

Working in Partnership: delivering value for people

Why partnership?

Delivering humanitarian, development and advocacy programmes through partnership has been integral to Christian Aid's identity since its foundation in 1945. We believe that working with and through partner organisations in developing countries – rather than directly implementing projects ourselves – is more likely to achieve wide-scale, deep, inclusive, lasting change in the lives of poor and marginalised people. Partnership has assumed even greater prominence with the launch of our strategy, *Partnership for Change* (2012-2017).

How does Christian Aid add value?

This paper summarises the findings of external qualitative research, commissioned in early 2015, to understand how our approach adds value and how it has evolved in the context of a changing external environment.

The study, conducted in Kenya, Colombia, and the Middle East, highlighted Christian Aid's key strength of adapting its role to local contexts. Our partnership approach adds value in at least five distinct areas:

1. We empower civil society.
2. We broker multi-stakeholder coalitions.
3. We leverage resources.
4. We enhance advocacy.
5. We offer protection to partners in insecure environments.

A validation exercise with other country programmes found that sharing knowledge, good practice and innovation across global programmes was an additional value.

'With other organisations we work for donors, but with Christian Aid we're working together'

1. Empowering civil society for lasting change: local ownership, sustainable projects

Christian Aid ensures that national and community-level civil society organisations, which understand local priorities and perspectives, control their own agendas and are more than channels for aid delivery. We support them to drive the changes marginalised people want. Partners said our approach to developing their technical and organisational capacity, which almost always goes beyond project funding, enables them to grow as organisations. This leads to greater sustainability. In Kenya, Colombia and the Middle East, partners said our capacity development helps them become strong, vocal influencers of the political and development agendas in their own countries. Results are lasting because partners continue their work long after external support ends.

On the ground: Kenyan partners said they benefited from support in conducting gender and power analyses and emphasised the relevance of the Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment approach that Christian Aid introduced in its programming. In an individual interview (19 May 2015), a Middle East partner also said Christian Aid views partners as more than channels for aid delivery because 'social change needs strong organisations, not only strong projects'.

2. Brokering multi-stakeholder coalitions: enabling cooperation

Christian Aid convinces potential collaborators that it is in their interests to work together. This research identified two types of coalition brokering: advocacy coalitions (in Colombia and the Middle East); and multi-stakeholder coalitions for innovative development solutions (in Kenya).

On the ground: Christian Aid Colombia has a diverse set of complementary partners, from those that provide civilian protection, enabling work in otherwise inaccessible places, to specialised human rights lawyers, tackling root causes of displacement. National and international advocacy organisations and networks pressure national governments to make structural changes and ensure the international community hears about human rights violations.

Christian Aid Kenya is increasingly working with a range of 'new' actors (including the government and private sector) to find innovative solutions to complex problems. Its country presence provides Christian Aid with excellent knowledge of local context, enabling us to bring stakeholders together; provide a helicopter view; manage information flows within coalitions; and act as a bridge between local and international levels.

3. Leveraging resources: boosting funding for partners

Christian Aid can attract additional resources due to the strategic investment of core funds, for example, through matched funding. Through its project management expertise and reputation, Christian Aid accesses funding for partners that they could not have accessed themselves. Christian Aid's control over considerable numbers of unrestricted funds enables country programmes to develop and test innovative approaches, and to scale up interventions.

'Core funding helps us to reach the most marginalised people'

On the ground: In a health project in Kenya, funding managed by Christian Aid enabled the county government to invest significantly in renovating health facilities serving remote villages, achieving long-term staffing of health workers and provision of medical supplies. In the Middle East, Christian Aid acts as a fundraising adviser to local partners and helps them develop fundraising skills. In a focus group discussion (20 May 2015), partners expressed their appreciation of Christian Aid's advisory role.

4. Enhancing advocacy: brokering links and amplifying voices

In Colombia and the Middle East, Christian Aid's London headquarters helps broker global relationships, providing access to international forums, and amplifying partners' messages.

On the ground: Christian Aid Colombia, which has a country-based team and sound knowledge of the political context, is directly involved in in-country advocacy in coordination with partners. It makes use of its international networks to bring partners and community issues to international political arenas where the Colombian government is more sensitive to critique

than it is at a national level. Christian Aid Colombia also coordinates the advocacy efforts of partners for shared analysis of problems, forging links between partners and helping them access embassies and high-level state authorities. It ensures the international community is informed and mobilised, and translates international issues into the Colombian context, introducing advocacy topics such as tax justice.

Working with local partners and communities gives Christian Aid the credibility and legitimacy to be an active and respected advocate for change in international environments. During the Gaza conflict in 2014, Christian Aid was able to use crucial information from partners on both sides of the conflict to lobby the UK Government to condemn Israel's involvement in the killing of Palestinian civilians.

5. Protecting civil society: safeguarding human rights and expressing solidarity

In Colombia, paramilitary groups, criminal gangs, state agents and guerrillas violate human rights and are responsible for abducting, threatening, intimidating and murdering activists and civil society leaders. Christian Aid functions as the local eyes and ears of the international community, taking an active political stance against human rights violations and speaking out to the Colombian government. Christian Aid's role is possible because of its local presence and extensive knowledge of the political reality in Colombia. By protecting local civil society partners, Christian Aid enables them to address the political root causes of human rights violations and achieve change.

'In case of conflict, development takes twice as long, therefore it is important to have long-term relationships in order to build trust'

On the ground: According to partners, a big difference between Christian Aid Colombia and other NGOs is that Christian Aid is willing to visit complicated, inaccessible zones, where extensive preparation is needed for security purposes. This expresses solidarity and commitment, which are needed for gaining trust.

To find out more, you can download the *Value for People* research report from christianaid.org.uk