

TACKLING VIOLENCE, BUILDING PEACE CHRISTIAN AID COLOMBIA

POVERTY

Strategy 2012–17



We believe that at the root of poverty is a lack of power – the power to have your say and be heard, or to know your rights and demand them



Christian Aid/Matt Gonzalez-Noda

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Christian Aid is an international organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice.

We have an integrated approach to poverty eradication, working worldwide on humanitarian relief, long-term development, specific advocacy issues and campaigns to expose the scandal of poverty by challenging and changing systems and institutions that favour the rich and powerful over the poor and marginalised.

From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities, supporting projects on the basis of need, not religion, ethnicity or nationality.

We work with, and through, partners including civil society organisations (CSOs), research institutions, churches, faith groups and social movements, as well as governments, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

In 2011/12, Christian Aid gave grants to 578 partner organisations across Africa, Asia and the Middle East and Latin America and the Caribbean. Our total income was £95.5m (Colombian \$256bn), including £36.7m (Colombian \$98.3bn) in funding from governments and other institutions.

OUR NEW GLOBAL STRATEGY

At Christian Aid, we believe human action is responsible for the underlying causes of poverty, and that when people work together, the world can be changed. This thinking has framed our new corporate strategy, *Partnership for Change*.

We believe that at the root of poverty is a lack of power – the power to have your say and be heard, or to know your rights and demand them. It is clear to us that poverty can be eradicated only through helping people secure power to help themselves. Christian Aid has identified five areas on which to focus our work:

- 1. Power to change institutions**
We want to see all people having the power to influence institutions – so that the decisions affecting their lives are made responsibly and fairly.
- 2. The right to essential services**
We want to see all people able to fulfil their right to access the services essential for a healthy, secure life.
- 3. Fair shares in a constrained world**
We want to see all people have a fair and sustainable share of the world's resources.
- 4. Equality for all**
We want to see a more inclusive world where identity – gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, class and sexual orientation – is no longer a barrier to equal treatment.
- 5. Tackling violence and building peace**
We want to see vulnerable people protected from violence and living in peace.

Our strategy for Colombia is closely aligned with *Partnership for Change*.

A COUNTRY WHERE VIOLENCE IS POWER

In Colombia, violence is the extreme expression of power in a polarised society. Wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of elites that have dominated politics, monopolised resources, and used the apparatus of the state to repress social movements, trade unions, political opposition and other movements seeking to challenge the balance of power.

More than 70,000 civilians have been killed or have disappeared in Colombia in the past 20 years, and the country has more internally displaced people than anywhere else on earth. The widespread and systematic human rights violations are directly linked to the extremely unequal distribution of land, power and wealth. The government has adopted measures to protect victims of human rights violations and return land to internally displaced people. But, in practice, the perpetrators of very serious human rights violations continue to act with impunity and, as of February 2013, almost no land has been returned under the new land restitution law.

All actors in the armed conflict – guerrilla, paramilitary and armed forces – commit gross and systematic violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law. Human rights defenders, community leaders and trade unionists are witnessing an increasing number of attacks, threats and false and illegal prosecutions. Women human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable because of their gender and role as caretakers and because there is a tendency to underestimate the risk to which women are subject. On all sides of Colombia's armed conflict, sexual violence is used as a strategy of war and terror with almost total impunity.

In August 2012, the government announced the initiation of peace negotiations with the guerrillas, the FARC, the first attempt in 10 years. Christian Aid believes a lasting and sustainable peace can be achieved only through negotiations, so we welcome this initiative as a positive step and an opportunity to tackle the core structural causes of the armed and social conflict in Colombia. These include the concentration of land and power, inequality, widespread and systematic human rights violations and high levels of impunity. But the process is unlikely, at least in the short term, to bring an end to the widespread violence. Any peace negotiations must be inclusive, a strong voice should be given to the victims of the armed conflict, especially women, indigenous people, Afro-Colombian communities and marginalised rural communities, and conditions should be guaranteed for opinions to be expressed without stigmatisation. For a peace agreement to truly bring about profound change, the agreement must be translated into public policies.

Colombia's tax system does not address inequality. Recent reforms focused instead on benefiting the private sector. A World Bank study concluded that the tax system and the system of monetary transfers do not reduce inequality in Colombia, which remains the most unequal country in Latin America and is ranked fourth in the world.

Despite being a middle-income country, one in three Colombians lives in poverty. Poverty is especially widespread in rural communities and particularly affects the estimated 4 to 5.5 million internally displaced people. Among internally displaced people, 94 per cent live in poverty, 77 per cent in extreme poverty and about half say they suffer from hunger.

Politically, the current government aims to assume a stronger role both regionally and globally and improve Colombia's image abroad. Drug trafficking, fuelled by international demand, plays an important role in the dynamics of Colombia's violence and also strongly influences US foreign policy towards the country.

Economic policies, including tax exemptions, are attracting foreign investment in sectors prioritised by the government such as agricultural exports and mining. Dependency on commodity exports makes the Colombian economy highly vulnerable to the volatility of world commodity prices. Free trade agreements with the US, Canada and the European Union have the potential to destroy local markets and the incomes of poor people, including vulnerable groups Christian Aid supports, such as women and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.



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CHRISTIAN AID IN COLOMBIA

Christian Aid has worked in Colombia since the 1980s and in 1995 opened an office in Bogotá in response to partners' requests for protection and our greater engagement in advocacy in-country. The programme applies a rights-based approach and has traditionally focused on governance issues in synergy with livelihood projects.

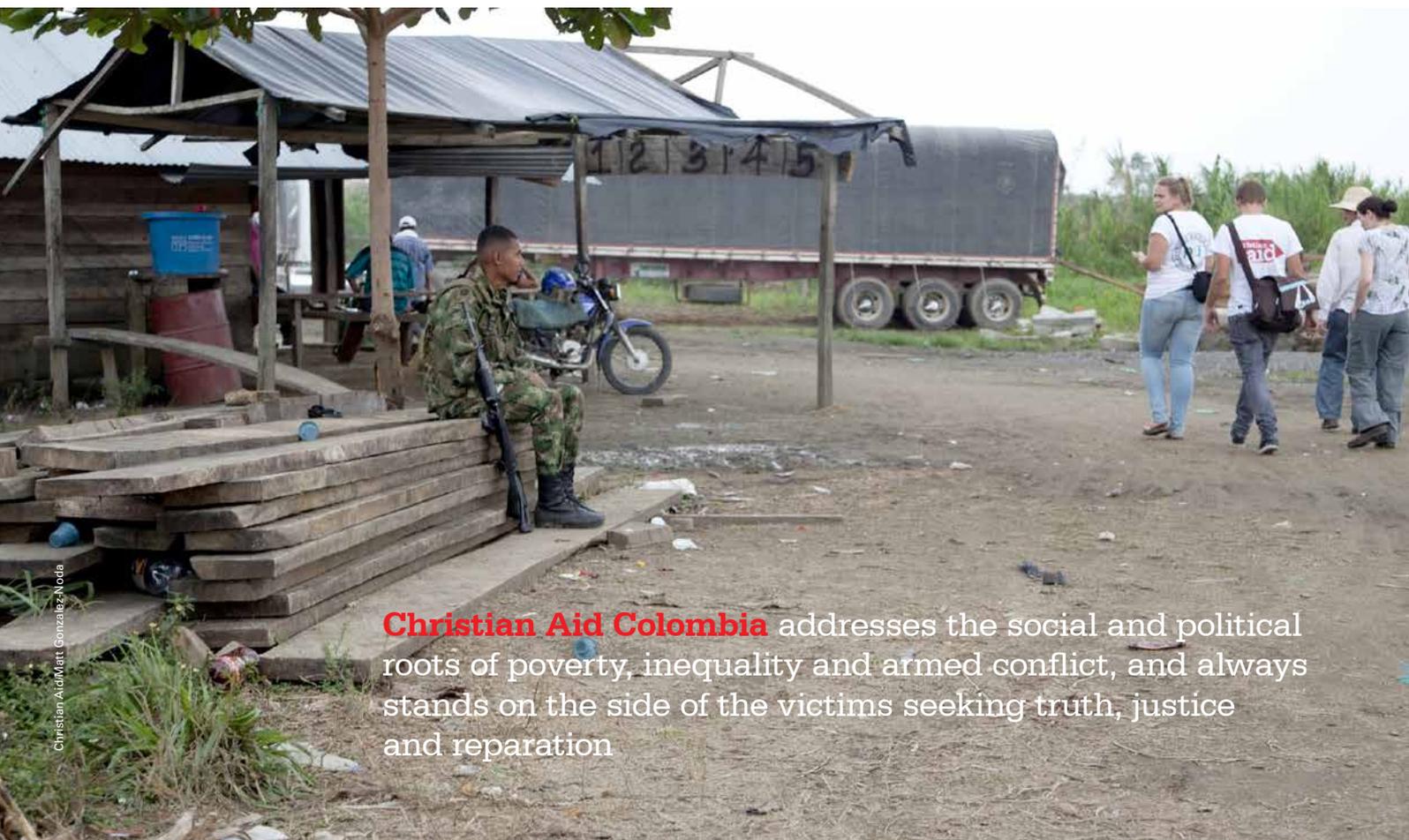
Our essential mission is to expose structural and physical violence and challenge the systems that prevent the fulfilment of human rights for all. We are radical in the sense that we speak out alongside our partners against these unjust systems. Our programme focuses on the closely interlinked issues of land and territory, impunity, vulnerable communities and human rights defenders. Tax justice also forms an integral part of our programme, complementing the other components by proactively advocating for a tax system that addresses inequality by making the rich pay more and the poor less.

Christian Aid's distinctive contribution comes from our particular way of working with partners, our strong partner portfolio and our expertise and experience in advocacy on human rights and land issues. Our partnerships are based on mutual long-term commitments, because achieving big change requires time and commitment, and political accompaniment, because the solutions to Colombia's problems are political in nature. Christian Aid promotes international engagement in Colombia and synergies between national and international advocacy work. Our current partners are among the most important organisations in the social movement and have a permanent presence in key regions and strong links with local communities.

Our programme has built alternatives to the dominant development model in the context of armed and social conflict. Displaced communities have been able to return to their territory, protect themselves and hold the government accountable for its obligation to uphold the rule of law and protect its citizens from human rights violations. Human rights defenders in Colombia have received international support and protection measures, enabling them to continue working for victims. Our partners have achieved important results in their fight against impunity.

We have facilitated international missions to and from Colombia that helped build solidarity and mobilised international pressure to effectively address the human rights situation. Christian Aid Colombia is recognised as a pioneer on human rights and land issues. The programme has worked to ensure that the international community understands why communities are struggling for their rights and why it is important to support their cause, enable them to propose change and determine their own future. We will continue to speak out with our partners to support civil society initiatives, establish platforms for dialogue with authorities and change structures that perpetuate violence, inequality and human suffering.

Christian Aid's Colombia programme is funded by our own resources raised by supporters in the UK and Ireland, by individual donors and foundations and by institutional donors. Irish Aid has traditionally been and continues to be a major donor of the programme.



Christian Aid Colombia addresses the social and political roots of poverty, inequality and armed conflict, and always stands on the side of the victims seeking truth, justice and reparation

THE CHANGE WE SEEK





'Christian Aid has lent their name and their identity to bring attention to communities we accompany. Within Humanitarian Zones you see the Christian Aid logo and it sends a message that, if you target these communities, if you target the Justice and Peace Commission, which accompany them, then you are also taking on Christian Aid'

Abilio Peña, Justice and Peace Commission

OUR STRATEGY FOR COLOMBIA

Our Colombia programme brings together four of Christian Aid's global strategic goals.

Tackling violence, building peace – Above all, we will work to build peace in communities where violence has shattered lives for decades and people still live in fear and at risk. We will help to protect vulnerable people from violence, identify and challenge its causes, strengthen communities to hold the state accountable and make it more responsive to civil society demands and transform conflict peacefully.

Power to change institutions – Our work to help communities gain lasting legal rights to and control over their land aims to improve public policies and ensure they effectively protect the rights of displaced communities, communities at risk of forced displacement and returned communities (Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, peasants). We will join in building a worldwide movement of people working in solidarity to demand that governments and other institutions share power with those they serve in ways that are just, accountable and inclusive.

Fair shares in a constrained world – The fight for land is also a fight for resources, and natural resources are at the heart of the conflict in Colombia. Rural communities have a far smaller environmental

footprint than the large-scale landowners who use it, for example, for monoculture crops, cattle or mining. We will work to transform unjust and unsustainable economic policies and practices so that poor and vulnerable people can have thriving livelihoods, and can face disasters more effectively while protecting the natural resources on which all our futures depend.

Equality for all – The situation in Colombia demonstrates that some people are given more importance than others. The voices of the poor and marginalised get lost in favour of the rich and powerful. Gender, ethnicity and class are at the heart of the problems we and our partners seek to address. We will help to reduce structural and gender-based inequality and create a more inclusive world, where identity – gender, ethnicity, religion, class and sexual orientation – is no longer a barrier to equal treatment.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Colombia strategy is built on two main objectives and will continue to focus on Magdalena Medio/Catatumbo, Chocó/Urabá and Bogotá/Cundinamarca, strategic regions in terms of natural resources and deeply affected by conflict and internal displacement. This is where the programme has built knowledge and important contacts and demonstrated sustainable impact.

Objective 1 – To strengthen communities’ resilience and capacity to build their future and claim their rights, especially rights related to land and territory.

Strengthening communities’ resilience is crucial for them to remain on or return to their land and rebuild thriving livelihoods. We will work for sustainable change by increasing their capacity, as right holders, to claim and defend their rights in the face of violence and strong external interests in their land.

Our goals:

communities have remained on, returned to or recovered land and have peaceful and sustainable alternatives to armed conflict, violence and other threats to their livelihoods

communities and partners are engaging with power holders (the government, state authorities and the international community) on issues of land and territory and on economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, including tax justice.

Objective 2 – To hold the state accountable, making it more responsive to civil society and protecting human rights defenders and communities.

As duty bearer, the state will be held accountable in specific emblematic human rights cases, which will provide valuable jurisprudence and influence national human rights policies and practices.

Our goals:

the state fulfils its legal obligation to uphold the rule of law in cases defended by partners on land, civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights

human rights defenders and communities have been protected through awareness raising, advocacy and litigation, and are able to maintain the scope and reach of their work.

Our Colombia strategy is an integrated whole in which different goals and actions are complementary and create synergy. The programme’s work with communities feeds into its advocacy work by bringing in new voices and perspectives. Advocacy work helps us address human rights violations at community level, identify their root causes, and make recommendations for appropriate public policies, while also creating leverage for legal actions by raising awareness and building political pressure.

Our protection work underpins the programme by allowing human rights defenders and communities to maintain the scope and reach of their work. Supporting community initiatives on food production, land use and income generation creates resilience and makes possible the continuing political and legal struggle for their rights.

No time for war

‘They say that I am a guerrilla, but I have had eight children and 41 grandchildren. Do they think I have time to make war?’

Ligia María Chaverra is one of the most respected and recognised leaders of the Afro-Colombian community in the Curvaradó basin.

With Christian Aid partner the Justice and Peace Commission she has spoken at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on behalf of her people and fights tirelessly for them to have their land and to live in peace. She lives in a Humanitarian Zone where weapons are not allowed. She cannot leave the zone unaccompanied because of threats against her.

‘If they kill me because I speak the truth, there is nothing I can do.’



OUR PARTNERS IN COLOMBIA

ABColumbia

Corporación Cactus

Cedetrabajo (Centro de Estudios del Trabajo)

Coordinación Colombia Europa Estados Unidos (CCEEU)

Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR)

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados Luis Carlos Perez (CCALCP)

Corambiente (Corporación Buen Ambiente)

Diálogo Inter-Agencial en Colombia (DIAL)

Oficina Internacional de los Derechos Humanos Acción Colombia (OIDHACO)

Pastoral Social Diócesis de Quibdó

Peace Brigades International (PBI)

Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio

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Front-cover photo: To protect themselves from violence and stand up for their rights, communities have established Humanitarian Zones, to which those bearing arms are denied entry. These zones are based on the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants under International Humanitarian Law and are recognised by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Christian Aid/Matt Gonzalez-Noda

Christian Aid is a member of the

actalliance



Christian Aid is a member of ACT – an alliance of more than 130 churches and related organisations that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development – giving us the ability to respond quickly and easily to emergencies the world over.

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Northern Ireland charity number XR94639 Company number NI059154
Republic of Ireland charity number CHY 6998 Company number 426928

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