights organisations such as Fespad in El Salvador and Centro Internacional para Investigaciones en Derechos Humanos

(CIIDH) in Guatemala, and works through DanChurchAid in Honduras. In Nicaragua, we work with Centro de Prevención de Violencia (Ceprev) and Mesa de Equidad de Género. We also work with the youth organisation Caja Lúdica in Guatemala.

Some of our partners monitor human rights and produce reports on the situation through participative processes. Others work with grassroots organisations and communities on the development of local initiatives to promote youth participation or to prevent violence, including against women. All of our partners are influencing the policies and practices of public institutions, to address and transform the causes of violence.

Taking back the streets

For Christian Aid partner Caja Lúdica, the levels of criminalisation and stigmatisation of young people in Guatemala are of grave concern. It believes young people are vulnerable on the streets and are not taken seriously when they try to share their opinions.

Caja Lúdica is trying to change attitudes towards young people through art and culture. In recent years, youth groups in several departments in Guatemala have organised annual cultural events in a bid to draw attention to the plight of young people and 'take the streets back' from the gangs.

In Villa Nueva, Peronia Adolescente and JOVI (Jóvenes por la Vida) organised No Violence Against Children Day, as well as a youth week, an arts festival and a campaign to raise awareness of cultural and ethnic differences.



Caja Lúdica also organises carnival parades – featuring stilt-walkers, jugglers, monocyclists, dancers and musicians – as part of its work with 'at risk' young people, helping them to reclaim their neighbourhoods from criminal gangs. A few weeks after parades have taken place, some of the performers return to a community and offer other young people the chance to sign up to workshops to learn the same skills.

Contact us

Christian Aid Central America
Club Terraza 2 cuadras al Oeste,
2 cuadras al Sur, 75vrs,
al Oeste. Villa Fontana,
Casa Número 150, Managua, Nicaragua

T: +505 2278 6010

E: centralamerica-info@christian-aid.org

W: christianaid.org.uk/americas

Christian Aid is a member of the

actalliance