

Gender justice

Christian Aid works for a world of gender justice and equity in which neither women nor men, nor any other gender identity of any age, ability, sexuality, sexual orientation, ethnicity or caste, are excluded, marginalised, poor or discriminated against, but live in dignity.

Our work

Christian Aid has long-standing strengths in gender justice and equity programming, in research, development and innovation. Our approaches address gender as a key theme of our work in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, in the Middle East region, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Colombia, Honduras, Haiti/Dominican Republic.

Gender justice remains elusive, with many countries even witnessing a reversal or rollback due to the rise in religious fundamentalism, anti-gender agendas and shrinking civic spaces which stifle women's and feminist movements.

Rooted in unequal power relations, gender injustice violates human rights, constrains choice and agency and impacts upon people's ability to participate in and benefit from development and humanitarian relief. Without just, equitable relationships between people of all genders, ages and diversities, resilient and thriving societies cannot exist.

For Christian Aid, gender justice means all people, irrespective of gender, are equally valued and empowered to pursue their human rights and fundamental freedoms and have an equitable, active and influential say in decisions affecting their lives. It means power relations, access and control over resources, business and market activity and regulation are more gender equitable, with sustainable benefits for all.

We recognise gender is a spectrum, including transgender and intersex people and others identifying outside these definitions. We are building a more inclusive world where identity is no longer a barrier.

Christian Aid works with people of all genders – including men and boys as allies – to transform notions of toxic masculinity. We seek to harness the power of progressive faith-based organisations to challenge gender power inequalities and combat gender-based violence (GBV).

Gender justice has been at the heart of Christian Aid's work for many years. It is both a standalone focus and a cross-cutting, integrated approach across our other three thematic priorities.

Through a gender transformative approach, we tackle the root causes in a targeted, sustainable



The Lusako cooperative in Karonga District, Northern Malawi is a combination of small community groups led by women. They were trained by Christian Aid and supported to secure loans, to start and expand their businesses.

way, challenging patriarchy and promoting the empowerment of women and girls across all themes.

For example, within our **Climate adaptation and resilience thematic priority, we work with marginalised women to create changes at household, community and system levels** – food, markets, financial – to challenge negative gender norms and break down barriers for women's access.

We advocate for the sexual and reproductive health rights of women, girls and other gender minorities, supporting them to articulate their demands and expand their influence over policy. Our work covers sexual coercion and intimate partner violence, education and information, high rates of early and unwanted pregnancy, access to services, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, and a lack of health financing.

Among our many gender justice projects and programmes, in Colombia, Christian Aid partners supported strategic litigation of 72 cases presented to the Special Peace Jurisdiction, representing a landmark development in GBV survivors' access to the transitional justice system and recognition of the prevalence of gender-based and sexual violence during the armed conflict.

For 15 years, Christian Aid has been supporting our Sierra Leone partner **SEND to develop the Kailahun Women in Governance Network** – 41% of councillors in the district are now women. We have also contributed to the passing of gender-progressive land legislation in Sierra Leone.

In El Salvador, our partners have supported transgender people in their legal battle to change their gender identities. In Nigeria and Burkina Faso, faith actors have been mobilised through the **Side by Side platform to advocate for gender justice**.

Across eight countries in Africa, we are working to advance gender-just macroeconomic policymaking in the pandemic recovery context.

Christian Aid is a **gold standard registered FCDO supplier** and has delivered work with **USAID**, the **European Commission**, **United Nations** agencies, the **German government**, **Inter-American Development Bank**, **Irish Aid** and the **Scottish government**, as well as the **Aurora Trust**, the **Mott Foundation**, the **Climate Justice Resilience Fund** and the **European Climate Foundation**.

Strategic objectives

The change we want to see

A world governed by just power relations where women and men, boys and girls in all their diversity, and other at-risk communities facing inequality, are able to realise their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Gender integration: development of organisational excellence on gender-integrated programming

Identify and address gender inequality in all our work and shift power to the most marginalised and excluded women, men and other at-risk communities facing different intersecting inequalities.

- **standalone gender work**

Christian Aid has identified three standalone areas of work on gender justice.

- **Gender-based violence**

Unequal gender norms and exclusionary practices driving GBV are challenged and transformed by strategies grounded in an ecological model addressing structural, societal, cultural and individual factors.

- **Women's economic justice**

Enable marginalised women to assert their economic rights, have increased voice and agency to influence economic decision-making at all levels (household, community, markets and governments) and influence gender-transformative economic policies.

- **Sexual and reproductive health**

Strengthen SRH governance for increased access to services for women and girls in all their diversity and other at-risk communities facing intersecting inequalities.

Combating gender-based violence in Bangladesh

This project supported by [Global Affairs Canada](#) and [UN Women](#) aimed to create an enabling environment where women and girls are free of violence at home, at work and in public spaces, with a focus on raising awareness and sensitising dutybearers such as local administrations, chambers of commerce and industry.

Working with about 3,000 women in the Bogra, Patuakhali and Cumilla areas, the project (May 2020 - December 2022) created a holistic framework of activities to address the underlying causes and drivers of violence, make dutybearers accountable to comply with international and national obligations and promote their equal rights, including in the huge Bangladeshi garment sector.

Christian Aid and its partners [Gram Bikash Sangstha](#), [Aid Comilla](#) and [AVAS](#) worked to set up 100 committees in government offices, chambers of commerce and industry and factories to prevent sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in the workplace. Women were trained in prevention and seeking justice against gender-based violence and conducting women's safety audits.

In Bangladesh, Kakoli Khatun is leading a group of women artisans and entrepreneurs to embrace new technology, revive ancient art forms, craft beautiful beadwork, and make colourful clothing, to sell online.



How we work

Our work consists of humanitarian, development and advocacy programmes. Across all three, localisation is vital, underpinned by principles on how we approach and sustain partnerships.

Humanitarian – meeting the needs of crisis-affected communities and strengthening resilience.

Development – meeting the needs of marginalised communities and tackling the causes of poverty: conflict, climate change and the denial of power. Together with local partners and communities we respond, support and campaign in pursuit of dignity, justice, and equality.

Advocacy – supporting communities to come together to claim power to transform their lives and influencing policymakers to shift power and ensure greater equity, justice and sustainability in systems and structures. Advocacy is at the heart of both our humanitarian and development work: principally around economic justice, climate justice and crisis contexts.

Safeguarding, protection and accountability are key programming elements, vital to the principle of Do No Harm to which Christian Aid is committed.



Mrs Hasinur received food and other essentials at a local aid distribution in Delhi, India as part of Christian Aid's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Flagship programmes

Breaking the Barriers

Reaching over 770,000 people, **Breaking the Barriers** created 2,545 jobs for rural women in 210 new sustainable energy and agro-processing businesses, improving working and living conditions, promoting gender equality and strengthening women's social status.

The US\$7m programme funded by the **European Union** and Christian Aid supporters ran between 2018-22 in Burkina Faso, Malawi, Ethiopia, and Honduras.

It supported women to create and own women-led sustainable energy enterprises in the poorest, most remote off-grid communities, providing training in marketing and distribution of sustainable energy products and technologies, business skills and access to finance through savings and loans groups. It influenced national policy on better access to renewable energy.

Breaking the Barriers won a **Climate Coalition Green Heart Hero Award** for recognising women are central in ensuring meaningful development through sustainable energy.

Collective Action for Adolescent Girls Initiative (CAAGI)

CAAGI worked through faith and community leaders to improve choices and opportunities for girls in Northern Nigeria, aiming to shift inequitable social practices and norms reinforcing gender inequalities around early marriage, access to education and economic empowerment.

With our partners **Gender Awareness Trust** and **Development and Peace Initiative**, we worked with Christian and Muslim leaders, scholars and teachers to develop a faith-based toolkit in local languages to be used to promote girls' rights. The project also established a faith leaders' dialogue forum to advocate for policy change.

Promoting and protecting girls' rights is highly sensitive work. The project came up against deeply entrenched patriarchal beliefs, countering this by training men and boys to be vocal 'gender champions'. There were serious security considerations of active violent extremists too.

Making Agriculture a Business

Making Agriculture a Business improved the livelihoods and economic resilience of women and marginalised groups in Zambia by harnessing the potential of small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs.

Through the US\$1.6 million Scottish Government-funded programme, 4,000 people acquired new business skills, organisational capacity and access to resources and markets. Two hundred self-help groups were set up to conduct training in cooperative awareness and start-up leadership, management and governance, as well as gender, equality and social inclusion.

The project was implemented alongside **DanChurchAid** and **Norwegian Church Aid** in partnership with **Churches Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ)**.

Disaster reduction and society safety

This **ECHO-funded project** was set up to strengthen social protection mechanisms and early warning and early action for vulnerable groups, improving preparation and response to disasters and increasing women's participation in disaster risk management.

In much of northern Nigeria, the voices of women and girls are not heard when issues affecting them are discussed, and their capacity to provide solutions is not recognised. Women are not usually allowed to sit with men in gatherings and even when in the same space, they tend to keep silent.



Through the 12-month US\$1m project, women took on key leadership roles. This includes Hajiya Aisha Abdullah, who was elected chair of the Disaster Management Platform, set-up by the project to provide coordination and technical support on state emergency response plans.

At community level work was done to educate and prepare for emergencies and disasters. Women participated in strategic leadership training and advocacy action plans.

Empowering left-behind minority communities

11% of the population of Bangladesh belong to minority communities and are under-represented in government, including the transgender and Hijra communities.

Hijras are often born male but look and dress in traditionally feminine ways. They face discrimination in every aspect of their lives: healthcare, education, safe living spaces, public transport and constitutional rights.

Our US\$2.9m EU-funded project (2021-24) enables these communities to find opportunities, use their voices and claim their rights. Our partner **Bandhu Social Welfare Society** has been lobbying on behalf of transgender and Hijra communities for seven years, alongside **UNFPA** and **UNICEF**. They achieved a significant victory when comprehensive sexuality education was incorporated in the national curriculum, a first step to sensitising children on gender diversity and ensuring diverse communities are accepted.

Bridging the Gap

This research project (2019-20) explored barriers to women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health and rights in Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. We enhanced our understanding of the political, socio-economic and contextual factors that influence and impede positive outcomes for women and girls, to establish the root causes behind these challenges and inform action to increase public financing for comprehensive services.

Empowering women and girls for gender equality and advancement

In South Omo, Ethiopia, women and girls' vulnerability to gender-based violence is high due to socio-cultural norms, economic dependency, ineffective existing laws and limited services.

Christian Aid's EU-backed project works with 48,900 women and girls to reduce violence, increase access to swift legal services and rehabilitation, participation in decision-making and property rights.

The project strengthens the capacity of justice, health and other government institutions in gender responsive services. Economic empowerment is another focal area.

Agnes Machona and members of Chigumira Communal Garden, Mutoko district Zimbabwe, grow various vegetables in the irrigated communal garden established by Christian Aid. The products are sold to make extra income for their families.

1,600 survivors have formed 80 self-help groups providing business development and leadership training and loans for income-generating activities.

Strengthening pastoralist communities' resilience to climate change

The project aims to enhance the climate resilience and adaptive capacity of communities in two Kenyan counties.

Among the project's achievements is the passing of the Climate Change Fund Act with the active participation of women's groups. It will be instrumental in financing adaptation projects and increasing women and young people's participation and influence in decision-making during county planning and budgeting.

The project has created spaces for more women to get involved and take leadership roles. More than 3,200 women have benefited directly.

Allanando el camino (Paving the way)

Allanando el camino was an 18-month project funded by the **United Nations Peacebuilding Fund**, supporting Colombia's path from transitional justice towards sustainable peace by increasing the influence of women and LGBTQI people in policymaking and development, challenging discrimination and demanding the implementation of the gender provisions of the historic Peace Agreement.

To address the disproportionate impact violence and discrimination has had on Afro and indigenous women and LGBTQI communities in rural Colombia, the US\$1.1m project used memory as a strategic tool to make their experiences of the conflict visible, locally and nationally, denouncing violence and creating solidarity for resistance and peace.

The project – which ran in 2021-22 – equipped women and LGBTQI people with tools and capacity to engage local authorities and promote their visions of peace and co-existence to ensure they have an integral role in shaping Colombia's future. The project also addressed discrimination and barriers to justice by supporting strategic litigation of sexual and gender-based violence cases.

Women role models in rural Sierra Leone

Women in Sierra Leone face severe poverty and discrimination. They provide more than 60% of farm labour for food production, yet men possess greater access to ownership and control of the production, confining women to the margins.

Yet four in five women in rural areas run small-scale businesses, offering a potential route to financial independence. Access to finance and business knowledge holds them back.

Funded by private foundations and individual major donors, our Women's Economic Empowerment and Leadership (WEEL) project is transforming how women do business, giving them more financial control and influence in society.

Working with five partners – including **SEND**, RADA, a telecoms provider and a bank – the programme brought digital banking to remote areas of Sierra Leone for the first time.

Fatmata lives with her husband and three children in a small community in Kailahun district.

Through WEEL she received training on resource mobilisation and business management and, after opening an individual account with her local cooperative credit union, was soon able to access a small loan of SLe 4,000 (approximately US\$190) to help her build a vegetable garden business and generate income for the family.

Fatmata also participated in Gender Model Family training with her husband, which has helped improve their relationship and led to more equal decision-making at home. Her new status and role in her community means she is a role model to other women and an active campaigner for their empowerment and rights.

In Mutoko, Zimbabwe, welding is seen as a venture for men, but women like Jerina and Charity are breaking barriers and striding into the space.

Looking to the future

Christian Aid is embedding a gender transformative approach (GTA) across all thematic priorities.

For example, based on a deep dive on how our climate resilience work delivers social and economic transformation for women facing intersecting vulnerabilities in Bangladesh and Kenya, a programming guidance document is being developed.

Programme guidance on adopting a GTA/feminist approach in our flagship **Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Energy (CCASE)** programme is also in progress. This is being piloted in Sierra Leone with a view to organisation-wide learning. The process will map out and document the key steps in a transformative approach, identify the gender transformational programming objectives and monitor and evaluate changes taking place. A number of learning questions will guide the process.

Learning papers on gender transformative microfinance in Bangladesh, feminist macro-economic policymaking and an audit of key challenges and recommendations to strengthen our gender-based violence work are also in the works. We aim to more deeply explore the effectiveness of sexual and reproductive financing advocacy in achieving access to rights.

Our country programmes and global policy-advocacy teams are encouraged to build partnerships with feminist and women's rights organisations, to help Christian Aid be a stronger advocate in the fight to dismantle patriarchal structures at all levels.

We will also partner with, support and strengthen locally-led women's, feminist and Indigenous people's movements to hold governments and other duty bearers, such as corporates, to account. The mobilisation of impacted communities can effectively push back against regressive, conservative forces.

We will continue to collaborate with key faith partners such as Side by Side and the Act Alliance.



Gender justice

Our vision is a world where everyone has fullness of life; a life lived with dignity, free from poverty and need; where global resources are equitably shared and sustainably used; and where the voice and agency of those living in poverty are fully realised.



In Kurigram, Bangladesh, Kakoli Khatun set up a craft-making business group with other young women who share a strong bond to change their lives through economic development.

About Christian Aid

What we do

Christian Aid provides long-term development support and humanitarian relief worldwide, highlighting suffering, tackling injustice and championing rights.

We believe efforts to end poverty should be led by those people experiencing it. We focus our efforts where poverty is most widespread and the obstacles to ending it most complex.

Christian Aid implemented 275 projects in 2022/23 across 14 countries and two regional programmes, directly reaching 2,960,055 people. We worked with more than 240 implementing partners, spending US\$115m.

2022/23

275 projects

14 countries

2 regional programmes

2,960,055 people

**STANDING
TOGETHER**

**POVERTY
POWER
PROPHETIC
VOICE**

Our strategic framework

Our global strategy Standing Together outlines our approach to eradicating poverty through the 3Ps framework.

Poverty – addressing people's immediate and longer-term needs, and building resilience so those living in poverty are better able to meet their needs in the future.

Power – shifting power to communities, empowering people living in poverty and transforming the structures that keep them poor.

Prophetic voice – joining together with people living in poverty to speak truth to power, build collective agency and support the realisation of their own vision of a just future.

Thematic priorities

Christian Aid's work focuses on four themes: **climate adaptation and resilience, gender justice, governance and rights, and peacebuilding and conflict prevention.**

Many of our projects and programmes are at the intersection of these themes. Climate change puts pressure on resources, which often leads to conflict. Gender justice cuts across all our work, as women experience poverty differently and more deeply than others.

Governments must provide essential services for citizens to realise their rights and live a dignified and fulfilling life in times of peace and stability, but also during conflict or humanitarian crises. Our work on governance and rights is critical for holding duty bearers to account.

Our humanitarian response work is driven by the specificities of each crisis and the needs of the communities. Our approach acknowledges the triple nexus of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work, which ensures longer-term recovery and resilience.

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