

Objective:

From violence to peace

El Salvador - Supported by our partner FESPAD, poetry teacher Jorge Alberto Ramirez helps young women with a background in gang culture to express themselves and come to terms with their experiences.



From violence to peace

We help to protect those most at risk of violence, identify and challenge its causes, and transform conflict peacefully.

What we want to achieve:

- Those most at risk of violence are safe, secure and protected, and are more resilient.
- The risk of gender-based violence is reduced, survivors receive adequate support, and women, men and institutions are working to change the conditions which lead to gender-based violence.
- Communities we support feel empowered to successfully challenge the key drivers of violence. Efforts are made to hold perpetrators to account but also inspire them to rehabilitate, and inclusive peace-building initiatives at all levels transform violence into lasting peace, justice and security.

Highlights

Our work to support the shift from violence to peace covers 18 country programmes across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. When we work on peace, we seek to target the root causes of violence; we want to engage with national peace and reconciliation processes. We aim to make sure that humanitarian interventions are sensitive to conflict, and we seek to help communities in tackling gender-based violence.

Last year, we effectively engaged authorities on violence reduction at regional and national levels. Partners were instrumental in creating an environment where peace was prioritised and role models, such as faith leaders and human rights activists, were supported to challenge the status quo. We saw this in the role of civil society organisations, both in the peace process in Colombia, and in working for safer communities in Central America, as well as the intervention of Zimbabwe's church leaders.

Other partners in Zimbabwe have successfully engaged with state institutions in the cause of civil and political rights. And we continue to support work for peaceful and just outcomes in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (loPT), through the international forum of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Building peace and stability through institutions

In **Zimbabwe**, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) has invited our partner Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) to join a working group on civil and political rights. This is the first time ZPP has been given such a role, allowing it to discuss issues such as the framework for police arrest, custody and pre-trial detention, and to receive feedback from ZHRC on cases referred to it. ZPP has also raised questions to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission on reports of voter intimidation.

ZPP is working with leaders on peace pledges, for communities to live without hate language or violence

ZPP also works to promote peace within communities. Following its work, traditional, community and national leaders in Chilonga, Chiredzi signed a peace pledge to live in harmony without hate language or violence and with tolerance for diverse opinions. This is the first community in which ZPP has worked on such a pledge, and the strategy will be rolled out to other peace structures.

In 2017 the 26 bishops and heads of churches of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches – a Christian Aid partner – issued a plea for calm and peace during the tension that followed the deposition of Robert Mugabe. This was one of the few occasions, in recent years, that the church had spoken out on issues of national concern. The council also signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission to lead community peace and reconciliation activities as part of a church and civil society collaboration.

In **loPt**, progress towards accountability is evident in the advancement of the ICC's preliminary investigation into

alleged violations of international humanitarian law by all parties since 2014. This was despite pressure to silence and discredit organisations contributing to the process.

In 2017, partners submitted substantive communication to the prosecutor of the court, detailing the long-term, systematic undermining of Palestinian rights that are consequences of the Israeli occupation. This provided detailed evidence to the process and, in so doing, strengthens international law. This has implications for accountability by supporting the process whereby the ICC can open criminal investigations into violations on both sides of the conflict. Partners AI Haq and PCHR played a key role in this process.

In Colombia, women were elected to senior positions in the post-conflict peace structures

Addressing violence against particular groups

In **Colombia**, women were elected to senior positions in the post-conflict peace structures, and the courts advanced the interests of women affected by conflict violence. Our partners had strongly advocated that women and human rights defenders should have key positions in the new transitional justice system.

In **Guatemala** the National Commission for Children and Adolescents, made up of public institutions and civil society organisations, updated the Public Policy of Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (2017-2032). The National Congress approved the policy after engagement from our partner Caja Ludica, which had lobbied for the policy to focus on youth protection.

In **El Salvador**, the Government showed political will to address violence by reviewing the Safe El Salvador Plan and committing to taking steps on community safety in deprived urban areas. This followed pressure from Christian Aid partner FESPAD – an NGO promoting human rights and fairness in the justice system – which consistently lobbied for the full implementation of the Safe El Salvador Plan and for community safety to be prioritised.

Our work has led to increased resources to tackle gender-based violence in El Salvador and Guatemala. Partners ensured that women from Guatemala's ethnic minorities who experienced gender-based violence had access to support services. However, achieving gender equality takes time, and challenges the assumptions of partners as well as beneficiaries.

Challenges and learning - navigating the uncertainties of conflict

In different countries, we are strengthening our understanding of what it takes to build peace, and to support partners to adapt appropriate strategies. In some places, this means using theatre and the arts to promote peace, in others greater advocacy and political engagement, or a combination of both. If the context changes, our analysis and strategies also change.

For example, the context has changed in Zimbabwe and Angola, owing to recent political changes. This presents new opportunities for peace building, but necessitates renewed contextual analysis to consider what can be pursued in the new political dynamic.

In Colombia, significant developments in the peace process included the beginning of talks with the National Liberation Army. Despite this very positive development, violence against human rights defenders continued at alarming rates. Managing and mitigating these attacks, by supporting partners on protection work, continues to be a major area of focus.

In Central America, gang violence continues to be a threat. Coordination with authorities is also difficult in some areas because of their lack of control. We have worked with partners to analyse the situation, and to develop plans and protocols to help them protect themselves and beneficiaries.

Also see case study on p38 for further information.