

**Keeping Hope Alive**

**Christian Aid's  
work on peace**

**Impact Study 2019**



**christian  
aid**

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Christian Aid exists to create a world where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of their dignity and lets injustice thrive. But together we have the power to transform lives.

We are a global movement of people, churches and local organisations who passionately champion dignity, equality and justice in 37 countries worldwide. We are the changemakers, the peacemakers, the mighty of heart.

We provide urgent, practical help in times of crisis and beyond. We seek to eradicate extreme poverty by tackling its root causes. Together with people living in poverty, we amplify our voices to speak truth to power and create lasting change.

Everyone is equal in the sight of God. For over 70 years this has inspired us to stand together in solidarity with our global neighbours, of all faiths and none.

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## Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
The challenges we face	8
<b>Our approach to building peace</b>	<b>9</b>
Our peacebuilding strategy	9
<b>Less vulnerability and more safety, security and resilience</b>	<b>11</b>
What we do	11
Our impact	11
<b>Preventing gender-based violence</b>	<b>16</b>
What we do	16
Our impact	16
<b>Supporting local actors working on peace and justice</b>	<b>19</b>
What we do	19
Our impact	19
<b>Lessons learned</b>	<b>24</b>
Multiple and interconnecting kinds of violence	24
Faith actors can be a powerful tool for peace	26
Peace requires fostering relationships of trust	28
Work on peace needs to go hand in hand with work on justice, accountability and human rights	30
Peacebuilding is a contested space	31
<b>Looking forward</b>	<b>33</b>

**Cover:** Women work together in a community vegetable garden in Dong Boma, Jonglei State. Most of these villagers have only recently returned home after being displaced by the conflict in 2013. Christian Aid's partner Lutheran World Federation is helping them restart their lives.

Photographs: cover, p7, p20: Christian Aid/Paul Jeffrey; p13, p14, p26: Christian Aid; p22: Christian Aid/M Gonzalez-Noda; p27: Christian Aid/Paul Plaza; p29: Christian Aid/Heidi Levine; p31: Christian Aid/Maurico Morales.

## List of Acronyms

<b>ADESJU</b>	Asociación Para el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Juventud
<b>CDH</b>	Centre for Human Development
<b>CIJP</b>	Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>FESPAD</b>	Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho
<b>GGM</b>	Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres
<b>HARD</b>	Hope Agency for Relief and Development
<b>IoPt</b>	Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory
<b>ORMUSA</b>	Organización de Mujeres Salvadoreñas por la Paz
<b>PVCA</b>	Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
<b>SSCC</b>	South Sudan Council of Churches
<b>WDP</b>	Women's Development Programme

## Foreword

In 2016, more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time in nearly 30 years. If current trends persist, by 2030 – the horizon set by the Sustainable Development Goals – more than half of the world's poor will be living in countries affected by high levels of violence.<sup>1</sup> Much of this violence is due to recurring violence and protracted conflicts. It is estimated that 135 different countries have experienced conflict recurrence – a pattern that is deepening.<sup>2</sup> Conflicts resume when issues and grievances are unresolved, and hostilities may flare up again or transform into new types of violence. This century, there are more hostilities recurring than new ones starting, demonstrating the fragility of peace in the aftermath of conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Without an explicit focus on peace, there can be no sustainable development. The failure to address violence and conflict has profound consequences. In 2017, up to \$14.3 trillion was being spent for violence containment globally.<sup>4</sup> The impact of human rights violations in these contexts of violence is immeasurable.

Through Christian Aid's work in providing humanitarian assistance and long-term development support, it has become clear that we cannot ignore the reality of violence. Peace and justice matter to us as a faith-based organisation and we seek to respond to real challenges of building peace with integrity, respect, courage and hope. This Impact Study is part of our story of this work.

*From Violence to Peace*, our peacebuilding programme, lays down our hopeful vision that a more peaceful reality free from poverty, violence and injustice is possible. We stand in solidarity with our local partners – households, community organisations and local leadership who live through conflict and violence first hand. We recognise we cannot work alone. We will seek to collaborate, building on decades of work by churches on peace and justice. We will speak truth to power.

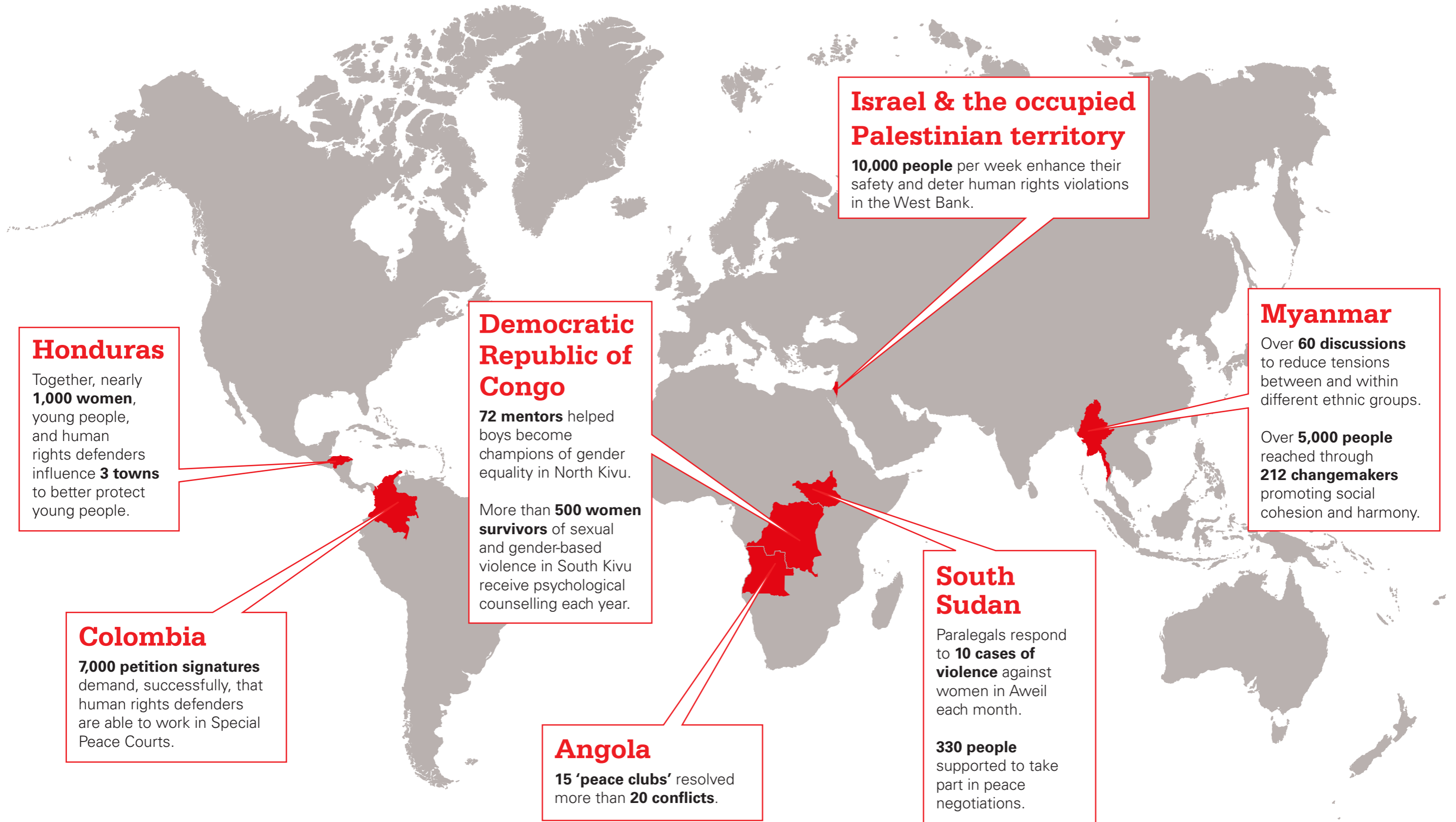
We want governments, faith institutions and communities to want and work for peace in their societies and to keep hope alive.

**Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, Chief Executive, Christian Aid**



# Snapshot of our work on peace

Our peacebuilding work is in 19 countries across the globe. We support local civil society partners, working locally, nationally and internationally.



## Introduction

Globally, violence is a major cause of poverty, reversing development, wiping out years of development and destroying thriving societies. Around 2 billion people live in countries affected by political and armed conflict. Poverty rates are 20% higher in countries affected by repeated cycles of violence. By 2030, an estimated 46% of the world's poorest people will live in fragile or conflict-affected areas.<sup>5</sup> By the end of 2017, more than 68.5 million people had been displaced from their homes and livelihoods because of conflict and violence.<sup>6</sup> By the end of 2018, around 41.3 million people were estimated to be living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence in 55 countries the highest figure ever recorded.<sup>7</sup>

We cannot ignore the reality of violence. Supporting people's deep aspiration for peace and justice is central to us as a faith-based development and humanitarian organisation. We make our own contribution to peacebuilding, recognising that without a clear focus on peace, there can be no sustainable development. The connection between sustainable development and peace is increasingly recognised in international policy commitments.<sup>8</sup>

Christian Aid's peacebuilding and violence prevention activities stretch across 19 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. We are working on peace in Afghanistan, Angola, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (loPt), Iraq, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria and Zimbabwe.

Over the last seven years, Christian Aid has strengthened its work on violence prevention and peacebuilding, driven by the belief that development organisations have a responsibility to tackle violence and contribute towards lasting peace. Working *around* conflict or *in* conflict settings is not enough. We have a shared responsibility to better ensure the formation of lasting, durable peace, recognising that this will require interventions that actually work *on* the root causes and drivers of violence.

**Below:** A girl carries water in a camp for displaced people on the edge of Juba, the capital of South Sudan.



This has required a shift in our approach. We have worked to understand what it means to work on violence and peace, assessing how we can work specifically on peace and how we can integrate this into our development and humanitarian work. In our broader work, we are more conflict sensitive, particularly in humanitarian settings. We have the experience of our partners to draw upon, many of whom have been working on violence, human rights and peace for years.

This Impact Study sets out Christian Aid's learning to date. It shows our overall approach and understanding of what it means to work on peacebuilding and a snapshot of the impact and scale of our global work. It summarises insights from four detailed case studies and a review of an internal fund. Finally, it sets out our thoughts on how this work will be developed in the future.

Our intention is to share our work and our learnings on taking peacebuilding seriously with our funders, academic partners, non-governmental organisations, policy makers and fellow peace builders across the globe. We hope that our knowledge will be useful in finding ways to be more effective in building peace.

## **The challenges we face**

For the communities and partners Christian Aid works with around the world, violence creates multiple, complex and chronic crises. Faced with the dynamics of violence and its consequences, every day is one of resistance and struggle for those with whom we work.

The impacts of violence are devastating and far reaching. Lives and societies can be torn apart and communities besieged by abusive state security, roaming militias or the threat of gang-related violence. The rule of law, state capacity and political processes may be weak and further eroded by criminality or war economies. Where there have been large-scale human rights abuses by government and non-state actors, responses to violence can be limited. Similarly, when the state is the primary perpetrator of violence, it is harder to work in a systemic and transformative way. In such contexts, addressing the legacy of widespread harms is extremely challenging. Prolonged violence, at whatever scale, increases trauma and deepens social divisions.

In many countries, an end to formal conflict and a return to economic growth have not ended violence. Violent persecution of marginalised groups and gender-based violence have reached epidemic proportions in some places.

Seeking positive change and understanding the impact of violence pose immense challenges.

Peacebuilding can and does work. While peace may be broken every day around the world, it is also built every day – by strong women and men determined to heal and transform their communities. This Impact Study not only shows the challenges of measuring impact in conflict settings, but also the potential of what peacebuilding can deliver.

**'Faced with the dynamics of violence and its consequences, every day is one of resistance and struggle for those with whom we work'**



## Our approach to building peace

Christian Aid works almost exclusively with local civil society partners. We listen to their wisdom, respect their priorities and stand side by side with them for the long-term.

Our approach to peace is shaped by who we are. Peace and justice matter to us as a faith-based organisation. We see the need to use our prophetic voice and challenge the unequal power dynamics that lie at the heart of our agenda of tackling poverty. Our work is supported by global policy and advocacy and a willingness to speak truth to power.

We try to approach peace and development in a holistic and integrated way. Our work on peace mutually reinforces our wider development and humanitarian work.

We are flexible and adaptive because the various stages and expressions of violence are context specific. There is not a one-size-fits all answer or plans that can be implemented regardless of changes in the context. Our work aims to support resilience, building the capacities of individuals and communities to anticipate, organise for and adapt to change. Standing in solidarity with those on the front lines of violence, amplifying their voices and championing their demands is at the heart of our approach to peace.

### Our peacebuilding strategy

Our peacebuilding strategy identifies three key changes we are seeking:

1. Greater protection for those most at risk of violence.
2. Reducing the risk of gender-based violence.
3. Giving local groups working on peace and justice the support they need.

The following visual is an overview of how we support our partners to make peace a priority. Point 1 explains what types of change might be targeted, how these can contribute to the drivers of change that we have identified as important, and what the outcomes, drawn from our global strategy on moving from violence to peace, might be. Point 2 explains how we support partners working on peace – either directly, integrated with other programmes, or indirectly by enabling a conflict-sensitive approach. Point 3 shows how these changes can work at various social levels – micro (community or local), meso (local to regional or national) to macro (national or international systemic change), or ideally at all levels at once. In Point 4, we explain how we support the programme.

## Methodology

Four major case studies were conducted from September to November 2018, to examine the question of 'How has the work supported by Christian Aid contributed to peacebuilding?'. Through a series of interviews, these studies prioritised understanding how our partners and programme staff are looking at peace in Colombia, Central America, IoPt and South Sudan.

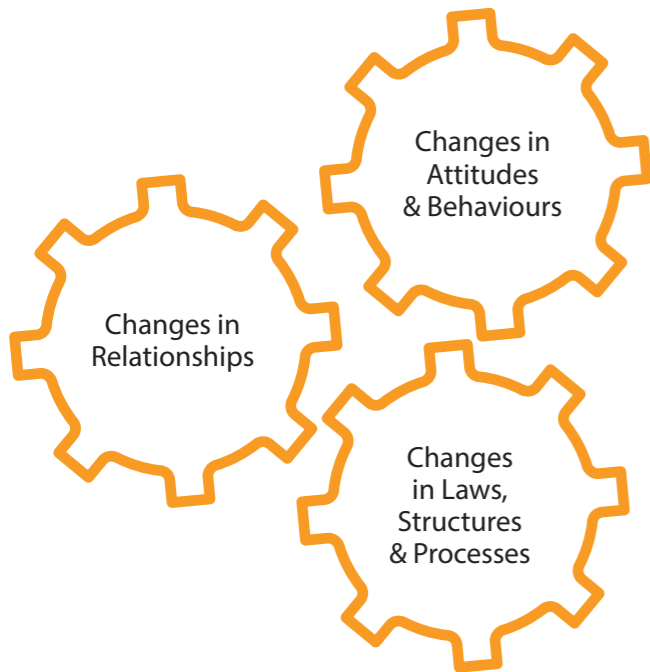
This was complemented by other cases, such as Myanmar and Zimbabwe; interviews with Christian Aid staff; and a review of internal documentation, including annual reports, theories of change, monitoring data and external evaluations; and other relevant reports, such as yearly reviews of our Investment Fund for peace projects. This helped the authors understand the wider country portfolio and the specific roles of partners.

A workshop with the participating programme staff, external consultants and thematic advisers from Christian Aid helped to identify key learnings and insights. A summary of the lessons learned from four years of Christian Aid's internal Investment Fund is also included.

# Christian Aid's Approach in Moving From Violence To Peace

## 1. Your programme can make peace a priority by:

### Focusing on one or more types of change



### Contributing to one or more drivers of change

<b>POVERTY</b>	<p>Strengthened humanitarian response to violence</p> <p>Reduced inequalities and enhanced safety</p>
<b>POWER</b>	<p>Transformation in power, social, political and gender relations</p> <p>Inclusive and transformed economic model</p>
<b>PROPHETIC VOICE</b>	<p>Real and meaningful state accountability</p> <p>Standing in solidarity with local peace actors</p>

### Leading to

#### Outcome 1 Protection



Those most at risk of violence are safe, secure and more resilient

#### Outcome 2 GBV



The risk GBV is reduced, survivors receive support, women, men & institutions work to change conditions which lead to GBV

#### Outcome 3 Peacebuilding



Local communities' peace building efforts are amplified in peace and accountability processes

#### Outcome 4 Policy & Advocacy



Governments, donors, multi-lateral agencies act to ensure peace is sustained and financed, laws are respected, economic policies are inclusive, and those at risk of violence influence key processes & institutions

## 2. Your programme will:

### OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Work specifically on From Violence to Peace  
OR  
Integrate 'From Violence to Peace' elements in a project focusing on other areas  
OR  
Have a conflict-sensitive approach

## 3. Your programme can work at:



**MACRO LEVEL**  
and/or **MESO LEVEL**  
and/or **MICRO LEVEL**

## 4. As Christian Aid we will bring expertise through:

- Programme design
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Conflict analysis
- Inclusive programming
- Research and policy
- Relationship brokering
- Solidarity/Movement building



## Less vulnerability and more safety, security and resilience

### What we do

Much of our humanitarian work is in situations of acute violence and seeks to help meet basic needs and enhance protection in places like the DRC, South Sudan, Myanmar and Syria (see box).

Our work on vulnerability and security includes protection of human rights defenders in violent areas. For example:

- We support partners working with women human rights defenders in Colombia and the Amazon region in Brazil and Bolivia.
- We assist partners working with farmers and herders in Kaduna state in Nigeria on early warning and response mechanisms to conflict.
- We work on changing responses to gang violence in Central America.

We have integrated 'do no harm' (a part of the Core Humanitarian Standard under which Christian Aid is certified) and conflict sensitivity into our programming, particularly for humanitarian work.

Christian Aid led the consortium to deliver the 'Linking Preparedness, Response and Resilience' programme (2015-18) funded by the UK's Department for International Development, which generated sector-leading insights on resilience in conflict settings. Christian Aid continues to invest in the integration of conflict prevention and resilience work in Burundi, DRC, South Sudan and Myanmar, including a research partnership with Queen's University Belfast on the integration approach.

### Our impact

Three examples show the different ways in which we can work to help people feel safe and protected.

- In the Naya Valley in Colombia, we highlight how working on land tenure has been integral in helping communities feeling safe and secure, especially in the face of continued violence.
- In Central America, our partners are working to reduce violence and break down distrust between communities and the state, enabling these communities to access vital services for the first time in years.
- In South Sudan, work by our partners has helped to break the cycle of revenge killings in Nyal.

Christian Aid's first strategic aim on peace:

Those most at risk of violence in our areas of engagement are less vulnerable and more safe, secure and resilient.

## Humanitarian programmes in violent situations

Christian Aid's humanitarian work addresses violence in different ways. It focuses on dealing with the consequences of major violence, such as supporting Rohingya who fled Myanmar and are refugees in Bangladesh. At other times, it involves supporting people living with chronic violence to build their resilience, as in the east of Democratic Republic of Congo where dozens of armed groups operate.

Even responses to natural hazards challenge us to respond to violence. For example, gender-based violence increases after all types of disasters.<sup>9</sup>

As we state in our strategy: 'We are committed to tackling all aspects of violence, including social and gender based violence. In violent and difficult contexts, this enables us to understand and tackle the root causes of violence, in order to build peace, contribute to gender justice, and deliver accountability.'<sup>10</sup>

## **Naya Valley, Colombia: Preventing displacement by defending land rights**

Land is central to the lives of Colombia's poor and is essential for their survival and development. Unequal property distribution, insecure land tenure and abuse of vulnerabilities fuels much of the country's violence. Colombia is the most unequal country in Latin America for access to land, with 81% of land owned by 1% of the population.<sup>11</sup>

Forced displacement and land grabs have been a central part of the Colombian conflict. In 2017, Colombia had the world's largest population of internally displaced people, with 7.5 million registered.<sup>12</sup>

Christian Aid and its partners have worked for more than 20 years in Colombia, demanding an end to violence and calling for justice on issues of impunity and human rights violations committed in the course of the conflict.<sup>13</sup>

A key focus for Christian Aid's programme in Colombia has been enhancing protection by helping to keep people on their land and to avoid forced displacement.

The Naya Valley had long been a base of operations for many armed groups. In 2001, right wing paramilitaries, with tacit consent from the army, used guns, machetes and chain saws to kill civilians and displace them from their land, leaving hundreds dead or disappeared.<sup>14</sup>

Christian Aid's partner the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace (CIJP) supported Afro-Colombian communities in their 16-year battle to regain control of their land. CIJP challenged the violence and sought security of tenure through legal and advocacy work.

The CIJP was successful in highlighting people's cultural attachment to land and the ways in which the Afro-Colombian communities organised in making the case for collective titling.<sup>15</sup>

In 2016, a hard-won legal decision resulted in the handover of the collective land title of 177,817 hectares – an area larger than Bogotá – from the Colombian state to the valley communities. The land is now home to 18,000 people from 52 communities.<sup>16</sup>

This land restitution was deeply significant and symbolic. It has shown what is possible, not just for the Naya community, but across the country.

## **Central America: Meeting the needs of youth and supporting alternatives to gang violence**

After decades of conflict, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras are rife with chronic criminal violence. This is the most dangerous region in the world outside war zones.<sup>17</sup> More than two decades on from the signing of the Central American Peace Accords, criminal gangs tightly control urban areas where poverty is widespread. There are multiple types of violence – drug cartels and organised crime, gang-related, gender-based and state violence. These are compounded by corruption and impunity and the resulting low levels of trust in police and judicial institutions. Young men and women are particularly vulnerable.<sup>18</sup>

Since 2012, Christian Aid's programme in Central America has supported seven partners working on violence prevention, security, and gender-based violence. We highlight the need for the authorities to provide accountability and fiscal policies that tackle the root causes of violence.

Christian Aid's partners support vulnerable young men and women, assisting them to engage with decision makers, authorities and policy makers, and also engage themselves. Our partners involve young people in art and sport as a peacebuilding tool.

In Guatemala, our partner Caja Lúdica worked with other local associations to win approval for new local public policies and budgets on culture and youth in six municipalities.<sup>19</sup>



**Above:** For many years, Bayardo Fargas was a drug user, dealer and gang member. His life has now been transformed after many years of support and counselling from our partner. He helped dismantle a gang, is a husband and father, and works as a painter and decorator. Bayardo also volunteers, working with other young men in his neighbourhood.

Youth organisations had key roles in shaping these policies through dialogue with the local authorities. While their implementation has varied, these policies result in local authorities positively engaging with youth and focusing on violence prevention.

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**‘Without Caja Lúdica, we would be either dead, or in a gang’**

Youth participant in Caja Lúdica project<sup>20</sup>

Partners aim to address the root causes of gang violence by providing meaningful educational, cultural and training opportunities for young people.

Caja Lúdica has supported local youth associations to advocate on issues affecting young people.<sup>21</sup> It was involved in lobbying on the Guatemalan Government’s national youth policy in 2012. Together with other youth associations and the Human Rights Ombudsman, Caja Lúdica established a National Youth Observatory to monitor the implementation of the policy, which includes a commitment to set up youth offices in all 340 municipalities.<sup>22</sup>

Caja Lúdica has supported youth to reclaim the public space through events such as the annual Calle 22 festival in Villa Nueva. Nearly all (95%) of the young people participating in these projects were at high risk of joining gangs.

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**‘I liked people to be fearful of me. Now, thanks to this learning, violence shocks me’**

Youth participant in Caja Lúdica project<sup>23</sup>

In El Salvador, Christian Aid partner Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho (FESPAD) has been a lead advocate for changing the government’s focus on repressive measures in response to violence to violence prevention. FESPAD is an observer at the National Commission of Citizen Security, which coordinates the implementation of the National Security Plan ‘Safe El Salvador’, a major investment fund for international cooperation. FESPAD was



also invited by the Ministry of Security to participate in the Police Conduct and Human Rights and Prison System Committees.

The communities that FESPAD works with identify state actors as posing more of a challenge to their security than the gangs, due to the lack of public services, and police and military abuse. The national 'Safe El Salvador' plan has municipal committees on violence prevention, yet communities are not fully involved. FESPAD has worked to ensure that these official spaces are open to communities suffering from violence, and that representatives from these communities feel able to participate.

In Honduras, our partner Centre for Human Development (CDH) supports youth, female survivors of violence, and human rights defenders to work together and support each other in their demands to the state.<sup>25</sup> It has been instrumental in creating and strengthening violence prevention committees in the municipalities of Choluteca, Nacaome, Namasigüe, El Triunfo, San Lorenzo and Apacilagua.<sup>26</sup> Community leaders, particularly from women and youth networks, are supported by CDH to actively participate in municipal affairs.

This has helped enable more representative participation, whereas previously the ruling party dominated.<sup>27</sup>

In Namasigüe municipality, the youth network convinced the mayor's office to allocate resources to a juvenile offenders' centre, now set up as a youth home providing skills in sports and other areas.<sup>28</sup> A regional Observatory of Violence was also established with CDH's support. This draws on the work of the municipal violence prevention committees and produces bulletins for national authorities advocating further violence prevention policies.<sup>29</sup>

Youth networks have succeeded in advocating on local public policy, and have influenced the introduction of public policies with a focus on violence prevention in El Triunfo and Pespire municipalities, and new investment plans for the existing youth policies in Choluteca and El Triunfo. Choluteca town hall has held a youth consultation every year since 2013, and CDH supports the involvement of the youth network. The network monitors the implementation of the youth policy and the municipal investment plan.<sup>30</sup>

**Below:** The Dolores neighbourhood on the outskirts of San Salvador has suffered from gang-related crime. Our partner FESPAD supports a female committee in this area that works with victims of domestic violence, supporting women to understand their rights.

## Building trust, promoting dialogue

Mejicanos is a municipality close to San Salvador with high levels of violence. In 2017-18, FESPAD developed a relationship with representatives from the El Nazareno and 28 de Enero communities. Once trust was built, FESPAD started to promote dialogue between the authorities and the communities.

With support of FESPAD, municipal staff were able to access the gang-controlled area in El Nazareno and provide health services with a mobile van to the community for the first time in years.

In 28 de Enero, FESPAD's relationships with the community enabled the Ministry of Education to introduce the project 'Strong Families', which it had not done before because of a fear of gangs.<sup>24</sup>



## Snapshot: South Sudan

**'The community members used to ask when the next revenge killing would be organised. Now, they ask when is the next peace and justice campaign.'**

Report from Christian Aid Investment Fund project in South Sudan, April 2018

### Peace committees and mediation address local conflicts and prevent cycles of violence

Christian Aid partners Hope Action for Relief and Development (HARD) and Comboni Missionaries, support communities at risk of multiple types of violence.

With the spread of armed violence across the countryside, feuds have become very common. Violence in South Sudan tends to be cyclical, long-term and involves inter-communal conflict which has existed for a long time in South Sudan, both connected to but also somewhat different to national level conflict dynamics. Homicide rates in some small communities have been estimated to be almost as high those Central American countries with the highest rates in the world.

A 2016 study in Akobo, in former Jonglei State, found that customary authorities dealt with 70 revenge cases in 2015, in a county with a population of 82,615. This suggests a homicide rate similar to that of Honduras (57 per 100,000 in 2015) or El Salvador (105 per 100,000 in 2015).<sup>31</sup> County murder rates in South Sudan are significantly higher than Cape Town in South Africa (59.9 homicides per 100,000 in 2007), which makes Akobo the 'murder capital of Africa'.<sup>32</sup>

Those engaged in violence in Nyal are young men or boys with military experience and easy access to weapons. A small-scale project supported by an internal Investment Fund in 2017/18 enabled

communities to address local conflicts over natural resources and feud killings, which had been aggravated by the national conflict.

In Bar Mayen, Northern Bahr al-Ghazal, HARD worked with two local communities, which had been displaced from their villages during the 1983-2005 war and were trying to rebuild their communities. Today, this state is relatively more peaceful than others, but it was at the centre of the 1983-2005 civil war.

The security of the communities was threatened by competition over fishing rights, pasture and water; gender-based violence; disputes over bride wealth; and feuds. HARD supported local peace committees to provide training on human rights and access to justice. The people who were trained then taught other community members.

In Nyal, Comboni Missionaries worked in a community devastated by killings and sexual violence. The community was also heavily affected by feuds. When someone is killed, the perpetrator's family are at risk from revenge killing, until reconciliation and compensation is agreed. Local government officials, including local chiefs, organise the reconciliation.

Now, when someone is killed, the Comboni Missionaries and people in their parish work through customary authorities on mediation activities with local youth. Community leaders and chiefs and military leaders share their understanding of the social consequences of violence and killing with the young people. The parish works with family members of victims and perpetrators on dialogue, and also provides counselling for people traumatised by killings.

At one meeting, the mother of a victim called on her family to forgive her son's killers. One missionary's parish provided mediation on nine revenge killings in 2017. Six of the nine victim groups decided to give up the revenge cycle.

## Preventing gender-based violence

### What we do

Christian Aid is a member of the international Call to Action to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Emergencies, where we are leading on a number of important initiatives:

- Testing the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict in Burundi.
- Protecting women human rights defenders in Colombia who are working to ensure gender aspects of the recent peace agreement are implemented.
- Actively working in international networks We Will Speak Out, the Irish Gender Based Violence Consortium and Side by Side, which unites faith-based actors in changing the conditions that lead to gender-based violence.
- Working towards implementation of the Guidelines on Integration of Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, drawing on the research outputs of the 'What Works?' consortium to inform this work.

Our programmatic experience includes providing health referral, psychosocial, and economic support to survivors of gender-based violence in DRC, challenging politically motivated gender-based violence in Bolivia, providing counselling for Syrian female refugee survivors in Lebanon, and trauma healing in South Sudan. We also work with partners on promoting narratives of positive masculinities as a preventive measure in Central America and North Kivu in DRC. In Angola and Zimbabwe, faith-based partners work with faith leaders to address issues of gender inequality and GBV through training and development of church policies and programmes. Throughout our work there is a focus on empowering women and supporting them to mobilise to claim their human rights.

### Our impact

Three examples show the different ways in which we support survivors of gender-based violence and focus on their human rights:

- In Guatemala, we provide an integrated model of support to survivors, including social, psychological and legal support and train police and justice officials.
- In El Salvador, we work with survivor units within police stations, providing gender training and supporting women from different communities to come together in self-help groups and share their experiences of violence.
- In Honduras, we support a regional network working on violence against women in Choluteca to campaign against femicide.

### Supporting women to mobilise on human rights and providing services and support in Central America

The Northern Triangle of Central America is one of the most dangerous regions for women in the world. Seven of the ten countries with the world's highest murder rates for women are in Latin America.<sup>34</sup> El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala had the first, second and fifth highest prevalence of femicide in the Americas in 2016/17 – 10.2,

Christian Aid's second strategic aim on peace:

The risk of gender-based violence is reduced, survivors receive adequate support, and women, men, and institutions are working to change the conditions which gave rise to it in the first place.

## A female police officer changes the response to GBV

Asunta Along is the only female police officer in Bramayen County, South Sudan. She was trained as a community paralegal by our Kenyan partner, the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness, in partnership with the local public prosecutor. She mobilised her law enforcement colleagues to establish a gender desk at the Mondit Boma police station to attend gender-based violence cases.

Asunta said: 'I have been receiving and resolving 10 to 20 cases per month for the last six months; cases that were not reported and recorded in the past. These include domestic violence where a husband's fighting the wife, taking away her properties and handing it over to his co-wives which can sometimes lead to divorce and drug abuse.'

Asunta refers the survivors to a health centre for medical care and support to take legal action. With the new case management procedure introduced by Asunta, there is evidence of reduced domestic violence in the community due to fear of the law. Asunta believes that the creation of the gender desk helps resolve domestic violence cases as it encourages women to come forward and report, enhances the response from the justice system and the confidence of women that they will receive support from the local police.<sup>33</sup>

5.8 and 2.6 per 100,000 women.<sup>35</sup> Gender-based violence is different to gang violence. A global study undertaken by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in 2018 noted that the most dangerous place for women is at home – most female homicides occur there at the hands of male partners or family members.<sup>36</sup>

In Guatemala, Christian Aid partner Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (Guatemalan Women's Group, GGM) advocated and coordinated the first centre specifically for women survivors of violence in 1991. With international support they have been able to establish further centres, which are now financially supported by the state.<sup>37</sup> GGM believes that key to this success was the fact that the first female Ministry of Interior ever was appointed in 2007.<sup>38</sup>

Today, there are 10 centres across Guatemala, all managed by associations specialised in women's rights. Four are led by GGM, partly supported by Christian Aid. Demand is high – 405 women survivors of violence, mostly mestizo women, attended during the first quarter of 2018 alone.<sup>39</sup> Of these, 180 women received psychological, medical and legal support.<sup>40</sup> This is an integrated model of support, with self-help groups, social and psychological support, legal support and shelter grouped in one service. GGM also provides training to police and justice officials.

Securing ongoing funds has required sustained advocacy. The support of several congresswomen has also been instrumental in pressuring the Ministry of Interior to release the funds each year and ensure a quality service can be provided. GGM won an increase in the budget allocation for the centres in 2017 after it participated in a public-private space where plans and budgets for the centres are discussed.<sup>41</sup> GGM is now advocating for a law requiring the government to commit funds each year.

In El Salvador, Christian Aid partner Organisation of Salvadorian Women for Peace (ORMUSA) has worked directly with the police and 32 survivor units have been integrated within police stations since 2011. Police play a central role in supporting survivors, even accompanying them to health and judicial appointments. This model requires a strong investment in gender training for police officers, who may be unfamiliar with gender-based violence and who risk further victimising survivors. ORMUSA has accompanied these processes and managed to extend the training at the police academy from two days to six months. No police officer can join the women's unit without passing the course.

Also in El Salvador, the Women's Association of San Pedro Masahuat supports women from different communities to come together in self-help groups and share their experiences of violence. From there, they can learn they are entitled to rights, increase their self-esteem and receive the support of a local network of women trained by ORMUSA.

In both Guatemala and El Salvador, partners encourage women survivors to organise in self-help groups and support newer survivors, which the women say is empowering. Some engage in more activist groups to demand and monitor state responses to gender-based violence.

In Honduras, Christian Aid partner Human Development Centre has supported a regional network working on violence against women in

**'Not all [women survivors of violence] are interested in political participation. I will not oblige them to be feminists, but I will aim to make them fall in love with being a feminist'**

GGM coordinator<sup>42</sup>



Choluteca to campaign against femicide on a national level. It successfully secured government protection for a union leader who had received death threats, and raised gender equality issues with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Frost, on his visit in May 2017.<sup>43</sup>

In 2017, the municipal offices of women in Nacaome, Namasigüe, San Lorenzo and El Triunfo, actively engaged regional and municipal women's networks on their 2018 plans. In Apacilagua, the network and the municipal office of women have coordinated women's projects with the municipal budget.<sup>44</sup> In Santa Ana de Yusguare municipality, advocacy by the women's network has resulted in the announcement of a centre for women's protection, but funding still has to be provided.<sup>45</sup>

### **Strengthening the response of states to support survivors of gender-based violence**

Impunity for GBV remains high in the region. In El Salvador, only 5% of cases that reached court in 2017/18 resulted in a sentence (334 out of 6,326 cases).<sup>46</sup> In 2017, specialist courts for cases of violence against women were created after advocacy work by feminist organisations, including our partner ORMUSA. A specific line in the government's budget now exists to address violence against women.<sup>47</sup>

ORMUSA played a key role in the publication of a report on acts of violence against women, addressing a fundamental gap in the data available on such crimes. ORMUSA was the only non-governmental organisation that worked with government bodies to produce this comprehensive document. The report presents exhaustive indicators based on five types of violence: femicide, sexual violence, physical violence, economic violence and violence in the workplace.<sup>48</sup>

ORMUSA was also critical in the codifying of a legal definition of 'femicide' after two years of advocacy and the creation of a femicide indicator in 2018.<sup>49</sup> This definition is now used for cases of gender-based murders. Any female killing is now assumed to be a femicide, not a homicide, unless the opposite is proven. This reverses the practice of needing to prove that a female homicide was gender-based for it to be considered femicide. This enables the state to have complete data on the scope of femicides, and to resource them accordingly. ORMUSA and other feminist organisations were instrumental in advocating for this.<sup>50</sup>

In Guatemala, GGM worked with the media to move from portraying femicides as individual, unrelated crimes of passion to understand them as a consequence of persistent structural violence based on gender inequalities. After years of weekly campaigns of sit-ins and activism, the media gradually shifted the narrative and language, for instance, saying 'women' rather than 'bodies'.<sup>51</sup>

## **Addressing violence in relation to reproductive health**

El Salvador and Honduras still penalise abortion in all cases, while Guatemala allows exceptions for saving the mother's life.<sup>52</sup> In some instances, women are forced to carry on with a pregnancy from their own fathers or grandfathers. Miscarriages are also penalised.

Christian Aid's partners ORMUSA in El Salvador and the Christian Organisation for Integral Development of Honduras in Honduras were part of a four-country programme on the rights of women to access sexual and reproductive health services (2013-18). Key areas of work included maternal mortality and child and adolescent pregnancies, including cases of nine and ten-year-old girls.<sup>53</sup>

Violence was a secondary component, focused on the violation of women's rights during antenatal care. At the community level, ORMUSA supported the creation of maternal and infant health commissions to monitor service delivery with participatory methodologies in five municipalities in La Paz.<sup>54</sup>

They achieved outstanding results. Maternal mortality in the area declined from 76 deaths per 100,000 births to zero; the number of pregnant adolescents halved; the number of referrals of high-risk pregnancies by community actors increased by 51%; and the use of contraceptive methods increased by 10%. The project also included sex education in schools, reaching 324 teachers and 6,564 students.<sup>55</sup>



## Supporting local actors working on peace and justice

### What we do

A key focus of our work in this area is on strengthening accountability mechanisms, ensuring compliance with international obligations, monitoring human rights and freedoms, and maintaining proactive engagement with decision makers.

In Myanmar, IoPt, Zimbabwe, Colombia and Angola, local community activists are supported to monitor human rights violations and bring these issues to national level institutions and processes. In South Sudan, partners seek to rebuild trust and reconciliation among communities where violence has destroyed trust and the social fabric. Partners challenge narratives of hate and violence and highlight the consequences of exclusion and discrimination.

In Latin America, partners work with state institutions to strengthen security policies and responses to violence, including GBV. We support partners across the region to train state officials to implement security laws and policies in line with human rights standards. In the Middle East and Latin America, partners advocate to reduce violence against marginalised groups.

### Our impact

Five examples show the different ways in which we support local actors working on peace and justice:

- In South Sudan, we were part of a group of organisations that supported the South Sudan Council of Churches to develop an Action Plan for peace and play a leading role in convening and managing national level peace talks.
- In Colombia, our partners' work ensured the peace negotiations addressed the needs and voices of victims, including survivors of gender based violence.
- In Zimbabwe, our partners were instrumental in preventing violence in the pre-election period in 2018. They continue to work with selected community structures to sustain peace.
- In Myanmar, we focus on inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts, communal and religious conflict and promotes social cohesion and dialogue facilitation.
- In IoPt, we stand in solidarity with partners for the long term.

### The role of faith actors in creating an authentic process for peace in South Sudan

While South Sudan has a long experience of war, it has many resources to offer peacebuilding. Its customary legal systems favour mediation and its political systems are oriented towards democracy built on consensus.<sup>56</sup> For decades, armed forces in South Sudan have fostered internecine conflicts as part of their military strategies.<sup>57</sup> Local communities, NGOs and churches have played a vital role in resisting the encroachment of violence and building peace.<sup>58</sup>

Christian Aid's third strategic aim on peace:

Local communities are empowered in their calls for peace, justice, and security, peacebuilding is inclusive and transformative, in particular for women and marginalised groups, and efforts are made to challenge the key drivers of violence, address impunity, hold perpetrators to account and inspire them to rehabilitate.

## Speaking truth to power: Using our prophetic voice

Christian aid's fourth strategic peacebuilding aim is grounded in our understanding of prophetic voice. Together with our partners, we speak out and challenge violence, poverty, inequality and injustice. We require the courage of our convictions to challenge oppressive structures and seek justice.

We believe that governments, donors and multilateral agencies need to take greater action to ensure peace is sustained and financed, international human rights and humanitarian laws are respected, inclusive economic policies are implemented, and those most at risk of violence can influence and effectively participate in key processes and institutions.

We do this by supporting the policy and advocacy of our partners, and by using speaking out to demand an end to violence, injustice and for governments and institutions to fulfil the unrealised potential of peace.

Christian Aid undertakes specific policy and advocacy in places such as IoPt, South Sudan, Colombia and Syria. We use our global voice to challenge amoral practices such as the arms trade and rampant militarisation that undermine the work of local peace actors.



**Above:** Most of the families in Dong Boma village, Jonglei State, fled after being displaced by rebel soldiers. Now they are returning and Christian Aid and its partners are helping the villagers restart their lives with support for housing, livelihood, and food security.

Peace conferences used the truth-telling and truth-seeking approaches of customary law, and some of the rituals of traditional and Christian belief. They sought to come up with local political initiatives or legal systems that would provide alternatives to violence, such as border courts or return of abductees. These 'people-to-people' peace initiatives also communicated the widespread longing for peace to political-military leaderships.

Christian Aid's partner, the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) was established in 2013 after South Sudan's independence. The SSCC set up its own peacebuilding mechanisms which played an important role in the local and international search for peace. This was not an easy process for churches. Like the rest of the country, they had been polarised by the 2013 war, and they needed to reconcile amongst themselves while seeking to reconcile others. The SSCC produced an Action Plan for Peace in July 2015 (with the support of Christian Aid and others). The SSCC went on to play a leading role in convening and managing national level peace talks.

They used church networks and consultations to bring the views of the war-fatigued and traumatised population to the negotiating tables. They brought moral and spiritual imperatives of justice and peace to the fore, in a process framed around military and political calculations. The Action Plan for Peace was built around:

- **Advocacy:** To bring voices of South Sudanese people into peace processes dominated by political and military leaders, and to change the narrative from conflict to peace.
- **Neutral forums:** To bring people together to discuss the root causes of conflicts, to envision the future of the nation and identify indigenous solutions to conflict.
- **Reconciliation:** To promote and coordinate local consultations and reconciliation.

The SSCC achieved some important results through this plan and its participation in the high-level peace process. The Action Plan for Peace helped the churches to develop a unified call for peace during high-level peace negotiations. It linked these to church-sponsored

local peace negotiations – neutral forums and reconciliation processes – in different parts of the country, using its local experience to give depth and authenticity to its call for peace.

It filled a gap in the process: neither the government nor the opposition appeared to attach much importance to the interests of their constituencies, and the SSCC authentically represented the views of many marginalised South Sudanese, bringing the issues of peace and justice to the fore. Civil society groups played a parallel role, although they did not have the same kind of legitimacy and were not as unified as the SSCC, reflecting South Sudanese political differences. Likewise, the government-sponsored National Dialogue, which excluded some armed opposition groups, lacked the reach and legitimacy of the church.

The SSCC navigated a complex arena and raised issues of justice and accountability, and was able to maintain control of its own peace efforts, and to hold open a space for a more authentic process in future.

### **Making the Peace Agreement in Colombia inclusive and based on victims' human rights**

In Colombia, our partners' work ensured the peace negotiations addressed the needs and voices of victims. As a result of consistent lobbying by partners, a considerable number of victims participated in the formal negotiations. A special sub-commission on gender was established in the peace talks, and Christian Aid's partner Sisma Mujer was an advisor to the gender commission. The negotiations ensured that there will be no amnesty for sexual violence crimes and the transitional justice agreement reflects suggestions made by partners.<sup>59</sup>

Largely due to the work of Christian Aid partners, Colombia now has an independent institution called Unit for the Search of the People Assumed to be Missing in the Context and as a Result of the Internal Armed Conflict. This institution is part of the system of truth, justice, reparation and guarantee of non-repetition pillar of the peace agreement.<sup>60</sup> Its role is to search for missing people, analyse what happened (in coordination with the Truth Commission) and ensure dignified memorial acts to hand over the remains to family members, who will also receive psychological support and protection measures if needed. There were 82,998 Colombians who were forcibly disappeared between 1958 and 2017 and they are presumed dead.<sup>61</sup> Given the concern that state authorities, in particular the military, were responsible for many of those disappearances, strong political forces opposed the work on this topic.

Christian Aid's partners Coordination Colombia Europe United States and the Jose Alvear Restrepo Lawyers Collective Corporation worked for decades to document cases, conducting research and doing advocacy work. They ensured that the issue remained on the public agenda and resulted in the establishment of this significant institution.



**Above:** Manuel Garzon is a lawyer working for our partner CIJP in Colombia. Manuel and other lawyers have prosecuted perpetrators of violence, including an army general and several palm oil businessmen who had displaced communities.

In 2018, two further achievements were accomplished – the institution remained independent despite attempts to place it under the Ministry of Justice, and the Constitutional Court guaranteed access to intelligence information which will be essential to discovering where people's remains have been buried or hidden. This institution could play a significant role in fulfilling people's rights to know the truth about their loved ones who were disappeared. Equally important, we expect the work of the institution to help prevent this terrible crime from happening in the future.<sup>62</sup>

### **Supporting local peace actors in Myanmar**

Multiple conflicts in Myanmar have created social and cultural divisions and undermined development. Christian Aid in Myanmar focuses on inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts, communal and religious conflict and promotes social cohesion and dialogue facilitation.<sup>64</sup>

A Christian Aid major donor fund, In Their Lifetime, supported positive dialogue between the ethnic groups and sub-groups in Kachin State between 2016 and 2018. A group of 27 facilitation trainers and 500 dialogue facilitators supported more than 60 inter- and intra-ethnic dialogues. This programme successfully engaged communities, civil society actors, political parties, cultural leaders and religious leaders in different forums and hosted dialogues in different regions. A multiplier effect developed, with requests from different regions and organisations to expand the programme and facilitate a dialogue process in their areas as well.

Several networks developed from the dialogue sessions, including a strong youth group that actively participated in drafting the national youth policy. The programme provided a way for communities to use dialogue as a tool for social transformation, to enhance understanding of the root causes of the conflict, take collective actions to bring ethnic sub-groups and groups together, and promote social cohesion and a shared vision for Kachin State.

Christian Aid supported 212 changemakers across Kachin, Rakhine, Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magwe, Mon, Shan and Tanintharyi states to promote social cohesion through a series of dialogues, training on

### **Strengthening human rights monitoring and violence prevention in Zimbabwe**

In Zimbabwe, Christian Aid partners were instrumental in preventing violence in the pre-election period in 2018 and continue to work with selected community structures to sustain peace. In three urban communities known for high levels of violence during elections, our partner the Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation successfully worked with youth, faith and community leaders to prevent violence during the election period. The centre also supported community leaders to engage with youth political party leaders and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, culminating in the signing of a peace pledge. This resulted in a calm voting process in the areas.

Another partner, the Zimbabwe Peace Project also played a pivotal role in engaging with the Human Rights Commission and the Police Unit on Elections, to report and investigate cases of violence and other human rights violations in the run-up to the elections. Through their partnership, several incidents of violence were investigated and prosecuted. At local community levels, the Zimbabwe Peace Project trained peace ambassadors in selected communities who have been instrumental in addressing conflicts and facilitating reconciliation in communities where violence occurs frequently. For example, in Chilonga, Chiredzi District, south Zimbabwe, peace ambassadors were able to facilitate a peace pledge by community leaders not to engage in violence during the election period, which was honoured. The community had experienced high levels of political violence during previous elections.<sup>63</sup>



civic education, awareness raising sessions, peace education, and advocacy meetings. These changemakers' capacity was strengthened on dialogue facilitation, conflict sensitivity, community-based advocacy skills and civilian protection and monitoring. The capacity of the youth was enhanced and to become active civil educators and catalyse community actions in targeted areas. The community actions related to issues on land rights, community forests, drugs and promoting a democratic culture. Communities are given training on community forest and related laws, so that they can preserve the lands and stop illegal logging and illegal sale of forest products.<sup>65</sup>

### Snapshot: Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

Partners in IoPt value the freedom awarded by the core funding provided by Christian Aid. This enables them to cover costs they cannot cover fully from project-specific funding alone. They can cover the costs of work that other donors do not fund, such as advocacy and using human rights mechanisms to seek accountability. Flexible funding has become more important to human rights partners, because many funders have given into pressure from the Israeli Government, which has been campaigning against foreign funding to Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations.

In November 2017, Christian Aid trained many of its IoPt partners in new ways of fundraising, with tailor-made support to individual organisations. Partners were then able to seek further help from Christian Aid staff on specific fundraising tasks. This support has helped two smaller partners to secure funding from new sources.

Strategy testing is a recent initiative. Its purpose allows organisations to reflect on the outcomes of their work against their theory of change in order to decide what changes they need to make to their strategies. The process helps partners to stop and think about their work differently.

Christian Aid's use of the Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PVCA) model has transformed the work and strategy of one partner, the Women's Development Programme (WDP) of the East Jerusalem YMCA. The PVCA process helped the WDP learnt to build a strategy and theory of change for the first time. As a result, the WDP was able to attract funding from several other donors for projects based on the theme of resilience and PVCA.

Both Christian Aid and its partners have described the relationship as one of solidarity – moral and not just material. Two partners in Gaza commented on Christian Aid's solidarity during the past three years, not only in the form of emergency grants, but also with emails and phone calls from our staff during Israeli military attacks. For an Israeli partner, solidarity 'is becoming increasingly important [because] we need Christian Aid's stature to defend [us] from all kinds of attacks and smear campaigns'.

Two partners regard the fact that Christian Aid brings delegations of British and Irish politicians and church leaders to IoPt as important. One partner appreciated that delegations have been brought to see the situation of the Bedouin in the Naqab/Negev, an issue that is overshadowed internationally by the Israeli occupation. The partner consider Christian Aid to be one of the few groups that is 'very interested and has taken many actions in this regard.'<sup>66</sup>



## Lessons learned

We have five key insights and examples to share from our learning to date:

- Multiple and interconnecting kinds of violence require multiple and interconnected responses, resources and capacities to build peace.
- Working with faith actors can be a powerful tool for peace, but the risks also need to be understood and managed.
- Peace requires fostering relationships of trust over the long term; with communities and with our partners.
- Work on peace needs to go hand in hand with work on justice, accountability and human rights.
- Peacebuilding is a contested space, considering risk is important, protecting people and learning from people about what peace means in their lives.

**'Multiple and overlapping forms of violence require more and better multiple and inter-connected responses, resources and capacities'**

## Multiple and interconnecting kinds of violence

Christian Aid's local partners working on peacebuilding are faced with different kinds of interconnecting violence – criminal violence, including from paramilitaries, gangs intersects with political violence related to the persecution of human rights defenders, environmental activists and other abuses of state power. These coincide with gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence, including the targeting of young women who become pregnant outside marriage. Increasingly, partners are faced with 'environmental violence' related to climate change and natural resource mismanagement, which in turn feeds a backlash against those claiming their human rights and challenging violence.

These multiple and overlapping forms of violence require more and better multiple and inter-connected responses, resources and capacities. Our peacebuilding responses seek to recognise this complexity and, in engaging with it, address the structural violence and extreme poverty, inequality and insecurity (including land tenure insecurity) that underpin and drive much violence.

Firstly, we require a response that addresses how structural issues intersect with violence and peace. Much of our peacebuilding work is therefore underpinned with a focus on human rights accountability, governance, tax justice, economic justice, gender justice, climate justice and seeking to transform unequal power dynamics that fuel violence, particularly against those living in poverty.

For example, in Colombia, partners work not only on violence prevention and engaging in the peace process and its implementation, but also on tax and gender justice as ways to build peace. In Central America, partners engage youth directly, and work with policy makers and the state to develop youth policies that address state accountability and challenge negative stereotypes about youth and violence.

Secondly, this recognises the deep interconnections between local and national conflict. For example, local violence in South Sudan is

often classified as separate or different from the violence of the armed conflict between South Sudan's different political-military factions, and their international backers, despite the fact that homicide rates are aggravated by armed conflict. In reality, local people and civil society often have very limited capacities to address violence committed by government and opposition forces, but may be able to address other forms of violence. We have learnt the importance of linking local peacebuilding to national, regional and global processes for transformative change.

Supporting and maintaining local practices of mediation and reconciliation is an important means of helping local people use their knowledge, skills and courage to address local problems, and to support the exercise of their own agency. In one project in Bolivia, which aimed to raise awareness on political violence against women successfully linked the local to the national, by providing training to local organisations, and then forming a national advocacy committee with female representatives from those organisations.

One of these representatives said: 'Having identified ourselves as female victims of political violence within the different organisations we represent is already an important step; but even more important has been sharing these experiences with women in other organisations.'<sup>67</sup> This then led to national level advocacy, which 'would not have had the same impact without the reflections, debate, articulation and collective design of strategies designed by social organisations.'<sup>68</sup>

Thirdly, interventions on violence prevention and peacebuilding happen in multiple ways. In Central America, partners primarily focus on young people living in neighbourhoods with high levels of violence who are at risk of suffering violence and/or of joining gangs. However, work is also done with the communities where these youths live, concentrating on human rights, fighting discrimination and developing conflict transformation tools and skills.

Arts and culture can play an important role in reducing violence, opening up a wider world beyond one's community, where violence can often be a response to social exclusion and limited opportunities.<sup>69</sup> Arts and community participation can channel a young person's energy, self-esteem, leadership and identity to develop through non-violent ways. They can also rebuild the social fabric in communities when a place which has been stigmatised is recovered as a space for dialogue.<sup>70</sup> Work with young people is complemented with a focus on institutional change from states, from one of repressive measures and responses to a response that promotes violence prevention.

In El Salvador, ORMUSA works to frame preventable maternal mortality, birth complications, and other pregnancy-related human rights violations, such as delays in attending cases, as 'obstetric violence' and, overall, as gender-based violence. This challenges governmental structures and highlights violence that occurs within health services.

ORMUSA talks about 'femicide violence' to refer to all violations of women's human rights that can end in death, including maternal deaths, suicides, violent death caused by lack of access to abortions, non-hospital birth deliveries, delays, and birth

**'Arts and culture can play an important role in reducing violence, opening up a wider world beyond one's community'**

complications and deaths that could have been prevented through caesareans. Partners played a critical role in having these violations counted officially and included in an indicator of femicide.<sup>71</sup> ORMUSA successfully lobbied for the inclusion of health and legal indicators in the Observatory of Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Involving the Ministry of Health to collect health indicators has been important in obtaining a fuller picture of gender-based violence, because women who do not report to the police may still attend health centres.

Finally, there is a need to recognise the environment of uncertainty and complexity in which partners operate. Easy wins and fixes are not always possible in the face of such uncertainty in difficult and volatile contexts. Therefore, Christian Aid uses an adaptive programming approach where possible, enabling partners to experiment and change plans in order to be as effective and as relevant as possible.

**Below:** Christian Aid's partner Caja Lúdica supports the Young People for Life group in Guatemala City. The group organises art and play activities for children and young people in deprived neighbourhoods where gangs, crime and violence are a part of everyday life.



## Faith actors can be a powerful tool for peace

While Christian Aid works with people of all faiths and none, there are many instances where our work with faith-based actors has proven to be an important bridge towards building peace.

Our work in South Sudan is one example that shows the power and possibility of what can happen when a group of religious leaders works out a shared strategy and infrastructures to support it.

The churches had been polarised by the 2013 war and sought reconciliation among themselves. The SSCC's key messages around peace and justice, and the authentic processes of representation it has sought to lead, continue to play an important role in the search for peace with justice in South Sudan. The decision to give the SSCC such a central role in national level negotiations was a recognition of the limitations of formal, inter-governmental diplomacy. But it was also a recognition of the SSCC's unique strengths – a combination of moral authority and dense connectedness with communities on both sides of the front lines.



**Above:** Our partner has helped Leonidas Cruz leave gang life. Leonides now has his own vehicle and a business distributing fruit and vegetables.

While the SSCC played a vital role, its intervention alone will not be enough to bridge the differences between the parties. In South Sudan, the capacity of churches to provide civil forms of leadership came to the fore when the legitimacy of military-political leaders is eroded by civil war and churches have personnel and institutional infrastructures cover the whole country. When South Sudan is divided into 'government' and 'rebel' territory, the church retains the capacity to carry out its activities across the country, just as the military-political leaders lose that capacity.

In other contexts, Christian Aid is seen as building bridges between human rights organisations and faith-based organisations. In Angola, churches and faith-based organisations are sometimes seen to lack leadership and the ability to speak out about injustice. However, human rights organisations are often considered by faith-based organisations to be too confrontational. This present work shows how important it is to strengthen dialogue and promote greater inclusiveness.

However, the assumption is often made that working with faith actors on peace is inherently positive. Such assumptions need to be tested and assessed. Attention needs to be paid to the fact that many faith actors have their own interests, may not always represent communities and that much may need to be done internally within churches to strengthen democratic practices in institutions which hold themselves accountable to a higher power. Faith groups themselves can be polarised by conflict.

Some faith actors can also undermine efforts to achieve peace. In Colombia, one of the reasons the Peace Agreement between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the government was first rejected was due to the inclusion of progressive provisions on women's and LGBT rights and a backlash from conservative faith actors. (The rejection came mostly from perceiving that the peace process would create impunity for perpetrators of violence.) This made explicit tensions between conflicting visions of Colombian society, with the feminist movement using the opportunity to advance women's rights and some religious fundamentalist



elements of Colombian society opposing them.<sup>72</sup> The gender and LGBT provisions were amended in the final Peace Agreement. This played to patriarchal attitudes that were suspicious and fearful of the potential transformation of gender dynamics offered by the strong focus on the rights of women, marginalised groups and LGBT in the agreement. The public rejection of these ambitious equality agendas seems to have had a negative impact on society by justifying narratives that discriminate against women and the LGBT community.<sup>73</sup> The killings of women human rights defenders doubled between 2016 and 2017,<sup>74</sup> and threats against LGBT defenders rose from five in 2016 to 26 in 2017.<sup>75</sup>

## Peace requires fostering relationships of trust

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**'Something quite positive about Christian Aid is that the processes are long, four and five years. That allows us to deepen into changes, particularly with community work. We cannot work on empowerment with projects of one or one and a half years.'**

FESPAD, El Salvador

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Dynamics of change around violence and peace take decades to see change happen. Christian Aid works with partners over the long-term on complex change processes (such as land reform, policy changes and government accountability), but also on everyday peace and relationships of trust.

Across and within societies, narratives of hate and otherness and negative beliefs drive discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation and perpetrate and sustain cycles of violence. Civil society can play a crucial role in assisting understanding of the gendered impacts of conflict and ensuring that groups that have been historically marginalised are included. Christian Aid's peacebuilding efforts need to diffuse, reframe and seek to transform these narratives and misunderstandings by dealing with the root issues of power and gender within societies – and challenge unequal power dynamics that fuel violence in order to build peace. Partners often challenge narratives of hate, violence and the reality of exclusion and discrimination. In Central America, partners work to shift the narrative on youth violence and promote youth leadership models distinct from gang structures and hierarchies, for instance, through the arts.

We foster relationships and trust with our partners, standing with them in solidarity to keep hope alive. Partners in Central America highlighted several benefits about our support, notably that it is long-term and locally targeted; we offer flexibility through theories of change; and we provide support in organisational capacity, including advocacy training and intermediating for further funding.

For example, staff from the youth association ADESJU in Chiantla, Guatemala, said that many international funders operate through cycles of three-year projects, and that they 'come and go'. ADESJU feels that smaller and more localised organisations in the field like themselves are better able to reach communities directly, but that

many international funders prefer to support national organisations. They noted that Christian Aid is an exception.

This longer-term approach enables us to pursue a deeper accompaniment to partners, one that is not overly prescriptive, but offers partners greater access to resources and a wider view on the world. Christian Aid has adopted a flexible and long-term approach to programming in South Sudan, and this approach was acknowledged by many people interviewed for this study. Christian Aid's support for the churches' role in the national peace process made a real contribution to peace, partly because of its commitment to authentic processes of consultation and advocacy – a commitment summed up in its 'accompaniment' approach.

One international adviser interviewed for the case study said that Christian Aid's work 'on accompaniment was the right approach. You need to fund process-based work, not fit into the project system.' The Task Force, created for the South Sudan Council of Churches by Christian Aid and other funders to implement the Action Plan for Peace, was able to protect the church from becoming a programme unit caught up in the programme rituals of outcomes and logframes. Instead, the church was able to focus on what it is good at – making a creative, positive intervention in a violent situation.

Based on this long-term relationship, Christian Aid is also able to help partners to build on their work to take a broader strategic approach. For example, a staff member at Caja Lúdica in Guatemala said that Christian Aid was key in moving it towards political advocacy: 'Caja continues to be a collective of artists, and advocacy was not seen as something of value. I think Christian Aid has been an ally that has kept raising the theme in the imagination of Caja Lúdica, and slowly it went through.'

In IoPt, partners cited the fact that Christian Aid provides flexible, core funding as beneficial. In tandem with this, political and moral support and advocacy in defence of its partners, at a time when human rights organisations are under unprecedented attack by the Israeli government has become more important than ever before.<sup>76</sup>

**Below:** Palestinian woman Fatma al-Saudi walks her daughter Ruha to school in Sha'af, Gaza City.



Such a long-term approach enables follow up, crucial to maintain the legitimacy of peacebuilding processes. National peace agreements in South Sudan often fail in implementation, and local peacebuilding conferences and agreements make resolutions which are not followed up. This undermines the legitimacy of peacebuilding.

### **Work on peace needs to go hand in hand with work on justice, accountability and human rights**

There is sometimes a perceived trade-off between seeking peace, and working on justice, accountability and human rights. Pursuing justice can often exacerbate violence and trigger backlash, and Christian Aid is keenly aware of the need to keep partners safe in their work. Those defending human rights are increasingly at risk. However, in the long term, the protection of civil, political rights, economic, social and cultural rights matter for sustaining peace.

Firstly, the denial of human rights can be a casual factor of violent conflict – as a root cause and driver of continuing unrest.<sup>77</sup> Secondly, violence can result in the denial of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for communities facing killings, displacement, disruption of their access to health and livelihoods. Within peacebuilding and conflict prevention approaches, economic, social and cultural rights have often historically been ignored.<sup>78</sup> Human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, therefore need to be better integrated into peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

In Colombia, partners worked with the assumption that tackling impunity for human rights violations and injustice builds peace. In this way, a perpetrator's crimes were publicly acknowledged, which in turn built respect for victims. Four processes were key for partners – denouncing all types of perpetrators of human rights violations (especially for state actors where there were high levels of responsibility but low levels of awareness of these crimes); using multiple strategies to tackle impunity; supporting the leadership and participation of victims in justice processes; and using international mechanisms for accountability.

In South Sudan, mediators and other international actors needed the SSCC's presence to bring the issues of justice and peace to the negotiations.

By contrast, in loPt, achieving success towards greater accountability may not mean progress towards a reduction in violence. Although people working on accountability of perpetrators of human rights violations believe that they are working towards peace, they also recognise that the accountability work may cause a backlash resulting in more violence, pain and suffering for Palestinians – at least in the short term – and it has already put them under unprecedented political pressure. The more successful partners and Christian Aid become in pursuing accountability at the international level, the more threatened partners become.<sup>79</sup>

Our experience shows that it is possible to work on peace and human rights in tandem, however human rights approaches need to be sensitive to the goals of peacebuilding and peacebuilding needs to take into account human rights protections.



**Above:** Children going to school over the river crossing near Las Camellias, Colombia. The conflict-affected region is constantly patrolled by military forces.

## Peacebuilding is a contested space

Working on peace is contested, and exposes civil society actors to danger and backlash and extreme risks. In Guatemala, three staff from Christian Aid partner Caja Lúdica were murdered in 2010-12. Staff in other organisations have been threatened because of their work on gang demobilisation or reinsertion.

In El Salvador, FESPAD worked with a gang in Ilopango in 2013. It offered gang members training, livelihoods opportunities and support to improve the conditions of gang members in prison, along with a dialogue with gang members on human rights, preventing recruitment and seeking to reduce harmful gang practices. However, gang members did not follow the agreed arrangements and our partner risked being seen as legitimising violence. Salvadorian law now imprisons those who collaborate with gangs, making this type of strategy no longer tenable. The Ilopango project happened under a period of truce indirectly supported by the El Salvador Government.<sup>80</sup> Working on peace is a slow, intricate process, beginning in the middle of ongoing violence and conflict.

Likewise, raising issues around gender-based violence is fraught with risks. In El Salvador, when survivors decide to join a women's association or report abuses, they may be further victimised by their husbands, the police or the judiciary. Gangs are in open conflict with the police and do not want women to report violence. Women leaders supporting survivors are especially threatened. This makes women fear reporting abuse and the work of women's associations becomes very difficult.<sup>81</sup>

Maintaining successes in supporting survivors is highly dependent on political will, and a change at any level of government can see programmes shut. For example, in San Pedro Masahuat municipality, the gender, youth and economic local development units were closed in 2018 when a new administration was elected.

How peacebuilding is understood needs to be looked at in a nuanced and contextually specific way. For example, in Colombia, CIJP has 'a clear position that we... accompany victims that decide



to return to their territories despite the conflict.<sup>82</sup> The underlying theory of change is that the ability to stay on the land prevents and reduces displacements, which supports people's capacity to develop their livelihoods and identity, thereby building peace. Supporting communities to stay on or return to their land assists the return of others, because they maintain the economic livelihoods and vital historic and cultural bonds. However, staying on the land may come at the expense of putting citizens at risk. Thus, the pros and cons of these processes need to be fully acknowledged by all parties.

In South Sudan, words such as 'peace' and 'mediation' do not map neatly onto how many South Sudanese speak about transforming conflict. These words have become codes to access resources, and may carry negative connotations. For example, in some areas, 'peace' means 'another kind of domination', 'dialogue' can mean 'partisan propaganda', and 'mediation' is the process of 'imposed agreement'.

Interviews with local communities revealed that what really mattered to people about peace was about moving through territory without fear, maintaining social relations, opportunities to trade, development, respecting shared justice mechanisms, and ending grievances.<sup>83</sup> Again, this may come with risks that need to be acknowledged.

## Looking forward

Christian Aid understands that peace will not happen of its own accord. The assumption that providing development relief will reduce violence has been proven to fail. Development actors need explicit and considered effort to work on conflict and peace. We have learnt to better understand the types of violence we are seeking to address and to better articulate visions of peace that are grounded in the work of our partners and communities they serve. We need to continue to improve this.

As shown in this Impact Study, we are seeing results, but we are also seeing continued and unacceptable levels of violence. Levels of violence are not decreasing globally, human rights and environmental defenders remain vulnerable and threats and restrictions to civil society space are growing.

Christian Aid's work is driven by our partners. Our learning shows that we need to understand what it means to support them in their work on peace. We are beginning to shape this, understanding that we are:

- supporting them to explicitly and intentionally reduce violence and build peace
- integrating a violence prevention focus in our wider programmes (humanitarian, livelihoods, governance, gender equality, human rights)
- supporting conflict sensitive interventions.

We have begun this process and will continue to develop it further. We will continue to assess and improve how we support our local partners and stand in solidarity with them; working with them to assess how we change behaviours, relationships, attitudes and perceptions, laws, institutions and structures.

Given the multiple manifestations of violence and that fact that we are one (complicated in ourselves) actor working in complex contexts with a whole ecology of other actors and organisations operating without a sense of common purpose and cooperation (often exactly the reverse), simple measures of changing levels of violence, while important, do not, in themselves, capture areas of significant change. We recognise that our work is one of many essential interventions. We will continue to seek to scale this work, but also to find ways of working more coherently with others to have real collective and cumulative impacts.

Christian Aid's new Global Strategy 2018-2026 sets out our ambition to eradicate poverty, dismantle its root causes, and enable the voice and agency of the poor and marginalised to be realised.<sup>84</sup> We recognise that poverty will not be ended without addressing violence; that there is a need to amplify the power of local peace actors in their calls and actions for justice and accountability; and that we have a prophetic role to play in our advocacy and challenging violence and standing in solidarity with local actors and communities.

We will continue our long-term approach, guided by the principle of respectful partnership with national counterparts could help it to develop a more joined-up and followed-up approach to the difficult task of peace.

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