

**OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
IN COLOMBIA: CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES
OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT. CASE STUDY
OF THE UNITED STATES
AND THE EUROPEAN UNION (2012-2021)**

JUAN CAMILO MESA BEDOYA*
(CEIPA)

CARLOS HERNÁN GONZÁLEZ PARIAS**
(Tecnológico de Antioquia)

CRISTINA CHICA GUARÍN***
(Esumer)

Abstract. The objective of this research article is to conduct the identification of the possible changes and continuities presented in the dynamics and the Official Development Assistance (ODA) received by Colombia from the United States of America and the European Union, after the signing of the Peace Agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP). A qualitative case study methodology is used by consulting databases and information from official sources on ODA projects granted to Colombia. The period 2012-2021 was set at four years prior to the signing of the agreement and five years after it. The results show significant changes in the amounts and number of projects financed by the United States and the European Union since the signing of the Agreement.

Keywords: International Cooperation for Development, Peace Agreement, Official Development Assistance, Negotiation Process, Colombia.

* Juan Camilo Mesa Bedoya is Professor at CEIPA with a PhD in International Relations (camilo.mesa@ceipa.edu.co).

** Carlos Hernán González Parías is Professor at the Tecnológico de Antioquia with a PhD in Social Sciences (carlos.gonzalez0@tdea.edu.co).

*** Cristina Chica Guarín is International Negotiator and Services Export Specialist at Institución Universitaria Esumer (cristina.chica@esumer.edu.co).

Introduction

Defining International Development Cooperation (IDC) is not a simple task, since its evolution and understanding responds to changing dynamics in internal and external policies, as well as to the changing dynamics of the international system. Lisbeth K. Duarte and Carlos González on one side, and on the other side Isaline Bergamaschi, Juana García and Carolina Santacruz point out seven characteristics that identify elements inherent to IDC.¹ These characteristics include the following: they respond to the criterion of co-responsibility; are based on the condition of solidarity among peoples; respect and protect Human Rights; include the voluntary collaboration of governments or private entities; share a common set of goals and strategies, and emphasize the importance of clear and constant dialogue. It is also important to note that the cooperating partners must remain neutral without interfering in the internal or external policies of the countries.

Since the 1990s, Colombia has become a noteworthy recipient of international development cooperation (IDC) flows, with a substantial aspect of its foreign policy directed towards attracting IDC resources². Nevertheless, uncertainties emerged during the negotiation process between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP in Havana, specifically regarding the potential challenges and changes that an eventual post-conflict scenario might introduce to the country's cooperation dynamics. There are many research studies that address this issue. For instance, Juana García Duque considers that cooperation in a post-conflict framework is an

¹ Lisbeth K. Duarte and Carlos González, "Origen y Evolución de La Cooperación Internacional Para El Desarrollo" [Origin and Evolution of International Development Cooperation], *Panorama* 8, no. 15 (2014): 117-131; Isaline Bergamaschi, Juana García and Carolina Santacruz, "Colombia Como Oferente y Receptor de Cooperación Internacional: Apropiación, Liderazgo y Dualidad" [Colombia as an Offeror and Recipient of International Cooperation: Appropriation, Leadership, and Duality] in *Nuevos Enfoques Para El Estudio de Las Relaciones Internacionales de Colombia* [New Approaches to the Study of International Relations in Colombia], eds. Arlene B. Tickner and Sebastián Bitar (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2017), 331–60.

² González Parias Carlos Hernán, *Política exterior colombiana, 2010-2018; entre la percepción de los tomadores de decisiones y la cultura estratégica* [Colombian Foreign Policy, 2010-2018; Between the Perception of Decision Makers and Strategic Culture] (Medellín: Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, 2021).

opportunity to address development problems.³ Authors such as Jenny Camelo, Juan David Mambuscay Burbano, Lisbeth Katherine Herrera Duarte, Carlos Hernán González, Juan Camilo Mesa Bedoya, Jenny Astrid, Camelo Zamudio, and Miguel Barreto Henriques reflect on the possible changes in the structure and dynamics of the cooperation flows received by Colombia because of the post-conflict scenario.⁴ Another issue that has been addressed is the possible role played by the Colombian military forces as providers of international development cooperation in security, as a result of the knowledge and experience accumulated over decades of conflict.⁵

For the past two decades, the United States and the European Union have been Colombia's main bilateral cooperation partners. From 1998 to 2018, of the total ODA received by Colombia, 53% and 41% came from the United States and the European Union, respectively.⁶ A large part of

³ Juana García Duque, "Acuerdo de Paz de La Habana y Cooperación Internacional Para El Desarrollo En Colombia" [Havana Peace Agreement and International Cooperation for Development in Colombia], *Revista española de desarrollo y cooperación*, no. 39 (2017): 127-35.

⁴ Camelo Zamudio, Jenny Astrid, and Juan David Mambuscay Burbano, "El Laboratorio de La Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo En Colombia. Estudio de Caso" [The Laboratory of International Cooperation for Development in Colombia. Case Study], *Revista Internacional de Cooperación y Desarrollo* 6, no. 1 (2019): 5-26; Lisbeth Katherine Duarte Herrera, González Parías Carlos Hernán and Juan Camilo Mesa Bedoya, "Retos de la Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo en Colombia" [Challenges of International Development Cooperation in Colombia], *Estudios Internacionales* 49, no. 188 (2017): 111-46, <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-3769.2017.47922>; Miguel Barreto Henriques, "Preparar El Post-Conflicto En Colombia Desde Los Programas de Desarrollo y Paz: Retos y Lecciones Aprendidas Para La Cooperación Internacional y Las Empresas" [Preparing for Post-Conflict in Colombia through Development and Peace Programs: Challenges and Lessons Learned for International Cooperation and Businesses], *Revista de Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia y Seguridad* 9, no. 1 (2014): 179-97.

⁵ Carlos Enrique Álvarez Calderón and Felix Antonio Duque Cruz, "De La Construcción Del Estado a La Construcción de La Nación Colombiana: Aportes y Reflexiones Desde Los Estudios En Seguridad y Defensa" [From the Construction of the State to the Construction of the Colombian Nation: Contributions and Reflections from Security and Defense Studies] in *Fuerzas Militares de Colombia: Nuevos Roles y Desafíos Nacionales e Internacionales*, eds. Eduardo Pastrana Buelvas and Hubert Gehring, (Bogotá: Fundación Konrad Adenauer, 2014), 181-208.

⁶ Davide Riccardi and Jairo Agudelo Taborda, "Cooperação Internacional Para a Paz Na Colômbia: Divergências e Convergências Entre Os Estados Unidos Ea União Europeia" [International Cooperation for Peace in Colombia: Divergences and Convergences between the United States and the European Union], *Estudos Internacionais: Revista de Relações Internacionais Da PUC Minas* 9, no. 3 (2021): 133-51.

these cooperation resources were raised in a context of internal armed conflict. Now, in a new context marked by the signing of the Peace Agreement, new challenges and needs are emerging, where the IDC stemming from these actors is also considered to play an outstanding role.

The main objective of this article is to comparatively analyze the possible changes and continuities of the IDC received by Colombia from the United States and the European Union since the signing of the Havana Peace Agreement. This includes the flows, mechanisms, programs, and allocation of funds, among other aspects.

The relevance of this endeavour is underscored by examining the evolving landscape of IDC in Colombia, particularly in the aftermath of the Havana Peace Agreement. This study contributes to the understanding of official development assistance and international development cooperation by delving into the dynamics, challenges, and continuities of IDC received by Colombia from key partners, the United States and the European Union. By analyzing shifts in flows, mechanisms, and programs, it aims to shed light on the intricate relationship between post-conflict scenarios, foreign policy, and developmental assistance. Additionally, this research provides insights into how Colombia's experience compares and contrasts with other cases, offering valuable perspectives on the broader implications for countries transitioning from conflict to peace.

Literature Review

The context of IDC is based on the actions of international communities and their influence on developing countries. For this reason, it is important to understand the concept of IDC, which is established as a foreign policy instrument comprising the set of actions of all types, and of the resources, whether financial, human, material, or technological involved:

“The scope of International Development Cooperation (IDC) falls within the framework of international relations, where there is a global interest. Through IDC, the aim is to contribute to an international context that enhances living conditions for the population while simultaneously promoting human rights, security, and

good governance. The goal is to foster the well-being and development of communities to achieve tangible progress.”⁷

In arguably the clearest synthesis, Duarte & Gonzales identify seven key characteristics of ICD. Some of these characteristics respond to the criterion of co-responsibility; are based on the criterion of solidarity among peoples; respect and protect Human Rights; include the voluntary collaboration of governments or private entities; share a common set of goals and strategies, and emphasize the importance of clear and constant dialogue. It is also important to note that the cooperating partners must remain neutral without interfering in the internal or external policies of the countries. The authors thus conclude as follows:

“International Development Cooperation is currently an extremely significant and effective tool for correcting evident disparities, gaps, and shortcomings of integrationist processes in globalization. The internationalization of certain problems no longer corresponds only to the territory or state that faces them, but rather they transcend national borders, and their solution, control or eradication becomes the responsibility of the international community.”⁸

Later, following the signing of the Peace Agreement in Colombia, Duarte and González analyze the main challenges faced by the IDC in Colombia. A major challenge for the Colombian government is to adjust the institutional framework, guide diplomacy, and define international aid, minimizing variations in resources since they are intended to finance a large part of public policies. Cooperating partners may feel strongly motivated to contribute financially since a Peace Agreement has been signed; however, they shall be strictly committed to ensuring the fulfillment of the objectives for which the funds are earmarked.⁹

⁷ Mónica Liliana Baracaldo Rincón, “La Cooperación Internacional Como Instrumento Para El Desarrollo Integral En Colombia” [International Cooperation as an Instrument for Comprehensive Development in Colombia] (Bogotá: Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, 2015), <http://hdl.handle.net/10654/7171>.

⁸ Lisbeth K. Duarte and Carlos González, “Origen y Evolución de La Cooperación Internacional Para El Desarrollo” [Origin and Evolution of International Development Cooperation], *Panorama* 8, no. 15 (2014): 117-131.

⁹ Juan Mario Díaz, Henry Staples, Juan Miguel Kanai, and Melanie Lombard, “Between Pacification and Dialogue: Critical Lessons from Colombia’s Territorial Peace,” *Geoforum* 118 (2021): 106-16.

Once the contexts that help understanding IDC in greater depth have been identified, it is important to further reflect on the fact that IDC should bring joint benefits for the parties involved. IDC relies on high financial investments that the beneficiary countries receive, but which may not be sustained over time, or may not yield the expected results. The development of public policies, millennium strategies and others are not necessarily on a long term, because the expected scope is not achieved in due time, and the activities that should be conducted to fulfill it are not developed in coordination with the actors, beneficiaries, and executors.¹⁰ IDC generates an essential and profound question as to how, despite large investments, poverty remains a constant. Therefore, thinking about IDC in the long term can be ambitious, especially when the continuation of policies or the achievements obtained depend on social and political dynamics.

The post-conflict scenario in the Catatumbo region of Colombia is a clear example of how social dynamics make the objectives set out by the IDC be fulfilled only in the short term, despite the agreements signed in Havana that sought to restore physical and emotional calm to the inhabitants and victims of the conflict.¹¹ They were not fulfilled on the long run because some of the actors took arms again, while others were not included in the agreement, and for this reason they continued with their illegal activities:

“Regarding the management of the IDC in the Catatumbo area, it is evident that there is a lack of coordination between the state government, non-governmental organizations, and the territorial entities that make up this region. As a result, there is no planned or organized structure that allows this cooperation to operate in the most effective way possible.”¹²

¹⁰ Bruno Ayllón, “La Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo: fundamentos y justificaciones en la perspectiva de la Teoría de las Relaciones Internacionales” [International Development Cooperation: Foundations and Justifications in the Perspective of International Relations Theory], *Carta Internacional* 2, no. 2 (2007): 32-47.

¹¹ Luis Jimenez, Carlos Vera, and Ramiro Gamboa, “Gestión de Paz Con Alianza de Cooperación Internacional Para La Región Del Catatumbo” [Peace Management with International Cooperation Alliance for the Catatumbo Region], *Revista de Ciencias Sociales (Ve)* 25 (2019): 187-207.

¹² Fabio Andrés Díaz and Magda Catalina Jiménez, “Trumping the Agenda? The Continuity and Discontinuity in Foreign Affairs Between the U.S. and Colombia,” in *The Future of U.S. Empire in the Americas: The Trump Administration and Beyond*, ed. Tim Gill (Oxford: Routledge, 2019), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3429529>.

Theoretical Framework

Since the configuration of modern states, war and cooperation have been factors of interaction between them; however, the IDC and its institutional framework have only been developed since the 1950s and 1960s.¹³ At the end of World War II, the countries that took part in it needed to invest in development and reconstruction in general. It was not only a question of physical structures, but also of everything that a society required to progress and be stable. Third World countries, formerly known as underdeveloped countries, required international investment from those who were economically better positioned in the market to invest, compete, or to develop projects. Cooperation is fundamentally an aid to poor countries. Over the years, the IDC has changed in pursuit of the objective of fighting poverty, and the actors in charge are now governments, private companies, and international non-profit organizations.¹⁴

From the vantage point of idealism theories, IDC can be understood as a tool aimed at fostering peace and global cooperation. Under this approach, states provide assistance to impoverished nations with the objective of improving their living conditions, and reducing social and economic disparities. This action not only seeks to address the immediate needs of disadvantaged communities but also aspires to contribute to the construction of a world characterized by peace and widespread prosperity.¹⁵

¹³ Manuel Galán Gómez and José Antonio Sanahuja, *El sistema internacional de cooperación al desarrollo: una aproximación a sus actores e instrumentos* [The International System of Development Cooperation: An Approach to its Actors and Instruments] (Madrid: CIDEAL, 1999), <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14352/61220>.

¹⁴ Carlo Tassara, "Paradigmas, Actores y Políticas. Breve Historia de La Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo" [Paradigms, Actors, and Policies. Brief History of International Development Cooperation], *Revista Unaula* 31 (2011): 41-97.

¹⁵ Claudia G. Jiménez González, "Las Teorías de La Cooperación Internacional Dentro de Las Relaciones Internacionales" [The Theories of International Cooperation Within International Relations], *POLIS: Investigación y Análisis Sociopolítico y Psicosocial* 2, no. 3 (2003): 115-47; Gino Pauselli, "Theories of International Relations and the Explanation of Foreign Aid," *Revista Iberoamericana de Estudios de Desarrollo = Iberoamerican Journal of Development Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 72-92, https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_ried/ijds.65.

An illustrative example of this perspective is the action of the European Union, which has offered support to African countries with the purpose of promoting democracy and protecting human rights. This commitment reflects the idealism underlying International Development Cooperation, where aid is conceived as a means to promote fundamental values that underpin peaceful coexistence and global progress.

Once its origins are fully clear, it is important to understand that IDC in itself is a set of actions and resources that actors from different countries voluntarily exchange according to their strategies and interests; it is a means to an end. It should be noted that IDC is dynamic and therefore changeable.¹⁶ During the 1980s, Latin American countries that were considered middle class received aid for the development of public policies and the creation of technological centers, which promoted scientific and technological development and fostered research.

In Colombia, there are different cooperation modalities, which are reflected at both central and lower administrative levels. According to the Colombian Presidential Agency of International Cooperation, at the central level, there are the following types of cooperation: Official Development Assistance, South – South cooperation, Triangular cooperation, Col-Col cooperation, and in-kind donations.¹⁷ At the decentralized level, there are tools such as decentralized international cooperation and south-south decentralized international cooperation.¹⁸

Official Development Assistance was defined in the 1970s as transfers received in the form of donations, financial or intellectual transfers, aiming to promote the development of a country at the economic, political,

¹⁶ Horario Rodríguez Vázquez, “La cooperación internacional para el desarrollo desde una perspectiva latinoamericana” [International Development Cooperation from a Latin American Perspective] in *Temas de cooperación internacional para el desarrollo: criticar, proponer, sistematizar* [International cooperation issues for development: criticize, propose, systematize], ed. Aaron Pollack, (San Juan Mixcoac: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2010), 9–34.

¹⁷ APC Colombia, “Modalidades de Cooperación” [Modalities of Cooperation], 2021, accessed (November 12, 2022), <https://www.apccolombia.gov.co/modalidades-de-cooperacion>.

¹⁸ Juan C. Mesa Bedoya, Carlos H. González Parías, and Carolina Yepes Hernández, “Cooperación Internacional Descentralizada Sur-Sur: El Caso de La Ciudad de Medellín (Colombia)” [Decentralized South-South International Cooperation: The Case of Medellín City (Colombia)], *Revista Espacios* 41, no. 21 (2020): 238-253.

or social level, received from partner countries, whether unilaterally, bilaterally, or multilaterally. This aid has undergone different adaptations or, to be more precise, has been adjusted over time, so that it does not become a political element that can be used for manipulation purposes by the different parties. The main objective of such aid is to promote the development and economic well-being of developing countries.¹⁹ The effectiveness of ODA in promoting development is a matter of debate. Some studies suggest that ODA can be effective in reducing poverty and promoting economic growth, while others indicate that it has a limited impact or can even be counterproductive.²⁰ The allocation of ODA is often influenced by political considerations. Donor countries may provide more aid to countries that are strategically important or that share their political values.²¹ The use of ODA can also be subject to corruption and mismanagement. In some cases, aid funds are diverted from their intended purpose and used for personal gain or political purposes.²²

This article centers on the idealistic perspective of International Development Cooperation (IDC) within the realm of international relations. It specifically delves into the contributions made, particularly before and after the peace process in Havana. Hence, it is crucial to recognize that this dynamic is subject to change, contingent on internal and external political circumstances, as well as the historical context that unfolds within cities or towns. It will be different in each case, since the development needs are different, given that the objective of the IDC is to

¹⁹ APC Colombia, "Análisis Del Comportamiento de La Cooperación Internacional No Reembolsable Recibida Por Colombia En El Año 2019" [Analysis of the Behavior of Non-Reimbursable International Cooperation Received by Colombia in 2019], 2020, accessed (November 17, 2022), link to the article. <https://www.apccolombia.gov.co/sites/default/files/2021-02/Ana%CC%81lisis%20de%20comportamiento%20de%20la%20cooperacio%CC%81n%20internacional%20no%20reembolsable%20recibida%20por%20colombia%20en%20el%20an%CC%83o%202019%20cc2019.pdf> .

²⁰ William Hynes and Simon Scott, "The Evolution of Official Development Assistance: Achievements, Criticisms and a Way Forward," OECD Development Co-operation Working Papers No. 12 (December 2013).

²¹ David H. Bearce and Daniel C. Tirone, "Foreign Aid Effectiveness and the Strategic Goals of Donor Governments," *The Journal of Politics* 72, no. 3 (2010): 837-51.

²² Graham Hancock, *Lords of Poverty: The Power, Prestige, and Corruption of the International Aid Business* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989).

promote support for poor countries. Colombia has had multiple fluctuations in receiving such cooperation. In the late 1980s and 1990s, according to the World Bank, Colombia was classified as an upper middle-income country, which led to a loss of interest on the part of multiple agencies to continue promoting development in this nation. We could be under the impression that the interest in peace and the fight against drug trafficking reactivated the international interest in the IDC, since this cooperation would boost and help reduce the impact that drug trafficking has had on the world.

Methodology

In order to achieve the proposed objective, this article adopts a qualitative approach, and carries out a thorough documentation and textual review of the different ODA projects implemented in Colombia in the 2012-2021 period. The period chosen for this study covers four years prior to the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP), 2012-2016, and five years after the signing of the Agreement, 2016-2021. This is justified by the need to analyze the ODA received by Colombia from both the United States and the European Union.

One of the main sources of data is the database of projects systematized by the Presidential Agency of International Cooperation (APC-Colombia), which contains a record of different IDC projects implemented in Colombia from 2010 to the present. A total of 5,415 projects were identified between 2010 and 2022, divided into two main areas: regional and national. After retrieving these records, the projects were filtered by applying the following criteria: (1) time period 2012-2021, (2) ODA projects, (3) donors: The United States, EU Trust Fund for Peace, U.S. Embassy in Colombia, European Union, U.S. Department of State. A total of seventy-nine projects resulted from the application of these criteria. In order to avoid bias and possible errors, the filters were applied twice by each of the authors of the article, each time reaching the same number of records. Subsequently, the projects were divided into sub-periods: 2012-2016 and 2017-2021.

When addressing variables 4 and 5 from Table 1, a triangulation of information was conducted between the project's objective, the project's name, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), crossed with the points of the Peace Agreement. This was done to determine the level of coincidence or alignment of the analyzed projects, either with the SDGs or with the points agreed upon in the Havana Peace Agreement. Following a content analysis, a score ranging from 1 to 5 was assigned (1 – no alignment, 2 – poor alignment, 3 – moderate alignment, 4 – good alignment, 5 – perfect alignment). For the analysis of the results, scores of 3 and above were considered.

Results

The results and discussion based on the application of the proposed methodology and the indicators are presented below. The discussion starts with a general description of IDC and ODA received by Colombia in the context of the armed conflict. Subsequently, a characterization of ODA received by Colombia from the United States and the European Union is presented. Finally, it concludes with the identification of changes and continuities in ODA as a result of the signing of the Government-FARC-EP Peace Agreement.

General Characteristics of International Development Cooperation (IDC) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) Received by Colombia in the Context of the Armed Conflict

Colombia's recent history has been marked by the longest armed conflict in Latin America. For more than sixty years, Colombia has been immersed in a clash that has plunged the country into a bloodbath, with thousands of dead, displaced, and grieving people throughout the country. It is a heterogeneous conflict due to the characteristics of the actors involved, and the territories in which it has taken place. It is worth noting that some areas of the country are characterized by being constant victims of this intersection of interests, since their geographic location is favorable for the maintenance of the economic objectives of illegal groups.

Jonathan Calderón offers a reconstruction of the different stages of the Colombian conflict. As shown in Figure 1, it is divided into three stages: initial, intermediate, and final stage, each with different dynamics and characteristics of the conflict.²³

However, despite the long duration of the conflict, its internationalization and the search for IDC for its resolution date back to the late 1990s. Nevertheless, IDC in Colombia started decades before this internationalization process, and its inception is not linked with the armed conflict.

In fact, the IDC emerged after the World War II, when the United Nations (UN) consolidated the need for such a policy tool in the San Francisco Charter in order to support common interests. These included the fight against poverty, equity, and accessibility to resources by all countries, since it is evident that some of the countries that make up the IDC have greater economic and technological resources. In the 1960s, most of the agencies of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) committee were created; initially, the IDC had a welfare nature.

Another important milestone for Latin America and Colombia is the Alliance for Progress. It was a North American program initiated during the Cold War as a strategy to stop and prevent the advance of communism in the region. According to Diana Rojas, between 1961 and 1969 Colombia was the second recipient country, only behind Brazil and on a par with Chile.²⁴ In that period, Colombia received \$885 million corresponding to 12% of the total resources delivered by the program in Latin America, while Brazil accounted for 30%.

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals were set by the United Nations, which also included the eradication of poverty. The process to achieve the goals differed from country to country. Thus, for Colombia, IDC went from being strictly assistance-based to a tool for strengthening institutional capacities, with the scope of achieving integral development in a context of peace for more than ten years. The money received through

²³ Jonathan Calderón Rojas, "Etapas Del Conflicto Armado En Colombia: Hacia El Posconflicto" [Stages of the Armed Conflict in Colombia: Towards the Post-conflict.] *Latinoamérica. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, no. 62 (2016): 227-57.

²⁴ Diana Marcela Rojas, "Plan Colombia II: ¿más De Lo Mismo?" [Plan Colombia II: more of the same?] *Colombia Internacional* 1, vol. 65 (2007): 14-37, <https://doi.org/10.7440/colombiaint65.2007.01>.

these programs has made it possible to maintain reintegration programs, guaranteeing the laying down of arms and reparations for victims.

Due to the long conflict, Colombia is a *sui generis* case of IDC. Firstly, based strictly on the eligibility criteria, Colombia is considered an upper middle-income country, which does not make it a priority target for aid and cooperation programs. Secondly, the conflict conditioned the cooperation agenda. In this sense, Isaline Bergamaschi, Juana García, and Carolina Santacruz consider that the distribution of cooperation has been determined, for the most part, by the domestic agenda and not by Colombia's foreign policy priorities, *i.e.*, mainly to address the internal issues of conflict and drug trafficking.²⁵

Since the internationalization of the Colombian conflict, there have been several events that have marked the dynamics of the IDC for the country, such as (1) the London Declaration in 2003, where government representatives expressed their support to Colombia, in order to "address threats to democracy, terrorism, drug trafficking, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and the serious humanitarian crisis," (2) the Cartagena Declaration in 2005, where the first steps were taken for the National IDC Strategy, (3) Bogotá 2007, when the second IDC Strategy for Colombia 2007-2010 was announced.

As of 2019, Colombia had received a total of \$713,436,605, with \$34,255,490 allocated for Peace with Legality programs. These funds supported eighteen projects aimed at achieving this objective by identifying specific needs within each program. The main four actors from which donations were received are the United States, followed by Canada, Germany, the European Union and Norway (APC Colombia, 2020).

Characterization of International Development Cooperation (IDC) as received by Colombia from the United States

The main purpose of this section is to characterize the IDC received by Colombia that comes from the United States and the European Union. The criteria used to carry out the characterization are: (1) projects for

²⁵ Isaline Bergamaschi, Juana García and Carolina Santacruz, "Colombia Como Oferente y Receptor de Cooperación Internacional," 331-60.

each year of the analysed period, (2) total value in US dollars of the projects, (3) number of projects and their respective percentage, before the signing of the Agreement (2010-2015) and after the signing of the Agreement (2016-2021).

U.S. Official Development Assistance (ODA)

With the application of the filters, a total of forty-eight ODA projects from the U.S. government and USAID were recorded for the analyzed period. Of these, thirty correspond to projects with national coverage, the remaining eighteen with local coverage.

The number of ODA projects of U.S. origin shows (Figure 2) an irregular behavior during the selected timeframe, reaching a maximum peak of twelve projects initiated in 2012, with a subsequent decline up to 2014. Then, a recovery is observed in 2015 and from this point on a steady decrease in the number of projects becomes evident, until reaching a minimum (zero projects) in the years 2018 and 2019.

Even when observing the behavior in two time periods, before and after the signing of the Agreement, it becomes evident that almost 75% of the ODA projects financed by the United States in Colombia were presented in the period prior to the signing (2010-2015). Twenty-five percent of the projects were submitted after the signing of the Agreement in 2016. These results may seem contradictory, since this considerable decrease occurs precisely after the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP.

However, the causes of this behavior respond to external and systemic factors. The arrival of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States, under the slogans “America first” and “Make America great again,” marked a populist nationalist orientation that deeply permeated the foreign policy of the United States. According to Gilberto Aranda Bustamante and Jorge Riquelme Rivera, Trump conceived foreign policy in a utilitarian sense, oriented to business affairs and imposing one’s own advantages and interests on the other, to the detriment of international stability. Under this conception of the country’s foreign policy, according to Trump, there should not be any concerns with the

construction and stabilization of nations in crisis nor in the spread of democracy and Western values in the world.²⁶ This foreign policy orientation directly affected the different assistance and cooperation programs of this country with the rest of the world, including Colombia.

However, despite the decrease in the number of projects between both periods (2012-2016 and 2017-2021), the amount of value of these projects maintains a certain parity (Figure 3). For the first period, the total amount of projects was \$57.28 million, while for the 2017-2021 period it was \$54 million. This is explained by the 2020 project “Resilient Youth Activity,” which aims to build the capacity of vulnerable youth who have disengaged from armed groups and youth who committed crimes in the past, to overcome the effects of crimes, as well as to reduce the risks of recidivism and foster more inclusive social and economic stability. The project amounted to \$50 million.

Alignment of the Projects with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Points of the Peace Agreement

Of the forty-eight projects observed in the overall period of analysis (2012-2021), a total of thirty-one are not aligned with any SDG. This is explained by the fact that these projects were initiated before the adoption of the SDG by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. The data collected shows that seventeen of the projects initiated after this year are aligned with one or more SDG (Table 2).

However, the aligned projects do not cover the total amount of the SDGs. Of the seventeen established SDGs, seven ODA projects from the United States and USAID are identified, leaving out objectives such as: zero hunger, health and well-being, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and non-polluting energy, industry, innovation and infrastructure, responsible production and consumption, underwater life, life of terrestrial ecosystems, alliance to achieve the objectives (Table 3).

²⁶ Gilberto Aranda Bustamante and Jorge Riquelme Rivera, “Carthago Delenda Est. La Impronta de Donald Trump En La Política Exterior de Estados Unidos” [Carthago Delenda Est. Donald Trump’s Imprint on United States Foreign Policy], *Relaciones Internacionales* 30, no. 60 (2021): 191–207, <https://doi.org/10.24215/23142766e131>.

Since 2016, after the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP, twelve projects supported by the United States and USAID have been identified. Of these, seven have considerable alignment with the points of said agreement, that is 58% alignment.

Notwithstanding, twelve of these 48 projects are found to indirectly point to some of the agreed points. As an illustration, the funds were utilized to support the initiatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights across six strategic areas:: (1) strengthening of monitoring and observation of human rights; (2) promotion of a culture of human rights; (3) strengthen and promote policy reforms and implement human rights in the security sector; (4) support a safe environment for the work of human rights defenders; (5) improve the Colombian government's response to human rights violations; (6) contribute to the effective application of the Victims and Land Restitution Law.

Characterization of the International Development Cooperation as Received by Colombia from the European Union

The purpose of this section is to present the different projects that were carried out in Colombia with the support of the European Union. A total of seventy-eight projects were identified, with sixty-two projects completed before the signing of the Peace Agreement (2012 to 2016). Between 2017 and 2021, fourteen projects were undertaken, and currently, two projects are in progress (Figure 4).

Analyzing the temporal and overall number of executed projects based on these data points revealed a heterogeneous pattern. The results indicate notable support from the European Union, which increased from 2012 and declined after 2016. This coincides with the signing of the Peace Agreement. Of the seventy-eight projects executed, 79% of these are established in the period prior to the signing of the Peace Agreement, and only 20% in the period after the signing of the Agreement.

Figure 5 illustrates the last two five-year periods between 2012 and 2021, in relation to the economic contributions received from the European Union, in which their decrease is evidenced, due to signing the Peace Agreement.

The European Union's engagement in conflict resolution in Colombia commenced in 2007 with the establishment of Peace Laboratories in the Magdalena Medio, Cauca, Nariño, and eastern Antioquia regions. This initiative encountered various limitations, along with political, ideological, and territorial contradictions. The economic contributions received over time in the different projects allowed solidifying the policies that were consistent with the agreements of the parties involved. However, the uniqueness of the political dynamics that wanted to be imposed by the European Union were not well received. For this reason, once this analysis was prepared, we can see how economic contributions and project support were withdrawn.²⁷

It should be noted that the maintenance of policies to guarantee the Agreements in Colombia have undergone significant changes in relation to the lack of commitment by the parties related to the conflict to maintain the Agreements, such as the laying down of arms, reparations for victims, among others. After the signing of the Peace Agreement, guarantees have not been maintained on the part of the perpetrators of the conflict, since groups outside the law, self-proclaimed as FARC-EP dissidents, are constantly re-emerging.

Alignment of the Projects with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Points of the Peace Agreement

In this section, we seek to identify the projects aligned with the SDG which were initiated starting 2015. There are thirty-seven projects that meet these parameters, as it can be observed in Table 4.

Eleven of the seventeen SDGs are reflected in the projects. The remaining six were not included in previous phases or in the current one: health and well-being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, climate action and underwater life. In addition, considering the six points of the

²⁷ Miguel Barreto Henriques, "El rol de la Unión Europea en la resolución del conflicto armado en Colombia: un análisis desde el terreno" [The Role of the European Union in the Resolution of the Armed Conflict in Colombia: An Analysis from the Ground], *Aldea Mundo* 15 (2010): 19-30.

Peace Agreement, sixteen projects financed by the European Union were analyzed, with only six projects being found to align with the provisions of the agreement, excluding: the end of the conflict, the solution to the problem of illicit drugs and the implementation, the verification and the endorsement. It is important to note that some projects focus on post-conflict construction, with objectives aimed at preventing forced displacement, recruitment and other types of violence that occur during the conflict. All of these would be achieved through education and community strengthening.

The agenda of the Peace Agreement established six points: comprehensive rural reform, political participation, end of the conflict, solution to the problem of illicit drugs, agreement on the victims of the conflict, implementation, verification, and endorsement. The projects aligned with the points of the Peace Agreement that received the most interest from donors were: comprehensive rural reform, political participation, and victims. The United States also backed the implementation, verification, and endorsement of various projects but did not address the resolution of the illicit drugs issue. This situation might arise because the narcotics control division, which falls under the program for eradicating and controlling illicit crops, is responsible for addressing this aspect.

In addition to the fact that the points of the Peace Agreement are structurally limited from the start, their scope, the strategies for achieving them, and the responsible actors are not very explicit either. We could assume that the international SDG agenda complements this set of objectives and strategies that pursue the same goal. However, the SDG broadened the coverage, allowing a greater part of the community to benefit.

In the Colombian context, the analysis of ODA trends following the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016 reveals a gradual decline in support from major cooperating countries like the United States and the European Union. While this decrease cannot be solely attributed to Colombia's internal dynamics, it is essential to consider the broader geopolitical landscape, and the evolving priorities of donor nations. Despite the reduction in ODA, idealism emphasizes the enduring impact of development projects, highlighting their ability to strengthen public policies, transform communities, and advance progress in critical areas such as security, education, health, and economic development. However,

they also acknowledge the limitations of these projects, particularly their time-limited nature and the challenges of ensuring long-term sustainability.

It is notable that the influence of the projects, regardless of who sponsors them, strengthens public policies. These in turn transform the communities, allowing progress in security, education, health, economic development, improving the quality of life of those involved. But this is limited to the time of execution of the projects with limited permanence, and it is reflected in the recurrence of outbreaks of disease, unemployment, school dropouts, and decline and loss of the basic elements that ensure an adequate quality of life. The problem is not only due to the lack of permanence of project financing, but also to the re-emergence of illegal groups that impose a new social change.

In essence, the idealist perspective envisions a world where international cooperation, driven by a shared sense of responsibility and mutual respect, plays a pivotal role in empowering developing nations to achieve sustainable development and improve the lives of their citizens. ODA, when implemented effectively and aligned with long-term development goals, can serve as a powerful catalyst for positive change, contributing to a more peaceful, equitable, and prosperous global community.

Conclusions

This type of research enables us to explore an influential subject and gain contextual understanding of the purpose of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in social and political environments. It also has repercussions on the manner in which the conflict and post-conflict developments are understood. The contributions made in the interest of mitigating the impact of the war in Colombia are limited in time and coverage. This analysis provides a starting point from which future research can be developed in order to improve the scope and approach of the programs and adjust them to specific needs in the context and nature of society.

The limitations of this type of research are linked to the lack of research on these topics in Colombia, since scientific or informative

publications are only published by a limited group of people interested in the topic. This means that access to information does not allow for adequate dissemination. On the other hand, much of the research in Colombia corresponds to the fulfillment of academic requirements, so the topics tend to have little coverage and analysis without having sponsorship for its awareness.

The findings presented here are not representative for the total cooperation aid that Colombia receives from cooperating partners. Therefore, it is not possible to affirm that, in terms of cooperation, the United States and the European Union are not committed to the implementation and support of the Peace Agreement. To reach this conclusion, all the dimensions in which cooperation is expressed must be considered: triangular, private flows, multilateral financial cooperation, technical cooperation, bilateral, humanitarian and emergency aid, IDC, among others.

This article is presented as a starting point for future research on different aspects of the subject, for example: the changes experienced by the IDC in Colombia in the post-conflict framework; generating post-conflict changes in the agenda of donors in Colombia; the strategies employed by Colombia to finance via IDC the post-conflict development; the role played by IDC in Colombia's foreign policy.

Table 1

Variables analyzed

Variables	Description	Aim
V1: cooperation and armed conflict in Colombia	Characteristics of IDC in Colombia in the context of the armed conflict and its internationalization.	This variable aims to explore how cooperation has been shaped by the challenges posed by conflict and its international dimensions, providing insights into the complex interplay between development assistance and conflict resolution
V2: ODA projects received by Colombia	Projects financed by the United States (Government and USAID) and by the European Union in the ODA category in the period analyzed.	This variable provides insights into the priorities and strategies of major donors, shedding light on the nature of aid projects in Colombia
V3: total amount of projects	Evolution of the amounts (USD) of the ODA projects received by Colombia from the United States and the European Union during the period of analysis.	This variable allows for a quantitative analysis of the financial commitments made by the United States and the European Union, offering a perspective on the changing financial landscape of development cooperation.
V4: alignment of projects with the SDG	ODA projects oriented to at least one of the Sustainable Development Goals.	This variable offers insights into the strategic orientation of aid projects towards achieving sustainable and inclusive development goals.
V5: alignment of projects with the points of the Havana Agreement	ODA projects oriented to at least one of the commitments and points negotiated in the Havana Agreement.	This variable allows for an evaluation of the extent to which aid projects contribute to the implementation of peace agreements and reconciliation efforts in Colombia.

Source: author's own elaboration, the variables were constructed in accordance with the problem statement, research question, and specific objectives.

Table 2

U.S. projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG	Projects	Number
End of poverty	Investing for Peace Fund – Acumen.	1
Quality education	To provide graduate and leadership training opportunities for emerging Afro-Colombian leaders who are committed to serving their communities, enabling them to better contribute to community development.	1
Decent work and economic growth	SEAF – Colombian Agribusiness Fund	2
Reduction of inequalities	Economic recovery and market systems, risk management policy and practice – OFDA. Resilient Youth Activity.	3
Sustainable cities and communities	Support USAID/OFDA – National Forest Mobilization, Colombia.	1
Climate action	Earthquake preparedness – OFDA.	1
Peace, justice, and strong institutions	Electoral process program. Public opinion program. Support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Alternative development projects, refugees, public relations, eco-pol (State Department). Support to MSPP (Mission to Support the Peace Process) – OAS. Support for the Ombudsman's Office. Reconciliation and business laboratory	8
Total projects aligned with the SDG		17

Source: author's own elaboration based on SDG and data from the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia).

Table 3

U.S. projects aligned with the Peace Agreement points

Agreed point	Projects	Number
Comprehensive Rural Reform	Support to the Peace Process – USAID – OAS (also aligned with points 3, 5 and 6). The goal of this project is to carry out support activities to MSPP related to transitional justice, which is divided in three main areas: 1. Reparations, truth, and reconciliation; 2. Monitoring and support for the restitution of lands and territories; 3. Peace, justice and other transitional justice mechanisms. This agreement also supports the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration tasks of the OAS.	1
End of the conflict	Reconciliation and business laboratory: support the transformation in the relationship between the private sector and its interest groups as a way to strengthen peacebuilding processes at the regional level.	1
Victims	Public policy program project – operated by AECOM International (also aligned with point 1).	3
	Support to the MSPP – OAS: strengthen the capacity of the MSPP/OAS to strengthen the competence of the Colombian government in fulfilling its mandate to conduct and monitor transitional justice activities. These include reparations, revelation of the truth, and reconciliation; monitoring and support for the restitution of lands and territories; and justice, peace, and other transitional justice mechanisms.	
	Support for the Ombudsman's Office. Increase access to justice for citizens in the regions most affected by the conflict, by supporting the ombudsman and the early warning system of the Ombudsman's Office.	
Implementation, verification, and endorsement	Public opinion program: contribute to the strengthening of capacities and the generation of territorial conditions for the future implementation of the agreements and the construction of stable and lasting peace.	2
	Resilient Youth Activity: build the capacity of vulnerable youth who have disengaged from armed groups and youth who committed crimes in the past. The objective is to overcome the effects of crimes, reduce the risks of recidivism and foster more inclusive social and economic stability.	
Total projects aligned with the agreement points		7

Source: author's own elaboration based on Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace (Colombia and Farc-EP) and data from the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia).

Table 4

European Union. Projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG	Projects	Number
End of poverty	Promote more effective humanitarian actions that meet the needs of affected populations.	3
Zero hunger	Capacity building for agricultural innovation systems: scaling up the common framework of the Tropical Agriculture Platform – TAP GCP /GLO/017/EC.	1
Health and well-being	Working together to combat antimicrobial resistance AMR – UNJP/SLS/001/EC	1
Gender equality	Promotion and protection of women in the defense of human rights in the framework of the implementation of the Peace Agreement.	1
Decent work and economic growth	Sectoral reform contract for strategic territorial competitiveness in Colombia.	5
Industry, innovation, and infrastructure	Technical assistance for the implementation of digital TV in Colombia.	1
Reduction of inequalities	Protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons in Colombia and PINP in western Venezuela.	2
Responsible production and consumption	When we have the soil, the seed will grow.	1
Life of terrestrial ecosystems	Budget support: sector reform contract for sustainable local development, DCI-ALA/2015/38166.	1
Peace, justice, and strong institutions	Economic security from ICRC for internally displaced persons and protection of civilian population activities in Colombia.	20
Partnerships to achieve the goals	Support to the implementation of the SDG in Colombia – preliminary actions LA/2020/412-052	1
Total projects aligned with the SDG		37

Source: author's own elaboration based on SDG and data from the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia)

Table 5

European Union. Projects aligned with the Peace Agreement points

Agreed point	Projects	Number
Comprehensive Rural Reform	Colombia Inheritance: territorial governance in a sustainable, productive, and resilient landscape – GCP/COL/120/EC – European Union contract 416210.	2
	Capacity building for agricultural innovation systems: scaling up the common framework of the Tropical Agriculture Platform – TAP GCP/GLO/017/EC.	
Political participation	Territorial governance with public consent.	3
	Thematic line with civil society organizations: enhancing the contributions of women in governance and development processes at the country level.	
Victims	Promotion and protection of women in the defense of human rights in the framework of the implementation of the Peace Agreement.	1
	Support for the fulfillment and national and territorial development of the mandate of the commission for the clarification of truth, coexistence, and non-repetition – ICSP/2019/410-491.	1
Total projects aligned with the agreement points		6

Source: author's own elaboration based on Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace (Colombia and Farc-EP) and data from the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia).

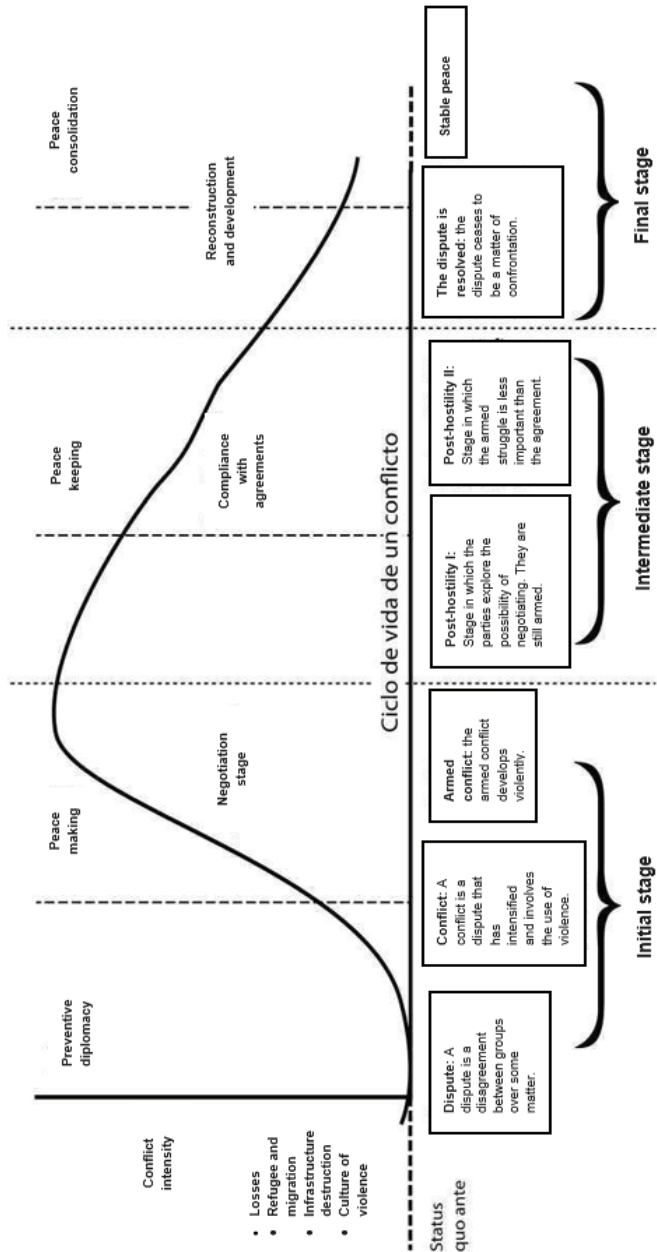


Figure 1. Stages of the Colombian Conflict

Source: Figure translated from Jonathan Calderón Rojas, “Etapas Del Conflicto Armado En Colombia: Hacia El Posconflicto” [Stages of the Armed Conflict in Colombia: Towards the Post-conflict.] *Latinoamérica. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, no. 62 (2016): 227-57.

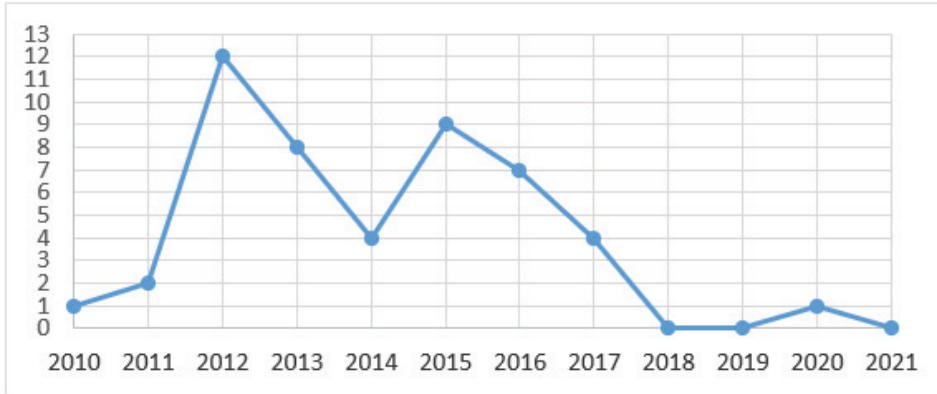


Figure 2. ODA Projects. U.S. and USAID donors, 2010-2021

Source: author's own elaboration based on data from USAID and data from the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia).



Figure 3. Cumulative amount per period 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 in million USD

Source: author's own elaboration based on data from USAID and data from the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia).

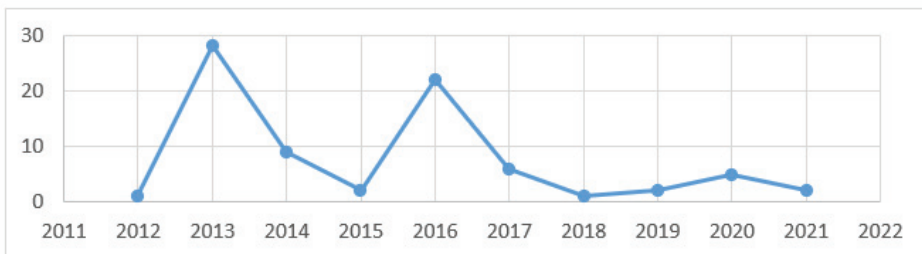


Figure 4. ODA Projects. European Union donors, 2012-2021

Source: author's own elaboration based on data from European Union Donors and data from the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia).



Figure 5. Cumulative amount by period 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 in million USD
Source: author's own elaboration based on data from European Union Donors and data from the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia).