

PROFILE: COLOMBIA



Although now classed as a middle-income country, Colombia is home to Latin America's longest-running conflict – and only Sudan has higher numbers of internally displaced people.

Dissatisfied with Colombia's inequity – land and wealth in the hands of the few – left-wing guerrilla groups emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. Rightwing paramilitary organisations funded by powerful landowners formed in opposition.

Fuelled by the cocaine trade, the civil war peaked in the 1980s. In recent years Colombia has experienced relative peace, but still has more than 3.2 million internally displaced people.

As a result of disrupted education and poverty, a large number of children live on the streets and child labour is common.

Meanwhile, young people in cities are at risk of enrolment into illegal armed groups, drug and alcohol addiction, teenage pregnancy, family breakdown and domestic violence.

Although the economy has grown recently, corruption is endemic, while half of Colombia's people live under the poverty line.

As well as suffering the most extreme poverty, rural people have been affected by fumigation used in US-sponsored coca-eradication programmes. Colombia's government denies side effects, but human rights groups claim damage to health and legitimate crops.

Colombia is prone to natural disasters, with more than 11 million people affected each year by droughts, earthquakes and flooding.

TEARFUND'S WORK IN COLOMBIA

Tearfund has been working in Colombia since 1980, with a strong focus on helping vulnerable and destitute children following the mass displacement of families during the civil war.

We currently work in the areas of child development and church mobilisation through our partner Red Viva de Colombia.

Working with and through a network of around 100 churches and 67 Christian organisations, Red Viva is improving the lives of children and families at risk in five Colombian cities.

Building on experience already gained, this project will provide training, accompaniment and opportunities for personal development, encouraging different groups to work together for the benefit of children and families in their communities. The project will directly benefit 100 pastors, 175 leaders and at least 20,000 children. At least 2,500 other church members will indirectly benefit.

Tearfund is also a member of the Alliance for Childhood in Colombia, which advocates for the rights of children in the country.

- **Pray for people living in poverty in Colombia.**
- **Please pray for our Colombian partners as they seek to help others.**
- **And pray for Colombia: for justice, peace, health and hope for everyone.**