

# Development plans in Colombia: Social and economic progress from 1961 to 2022

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**Abstract:** The primary objective of this article is to determine the social and economic advancements achieved in Colombia through the development plans approved and executed between 1961 and 2022. This is a descriptive, longitudinal study with a retrospective design, employing documentary techniques to access information from institutional primary sources and secondary sources necessary for analyzing the regulatory framework regarding planning and the outcomes of the plans approved during the mentioned period. Among the indicators used to ascertain these advancements are data related to coverage in education, health, and public services, the offering of social housing, gross domestic product, per capita income, exports, and imports. The results show that the country achieved significant economic and social progress during these six decades of plan implementation. A key conclusion is that executing each national development plan requires not only financial resources but also greater individual, collective, and regional commitments that can truly contribute to mitigating persistent problems, especially extreme poverty, drug trafficking, labor informality, and violence in rural areas.

**Keywords:** national development plan; education; peace; exports; imports

## 1. Introduction

The planning of social and economic development constitutes a fundamental pillar in a nation's growth and well-being strategy, especially in key indicators such as infrastructure, basic public services, educational coverage, health system, social housing, total production, per capita income, exports, and investment, among others. Development planning began to be fundamentally established after World War II, in response to the need to rebuild countries and set new directions for their development (Mejía et al., 2020).

Therefore, the development plan is a planning tool that defines and prioritizes objectives and public policies, setting goals, programs, projects, and the necessary resources for their funding over a government period (DNP, 2012). It requires the formulation of a technical diagnosis and the offer of perspectives for the economy, defining global and sectoral targets for a specified period (Vélez, 2009). It is considered a government instrument, affecting public management over a four-year

period, allowing the participation of different sectors and authorities (Zapata-Cortés, 2020). It is composed of the plan's foundations, the investment plan, and the law that makes it official (Berrío et al., 2020).

In Colombia, the national development plan (hereafter NDP) initially aimed to solve the problems that hindered the country's development in the first half of the 20th century, mainly low productivity in agriculture, educational delays, housing deficit, violence, public services deficit, and poverty, described in a diagnosis led by the Canadian Lauchlin Currie in 1950 (López, 2011; Vergara Varela, 2018). This diagnosis subsequently contributed to the incorporation of development planning and the formation of a planning committee in the country (Martínez, 1982).

The central aim of this article is to determine the social and economic advances achieved in Colombia with the development plans approved and executed between 1961 and 2022. It is a descriptive, documentary-type study with a retrospective design, based on content analysis as the primary technique for information collection.

The data and indicators considered to determine the social and economic advances of the development plans primarily included the following: coverage in primary, secondary, and higher education; teachers' level of education; coverage in the health system, both in contributory and subsidized regimes; coverage in public services of electricity, water supply, and sewage; housing construction; investment in social spending; gross domestic product; per capita income; exports; imports; trade balance; direct foreign investment; and unemployment rate.

The importance of this article lies mainly in analyzing the entire formal period of planning in Colombia and identifying the most significant social and economic contributions of each of the NDPs approved and executed until 2022. While significant analyses of specific NDPs' scope or the results of planning in different periods have been carried out, in recent years, there is no evidence of a work that analyzes the contributions of all the NDPs that have been executed in the country to date.

Among the published works that analyze several NDPs are those by Martínez (1982), Acevedo (2009), Vergara Varela (2018), and Guzmán (2019). In this order, Martínez (1982) analyzed agrarian policy within the NDPs in the period 1960–1978. For his part, Acevedo (2009) conducted an analysis between the years 1960 and 2002, focusing his study on the role of the National Planning Department (hereinafter DNP). On the other hand, Vergara Varela (2018) studied the period 1960–2014, directing his analysis to the agricultural and industrial sectors within the NDPs. Similarly, Guzmán (2019) analyzed scientific policy within the NDPs over a broad period, starting in the government of Cesar Gaviria in 1990 and ending in 2018 in the administration of Juan Manuel Santos.

Likewise, there are works that specifically analyze an NDP. Among these, it is appropriate to mention Jaramillo (1997), who evaluated the social policy in the NDP "The Social Leap" (1994–1998); Torres Castro (1999), who analyzed the basic aspects of the NDP "Change to Build Peace" (1998–2002); and Berrio et al. (2020), who analyzed the NDP "Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity" (2018–2022). Another work worth mentioning is by Zapata-Cortés (2020), who presented a reflection on development plans in Colombia from a normative perspective.

This work aims to answer the following question: Have the NDPs significantly contributed to social and economic advances in Colombia between 1961 and 2022?

For this purpose, the article presents the following structure: 1) introduction; 2) literature review, which includes, legal framework of planning in Colombia, normative framework of development plans, and background on development planning; 3) methodology; 4) results, describing the social and economic advances in Colombia, starting with the decennial plan (1961–1970) and ending with the plan “Pacto por Colombia, pacto por la equidad” (2018–2022); 5) discussion; 6) conclusions.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Legal framework of development planning in Colombia**

Planning in Colombia was incorporated into the legal framework with the constitutional reform of Legislative Act No. 1 of 1945, which established the responsibility of the Congress of the Republic concerning the execution of plans and programs for public works: “To set the plans and programs that the promotion of the national economy must follow” (Republic of Colombia, 1945). That is, Congress was assigned responsibility in the processes of formulating plans and programs aimed at achieving the economic and social development of the country (Ocampo, 1991).

Subsequently, in 1958, Law 19 provided significant support for the formulation, execution, and monitoring of planning by creating the National Council of Economic Policy, charged with “studying and proposing the economic policy of the State, as well as monitoring the national economy” (Republic of Colombia, 1958). It also created the Administrative Department of Planning and Technical Services, which would later be called DNP, through Decree 2996 of 1968. In this same Decree, the National Council of Economic Policy was transformed into the National Council of Economic and Social Policy Conpes (Republic of Colombia, 1968a).

This Council, like the DNP, would be restructured in 1974 through Decree Law 627. According to this Decree, Conpes would have among its functions to recommend economic and social policy to the government. For its part, the DNP would be responsible for developing the general plans and programs of development based on the sectoral or regional plans presented by the ministries, departments, and municipalities, as well as proposing to Conpes the necessary policies for the fulfillment of the plans.

In this legal framework on planning, it is also pertinent to include Legislative Act No. 1 of 1968, which would expand the responsibility of the Congress of the Republic by incorporating the concepts of resources and investments for the execution of plans, allowing the national government to adopt a harmonious policy regarding development planning. Similarly, it established the responsibility of the president in the timely delivery of plans aimed at the economic and social development of the country and each of its different regions (Republic of Colombia, 1968b).

Another decree from 1968 is Decree 1050, which granted the President of the Republic the authority to assign functions to ministries and administrative departments, mainly to prepare the plans or investment programs (Republic of Colombia, 1968c). The Decree also established, in its article 18, functions for the administrative department of planning in relation to the general development plans.

Thirteen years later, Law 38 of 1981 established the components that should make up the national plan for economic and social development, its process of

elaboration and approval, and its articulation with the national budget. However, following the enactment of this Law, the plans “Change with Equity (1982–1986),” “Plan for Social Economy (1986–1990),” and “The Peaceful Revolution (1990–1994)” did not receive approval from the Legislature because the Plan Commission did not operate (Mejía, et al., 2020).

A decade later, the new Political Constitution of Colombia would grant great importance to planning by establishing that the NDP must indicate the purposes of state action and the orientations of the economic and social policy of each government (Republic of Colombia, 1991). Subsequently, Law 152 of 1994 was approved, which would establish and regulate the procedures for the elaboration, approval, execution, and evaluation of the NDPs; the creation of the National Planning Council; and would define the articulation of the income budget with the NDP (Republic of Colombia, 1994). **Table 1** clearly shows the regulatory framework approved between 1945 and 1994.

**Table 1.** Regulations on planning approved between 1945–1994.

Year	Regulation	Contribution of the regulation
1945	Legislative Act No. 1	Constitutional reform that assigns planning functions to the Congress of the Republic.
1958	Law 19	Creates the National Council of Economic Policy and the Administrative Department of Planning.
1968	Decree 2996	Establishes the National Planning Department (DNP) and the National Council of Economic Policy was transformed into the National Council of Economic and Social Policy (CONPES).
1968	Legislative Act No. 1	Establishes responsibilities to the Congress of the Republic regarding resources and investments for the execution of plans.
1968	Decree 1050	Grants powers to the President of the Republic to assign functions to ministries on the preparation of plans and investment programs.
1974	Decree Law 627	Restructuring of the DNP and CONPES.
1981	Law 3891	Establishes the parts that must make up the NDP.
1991	New Political Constitution	Incorporates citizen participation in the NDP through consultation and the National Planning Council.
1994	Law 152	Establishes and regulates the procedures for the elaboration, approval, execution, and evaluation of the NDP.

## 2.2. Legal framework for development plans in Colombia

It is pertinent to note that although Legislative Act No. 1 of 1968 regarding constitutional reform and Law 38 of 1981 established that Congress was required to approve the NDP by law, in conjunction with the national budget, this only became possible after the new Political Constitution of Colombia in 1991 and Law 152 of 1994, which establishes the Organic Law of the development plan. In this order, the first NDP approved by Congress was “El Salto Social” in 1995, during the government of Ernesto Samper. **Table 2** presents the year of law approval, regulation number, period, and priorities of the NDP.

As can be seen, each president established different priorities and managed to execute their NDP in accordance with the respective law that endorsed it, except for the government of Andrés Pastrana Arango, whose Law 508 of 1999, for the validity of the 1998–2002 period, was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court after its article 4.3.5, regarding the operation of public hospitals, was challenged. As a result, this president had to resort to Decree 955 to fulfill the objectives and goals of

the plan. However, the same Court also declared this Decree unconstitutional.

**Table 2.** Regulations on planning approved between 1945–1994.

Year	Regulation	Name and validity	Priorities
1995	Law 188	The social leap: 1994–1998	Economic opening consolidation for internationalization more and better jobs.
1999	Law 508	Change to build peace: 1998–2002	Peace negotiation process reactivation of production: increase in exports.
2000	Decree 955	Towards a communitarian state: 2002–2006	Provide democratic security drive economic growth and job creation.
2007	Law 1151	Communitarian state: development for all: 2006–2010	Defense and democratic security promotion of poverty reduction, employment and equity.
2011	Law 1450	Prosperity for all: 2010–2014	Sustained economic growth consolidate peace throughout the territory strategic competitiveness and infrastructure.
2015	Law 1753	All for a new country: 2014–2018	Social mobility: health, education and high-quality employment.
2019	Law 1955	Pact for Colombia, Pact for equity: 2018–2022	Legality: security and justice entrepreneurship, formalization, and productivity.

### 2.3. Background on development planning

Mejía et al. (2020) argue that, after World War II, with the exception of the Soviet Union and China, most countries planned their reconstruction and development, considering the market as the main axis of economic growth. They also note that France, South Korea, and Japan are important benchmarks in planning, having managed to establish five-year plans between 1946 and 1997, 1962 and 1996, and 1962 and 1998, respectively. These authors conclude that not all countries today have a planning document; that is, 70% of low-income countries have plans, 65% of lower-middle-income countries, 50% of upper-middle-income countries, and only 22% of high-income countries.

Among the studies with results on some or several of the indicators used in the present study to establish social and economic advances of the development plans are publications in different geographical contexts. One such study is by Oum (2019), who assessed energy poverty in Laos and its effects on education and health, suggesting that inclusive development policies should be prioritized to promote the rural economy and reduce energy poverty.

Turok and Scheba (2019) critically examined the right to housing in South Africa and its implementation in the context of urban growth, concluding the need to establish more inclusive urban policies, with approaches that better integrate housing access rights and help solve the housing shortage problem. In the same country, Matekenya and Moyo (2023) confirmed that foreign divestments negatively affect both economic growth and development, outweighing the positive effects of foreign direct investment inflows, suggesting policies to retain FDI inflows and improve economic freedom.

In China, Bian et al. (2021) analyzed the patterns of landscape urbanization and its impact on regional sustainability in the Yangtze River economic belt, finding a significant expansion of the built area from 1990 to 2015, influenced by national development plans. They suggest the need to establish policies to address geospatial disparities and improve sustainability.

In Colombia, Zapata-Cortés questions the centralized top-down planning model and proposes an inverse one, considering that it does not favor citizen participation

and imposes the agenda on municipalities and departments, especially those dependent on transfers and national resources for their development. On the other hand, Erazo-Patiño and Coronado-Camero (2022) considered that the conflict influences the country's capacity for growth and development, however, they stated that this has not been a limitation to achieve significant advances in this regard.

Vergara Varela (2018) considered that the agricultural and industrial sectors within the development plans operated in a closed economy, characterized by interventionism and protectionism in the period 1960–1989, and an economic opening after 1990, characterized by the free market and the structural adjustment of the State. Guzmán Aguilera (2019) joins this concept, warning about the country's economic model change starting in 1990 and the inclusion of scientific policy in the NDPs.

Subsequently, Rodríguez Galvis and Guerrero Sierra (2022) determined the advances made in the country's departmental territories in relation to actions aimed at mitigating women's poverty, their access to education, and improved conditions in the health system, stemming from the Women's Equity Pact included in the NDP 2018–2022. The same period was also analyzed by Berrío et al. (2020), who made several questions to the NDP before its completion, based on three aspects that, in their opinion, would affect Colombian development: 1) possible growth in unemployment and underemployment as a consequence of an economy increasingly based on new technologies; 2) impacts on the balance of payments due to a possible substitution of the energy matrix; and 3) changes in geopolitics that could affect trade flows.

### **3. Methodology**

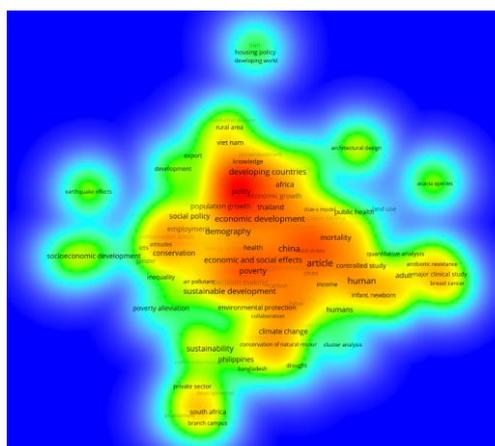
This is a descriptive, longitudinal study with a retrospective design that utilizes documentary research techniques. The review and documentary analysis begin with the first development plan approved in Colombia in 1960, "Economic and Social NDP," and continues with each of the subsequent plans up to the 2018–2022 NDP, "Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity".

The inquiry and documentary review were conducted on the institutional web pages of the National Planning Department (DNP), the Bank of the Republic, the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), and the Congress of the Republic. Additionally, academic and scientific databases were consulted, especially Scopus, to obtain and analyze scientific literature related to the topic of study.

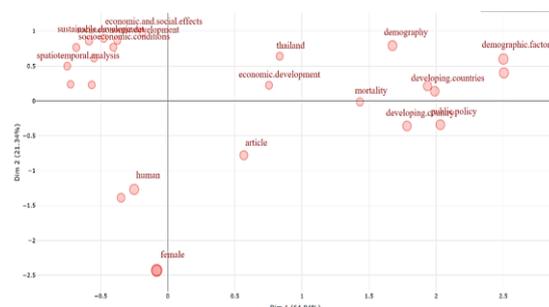
The data and indicators considered to determine the social and economic advances of the development plans mainly included the following: coverage in primary, secondary, and higher education; teachers' education levels; coverage in the health system, both contributory and subsidized; coverage in public services of electricity, water supply, and sewage; housing construction; investment in social expenditure; gross domestic product; per capita income; exports; imports; trade balance; foreign direct investment and unemployment rate.

Through an optimized search string, ("socioeconomic development" and "development plans") and ("education coverage" or "health system" or "public services" or "social housing" or "GDP per capita" or "income" or "exports" or "imports"), 100 relevant documents were identified, covering the period from 2018 to 2023, providing a robust and updated database for bibliometric and factorial analysis.

In **Figure 1**, the bibliometric density map reveals a preeminence of terms such as “socioeconomic development” and “sustainable development,” illustrating extensive academic coverage in these fields. The overlap of terms such as “economic and social effects” and “spatiotemporal analysis” suggests a robust and multifaceted analytical approach within the corpus. In contrast, **Figure 2**, a factorial analysis, provides a quantitative view of thematic dispersion, with dimension 1 (64.94% of explained variation) and dimension 2 (21.49%) illustrating conceptual variability.



**Figure 1.** Bibliometric density map of literature on socioeconomic development.



**Figure 2.** Factorial analysis of the literature on social and economic development in developing countries.

The search string and the subsequent bibliometric and factorial analysis, as shown in **Figures 1** and **2**, have proven essential for exhaustively analyzing the fabric of influences of development plans in the socioeconomic context of Colombia. This rigorous methodology has facilitated the selection of studies of great thematic relevance, allowing a deeper understanding of how different policies, from education to public service infrastructure, interconnect and contribute to the nation’s progress. By highlighting these methods and results, the present study underscores the importance of continuing well-founded and data-driven political approaches to drive sustainable and equitable progress in the country. Thus, the research establishes itself as a valuable resource for future planning and makes a significant contribution to the field of economic development.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. NDP “Economic and Social Development”: 1961–1970

In 1961, the National Planning Department (DNP) developed the first NDP called “Economic and Social Development Plan” during the government of Alberto Lleras Camargo (1958–1962). The diagnosis of this plan described concrete problems such as violence, land conflicts, a housing deficit of 220,000 units, 2.5 million illiterates (41%), 16.6% of the population with complete primary education, 7% with completed high school, 0.9% with some type of university studies, and more than half of the primary school teachers without any degree in a country with a population of 15.6 million people (DNP, 1961).

One of the main goals was to begin reducing the high illiteracy rate and to increase coverage in primary and secondary education, which required providing the National Ministry of Education (MEN) with sufficient resources to build the necessary classrooms in urban and rural areas. In higher education, the need to accelerate the training of professionals, mainly agronomists, engineers, and administrators, was established, requesting special assistance from the United Nations (UN). In this sector, the language of science and technology began to be incorporated, promoting technological and scientific activities aimed at improving productivity, increasing annual growth of the gross domestic product, and reducing unemployment (Martínez, 1982).

The plan set forth the construction and provision of 22,000 urban and rural classrooms to benefit 880,000 school-age children, expand coverage to 2.44 million school enrollments, reduce the quantitative deficit by 75%, and the professional training of 11,160 teachers in service, with a total four-year cost (until 1965) of \$445.6 million, of which \$269.8 million would come from external resources (DNP, 1961). With these projections for investment in education and the start of agrarian reform in 1961 (law 135), the government of Lleras Camargo aimed to increase employment and productivity as key factors in economic growth and quality of life.

Lleras Camargo ended his term in 1962, leaving the ten-year plan as a roadmap for planning for his successor Guillermo León Valencia (1962–1966), who encountered the problems mentioned in the initial diagnosis, especially violence, housing, and the commercial and fiscal deficit. Accordingly, the objectives of this government included the pacification of the country, reducing the housing deficit, and correcting trade and fiscal imbalances (Caballero, 2009).

In 1966, Carlos Lleras Restrepo became president with the challenge of resolving the serious problems facing the country, such as the aftermath of political violence, migrations from the countryside to the city, unemployment, social inequality, devaluation of the peso, high inflation rate, poverty, and marginalization (Amézquita, 2010). This was the third government of the so-called “National Front” pact, which consisted of a bilateral agreement for the alternating power of the liberal and conservative parties during the period 1958-1974, aimed at ending political violence and the situations of ungovernability that such violence represented (Marín, 2010; Duque Daza, 2019).

During this period (1966–1970), the country made progress in its economic and social indicators, especially in non-traditional exports, GDP, employment, and inflation control (Amézquita, 2010). In education, primary coverage went from 63.7% in 1965 to 71.6% in 1968, secondary education increased from 14% to 19.3%, and higher education from 2.5% to 3.5% (DNP, 1969). Various institutes were created,

among which stand out the family welfare institute, the higher education promotion institute, and the foreign trade institute (Caballero, 2009).

Programs and projects related to agrarian reform, disease eradication, rural basic sanitation, construction and provision of hospitals, health centers and posts, personnel training, and nutrition were also implemented. Regarding agrarian reform, Lleras Restrepo widely promoted this process through the creation of the agrarian reform institute (INCORA), achieving an average annual increase of the National Agrarian Fund lands to 63,000 hectares, of which 68.4% corresponded to purchases and 7.4% to expropriation (Arango, 1986).

In the social economy sector, the most important data during this period is the formation of a little more than sixty-five thousand (65,000) community action boards (JAL) (DNP, 1969). These JAL promoted cooperative work and community development through participation in infrastructure, housing, and community services projects, financed or subsidized by the state, as established in Law 19 of 1958, article 23, on the promotion of neighbor cooperation by the government. A key aspect of this cooperation is the organization of production and consumption cooperatives, which would be formed in the country in the following years, fundamentally work cooperatives and housing cooperatives.

In general terms, during the period 1961–1970, significant advances were made in social and economic aspects. In primary education, the number of teachers increased from 44,910 in 1960 to 67,764 in 1968; in high school, during the same period, it increased from 22,232 to 42,565 and in higher education, the number of professors grew from 2469 to 7918, among them 555 masters and 86 Ph.D.s (DNP, 1969). Colciencias and the “Francisco José de Caldas” scientific research fund were also created by Decree 2869 of 1968 (Guzmán Aguilera, 2019).

It is pertinent to mention that during the period of this NDP several goals were achieved through financial resources donated by the United States, within the external aid program for Latin America Alliance for Progress, which amounted to US\$885 million between 1961 and 1969 (Rojas, 2010). Indeed, the plan’s goals were directly related to the objectives established in the international aid program.

#### **4.2. NDP “The Four Strategies”: 1970–1974**

Carlos Lleras Restrepo was succeeded by Misael Pastrana Borrero (1970–1974), who would be the last president of the National Front, which, as indicated earlier, was agreed upon to curb the political violence for power between liberals and conservatives during the early decades of the 20th century. However, it is pertinent to note that violence and conflicts continued with the emergence of FARC, ELN, and EPL in the sixties (Pécaut, 2001).

Against this political backdrop, and the social problems that violence continued to cause, Pastrana Borrero formulated the NDP “The Four Strategies,” which had, among others, the following objectives: 1) private construction of housing plans; 2) increase in exports; 3) increase in agricultural production, and 4) establish a system of progressive taxes in order to achieve better income distribution and efficiency in public spending (DNP, 1972).

Housing construction aimed not only to reduce its deficit but also to stimulate

employment that would improve family incomes and the possibility of accessing other consumer goods. In this goal, the adoption of a financial mechanism called the constant purchasing power unit (UPAC) was important, which tried to offer profitability to savers through monetary correction (Franco, 1994). Meanwhile, the increase in exports and agricultural productivity were aimed at reducing rural gaps, increasing rural income, boosting production, optimizing resource use, better land tenure distribution, and addressing macroeconomic problems such as capital shortage, unemployment, lack of foreign exchange, absence of qualified human resources, lack of credit and incentives to produce, institutional restrictions, inflation, and population growth (DNP, 1972).

These ends would imply the strengthening and greater allocation of resources to institutions such as the agricultural bank, the livestock bank, and the agricultural marketing institute (IDEMA), among others. It is significant to note that during this period the national institutes of secondary education INEM were inaugurated (Zambrano, 2008). Also noteworthy is the program called “Rural Basic Sanitation Plan,” through which the national government invested \$173.4 million between 1970 and 1971, with community contributions of 20% (DNP, 1972).

With these first development plans, some economic indicators improved, but problems associated with poverty, rural backwardness, armed conflicts, forced displacement, and corruption in public administration persisted, which became objectives to be solved by presidential candidates and key aspects for the construction of respective government programs in the immediate future.

### **4.3. NDP “To Close the Gap”: 1974–1978**

In 1974, Alfonso López Michelsen came to power, who formulated the NDP “To Close the Gap”. This plan’s diagnosis described the following problems: 1) Inequalities that caused adverse consequences such as child labor, high school dropout rates, low academic performance, and malnutrition; 2) Lack of research; 3) Lack of coordination of actions in education; 4) Poor academic quality of teachers; 5) Lack of attention to preschool; 6) Fiscal deficit, and, 7) Inflation (DNP, 1975).

With this diagnosis, and a population of 22.8 million inhabitants, the plan proposed by López Michelsen sought economic growth and productive employment from four scenarios: 1) agricultural; 2) industrial; 3) exports, and 4) regional and urban development. Likewise, it proposes incentives for small and medium industry, diffusion and adaptation of technology to productive processes, the national food plan (PAN), which aims to improve the quality of life for 50% of the poor in Colombia, and the Integrated Rural Development (DRI) program which seeks to improve conditions in the countryside and control mass migration to the cities (DNP, 1975).

During this government, the open interventionism of the state in the economy and protectionism began to be gradually reduced through the elimination of subsidies, suppression of price controls, tariff reductions, and liberation of interest rates (Franco, 1994). Internationally, Colombia reoriented relations with the United States and restored relations with Cuba (González-Arana, 2004).

In education, priority was given to the universalization of primary education, and neighborhood development centers were created to provide services to children and

families (DNP, 1975). In this sense, it is significant to highlight that between 1970 and 1978 the social sector achieved the highest percentage increase in the budget, from 31.3% to 40.9%, especially in education, health, and social housing (DNP, 1979).

However, despite the creation of new social and economic programs, this period was characterized by the discontent of trade unions, who expressed their grievances through protests in 1975, the social security strike in 1976, the national strike in 1977, and the persistent armed struggle of different guerrilla groups in the country (Restrepo Jaramillo, 2016).

#### **4.4. NDP “National Integration”: 1978–1982**

Between 1978 and 1982, the presidency was held by Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala, who formulated the NDP “National Integration Plan.” This president identified the inefficiency in the use of public resources as a significant problem in Colombia and proposed economic decentralization, regional autonomy, and the responsibility of local governments in planning their development.

During this period, foreign investment began significant growth, particularly oriented towards energy projects. In this respect, the plan projected investments of US\$4.2 billion for the Colombian oil company ECOPETROL and US\$1.2 billion for Colombian coals CARBOCOL in Cerrejón, in the department of La Guajira. Similarly, the completion by 1982 of the construction, assembly, and exploitation phase of the Cerro-Matoso nickel deposit, in the department of Córdoba, was projected, totaling US\$3.4 billion, with 55% foreign direct investment participation (DNP, 1979).

In the social sector, the continuation of the Integrated Rural Development (IRD) program is highlighted, with subprograms in infrastructure, education, and health, including rural aqueducts, socio-educational research projects, and the school nutrition program under the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF), which amounted to investments of \$21.421 million in the four-year period 1979–1982. In education, meanwhile, the budget increased to 24%, and primary school enrollment rose to 80.9% (Velasco, 2014).

It is significant to note that in the drafting of this plan, profound reflections and questions were raised about the results of social investment achieved since the institutionalization of the NDPs in Colombia. Among the questions, it is pertinent to highlight the following: “What aspects could explain the low efficiency of the resources allocated to the social area, which represent between 20% and 30% of the total government expenditure?”.

However, the plan itself attributed the low efficiency to the dispersion in short-term campaigns and programs, the lack of evaluation of investment results, and because the central government’s effort in allocating resources did not have an adequate counterpart in the individual effort of people and regions. At this time, emphasis was not yet placed on corruption or drug trafficking as would be done in future plans, as the main problems were still the gap between rural and urban areas, low productivity, limited coverage in social services and infrastructure, land conflicts, and criminal actions of armed groups and common crime.

#### **4.5. NDP “Change with Equity”: 1982–1986**

Belisario Betancur Cuartas won the elections for the 1982–1986 period, formulating the NDP “Change with Equity,” which sought to achieve peace and economic growth based on three major objectives: 1) economic reactivation; 2) consolidation of economic development, and 3) organization of social change (DNP, 1983). He was aware of the unresolved needs and problems but also highlighted in the foundations of his plan the efforts of previous governments to achieve economic growth, increased educational coverage, improvements in health services, and to increase the offer of technical programs and the number of university students through the National Learning Service (SENA) and the Institute for Higher Education Credit and Studies Abroad (ICETEX).

The plan reiterated the need to seek greater equity and justice, to eradicate factors of extreme poverty, to expand educational opportunities, to provide health care, and to offer a more efficient justice system that could reduce crime, increase social security coverage, which in 1982 was only 10% of the total population (2.9 million people). It also aimed to increase coverage in education, which did not exceed 11% in preschool; 82% in primary; 44% in basic secondary and middle vocational; 8.3% in higher education, added to these indicators were three million illiterates in the country (DNP, 1983).

In the goal of social organization and change, the plan proposes to promote the leveling of opportunities within a framework of participation. Regarding this, Belisario Betancur states: “Development plans must translate the commitment of the community and not just the state, to the purposes of change.” (DNP, 1983). It is pertinent to highlight that the issue of peace was incorporated as one of the main purposes of this government.

The driving sector of the economy was housing construction, which achieved significant development, with financial support from institutions such as the central mortgage bank, the agricultural bank, and the institute of territorial credit (ICT), responsible for projects of houses without an initial fee, aimed at reducing the quantitative housing deficit of 613 thousand units.

In this plan, the strategic role given to the family and literacy is noteworthy, specifically with the national instruction campaign (CAMINA), which aimed to eradicate illiteracy in Colombia. Other aspects to highlight are the promotion of scientific research, which showed an increase in the period, going from 0.15% of GDP in 1982 to 0.5% in 1986, and the investment of \$515,000 million for the construction of 400,000 homes.

#### **4.6. NDP “Social Economy”: 1986–1990**

In 1986, Virgilio Barco won the presidency and formulated the “Social Economy Plan,” with the purpose of redirecting peace policies and combating social inequality through the following plans: Poverty eradication plan; rehabilitation plan; and comprehensive rural development plan (DNP, 1987). While the first plan was too abstract, the second and third defined specific objectives, focused on 250 municipalities affected by the significant absence of the state and on families owning small plots of land.

The plan insists on the concept of social justice and maintains that political and legal equality must be underpinned by economic and social equality, political change, different relations between citizens and the state, and the forms and goals of state intervention. This government found significant coverage in higher education, corresponding to 14.4%, with 417,786 students enrolled in 1986, of which 176,928 are from public universities and 240,858 from private universities. Similarly, it inherited a significant number of 1.2 million children benefiting from nutritional supplementation and child protection programs under the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) (DNP, 1987).

For economic growth, the plan proposed to redirect public spending, increase exports, and stimulate private investment. This period initiated the modernization of the state for the economic opening process (Saavedra et al., 1999). Policies for expanding exports and state modernization contributed to balanced macroeconomic indicators, moderate fiscal deficit, growth in the industrial and agricultural sectors, and an increase in non-traditional exports, which went from US\$1.3 billion in 1986 to US\$3.5 billion in 1991 (Sánchez and Hernández, 2004).

This period of government is characterized by the extension and intensification of problems, especially caused by paramilitary activities and drug trafficking (Villamil, 2017). However, at the end, two relevant events occurred: one is the approval of Law 29 of 1990 for the promotion of scientific research and the science and technology statute, through Decree 1767 of that same year. The other significant event is the peace agreement with the M-19 guerrilla and their subsequent entry into national politics and participation in the constituent assembly in 1991.

#### **4.7. NDP “The Peaceful Revolution”: 1990–1994**

Virgilio Barco was succeeded in 1990 by Cesar Gaviria Trujillo, who unexpectedly came to the presidency following the assassination of Luis Carlos Galán, the strong candidate for the country’s top position. He found an unfavorable socioeconomic situation in the countryside and cities, despite the efforts and social investment of previous governments. The population was at 32.6 million, with rural education coverage below 30%, 48% in urban areas, 65% coverage of drinking water, and 53% in sewage (DNP, 1991).

The plan projected efficiency, equity, and economic growth, identifying four areas to ensure such growth: 1) human capital; 2) physical infrastructure; 3) scientific and technological capacity; and 4) the environment (DNP, 1991). Its main proposals included the modernization of the state, economic opening, privatization of state-owned enterprises, reduction of import taxes, and liberalization of capital flows (Torres, 2014).

At the beginning of the plan period, the new Political Constitution of 1991 was promulgated, bringing significant social, economic, and political reforms. Subsequently, fundamental laws in education were passed, among which stand out the Law 30 of 1992 on higher education, Law 60 of 1993 on the distribution of territorial competencies, and Law 115 of 1994 for basic and middle education. Additionally, the national system of science and technology was created, proposing regionalization, promotion of research, and international scientific openness (Guzmán Aguilera, 2019).

The period projected to fund 450 master's students and 580 doctoral students.

Furthermore, fundamental laws regarding development planning, public services, taxation, citizen participation, and anti-corruption policy were approved. These include Law 152 of 1994 on development plans, Law 142 of 1994 on public services, Laws 44 and 49 of 1990 on tax collection, and Law 134 of 1994 establishing mechanisms for citizen participation in politics. In terms of anti-corruption policy, Decree 1860 of 1991 was issued, and the mission for the moralization of public administration was created as a formal anti-corruption strategy (Gamarra, 2006).

The period saw significant events in politics, the economy, and international trade relations. Politically, peace was signed with the PRT, EPL, and Quintín Lame. Economically, the period was marked by significant privatization of state-owned entities, with a particular focus on the financial sector. This included the privatization of several prominent banks such as Banco Cafetero, Banco del Estado, Banco Tequendama, Banco Central Hipotecario, and Banco del Comercio. The privatization drive aimed at infusing efficiency and competitive practices within the sector. On the international stage, this era was characterized by an expansion of trade relations, as evidenced by the signing of trade agreements with countries like Panama and Chile, enhancing Colombia's economic ties and presence in the global market.

#### **4.8. NDP “The Social Leap”: 1994–1998**

Ernesto Samper Pizano took office for the 1994–1998 term, formulating the NDP “The Social Leap,” which was aimed at achieving higher levels of equity, employment, education, and reducing inflation. The plan's diagnosis highlighted positive aspects of the previous government, such as the promotion of exports and the reform of National Learning Service (SENA). However, it pointed out that the economic changes, political decentralization, and modernization of the state were not reflected in an improved quality of life for most Colombians, nor did they address problems of social inequality (DNP, 1995).

With a population of 35.3 million, the plan emphasized four aspects: 1) social development; 2) competitiveness; 3) environmental protection; and 4) institutional development (Saavedra et al., 1999). Regarding social development, it projected the universalization of basic education and the basic health care plan (health for all), which proposed enrolling 80% of the poorest population by 1998 and benefiting a million families with social housing programs.

Other significant proposals of this NDP include: the oil stabilization fund; policy to promote the solidarity economy; 500,000 subsidies for students and 66,000 educational credits; fund for the development of higher education; program for the rehabilitation of 14.5 thousand juvenile offenders; 300,000 subsidies for rural housing in the four-year period 1995–1998; and the Revivir program to benefit 240 thousand elderly people in destitute conditions.

The resources allocated to finance the mentioned social programs were set at COP\$38.1 trillion. However, various situations such as the economic emergency, fiscal deficit, the increase in VAT from 14% to 16%, the reduction in tax revenues, and high-interest rates led to annual budget cuts that contributed to the failure to achieve the objectives and goals established in different programs (Jaramillo, 1997).

This period was marked by the scandal of narco-trafficking funds infiltrating the presidential campaign and a series of civil and political processes that affected relations with the United States (Borda, 2012).

#### **4.9. NDP “Change to Build Peace”: 1998–2002**

Andrés Pastrana Arango won the presidential elections for the 1998–2002 period, formulating the NDP “Change to Build Peace,” which aimed at the search for peace through sustainable growth with social cohesion (DNP, 1999). At that time, Colombia was considered the world’s leading producer of cocaine, with an estimated annual production of 520 tonnes, a cultivated area of 110,000 hectares of coca leaf, and 6000 hectares of poppy (Duro, 2002).

Key programs of the plan include: Towards a participative state; Plan Colombia; policies for productive chains; rural development; and institutional change policies. Plan Colombia formulated regional projects and actions in productive processes, humanitarian care, institutional development, and environmental sustainability, funded with international cooperation resources, mainly from the United States, a strong ally of Pastrana Arango’s government, who insisted on the peace issue and managed to establish talks with the FARC guerrillas from January 1999.

US cooperation funds to Plan Colombia exceeded US\$1.3 billion between 2000 and 2001 for military aid, eradication of illicit crops, and social investment. Of this, just over 900 million was assigned to the military assistance program, 37 million to displaced populations, 51 million to the protection of human rights, 13 million to the reform of the Colombian judicial system, 55 million to strengthen the rule of law, and 3 million dollars to support the peace process, with an additional 35 million euros from European Union aid (Duro, 2002).

Relevant data from the NDP during this government period include the following: 1) the investment plan for the period 1999–2002 amounted to COP\$60.3 trillion, of which 58% was for education and health (Torres Castro, 1999); 2) foreign investment decreased from US\$2.829 billion in 1998 to US\$2.115 billion in 2002; 3) 250,000 families benefited from the Families in Action program; 4) the trade balance with the outside world showed a surplus from 1999 to 2002, achieving its best balance in 2000 with US\$2.160 billion (DANE, 2022). Overall, it was a period characterized by good international relations, the fight against drugs, the rise of self-defense groups and guerrillas, strengthening of the public force, and an increase in social programs.

#### **4.10. NDP “Towards a Communitarian State”: 2002–2006**

In 2002, Álvaro Uribe Vélez assumed the presidency, inheriting a country with progress in social and economic aspects but facing significant public order disturbances, associated with the rise of self-defense groups, guerrillas, and the number of hectares cultivated with coca leaves. Identified issues included a poverty rate of 58%, extreme poverty at 21%, unemployment at 16%, and public debt at 47.7% of GDP (DNP, 2003). Additionally, issues related to administrative corruption, tax evasion, low quality of life in conflict-affected areas, annual deforestation of 221 hectares, four million children and youths out of the school system, 424.3 thousand displaced by violence, and a population of 40.4 million were noted.

With this diagnosis, the NDP “Towards a Communitarian State” focused on security, economic growth, employment generation, social equity, and state efficiency (DNP, 2003). The plan includes the development of physical and social infrastructure, provision of energy and telecommunications in rural areas, creation of 1.5 million educational slots, 500,000 new slots in the school feeding plan, expansion of the young researcher’s program initiated in 1995, strengthening of the ethno-education program and Afro-Colombian studies chair.

Additionally, the plan includes: A national library plan benefiting 300 municipalities; real estate microcredit aimed at helping 700,000 households; a push for hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation; support for doctoral training abroad; consolidation of the protected areas system; green markets plan; Colombia Joven program, and incentives for the creation of new solidarity economy organizations.

Regarding employment, a labor reform was proposed to reduce labor costs with the intention of balancing costs for service companies with extended working hours, especially in commerce, hotels, restaurants, and recreational businesses. The reform also aimed to reduce dismissal costs and contributions to parafiscal charges, offering an exemption percentage to companies that employ young people between 18 and 25 years, physically disabled individuals, people over 50, reintegrated and ex-convicts.

During this period, Colombia achieved an average economic growth of 5%; poverty was reduced from 58% to 49% (nearly two million people); extreme poverty decreased from 21% to 14.7%; 1.4 million new educational slots were created, four million students were trained by SENA; eight million new slots in the subsidized health regime; restructuring of 128 hospitals; 390,000 housing solutions delivered; 3.1 million people integrated into drinking water coverage; 3.8 million into basic sanitation, and 450,000 new families linked to the Families in Action program for a total of 650,000 (DNP, 2007). Furthermore, exports increased from US\$11.975 million in 2002 to US\$24.512 million in 2006, while imports rose from US\$11.897 million to US\$24.534 million, leading to a trade deficit in 2006 of US\$22 million (DANE, 2022).

#### **4.11. NDP “Communitarian State, Development for All”: 2006–2010**

Through constitutional reform, President Álvaro Uribe was re-elected for the 2006–2010 period, formulating the plan “Communitarian State: Development for All,” aiming to continue improving security and investor confidence. Over these two government terms, significant progress was made in foreign investment and public order, but several state entities were dissolved, including the national pension fund, the industrial development institute, TELECOM, and INCORA, which failed to meet the expected social and economic objectives, especially INCORA in achieving two agrarian reform purposes: 1) deconcentration of land ownership and 2) ensuring property rights and titling for peasants in various parts of the country.

Regarding public order, according to the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization, 17,348 guerrillas and 35,822 paramilitaries were demobilized. However, the last government period saw scandals erupt over so-called false positives, implicating, prosecuting, and convicting dozens of military personnel, and corruption in the Agro Income Insurance program, culminating in the convictions of the Minister

of Agriculture from that government and his deputy minister. In international trade, foreign investment reached US\$33 million in the period, and the trade balance ended with a surplus of US\$1.559 million in 2010 (DANE, 2022).

#### **4.12. NDP “Prosperity for All”: 2010–2014**

In 2010, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón became president, finding a country still facing problems but in better condition than those encountered by previous governments in terms of infrastructure, education, health, and economy. In infrastructure, there was a notable increase in the coverage of household public services; in primary and secondary education, gross coverages exceeded 100%; 90% in preschool; 79.4% in high school; and in higher education, a gross coverage of 35.5% with 1.49 million students in 2009, of which 482,000 slots were for technical and technological training, including those of SENA; in health, 21.67 million people enrolled in the subsidized regime and 18.11 million in the contributory regime; in the economy, an average growth of 4.0% and a tourism sector favored by the arrival of 2.49 million foreign visitors in 2009 (DNP, 2011).

However, despite social and economic progress, 3.7 million people were without access to drinking water, 5.8 million lacked basic sanitation, there was an illiteracy rate of 6.8%, unemployment at 12%, labor informality at 69.1%, a poverty rate of 17.7%, and extreme poverty at 4.7%, according to the index of unmet basic needs (DNP, 2011).

With these issues to address, Santos Calderón formulated the NDP “Prosperity for All” based on the following pillars: Regional development, sustainable growth, equal opportunities, and peace consolidation. Regarding equal opportunities and peace consolidation, the plan focuses on social inclusion, gender equality, and rights of the LGBTI population.

Key achievements of this period include the reduction of informality from 69.1% to 65.6% and the addition of 200,000 more families to the Families in Action program (DNP, 2015). Furthermore, there was an increase in foreign investment from US\$9.480 billion in 2010 to US\$16.054 billion in 2014, while the trade balance showed a deficit of US\$ 6.231 million, resulting from exports of US\$54.847 million and imports of US\$61.088 million in 2014 (DANE, 2022).

#### **4.13. NDP “All for a New Country”: 2014–2018**

President Santos was re-elected for the 2014–2018 period, during which he formulated the NDP “All for a New Country,” focusing on peace, road infrastructure, and increasing housing supply. Notable achievements of this period include the reduction of illiteracy to 5.2% and the completion and delivery of 100,000 free homes, adding to about 40,000 delivered during his first government. Additionally, the construction of 1300 kilometers of dual carriageways was undertaken to complete a total of 2100 kilometers across the country.

In the realm of peace, the agreement with the FARC group was signed in 2016, leading to the demobilization of a large sector of this guerrilla group and their integration into the political power. However, these achievements were overshadowed by political polarization generated by the failure to ratify the agreements at the polls

by the citizens and by corruption cases in various road projects, which resulted in several officials, judges, congressmen, and ex-congressmen being investigated and convicted.

#### **4.14. NDP “Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity”: 2018–2022**

In 2018, Iván Duque Márquez won the elections and found the country with significant advancements, reflected in poverty reduction, middle-class growth, a per capita income above six thousand dollars, extensive coverage in preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education, and achievements in science, technology, and innovation. However, he also encountered problems related to drug trafficking, labor informality, and urban and rural crime, with a population of 48.2 million inhabitants (DPN, 2019).

With this backdrop, he formulated the NDP “Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity,” aiming to reduce extreme poverty to 4.4%, provide access to higher education for 500,000 youths, build 41,000 rural homes, 120,000 urban homes, increase secondary education coverage to 83% and higher education to 60%, attract 5.1 million foreign tourists, strengthen the solidarity economy, and reduce unemployment to 8%. In science, technology, and innovation, the plan projects increasing these activities to 1.5% of GDP, 3680 scholarships for doctoral training, and 800 postdoctoral fellowships supported by COLCIENCIAS (DPN, 2019).

However, these projections were impacted by the global economic contraction caused by Covid-19 in 2020, which led the national government to obtain and reallocate resources to subsidize independent workers, vulnerable families, the elderly, and businesses through subsidies such as the Solidarity Income, VAT refund, Colombia Mayor, Young People in Action, and the financial support program for businesses. These measures helped to meet the basic needs of those most affected and maintained employment for just over four million Colombians.

The economic crisis brought on by the pandemic was compounded by the 2021 protests, which lasted several months, exacerbating social and economic problems, especially for those trying to revive their small businesses or micro-enterprises in the main Colombian capitals. The construction sector, food industry, public transportation, exports, and imports were also affected.

During this period, the number of immigrants from Venezuela increased to 2.5 million, who, due to their vulnerability, had to be integrated into the education and health systems through a Temporary Protection Statute in 2022. This positively impacted the quality of life of this population and contributed to the regularization and integration of Venezuelan workers into the country’s economic fabric.

The government period ended with a 7.5% increase in GDP in 2022, extensive coverage in public services, education, health, improvement and expansion of road infrastructure, and a decrease in unemployment to 9.9%. However, it faced discouraging economic and social indicators, specifically labor informality at 57.8%, public debt over 50% of GDP, inflation at 13.12%, a fiscal deficit close to 6%, and a current account deficit of 6% (ANDI, 2023). Unfortunately, these figures are accompanied by the persistence of the social gap between rural and urban areas, a notable corruption case in the Ministry of ICT, and high crime rates, reflected in 93

illegal armed groups, 94 massacres, 352,652 thefts, 8,745 extortions, and 8,909 homicides in 2022 (National Police, 2023). **Table 3** presents a synthesis of the objectives, progress, and difficulties of the NDPs executed in the analyzed period.

**Table 3.** Synthesis of the NDPs Studied from 1961 to 2022.

NDP	Objectives	Advances	Problems
Economic and social development: 1961–1970	Reduce illiteracy/Agrarian reform/Increase productivity	Expansion of primary, secondary, and higher education coverage/Land allocation/Housing programs	New phase of violence with the emergence of guerrilla groups
The four strategies: 1970–1974	Promotion of housing construction/Increase in exports	Construction of public housing and educational facilities/National plan for basic sanitation	Rural backwardness, armed conflict, and administrative corruption
To close the gap: 1974–1978	Promotion of agriculture and industry/Increase in exports	Increase in exports/GDP growth/Creation of institutes and family welfare programs	Strikes, national stoppages, and escalation of armed conflict
National integration: 1978–1982	Efficiency in the use of public resources/Economic decentralization/Regional planning	Growth in foreign investment/Investment in energy projects/Integrated Rural Development Program (IRD)	Persistence of the urban-rural gap, low coverage in basic services
Change with equity: 1982–1986	Economic reactivation/Consolidation of development/Peace policy	Increased state housing supply/Increased budget for scientific research/1.2 million children in nutrition program	Natural disaster in the town of Armero, guerrilla assaults, and the emergence of drug trafficking
Social economy: 1986–1990	Redirecting the peace policy/combating social inequality	Peace agreement with M-19/increase in exports by 163%/National Plan for Rural Rehabilitation	Escalation of armed conflict, emergence of paramilitarism, and increase in drug trafficking
The peaceful revolution: 1990–1994	Economic growth/Human capital/Infrastructure/Scientific capacity/Economic opening	Creation of the national system of science and technology/New Political Constitution/Approval of Law 152/Peace agreement with three guerrilla groups	Increase in insecurity, armed violence, strengthening of guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, and drug traffickers
The social leap: 1994–1998	Social development/Competitiveness/Environment/Institutional development	300.000 subsidies for rural housing/Subsidies for students, the elderly, and families/Basic health care plan	Economic emergency, insecurity, and scandal over campaign financing with drug trafficking money
Change to build peace: 1998–2002	Peace process/Increase in exports/Regional competitiveness	Plan Colombia with an emphasis on productive development and environmental sustainability/increase in social investment	Failed negotiations with the FARC guerrilla and an intensification of violence
Towards a communitarian state: 2002–2006	Security/Sustainable growth/Job creation/State efficiency	Poverty reduction/Increased educational and health coverage/Infrastructure improvement/increase in FDI	Persistence of administrative corruption, armed conflict, and drug trafficking
Communitarian state, development for all: 2006–2010	Democratic defense and security/Poverty reduction/Environmental risk management for sustainable development	Improvement of public order/Reduction of violence/Increase in exports by 102%/Trade surplus	Scandals due to corruption in the Ministry of Agriculture and a sector of the armed forces
Prosperity for all: 2010–2014	Regional development/Sustainable growth/Consolidating peace	Reduction in labor informality/Increase in foreign investment/Development of road infrastructure	Trade balance deficit and an increase in narcotics production
Everyone for a new country: 2014–2018	Competitiveness and infrastructure	Reduction of illiteracy/public housing program/Peace agreement with the FARC/Airport modernization/Expansion of subsidized health coverage	Political polarization, corruption in road works, increase in the area cultivated with coca, and narco-trafficking groups
Pact for Colombia, pact for equity: 2018–2022	Legality/Entrepreneurship/Formalization and productivity	Projections affected by the Covid-19 pandemic/Growth in coverage of aqueducts, sewage, electricity, and natural gas, 7.5% GDP increase	Economic crisis exacerbated by the 2021 protests, strengthening of drug trafficking and guerrillas

These data indicate that sixty years of development planning efforts in Colombia

have contributed to the improvement of social and economic indicators, particularly in the last six governments, where educational coverage notably increased to 100% in primary education, 100% in high school, and 54.9% in higher education, and the subsidized health regime was expanded in urban and rural areas, achieving 99.6% coverage in the country (Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2022). Similarly, coverage for electricity, drinking water, sewage, and natural gas, though not reaching all regions, increased to 98.6%, 88.9%, 75.4%, and 69%, respectively.

In terms of the economy, the GDP growth rate reached a historical high of 7.5%, and per capita income rose from US\$257 in 1960 to US\$6630 in 2022, with an average annual increase of 40% (World Bank, 2023). Meanwhile, exports increased during the same period from US\$638 million to US\$57,088 billion, while foreign investment went from US\$425 million to US\$17,048 billion, demonstrating a significant trajectory of economic growth and the achievement of a substantial part of the NDP objectives and goals.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that National Development Plans (NDPs) have contributed to the improvement of various social and economic indicators in Colombia since their incorporation as a development planning tool in 1961. These plans have established a roadmap defining strategies, goals, objectives, programs, projects, and the financial resources necessary to address national problems and seize international opportunities. In this regard, each national government proposed its vision through these plans, aiming not just for economic growth but also for social improvement based on the needs and priorities identified for the respective period.

The analysis found that the period of the first NDP (the only one formulated for 10 years) coincided with the initiation of the United States' foreign aid program for Latin America, the "Alliance for Progress," as noted by Rojas (2010). Therefore, this study suggests that the goals of this plan were defined based on the objectives established by this international program, especially in education and agrarian reform, which allowed favorable results in reducing illiteracy, constructing school classrooms, and acquiring land for peasants with resources from the aforementioned program.

The analyzed information helps to identify three major periods in the development planning process in Colombia. The first began in 1961 when the population was predominantly rural, the economy heavily depended on the agricultural sector, and the country was immersed in a closed economic model that prevailed in Latin America, influencing the objectives set in the first NDPs. These objectives were initially directed at strengthening the agricultural sector and promoting the industrial sector under protectionist measures, as suggested by Vergara Varela (2018), who stated that these two sectors operated in a closed economy during the 1960–1989 period. However, this analysis revealed that since 1974 the government began to gradually reduce interventionism and protectionism by eliminating subsidies and opening up foreign investment, a situation that contrasts with the prolonged period of closed economy referred to by Vergara Varela.

The second period identified occurs between 1974 and 1994, after the implementation of the first two NDPs and having achieved significant goals in the

agricultural sector and rural population. This period was characterized by population growth and migration from the countryside to the city (due to forced displacements or in search of opportunities in the main cities), leading governments of that time to include regional and urban development and opening processes such as tariff reduction on imports, attraction of foreign investment for mining-energy projects, and promotion of industry and exports in their NDP objectives. These findings corroborate that the change in Colombia's economic model did not begin in the 90s, as asserted by Guzmán Aguilera (2019) in his analysis of the NDPs. However, it is pertinent to note that the consolidation of the new model did take place from this decade onwards, with the new Political Constitution of 1991.

A third and final period occurs between 1994 and 2022, which are the years of greatest effectiveness in achieving the objectives and goals of the NDPs, as a result of the guaranteed financing and citizen participation established with the new Political Constitution of 1991 and the approval of Law 152 of 1994, "Organic Law of the NDP." This law stipulates that the plan consists of a general part, which includes goals, objectives, and strategies, and a part for investments that schedules resources for the execution of programs and projects in harmony with the revenue budget, contributing to favorable results in social and economic indicators in recent years. In this sense, evidence shows that the top-down planning model has worked, thus these findings differ from those claimed by Zapata-Cortés (2020), who criticizes the centralized model for imposing the agenda on municipalities and departments.

The study confirmed that the goals and objectives of the different NDPs were determined by factors associated with geopolitics and the agendas of multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, especially the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. These have contributed to the inclusion in the NDPs of not only goals for economic growth and urban development but also commitments to poverty reduction, gender equality, environmental sustainability, access to health and education, reduction of inequalities, clean energies, and sustainable cities.

In this order, since the year 2000, the NDPs in Colombia have not only incorporated the aforementioned aspects but also addressed the theme of inclusion for individuals with any type of cognitive or sensory disability, which has enabled significant advances for various population groups and territories within the country. Consequently, these multilateral agendas participate directly or indirectly in the design of the plans and in the economic, environmental, territorial, and urban objectives in different countries. On environmental issues and inclusion, the works of Turok and Scheba (2019), Bian et al. (2021), and Oum (2019) present findings related to the indicators analyzed in this study.

Turok and Scheba (2019) highlight the need for more inclusive urban policies in South Africa's housing programs, Bian et al. (2021) suggest establishing policies to address geospatial disparities and enhance sustainability in China, and Oum (2019), who recommended prioritizing inclusive development policies to promote the rural economy and reduce energy poverty in Laos. Additionally, Rodríguez Galvis and Guerrero Sierra (2022) identified advancements in gender equity within the Women's Equity Pact included in the 2018–2022 NDP, aligning with the data analyzed in this work.

The analysis conducted provides an answer to the research question, despite limitations due to the lack of broader information in primary sources on the achievements of the first NDPs, the breadth of the period analyzed, and the high number of indicators incorporated into the plans. These limitations were addressed by limiting the study only to the social and economic indicators described in the methodology section and by searching for data from reliable secondary sources, among which Mejía et al. (2020) stand out. They conducted a rigorous structural analysis of the NDPs and achieved findings that do not contrast with the results of the present work.

The regulatory framework of 1958 and 1968 was important because it served to establish CONPES and DNP and set up bodies and functions in the formulation of the NDPs. However, the most significant contributions and legal tools were achieved in 1991 and 1994. These established citizen participation through Planning Councils, which includes representatives from the political, economic, social, academic, ecological, community, and ethnic minority sectors. They also established municipal and departmental planning. A key legal contribution to these processes is the approval of Law 1909 of 2018, which establishes mechanisms for government accountability in achieving goals, allowing for greater citizen participation, social control, and transparency.

The results show that each NDP includes strategies and programs on coexistence, principles, and values, aiming to mitigate and eliminate armed conflict, drug trafficking, and high criminality, three significant issues that annually leave victims and displaced people. However, education in democratic values and respect and love for others has not been established as state policy but as isolated programs of each government, without the cohesion or appropriate budget that allows current and new generations to coexist in peace.

There are still many tasks pending to achieve social development in Colombia, but the social and economic advances that the NDPs have contributed are evident. Among the pending tasks is the definitive solution to the armed conflict that generates successive confrontations, despite the different peace processes signed in the country, but they have not been an impediment to achieving much of the objectives set out in the NDPs. In this regard, Erazo-Patiño and Coronado-Camero (2022) considered that the conflict influences the country's growth and development capacity, but it has not been a limitation to achieving significant advances in this regard.

## **6. Conclusion**

The development plans, as a whole, propose aligned alternatives on economic growth, education, employment generation, narrowing the urban-rural divide, increasing agricultural productivity, inflation control, housing construction, and expanding the coverage of public services. However, recent plans stand out because they incorporate solutions to issues associated with climate change and the inclusion of the LGBTQI population.

Each plan highlights programs and projects that have achieved increased coverage in primary, secondary, and higher education, extended healthcare, nutrition, and school feeding programs, citizen participation, and financial credit. In urban

development, programs of urbanization and urban renewal in the country's main and intermediate capital cities are emphasized, which have allowed the construction and expansion of drinking water networks, basic sanitation, integrated public transportation systems, and provision of significant urban facilities, achieving 100% coverage or close to it. Yet, these indicators remain out of reach for inhabitants of various rural areas, especially concerning education coverage, public services, and facility provisions.

Development requires not only plans but also individual and collective commitments that lead to quality education, honest work, effort, discipline, savings, creativity to do good, innovate, and invest, with the aim of improving the quality of life, household income, and the presence and efficiency of state institutions in the countryside.

Finally, this work has made a significant effort to establish the social and economic advancements achieved through the implementation of NDPs over six decades of development planning in the country. However, the high number of sectoral and territorial goals and indicators set by each of these plans requires further analysis. Therefore, it is necessary to continue with new research that contributes to establishing advancements in urban development, road and airport infrastructure, housing, mass transportation systems, and facilities, among others.

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