

OXFAM IN COLOMBIA

47% of people in Colombia live in poverty – 15% in extreme poverty



THE SITUATION

Colombia has about 46m inhabitants. 47% live in poverty, and 15% in extreme poverty. The poorest zones (Chocó, Boyacá, Córdoba, Nariño, Huila, Sucre, Cauca and Tolima) are those where the population is mostly indigenous and afro descendant.

In rural areas, 44% of the population lives in extreme poverty. They're also the most affected by armed conflicts, as they are continuously forced to leave their land and homes (and as such their livelihoods and means of subsistence).

IN NUMBERS*

150,000
total people helped



Photo: Jesus Habat Colorado

HOW OXFAM IS HELPING

Oxfam has worked with local organisations in Colombia for more than 25 years

We work on projects for rural development, protecting victims of natural disasters and conflicts, reducing the risk of disasters, promoting the rights of ethnic minorities, fostering women's political leadership, and strengthening social organisations to help eradicate poverty

Left: A female farmer takes part in a 'mercados campesinos' or farmers market organised by Oxfam to bring rural produce to the big cities

DEVELOPING ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES

We work with farmers and indigenous and afro-Colombian communities – particularly women – on their participation in the food market between the fields and the cities.

We seek to improve growers' livelihoods and improve food security in the cities.

And we work to strengthen small-scale rural economies and improve urban areas, reducing poverty and inequality in the country.

Right: An Oxfam 'mercados campesinos' or farmers market organised to bring rural produce to the big cities.



Photo: Jesus Habat Colorado

LAND TITLING

We help ethnic-territorial organisations exercise their right to land, and their right to be protected from armed conflict and economic threats. We also seek to advocate for, and strengthen, the control they have of their lives and territories, and the wealth contained therein.

Strengthening women's leadership is fundamental to these organisations, because it ensures their role, and women's agendas, are made visible. It also seeks to acknowledge and increase their power in the decisions affecting the development of their community and their lives.

We network with local stakeholders to increase knowledge and awareness and demand action from the Colombian population on behalf of greater quality and respect for the rights of the indigenous and afro-descendant population.

MILK PRODUCTION

In 2009, four organisations made up of 189 small milk producers – 25% of them women – along with Oxfam and Alpina S.A, one of the largest dairy companies in Colombia, formed an alliance to:

- ensure lasting commercial relations
- provide technical support
- provide access to funding

All to improve the quality of milk, increase production, and diversify markets. This

business and funding model is a new way in which local organisations, the private sector, authorities, and agencies can bring about sustainable development.

All four organisations are located in the Cauca area, in the south-western region of the country – the second poorest in Colombia – and especially include farmers and indigenous and afro descendant producers.

ARMED CONFLICT IN NARIÑO

The Nariño area in the south-east is one of those most affected by the armed conflict, because the threat of control by armed groups in the country is constant. These areas used to be dedicated to growing food but are now abandoned or burned because they were used for illegal planting. Oxfam has been working in these zones for three years to reactivate the economy of the communities and ensure food security.

An example of this is the support Oxfam has given local organisations FUNDESUMA and CIMA. Both organisations have provided training to small farmers (men and women) on technical and leadership topics, as well as in the creation of agro-environmental schools that help replicate lessons learned.

ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Colombia is somewhat vulnerable to natural disasters, but the number of severe floods, hurricanes and other climate-related disasters has increased in recent years.

Oxfam works on risk reduction and climate change adaptation activities in the most vulnerable areas of Colombia. It also works with communities at risk, state authorities and stakeholders, providing people with

access to safer territories and better life conditions.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Torrential rains in early 2011 caused floods in 28 of Colombia's 32 areas. Nearly 2 million people were affected. The areas most affected were the Andean and Caribbean regions – most people in the latter area live in poverty.

Oxfam helped more than 200,000 people through its "Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programming" (WASH) and "Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods" programmes.

Right: A group of children leave a flooded house in Riosucio in January 2011. Oxfam's response included the provision of clean water and sanitation.



Photo: Oxfam