

Partnership for Change:

Christian Aid in
Latin America
and the Caribbean

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Who we are and what we do

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

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

We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.

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

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

'We believe that the world can be changed'

In 2012/13, Christian Aid gave grants to 814 partner organisations across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Our total income was £95.4m (\$153.7m), including £39.8m (\$64.1m) in funding from governments and other institutions. We gave grants worth £8.3m (\$13.7m) to 109 partners in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Our global strategy

We believe human action is responsible for the underlying causes of poverty and inequality, and that when people work together, the world can be changed. This thinking has framed our global strategy, Partnership for Change.

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

1. Power to change institutions

We want all people to have the power to influence institutions, so that the decisions affecting their lives are made responsibly and fairly.

2. The right to essential services

We want all people to be able to fulfil their right to access the services essential for a healthy, secure life.

3. Fair shares in a constrained world

We want all people to have a fair and sustainable share of the world's resources.

4. Equality for all

We want a more inclusive world where identity – gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, class and sexual orientation – is no longer a barrier to equal treatment.

5. Tackling violence and building peace

We want vulnerable people to be protected from violence and able to live in peace.



Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, many families moved out to the countryside. Our partner Haiti Survie is helping them to build earthquake-resilient homes.

Preparing for the floods

Community leader Concepción Moratalla (pictured with her granddaughter Catarina) has been farming the land in Bajo Lempa, El Salvador for more than 30 years. During the 2011 floods, she spent 12 days in an emergency shelter. She says, 'There was always flooding [in the past], but never like now.'

'Before, we didn't really have the skills to cope with flooding'

Concepción has been working with our partner Acudesbal to help her community prepare for and cope with the floods.

'I have a radio so when it floods I can be in touch with Acudesbal and the community.'

'Before, we didn't really have the skills to cope with flooding.'

'We now have leaders in each of the different areas of the community, and they all know the evacuation process.'

Given the extreme level of flooding, the low number of deaths is testament to the disaster risk reduction work carried out by our partners.



Christian Aid in Latin America and the Caribbean

Background

We have worked in Latin America and the Caribbean for more than 30 years, supporting our partners to tackle injustice, human rights violations and inequality. We believe inequality stretches far beyond income, encompassing gender, ethnicity, land, access to basic services, tax and climate justice. Our work focuses on groups disproportionately affected by inequality, poverty, violence and social exclusion – including indigenous people, Afro-descendants and women.

The region has made progress. The past decade has seen overall poverty levels fall, and some reductions in income disparities.¹ But there are still dramatic and untenable inequalities between social groups and territories. Exposing these extremes and the disparities between and within countries, and the severe impact inequality has on specific groups, is fundamental to our work.

Current challenges

Changes to structures and systems are needed in the region to promote equality and ensure that economic growth is beneficial for all. Without serious attempts to shift power relations and overhaul economic structures, we believe continued, sustainable development will be impossible.

The majority of the world's poor now live in so-called middle-income countries. It is a key concern that many of these countries are failing to translate high economic growth into an improvement in the lives of their poorest citizens. Decisions about foreign aid are often based on the recipient country's average income levels, without looking further at deeper disparities and the actual number of poor and marginalised people.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, violence and crime rates continue to rise. Violence against women, in particular, is a huge problem and needs serious attention.

The rights of marginalised groups, particularly women, indigenous people and those of Afro-descent, are regularly violated or not recognised by those in power. It is vital that these groups have a voice and are able to shape their future and that of the region. Land rights are also a major issue and communities continue to fight for the legal right to the land on which they live, and for opportunities to produce and commercialise their agricultural goods.

The region is already suffering the effects of climate change, with indigenous, Afro-descendant and peasant communities in places such as the Andes and the tropical rainforests of the Amazon hit hardest.



The future of the children, and the forest

Deivite (left) and Dielem celebrate the end of the school day in Brazil with a swim in a tributary of the Amazon. The children are members of the quilombola community, whose ancestors were slaves who escaped from Brazil's early plantations and hid in the rainforest, where they have lived ever since.

'Our partner CPI is helping the quilombola people gain the legal collective title to their lands'

But the land on which Deivite and Dielem's community depends is under threat from big business and large-scale infrastructure. The future of the quilombola community in the Amazon depends on them being able to protect their lands and make a sustainable living from the forest.

Our partner CPI (Pro-Indigenous Commission of São Paulo) is helping the quilombola people gain the legal collective title to their lands, fight off threats, and turn their Brazil nut harvest into a reliable source of income, which protects the future of children like Deivite and Dielem, and protects the forest itself.

Central America's climatic vulnerability is made worse by its geographic location between the North and South American continents (making it prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions) and the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans (hurricanes). The Caribbean is also experiencing increasingly severe weather patterns related to the rise in sea temperatures, which has led to fiercer hurricanes and more intense periods of flooding and drought. These events, as well as landslides and intense floods in South America, most affect poor urban and rural communities because of the vulnerable circumstances in which they often live: fragile homes are easily damaged or destroyed in adverse weather, land is stripped of trees and plants (for food and firewood) that would help to absorb and contain water, and the clearing of the forest and overuse of the land (for farming and by business) makes the soil more likely to wash away in heavy rains.

In the development sector, discussions about what will replace the Millennium Development Goals are well underway. These discussions, referred to as the post-2015 agenda, are an important opportunity for us and our partners to share our understanding of inequality and sustainable development, and ensure these are built into future global targets and guide public policies at different levels.

The issue of tax has increasingly become part of the development agenda. With our local partners, we have comparative advantages in working on tax justice and will continue to deepen this focus in the coming years.

We believe this is one way systems and structures can be changed to reduce inequality.

Our reach

We have five programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Bolivia

Our programme promotes the rights of forest communities and other vulnerable people in the Amazon region. We help to strengthen grassroots organisations to ensure that poor people are central to the process of change and can become thriving and resilient communities.

Brazil

We work with partners at local, national and international levels to reduce gender and ethnic inequalities, promote communities' abilities to sell their products in national and global markets, ensure projects take into account environmental impacts and that energy use is sustainable, and improve advocacy work that promotes inclusive policies at national and international levels.



In Brazil our partner MST (the Landless Worker's Movement) promotes agricultural production through more than 400 cooperatives and advocates for rural schools, healthcare, roads and access to markets.

Central America

We work in four countries in Central America – El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua – on resilient livelihoods, tax justice, violence prevention and inclusive markets. We work with around 30 partners, from community-based groups to larger organisations operating across the region and beyond.

Colombia

We focus on the related issues of violence, land and territory, impunity, vulnerable communities and human rights. We work with partners to strengthen communities' resilience and capacity to claim their rights, and to make the state more accountable and responsive to civil society.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic

Our work in Haiti and the Dominican Republic focuses on empowerment and resilience. We want to empower citizens to hold their states to account, to challenge and change economic and political systems and structures, and to create a fairer, more transparent society by working for fewer human rights abuses, stronger institutions and reducing the inequality of vulnerable people.

Our partners

We work with, and through, partners in the region and beyond, including civil society organisations – churches and faith-based organisations, social movements, non-governmental organisations and research institutions – as well as governments, the private sector and other organisations with technical expertise, which can support us to bring about change.

We seek to maximise our global reach by sharing our experiences and learning across the other regions in which we work – Africa, Asia and the Middle East – and amplifying the voices of our partners on the national, regional and international stage.

Building on firm foundations

Since 2011, we have made great strides towards our vision of challenging the unacceptably high levels of inequality and poverty in the Latin America and Caribbean region. We reviewed our work between 2011 and 2013, and our strategy aims to build on the gains, and address and close the gaps that remain. Some of our main conclusions from the review included:

Advocacy

Our tax justice and climate change work has deepened and expanded. Partners took part in global forums, and played a key role in challenging human rights abuses and guaranteeing land rights.

Resilient livelihoods

Our programmes seek to address the poverty people face as a result of economic, social and environmental factors, and conflict. We are active in national disaster risk reduction and preparedness programmes, and we are boosting our work to ensure poor communities are able to access local and global markets.

Gender inequality

This has been a cross-cutting commitment, though we have yet to embed gender as a key issue within all partnerships. Preventing gender-based violence is now an important part of our gender work.

‘We have made great strides towards our vision of challenging the unacceptably high levels of inequality and poverty’

Faith in action

Ties with ecumenical networks, churches and faith-based organisations were strengthened through increased collaboration with ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) and key regional partners.

Key changes

Our programmes in Jamaica and Peru are being phased out. Despite good work in both countries, we have made a decision to focus resources in fewer locations where we can provide greater evidence of impact.

Performance

Some programmes have begun to evaluate their work through impact assessments and learning exchanges. Accountability to beneficiaries has also improved dramatically, largely due to the implementation of HAP (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership) standards.²

Our strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean

Our work in Latin America and the Caribbean contributes to four of our five global strategic change objectives.

1. Power to change institutions

Through rooted advocacy, directly based on our partners’ experiences, we promote the empowerment of key organisations and individuals in the region to change institutions, systems and laws that perpetuate inequality. We strengthen partners’ and communities’ participation in decision-making processes at local and national level, and in monitoring the adoption of inclusive public policies.

Advocacy in the region, in Europe and in the US continues to play an important role in our strategy to ensure states remain accountable to their citizens.

2. Fair shares in a constrained world

Inclusive market development and building the resilience of urban and rural communities to better deal with environmental and non-environmental risks – including violence, conflict and the impacts of large-scale mining, agribusiness and infrastructure projects – are important components of our work in relation to fair shares, with the recognition that we all live in a constrained world.³

3. Equality for all

We use analysis and practices based on learning and experience to tackle the causes of disparity between different parts of society in Latin America and the Caribbean – rural and urban, white and Afro-indigenous, women and men, old and young – to contribute to equality for all in a region that remains the most unequal in the world.

4. Tackling violence and building peace

We work through local partners to build peace by strengthening the capacity of communities and sectors affected by violence and conflict, and to break down prejudices of all kinds.

Work with other organisations

We continue to work with InspirAction (Christian Aid in Spain) on joined-up advocacy and communications initiatives focusing on our work in the region. Our active membership of ACT Alliance enables us to speak out with one ecumenical voice across the region, while we also keep close ties with our sister agency Church World Service in the US and other ecumenical agencies in Europe on key advocacy and capacity-building issues.

Tackling violence, building peace

Fear entered Liliana Turbequia's life when she was nine: her father was killed and her family displaced in the armed conflict that still continues in Colombia.

'I want all of us to be able to live in peace'

Our partner the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace helped her community to return, rebuild

and establish a humanitarian safe zone where no weapons are allowed. The zone has been given national and international recognition, and is now home to 40 families, mostly Afro-Colombians and peasant farmers.

Liliana (pictured with her daughter) and her family have lived there in safety for four years.

'I want all of us to be able to live in peace,' she says.



The quality of Christian Aid's and our partners' work is recognised by continued support from institutional donors such as the European Union, the United Nations, and the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) as well as British, Irish and other international trusts and foundations. This collaboration goes beyond funding to include capacity building and advocacy.

As our programmes are in countries highly vulnerable to natural hazards, we continue to support emergency preparedness work and will be ready to respond with humanitarian support should the need arise.

The shape of things to come

Grounded in Partnership for Change, there are seven key areas that shape our new work in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Climate justice

Our programme aims to support communities to develop livelihoods resilient to climate change and disasters. An increase in natural disasters is generally attributed to climate change, and such emergencies cause significant losses for the most vulnerable people in the countries where we work.

Our work includes the following elements: local, regional, national and international advocacy, climate change



A viable, sustainable industry

Fernando Temo Nalema lives in the Bolivian rainforest. 'I love the forest,' he says. 'When I am older I want to be a farmer like my dad.'

Thanks to our partner CIPCA (the Centre for Research and Training of Peasants), he can do just that.

'CIPCA has helped all the families here'

CIPCA has supported indigenous families in the development of wild cocoa groves in the Beni region. Now a local factory has been built

to process the cocoa into chocolate for the national market.

Cocoa is becoming a viable, sustainable, environmentally friendly industry for Beni, giving these communities a secure income, and young people prospects without having to leave their rainforest homes. Fernando says: 'CIPCA has helped all the families here.'

Community member Ibremia Semo Yuco adds: 'We feel happy because we have the security that we will sell our chocolate for prices that benefit us.'

adaptation, disaster risk reduction (including the use of traditional knowledge to deal with the impact of climate change), scientific investigations, water management, forest management and alternative energy models based on low-carbon energy.

Faith in action

Ecumenism is a significant element of the religious landscape in the region. As a Christian organisation, faith-based organisations are important partners for us. Faith-based organisations have been successful in campaigning on issues such as human rights, peace, sustainable development, prevention of gender-based violence and climate justice.

We believe in the strong role of faith in action in addressing inequalities, promoting behaviour changes and building advocacy initiatives that are based on the experiences of people living in poverty.

We will also engage in contextual biblical and theological reflection on inequality, sustainability, tax and morality, gender-based violence, conflict and violence, the post-2015 agenda, power and inclusiveness, and share our experiences with churches in Britain and Ireland.

Gender justice

We believe a lack of gender justice is a structural cause of poverty and inequality. Where gender-equality laws exist in Latin America and the Caribbean, there is often neither the budget nor political will for them to be fully applied.

Gender inequality is also worse for indigenous women or those of Afro-descent. Domestic violence, sexual abuse and harassment are prevalent, but these issues are almost totally excluded from official debates of public insecurity.

We will support the development of stronger gender-sensitive programming in the region and seek to engage churches and faith-based organisations in these efforts, through action (training and denunciations), and contextual theological and biblical reflections.

We will expose violations of women's rights by government projects, promote public policies that tackle this, and encourage women's participation in social movements and political spaces.

Our programmes will work for the increase of women's income and economic autonomy in rural and urban areas. They will promote a new masculinity model that makes men aware of the effects of gender inequality, and seeks to prevent violence against women, and in general.

Land rights

Land and territories are closely linked to the livelihoods and identities of rural communities. We will support the landless, peasants, indigenous people, Afro-descendants – including quilombola communities in Brazil – in guaranteeing their constitutional and ancestral rights to land, and to reinforce their community organisations in the face of threats related to land rights from large-scale infrastructure projects – dams, roads, extractives, agribusiness – and armed conflict.

We will support policy work and advocacy campaigning to shape these rights – including the International Labour Organisation's Convention 169, which gives indigenous and tribal peoples the right to be consulted and to give their consent about all actions implemented on their land.

Inclusive markets

We will support marginalised people to take advantage of market opportunities to create wealth and prosperity, bringing about sustainable and lasting change.

Our inclusive market development work across Latin America and the Caribbean focuses mainly on market access, supporting small businesses owned and run by poor people (such as coops and producers' associations) in rural and urban areas.

Our programmes in Bolivia, Brazil and Central America are using tools (market maps and studies, feasibility studies, business plans, cash flows and financial projections) to develop quality projects and improve value chains. We are engaging more with the private sector, including cooperative associations, processors, buyers and exporters.

Tackling violence, building peace

High levels of poverty and inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly for ethnic groups, are closely linked to the high levels of violence.

We believe violence stems from the inability of political systems to resolve conflicts in a way that satisfies the most vulnerable and excluded groups. Our programmes will seek to strengthen citizens' capacity to address the power imbalances, claim their rights and transform conflicts.

Tax justice

Challenging aggressive and unfair tax systems – and unjust public spending – is one way we can work to increase equality. Fairer tax systems regionally, nationally and globally can provide a real sustainable solution to systems that see wealth remain in the hands of the privileged few and the poorest pay an unfair share.

Tax justice success

Our partner Centro Bonó was at the forefront of one of the largest public movements in the Dominican Republic's history, which demanded people's taxes be used to improve life for all.

'The campaign succeeded in getting the government to agree to invest in education for the next generation'

Lack of funds meant many children missed out on a decent education. In 2010, we gave Centro Bonó £10,000 to help establish a campaign to lobby the Dominican Republic government to spend 4% of

the country's gross domestic product on schools. The campaign was supported by millions and succeeded in getting the government to agree to invest in education for the next generation.

Mario Serrano, Centro Bonó's former director, says: 'We have managed to double the investment in education. This will improve and increase the numbers of schools.'



We believe we can campaign to change these systems nationally and globally. We will work on tax through a number of approaches: education on why tax is important and how tax justice can make a difference to the lives of the poorest, building public opinion to challenge unfair

and regressive tax systems and promote alternatives, uncovering unfair practices such as evasion, and monitoring national budgets and public spending.

Our objectives

Our overarching aim is to support profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith, gender or nationality in the countries in which we work in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We have two main objectives from 2013 and beyond, which set out how our work through partnership in Latin America and the Caribbean will contribute to achieving the changes we want to see in the world.

Objective 1

To strengthen communities to hold decision makers to account, to make them more responsive to civil society, and to challenge them to change systems and structures to reduce poverty and inequality.

Our goals:

- Poor and vulnerable people, including indigenous peoples, women and Afro-descendants, have a voice and use it in decision-making systems.
- States respond to demands by communities for fairer public policies, recognition of human and land rights, and to reduce conflict.
- Partners in Latin America and the Caribbean influence fairer national and international tax systems.
- Laws are implemented and monitored to prevent gender-based violence.

Objective 2

To ensure women and men in urban and rural communities affected by poverty and inequality where we work in Latin America and the Caribbean are more resilient to risks, shocks and threats affecting their livelihoods and resources.

Our goals:

- Poor and marginalised communities in urban and rural areas have increased access to markets for their products.
- Poor and marginalised communities in urban and rural areas are better prepared for environmental and non-environmental risks, including being more resilient to conflict and violence-related risk.
- Our partners in Latin America and the Caribbean have increased influence in regional, national and global climate change negotiations.

Endnotes

¹ Luis Lopez Calva and Nora Lustig, *Declining Latin America Inequality: Market Forces or State Action*, 6 June 2010.

² HAP International is the humanitarian sector's first international self-regulatory body. Members of HAP are committed to meeting the highest standards of accountability and quality management.

³ Christian Aid, *The Scandal of Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean*, April 2012
christianaid.org.uk/images/scandal-of-inequality-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.pdf

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