

Open government and U.S. development cooperation in Colombia: Lessons for locally led development

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Motivation:

“Localization”—direct donor support for national organisations in aid recipient countries—has become a major priority for international development. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) pledged to raise the proportion of direct funding to national organisations to 25% and for 50% of funding to involve “locally led” input. Independently, USAID commits to proactive disclosure of project information. This study analyses sectoral priorities, project data access, and localization trends to inform policy discussion about how USAID can reach its twin localization goals, with a focus on Colombia, the largest recipient of U.S. aid in Latin America.

Purpose:

An open government perspective can shed light on whether and how development agencies are making progress towards localization. Moreover, proactive disclosure by donors is necessary to inform locally led development. This study’s goal is to document USAID’s sectoral funding priorities, gaps in proactive data disclosure, and direct local funding progress to make trends in institutional performance more visible to stakeholders. We ask: What are the strengths and limitations of public disclosure of data concerning U.S. foreign assistance in Colombia?

Approach and methods:

This analysis uses open-source data review methods to bring together different sources of publicly available data. These methods include triangulating government data disbursed across multiple sites, recoding government data to make trends visible, and identifying barriers to data access.

Findings:

Public data indicate that U.S. funding for peace-related projects increased in the years following Colombia’s 2016 Peace Accord, though the security share of total U.S. aid remains high. Funding trends demonstrate that USAID is far behind its localization goals in Colombia, though absolute funding totals to local organisations are increasing. Finally, publicly available data are not user-centred, require technical acumen to access, and are fragmented across multiple sites.

Policy implications:

User-centred disclosures are key to locally led development to ensure informed participation and accountability to stakeholders.

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Introduction

In the field of international development cooperation, the goal of “localization” is increasingly recognized as a major priority. “Localization” refers to direct funding for national organisations in recipient countries strengthening local systems (Baguios et al., 2022; USAID, 2023a). “Locally led” development is an even more ambitious goal, involving sharing power to set agendas, along with funding of local organisations (USAID, 2023b). Donors and practitioners across the globe acknowledge that this priority represents a paradigm shift, with challenges concerning oversight and institutional capacity (Ingram, 2022; Venton & Pongracz, 2021; Vij, 2023). In 2021, new United States Agency for International Development (USAID) leadership impressed counterparts and observers with a pair of very ambitious goals—for direct funding for ‘local’ organisations to reach 25% of its program spending by 2025, and for 50% of its funding to be “locally led” by 2030.

This study’s point of departure is that proactive public disclosure of user-centred USAID project information and sectoral trends is key if locally led development is to involve power-sharing. In addition, open government tools can shed light on whether and how development agencies are making progress towards localization. Yet development policy discussions have yet to bring open government and localization agendas together.

As the Open Government Partnership suggests, open government is essential for enhancing local agency, allowing civil society organisations to engage in informed participation, and to improve their capacity to manage larger amounts of funding (Hasan, 2023; Powell & Onigbinde, 2023). Yet, local organisations have identified a lack of relevant resources to develop competitive bids and unresponsiveness from USAID as challenges to realising full participation in the localization agenda (USAID, 2023d). As proposed by a former USAID Chief of Staff, a “radical approach to transparency” could promote greater accountability to local stakeholders by reducing information asymmetry on a range of actions—from agenda setting to procurement to project assessment (Steiger 2023).

This study takes stock of public disclosure of USAID project information by bringing together different, often disconnected sources of publicly available data. This exercise allows stakeholders to see both project specifics and broader donor funding patterns, enabling more informed participation by national and local stakeholders in the policy process. More user-centred public access to information about the flow of development aid allows stakeholders to

follow the money, spotlight progress, and identify bottlenecks. Data collation and visualisations that provide information on progress toward localization goals, such as involved partners and total project funding, can make complex processes more legible for interested parties. Yet, key indicators and simple visualisations are frequently missing from official government sources. For locally led development to be truly collaborative, stakeholders in aid recipient countries need more user-centred information about where aid funding goes and how project decisions are made. In addition, third party analysis of official public data can also identify gaps in official data, which can show where additional, independent, field-based ‘follow-the-money’ investigation is warranted. Without a user-centred approach to proactive disclosure of information about aid flows, there is a risk that official consultations will become box-ticking exercises, lacking the relevant information to make them useable by civil society and others.

The application of an open government perspective to U.S. foreign aid is especially significant because of the historical legacy of the U.S. government’s role in Latin America. Analysis of USAID’s current policy focus on localization and locally led development needs to take into account the longstanding legacy of geopolitics (Schultz, 2018; Taffet, 2007). During the Cold War, well-documented U.S. government covert interventions to overthrow democratically elected governments, as in Guatemala (1954) and Chile (1970 and 1973), combined both overt and covert actions, which cast a long shadow over development and humanitarian efforts. In the 1960s, the U.S. government’s Alliance for Progress also combined political and economic support for moderate social and political reform with targeted efforts to weaken more radical challenges to dominant elites (Levinson & DeOnis, 1970; Page, 1972). During the 1980s, critics of the U.S. government’s military and political intervention in Central America exposed multiple dimensions of its accompanying “soft war” (Barry & Preusch, 1988).

Independent analysts have also documented the winners and losers of U.S. aid that is categorised as humanitarian (Garst & Barry, 1990). For example, ‘food aid’ from the U.S. government is officially called ‘humanitarian’ but food aid policy has long been influenced by domestic economic interests (such as commercial farmers and the shipping industry), while undermining food production in receiving countries. In this geopolitical context, official descriptions of the goals and impacts of U.S. government development aid cannot be taken at face value.

Colombia is relevant not only because it is the largest recipient of U.S. aid in Latin America, but also because its pattern of U.S. aid has shifted dramatically over the past two decades from a primarily military and police focus to an increased emphasis on development and the implementation of Colombia's 2016 Peace Accord. The analysis that follows identifies both notable areas of open government progress, as well as how fragmented and opaque official data limit user-centred access to relevant information about U.S. government funding priorities and trends.

This study's open government perspective sheds light on the unevenness of the localization process, beginning with an international overview of open government and development aid. The findings focus on USAID's proactive disclosure of its Colombia project information through analysis of changing sectoral priorities, gaps in public data access, and current direct local funding progress. The conclusion stresses the importance of open government as a tool to help meet both localization and locally led development goals.

Aid Transparency

Open government initiatives rest on the premise that improved access to information, citizen engagement, and public oversight can improve governance outcomes (Ornelas et al., 2022). Yet the links in the causal chain between specific transparency measures and tangible changes in institutional performance are often assumed rather than spelled out (Fox, 2007). This holds for the application of open government to international development aid, as in other areas of governance (McGee, 2013). One of the many reasons for the ambiguous relationship between transparency and institutional change—including accountability—is that open government can take many forms, some more user-centred than others (e.g., Fung et al., 2007).³

In the case of aid transparency initiatives, there is a major difference between public disclosure designed for 'upwards accountability' (to donor governments, their legislatures, and taxpayers) and for 'downwards accountability' (to recipient governments, affected citizens and ostensible beneficiaries). This distinction is critical—the key constituencies involved in locally led development benefit from clear, timely, and relevant data, yet open government transparency

³ On the distinction between transparency and right to know, and for further discussion of different understandings of related concepts to 'upwards' and 'downwards' accountability, see Fox, 2022

initiatives are often limited satisfying technical reporting requirements while remaining largely inscrutable to non-specialist stakeholders.

In the field of international cooperation, the World Bank pioneered systemic public information disclosure reforms, in direct response to pressure from transnational civil society advocacy campaigns that challenged the high social and environmental costs of many of its projects (Fox & Brown, 1998). Bilateral development agencies eventually followed, to varying degrees. The multistakeholder International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) was launched in 2008 to collate and standardise development and humanitarian aid data.⁴ The “IATI Standard” for data reporting, first agreed upon in 2011, requires that organisations provide consistent aid information that can “be easily exchanged, compared and combined” with other sources (IATI, n.d.b). More than 1,500 organisations have published data to IATI, including the world’s largest government aid agencies and international donor organisations. IATI and outside observers regard open access to aid data as integral for governments in aid receiving countries to plan and coordinate budgets effectively.

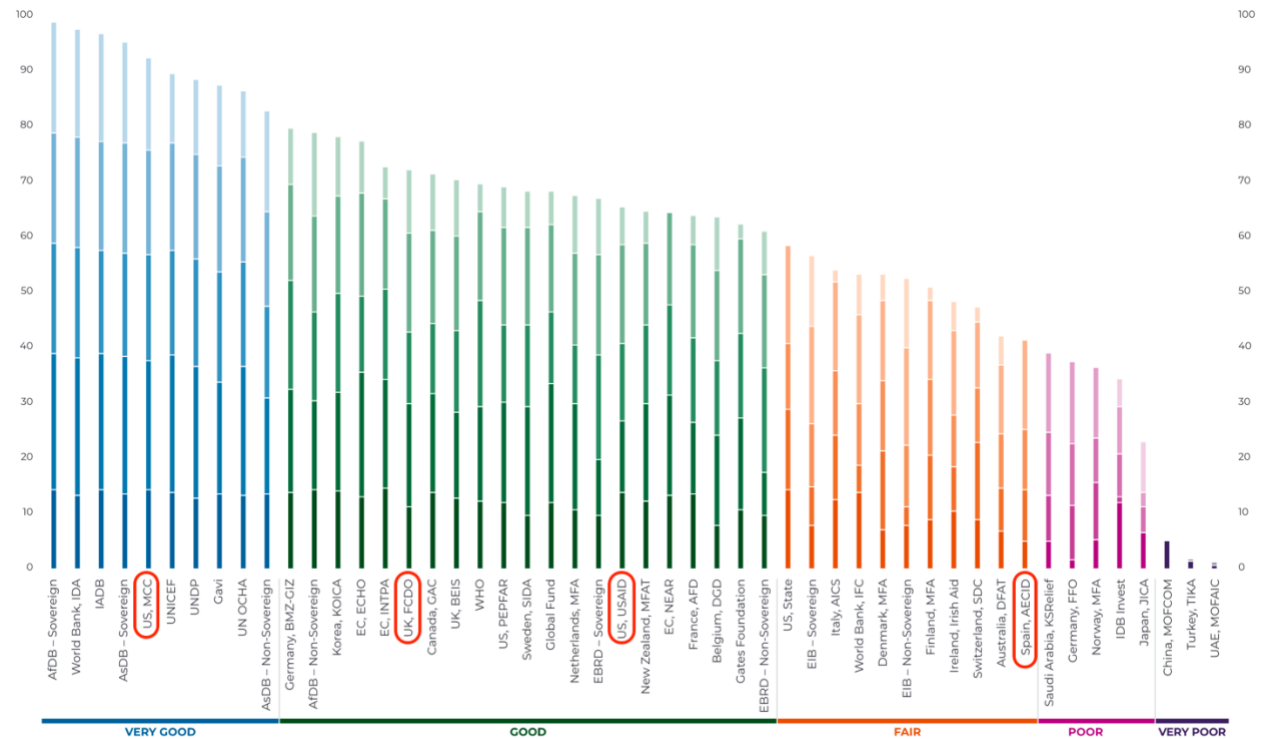
The global open government push has produced measurable progress towards more proactive disclosure of information about the budget priorities of international organisations and government agencies. One key theory of change—as in the case of the Open Government Partnership—is the idea of a ‘race to the top.’ In this view, if organisations are publicly compared and ranked together with their peers in their progress towards goals widely seen as laudable, laggards will make efforts to catch up, while leaders will look over their shoulders to maintain their lead. This is the approach behind the Aid Transparency Index, a ranking system that was launched during the same wave of open government reform as IATI.

The Aid Transparency Index is produced by the watchdog group Publish What You Fund (PWYF), an NGO founded in 2008 with the goal of ensuring “that all aid and development data is transparent and available, usable and used” (Publish What You Fund, n.d.a). The Aid Transparency Index measures commitment to the transparency goals established at the 2011 Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Tilley, 2022, p. 7). The seven Aid Transparency Index reports published between 2013 and 2022 allow for comparative assessments among reporting practices both within and between countries and organisations. USAID’s disclosure

⁴ IATI was part of a wave of international multistakeholder initiatives focused on governance. For a comparison, see, Brockmyer & Fox, 2015.

practices, for example, are middling compared to other bilateral agencies (Publish What You Fund, 2022). In 2022, the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) ranked at the higher end of ‘good’, while Spain’s Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) was ranked as ‘fair’, slightly above the demarcation of ‘poor’. (Tilley, 2022) (see Figure 1).⁵

Figure 1: Aid Transparency Index 2022: Overall Scores and Ranking



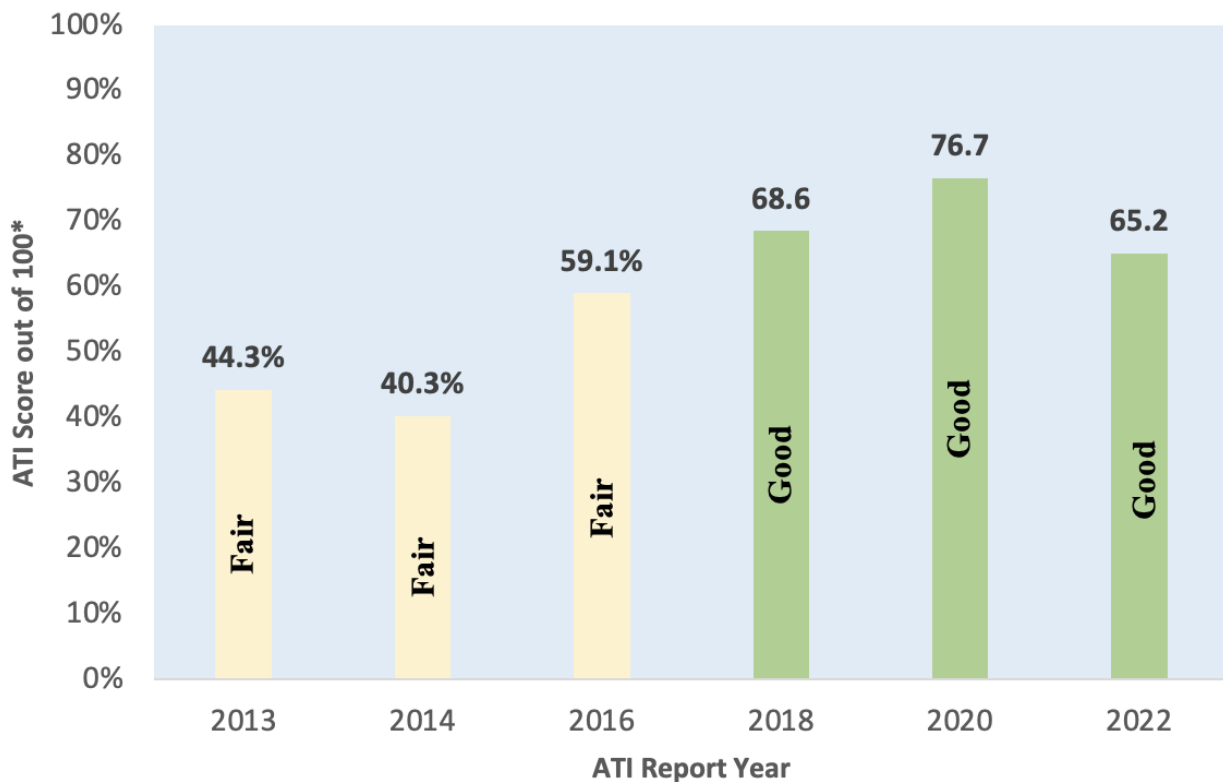
Source: Tilley (2022, p.6).

Improved performance at USAID appears to have been driven by a race to the top, improving from “fair” to “good” in between 2016 and 2018 (See Figure 2). Honig and Weaver (2019) interviewed informants who credited the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s (MCC) high levels of public disclosure as driving improved USAID efforts to comply with IATI standards starting around 2013 (Honig & Weaver, 2019, p. 604). As part of its open government push (USAID, 2016), USAID began to improve its compliance with IATI, independently

⁵ For other international aid transparency initiatives see, among others, Development Initiatives Poverty Research, <https://devinit.org/>. and AidData, <https://www.aiddata.org/>. For data on UK Aid, see Development Tracker, <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/>, plus an evaluation of its public disclosure (ICAI 2022). For Sweden, see: OpenAid, <https://openaid.se/en>.

publishing data to IATI starting in April 2017 (IATI, 2017).⁶ USAID’s progress on transparency has been neither linear nor complete. Between 2020 and 2022, USAID’s transparency ratings *fell* in both absolute and relative terms on the index (from 76.7 to 65.2 points out of a possible 100, and from 15th to 25th overall among assessed organisations). This unexpected downturn in USAID’s open government rating shows that its institutional transparency trends have been independent of changes in U.S. presidential administrations.

Figure 2: USAID Aid Transparency Index Scores: 2013-2022



Source: Publish What You Fund. (n.d.b). Note*: PWYF updated the Aid Transparency Index methodology between 2018 and 2020, accounting for the presentation of percentages and absolute values.

The Aid Transparency Index is composed of multiple indicators, with some more relevant to locally led development than others. USAID receives high scores for the Aid Transparency Index’s category of “Joining-up development data,” a technical indicator mainly of interest to global data analysts. In contrast, the Aid Transparency Index indicators show that USAID consistently falls short in publishing categories of information that are of greatest

⁶ By comparison, MCC began independently publishing to IATI in February 2018, the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in August 2020, and the U.S. State Department in January 2023.

interest to in-country policy analysts and partners, such as budgets for country level projects and key project-level performance-related documents (baseline, mid-project, and final assessment reports and evaluations). When USAID publishes performance documents, they include project details and outcomes, though they rarely disclose information on their budget amounts and spending patterns. USAID’s project reports and evaluations, when available, are also published on websites that are separate from USAID’s project descriptions. USAID’s published project data also include little subnational information, which also contributed to the 2022 drop in the Aid Transparency Index ratings (Publish What You Fund, 2022).

USAID’s public disclosure of project data does not prioritise enabling stakeholders in recipient countries to follow the money. Following the money often requires cross-referencing different data sources but, even then, complete funding delivery is difficult to reconstruct. For example, in 2018, an Oxfam ‘follow the money’ report was able to trace only 7% of USAID funding arriving in Ghana using IATI data (Parrish et al., 2018a, 2018b). From a user-centred perspective, large contracts appear extremely opaque, without disclosure of spending patterns within them. Yet the U.S. government mandated contractors to publish their data on subaward spending on separate government-wide website (Zients, 2010). Compliance with and oversight of these reporting requirements is patchy at best across the US government (GAO, 2023). Public reporting on USAID contracts is no exception. Similar issues arise for third party assessments of USAID progress on localization goals, requiring analysts to reconstruct and estimate figures due to the paucity of public data (Tilley & Jenkins, 2023; Adomako & Cohen, 2023).

Localization of aid: USAID initiatives

During the same wave of international transparency initiatives that included IATI and the Open Government Partnership, USAID initiated a reform agenda called “USAID Forward” in 2010, with a focus on strengthening local partners through capacity building, joint program monitoring, and trainings on how to better work with USAID (USAID, n.d.). After modest progress towards an ambitious target of 30% local funding, policy reverted after the 2016 election. International NGOs continued to advocate for localization (Ahmad & Wainer, 2016), and gained renewed momentum at USAID with the new targets announced in November 2021 (Power, 2021).

These new goals have two components—increasing the share of direct funding to local organisations and increasing the share of funds to practices considered “locally led.” So far,

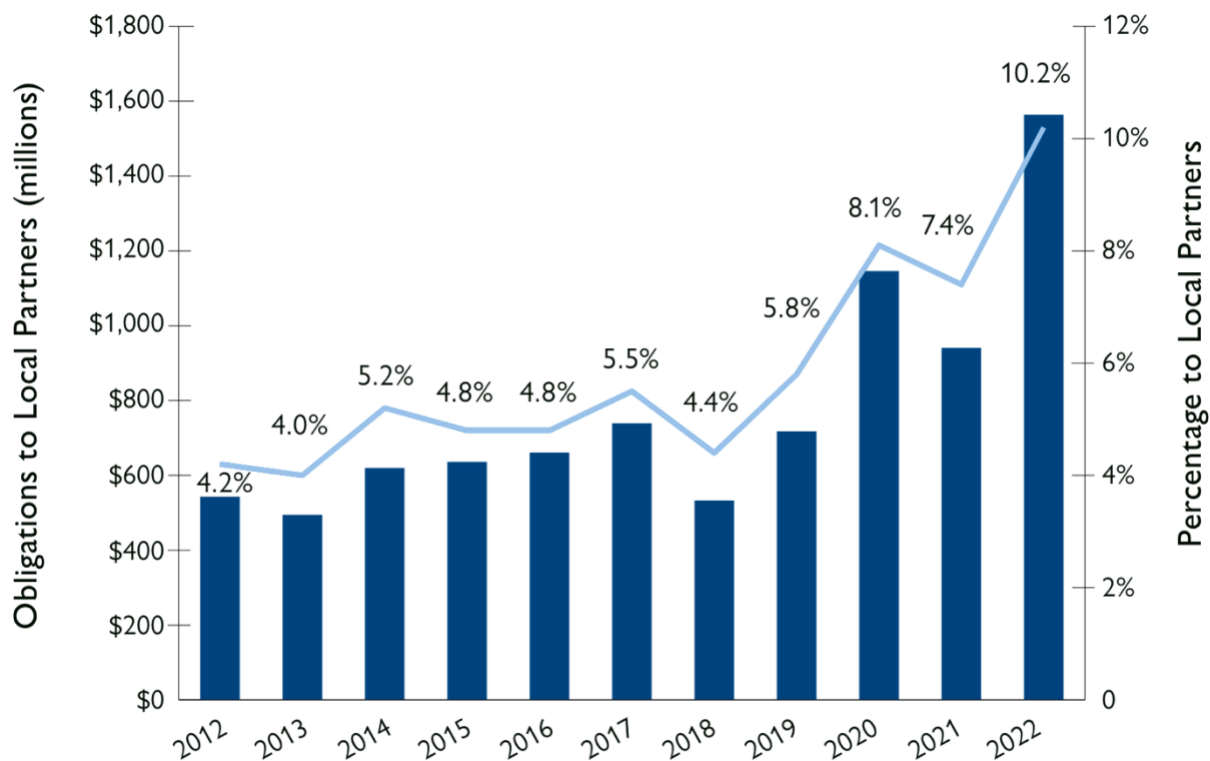
independent research on USAID localization trends has focused on its direct funding (Tilley & Jenkins, 2023; Adomako & Cohen, 2023). USAID progress towards the broader process of locally led development has yet to garner much empirical or analytical attention (Ainsworth, 2023; Feit, 2023). This analysis assesses USAID’s direct funding trends, while also taking stock of its sectoral priorities and the public access to project data that would be necessary for informed participation in locally led development.

Localization and locally led development can sound like synonyms, yet they sometimes involve different actors with different agendas. Experienced observers note that direct USAID funding implies a high degree of upwards accountability to the U.S. government that may be in tension with leadership accountability to broad social constituencies (Levine, 2023; Feit, 2023). Direct funding is only an option for “implementing partners” with substantial administrative capacity, while in principal the goal of locally led could involve a much more diverse range of stakeholders, including social and civic organisation that represent broad-based constituencies.⁷ Indeed, the goal of locally led would be more robust if it included consultations and power-sharing with social and civic organisation that are *not* dependent on USAID funding. Yet as noted below, few of USAID’s 14 operational criteria for defining locally led do not involve power-sharing with independent voices (with a notable exception in the area monitoring and evaluation). For this reason, as a former senior USAID official put it, USAID’s goal for 50% of its funding to be locally led by 2030 “might be far more important” than the current focus on direct local funding (Steiger, 2023).

One of the key obstacles to USAID’s first localization effort involved addressing its own institutional constraints, notably its procurement policies and staffing. In March 2023, USAID announced a new Acquisition and Assistance Strategy to enable greater responsiveness, and in April 2023, the agency provided key performance indicators and definitions for direct local funding (USAID, 2023a, 2023e).

⁷ Note that USAID’s standard term “implementing partner” implies that the role of local organisations is to carry out USAID’s agenda, which is in tension with the new goal of power-sharing over agenda-setting.

Figure 3: USAID Direct Local Funding Over Time, Funding Commitments and Percent



Source: USAID (2023c, p.6).

In June 2023, USAID published its first update on localization, acknowledging slow progress towards its own goals, with only 10.2% of its total funding commitment going directly to national organisations in 2022 (USAID, 2023c, Figure 3). This progress report also revealed stark differences in the countries and sectors that received the largest direct local shares of funding. African countries averaged a 23.8% direct local funding share in 2022, while Latin America and the Caribbean was far behind at 13.2% (down from 14% the year prior). In some countries, the proportion of local funding went down rather than up between 2021 and 2022 (e.g., Mexico, Philippines, Colombia). Progress towards localization also varied significantly across sectors. USAID funding for health, its largest sector, had a 20% share of total funding commitments going to local organisations, while local organisations received around 6% of aid in each of the sectors called “Peace & Security” and “Democracy, Human Rights, & Governance” (USAID, 2023c, p. 7).

Technical issues influence how to measure localization trends, which involves specifying precisely ‘what counts’ as a local organisation. The convention for calculating localization shares of donor funding is to divide the total amount of direct funding to national partners (numerator)

by a specified set of total project funds for a given year (denominator). One complication for this metric is that different official and non-governmental organisations use different definitions of ‘local’ (Saldinger, 2022). These differences are not merely academic, as changing the methodology can result in millions of dollars and multiple percentage points of difference in the final funding figures. The NGOs Publish What You Fund and Oxfam make a case for excluding branches of international entities and multilateral organisations in the numerator, to avoid crowding out more locally-grounded organisations (Tilley & Jenkins, 2023; Hirschfeld, 2024). Indeed, the meaning of the concept of ‘local’ is inherently relative, depending on the positionality of the user (Fox, 2022, p. 78).

After its early emphasis on direct funding, USAID published highly detailed information about the agency’s 14 locally led program indicators, or “practices” that will guide its own assessments (see Table 1). USAID will consider a program locally led if it “demonstrates the use of” two of the 14 indicators in two of the four different categories in a fiscal year (USAID, 2023b). In practice, this appears a relatively low bar when having subawards to national organisations or hiring local evaluators (currently common practices) would satisfy half of the locally led requirement.

Notably, the document makes few references to user-centred open government measures that would contribute to the locally led agenda or informed participation of local constituencies. While there is wide variation in actual power sharing among the 14 practices (see Table 1), four of the indicators specify tangible steps toward sharing power with local organisations (though only one of them explicitly references power sharing). Of note are the practices of “Institutionalizing feedback and accountability with local communities” and “Implementing participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning” as part of USAID’s effort to directly engage communities.⁸ Local organisations express concerns about competition for limited resources and USAID’s preference for international implementers, as well as unclear communication and limited feedback from USAID (USAID 2023d, pp.10-12). Ultimately, ensuring locally led development requires not only hitting more than two of these important benchmarks, but providing timely information on progress.

⁸ The most significant possible open government measure involves institutionalising feedback to communities, which includes “clos(ing) the loop: update actors who are directly and indirectly affected about actions USAID and the Implementing Partner(s) have made in response to information provided.” (USAID, 2023b, p.36).

Table 1: USAID Indicators of ‘Good Practices’ for Locally Led Programs

Category	Indicator	Authors’ assessments of power-sharing generated by indicator*
Direct Local Funding	1. Partnering directly with local or regional partners	Low
Creating Effective Local Partnerships	2. Co-creating with local or regional partners	High
	3. Making descriptive, not prescriptive awards to local and/or regional partners	Medium
	4. Helping local and regional partners achieve full cost recovery	Low
Recognizing, and Investing in Local Capacity	5. Using demand driven capacity strengthening approaches	Medium
	6. Advancing local and regional actors’ readiness to work directly with USAID	Low
	7. Measuring programmatic success using locally defined measures	Medium
	8. Making local subawards and subcontracts	Low
	9. Including the transition award process in prime assistance awards	Low
	10. Conducting evaluations with local evaluation experts	Low
Engaging Communities Directly	11. Conducting listening tours to inform activity design	Medium
	12. Co-creating with stakeholders, including local communities	High
	13. Institutionalizing feedback and accountability with local communities	High
	14. Implementing participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning	High

Author coding: Rated ‘High’ when there is a substantial, operationalised process of co-creation or participation explicated in the indicator; Rated ‘Medium’ when local partners are consulted as part of a hierarchical process; Rated ‘Low’ when local partners are included in or trained to navigate a hierarchical processes. **Source:** USAID (2023b).

Methods: Open Government Perspective on U.S. Foreign Assistance Data

This study uses a combination of open-source data collection and coding methods to analyse three issues that contribute to understanding USAID’s progress towards locally led development in Colombia: 1) Making sectoral priorities in USAID Colombia’s program more

visible by re-coding ForeignAssistance.gov⁹ data; 2) Assessing gaps in public disclosure of USAID’s Colombia project information by triangulating data on the Colombia country mission website with relevant reports and evaluations on the USAID Development Clearing House, and subaward data reported on USASpending.gov; and, 3) Enumerating USAID’s direct local funding in Colombia by analysing expenditure between 2012 and 2022, applying PWYF’s direct local funding calculation methods to IATI data.

For each of these issues, we developed replicable search terms, diagrammed data access pathways, and created indicators to set benchmarks for basic data about USAID projects (e.g., the names of implementing organisations, total project budgets). Two of our methods, recoding official project labels for all agencies in 2021 and recoding USAID project objectives between 2012 and 2022, required more robust methodological processes (see Appendix). We followed PWYF’s guidance on calculating direct local funding using both PWYF’s narrower definition of ‘local’ as well as the estimate of how USAID calculates direct local funding (Tilley & Jenkins, 2023).

While a large quantity of data is publicly available on U.S. foreign assistance to Colombia, it is fragmented across multiple unlinked sites and access requires technical proficiency and sometimes prior knowledge of where to look. Methodological challenges involved not only accessibility of data, but also ambiguity in how to interpret technical terminology.¹⁰ At times, we found the same USAID project could be listed under different names across official government sites, requiring intensive cross-referencing to ensure the same project is under review.¹¹ Gaps and data inconsistencies are highlighted in our analysis of the findings for each of the three issues.

⁹ This data analysis used the official source ForeignAssistance.gov, the flagship U.S. government site created to comply with the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016 (FATAA). The site makes data downloads available in several data formats with highly customisable filters. It offers a legible, user-centred interface, where interactive maps and country profiles provide top-line figures (though few project specifics). IATI also provides detailed Colombia project funding information in several downloadable formats, but differences between the two sources concerning data presentation and project information resulted in favoring ForeignAssistance.gov data. In practice, funding totals from all databases should align, yet mismatches found related to project funding totals by year were beyond the scope of this project to assess.

¹⁰ Several funding sites provide glossaries, but they are not always easy to navigate and sometimes have limited follow-up information.

¹¹ For example, on the ForeignAssistance.gov database, the Colombian anti-corruption project “Partners for Transparency” is mislabeled as “Leverage Local Partner'S[sic] Expertise To Promote Transparency And Accountability In Colombia.” Interested parties would not be able to find the project using the English or Spanish

Trends in U.S. Foreign Assistance to Colombia

After the end of the Cold War, starting in 2000, the \$1.3 billion Plan Colombia continued the pattern in which geopolitical priorities dominated official development aid—combining the ‘war on drugs’ with counter-insurgency.¹² This bipartisan U.S. policy combined assistance to the military and the police with economic development and humanitarian aid. Colombia’s military and police collaborated with paramilitary forces in intensive, well-documented, large-scale repression and forced displacement of civilians. Plan Colombia even budgeted for humanitarian aid for civilians expected to be displaced by the same policy (Lindsay-Poland, 2018). In the name of local economic development, USAID funds reached paramilitary front groups—such as oil palm companies associated with forced displacement of smallholders (Ballvé, 2009, 2020). This legacy underscores the relevance of raising open government standards to enable independent monitoring of international aid flows—ideally in real time, not only retrospectively.

Over two decades, U.S. aid flows have prioritised military and police support over broader development funding at a nearly 2 to 1 ratio (see Figure 4). Isacson (2023), an analyst with the independent human rights organisation Washington Office on Latin America, has painstakingly constructed estimates of U.S. military and police funding to Colombia from multiple sources due to lack of funding transparency.¹³ The U.S. government continues to regard Colombia as a critical strategic partner for security and trade in the Western Hemisphere (Arjona et al., 2019; Biden & Petro, 2023).

The mix of U.S. military and police funding versus economic and institutional aid has shifted significantly over time, but even under the Biden administration the security share requested was almost half of the total. Military and police funding hit a sixteen-year low of

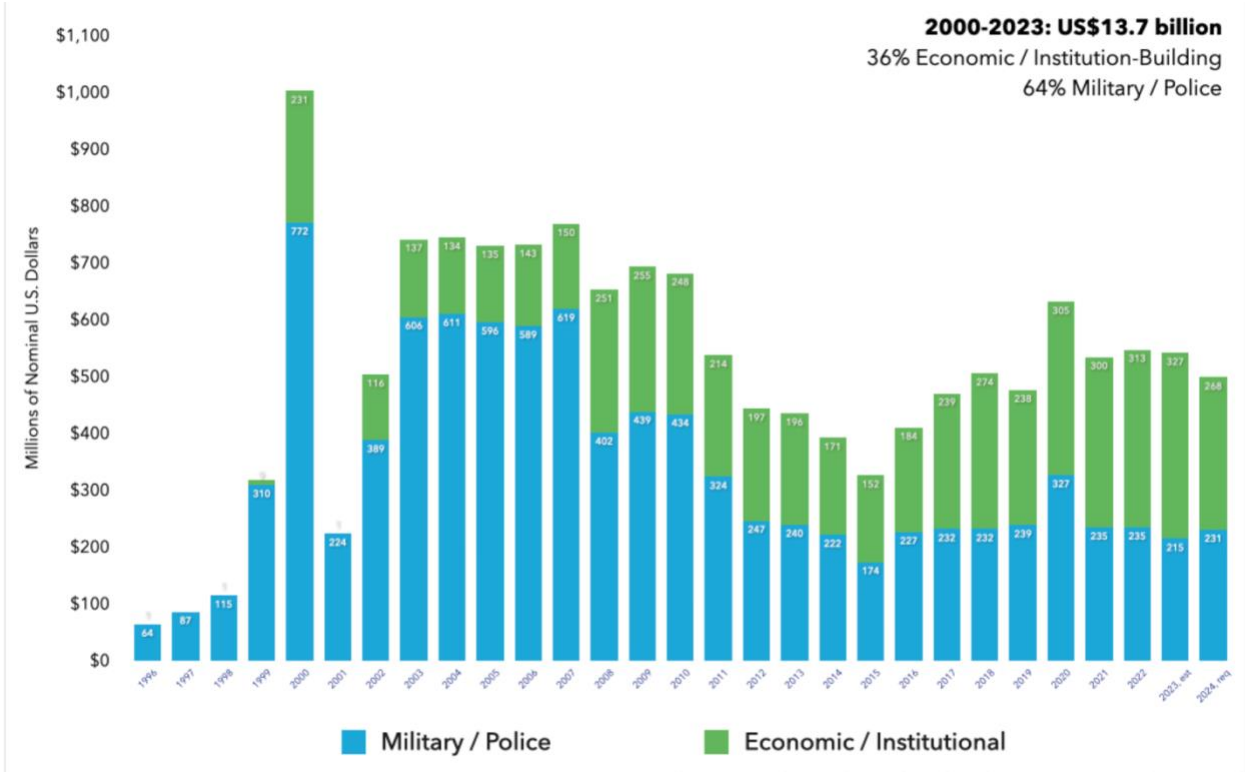
language project name on the U.S. government’s flagship foreign assistance website. The project is properly labeled on other sites, such as USASpending.gov and the USAID Colombia mission site.

¹² For diverse perspectives on Plan Colombia, see Angelo (2024), Bartilow (2019) and Lindsay-Poland (2018), among others. Within the U.S., investigative journalists used transparency tools to reveal campaign donations from helicopter manufacturing companies to national legislators who advocated for arms ‘aid’ and sales to the Colombian military (from both political parties). See, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, 2012.

¹³ *About - Status*, n.d. Accurate as of October 18, 2023. Department of Defense funding disclosures are frequently “not reported” or “partial or incomplete” across years. See ForeignAssistance.gov “reporting robustness by year” for further information. The CIP Security Monitor is another civil society organisation that independently publishes estimates of U.S. military funding. Similar to WOLA’s Adam Isacson, CIP uses multiple sources to construct their figures due to the lack of consistent official military and police funding figures. See, securityassistance.org. For an overview of the obstacles to public disclosure of data on U.S. “security cooperation,” commissioned by the Department of Defense itself, see Grill et al. (2017).

\$174m in 2015, but slightly increased in subsequent years. Indeed, 66% of the 2021 Presidential Budget Request for Colombia (prepared during the Trump administration) was for security-related assistance. During the Biden administration, the annual Presidential Budget Request for Colombia security funding dropped to 52% in 2022, 49% in 2023, and 47% in 2024 (*Data - Query*, n.d.). Between 2016 and 2023, Isacson’s estimates roughly correspond to these figures by showing near parity between “economic/institutional” aid and funding for the “military/police,” with slightly more going to development versus security. However, without more complete and up-to-date proactive disclosure of military funding patterns, any external estimate must be regarded as provisional.

Figure 4: U.S. Aid to Colombia



Source: Isacson (2023).

U.S. foreign assistance to Colombia: Findings

U.S. development aid flows to Colombia were also the largest in the region. Colombia’s \$538m annual aid average—covering all funding—accounted for 26.6% of all country-specific funding in Latin America and the Caribbean between 2001 and 2022, and the Biden administration’s 2023 budget request continued this pattern (Meyer, 2023). Yet the main focus of

U.S. aid to Colombia shifted over this period, with the Obama administration providing both diplomatic and economic support for the peace process.

Because of the controversial historical legacy of U.S. government aid to Latin America, independent observers may wonder how to *interpret* the reported data, especially the categories for describing its distribution across sectors. When one of the main categories of official U.S. aid is labelled “Peace and Security,” observers may wonder how much of that funding was for peace, how much was for security—and what kind of security was actually involved (especially where the security forces are responsible for human rights violations). These questions underscore the relevance of unpacking the official categories to see how they are defined and applied in practice. Rather than accepting the official categories at face value, we re-coded publicly disclosed data with disaggregated criteria based on project-specific goals to determine changes in the sectoral distribution of aid.¹⁴ Projects focused on supporting vulnerable Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities or reintegrating child soldiers are very different from military hardware transfers and training—yet all have some disbursements categorised under “Peace and Security”. At the same time, some projects do involve *both* peace and security—consider demining, for example, which received approximately \$68m since the start of the Peace Accord.¹⁵

Recoding all reported U.S. aid to Colombia for “Peace and Security” in 2021 into the two different categories of “Peace” and “Security”¹⁶ shows that security funding continues to be a high priority with \$142m in funding compared to \$151m for peace-related funding (see Figure 5). This finding is notable, given the U.S. government’s public emphasis on supporting the peace process (United States Department of State, 2023; US Embassy Bogota, 2023). Further, it bears

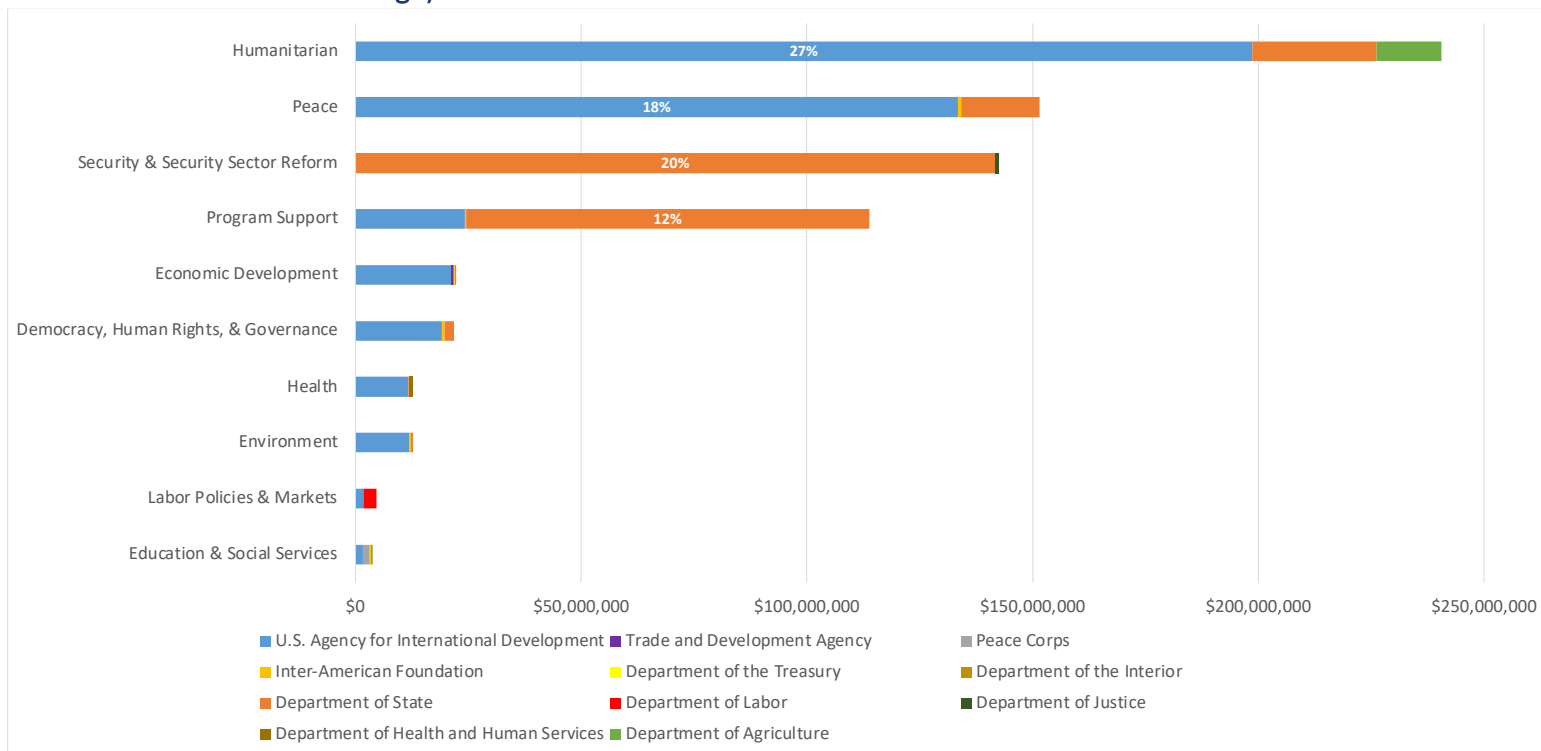
¹⁴ The coding criteria are available in the Appendix.

¹⁵ The effectiveness of demining aid was limited by the U.S. government’s ban on any funding for demobilised guerrillas, who recollections about where they planted them would make demining efforts much more efficient.

¹⁶ ForeignAssistance.gov uses both OECD and U.S. definitions to categorise data. Examining crosstabs on these different methods does not always produce consistent funding totals for seemingly related categories. Notably, differences in peace-related funding totals change drastically depending on the method used. For example, using OECD’s “International Purpose” coding, one would find that in 11 years only 4% of the USAID Colombia budget went to “Civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution,” standing in stark contrast to the \$1.5b in peace-related funding touted by the U.S. government since the 2016 Peace Accord. Another complication for assessing “Peace and Security” first at the U.S. Category level then at the U.S. Sector level is that there is a Sector labelled, “Peace and Security – General” with substantial funding totals. For more information on coding, see the Appendix.

repeating that these security figures do *not* include funding from the Department of Defense (DoD), since their 2021 spending was not yet publicly reported as of early 2024.¹⁷

Figure 5: U.S. Foreign Assistance to Colombia – Sectoral Trends: FY2021 (Excluding Department of Defense Funding*)¹⁸



Source: Data—Query. (n.d.—accessed October 15, 2023). Note*: This dataset is incomplete because it does not list Department of Defense funded or managed projects. Two projects in this dataset funded and managed by the State Department are implemented by the Department of Defense.

In contrast to the Department of Defense, the State Department does report its spending for 2021, but its opaque categories limit consistent fine-grained re-coding to identify priorities.¹⁹ Some of its projects are not transparent, while others report extremely detailed data, providing

¹⁷ The FY2021 data provides two items labeled as military spending implemented by the DoD, but both are managed and funded by the State Department.

¹⁸ This analysis uses independent criteria, informed by the official US Category and Sector, to differentiate sectoral spending and make relative weights more visible to non-specialists. For example, "Peace and Security" was disaggregated into peace and security. 'Peace' includes explicit peace-related education projects, land and environment projects in conflict-affected areas aiming at fostering peace, and demining projects, among others.

¹⁹ For example, in 2020 the State Department's largest amount of funding was for "International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement: Unspecified Law Enforcement Activities" and in 2021 and 2022 the largest amount of funding was for "DOS Miscellaneous Goods, Services, and Operations Maintenance." The vague nature of these project titles limits re-coding consistency.

specifics such as nine separate line items for the same cell phone plan.²⁰ In brief, the official data disclosure process discloses some specific, individual ‘trees’ without providing a clear picture of the ‘forest.’

This exercise in unpacking and rethinking the official sectoral categories finds that a substantial majority of USAID funding in Colombia is targeted to either humanitarian or peace-related goals. In contrast to the State Department, USAID provides consistent, detailed project descriptions, which can be cross-referenced with reports and fact sheets listed on other sites to obtain preliminary insight into project objectives. Such detail allows for re-coding the publicly available data based on stated funding objectives and contextual country knowledge to analyse funding trends. For a country such as Colombia, there is value in identifying not only a general category of “Peace” to account for Peace Accord implementation funding, but also to examine the *relative weights* assigned to funding within sub-categories. These categories include, but are not limited to, when peace intersects with environmental conservation, humanitarian support, and land rights.

Another important U.S. government priority in Colombia is ethnic inclusion, in response to many years of congressional advocacy for peace and human rights by U.S. and Colombian public interest groups. The 2016 Peace Accord’s innovative Ethnic Chapter stressed the cross-cutting nature of support for ethnic rights, to contribute to addressing underlying causes of the conflict (Quiñones Mendoza, 2022). The U.S. government reiterated its commitment to supporting implementation of the Ethnic Chapter in July 2023 (US Embassy Bogotá, 2023). However, the available project data do not permit consistent identification of projects that contribute to ethnic inclusion (notably, limited subaward reporting). USAID internally tags projects as fitting under their indigenous peoples initiative, but does not make the information publicly available. Therefore, to see the degree to which U.S. aid supports ethnic rights projects requires re-coding the data, as can be observed in Table 2. Evaluation of aid delivery and impact

²⁰ All nine cell phone bills are listed as “Activity Project Number: 1105M065”, but are on separate accounting lines and contain different values. *Data - Query*, n.d. Coding thousands of lines of data covering small reimbursement amounts for agents completing specific project tasks presents clear challenges for coding consistency. Accordingly, comprehensive re-coding typically requires some level of detail in the descriptive data to allow for a coding schema that captures the aims of a given project and larger funding totals that indicate year-over-year project consistency and commitment.

would require independent, field-based analysis of the specific organisations and activities that are funded in practice (which goes beyond the scope of this study).

Table 2: Primary Objectives of USAID Colombia Spending by Budget Percentage: FY2016-2022

Objective	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Peace	\$44m (33.1%)	\$73m (47.0%)	\$85m (49.1%)	\$98m (54.4%)	\$90m (55.6%)	\$99m (61.4%)	\$100m (56.4%)	\$113m (48.8%)	\$103m (35.2%)	\$118m (27.9%)	\$110m (25.9%)	\$1bn (41.1%)
Humanitarian	\$15m (11.4%)	\$6m (3.9%)	\$6m (3.5%)	\$7m (3.8%)	\$6m (4.0%)	\$3m (1.7%)	\$6m (3.7%)	\$42m (18.2%)	\$106m (36.1%)	\$195m (46.1%)	\$193m (45.1%)	\$586m (23.3%)
Environment	\$8m (5.7%)	\$10m (6.2%)	\$14m (8.3%)	\$15m (8.1%)	\$8m (5.1%)	\$11m (7.0%)	\$14m (7.8%)	\$15m (6.3%)	\$16m (5.5%)	\$15m (3.5%)	\$12m (2.8%)	\$137m (5.4%)
Ethnic Inclusion	\$5m (4.0%)	\$14m (9.2%)	\$16m (9.0%)	\$12m (6.7%)	\$14m (8.6%)	\$5m (3.1%)	\$14m (7.9%)	\$7m (3.0%)	\$13m (4.3%)	\$19m (4.4%)	\$7m (1.6%)	\$125m (5.0%)
Good Governance	\$31m (23.2%)	\$10m (6.4%)	\$11m (6.5%)	\$7m (3.7%)	\$5m (3.0%)	\$6m (4.0%)	\$1m (0.8%)	\$2m (0.9%)	\$1m (0.4%)	\$7m (1.5%)	\$18m (4.1%)	\$99m (3.9%)
Human Rights	\$5m (3.4%)	\$10m (6.4%)	\$9m (5.5%)	\$9m (4.9%)	\$5m (3.0%)	\$7m (4.6%)	\$8m (4.5%)	\$8m (3.3%)	\$9m (2.9%)	\$13m (3.1%)	\$13m (3.1%)	\$96m (3.8%)
All Other Funding	\$26m (19.3%)	\$33m (21.0%)	\$32m (18.2%)	\$33m (18.3%)	\$33m (20.7%)	\$30m (18.3%)	\$34m (19.0%)	\$45m (19.5%)	\$46m (15.6%)	\$57m (13.5%)	\$75m (17.4%)	\$443m (17.6%)

Source: Data—Query. (n.d.—accessed January 11, 2024). **Note*:** All the above categories contain at least one project which overlaps with “Peace”. The above coding decision were determined through assessment of the main project objective. The full coding schema can be found in the Appendix.

Recoding the data allows us to observe changes—and relative continuity—in priority issue areas that would otherwise be invisible and reveals several important trends. First, the proportion of spending for anti-corruption and good governance stands out for its small share relative to other categories, representing an average of 3.9% of the annual USAID Colombia budget between 2012 and 2022 (though there was a large increase in 2022 funding, seemingly aligned with USAID’s global focus on combating corruption). Second, despite persistent high rates of abuses and impunity, human rights projects received the least amount of funding among major project objectives between 2012 and 2022 at \$8.7m per year—and averaging only 3% of the total budget in the 2020s. These two categories are a priority concern for human rights advocates who call for more U.S. funding to support the peace process (WOLA, 2023). Third, this data analysis shows uneven progress towards funding ethnic inclusion. Ethnic inclusion-related aid dropped from an annual average of \$11.8m between 2012 and 2015 to \$11.1m between 2016 and 2022, though funding increased to \$18m in 2021. Finally, U.S. government humanitarian aid to

Colombia grew rapidly in response to Venezuelan migration, representing more than 45% of all USAID disbursements in 2021 and 2022.

Public Data Disclosures: Project Information, Evaluations, and Subawards

Gaps in access to important project information remain, even as topline USAID project funding figures are widely available. Despite the attention to estimating, debating, and assessing USAID’s progress on direct local funding using public funding figures, this goal is only a part of the more ambitious 50% funding for locally led programming. As outlined earlier, USAID is using 14 practices to evaluate when projects are “locally led.” While many of these 14 practices are hard to independently verify, we examined preliminary public access to information related to two of them, independent project evaluations and subaward data, as well as proactive disclosure of topline project information.

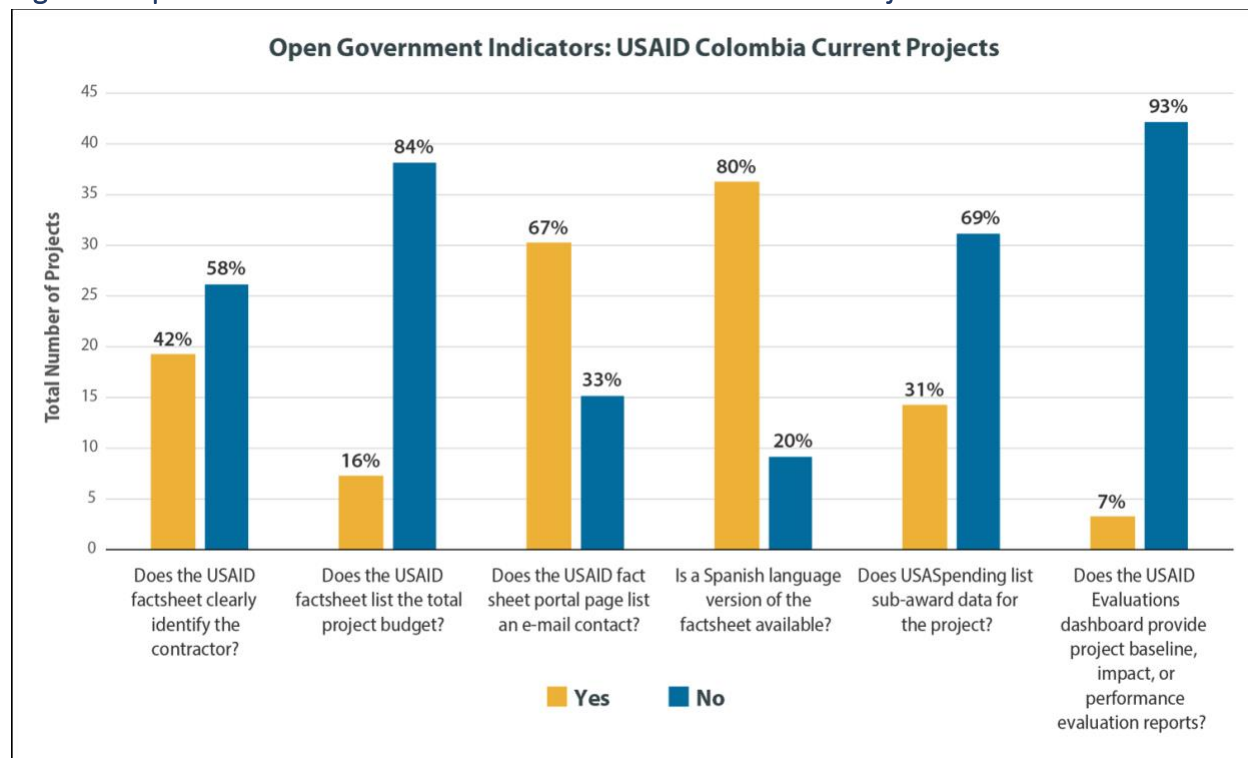
The first step in carrying out this verification was to assess the degree of public access to basic project information. The USAID Colombia mission website provides fact sheets for individual projects, but constructing a fuller picture of a single USAID project required accessing at least five different sites. The user-centred indicators of public access to project data used here include: naming the “prime” contractor (lead project implementor), project budget, email contact, access to information in the national language, reported subaward information, and access to the project’s progress reports and evaluations (see Figure 6).

Analysing USAID Colombia’s 45 unique project fact sheets,²¹ only 16% listed the project budget total. Annual funding totals are available on ForeignAssistance.gov, while reported project subaward data is housed elsewhere, on USASpending.gov. Fact sheet project descriptions provide simple text with basic details, with more than 80% are available in Spanish as well as English. Most of USAID Colombia’s project fact sheets do not name the contractor, which suggests that the idea of locally led is only by invitation. In some cases, contractors create dedicated sites for their project, but links to these project pages are not always easy to find and are rarely, if ever, available via the USAID site. Constructing complete profiles for USAID

²¹ Accurate as of August 2023. The total number of current project fact sheets listed on any USAID mission site is subject to change.

Colombia projects requires visits to multiple sites to supplement the abridged information provided on the mission page.

Figure 6: Open Government Indicators: USAID Colombia Current Projects



Sources: USAID Colombia (n.d.), Data—Query (n.d.), Evaluations at USAID Dashboard (n.d.)

The second step involved examining publicly available project evaluations. Understanding if local communities or partner organisations have been involved in project evaluations requires assessing if USAID’s completed Colombia projects have final performance evaluations. Final project evaluations are located on USAID’s Development Clearing House (DEC), a comprehensive USAID repository with high sensitivity to search terms.

Among the 20 largest USAID Colombia projects completed between FY2012-2022, only 7 had independent final evaluations posted to the DEC.²² Of the 20 projects, 14 had some type of project-related reports, but they were typically quarterly or final project contractors’ reports mandated by USAID. Three of these 14 projects were labelled on ForeignAssistance.gov with project names that produced zero hits on the DEC and required triangulation using the IATI database. The six projects without any specific reports were all related to humanitarian

²² In some instances, project evaluations may have been completed but require a FOIA request to access. See, Wise, 2021.

assistance. These projects are likely addressed in aggregate reports published by USAID’s Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs.

As an alternative to the DEC, the USAID Evaluations project dashboard is a recent effort to collate project evaluations. Colombia’s dashboard contains a haphazard mix of 18 baseline, mid-term, and final project reports (starting from 2016), all of which indicate local partner participation. Assuming the dashboard is managed and maintained, it would represent a significant upgrade on the DEC concerning user-access. The dashboard does not appear to be widely publicised beyond a sidebar link on the official “Evaluations at USAID” landing page on USAID.gov.

Finally, USAID contractors that lead projects (“prime award recipients”) are mandated to disclose subaward data for publication on the site USASpending.gov.²³ The site is not user-friendly and requires a high degree of technical sophistication to navigate. External review of USASpending.gov finds the data are incomplete and contain a high degree of errors (GAO, 2023).

Systematic analysis of the published USAID Colombia subaward data revealed a picture of unreliability due to apparent data lags, errant data inputs, and various download options capturing different underlying data, even when using consistent search filters. For an important ethnic inclusion project, a lead contractor uploaded multiple subawards using a funding code from an entirely different project. While it is possible the funding served a dual purpose, such accounting could lead to an overcounting of ‘local’ indicators, especially when there is not any accompanying information to explain the funding code discrepancy. According to USAID’s indicators, a national branch of an international organisation or a local public relations firm receiving at least 50% of the project subawards satisfies USAID’s criteria. This is a low bar for defining “locally led.”

USAID Localization Trends in Colombia

Independent recoding of official data can also provide further insight into patterns of ‘local’ project funding. In Colombia, USAID directly funds very different kinds of national organisations, ranging from community-based civil society organisations and human rights organisations that support the forcibly displaced, to private sector-oriented economic

²³ Subawards less than \$25,000 or assessed to be a risk to the subawardee are exempt from publication.

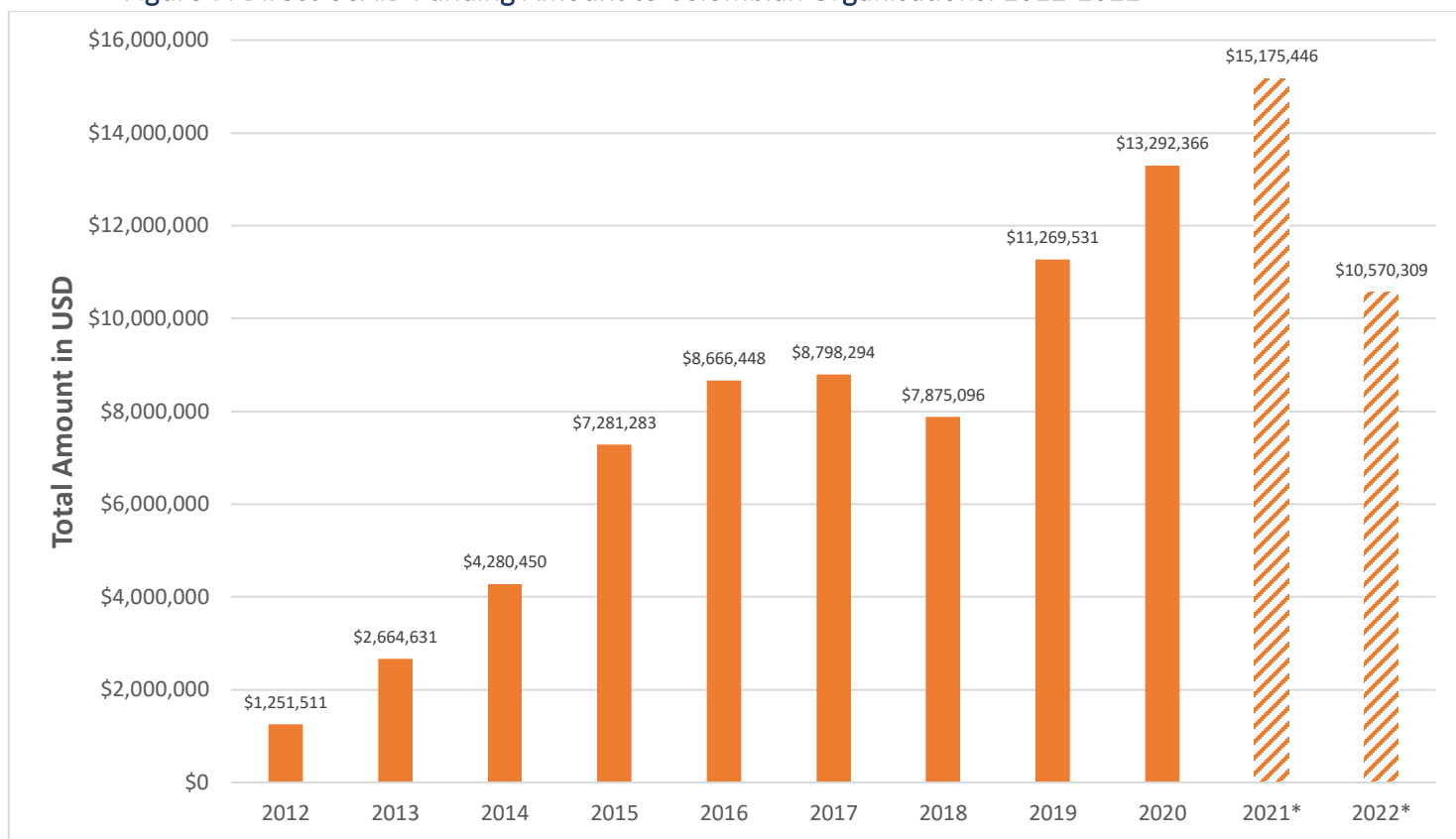
development enterprises. For example, part of USAID's support for ethnic inclusion includes direct funding for a joint project involving the national civil society organisations Asociación Nacional de Afrocolombianos Desplazados (AFRODES) and Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC); as well as the Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato (COCOMACIA), a broad-based Afro-Colombian membership organisation comprised of 124 local community councils that defend territorial rights and local development. At the same time, USAID still maintains its traditional emphasis on funding consulting firms and foundations associated with the private sector under the rubric of economic development. Analysis of public official data is not sufficient to disentangle continuity and change in terms of which kind of Colombian organisations receive the most direct funding. Moreover, only independent field research will be able to determine the actual on-the-ground development impact of these different national organisations.

USAID's progress towards meeting its 25% direct local funding target shows two very different trends in Colombia. Absolute levels of direct funding are going up, while the direct share for national organisations is going down (see Figures 7 and 8). Granted, the 25% goal is an agency-wide average rather than a fixed target that applies equally to all of its country programs, but Colombia's robust civil society organisations would lead one to expect more progress. Moreover, global analysis of USAID's reported country level localization rates shows that they do not correlate with indicators of national civil society strength – as indicated by the contrast between high rates of progress in Africa and lags in Latin America mentioned above.²⁴ This puzzle underscores the need for additional research to determine the drivers of varying USAID country level localization rates.

Primarily focusing on the *share* of funding to local organisations can overshadow the distinct increase in the annual amount of direct aid USAID provided to Colombian organisations between 2012 and 2021 (see Figure 7). In 2012, direct local funding totalled \$1.3m. By 2021, after years of steady increases, that figure reached \$15.2m. The divergence between the declining *share* of direct local funds as a proportion of the larger portfolio and an increase in the total *amount* of funding for local organisations is noteworthy.

²⁴ Correlations between USAID's public localization figures and V-dem's 'Core Civil Society Index' for 2021 and 2022 are .243 and .255, respectively, indicating a high degree of independence between the variables. See the Appendix for visualisations of the relationship between these variables.

Figure 7: Direct USAID Funding Amount to Colombian Organisations: 2012-2022

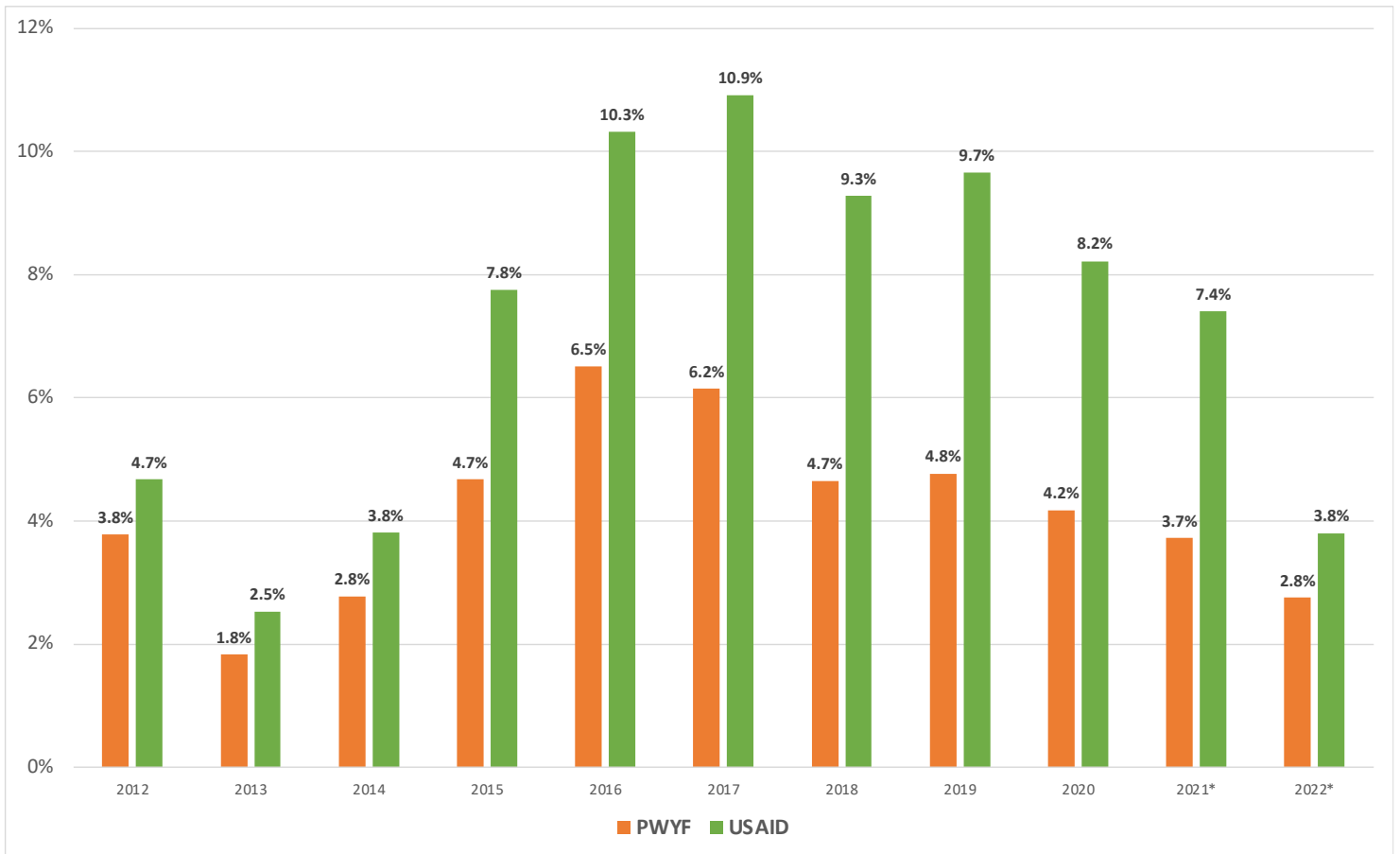


Source: IATI (n.d.a—accessed May 31, 2023. Note*: An asterisk on the year denotes that public data was reported as not complete when accessed. Colombian organizations are scoped using the Publish What You Fund method. International denotes the recipient organisation’s primary headquarters is not in Colombia; Colombian denotes the recipient organisation’s primary headquarters is in Colombia.

Direct local funding shares peaked at 10.9% in 2017 and have steadily dropped since then to 3.8% in 2022, following a combination of the USAID measurement method designed by PWYF and self-reported USAID funding totals.²⁵ Both measurement methods show the same pattern of increasing before declining to near decade lows in 2022. These trends again underscore the ambition of USAID’s 25% goal and the gap between aspiration and measurable progress.

²⁵ For comparison, our calculation estimating the USAID figures for 2021 and 2022 were 6.3% and 4.1% respectively. USAID’s June 2023 report states Colombia’s 2021 figure was 7.3% and the 2022 figure was 3.8%.

Figure 8: Share of Direct USAID Funding to Colombian Organisations: PWYF and USAID Methods Compared



Source: IATI (n.d.a—accessed May 31, 2023. Note*: An asterisk on the year denotes that public data was reported as not complete when accessed. USAID figures for 2021 and 2022 are from United States Agency for International Development, “Moving Toward a Model of Locally Led Development”. PWYF and USAID define ‘local’ organizations differently. Local denotes the recipient organisation’s primary headquarters is in the recipient country for PWYF, while USAID includes nationally incorporated branches of international entities.

One possible explanation for the divergence between localization shares and total funding is that the higher annual aid totals in the USAID Colombia portfolio starting in 2018—caused, in part, by new humanitarian funding in response to Venezuelan immigration—minimised the appearance of absolute gains in local funding. Though this position provides a partial explanation, a rough estimate accounting for spikes in humanitarian assistance still places direct local funding at lower than 15% in 2021.

Conclusion

As the localization agenda gains ground among the world’s top development donors, so must open government practices that allow national stakeholders to engage in informed participation—including stakeholders that may not already be USAID funding recipients. If the new emphasis on localization and locally led development is to diversify the mix of organisations that choose to *seek* USAID funding, then those organisations need better access to relevant information in order to make informed decisions. Given the legacy of U.S. government use of aid for geopolitical purposes, timely and clear open data is needed for national civil society organisations and policymakers both to be informed participants in USAID’s locally led development agenda, and to reduce possible risks in their national context.

The open government perspective developed here has shed light both on historical funding trends and the localization agenda in Colombia by connecting the dots on public data currently fragmented across different official sources. Notably, this study shows that military and police funding remain a central part of U.S. foreign assistance to Colombia, despite public diplomacy elevating its commitment to Peace Accord implementation. This study also found that longstanding priorities to improve social and governance outcomes, including upholding human rights, anti-corruption, environment, and ethnic inclusion, have not received consistent increases in their share of USAID funding over time. USAID’s Colombian localization efforts also tell a mixed story. While the absolute value of direct funding to local partners has increased year over year, the share of direct funding to local partners has greatly declined between 2017 and 2022.

Finally, important gaps remain in public data access. Users can find some technical funding figures for USAID projects, but other very relevant information is not public for a substantive share of projects in Colombia, notably involving budgets, subawards, project implementation reports, and evaluations. Third party monitoring and evaluation—with informed stakeholder participation—can help to fill gaps by ‘following the money’ to assess if project impact matched preliminary goals (especially if the findings are published).

In conclusion, more user-centred public access to information can help stakeholders to identify how development aid is being used, by whom, and to what end. User-centred transparency can help reduce information asymmetries and encourage more power sharing. Greater institutional attention to making relevant project information available, accessible, and

legible to local stakeholders can enable progress towards locally led development—and offset inertial tendencies to relegate “locally led” to a box ticking exercise.

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Appendix

For complete data, see, Hallock, Jeffrey (2024). Open Government and US Development Cooperation in Colombia: Lessons for Locally-Led Development. American University. Dataset. <https://doi.org/10.57912/25274497>

Coding: U.S. Foreign Assistance to Colombia – Sectoral Trends: FY2021

ARC developed slightly adjusted sectoral categories to make relative spending weights more visible and easily understandable to non-specialists. These categories are based on U.S. Category Names, which are “A framework developed to categorize U.S. government foreign assistance reporting across agencies”.

- ARC Categories include: Humanitarian, Security & Security Sector Reform, Economic Development, Peace, Democracy, Human Rights, & Governance, Program Support, Health, Environment, Labor Policies & Markets, and Education & Social Services
 - While these categories are largely aligned with the coding schema used for the USAID Objectives Coding, the categories do not overlap perfectly, explaining minor discrepancies in funding totals
- ARC evaluated line items for Colombia’s FY2021 disbursements to determine if the U.S. Category name was apt for projects, or if certain projects should be recategorized. Coding decisions included:
 - Coding all projects with the goal of creating ‘peace’ to the ARC Category “Peace”
 - These projects typically focused on general post-conflict peacebuilding and mitigating lingering effects of the conflict, such as demining projects
 - Coding all Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs projects, along with projects related to policing, to “Security & Security Sector Reform”
 - Coding all Covid-related projects to “Health”
- The ARC Categories contain three main differences from the US Category Names
 - The new “Peace” ARC Category contains many projects previously categorized under “Peace and Security,” but also contains projects previously coded under different U.S. Category names such as “Economic Development” and “Education and Social Services”
 - The new “Security & Security Sector Reform” ARC Category contains many projects previously categorized under “Peace and Security,” but now includes all Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs projects
 - The new “Labor Policies & Markets” ARC Category lifts up projects designed to protect workers' rights. This category was previously coded as a U.S. Sector Name, as a subset of the “Economic Development” category
- For the graph, negative values for the Department of the Interior (-\$224,221 in Environment) and Peace Corps (-\$6,494 in Program Support) were removed for visual presentation purposes.

Coding: Primary Objectives of USAID Colombia Spending FY2012-2022

- ARC primarily utilized USAID projects’ “Activity Description” to highlight project objectives, and make visible relative funding changes over time
 - Coding decisions were primarily based on ForeignAssistance.gov official descriptions, utilizing the “Activity Description” language and details. Projects with no “Activity Description” other than the project name were not assigned ‘objectives’ coding unless they 1) contained easily searchable project information made available by USAID or 2) were projects with easily identifiable objectives in the “Activity Name”, such as “Afro-

Colombian and Indigenous Program” or “Assistance To Demobilization And Reintegration”. All administrative, project support, monitoring and evaluation, logistics and acquisitions, and redacted line items were coded as “All Other Funding” unless the objective was clearly specified, such as logistics supporting humanitarian food assistance

- Coding process:
 - Download full “Colombia” disbursements dataset from ForeignAssistance.gov. Data includes disbursements between FY2001-2023.
 - Add filter and sort data by “Managing Agency” using ‘U.S. Agency for International Development’.
 - Read “Activity Description” of all USAID projects that contain the following terms:
 - "transpar*"; "corru*"; "overs*"; "oversee"; "rule of law"; "good governance"; "management"; "crim*"; "illeg*"; "licit"; "justic*"; "account*"; "building"; "land".
 - Provide an initial coding for each line item based on the “Activity Description” conveyance of project objectives.
 - Read “Activity Description” of all USAID projects in “US Sector Name”: ‘Rule of Law and Human Rights’; ‘Good Governance’; ‘Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation’; ‘Political Competition and Consensus Building’; ‘Stabilization Operations and Security Sector Reform’.
 - Provide an initial coding for each line item based on the “Activity Description” conveyance of project objectives.
 - Provide ‘expansive’ coding that captures two objectives
 - Provide ‘streamlined’ coding that determines primary funding objective
 - Sort USAID managed projects by “Activity Name”. Read through all “Activity Description” cells to ensure consistency and accuracy of coding.
 - Repeat previous steps as needed to ensure consistency and accuracy across coding decisions.
 - In total, five primary-coder audits and two secondary-coder audits were completed
- Categories include:
 - **Peace.** Includes funding focused on economic, social (civil society), and/or capacity-building support for local, municipal, or national government in conflict-affected areas. Peace-related projects can overlap with most other categories. For the more streamlined “Peace” coding schema, coding decisions were predicated on a determination of the primary funding objective.
 - Example: *Reconciliation and Conflict Prevention*—The purpose of the activity is to contribute to reconciliation among victims, ex-combatants, and host communities in four municipalities affected by conflict by strengthening attitudes and skills associated with a culture of peace and a pacific coexistence.
 - **Peace & Economic Development.** Includes funding with objectives closely aligned with both “Peace” and “Economic Development”. All “Peace & Economic Development” projects are re-coded as “Peace” in the streamlined coding.
 - Example. **Cocoa Effect Activity**—The goal of the activity is to strengthen the cocoa productive chain, contributing to better living conditions of producers and their surrounding communities, in municipalities of 3 sub-regions: Urab, Bajo Cauca Antioqueño and Centro-Sur del Huila, as a foundation for the construction of a lasting peace in Colombia.

- **Peace & Environment.** Includes funding focused on environmental conservation in conflict-affected areas.
 - Example: *Paramos and Forests Activity*–The purpose of the USAID Paramos and Forests Activity is to support Colombia in the implementation of its Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses related climate change mitigation goals, while strengthening community-based sustainable development initiatives in the context of a post peace agreement scenario.
- **Peace & Ethnic Inclusion.** Includes “Peace” funding designed to support Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations, typically through rights protections, economic development, and aiding in the development of greater capacity for self-governance. For streamlined coding, all “Peace & Ethnic Inclusion” funding is re-coded as “Ethnic Inclusion”.
 - Example. *Foster Social and Economic Inclusion of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities*–Through this activity, USAID seeks to support the efforts of an organization to foster social and economic inclusion of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities that have been severely affected by conflict, with a special emphasis within that community on people with disabilities, LGBTI population, and victims of gender-based violence.
- **Peace & Good Governance.** Includes funding with objectives closely aligned with both “Peace” and “Good Governance”.
 - Example. *Regional Governance Activity*- To enhance good governance, public financial management and service delivery in conflict-affected municipalities.
- **Peace & Humanitarian.** Includes funding with objectives closely aligned with both “Peace” and “Humanitarian”.
- **Peace & Human Rights.** Includes funding with objectives closely aligned with both “Peace” and “Human Rights”.
- **Peace & Lands Rights.** Includes funding formalizing land tenure and land access in conflict-affected areas.
 - Example. *Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights (STARR) II*–The purpose of this Activity is to improve the conditions of conflict affected rural households in a sustainable manner. This will be achieved by providing massive access to land titles while supporting land restitution as part of the broader land titling.
- **Economic Development.** Includes funding to spur economic growth and enlarge markets.
 - Example. *Development Assistance*–Partnership and co-creation modules: building effective multistakeholder partnerships and co-design/co-create shared value (practicum and follow through included)
- **Environment.** Includes funding for environmental conservation.
 - Example. *Amazonia Connect*–Amazonia connect purpose is to reduce commodity-driven deforestation (CDD) in the amazon.
- **Environment & Economic Development. Includes funding** with objectives closely aligned with both “Environment” and “Economic Development”
- **Environment & Good Governance.**
 - Example. *Amazon Alive/Forest Management and Conservation*–In response to Colombia recent surge in deforestation and biodiversity loss, the purpose of the amazon alive activity is to (1) improve the effectiveness of the environmental crime prevention and prosecution and (2) improve the effectiveness of forest conservation and management. This will be an integrated activity designed to contribute to Colombian development by strengthening social cohesion, responsive governance, and environmentally sustainable economic development.

- **Ethnic Inclusion.** In the expansive coding, this category captures projects geared toward Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, but do not contain a clear connection to peace-related funding.
- **Good Governance.** Includes projects designed to improve or reform state institutions, promote transparency and oversight, and implement anti-corruption policies. Some good governance project descriptions contain language about the benefits of the reform, but coding for these projects is predicated on the core governance objective.
 - Example: *Partners for Transparency*–Leverage Local Partner’S [sic] Expertise To Promote Transparency And Accountability In Colombia.
- **Human Rights.** Includes projects designed to ensure rights protections in Colombia and/or monitor the Colombian government’s compliance with international human rights standards.
 - Example: *Human Rights Program II*–Advance Colombian initiatives in preventing, protecting and responding to human rights abuses.
- **Humanitarian.** Includes funding designed to respond to the needs of vulnerable people in crisis situations. Humanitarian aid is inclusive of support for internally displaced people and refugees.
 - Example: *The Community Stabilization Activity*–The Community Stabilization Activity responds to the need to provide the Government of Colombia (GOC) with technical assistance and tools to address the dire humanitarian situation created in communities affected by the sudden increase of population flows from Venezuela.
- **All Other Funding.** This category contains administrative, indeterminate, and residual funding that does not properly fit in the above objective categories. In the streamlined coding, “Economic Development” specific funding was re-coded in this category to make other priority issue areas more visible.

Relationship between USAID’s Self-reported Localization Figures and V-dem “Core Civil Society Index”, 2021 and 2022

