Religious *Freedom*

WITH VALUES IN COLOMBIA



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WITH VALUES IN COLOMBIA



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WITH VALUES IN COLOMBIA

Summary

The universal right to Religious Freedom, enshrined in the 1991 Constitution, required approximately thirty years to achieve substantive development in Colombia. Since its founding in 2000, the MIRA Political Party established the defense and promotion of Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience for all Colombians as a fundamental pillar of its work. Guided by this purpose, this book summarizes the most relevant and concrete actions that have significantly influenced the State's recognition of all churches and their organizations. These efforts have been carried out through coordinated collaboration with the Presidents of the Republic in office at different periods, governors, mayors, and, most importantly, religious leaders from all denominations.

This process reflects the social contribution and economic savings generated by the religious sector, as well as the way in which, despite doctrinal differences, a shared understanding has been achieved in pursuit of the common good. Such cooperation has benefited millions of individuals who aspire to practice their spirituality in freedom and peace, while advancing tolerance and a deeper understanding of existing Religious Pluralism.

Additionally, the work identifies the essential elements that, in the authors' view, must be present within a territory in order to affirm that this universal right is being promoted and valued. The purpose is to encourage presidents, governors, and mayors to incorporate these elements into their government plans and the implementation of their administrations.

Keywords: Religious Freedom, values, public policy

LIBERTAD RELIGIOSA CON VALORES EN COLOMBIA

Resumen

El derecho universal a la libertad religiosa, consignado en la Constitución de 1991, tardó aproximadamente 30 años en desarrollarse en Colombia. El Partido Político MIRA, desde su creación en el año 2000, estableció como pilar fundamental de su trabajo, la defensa y promoción de la libertad religiosa de culto y conciencia para todos los colombianos; por lo que guiados por este propósito, esta obra resume las acciones más relevantes y concretas que han influido de manera significativa en el reconocimiento por parte del Estado, de todas las iglesias y sus organizaciones, en un trabajo mancomunado con los presidentes de la República de cada momento, gobernadores, alcaldes y principalmente los líderes religiosos de todas las denominaciones. Esta construcción refleja todo el aporte social y el ahorro económico que el sector religioso genera, y la forma en que a pesar de las diferencias doctrinales, ha logrado establecer un entendimiento para un bien común, en beneficio de millones de personas que esperan disfrutar de su espiritualidad en libertad y paz, avanzando en la tolerancia y la comprensión de la pluralidad religiosa existente. Además, define los elementos esenciales que, a nuestro juicio, deben existir en un territorio para afirmar que se está promoviendo y valorando este derecho universal, con el fin de motivar a que presidentes, gobernadores y alcaldes, los incluyan en sus planes de gobierno y en el desarrollo de sus administraciones.

Palabras clave: Libertad religiosa, valores, políticas públicas,

Citación sugerida / Suggested citation

Centro de Pensamiento Luis Eduardo Moreno - Partido Político MIRA, (Ed.) Libertad religiosa con valores en Colombia, Bogotá, 2025. ISBN: 978-958-57718-4-0

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WITH VALUES IN COLOMBIA

MANUEL ANTONIO VIRGÜEZ PIRAQUIVE
President, MIRA Political Party

ANA PAOLA AGUDELO
Vice President, MIRA Political Party

CARLOS EDUARDO GUEVARA VILLABON
Senator of the Republic, MIRA Political Party

IRMA LUZ HERRERA
Member of the House of Representatives for Bogotá, D.C. MIRA Political Party

Constitutional Term 2022–2026

RESEARCHERS
LUIS EDUARDO MORENO THINK TANK

Juan Felipe Gómez Rodríguez
Jhon Fredy Osorio Cardona
Ivonne Vanessa Peña Wilches
Lizeth Carolina Torres Padilla
Carolina Novoa Mendoza
Shirley Merchán de las Salas
Erika Natalia Salgado
Alirio Quitian Marín
Daryeny Parada Giraldo
Harol Oswaldo Lopera Rodríguez
Ingri Yinet Peñuela Morales
Alfonso Vargas Palacios
Carolina Montoya Orjuela
Diego Fernando Galvis Criollo
Laura Alejandra Álzate Mayorga

COVER DESIGN
Santiago Castillo

TRANSLATION - KEYS ENGLISH ACADEMY

Joshua Kessler
Diana Salcedo
Jefferson Tejada Paz
Claudia Lorena Alvarado
Leidy Milena Garzón
Kevin Parra

TIMELINE
Ideological Delegates for Religious Freedom
MIRA Political Party

2025

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WITH VALUES IN COLOMBIA
ISBN: 978-958-57718-9-5 © – DIGITAL BOOK
PUBLISHING IMPRINT: MIRA POLITICAL PARTY (978-958-57718)
APRIL, 2026
TOTAL OR PARTIAL REPRODUCTION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PRIOR AUTHORIZATION.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

11 Introduction to Religious Freedom as a Human Right

20 Contributions from Public Service within the Executive Branch

41 We Are the Political Party Leading the Struggle for Religious Freedom in Colombia

46 The Right to Conscientious Objection in Colombia

74 COLOMBIA

75 Timeline

79 Amazonas

80 Timeline of the Amazonas Department

81 Antioquia

82 Timeline of the Department of Antioquia

88 Arauca

89 Timeline of the Department of Arauca

TABLE OF CONTENTS

91 Atlántico

92 Timeline of the Department of Atlántico

93 Bolívar

94 Timeline of the Department of Bolívar

96 Boyacá

97 Timeline of the Department of Boyacá

98 Caldas

99 Timeline of the Department of Caldas

102 Caquetá

103 Timeline of the Department of Caquetá

105 Casanare

106 Timeline of the Department of Casanare

TABLE OF CONTENTS

108 Cauca

109 Timeline of the Department of Cauca

114 Cesar

115 Timeline of the Department of Cesar

118 Chocó

119 Timeline of the Department of Chocó

120 Córdoba

121 Timeline of the Department of Córdoba

123 Cundinamarca

124 Timeline of the Department of Cundinamarca

146 Capital District

147 Timeline of the Capital District

TABLE OF CONTENTS

152 Guainía

153 Timeline of the Department of Guainía

154 Guaviare

155 Timeline of the Department of Guaviare

157 Huila

158 Timeline of the Department of Huila

162 La Guajira

163 Timeline of the Department of La Guajira

164 Magdalena

165 Timeline of the Department of Magdalena

170 Meta

171 Timeline of the Department of Meta

TABLE OF CONTENTS

174 Nariño

175 Timeline of the Department of Nariño

178 Norte de Santander

179 Timeline of the Department of Norte de Santander

181 Putumayo

182 Timeline of the Department of Putumayo

183 Quindío

184 Timeline of the Department of Quindío

186 Risaralda

187 Timeline of the Department of Risaralda

191 San Andrés and Providencia

192 Timeline of the Department of San Andrés and Providencia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

193 Santander

194 Timeline of the Department of Santander

197 Sucre

198 Timeline of the Department of Sucre

199 Tolima

200 Timeline of the Department of Tolima

205 Valle del Cauca

206 Timeline of the Department of Valle del Cauca

208 Vichada

209 Timeline of the Department of Vichada

212 How to Implement Religious Freedom in a Territory

213 Essential Elements of Religious Freedom in a Territory

TABLE OF CONTENTS

215 ABC of Public Policy Design

223 Participatory Budgets in the Interreligious Sector – Public Sector Excellence and Sustainable Development

239 The Importance of Interreligious Committees – The Essential Role of Interreligious Sector Participation in Colombia

245 Religious Freedom Alliances – Guardians of Human Rights

250 Territorial Planning in Colombia – A Challenge for Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship

266 Religious Freedom and Development – A Strategic Perspective for the Inclusion of the Religious Sector in Territorial Development Plans

280 Cooperation Policy for the Protection of Religious Freedom – Approaches and Challenges

313 How to Develop a Project in Five Steps?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

316 Abbreviations

317 Glossary

319 References



Tablillas de piedra con escritura cuneiforme sumeria

INTRODUCTION

Religious Freedom as a Human Right

Human Rights, both as an ideal and as a body of law, represent one of the most significant responses of humanity to the persistent challenges of injustice and social indifference. Despite their prominence in contemporary discourse, Human Rights are the result of a long process of development spanning multiple civilizations and millennia (Ishay, 2008).

These rights, defined as rights inherent to all human beings without distinction of any kind, constitute the foundation of social justice and equity in modern societies. They are universal principles that ensure that all persons, regardless of origin, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other condition, possess guarantees for the protection of their freedom and dignity.

These rights are considered inalienable and indivisible, meaning that they cannot be arbitrarily granted, revoked, or diminished, and that all of them are interrelated in such a way that the deprivation of one may affect the others. Although this concept is widely accepted today, its roots lie in antiquity and it has undergone significant development throughout history.

The Epic of Gilgamesh, the Cyrus Cylinder, and the legal and ethical practices of ancient civilizations such as Sumer, Babylon, and Egypt provide early sources of legal and moral thought that reflect an emerging sense of justice and rights. The earliest legal systems in Mesopotamia and Egypt did not articulate Human Rights as they are understood today, but they did establish norms of conduct and systems of penalties (Roth, 1995).

In Mesopotamia, the Code of Hammurabi constituted one of the earliest attempts at the codification of laws intended to ensure equitable treatment of citizens under the authority of the king (Van De Mieroop, 2005). The laws contained in this code addressed a wide range of matters, from property and commerce to personal conduct and family rights, demonstrating a remarkable level of juridical sophistication for its time. More importantly, the Code of Hammurabi sought to impose sanctions proportional to the offenses committed, an idea that resonates with the modern principle of justice as proportionality.

In Egypt, by contrast, the notion of Ma'at —representing truth, justice, and cosmic harmony—was deeply integrated into the legal and ethical framework of the pharaonic State. This integration of the legal, the ethical, and the religious underscores how the law aimed not only to regulate human actions but also to align them with a perceived universal order, thereby ensuring social balance.

In the case of Cyrus the Great, he stands out as a precursor whose policies implemented principles that can today be identified as fundamental to the modern conception of Human Rights. Following the conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C., Cyrus issued a series of edicts that marked a significant departure from the practices of his predecessors and from those of the period in general. Rather than enslaving conquered peoples, he adopted a policy of liberation and respect for cultural and religious pluralism, which was embodied in the document known as the Cyrus Cylinder.

This cylinder, described by Irving Finkel (2013) in his work on the archaeological findings of the British Museum, is regarded as one of the earliest manifestos in history advocating tolerance and freedom of belief within a multicultural empire. In it, Cyrus the Great proclaimed the liberation of slaves and allowed deported peoples to return to their homelands and restore their temples and religious rituals. Such a policy was not only strategically advantageous for securing peace and cooperation within his vast empire, but also reflected an ethical vision that was remarkably advanced for its time.

In the case of ancient Greece, its legacy extends not only to ethics and politics, but also to the development of the concept of Human Rights through the notion of natural law. Plato and Aristotle, two pillars of Western philosophy, explored in depth the idea of justice beyond the written laws of the polis, arguing that there exists an inherent morality that should govern human conduct independently of local regulations (Raaflaub, 2009).

Natural law is a philosophical concept which holds that certain norms and rights are inherent and universal, derived from human nature, and discernible through reason. This concept has been fundamental in the development of ethical and juridical thought throughout human history. It affirms that all human beings, by virtue of being human, possess inalienable rights that must not be violated by other individuals or by the government. However, for many centuries, certain interpretations of natural law were used to justify slavery, often contradicting the very essence of the principle that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights.

In his work Politics, Aristotle argued that some individuals are born for the purpose of being slaves due to their natural inferiority in relation to those born to govern. According to him, this condition formed part of the natural order and was beneficial both to masters and to slaves. This view, deeply rooted in ancient Greek society, influenced many cultures and remained for centuries as a philosophical justification for slavery (Granobles, 2007). During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, slavery was often justified through interpretations of divine and natural law in terms of just wars and the domination of so-called “barbarian” peoples.

On the other hand, the Romans maintained certain legal principles and practices that reflected early notions of justice and equity which may be regarded as precursors to modern Human Rights. However, Roman society was deeply structured around systems of slavery and persecution, both of which played central roles in its economy and social order. In Rome, the legal status of a person largely determined the extent of his or her rights.

Roman citizens enjoyed numerous privileges, including the right to vote, the right to a trial, and protection against certain forms of corporal punishment.

The Law of the Twelve Tables represented an attempt to codify and standardize rights and responsibilities within Roman culture, ensuring more equitable and predictable treatment under the law (Nicholas, 1967).

Paradoxically, while some individuals enjoyed these rights, slavery remained a central institution in Rome, essential to its economy and military structure. Slaves were considered property without personal rights. Manumission offered a path through which some slaves could obtain freedom and, in rare cases, the status of citizenship; however, this did not alter the fundamentally oppressive nature of slavery (Bradley, 1994).

Persecution in Rome was not limited to slaves; it also extended to groups considered subversive or threatening to the social and political order. A notable example was the persecution of Christians, who were subjected to hostility because of their refusal to participate in the imperial cult. Roman authorities regarded Christianity as a threat to public order and to the religious duties owed to the State, which, in their view, justified the imposition of severe repressive measures (Sherwin-White, 1966).

During the Middle Ages, the idea of Human Rights as it is understood today did not exist; however, the principles that would eventually influence its development were beginning to take shape, particularly through religious philosophy and the legal norms of the period. The Inquisition, one of the most emblematic phenomena of this era, illustrates in a complex manner the interaction between ecclesiastical power, law, and emerging ideas concerning morality and justice. It was formally established in 1231 by Pope Gregory IX, and was originally conceived as a means to combat heresy and preserve orthodoxy within the Catholic Church.

Although it initially sought to provide a more orderly and humane legal process compared to persecutions carried out by mobs, it gradually evolved into an institution that strengthened the alliance between the Church and the State, employing methods contrary to modern Human Rights, such as torture and execution (Moore, 1987).

The experience of the Inquisition illustrates the tension between authoritarian power and individual rights. Although at the time it was considered necessary for the preservation of religious and social unity, inquisitorial practices generated criticism and rejection that later influenced Enlightenment thought. Philosophers such as John Locke argued against absolute authority and in favor of the natural rights of the individual, including the rights to life, liberty, and property—principles fundamentally opposed to those of the Inquisition (Tuck, 1999).

In contrast, the Renaissance encouraged a more individual-centered approach and emphasized the inherent rights of the human being, largely influenced by the return to classical texts and the development of humanism (Kristeller, 1990). This period also witnessed the Reformation, which challenged authoritarian structures in religion and contributed to the promotion of personal autonomy and freedom of belief, both of which constitute fundamental elements of Human Rights (Oberman, 2003).

During the Renaissance, a period characterized by the revival of interest in the classical arts and sciences, a significant conceptual shift occurred toward the recognition of individuality, largely driven by humanism, an intellectual movement that emphasized the dignity and agency of the individual. Paul Kristeller (1990) argues that Renaissance humanism redirected European culture toward the study of the humanities, promoting a more human-centered and personalist vision of knowledge. This intellectual movement not only encouraged appreciation for human capacity and dignity, but also laid the foundations for the later development of Human Rights by emphasizing the importance of reason and individual experience.

At the same time, the Reformation, initiated by figures such as Martin Luther, represented a significant challenge to authoritarian religious structures in Europe, particularly those of the Roman Catholic Church. Heiko Oberman (2003) notes that the Reformation promoted the idea of a more direct and personal relationship with the divine, free from the ecclesiastical mediation that had characterized medieval Christendom. This emphasis on personal autonomy and freedom of belief was expressed in various demands for greater Religious Freedom and in criticisms of political and ecclesiastical authority, thereby paving the way for the modern conception of Human Rights.

These developments during the Renaissance and the Reformation contributed to an environment in which ideas concerning personal liberty and individual dignity were able to flourish. These conceptual changes influenced not only the arts and sciences, but also began to shape political and legal thought. Treatises on government, such as those later written by John Locke during the Enlightenment, drew directly from this renewed focus on individuality and the inherent rights of the human being, arguing that governments must be founded upon the consent of the governed and upon the protection of the individual's natural rights (Tuck, 1999).

These ideas became catalysts for the American and French revolutions, where documents such as the United States Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) explicitly articulated Human Rights in the form of national law (Hunt, 2007).

For his part, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in The Social Contract (1762), asserted that sovereignty resides in the people, who are the true holders of authority within a society. Rousseau expanded the notion of liberty beyond mere protection from interference, arguing that it must also include participation in government, which is essential for an individual to be truly free (Hunt, 2007).

The struggle for Human Rights has been a constant throughout history, marked by periods of profound social and political transformation. The eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of two major revolutions that redefined the concepts of rights and liberty: the American Revolution and the French Revolution. These events not only radically altered the structures of power within their respective countries, but also profoundly influenced the global understanding of Human Rights.

The American Revolution was, in many respects, a conflict driven by Enlightenment ideas concerning liberty and individual rights. In 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed that "all men are created equal" and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (Maier, 1997). This declaration not only justified the separation from Great Britain, but also established a new standard of governance founded upon the consent of the governed and upon respect for individual rights.

Shortly thereafter, the French Revolution erupted under the slogans of "liberty, equality, and fraternity." In 1789, the French National Assembly promulgated the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which articulated a series of natural and universal rights. This declaration had a profound influence on European politics and consolidated the concept of Human Rights as fundamental and universal (Hunt, 2007).

The historical trajectory of Human Rights was not linear. Napoleon Bonaparte, who initially presented himself as an heir to the Revolution, eventually crowned himself emperor and expanded his empire across much of Europe. Although his regime displayed contradictions with respect to Human Rights, the dissemination of the Napoleonic Code introduced legal reforms that modernized many of the laws in the conquered territories (Bell, 2015).

The twentieth century witnessed how the ideas sown during the Enlightenment and crystallized during the French Revolution evolved into a broader conceptualization of Human Rights. At the same time, labor movements and the revolutions of the first half of the twentieth century—such as the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the Russian Revolution of 1917—significantly influenced the juridical recognition of collective rights.

These events underscored the importance of economic and social rights, which were incorporated into many national legal systems and into international Human Rights instruments. Jacques Lambert (1973) maintains that, prior to 1917, Latin American constitutions were predominantly influenced by the individualistic and liberal thought of the eighteenth century; however, after the aforementioned revolutions, they adopted models that included a strong social dimension, largely inspired by the Mexican Constitution of 1917, the first of its kind in the world.

Years later, the atrocities of the Second World War demonstrated the urgent need for a legal and moral framework capable of transcending national borders in order to protect human dignity. In response, the United Nations was established, and in 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, a document that not only reaffirmed civil and political rights, but also incorporated economic, social, and cultural rights (Morsink, 1999).

Johannes Morsink explains that this document was the result of an international collaborative effort involving delegates from different cultures and legal traditions, who worked together to formulate a set of principles capable of being accepted and adopted worldwide. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) established, for the first time in history in an explicit manner, that rights such as life, liberty, and personal security are universal and must be guaranteed without any form of discrimination.

he Declaration not only enumerated fundamental rights and freedoms, but also influenced the creation of two major international covenants: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both adopted in 1966. These treaties, together with the UDHR, constitute what is known as the International Bill of Human Rights. Morsink emphasizes that the UDHR has been a crucial instrument in the struggle against oppression and injustice, inspiring civil rights movements and democratic transformations throughout the world (1999).

Despite its undeniable global impact, the implementation of the principles established in the UDHR continues to face significant challenges. Armed conflicts, Human Rights violations, inequality, and discrimination persist, underscoring the need for constant vigilance and renewed efforts to ensure that the rights proclaimed in the UDHR become a reality for all people.

For example, in the right to Religious Freedom, internationally recognized through various treaties and declarations, multiple violations can be observed, manifested through discrimination, persecution, and legal restrictions imposed on certain religious practices and their adherents. These transgressions are especially prevalent in contexts where religious minorities face systematic exclusion and acts of violence.

Among the specific forms of violation, religious discrimination emerges as an alarmingly common phenomenon. This may be institutional in nature, where laws and Public Policy establish restrictions on the practice of non-majority religions or directly favor a State religion over others. It also occurs at the social level, where individuals of certain beliefs are marginalized or subjected to violence (Pew Research Center, 2018).

In addition, religious persecution constitutes another serious infringement of this right. It is characterized by actions ranging from physical hostility to campaigns of suppression orchestrated by the State, such as those reported against the Rohingya Muslim population in Myanmar, which have been classified by the United Nations Human Rights Council as acts of "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018). Such acts not only undermine social cohesion and political stability, but also promote cycles of violence and retaliation that may persist for generations.

Martha Nussbaum, in her work The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at Our Political Crisis (2018), introduces the concept of the "violences of the soul," referring to subtle forms of harm that deeply affect the psychological and emotional integrity of individuals. For Nussbaum, these forms of violence manifest through attitudes and actions that, although not physically aggressive, perpetuate discrimination, fear, and exclusion. In the context of Religious Freedom, these "violences of the soul" become evident when individuals are marginalized, stigmatized, or ridiculed because of their religious beliefs, often resulting in significant emotional and psychological harm. This type of violence is particularly pernicious because it undermines human dignity and mutual respect within societies that claim to be pluralistic and tolerant.

ánchez, Daniel. (2011, July 23). History of Human Rights – Documentary [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiQmq8NO4zg

We Uphold the Idea of GOD

The defense of Religious Freedom for all Colombians is a matter of honor for us

Defending Religious Freedom for all Colombians is, for us, a matter of honor. As a religious sector, we hold different practices, doctrines, and ways of understanding the sacred. Yet there is something that unites us: the defense of the idea of God. This does not mean imposing a definition of God nor seeking to standardize faith. Rather, it means recognizing that the idea of God constitutes a shared root that gives meaning, calls the conscience into responsibility, and sustains our presence in the public sphere.

This is the challenge of our time: to ensure that the idea of God is not erased from the collective conscience. The risk does not always appear in the form of prohibition; it often advances through indifference. While we engage in disputes among ourselves, the idea of God gradually loses space in public discourse. In schools, in the media, and in politics, it has become increasingly easy to speak of God with contempt, and increasingly difficult to defend the idea of God without believers being ridiculed. If the religious sector does not defend the idea of God, no one else will. This is not only a matter of religion; it is a matter of social conscience.

For this reason, the necessary discussion is not to compete over God, but to defend the very possibility that God remains meaningful in public life. The real debate is not among confessions, but in the face of a culture that seeks to relegate every expression of faith to the private sphere. When the spaces that have been gained are reduced to internal disputes, the result is that we unintentionally assist those who wish to remove faith from the public sphere.

There are also internal challenges within the religious sector. The first is silence, which at times becomes complicity. Where is the voice of the religious sector when faith is offended? When the faith of one is violated, something is harmed that, with differences, we all share. If we remain silent today, tomorrow it will be more difficult to firmly uphold what we ask for everyone: respect. The second challenge is the internal damage caused by taking satisfaction in the misfortune of others. To believe that the failure of another benefits us is a mistake; it erodes the legitimacy of the religious sector and weakens the credibility of religious life in the public sphere.

From this arises the call for a common defense, conducted with dignity. We can work together, without erasing our differences, so that Religious Freedom is not treated as a concession, but as a principle. What is at stake is that the idea of God continues to have a legitimate place in the public sphere, free from ridicule or censorship. If we do not form new leadership and build bridges now, what has been achieved may dissolve within a single generation. Religious Freedom protects precisely this: the right of every person to seek God according to his or her conscience, and the duty of society to respect that search.

WE ARE THE POLITICAL PARTY THAT LEADS THE STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN COLOMBIA

OUR HISTORY OF PROMOTION AND DEFENSE

> The MIRA Party was founded in the year 2000, and as stated in its constitution: "MIRA is a permanent institution that reflects political pluralism, promotes and channels citizen participation, and contributes to the formation and expression of the popular will, with the purpose of accessing power, holding popularly elected office, and influencing the political and democratic decisions of the Nation.
>
> In addition to its political achievements and their constant dissemination, and as a foundation for them, MIRA shall carry out broad and continuous social work aimed at strengthening the ongoing pursuit of peace, solidarity, deliberation, integrity, democracy, freedom, justice, equity, knowledge, and work for all Colombians."

AUTHORS OF THE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW

One of the principal areas of work of MIRA, as well as one of its greatest concerns, is the guarantee of the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship. The Party is the author of the Anti-Discrimination Law (Law 1482 of 2011) and has promoted multiple actions that advance the comprehensive protection of this right throughout the national territory, including its departments, districts, and municipalities.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

From the Political Constitution of Colombia, Religious Freedom is established as a fundamental right that must be protected and guaranteed throughout the national territory, followed by Law 133 of 1994 and other legal provisions that, to varying degrees, contain one or more articles related to the promotion and effective enjoyment of this right. Examples include several national laws through which the MIRA Political Party has sought to incorporate Religious Freedom into the Public Policy agenda, such as Law 1482 of 2011, also known as the Anti-Discrimination Law, which amended the Criminal Code in order to prevent discrimination and harassment on the grounds of religion, as well as to prevent the advocacy of genocide in Colombia, seeking to ensure that acts such as those committed against the Jewish community during World War II are not repeated.

In this way, not only the Office of the Attorney General, but also government secretariats, and in some cases secretariats such as those of education or culture, have developed programs aimed at fostering a culture of greater respect for religious differences. In the same spirit, the MIRA Political Party secured the inclusion, within Article 40 of Law 1801 of 2016, known as the National Code of Security and Citizen Coexistence, of provisions requiring respect for individuals' religious beliefs in relation to their expressions and gatherings in public and private spaces., thereby enabling not only the imposition of fines but also the adoption of administrative measures to improve coexistence based on respect.

Also noteworthy among the achievements of the MIRA Political Party in incorporating Religious Freedom into the Public Policy agenda is the inclusion of Article 244 in Law 1753 of 2015, which gave rise to the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship. Likewise, Article 127 of Law 1955 of 2019 provided the basis for the characterization of the interreligious sector, including the measurement of its social impact, as well as the establishment of actions for intersectoral, interinstitutional, and territorial coordination to guarantee this right.

In addition, MIRA was one of the political parties that argued that, within the Final Peace Agreement signed in 2016 between the National Government and the FARC-EP, and based on the principle that one of the general guidelines for implementation should be the "Respect for Freedom of Worship," the participation of the interreligious sector in the construction of peace should be ensured, as well as the restoration of the rights of victims of the armed conflict whose victimization was based on religious beliefs.

Another significant achievement is the creation and implementation of the National System for Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, Social Dialogue, Total Peace,

and Non-Stigmatization (SINALIBREC), established in Article 312 of Law 2294 of 2023, the National Development Plan for 2022–2026. This system brings together public and private entities in order to promote the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, for which the Directorate of Religious Affairs is responsible for coordinating these efforts, including the articulation of interreligious and multisectoral dialogue spaces such as the National Committee and the National Roundtable of the Religious Sector.

VERTICAL CAUCUS

Considering that the MIRA Political Party operates in a coordinated and uniform manner through a vertical caucus structure, it it is important to note that in the departments, districts, and municipalities where the Party has representatives—such as deputies, council members, and local board members—actions have been undertaken to promote the inclusion of Religious Freedom within the Public Policy agenda. These actions have included the adoption of Public Policy on Religious Freedom through departmental ordinances and municipal agreements; the incorporation of specific goals into local development plans, among many others; the protection of places of worship within territorial land-use planning instruments; the exclusion or exemption of property tax for religious properties; and the modification of the structure of participatory bodies such as Territorial Planning Committees and Peace, Reconciliation, and Coexistence Councils in order to integrate the interreligious sector, among other measures.

Nevertheless, it remains necessary to broaden the scope of the incorporation of Religious Freedom within the framework of the Public Policy agenda. In this regard, the co-founder of the MIRA Political Party, Carlos Alberto Baena López, proposed an administrative framework based on Multithematic Social Dialogue in order to incorporate Religious Freedom into different spheres of action of the interreligious sector.

ADVOCACY IN DEVELOPMENT PLANS

National and territorial development plans originate in the Political Constitution of Colombia of 1991, specifically in Article 339, Chapter II: On Development Plans

> *"There shall be a National Development Plan composed of a general section and an investment plan for public entities at the national level. The general section shall establish the long-term national purposes and objectives, the medium-term goals and priorities of State action, and the general strategies and guidelines of the economic, social, and environmental policy to be adopted by the Government. The public investment plan shall contain the multi-year budgets for the principal national public investment programs and projects, as well as the specification of the financial resources required for their execution, within a framework that guarantees fiscal sustainability."*
> *(Application of the Principle of State Neutrality and Religious Equality in the Political Constitution of Colombia of 1991, 2019)*

The Development Plan may be understood as a guide or roadmap through which the Government executes the resources of the Nation, establishing the strategic guidelines that will make it possible to materialize its vision of development. Various social actors participate in the formulation of this Plan, as it is a participatory process in which

different perspectives seek to demonstrate the importance of guaranteeing their respective rights. This same exercise is carried out in the departments, districts, and municipalities for each governmental term, and it constitutes the mechanism through which public resources are directed, by means of the design of goals, programs, indicators, and implementation timelines.

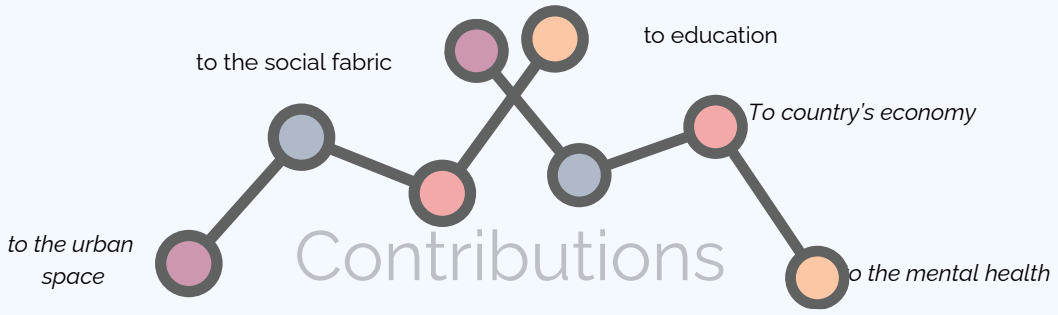
The interreligious sector is a key actor in the construction of peace in Colombia, as well as in the strengthening of the social fabric, the economic growth of the country, and the achievement of sustainable development. This demonstrates that it is essential for the National Development Plan to include actions aimed at guaranteeing the protection of Religious Freedom in its multiple dimensions and areas of application, since this ensures targeted allocation of resources, clear policy guidelines from which programs, projects, and actions are derived, and the measurement of progress in accordance with the indicators established for that purpose. The interreligious sector understands Religious Freedom as a comprehensive right that goes beyond the mere possibility of exercising Freedom of Worship in places designated for religious practice.
At the national level, the National Planning Department is the entity responsible for the preparation, dissemination, evaluation, and monitoring of the Development Plan.

The Development Plan includes national purposes and objectives, as well as the goals and priorities established by the Government. Other components of development plans include the strategies and guidelines of the economic, social, and environmental policies proposed by each administration. The investment plan contains the annual budgets required for execution, together with their respective sources of financing. The legal framework governing the National Development Plan (PND) is established in Law 152 of 1994, which enacted the Organic Law of the Development Plan.In light of the foregoing, and considering that the exercise of Religious Freedom does not occur solely within places of worship, but also in diverse settings and contexts, including the social sphere and areas of collective participation and influence, the importance of incorporating Religious Freedom into the National Development Plan for 2022–2026 becomes evident. This Plan establishes six structural pillars within its framework.

INTERRELIGIOUS SECTOR IN COLOMBIA

The interreligious sector is a key actor in the construction of peace in Colombia, as well as in the strengthening of the social fabric, the economic growth of the country, and the achievement of sustainable development. Therefore, it is essential that within the National Development Plan the actions aimed at guaranteeing the protection of Religious Freedom be clearly established in its multiple dimensions and areas of application, since this ensures targeted allocation of resources, clear policy guidelines from which programs, projects, and actions are derived, and the measurement of progress according to the indicators established for that purpose. The interreligious sector understands Religious Freedom as a comprehensive right that goes beyond the

possibility of exercising Freedom of Worship in places designated. The interreligious sector understands Religious Freedom as a comprehensive right that goes beyond the possibility of exercising Freedom of Worship in places designated for religious practices. The religious sector can contribute in two ways: first, through its spiritual support, which provides emotional stability to individuals; second, through multiple social actions that have been characterized in recent years as multifaceted support for the country. Let us observe how this sector provides support to the nation in diverse ways:



Contributions to the social fabric and to the country's economy. Recently, the National Government conducted a characterization study of 1,583 faith-based organizations in 219 municipalities and found that their economic contribution through humanitarian assistance amounts to 341 billion Colombian pesos from the pandemic to the present day. When this figure is projected across the total number of places of worship in the country, it is estimated that humanitarian assistance throughout Colombia has reached the equivalent of 5 trillion pesos. Likewise, according to the report, which cites studies by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), religion contributes more than 1.2 trillion pesos annually to economic growth, thereby making it a key actor in achieving a higher standard of living for Colombians.

The report also presents findings from the Capital District of Bogotá, demonstrating that, at a minimum, faith-based organizations enable the Mayor's Office to save approximately 1.7 trillion pesos per year in social investment, since the work carried out by these organizations represents a contribution equivalent to that amount.

Contributions to mental health. It was found that nine out of ten organizations have suicide prevention initiatives, one of the principal initiatives being the teaching of methods to manage and confront personal difficulties, as well as to mitigate and prevent risk factors such as drug addiction, family-related problems, and depression. Since the pandemic, these organizations have allocated approximately 41 billion pesos to such efforts, which, when projected nationwide, amounts to nearly 625 billion pesos invested in programs focused on the mental health of Colombians. Religion in Colombia is therefore undoubtedly a highly significant actor in strengthening the social fabric.

Contributions to the urban environment. The report highlights that places of worship contribute to the improvement of the areas in which they are located. It notes that in

e las 508.224 acciones, programas y proyectos identificados, las organizaciones realizan en los 219 municipios, 216.939 relacionados con la paz, es decir, el 60% del total de programas. De esta manera, el informe concluye que es importante involucrar a las organizaciones religiosas dentro de los escenarios de participación relacionados con este ámbito, tales como, los Consejos de Paz 69% of these locations, urban security in the surrounding area is improved. Other identified contributions include the enhancement of public lighting in nearby areas, better management of solid waste, and, in some cases, the improvement of sidewalks and roadways through the organizations' own resources or through institutional coordination. In other cases, transportation routes have been requested that benefit neighboring communities, and it was also found that these organizations play a significant role in responding to emergencies and disasters.
For this reason, the report recommends that planning authorities take these contributions into account in order to integrate faith-based organizations into urban planning decisions.

Contributions to peace for all. Of the 508,224 actions, programs, and projects identified, faith-based organizations carry out 216,939 initiatives related to peace across the 219 municipalities, representing approximately 60% of the total. Accordingly, the report concludes that it is important to involve religious organizations in participatory bodies related to this field, such as Territorial Peace Councils and other institutional forums in which the sector can make a greater contribution.

Contributions to education. After identifying the large number of programs and initiatives focused on training and instruction, the report concludes that the "Interreligious Sector is an actor that contributes to the integral formation of the individual through teachings, guidelines, and training processes that promote ethical values, civic culture, peaceful coexistence, and conflict management."

WORK OF THE MIRA POLITICAL PARTY IN THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT JUAN MANUEL SANTOS CALDERÓN

The MIRA Political Party achieved the inclusion of Article 244 in the Development Plan 2014–2018 of the administration of former President Juan Manuel Santos, through Law 1753 of 2015, which gave rise to the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship in Colombia. This provision was established as follows:

National Development Plan 2014–2018, *All for a New Country*
Article 244. Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience

"The Ministry of the Interior, in coordination with the competent entities, shall undertake actions that promote the recognition of associative forms of civil society based on the principles of Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience. The National Government shall formulate and update the Public Policy in this matter with the participation of religious entities, guaranteeing religious freedom and equality under

conditions of equity, and recognizing their contribution to the common good at the local, regional, and national levels."

This provision enabled the initiation, in 2015, of the formulation of the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, which was developed by the Ministry of the Interior with the support of different stakeholders and with the backing of the interreligious sector in Colombia. It should be clarified that the formulation of the Public Policy was the responsibility of the Executive branch; however, it must be noted that without its inclusion in the National Development Plan, its implementation would not have been possible. For this reason, MIRA considers the incorporation of this right within the National Development Plan is fundamental.

GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT IVÁN DUQUE MÁRQUEZ

Subsequently, the caucus of the MIRA Political Party achieved the inclusion of Article 127 in the Development Plan 2018–2022 of the administration of former President Iván Duque Márquez, through Law 1955 of 2019, by means of which actions were undertaken to demonstrate the importance of the interreligious sector in all its spheres of activity. The article provides as follows:

National Development Plan 2018–2022, *Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity*
Article 127. Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience

"The National Government, coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior, shall undertake actions that promote intersectoral, interinstitutional, and territorial coordination in order to guarantee and ensure the effective enjoyment of the right to Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience throughout the national territory. For this purpose, it shall promote and encourage the participation of representatives of religious entities, the recognition of such entities, the guarantee of the free exercise of these rights, and the implementation of actions that make it possible to determine the social impact of religious organizations and entities, in accordance with the Constitution and the law." (Transition Report, Ministry of the Interior, 2022).

Following the incorporation of this article, the Government was able to broaden the concept of the interreligious sector, which had traditionally been viewed in a limited manner, often considered isolated from the country's social, educational, and cultural processes. This achievement made it possible to map a large portion of the activities carried out by the interreligious sector beyond the spiritual sphere, demonstrating that it is a key actor in achieving common objectives shared by civil society, as well as by the public and private sectors. This represents an important achievement because it helps to counteract the negative perception that is sometimes held regarding the work of the sector, thereby reinforcing its connection to the right to Religious Freedom.

Through this article, dialogue among different actors was also encouraged from an intersectoral perspective in order to guarantee this right, promoting the creation of interreligious spaces in cooperation with various public and private entities.This included

encouraging active participation from ministries such as Health and Social Protection; Environment and Sustainable Development; Labor; National Education; Commerce, Industry and Tourism; Transport; and even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all working together in the defense of this right. At the territorial level, similar participation was promoted among departmental and municipal secretariats, as well as decentralized administrative bodies.

GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT GUSTAVO PETRO URREGO

For the term corresponding to the National Development Plan 2022–2026, enacted through Law 2294 of 2023, the MIRA Political Party achieved the inclusion of Article 312 for the defense and protection of Religious Freedom in Colombia.

ARTICLE 312. NATIONAL SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, FREEDOM OF WORSHIP AND CONSCIENCE; SOCIAL DIALOGUE; TOTAL PEACE; EQUALITY AND NON-STIGMATIZATION — SINALIBREC.The National System of Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship and Conscience; Social Dialogue; Total Peace; Equality and Non-Stigmatization (SINALIBREC) is hereby created. It shall be composed of national and territorial public entities, as well as other public or private entities responsible for formulating, executing, and promoting plans, programs, projects, and actions aimed at the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience, with the purpose of strengthening the capacities of religious organizations.

The Ministry of the Interior, under the coordination of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, shall undertake actions to ensure the intersectoral, interinstitutional, and territorial coordination of SINALIBREC. Likewise, it shall coordinate interreligious spaces, including the National Committee for Participation and Social and Intersectoral Dialogue on Religious Freedom; the National Roundtable of the Religious Sector; as well as territorial councils, committees, and roundtables for interreligious, multithematic, and multisectoral social dialogue. As of 2024, the system is in the process of implementation through the previously mentioned bodies. (Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications; Avance Jurídico Casa Editorial S.A.S., n.d.)

MIRA REGIONAL FORUM CYCLE

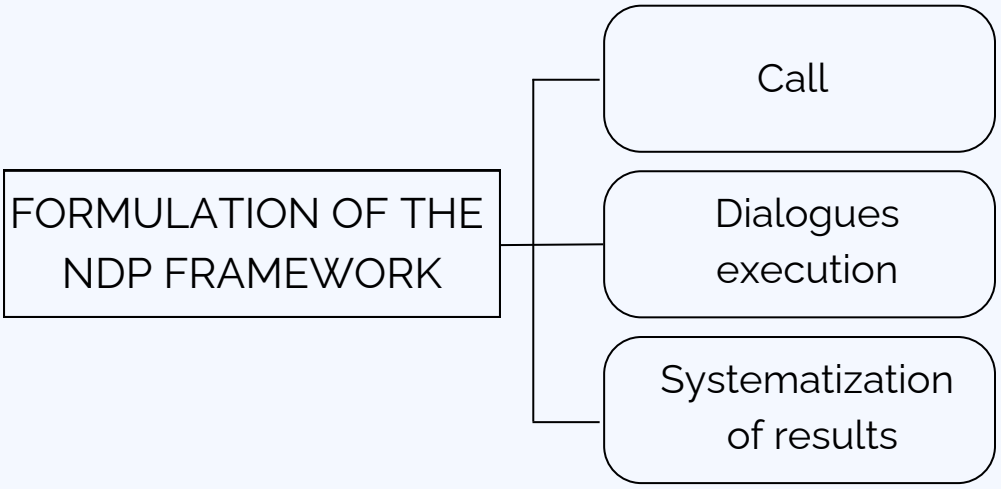
In order to accomplish this objective, the Party designed a methodology called the MIRA Forum Cycle, through which nearly 500 proposals were collected from across the country and classified according to the structural pillars of the Development Plan.

In this information-gathering process, governors and mayors, deputies and council members, religious leaders, and academics participated, with the purpose of activating interreligious and multithematic social dialogue throughout the national territory.

Through the following two diagrams, the participation of the Religious Freedom Forum Cycle is intended to be illustrated within the methodological framework established by the National Government for the incorporation of proposals. In summary, this may be

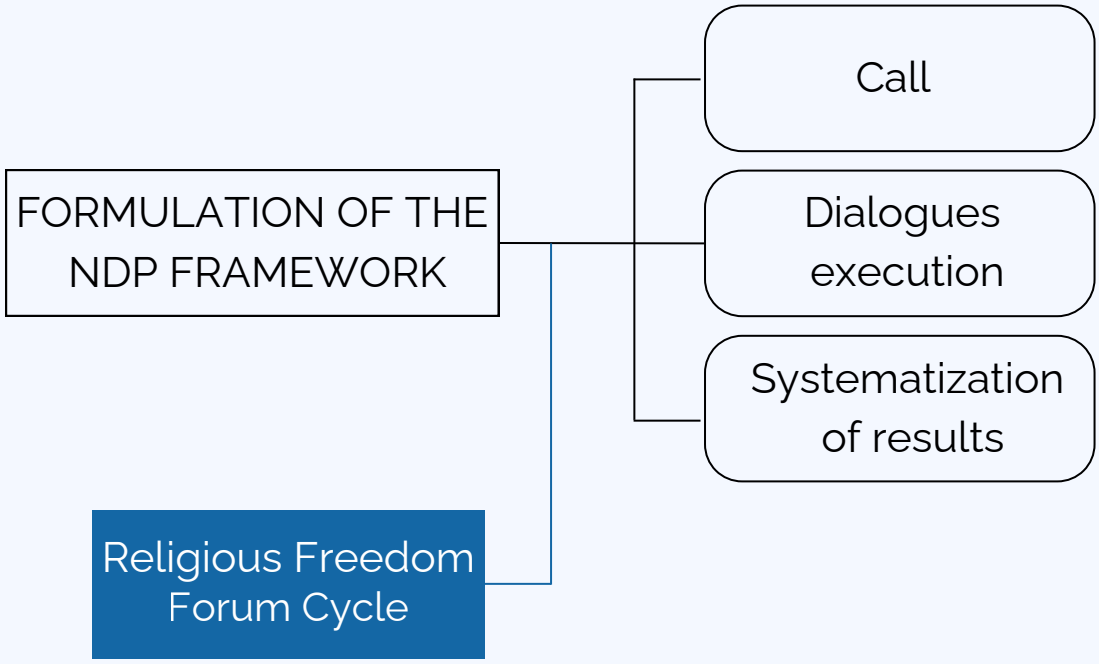
understood as a parallel exercise developed by the MIRA Political Party within the existing proposal integration framework, but with a specific emphasis on Religious Freedom, as follows:

GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE FORMULATION OF THE NATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

MIRA POLITICAL PARTY'S PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE THE ENTIRE RELIGIOUS SECTOR



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

ADVOCACY FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR IN THE ORGANIZED SPACES DESIGNATED BY THE NATIONAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Within the framework of the extensive logistics involved in the Binding Regional Dialogues, the need was identified to consider a space specifically dedicated to the interreligious sector in Colombia. In one particular region, several religious leaders participated in the dialogue organized by the National Government. Although they were able to attend the event through the registration process, they observed that no exclusive space had been planned to address issues specific to their sector. In response to this situation, a formal request was submitted to the National Planning Department so that future Regional Dialogues would include a space dedicated to this sector.

The Government implemented 47 Binding Regional Dialogues as part of the process for structuring the National Development Plan (PND). Although these dialogues are open to all sectors, including those belonging to the interreligious sphere, the opportunity was identified to improve the initial planning by including a specific working group so that this sector could submit direct proposals to the National Development Plan 2022–2026.

In the following image, the registration link for the Regional Dialogues promoted by the National Government is shown, where it can be observed that, although there are working groups for most population sectors, a specific group for the interreligious sector was not initially included, leaving only the category “others” as an option. In view of this situation, the MIRA Political Party took the initiative to lead two actions:

1. Submission of a formal communication addressed to the President of the Republic.
2. Creation of the Religious Freedom Forum Cycle.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FORUMS FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE ENTIRE RELIGIOUS SECTOR IN PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN



The different components of the design of the Regional Religious Freedom Forum Cycle were presented in a descriptive manner. The parameters for each forum were defined and standardized in order to be applied in each of the departments.

Each of the four members of Congress from the Party was responsible for moderating certain departments in order to accompany the event held in each of them.

Duration of presentations: 10 minutes each
Total duration of the event: 1 hour and 10 minutes.

GUIDING QUESTIONS OF THE FORUM

1. From your role, why do you consider it important to include the religious sector in the National Development Plan 2022–2026?
2. Do you have one or more proposals to be included in this National Development Plan that involve the religious sector in Colombia? If so, which ones?
3. Why do you consider that the inclusion of Religious Freedom in the last two development plans of Colombia has contributed to Colombian society?

Objective: To identify the principal proposals for the inclusion of Religious Freedom within the National Development Plan, based on contributions from the interreligious, public, and academic sectors.

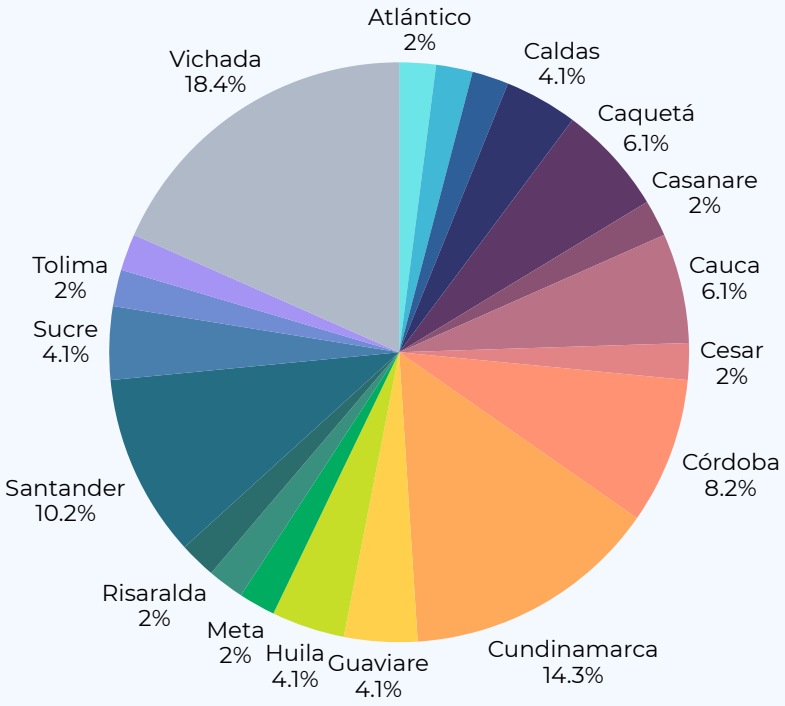
PHASES OF THE CYCLE

The Regional Religious Freedom Forum Cycle began with a call to the National Government to include the interreligious sector in a more appropriate manner within the Binding Regional Dialogue spaces. Subsequently, the process moved to the design and implementation of an independent strategy, based on the systematization of results, the classification of proposals according to the structural pillars of the Plan's framework, and the definition of principal lines of action leading to a comprehensive proposal. It is called a Cycle because the strategy follows a cyclical dynamic, concluding with a second call to the National Government, whose purpose is the submission of the supporting document of the strategy together with its corresponding proposals.



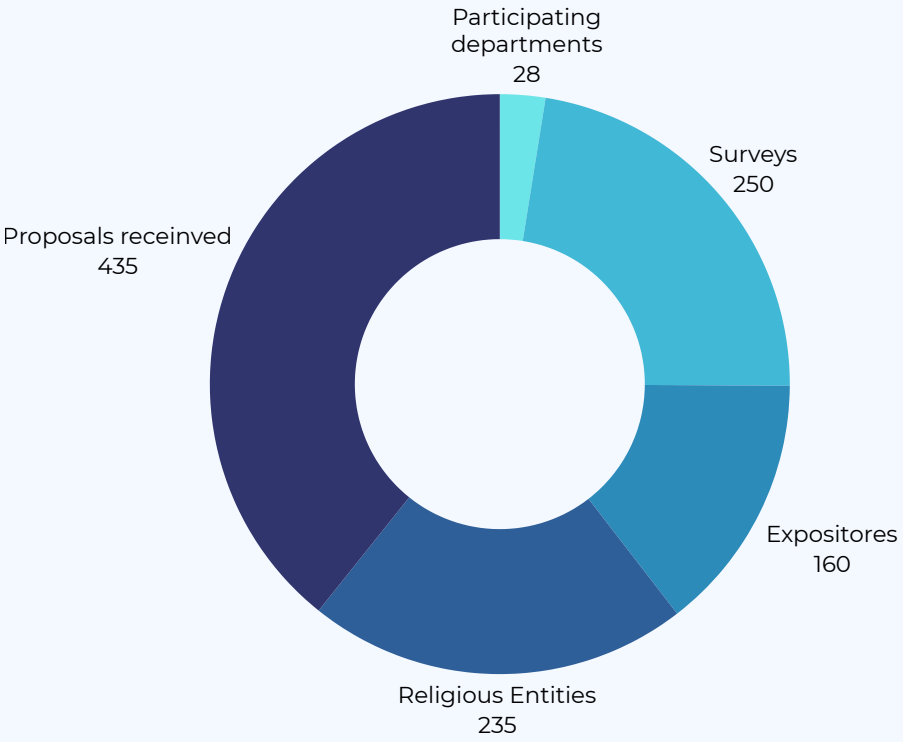
Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEY



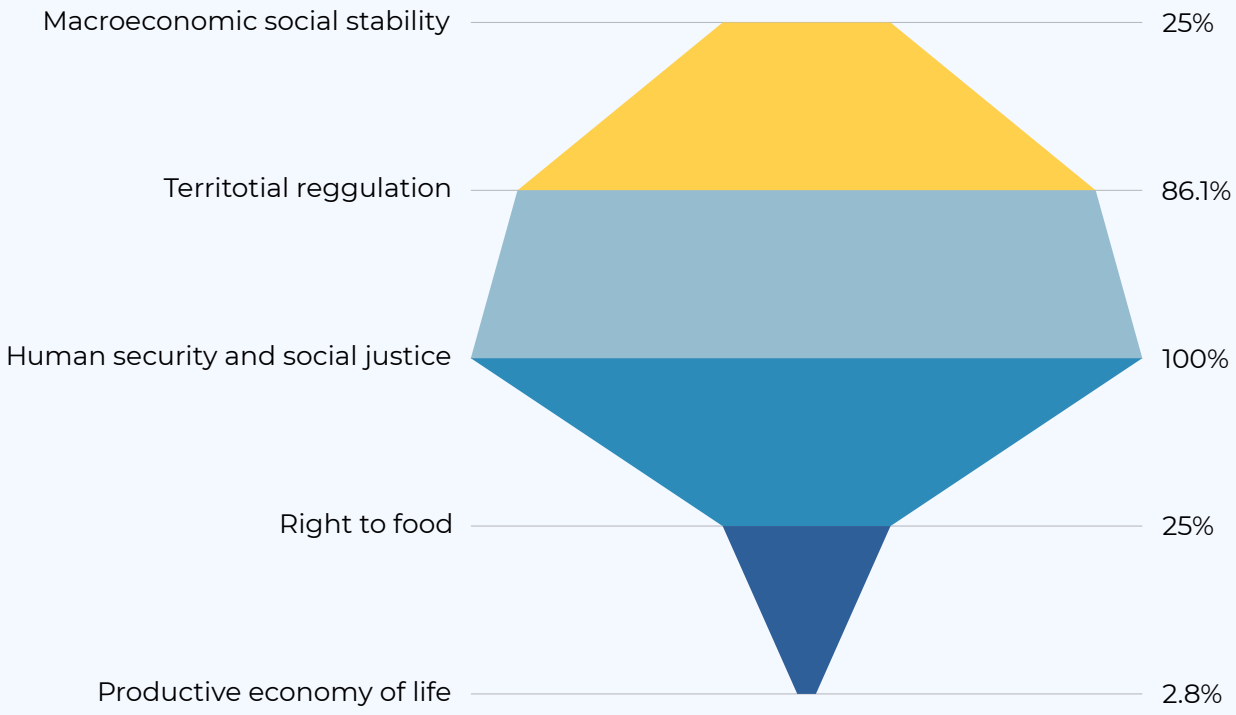
Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

It is important to highlight the regional participation in the Forums, which was developed at the territorial level, with the input and perspectives of all stakeholders as a central pillar.



Fuente: Elaboración propia. 2024.

IMPACT ON THE AXES OF THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

The proposals on which actors of the religious sector focused have a positive impact on human security and social justice, which is consistent with their social assistance role, as well as on territorial planning.

PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

According to the National Planning Department (DNP, 2023), the foundations of the National Development Plan 2022–2026, the Plan is structured around six major lines defined by the Government as the Six Transformations, which are described as follows according to the National Planning Department:

1. Territorial Planning

This approach revolves around three components: (1) Determinants of territorial planning (environmental factors, heritage, transport infrastructure, public and care services, comprehensive metropolitan development plans, and tourism projects); (2) Planning and territorial management instruments; and (3) Territorial planning institutions. The result of the articulation of these three components should improve the effectiveness of the relationship between the Nation and the territorial entities. This improvement in effectiveness must be reflected in a real decentralization of powers and responsibilities, as well as in the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of the territorial entities.

2. Human Security and Social Justice

This transformation seeks to guarantee the fundamental minimum conditions that promote well-being, physical integrity, comprehensive development, and the protection of individuals against any factors that threaten rights and freedoms.

3. Human Right to Food

This right is understood as the integration of: (1) the development of a greater and improved food supply that takes into account the specific practices of each territory and reduces food and nutritional insecurity; and (2) access to this supply by the population, improving their ability to obtain food, particularly for population groups facing greater difficulties.

4. Productive Economy for Life and the Fight Against Climate Change

The country has relied on an economic structure strongly dependent on extractive activities. This situation is incompatible with the objectives of an industrialized and diversified economy, following a path of green growth based on knowledge, promoting the use of clean energy, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

The productive economy will advance toward decarbonization and climate resilience, in harmony with nature, with greater efficiency in the use of resources such as air, water, and soil, more knowledge-intensive, equitable, and socially inclusive.

5. Regional Convergence

Colombia is a country marked by significant inequalities, not only in terms of income distribution but also in social indicators among different population groups and territories.

Within this transformation, the objective is to reduce territorial socioeconomic disparities, aiming toward greater overall well-being, recognizing the value of the voices of territories and the communities that inhabit them in order to collectively build development visions and models adapted to the diverse realities, characteristics, and potentials of the country's regions.

6. Macroeconomic Financial Stability

Macroeconomic stability comprises two aspects: first, stable economic growth withou major fluctuations in economic activity, such as recessions or unsustainable booms; and second, price stability, understood as low and stable inflation.

(National Planning Department – DNP, 2023)

recesiones o auges insostenibles y, segundo, la estabilidad de precios, entendida como una inflación baja y estable. (Departamento Nacional de Planeación - DNP, 2023)

PROPOSALS BY TRANSFORMATION AXIS

It is essential to emphasize that these proposals encompass multiple dimensions aimed at strengthening the integration of the religious sector in different areas of public life in Colombia. The process involves consolidating existing structures, such as the National Committee for Participation and Social and Intersectoral Dialogue on Religious Freedom, and creating new bodies, such as Offices of Religious Affairs in each department and national response mechanisms to address specific issues affecting the sector. In addition, the objective is to promote the active participation of different religious denominations in the development of planning instruments such as territorial land-use plans, basic plans, and territorial planning schemes, in order to guarantee the right to Freedom of Worship.

Based on these advances, the following steps include the implementation of concrete actions to ensure effective coordination between the State and the religious sector, the training of key actors, and the strengthening of support mechanisms.

1. Human Security and Social Justice:

- Strengthen the National Committee for Participation and Social and Intersectoral Dialogue on Religious Freedom, as well as the Religious Freedom Committees, so that they may serve as advisory bodies to the Government on peace-related matters.
- Strengthen the National Directorate of Religious Affairs and the National Roundtable of the Religious Sector, as well as departmental and municipal roundtables, by providing technical assistance mechanisms and establishing Religious Affairs offices in the regions.
- Creation of a Religious Affairs office in each department.
- Establishment of a national response mechanism to address the issues identified by the religious sector and provide permanent solutions.
- Promotion of values-based education and social service programs for children and youth, including reintegration processes and support for persons deprived of liberty.
- Creation of a Youth Observatory on Religious Freedom to strengthen youth networks on Religious Freedom and promote spaces for Social Dialogue in educational settings and youth committees on Religious Freedom.
- Establishment of a working group that allows all religious denominations to collaborate in the promotion of peace.

- Inclusion of a representative of the interreligious sector in participatory bodies within each municipality.
- Promotion of actions against discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs or ideology.
- Respect for conscientious objection.
- Promotion of churches as builders of social networks.
- Implementation of life-education courses in schools, delivered with the support of pastors and youth leaders committed to youth outreach, in order to combat suicide, depression, adolescent pregnancy, substance abuse, and to strengthen self-esteem and respect for family values.
- Training members of the religious sector to serve as mediators in family and community conflicts.
- Creation of a national program of social facilitators from the religious sector.
- Training of public officials, authorities, and government personnel in the legal framework of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, with the aim of ensuring broad knowledge and guarantees of these rights, thereby reducing violations and discrimination against those who profess and practice a religious belief.
- Respect for the preaching of the Gospel

2. Territorial Planning:

- Ensure that the National Planning Department and the planning secretariats of departmental and municipal governments promote the participation of religious entities and faith-based organizations in the development of territorial planning instruments.
- Review land-use regulations within territorial planning frameworks in order to ensure that the interreligious sector does not face restrictions on the establishment of places of worship, recognizing the social and spiritual contribution they provide to the communities in which they are located.
- Provide guarantees so that worship facilities may be established in any designated activity area, implementing mechanisms to prevent territorial authorities, through planning instruments, from limiting or affecting this possibility.
- Guarantee and promote neutral worship spaces in locations where no worship facilities are available, such as hospitals and airports, ensuring that these spaces may be used by any religion registered with the Ministry of the Interior.
- Strengthen the definition of worship and the concept of institutional or public-service land use within territorial planning instruments.
- Establish preferential public service tariffs for all social institutional uses within municipalities, including activities related to worship.

3. Regional Social Convergence:

- Protection of the right to Religious Freedom through recognition of the multiple dimensions of this right in its different dimensions, ensuring its incorporation across various institutions at the national level.
- Promotion of training for the population, as well as the identification of social programs that can be coordinated with public initiatives, reinforcing the importance of intersectoral collaboration.
- The same approach applies to mental health initiatives and other areas in which the interreligious sector contributes to society.
- Placing the spiritual dimension as a guiding axis of public action, while promoting interdisciplinary and interinstitutional work.
- Strengthening coordination between the State and the religious sector so that, through early warning mechanisms, social problems affecting the Colombian population may be addressed in a timely manner.

4. Macroeconomic Financial Stability:

- Strengthen national and territorial public policies by allocating resources for the execution of action plans.
- Include projects aimed at peaceful coexistence, psychosocial support, and collective emotional well-being, recognizing that the religious sector contributes to personal peace, as well as promoting training and education for employment.
- Allocate budgetary resources for the characterization of the religious sector in regions where such studies have not yet been conducted.
- Promote campaigns to strengthen the interreligious initiative bank.
- Promote social-oriented talent in Colombia through the National Festival of Sacred Music and Talents.
- Support the training of ministers in Religious Freedom through scholarship systems or incentives in recognition of their social work.
- Provide technical assistance and training to the religious sector in matters related to legal organization, property management, and security.
- Ensure equal rights for chaplains of different faiths, based on the principle of equality.

5. Human Right to Food:

- Creation of food banks, health prevention programs, family and interpersonal relationship support initiatives, and humanitarian assistance programs.
- Direct delivery of food to the most vulnerable communities without intermediaries.

- Establish the central role of a food bank through which the entire interreligious committee may benefit.
- Promote, within the different territorial entities, programs to support persons experiencing homelessness, encouraging the participation of religious entities.
- Promote the development of home gardens through initiatives led by the religious sector.

6. Productive Economy for Life and the Fight Against Climate Change:

- Provide entrepreneurship opportunities and strengthen the initiatives led by women within the interreligious sector, allocating resources to support projects and generate opportunities through different approaches for this population group.
- Creation of supply chains, as well as sustainable cities and communities.
- Scholarships for religious leaders to pursue higher education.
- Provide guarantees so that foundations belonging to the religious sector may participate in public procurement processes.

Other lines of action:

- Review and update the Concordat so that it includes all religious denominations.
- Facilitate the use of public venues or spaces for the performance of religious activities, ensuring equal conditions for all.
- Establish agreements between public entities, private organizations, State institutions, and churches to develop productive, social, and environmental impact projects.
- Strengthen the dissemination and communication of projects led by the Ministry of the Interior for religious entities; likewise, ensure that the religious sector is taken into account in projects developed by other ministries. For example, environmental initiatives promoted by religious entities should be considered by the Ministry of Environment.
- Regulate the single registry of ministers of worship through an official credential issued by the Ministry of the Interior, while respecting the internal regulation of each religious organization.
- Ensure that marriages officiated by religious leaders have civil legal effects, as recognized for certain denominations such as the Foursquare Church, Assemblies of God, Casa sobre la Roca, Manantial, and the Pentecostal Church, in accordance with the 2004 agreement, and extend the deadlines when official calls or procedures are issued for this purpose.

PROPOSAL

THE CONSOLIDATION OF A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (SINALIBREC) that guarantees the protection of the rights to Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience, integrating all sectors of the National Government and the territorial entities through designated professionals who serve as liaisons for each sector and institution. These liaisons would facilitate interaction and Social Dialogue with the religious sector as a strategic partner for the consolidation of Total Peace through its social impact and actions of reconciliation.

IMPORTANCE OF THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SYSTEM

1. Human Security and Social Justice:

- Total peace can only be achieved with the inclusion of the religious sector as a mediator in peace dialogues.
- An effective response to the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom will only be achieved through the institutional strengthening of the religious sector, which must include Religious Freedom Committees, the National Directorate of Religious Affairs, the creation of departmental offices, and the strengthening of municipal liaison structures.

2. Territorial Planning:

- True social inclusion will only be possible if worship facilities are recognized as social institutional uses due to their social contribution to the communities where they are located. To make this possible, it will be necessary to allow the establishment of places of worship in any designated activity area of urban and rural land, without restrictions on size or capacity.
- Likewise, it is necessary to strengthen the concept of institutional land use, for which the definitions applied by the Ministry of Housing and the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute must be unified, thereby ensuring the correct property tax exemption and fair public service charges for places of worship.

3. Macroeconomic Financial Stability:

- The Public Policy on Religious Freedom requires action plans for its implementation; therefore, it is a national priority to allocate public resources for the execution of these action plans and to ensure the participation of the religious sector in the implementation of public projects.

- Productive Economy for Life and the Fight Against Climate Change.
- The religious sector calls for equitable conditions in order to carry out its activities, which requires respect for the religious vocation, opportunities to access bank credit, and the strengthening of education through scholarship programs.

4. Main Areas of Action

1. Creation of new participatory mechanisms for the protection of places of worship and their surrounding areas within urban development and territorial planning frameworks.
2. Establishment of coordinated actions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to guarantee Religious Freedom for Colombians abroad.
3. Modernization of public administration at the departmental, district, and municipal levels, incorporating Religious Freedom offices and providing training for public officials and contractors.
4. Continued development of intersectoral and interinstitutional administrative structures to ensure the comprehensive guarantee of Religious Freedom.

Law 2488 of 2025

In Colombia, this is a key regulation prometed by the MIRA Political Party that strengthens Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, recognizing the social contribution of the interreligious sector in social cohesion, ethics and conflict resolution, while promoting cooperation with local goverments and training of public officials, without imposing beliefs and respecting freedom as state policy.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Ex viceministro Carlos Alberto Baena López

During the period between 2020 and 2022, Dr. Carlos Alberto Baena López served as Vice Minister in the Government of Colombia, initially at the Ministry of Labor and subsequently at the Ministry of the Interior. His service in public office was carried out within the legal competencies of the position and in accordance with the regular functioning of the institutions of the Executive Branch.

Within this institutional context, spaces for social dialogue were promoted, aimed at fostering respect for Human Rights, equality, and coexistence in a pluralistic society, through coordinated work with diverse sectors of the population, including social leaders, labor organizations, Afro-descendant and Raizal communities, Indigenous peoples, youth, and religious organizations.

From the Vice Ministry for Social Dialogue, Equality, and Human Rights of the Ministry of the Interior, and as part of the institutional responsibilities of that Ministry, actions were carried out to strengthen the guarantee of Religious Freedom and the recognition of religious entities as social actors, with the support of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the technical and administrative team of the Ministry, in accordance with the guidelines and functions assigned to the institution.

The following section presents some of the main results associated with the institutional work carried out by the Executive Branch, reflecting progress in matters of Religious Freedom and in strengthening dialogue between the State and religious entities throughout the territories.

Creation of the Committee for Social Dialogue on Religious Freedom

The National Committee for Participation and Social and Intersectoral Dialogue on Religious Freedom was created through Resolution 2118 of 2020 issued by the Ministry of the Interior. Its members include the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation, the Office of the Inspector General of the Nation, and the Office of the Ombudsman, as well as representatives from different Government Departments, with the purpose of providing a comprehensive approach to Religious Freedom.

Creation of the Observatory for Non-Discrimination “Colombia Belongs to Everyone,” with a chapter dedicated to the religious sector

With the support of ICONTEC, this Observatory was established to identify the different violations and forms of discrimination affecting diverse population groups across the country.

Anti-Discrimination Seal.

From the Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior, the parameters were developed for the chapter on Religious Freedom, within which the promotion of a Non-Discrimination Seal may also be carried out. This seal includes a quality certification based on standardization norms for public and private organizations that implement actions aimed at respecting individuals who profess a religious creed within their places of operation.This certification is granted by ICONTEC and is awarded in accordance with compliance with organizational protocols—such as those of companies—that incorporate processes related to respect for the religious differences of their employees. (Transition Report, Ministry of the Interior, 2022).

Projection of the Satellite Account for the Religious Sector.

The Ministry of the Interior and DANE (National Administrative Department of Statistics) established an inter-administrative agreement to develop a technical methodology to determine the contribution of the religious sector within the System of National Accounts. This makes it possible to measure the socioeconomic contribution of this sector, an exercise without precedent to date, and one that will support the development of new Public Policies integrating economic actors with the institutional activities of the religious sector.

DANE, through the satellite account on Nonprofit Institutions (NPIs), reported that the participation of Religious Entities in the total value added of NPIs is 3.6%, representing 34.2 billion pesos, generating more than 260,000 paid jobs in Colombia and contributing more than 1,760,000 volunteer positions. (Transition Report, Ministry of the Interior, 2022).

Characterization of the Religious Sector.

Through an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the religious sector in Colombia was characterized, making it possible to coordinate the actions of this sector with other government agencies, promote structured cooperation, and better focus efforts aimed at generating social well-being and improving the quality of life of the Colombian population.

The study found that the religious sector makes a significant contribution to the national economy, and that its activities generate savings in public expenditure for the states included in the characterization. For the fourteen territories analyzed, the sector contributed a total value of 341 billion pesos through two evaluated factors: humanitarian assistance provided and psychosocial and emotional support services.

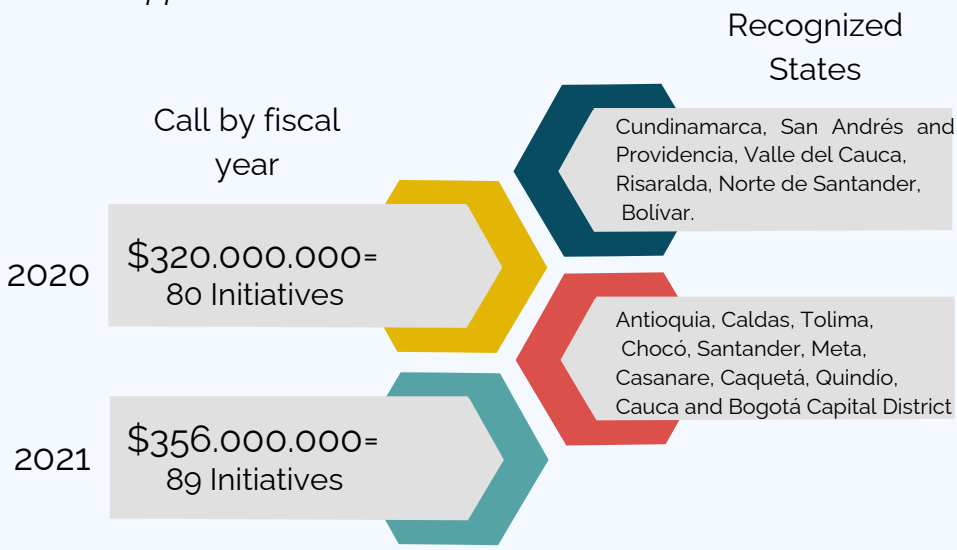
According to the report, in one year the sector provided 820,005 kinds of assistance related to depression (82%), suicide (43.9%), divorce (66.3%), and addictions (47.6%), representing an investment of COP 37,731,186,823, with an average cost of COP 46,013 per intervention. Additionally, the characterization shows that in the prioritized territories, Faith-Based Organizations voluntarily delivered 3,732,116 kinds of assistance related to food donations (93.1%), clothing donations (63.3%), medication donations (42.3%), support

for rent payments (17.7%), and other types of aid (9.3%), contributing COP 304,087,113,732, with an average value of COP 81,478 per assistance provided.
The study concludes that the religious sector is not only present in the exercise of Freedom of Worship, but also plays a significant role in the economic impact across different areas of development. (Final Report on Characterization, Territorialization, and Acceleration of the SDGs of Faith-Based Organizations, 2022).

Interreligious Initiatives Fund.

This initiative seeks to support projects developed by foundations, corporations, and non-governmental organizations within the religious sector through financial incentives granted to interreligious cooperation projects.
The religious sector functions as a social actor with broad coverage of beneficiaries, since on average each initiative reaches up to 205 individuals. This impact is explained by factors characteristic of the sector, such as continuity in its processes, permanent presence in the territories, and the high level of participation of volunteer work.

Amounts invested, number of initiatives supported, and territories in which Faith-Based Organizations received support.



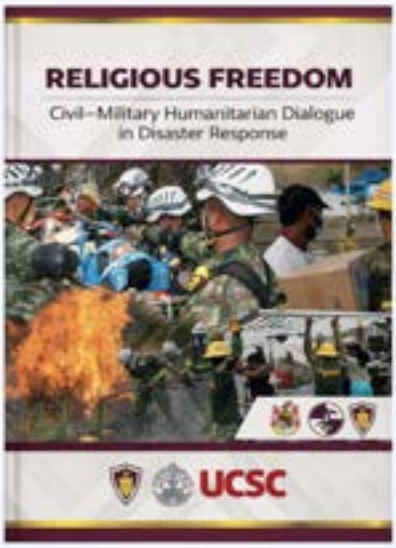
Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

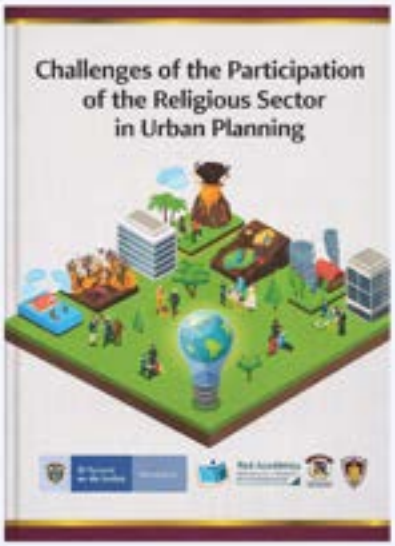
Academic production

In order to strengthen actions in favor of Religious Freedom, a partnership was established with the Military Engineers School of the National Army of Colombia, resulting in two publications: “Religious Freedom: Civil–Military Humanitarian Dialogue in Disaster Response” and “Challenges of the Participation of the Religious Sector in Urban Planning.”The first of these works is an original and innovative contribution that explores the different dimensions of institutional cooperation frameworks based on the legal recognition and guarantee of Religious Freedom in Colombia, with the purpose of promoting intersectoral participation of the religious sector in Public Policy related to disaster risk management.

In the first three chapters, members of the National Army of Colombia present, through their expertise in military operations and military engineering, the leadership exercised by the Military Engineers School in both civilian and military training. This process includes instruction in the Incident Command System and in the operations of the Emergency Response Brigade, with the aim of promoting education in sustainable development aligned with the objectives and goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The second publication argues that urban planning is essential for the comprehensive guarantee of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship for religious denominations, since religious practice is not manifested in an intangible manner but generally requires a physical space in which participants may gather to carry out religious expressions. Frequently, decisions are made without considering the way these communities inhabit the territory, which may affect, among other aspects, the purpose for which places of worship are established. Therefore, appropriate mechanisms of participation must be developed to incorporate the perspective of those who ultimately occupy and use urban space.





Fuente: Caratulas libros Originales

Promotion of Events

Summit of the Religious Sector

In coordination with the Government of Valle del Cauca, the First Summit of the Religious Sector and Government was held in the city of Cali, with the participation of governors and representatives from the 32 departments of the country.

National Congress on Advances in Religious Freedom

In the city of Pasto (Nariño), and with the participation of territorial liaisons from the departments of Colombia, positive experiences in the protection of this right in the country during the year were highlighted.The team of the Directorate of Religious Affairs presented the progress achieved in 2021, emphasizing the creation of coordination

pathways to integrate the religious sector with entities of the National Government, such as the National Disaster Risk Management Unit and the Ministry of Health.

Event with Youth from the Religious Sector

The Youth Pact for Religious Freedom "Generation V" was held at the Casa de Nariño on July 4, 2021. This initiative was proposed by the Directorate of Religious Affairs in collaboration with young leaders from the religious sector and included the signing of the agreement by the then President of the Republic, Iván Duque Márquez.The initiative aimed to promote coordinated work with youth from the religious sector and to secure the support of the National Learning Service (SENA), providing training to 80 young participants in vocal technique, 70 in piano and guitar, and 65 in introductory web page development.

Training Programs for the Religious Sector

The Directorate of Religious Affairs formalized Inter-Administrative Agreement 1092 of 2021 between the Ministry of the Interior and the Higher School of Public Administration (ESAP), with the objective of "joining administrative, technical, and financial efforts for the design, structuring, and implementation of the School for Human Rights Defenders and Social Leaders from the communities under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior," which included religious leaders among its participants.

Diploma programs were conducted on topics related to citizen participation and project formulation in development and public policy. Within this framework, the first Diploma Program in Religious Freedom was created in partnership with ESAP, with an enrollment of 500 participants.
In the same context, collaboration was established with the Military Engineers School, and a diploma program on Risk Management and the Religious Sector was developed. This program, unique of its kind in the world, reached an enrollment of 1,500 participants (Transition Report, Ministry of the Interior, 2022).



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

RIGHT TO CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN COLOMBIA

When a person feels pressured to act against their values or beliefs, they may invoke the right to conscientious objection. Freedom of conscience allows individuals to be exempted from performing mandatory activities that contradict their ethical, moral, or religious convictions.

Anyone who exercises this fundamental right becomes a conscientious objector and may transfer the obligation to another professional who is not an objector, without influencing the will of third parties. The law regulates this right, which may be exercised individually or institutionally and must be duly justified (it does not apply as a means to evade responsibilities), and it must not impose a particular belief on other persons.
Conscientious objection does not involve pressure or discrimination from peers, superiors, or the institution for which one works. Nor may conscientious objection be invoked to avoid excessive workload, maintain appearances, or avoid comments from others.

Further details about this fundamental right, its application, limitations, and other current issues related to the subject are presented in this forum, with special guests from the Government, State entities, and academic experts.

CONSTITUTIONAL ORIGIN

The Political Constitution, in Article 18, establishes that freedom of conscience is guaranteed. No person shall be harassed on account of their convictions or beliefs, nor compelled to reveal them, nor forced to act against their conscience.

CONSTITUTIONAL BLOCK

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18.
"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change one's religion or belief, as well as freedom to manifest one's religion or belief, individually or collectively, both in public and in private, through teaching, practice, worship, and observance."

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18.

"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice, and freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs, individually or collectively, both in public and in private, through worship, observance, practice, and teaching.

No one shall be subject to coercive measures that would impair their freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of their choice.

Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."

HOW HAS THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT DEFINED THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE?

"Conscience determines the actions of individuals, allows them to define the meaning of their lives, and to establish what is right and how they ought to act. For this reason, freedom of conscience constitutes a fundamental right that fulfills structural functions within a Social Rule of Law State." **(Judgment T-353/18).**

RIGHTS DERIVED FROM FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

(Judgment SU-108/16)
(i) No person shall be subject to harassment or persecution on account of their convictions or beliefs;

(ii) No person shall be required to disclose their convictions; and

(iii) No one shall be forced to act against their conscience.

WHAT IS CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION?

According to the Constitutional Court, it is a fundamental right derived from freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and freedom of thought (Judgment C-370 of 2019). The Court has also stated that this right is intended to ensure that individuals are not compelled to act against their convictions, always with respect for moral beliefs (Judgment SU-108/16).

The Constitutional Court has likewise defined it as the "refusal to comply with a legal mandate by invoking the existence of a dictate of conscience that prevents adherence to the prescribed conduct." It "implies the existence of a discrepancy between the legal norm and a moral norm" (Judgment C-728/09).

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Civil disobedience is an act of political resistance; it is "an exceptional form of protest that presupposes acceptance of the structural principles of the political and legal order, and does not seek to subvert them, but rather to ensure their proper implementation" (T-571/08). In contrast, conscientious objection does not seek to change the system or to ensure the proper application of the norm, but rather constitutes the constitutional faculty not to comply with a rule when it contradicts the individual's intimate and personal convictions.

PROTECTION THROUGH TUTELA ACTIONS

Conscientious objection is recognized as a constitutional right and may be protected through a tutela action.

Between January 2019 and February 2020, thirty-eight tutela actions were filed on the grounds of conscientious objection, and fifty-five on the grounds of Freedom of Worship.

WHEN DOES CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION APPLY?

(Judgment SU-108/16)

- The individual must demonstrate external manifestations of their convictions and beliefs, which may be religious, ethical, moral, or philosophical in nature.
- It must be proven that their conscience has conditioned and determined their conduct in such a way that they are compelled to act against it.
- The convictions or beliefs invoked must be deep, fixed, and sincere:

- **Deep:** This implies that they are not superficial personal convictions or beliefs, but rather convictions that integrally affect the person's life and way of being, as well as the totality of their decisions and judgments.
- **Fixed:** This implies that they are not changeable, and that they are not convictions or beliefs that can be easily or quickly modified. They are not beliefs or convictions that the individual claims to have adopted only recently.
- **Sincere:** This implies that they are honest, and not false, convenient, or strategic.

CASES OF APPLICATION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

Party Caucus System: Autonomy of the political party or political movement to define the "matters of conscience" that are exempt from the party caucus regime. Article 108 of the Political Constitution (Judgment C-859/06).

Military Service: "For many years, constitutional jurisprudence did not accept conscientious objection in relation to compulsory military service, even though in the field of international law its protection was being promoted. This situation changed in 2009, when the Constitutional Court recognized the fundamental right to conscientious objection regarding the performance of military service" (Judgment SU-108/16).

Medical Practice: Law 23 of 1981, "By which rules on medical ethics are issued."
Chapter II. Oath. Article 2 (…) "To disregard differences of political and religious beliefs, nationality, race, or social status, avoiding that such differences come between my professional services and my patient."

"Article 5. The physician–patient relationship takes place in the following cases: 1. By voluntary and spontaneous decision of both parties."

"Article 6. The physician shall refuse to provide services for acts that are contrary to moral principles, and when conditions exist that interfere with the free and proper exercise of the profession."

Educational Service: The State may not adhere to or favor any particular religion, in accordance with the principle of secularism and the duty of neutrality in religious matters established in the Political Constitution, statutory law, and constitutional jurisprudence.

The Constitutional Court has stated that: "With respect to the authority granted to public educational institutions in religious matters, such institutions may only facilitate the performance of religious acts, without this implying their institutionalization, limiting themselves to offering the space and time for their realization, if voluntarily requested by the educational community. Consequently, they may not promote, sponsor, encourage, or favor religious activities of any denomination, since such actions correspond to religious confessions and to members of the educational community who voluntarily support them" (Judgment T-524/17).

Nation, Notaries, and Judges — Circular 013 of 2013 — Office of the Attorney General of the Nation — Same-sex unions.

Guidelines and recommendations related to compliance with paragraph five of the operative section of Judgment C-577 of 2011 of the Constitutional Court.
Paragraph five of the operative section of the judgment establishes that "if, by June 20, 2013, the Congress of the Republic has not enacted the corresponding legislation, same-sex couples may appear before a notary or competent judge to formalize and solemnize their contractual bond."

- Through this circular, the Public Ministry established guidelines on how compliance with the aforementioned ruling could be carried out, in view of the uncertainty generated by the lack of regulation regarding the specific manner of formalizing unions intended to have permanence between persons of the same sex.
- Directive four, addressed to officials of the Public Ministry, states that it is their duty "to ensure that the fundamental right to freedom of conscience of judges and notaries is respected, as well as that of any other public servant or private individual performing public functions related to the enforcement of paragraph five of Judgment C-577 of 2011."
- This directive was issued under the understanding that this fundamental right is guaranteed through the use of the indeterminate pronoun "no one," meaning that no person may be excluded from its protection, including public servants and other public officials, such as the Attorney General of the Nation.

- The recommendations, in paragraph four, establish that, with due respect for the autonomy and independence of judges and notaries, if they consider that formalizing and solemnizing unions between persons of the same sex intended to have permanence, as provided in paragraph five of the operative section of Judgment C-577 of 2011, violates their conscience in any way, they may exercise the fundamental right to conscientious objection.

FORUM

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

At the international level, the Constitutional Court has stated that conscientious objection has also been recognized as a guarantee and as a fundamental right. International norms indicate that any limitations imposed on this right must also aim to protect public safety, order, health, public morality, and the rights and freedoms of others (Judgment SU-108 of 2016).

Uruguay (Law 18.987)

- The right to conscientious objection is regulated in Articles 10 and 11 of Law 18.987.
- This law establishes the right to ideological objection (for institutions) and conscientious objection (for medical and health personnel).
- It operates under the requirement that the circumstance giving rise to the objection must be pre-existing.
- For institutions, they must agree with the Ministry of Health on a protocol of care for their users.
- For physicians, they must inform users of the institutions in which objection-based services are provided.

Mexico (Law 27.193)

- Recognition of freedom of conscience does not have an explicit provision, but it has been guaranteed on the basis of Article 24 of the Federal Constitution concerning Religious Freedom.
- However, in the State of Jalisco, legal protection for conscientious objection was established in Article 18 of Health Law 27.193.
- This provision grants professionals, technicians, assistants, and social service providers who are part of the Health System the right not to participate in programs, activities, practices, treatments, methods, or research that contravene their freedom of conscience, which may include organ implantation or even blood transfusion.

ANNEXES

Theories of conscientious objection:

1. Incompatibility: This position holds that there is an ethical duty to perform, without exception, all tasks and obligations derived from one's profession, under penalty of withdrawing from the position or choosing another profession.

2. Absolutism: This position maintains that there are no limits to the manifestation and practice of conscientious objection. The objecting provider has no obligation to perform the service, nor to facilitate access to information for third parties.

3. Concessions or mutual agreement: This position recognizes the provider's right to conscientious objection, but also establishes duties and limits in order not to violate the rights of third parties, to guarantee access to services, and to prevent excessive workload, stigmatization, or other related effects from being imposed on non-objecting providers.

2.REPORT

Given the relevance of conscientious objection in guaranteeing Religious Freedom, the organization of an event was led that was broadcast through YouTube, Canal Institucional, Canal Zoom, Facebook Live, and Twitter Periscope, and included twenty-four invited participants from government entities, academia, experts, and representatives of organizations. The Forum Right to Conscientious Objection in Colombia was successfully held.

During the Forum, the commitment of the Ministry of the Interior was highlighted, represented at the event by the Vice Minister for Participation and Equality of Rights, Dr. Carlos Alberto Baena López, under whose authority the Directorate of Religious Affairs operates. From this office, a call was made to join efforts among the Forum participants, including the Ministry of Defense, in order to advance interinstitutional coordination toward administrative regulation that guarantees conscientious objection without obstacles and under fair conditions.

In the dialogue held with members of Congress from the MIRA Party caucus, as well as representatives from the parties La U, Colombia Justa Libres, Cambio Radical, Centro Democrático, and AICO, together with academic representatives, the need was identified to begin converging across different sectors, parties, and actors toward a statutory initiative that broadens the scope of development of the right to conscientious objection, based on dialogue between the public and private sectors in order to establish clear rules and regulations for its full exercise in the country.
It also became evident that greater emphasis is required from an early age, both in schools and in the home. Promoting education on the exercise of conscientious objection must be guaranteed at different levels of education, as well as within the various professions, so that institutions and citizens clearly understand the balance between rights and duties.

This Forum produced a roadmap of challenges and tasks to continue advancing in matters of conscientious objection, as part of the exercise of freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, and Religious Freedom, within the different areas of applicability, such as education, the health sector, public service, compulsory military service, among others.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1.Conscience may generally be moral in nature and motivated by religious beliefs about God, about an Authority beyond that of the State, and, of course, about an authority beyond human authority;

at this stage such an idea is considered anathema in many countries. However, moral judgment is necessary for making correct decisions for the common good.

2. It is necessary to harmonize rights, including the right to conscientious objection and other rights. The European Union has advanced in a line of jurisprudence recognizing this right, which may serve as guidance for other legal systems.

3.In a free society, laws must be sensitive to serious judgments of conscience, allowing each individual to make conscientious exceptions in matters of great importance.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND JURISPRUDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

- Conscientious objection, from a modern understanding, cannot be interpreted as an evasion of the legal system; rather, it seeks recognition in order to guarantee democratic quality and individual rights. Conscientious objection is a fundamental and autonomous right.

- It is a relative right and has limits: "one's own rights end where the rights of others begin." The exercise of this right may be regulated by law, but it must not be restricted, since it constitutes a Human Right.

- The protection of conscientious objection is closely related to the democratic and pluralistic nature of the current political model, which allows for full acceptance of others with their different ways of thinking and being.

RIGHTS DERIVED FROM FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

(Judgment SU-108/16)

(i) No person shall be subject to harassment or persecution on account of their convictions or beliefs;

(ii) No person shall be required to disclose their convictions; and

(iii) No one shall be forced to act against their conscience.

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

- Religious communities emphasize the importance of conscientious objection as a right and call for further progress in guaranteeing it, especially in contexts related to the conception of life as a supreme right.

- Conscientious objection is an expression of democratic maturity; therefore, laws must not transgress the beliefs of individuals.
- Religious congregations respect the law and, for this reason, have taken a constructive approach by proposing that military service should be voluntary rather than compulsory. They have also proposed the creation of an office within the Office of the Attorney General to guarantee this right and to provide training for public officials on the subject.

VICE MINISTER FOR PARTICIPATION AND EQUALITY OF RIGHTS, DR. CARLOS ALBERTO BAENA LÓPEZ

- He emphasized the need for coordinated work with State entities and different members of Congress to ensure the protection and guarantee of this right.
- At present, the absence of clear protocols allows for widely differing interpretations on the matter; therefore, progress in regulation is required.

He proposed:
1. To develop a protocol through the Directorate of Religious Affairs, for example in coordination with the Ministry of Defense, in order to define national criteria regarding military service.

2. To carry out educational and pedagogical efforts through training programs to teach how conscientious objection should be applied.

3. To establish a commission with Congress and religious entities in order to reach an agreement for the regulation of this right.

4. To convene a working group to adopt regulatory measures, such as issuing circulars and promoting educational initiatives, so that this right may continue to develop in the country.

LEGITIMACY OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION (COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE)

- A conscientious objector possesses a sense of service, and conscientious objection does not imply a lack of respect for institutions. Objection may even arise during the period of service in certain situations, provided that it does not result in acts of insubordination, but is motivated by convictions of conscience.
- This is not a dispute between the military authority and the objector. Military authorities may not invoke biblical contexts in order to refute the reasons or motivations of conscientious objectors.

- There is an intention to promote joint work with the Ombudsman's Office so that it may assume an active role in the working groups to be carried out by the Party and the Government, with the purpose of ensuring the effective implementation of this right.

MEDICAL SERVICE AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

- Conscientious objection is inevitable in a pluralistic society and is as important as sexual and reproductive rights.
- The ethical judgment of each professional is not negotiable according to their conscience; it cannot be altered or made subject to administrative considerations, especially in a country that guarantees Freedom of Worship and freedom of conscience.
- Physicians are required to comply with formal law; however, their moral law is often not taken into account.

NOTARIES MAY INVOKE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

- Freedom of conscience, conscientious objection, and juries of conscience must not be confused.

- Current jurisprudence does not recognize notaries or judges as holders of this right; decisions must be made according to the law, not according to personal conscience.

- Regulation and training should be expanded in order to avoid disciplinary violations.

LEGITIMATION IN CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION (POLITICAL PARTIES)

- Article 188, concerning Political Parties, recognizes conscientious objection within the statutes of political parties and in the democratic decisions of party caucuses. Members have the freedom to vote individually on a decision based on their conscience.

- The Caucus Law established that it is the autonomy of political parties to determine which matters may be subject to conscientious objection. The importance of ethics oversight councils lies in their role as the bodies responsible for interpreting these internal regulations and establishing the procedures and actions related to their application.

3. GUEST SPEAKERS' INTERVENTION

(PANEL 1) — ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

In the conceptualization of Conscientious Objection, Senator Carlos Guevara delivered a presentation:

Progress and challenges of conscientious objection in Colombia. For this purpose, a review of the content and scope of the right to conscientious objection at both the national and international levels was proposed.

Together with experts in the field, the current status of this right was evaluated in order to identify the need to advance in the regulation of conscientious objection.

It is emphasized that in this Forum several current issues related to military service, abortion, and euthanasia were addressed. However, this was not a discussion focused on these topics, but rather included the participation of academics, experts from different sectors, social actors, politicians, and public officials.

The Political Constitution of 1991 recognizes that conscience determines the actions of individuals, allows them to define the meaning of life, and guides the way they act. It fulfills structural functions in a Social Rule of Law. This definition of the right must operate under principles, beliefs, and value systems.

No legal norm may prevail over these principles; when there is a conflict between rights and duties, conscientious objection is a fundamental right, a human right, recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

(PANEL 2) — NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND JURISPRUDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

International Legal Framework

- President, *Viadrina International Association* — **Enrique Montes Pérez**

He presented the historical development of conscientious objection in Europe:

The right to conscientious objection has been recognized since Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (1953).
The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000–2009) explicitly included the right to conscientious objection.

There was a period of rejection between 1966 and 1993, due to a literal interpretation of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (ECHR). As a result, the interpretative scope was later expanded, and the Commission was initially unable to issue a definitive position. From this point, a new line of jurisprudence began.
1993 marked the beginning of a stage of recognition, granting protection within anti-discrimination frameworks.

In 2011, the Convention was consolidated as a living instrument, recognizing the external manifestation of convictions and the legitimacy of certain restrictions, while decriminalizing the exercise of the right to conscientious objection.

Resolution 337 (1967), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), established the foundations of the basic guarantees for conscientious objection. It emphasized that criminal proceedings should not be initiated against the objector and recognized the right to be heard, informed, and defended.

In addition to compulsory military or social service, conscientious objection also applies to health-related matters (abortion and euthanasia), education (ideological and religious neutrality in the classroom), and professional fields (scientific research, conscience, and religion).

Conclusions from these sixty years of precedents:

- In Europe, conscientious objection is a consolidated right linked to human dignity.
- The objector of conscience must not be criminalized.
- Jurisprudential criteria have progressively been unified regarding military service.
- Interpretative diversity persists in resolving conflicts of interest.
- Future challenges include bioethics, artificial intelligence, and ongoing debates on conscientious objection.

- Senior Research Fellow, Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford — **Roger Trigg,** presented the following reflections:

Why does conscience matter? This is the central question.
Conscience is not only a matter of meaning, but a continuous judgment about how to act in the world. Such judgments may be mistaken and therefore must be subject to debate. Democracy consists in debating arguments about what is best for society.

Conscience may be guided by moral or religious judgments, recognizing God as an authority beyond that of the State. For many States and countries this is problematic, since in many contexts the State is expected to be the highest authority. However,

because moral judgments may be erroneous, they must be subject to evaluation according to higher norms, namely moral principles.

The proposal of a network of reasonable accommodations seeks to allow individuals to act according to their conscience while remaining in compliance with the law. A well-ordered society will enact laws that respect people's conscience and will provide specific adaptations when necessary.

Freedom is as important as the laws that enable society to live in agreement.

- Global Alliance MIRA USA — **Laura Hoyos**, presented:

In the United States, there are several laws that protect conscientious objection, designed to protect and respect individual differences. Among the examples mentioned:

Education is public; however, within the school system there is the possibility of expressing disagreement with the educational model, allowing alternatives such as homeschooling or home-based education.

In the armed forces, soldiers whose religious or moral convictions prevent them from agreeing with the use of weapons are protected. Their position is respected, and they cannot be denied promotion or forced to perform combat duties.
In the legal field, during judicial proceedings, individuals are required to take an oath before a judge and witnesses; the oath may be taken in the name of God or upon a sacred text. However, there is also the possibility of objecting to the oath without preventing the continuation of the proceedings.

In the health sector, individuals are respected in their decisions regarding medical treatments (for example, blood transfusions). Likewise, healthcare professionals are allowed to abstain from participating in procedures such as abortion or sterilization when these conflict with their moral or religious convictions.

National Constitutional Framework — Senator Ana Paola Agudelo

For the context of the Forum, the Senator stated:

The Political Constitution, in Article 18, establishes that freedom of conscience is guaranteed.

From freedom of conscience derive and interrelate other rights, such as freedom of expression and the free development of personality. When these move from the individual dimension to the public sphere, certain tensions arise, ranging from everyday situations—such as respecting another person's opinion and beliefs—to dilemmas that require compliance with the Constitution and the law, for example compulsory military service, medical ethics, and decisions made by public officials that may conflict with their personal convictions.

It is within this tension between the individual right and the public sphere that the scope of the right to freedom of conscience in our Constitution and jurisprudence is debated, as well as the matters that must be developed through legislation.

- Director of Graduate Studies in Public Law — Pontificia Universidad Javeriana — **Dr. Claudia Dangond**, stated:

The recognition of conscientious objection is related to freedom of thought and religious freedom.

All individual rights are limited by the rights of others. In religious matters, beliefs cannot be modified because they belong to the intimate sphere; the question arises when those beliefs lead a person to act in a different way.

In Colombia, conscientious objection is understood as a legal figure that allows an individual to refuse to comply with a legal provision when the required activity implies conduct that contradicts the person's deeply held convictions.

The Constitutional Court has addressed issues related to Religious Freedom, freedom of conscience, and their practical application in situations such as compulsory military service; the right to education when conscientious objection is invoked to avoid practices contrary to a person's religious worship; in such cases, a balancing of rights is required.

Civil disobedience is different and must not be confused with conscientious objection.
There are challenges in regulating the right to conscientious objection, which must be done through a Statutory Law, taking into account international instruments that form part of the constitutional block, as well as existing jurisprudential developments.

- Director of the Legal Clinic for Public Interest and Human Rights — Universidad de La Sabana — **Juana Inés Acosta**, stated:

The Constitutional Court, in Decision C-370 of 2019, stated that the right to conscientious objection had been considered a legal right; however, this position was later surpassed, recognizing it as an autonomous and expressly named fundamental right derived from freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and freedom of thought.

A person who objects on grounds of conscience should not be subjected to verification regarding whether their reasons are fair or unfair. The guarantee of this right is not dependent on prior legal regulation.

Conscientious objection is therefore a fundamental and autonomous right, and the Constitutional Court of Colombia has treated it as a fundamental protection, even when it is not expressly regulated in statutory law.

The Court has also indicated that conscientious objection is linked to democracy and to the acceptance of others; it is connected to other rights such as diversity, freedom of expression, and Religious Freedom.

(PANEL 3) — LEGITIMATION IN CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION. WHO MAY EFFECTIVELY CLAIM OR INVOKE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION?

Legitimation in conscientious objection: Who may effectively invoke this right?

Religious Communities

To introduce the topic, Representative **Irma Herrera** stated:

The Constitutional Court has defined conscientious objection as a fundamental right derived from freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and freedom of thought.

It is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris on December 10, 1948.

Likewise, it is recognized in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 16, 1966.

The participation of the religious sector in this forum is essential in order to understand the positions, experiences, and proposals that arise from their religious convictions, as well as to identify aspects that require improvement in the application of the right to conscientious objection in our country.

- **Seventh-day Adventist Church —** Pastor Henry Beltrán stated:

His conviction is to support young people who voluntarily perform military service and who are willing to serve God and the country.

Considering that life is sacred and belongs only to God, it is necessary to regulate conscientious objection so that healthcare personnel, such as physicians, may object to procedures related to the termination of life, such as euthanasia and abortion.

- **Justapaz Foundation** — Mennonites — Andrés Aponte stated:

This is an issue of public interest, especially for youth.

Conscientious objection in military service is the obligation that young people have to refuse to comply with that obligation, and the law must guarantee this right to conscientious objection.

Law 1861 of 2017, specifically Articles 12 and 17, allows conscientious objection to military service; however, there are no technical or impartial criteria.

Those who object to military service on grounds of conscience represent approximately 0.0002%, which is a very low figure; therefore, the number of objectors for ethical or political reasons is minimal.

Advances are required in regulation and pedagogy, both for military districts and for young objectors.

- **President of the Freedom and Religious Freedom Committee** — Iván Bonilla stated:

The law establishes limits when it comes to matters of conscience, and conscientious objection must not be confused with civil disobedience.

Conscientious objection is recognized by law because it is part of the individual's identity; it is an inalienable right and may only be regulated by law.

The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Education must promote awareness in schools of the different causes of exemption and conscientious objection among students. Young people who object should not be displaced in military service.

It is necessary to further recognize the social contribution of religious entities in order to provide a social service oriented toward nonviolence, ensuring the right to conscientious objection for those who adhere to these convictions.

It is necessary to deepen the recognition of the social contribution made by religious entities in order to offer a social service focused on nonviolence, guaranteeing conscientious objection for those who subscribe to these convictions.

- **Member of the Departmental Committee on Religious Freedom and Worship of Tolima** — Pastor Emilio González, stated:

The legal institution of conscientious objection holds great value within our legal system, as it provides protection against being compelled to perform actions that contradict our deeply held, firm, and sincere beliefs.
The Office of the Ombudsman has also warned about discriminatory treatment suffered by some individuals when they request recognition as conscientious objectors, and has criticized unjustified delays by certain State institutions in processing such requests.

The difficulty lies in the delay of administrative procedures and in the lack of training of some public officials regarding the importance of the right to conscientious objection and the proper way to resolve such petitions.

As recommendations in light of the existing shortcomings, and considering recurring cases related to conscientious objection in compulsory military service, the following points were emphasized:
Military service should preferably be voluntary rather than mandatory, based on personal conviction and interest, and should also be remunerated in order to provide an incentive.

It should have a professional and comprehensive character and be complemented with academic training provided by the national government, for example through SENA.
It would be appropriate to create a specific office for the protection of Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience within the organizational structure of the Public Ministry, that is, to establish a Delegate for Religious Affairs within the Office of the Inspector General, the Ombudsman's Office, and local oversight offices.
In order to guarantee the exercise of this fundamental human right, the procedure must be prompt, efficient, and effective.

- **Leader of the Greek Orthodox Church** — Alberto Arias Jaramillo, stated:

Conscience is the common natural law.

One way to determine what should be considered the reasonable exercise of the right to conscientious objection is the principle of reasonableness, also known as the principle of proportionality.

In the case of the right to conscientious objection, it is necessary to consider the human goods toward which this right is directed; such goods may be identified as "practical reasonableness" and "religion."

Actions that are contrary to the common good or to the individual's own convictions will not fall within the reasonable scope of the exercise of this right.

Ministry of the Interior

Dr. Carlos Alberto Baena López, Vice Ministry for Participation and Equality of Rights, stated:

- Conscientious objection is a fundamental, autonomous, and expressly recognized right, in accordance with Article 18 of the Political Constitution. A more expeditious application of this right is required, in coordination with State institutions.
- Legal instruments are needed to define how this right should be applied at the administrative level in each area.
- From the Vice Ministry, together with the Directorate of Religious Affairs, an invitation has been extended to the different caucuses of Congress to establish a commission and continue the proposals discussed in the Forum, particularly regarding procedural efficiency and the establishment of time limits in conscientious objection proceedings.
- Further development is required, whether through statutory law or through internal regulation.
- It is proposed to create a protocol led by the Directorate of Religious Affairs, in coordination with the Ministry of Defense, the different congressional caucuses, and religious entities, in order to establish general guidelines for the exercise and guarantee of the right to conscientious objection in the country.
- The intention is not for conscientious objection to become an opportunity for abuse; there must be organization and mechanisms that facilitate its proper application. For this purpose, it would be important to know the position of religious entities regarding this right and the various situations in which it is invoked.

Religious Freedom Committees, both at the national and local levels, are essential to support processes at the departmental and municipal levels, with the participation of the Public Ministry, in order to advance the development of this right in the country. For example, it would be appropriate to move toward the creation of a special delegation

for religious affairs within the Ombudsman's Office or the Office of the Inspector General, similar to what has been done in areas such as environmental rights or ethnic communities.

- Progress must be made in training and awareness, beginning in educational institutions. In coordination with the Ministry of Education, important work can be carried out so that this fundamental right is known from the school level.
- A call is made to establish a joint working group with the relevant institutions in order to guarantee, through internal regulation, all matters related to the right to freedom of conscience.

Conscientious Objection in relation to compulsory military service — Senator Manuel Virgüez stated:

Being a conscientious objector does not necessarily mean a complete refusal to perform compulsory military service. Historically, there have been precedents of war heroes who, without carrying weapons, performed honorable service within the armed forces.
In Colombia, within the Armed Forces, the right to conscientious objection has been recognized in matters such as participation in religious ceremonies, which were previously considered acts of service but are now regarded as matters of conscience, from which members of the public force may abstain without being subject to sanctions.

- **Deputy Director of Recruitment — Recruitment and Reserve Control Command - Major Carlos Armando Jaimes stated:**

Articles 18 and 216 of the Political Constitution establish the constitutional duty to take up arms and comply with compulsory military service.

Law 1861 of 2017 regulates the process of recruitment and incorporation.
Judgment SU-108 of 2016 clarified the interpretation of the right upon which Law 1861 is based.

For the recognition of conscientious objection, the recruitment authorities rely on these constitutional provisions and on the criteria established by the Constitutional Court; beliefs must be external, profound, fixed, and sincere.

Within the procedure, the possibility of appearing before the committees is not denied (Article 77 of Law 1861 of 2017), which constitute the first instance in the Military Districts. The individual may appear personally or through representatives in order to present the reasons for invoking conscientious objection.

Conscientious objectors are generally pacifists, not revolutionaries; they are often leaders within their communities, as reflected in their statements, and they are willing to serve society.
These committees include the commanding officer, a psychologist, a legal advisor, a physician, a representative of the Public Ministry, and a family member accompanying the applicant as a guarantee of due process.

- **Legal Officer attached to the Ombudsman's Office, Delegate for Constitutional and Legal Affairs** — Diego Fernando Perdomo Rojas, stated:

Through jurisprudence, conscientious objection not only exempts individuals from compulsory military service, but also requires that a substantive decision be issued in each case, including situations related to discharge from service and the exercise of the right before, during, and after incorporation.

This should not be understood as a dispute between the military authority and the objector. The military authority cannot rely on biblical or religious arguments to contradict the reasons or motivations presented by conscientious objectors.

There is a regulatory gap that may become a barrier to resolving an individual's military status. Despite the existence of an interdisciplinary review group, it is necessary to regulate procedural aspects that remain unclear, such as the recording of hearings.

A call is made to the Ministry of Defense to advance in the regulation of the functions of each member of the review group, and to ensure that the procedure is public and transparent.

- **Director of the Military Observatory (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana)** — Javier Rincón, stated:

Law 1861 of 2017 exists and represents progress:
Administrative authorities must balance the duty to perform compulsory military service with the right to conscientious objection. The criterion for this balancing process should be restrictive, and the evaluation of conscientious objection is often made in quantitative terms.
The Code of Administrative Procedure and Administrative Litigation (CPACA) already establishes deadlines and procedural rules for resolving requests within the administrative framework.
There is a need to reform the law, adopting a more pragmatic and less conceptual approach. The reform should focus specifically on compulsory military service rather than on conscientious objection in general.

Administrative authorities must be provided with clear legal tools, preferably through a Statutory Law.

- **Colombians Without Military Card Group** — Juan Camilo Díaz Hernández, stated:

Difficulties remain in making the right effective. Decisions are determined by four members of the military institution, which does not guarantee effectiveness, independence, or impartiality. The presence of the Public Ministry does not sufficiently mitigate the procedure for recognizing the right.

There are no clear technical or procedural standards for recognizing the exercise of this right. Military doctrine often prevails in decision-making, and the objector is frequently viewed in bad faith with respect to the duty of national security.

Verbal expressions of conscientious objection are not taken into account, even though such declaration should immediately interrupt the classification and incorporation process.

Disagreement with the carrying of weapons or military training is sometimes interpreted as disobedience, which leads to forced incorporation without recognizing the invocation of conscientious objection.

Medical Practice and Conscientious Objection — Senator Aydeé Lizarazo stated:

Conscientious objection is the right that allows individuals to express their will and position beyond what is legally and socially accepted. It is an individual, not collective, manifestation, and must be well substantiated.

This is not a new issue. Law 23 of 1981, which establishes rules on medical ethics, provides in Article 6 that a physician may refuse to provide medical services when the act is considered contrary to moral principles. In order to further examine these matters, this category of discussion was initiated.

- **National Medical Ethics Tribunal —** Germán Gamarra Hernández, stated:

To date, there have been no complaints regarding medical acts or against physicians who have refused to provide a service on the grounds of conscientious objection.

Conscientious objection is a concept that is difficult to define and should be considered exceptional. In the case of health professionals, refusing to perform certain legally permitted acts may be justified under freedom of thought.

It is a specific and individual position, not a collective one. When invoked directly, the professional confronted with the situation must act according to deeply held convictions based on moral or religious principles.

The areas in which conscientious objection most frequently arises include end-of-life decisions, withdrawal of life support, acceptance of brain death, genetics, and assisted reproduction. Some physicians do not accept these practices, arguing that the right to life must prevail above all.

Conscientious objection is inevitable in a pluralistic society. The conscientious objection of both the physician and the patient must be respected.
In any case, it must not affect the provision of health services.

- **Director of the Clínica Universidad de La Sabana —** Juan Guillermo Ortíz, stated:

Conscientious objection is "the refusal of a person to perform certain acts or to take part in certain activities that are legally required, in order to avoid a serious violation of one's own conscience" (Elizari).

It is also defined as "the clearly expressed opposition of a person to a legal mandate or authority, based on one's own moral principles" (Interdisciplinary Bioethics Group, IBB).
Conscientious objection is not civil disobedience; it is a personal act related to moral, professional, or religious matters, recognized by law. It does not constitute subversion.
For example, a physician may refrain from performing procedures considered contrary to his or her conscience, moral principles, beliefs, or professional ethics.

The physician–patient relationship is sacred. The mission of the physician is to promote health and physical well-being. Within this relationship, there are fundamental moments in treatment in which the ethical decision is essential — the decision of whether to act or not to act.

This ethical moment is rooted in the Hippocratic Oath (5th century B.C.), which forms the foundation of medical practice: "do no harm."

The physician–patient relationship is personal and non-transferable. The ethical decision is not negotiable according to the conscience of each professional; it cannot be altered or manipulated for administrative reasons, especially in a country that guarantees Freedom of Worship and freedom of conscience.

- Gynecologist — Master in Bioethics — Lina Garzón, stated:

Conscientious objection is a fundamental right, equally important as women's sexual and reproductive rights.

Since 2006, when voluntary interruption of pregnancy was decriminalized, conscientious objection for the medical profession was also recognized.
It is not an absolute right and cannot generate discrimination, neither against the physician nor against the patient. Conscientious objection must not result in withholding information and requires referral to another professional.

Since 2008, failure to refer the patient has been considered a disciplinary offense. In 2009, collective or institutional conscientious objection was prohibited.
In 2016, conscientious objection was extended to nurses, and in 2020 the existing grounds were reaffirmed, recognizing conscientious objection for the medical and nursing staff present at the time of the procedure, but not for post-operative care.
Conscientious objection seeks to protect the moral, religious, and philosophical principles of healthcare professionals.It cannot be conditioned on whether one works in a State hospital, nor may it be used as a limitation on professional practice.

Neither the patient nor the physician should be subject to any form of imposition.It does not imply disregard for the fundamental rights of women, and the physician has the duty to protect life.

In gynecology, there are cases of advanced pregnancies involving severe fetal conditions, and physicians must balance their duties while remembering the obligation to preserve life. They cannot be forced to act against their code of beliefs.
The conclusion is that the right to conscientious objection must stand on equal footing with women's sexual and reproductive rights. After fourteen years, the legal and practical framework is still not entirely clear.

May notaries invoke conscientious objection?

- **President, Colombian National Association of Notaries** — Álvaro Rojas Charry, stated:

Freedom of conscience, conscientious objection, and juries of conscience must not be confused.

Regulation is required regarding these functions and the scope of conscientious objection.

Notaries provide a public service by granting public certification. A notary does not exercise conscientious objection but rather performs a legality review, for example when a contract does not meet the legal requirements.

A notary does not have the authority to disregard a legal order and therefore cannot invoke conscientious objection. Judicial authorities cannot do so either, since they act according to the law. Decisions must be based on the law, not on personal conscience.

It is important that both public officials and users have greater knowledge about the right to conscientious objection in order to avoid the risk of disciplinary proceedings and to understand that, in such cases, responsibility rests with the person requesting the procedure.

- **Political Parties —** Conscientious Objection

Cambio Radical — Secretary of Ethical Oversight — David Andrés Vargas Salazar, stated:

Party statutes define the internal disciplinary regime, under the constitutional authority of political parties to exercise self-regulation. The purpose of this provision is to strengthen political parties.

All actions taken within a caucus must be coordinated and carried out collectively in accordance with their representation. Legislative initiatives under their responsibility must be debated.

Internal democracy within political parties is promoted, and parties are empowered to impose sanctions on their members. Within this framework, it is possible to determine the grounds of conscience that allow a member of Congress to depart from the party line.

Who interprets the statutes? The ethics oversight councils of the parties. These bodies must act in accordance with constitutional principles and in coherence with internal democratic rules.

AICO — National Executive Secretary — Luis Alfredo Quiroz Guerrero, stated**:**

For many communities, the issue remains largely unknown. The Senate should regulate those aspects that are not yet clear.

Within the party structure, the ethics committee is responsible for overseeing the conduct of members of Congress.

The U Party — Coordinator of the Think Tank "Pensemos Unidos" — Isabel Cristina Rico Barrera, stated:

There is a lack of awareness regarding this right, and therefore it is necessary to regulate it through legislation.

Any initiative must be harmonious, balanced, and fair, allowing the exercise of freedom of thought, religion, and conscience, and enabling conscientious objection when there is a conflict between personal convictions and the legal framework.

This does not imply abandoning the principle of legality, but rather achieving the constitutional effectiveness of freedoms in a coherent manner, without affecting the rights of others. It is not an absolute right.

A context of favorable conditions must be created so that individuals may exercise their freedoms within a framework of pluralism and diversity, consistent with international commitments and recommendations on Human Rights and fundamental rights.

Colombia Justa Libres — Representative Eduardo Pacheco, stated:

Conscientious objection is not an evasion of constitutional duties; it is the recognition of the right of an individual to object based on personal convictions, acknowledging the conflict between moral duty and legal duty for reasons of different nature.

It cannot be understood as acting against the legal order, nor as resistance or civil disobedience.

Article 188, concerning Political Parties, recognizes conscientious objection within the statutes of political parties and in the democratic decisions of party caucuses. Members have the freedom to vote individually according to their conscience.

Are these matters of a moral nature rather than political, or are they related to coherence with political ideology (vote of conscience)? There is a complex issue regarding the limits of party objection when a member of Congress departs from the decision of the caucus.

Democratic Center — Representative Santiago Valencia, stated:
This is an essential right that should also be extended to legal entities, for example hospitals that do not agree with the practice of abortion.

4. QUESTIONS

HOW IS THE RIGHT TO MANIFEST RELIGION OR BELIEFS IN PUBLIC RECONCILED WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF A SECULAR STATE IN COLOMBIA?

The Political Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience. Article 18 states that no one shall be harassed on account of their convictions or beliefs, nor compelled to reveal them, nor forced to act against their conscience. Likewise, it is important to bear in mind that Article 19 of the Political Constitution establishes that Freedom of Worship is guaranteed. Every person has the right to freely profess their religion and to disseminate it individually or collectively.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN, DESPITE INVOKING THE RIGHT TO CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION, PEOPLE ARE STILL DENIED?

The right to conscientious objection is recognized as a constitutional right and therefore all citizens are protected through legal remedies.

IF A JOURNALIST PRESENTS BACKED BY THE MEDIA, HOW DOES THE RIGHT TO CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION PROCEED IN SUCH CASES?

According to the Constitutional Court, conscientious objection is a fundamental right derived from freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and freedom of thought (Judgment C-370 of 2019). Respect for this right requires that all individuals may exercise their fundamental freedoms in accordance with their own beliefs.

IS CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION ONLY IN THE RELIGIOUS SPHERE? OR DOES IT ALSO APPLY TO THE REFUSAL TO BEAR ARMS?

Conscientious objection does not apply only to the religious sphere; convictions may be secular, political, or philosophical, but they must arise from deep and sincere beliefs capable of external manifestation, as determined by the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court (SU-108 of 2016).

DOES IT ALSO APPLY TO THE WORKPLACE?

Conscientious objection in Colombia is recognized in cases of religious, moral, or philosophical reasons (Judgment SU-108 of 2016).

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE THESE LAWS CITED BY DR. JUAN GUILLERMO ORTÍZ TO SUPPORT THEM?

Dr. Juan Guillermo Ortíz referred to:

- Statutory Law 133 of 1994
- Judgment C-088 of 1994
- Judgment T-300 of 2000
- Judgment T-269 of 2001



BUT, IF YOU LIKE MILITARY SERVICE

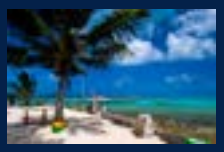
TO SERVE GOD, THE COUNTRY AND THOSE IN NEED

Law 2384 of 2024 prometed by the Political Party MIRA, implemented a progressive increase in bonuses for regular soldiers, which goes from 50% in 2024 (aprox. $650.000) to 70% in 2025 (aprox. $996.450), and establishes that dignifying their work and prohibiting arbitrary deductions, with the fian parhing 1.5 current minumum wages at discharge.

Applies to young people in the Army, Police, Navy, Aerospace Force, and INPEC who provide military service.

Prohibition of Deductions: The law prohibits any type of deduction or retention on soldier bonuses, making authorizations given by them null and void.



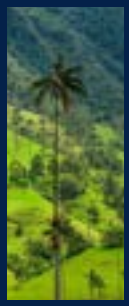














COLOMBIA





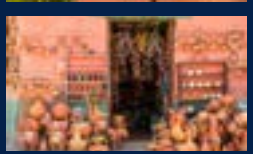








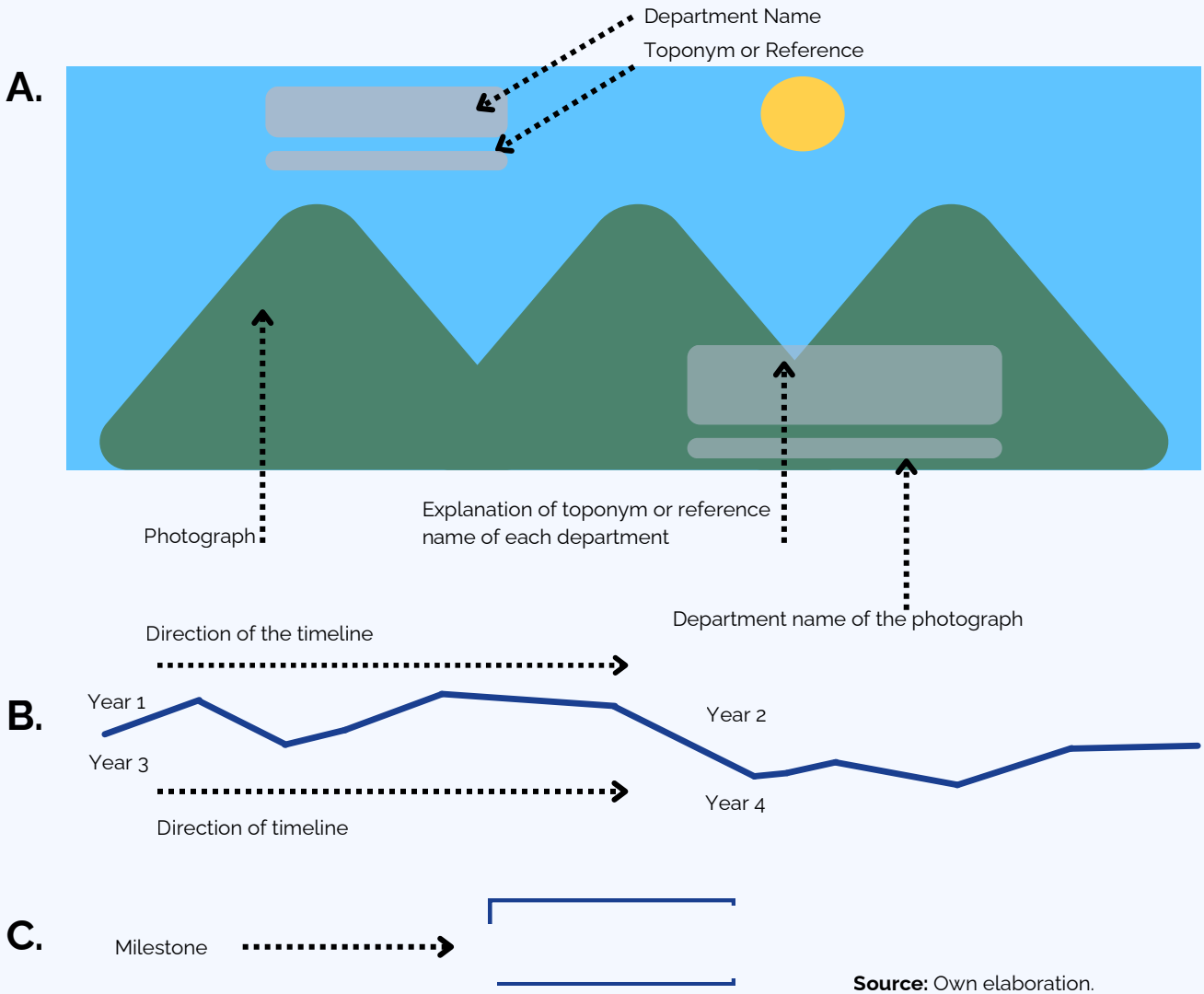




TIMELINE

The following section presents a photographic journey across Colombia, highlighting some of the actions promoted by the MIRA Political Party for the defense and promotion of Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience. These actions are the result of coordinated teamwork with religious leaders from different faiths, members of Religious Freedom committees and roundtables, liaison officers, mayors, governors, and public officials—each contributing from their respective roles with the purpose of benefiting more than 12,000 religious entities established throughout the national territory.

Timeline Structure



Source: Own elaboration.



WE PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE REGIONS

From our position as a Political Party, we have contributed in a positive and proactive manner to the development of actions in favor of defending the human right to Religious Freedom. This work has been carried out in coordination with municipal and departmental administrations, which has made it possible to guarantee the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, as well as the creation of more than 350 Religious Freedom committees through decrees, agreements, and ordinances, with the participation of individuals from all beliefs.

Our philosophy seeks to ensure that all people may exercise the right to Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience without fear. For this reason, the following section presents the manner in which progress has been made in strengthening regional respect for the human right to Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience.

In addition to presenting a brief sample of actions, this section also aims to show, through photographs, the beauty of the best country in the world: our beloved Colombia.

It is important to clarify that the actions presented below are only a sample and do not reflect one hundred percent of the work carried out throughout the territories in matters related to Religious Freedom. In this regard, it is noteworthy that actions have been undertaken across the entire national territory, motivated by the growing commitment within the country to protect individuals belonging to religious communities.
We also wish to recognize all the work that has been carried out but is not included in the present sample, since Religious Freedom, as a human right, can and must be protected by any person.

Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience are still in an initial phase of implementation; therefore, our intention is to demonstrate how Colombia is leading this issue in the region and how each small action contributes positively at the global level.

The social contribution of churches and their organizations makes the world a better place to live. Their spiritual support and their formation in values help shape responsible citizens who contribute positively to the peace of societies.







AMAZONAS

The Amazonas region of Colombia has a humid equatorial climate, with temperatures ranging between 25°C and 27°C. Its main attractions include Amacayacu National Natural Park, the Tanimboca Natural Reserve, Monkey Island, and the indigenous communities of the Yagua, Tikuna, and Cocama peoples. Notable natural features include the Amazon River, the rainforest, and the Tarapoto Lakes. Its fauna includes pink river dolphins, monkeys, anacondas, and fish such as the pirarucú; its flora includes rubber trees, aguaje palms, orchids, and bromeliads. It is an ideal destination for those interested in nature and indigenous culture (Martínez, 2019).

In the Amazonas region, the Tikuna indigenous community is predominant,, and since the time of the Conquest they have participated in various religious movements. The arrival of the Arawak and Tupí communities influenced new systems of thought and belief, allowing the entry of new entities and organizations of a religious nature into the territory. In 2018, more than 40 religious leaders from different spiritual traditions and beliefs signed an alliance committing themselves to the protection of the environment from their respective places of worship. By 2024, 36 entities have been officially identified in Leticia (Goulard, 2012) – (Calle, 2021).

AMAZONAS
LUNG OF THE WORLD



The Amazon region of Colombia is known as the "Lung of the World" because it produces a significant portion of the oxygen we breathe and absorbs large amounts of carbon dioxide, helping to regulate the global climate (Amazonia, the Lung of the Planet – Get Up And Goals, 2019).

Amazon River, Colombia.

2024

LETICIA

Conversations began with the Administration in order to promote joint work with the religious sector.







ANTIOQUIA

Antioquia has a varied climate, ranging from humid tropical to temperate. Its main tourist destinations include Medellín, Guatapé, Santa Fe de Antioquia, and Jardín. Among its most notable landscapes are the Aburrá Valley, the Cauca River Canyon, and the high-altitude páramos. Its fauna includes birds such as the Andean motmot and mammals such as the spectacled bear. The flora includes orchids, the wax palm, and cloud forests. Antioquia offers a combination of nature, culture, and vibrant urban life (Martínez, 2019).

As of 2023, 649 religious entities have been identified across the different subregions of the department, of which 91.91% have legal status. In Medellín, the District Mayor's Office conducted a mapping of stakeholders, identifying 1,414 actors, of which 1,093 correspond to religious entities, 223 to faith-based organizations, 12 to media outlets, and 86 to educational institutions (Mayor's Office of Medellín, 2023) – (Arteaga Hoyos, 2023).

ANTIOQUIA
MOUNTAIN OF GOLD



Antioquia has an abundance of mountains, and although this region is often referred to as "the Mountain," this nickname is mainly associated with Buriticá,, a municipality recognized for its gold mines (Wikipedia contributors, 2024).

El Poblado, City of Medellin

2016

CAREPA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was established through Agreement 008 of June 2016.

2017

CHIGORODÓ

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Agreement 009 of 2017.

2018

CAREPA

The Mayor issued official recognition to the different churches through Decree No. 058 of April 24, 2018, in acknowledgment of their social contribution to the municipality.

With the participation of different religious leaders, the First Commemorative Forum of the National Day of Religious Freedom was held.

ANTIOQUIA
MOUNTAIN OF GOLD



Carriel and silletero hat, Flowers Festival

2020

ANTIOQUIA

For the first time, the Antioquia Departmental Development Plan included indicators on Religious Freedom.

Municipal ordinances were promoted to guarantee the right to Religious Freedom, and the Departmental Council for Religious Affairs was created, including the religious sector within the Territorial Planning Council.

ANTIOQUIA

The celebration of the Day of Religious Freedom was held in different municipalities.

Different forums were conducted on Religious Freedom for public officials and the community.

The creation of a research group on Religious Freedom at the Universidad de Antioquia was promoted.

2021

MEDELLÍN

Authorization was granted for the façades of churches to display graffiti artwork.

APARTADÓ

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Municipal Agreement 001 of 2021.

For the first time, resources were allocated for the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom within the municipal budget for 2021, with an amount of 20,000,000.

NECOCLÍ

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Agreement 026 of 2020.

Participation of the religious sector was achieved in the Antioquia Departmental Forum "Management in Service of the Antioqueños," held in November 2020.

ANTIOQUIA
MOUNTAIN OF GOLD



Metrocable ride in Medellín, Colombia.

2022

ANTIOQUIA

in 28 municipalities, Municipal Religious Freedom Committees were created.

Forums, workshops, and meetings were held to promote Religious Freedom.

The participation of the religious sector in the Territorial Planning Council was promoted.

NECOCLÍ

A recognition was granted to the interreligious work carried out through Resolution No. 029 of 2022.

Recognition was given for the social work performed by different religious denominations in the municipality.

A municipal liaison for Religious Freedom was appointed.

APARTADÓ

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was created through Municipal Agreement 031 of 2022.

Interreligious commemorative activities were carried out for the social contribution of religious leaders in the municipality.

URABÁ

The first Interreligious Dialogue meeting was held, as a contribution to social development, with the construction of proposals for the National Development Plan, in the municipality of Chigorodó, on October 21, 2022.

2022

CAREPA

The Municipal Committee was created through Agreement 009 of 2022.

APARTADÓ

On July 27, leaders from different denominations participated in the creation of the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom.

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted, guaranteeing the right to believe.

CHIGORODÓ

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was created through Agreement 004 of 2022.

A large social outreach event was held with all religious leaders of the municipality.

ANTIOQUIA
MOUNTAIN OF GOLD



El Peñol Rock, Guatapé, Antioquia, Colombia.

2023

ANTIOQUIA

25 municipalities incorporated the Public Policy on Religious Freedom within their territories.

659 religious entities were characterized and geo-referenced to identify their social contribution and the objectives of the Departmental

Development Plan.
21 municipalities incorporated actions related to Religious Freedom within their Territorial Planning Plans, with the purpose of guaranteeing the construction and proper functioning of places of worship.

110 religious leaders were recognized for their social work.

227 religious leaders were trained in mental health.

APARTADÓ

The contribution of the religious sector to the Territorial Development Plan was incorporated through Municipal Agreement 001 of 2023.

CAREPA

The contribution of the religious sector to the Territorial Planning Plan was incorporated through Agreement 005 of 2023.

2023

CHIGORODÓ

The religious sector was incorporated into the Territorial Planning Plan through Agreement 004 of 2023.

NECOCLÍ

Support was provided to the religious sector by the Government of Antioquia through the geo-referencing of the religious sector.

The religious sector was included in the creation of the Municipal Religious Freedom Committee.

Support was provided to the religious sector within the POT through Agreement No. 3 of 2023.

MEDELLÍN

11 interreligious meetings were held, with participation from different communities of the District of Medellín.

ANTIOQUIA
MOUNTAIN OF GOLD



Aerial view of Guatapé Lake, Antioquia, Colombia

ANTIOQUIA

25 municipalities incorporated the Public Policy on Religious Freedom within their territories.

650 religious entities were characterized and geo-referenced to identify their social contribution and the objectives of the Departmental

Development Plan.
21 municipalities incorporated actions related to Religious Freedom within their Territorial Planning Plans, with the purpose of guaranteeing the construction and proper functioning of places of worship.

110 religious leaders were recognized for their social work.

227 religious leaders were trained in mental health.

2024

CAREPA

Meetings were held with the municipal administration to approach th religious sector regarding the Territorial Planning Plan, in order to request a new project under the Agreement that includes them.

Meetings were held with the formulators of the Development Plan to include a specific chapter on Religious Freedom and actions that promote the environment for the protection of places of worship.

TURBO

The district of Turbo was incorporated into Agreement 004 of 2023, and cooperation guidelines were established through Agreement 008 of 2024.

2024

NECOCLÍ

On February 15, 2024, the draft Agreement was submitted, modifying Municipal Agreement 010 of 2023 and including a new article incorporating the Public Policy on Religious Freedom in the municipality of Necoclí.

On February 16, 2024, the Municipal Council of Necoclí, Antioquia, granted special recognition to Iglesia de Dios Ministerial de Jesucristo Internacional, in the category of religious leaders, for their commitment and support for the defense of Human Rights.

On October 23, 2024, Agreement 003 of 2024 was approved, modifying Municipal Agreement 010 of 2023 and including a new article incorporating the Public Policy on Religious Freedom in the municipality of Necoclí.

ANTIOQUIA
MOUNTAIN OF GOLD



Pueblito Paisa, a traditional Antioquian-style village, Medellin, Colombia.

NECOCLÍ

On March 13, 2024, a meeting was held with the municipal council in order to formulate the Development Plan.

On March 18, 2024, a meeting was held to review the proposals for the municipality's Development Plan.

2024

APARTADÓ

Agreement 013 of 2022 was modified and new cooperation guidelines were established through Agreement 002 of 2024.

The inclusion of a specific chapter in the Development Plan was managed, focused on Religious Freedom, guiding and supporting religious leaders.

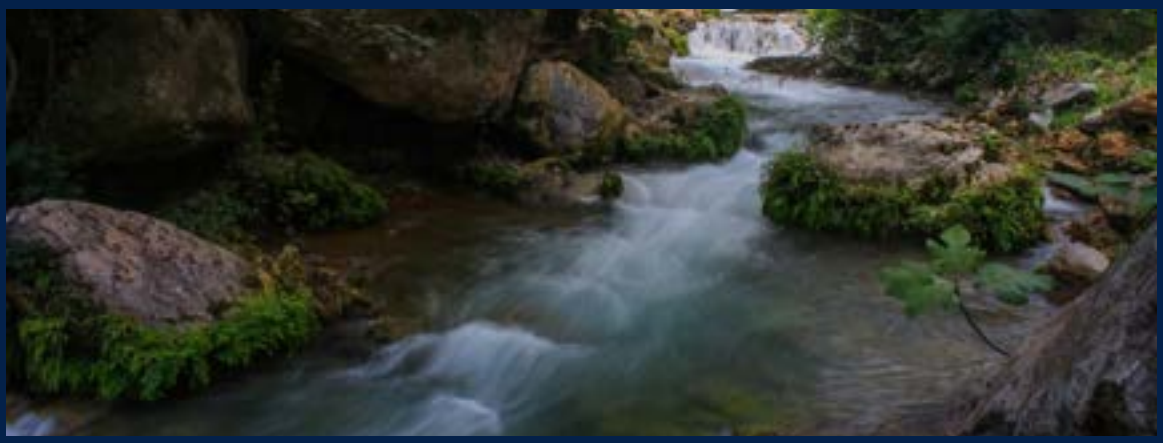
Proposals from the religious sector were incorporated into the Municipal Planning Secretariat as part of the formulation process of the Municipal Development Plan.

2024

APARTADÓ

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was formalized with the creation of Religious Affairs Advisors.

A meeting was held with the Planning Secretariat to review the progress in the formulation of the Development Plan, with the participation of the religious sector.





ARAUCA

Arauca has a tropical savanna climate with a rainy season from April to November. Its main attractions include the city of Arauca, El Cocuy National Natural Park, and several natural reserves. The plains of the Orinoquía region, the Arauca River, and wildlife such as capybaras and birds stand out. The flora includes moriche palms and oil palms. Arauca offers a combination of biodiversity and traditional llanero culture (Martínez, 2019).

The department of Arauca has 25 entities belonging to the religious sector, two of which operate radio stations and two others have educational institutions (Author's own research). These entities are located in the municipalities of Arauquita, Saravena, Tame, and Fortul, and among them, 19 report being Christian organizations (Public Registry of Religious Entities 2023., n.d.).

ARAUCA
LAND WITH THE AROMA OF COCOA



In this area of eastern Colombia, some of the largest cocoa crops in the world are grown, located in the Arauca region of Colombia, the Araucanian Plain, part of the Orinoquía region of Colombia. (Municipality of Arauca, n.d.)

"River Arauca, Arauca- Colombia"

ARAUCA

The first departmental forum on Religious Freedom was held.

The District Interfaith Board was created through Departmental Decree No. 80 of October 18, 2019.

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted through Agreement No. 047 of December 20, 2019.

2019

2020

SARAVENA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted through Agreement No. 36 of December 30, 2020.

ARAUCA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted through Ordinance No. 094 of November 30, 2020.

ARAUCA

LAND OF THE ARAHUACOS



"Leopardo escondido detrás de la vegetación"

SARAVENA

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree No. 42 of May 4, 2022.

ARAUCA

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree No. 108 of October 12, 2022.

TAME

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted through Agreement No. 046 of November 22, 2022.

ARAUQUITA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted through Agreement No. 061 of June 2, 2022.

2022



2024

ARAUQUITA

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree No. 100-08050 of April 15, 2024.







ATLÁNTICO

Atlántico, located in the Caribbean region of Colombia, has a tropical dry climate and attractions such as Barranquilla with its Carnival, the Caribbean Museum, and the Muelle del Río Magdalena. The beaches of Puerto Colombia, the Magdalena River, the mangroves, the flora and fauna, as well as Ciénaga de Mallorquín, are natural attractions, along with the biodiversity of the Montes de María, which preserve indigenous, African, and Spanish traditions (Martínez, 2019).

In the department of Atlántico, as of 2021, according to the report of the Ministry of the Interior and the RUPLES, 57 religious entities have been identified and geo-referenced, mainly in the municipalities of Baranoa, Barranquilla, Galapa, Malambo, Puerto Colombia, Sabanagrande, Sabanalarga, and Soledad. Within these findings, two projects developed in the territory have been registered with the aim of strengthening the Public Policy on Religious Freedom.

ATLÁNTICO

LAND OF CULTURAL RICHNESS



It is known as the "Land of Cultural Richness" due to its vibrant ethnic and cultural diversity, highlighted by the famous Barranquilla Carnival, traditional rhythms such as cumbia and vallenato, its rich gastronomy, and its historical heritage reflected in sites and museums that preserve its cultural legacy.

Barranquilla Carnival mask.

2022

PUERTO COLOMBIA

Meetings were held with religious leaders of the municipality to present the importance of advancing the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and the creation of the Municipal Committee.

SABANAGRANDE

Meetings were held with the mayor to present the importance of implementing the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and the creation of the Municipal Religious Freedom Committee.

ATLÁNTICO

Ordinance No. 582 was issued establishing the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship in the department of Atlántico.

2023

SABANAGRANDE

Decree No. 124 was issued establishing the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom in Sabanagrande.

Participation was held in the Territorial Planning Council for the Development Plan, with representation from the religious sector.

Participation took place in meetings to prepare the installation of the Departmental Religious Freedom Committee.

2024

ATLÁNTICO

Meetings were held with the mayors for the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom in the municipalities and the inclusion of religious leaders in the working groups for the formulation of the Development Plans of Puerto Colombia, Baranoa, Malambo, and the municipalities of the Southern Subregion.

Meetings were held with the mayors of Sabanagrande and Santo Tomás, and with the Government Secretariat, to support the implementation of proposals on Religious Freedom at the municipal level.







BOLÍVAR

Bolívar, located in the Caribbean region of Colombia, has a tropical climate and attractions such as Cartagena de Indias with its Walled City and beaches, and Mompox, a colonial town. The Corales del Rosario and San Bernardo National Natural Parks are notable for their coral reefs, marine life, mangroves, and the El Totumo Mud Volcano. The fauna and flora are diverse, with monkeys, caimans, jaguars, mangroves, and corals. It is a destination rich in history, culture, and natural beauty in the Colombian Caribbean (Martínez, 2019).

According to a national survey on religious diversity, in general terms the Caribbean region stands out for the highest percentage of people fully convinced of the existence of God, reaching 95%. Among those surveyed, the predominant religious beliefs in this region include Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Protestants, Adventists, Catholics, believers not affiliated with a religion, followers of other religions, agnostics, and atheists. Without a doubt, the above highlights the importance of religion in the northern region of the country (Beltrán & Silva, 2020).

BOLÍVAR
AT THE SERVICE OF FREEDOM



It is known as "At the Service of Freedom" due to its important role in the history of the country's independence. Cartagena de Indias was one of the first cities to declare its independence from Spain. This act was crucial in the struggle for freedom and independence in Colombia and Latin America (Wikipedia contributors, 2024b).

View of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.

2014 — BOLÍVAR

Meetings and discussions were held with the religious sector in the city of Cartagena.

2015 — CARTAGENA

Meetings were held with the religious sector to discuss the importance of participating actively in public policies.

2016 — CARTAGENA

A forum was held with members of different faith communities in Cartagena.

The first Interfaith Forum was held, with participation from different churches and religious entities.

2017 — CARTAGENA

The first approach was made with the Mayor's Office of Cartagena, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of the Interior's Religious Affairs Office.

2018 — BOLÍVAR

The first meetings were promoted with the religious sector in Turbaco, Turbaná, and Santa Rosa.

MAGANGUÉ

The first forum on Religious Freedom was held, promoting the defense of this right and recognizing its social contribution

BOLÍVAR
AT THE SERVICE OF FREEDOM



The picturesque bay of Cartagena, Bocagrande.

2019

BOLÍVAR

Several meetings were held for the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom in Cartagena and Bolívar.

Meetings were held with the Ministry of the Interior and the Religious Affairs Office.

Visits were conducted to different municipalities of Bolívar to learn about the status of Religious Freedom in the territory.

2021

BOLÍVAR

Initial meetings were held with the Government of Bolívar for the formulation of the Development Plan.

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was presented with the religious sector.

Religious leaders in schools of Cartagena were trained on the topic of Religious Freedom.

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 0065 of 2021.

EL CARMEN DE BOLÍVAR

The Religious Freedom Committee was created in the municipality through Decree 104 of 2021.

2022

BOLÍVAR

The Interfaith Board of Bolívar was created through Decree 0282 of the Government of Bolívar.

2023

BOLÍVAR

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom in Bolívar was adopted through Ordinance 354 of 2023.

EL CARMEN DE BOLÍVAR

The Religious Freedom Committee was recognized in 2021 and, in 2023, the directive board was updated to promote the participation of all its members.







BOYACÁ

Boyacá, located in the Andean region of Colombia, has a varied climate ranging from temperate to cold, with average temperatures between 12°C and 18°C. Its main attractions include Villa de Leyva, a colonial town; El Cocuy National Natural Park, known for mountaineering; and Paipa, recognized for its thermal springs and water sports at Lake Sochagota.

Notable features of the department include high-altitude páramo ecosystems, mountain ranges, agricultural fields, and the Chicamocha Canyon. The fauna includes condors, deer, spectacled bears, and trout, while the flora is characterized by frailejones, oak trees, and pines. Boyacá offers a combination of natural landscapes, historical heritage, and Andean traditions.

In the department of Boyacá, according to data updated to 2024, there are 120 entities belonging to the religious sector, of which 89 have legal status. Additionally, there are 10 religious educational institutions, of which 7 are Catholic and the remaining 3 are Christian.

There are also 11 radio stations affiliated with different religious entities, located in the municipalities of Chiquinquirá, Miraflores, Duitama, San Luis de Gaceno, Úmbita, Ciénega, Oicatá, Sutamarchán, Puerto Boyacá, and Sogamoso.

(COMUNIDADES RELIGIOSAS | Diócesis de Chiquinquirá, n.d.), (Emisoras de Radio en Boyacá - Colombia Emite, n.d.), (Nuestras Instituciones Educativas – Secretaría de Educación, n.d.), (SAS, n.d.).

BOYACÁ

CRADLE AND WORKSHOP OF FREEDOM



Boyacá, Colombia, is known as the "Cradle and Workshop of Freedom" because of its decisive role in the country's independence, particularly with the Battle of Boyacá in 1819, and because it later became a center for the organization and strengthening of freedom and the construction of the new State. (Superadmin, 2019).

Image of the Boyacá Bridge.

DUITAMA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was approved

BOYACÁ

The Departmental Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship of the Department of Boyacá was established as part of the institutional process aimed at ensuring dialogue between the departmental government and the religious entities present in Boyacá.

2022

SÁCHICA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was approved.

CHIQUINQUIRÁ

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was approved.

2023

TURMEQUÉ

A forum on Respect for Religious Freedom in Educational Institutions was held, enabling younger generations to understand and defend this right, and contributing to the reduction of cases of discrimination.

DUITAMA

The Municipal Pact for the Guarantee, Effective Enjoyment, and Non-Stigmatization of the exercise of the right to Religious Freedom was signed.

BOYACÁ

The first session of the Departmental Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was held.

CHIQUINQUIRÁ

The Municipal Pact for the Dignification and Guarantee of the Effective Enjoyment of Religious Freedom was signed, with the purpose of reaffirming the commitment of the municipal administration to the participating entities. Recognition awards were also granted by the Municipal Council to religious leaders who have made significant contributions to the municipality.







CALDAS

Caldas, in the Andean region of Colombia, has a varied climate with average temperatures ranging from 18°C to 22°C. Manizales, its capital city, is known for its colonial architecture and the International Theater Festival. Notable places include Los Nevados National Natural Park, ideal for hiking and hot springs. Its landscapes feature snow-capped peaks, coffee-growing valleys, rivers, and waterfalls. The fauna and flora are diverse, including condors, monkeys, spectacled bears, frailejones, and coffee plantations. It is a destination known for nature, culture, and coffee-growing tradition (Martínez, 2019).

In the Public Registry of Religious Entities of the Ministry of the Interior, 60 religious entities with legal status are registered (Public Registry of Religious Entities 2023.xlsm, n.d.). According to data from the Government of Caldas, there are approximately 120 religious entities in the department, although many of them do not yet have legal status or are currently in the process of obtaining it. According to a characterization conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of the Interior, in one year the religious sector benefits approximately 190 people through employment assistance programs, acting as a support network (UNDP, 2021).

CALDAS

A MEETING POINT OF WATERS AND PATHS



Caldas is known as "a meeting point of waters and paths" because in this region numerous rivers and important bodies of water converge, along with diverse roadways and transportation routes that connect different parts of the country, facilitating trade and communication (Caldas, A Meeting Point of Waters and Paths – Government of Caldas, n.d.).

Coffee plantation landscape near Manizales.

2017

CALDAS

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom of Manizales was signed, becoming the first policy articulated and adjusted based on Decree 437, which establishes the National Public Policy on Religious Freedom.

A forum on Religious Freedom was held with the presence of 1,250 people, and the Mayor of the city awarded Doctor Carlos Baena the highest recognition granted by the municipality. This event was highly significant, as it enabled the articulation of different entities and organizations of the religious sector with the local administration.

2018

CALDAS

A position for Religious Freedom was created within the Government of Caldas, which allowed the defense, strengthening, visibility, and coordination of the interreligious sector.

The creation of Religious Freedom Committees began in Caldas, reaching 25 out of the 27 municipalities, representing 93% of the municipalities to date.

An agreement for respect for beliefs was established with the participation of 1,200 people, generating benefits such as the creation of the Network of Students of Religious Education, whose objective is to integrate students from different beliefs, provide support among students of different religious traditions, and promote respect for religious diversity within educational institutions. Additionally, teachers were encouraged to act as peace mediators, generating cultural change through education.

CALDAS

A MEETING POINT OF WATERS AND PATHS



View of the city of Manizales, Colombia.

2019

CALDAS

An Interfaith Dialogue Board was created for urban planning purposes, in order to work on the Territorial Planning Plan and ensure that the capital city could have places of worship without restrictions.

The OLIRE Observatory (Religious Freedom Observatory in Latin America) highlighted Manizales and the MIRA Political Party for including indicators related to Religious Freedom in the Development Plan.

2020

CALDAS

Public Policies on Religious Freedom were adopted in the territories.

The Religious Freedom Committee of Caldas was created and installed, with the participation of Vice Minister Carlos Baena, who led its establishment.

2021

CALDAS

A Religious Freedom Forum was held with the participation of Dr. Carlos Baena, Vice Minister for Citizen Participation.

A contest on Religious Freedom was organized in public schools, where students learned about the value of respect for different beliefs through art and drawing.

2022

CALDAS

A departmental assessment of Caldas was conducted with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the University of Manizales.

Public officials from different government secretariats were trained in Religious Freedom.

In Chinchiná, two digital magazines were created to teach the importance of Religious Freedom, designed in an accessible way to reach young people in the municipality.



CALDAS

A MEETING POINT OF WATERS AND PATHS

View of Nevado del Ruiz Volcano.

CALDAS

Three municipalities were involved in the Territorial Planning Plan: Palestina, Viterbo, and Chinchiná.

Forty religious entities were trained in public communication and regulations, and they were included within the suicide prevention strategies.

2023

2024

CALDAS

Several interfaith cooperation agreement projects were submitted. These include Municipal Agreements in Filadelfia, Anserma, Risaralda, Chinchiná, and Villamaría.

Territorial Religious Freedom liaison officers were established in Neira, Chinchiná, and Filadelfia.







CAQUETÁ

Caquetá, in the Amazon region of Colombia, has a warm and humid climate throughout the year. Its main attractions include Serranía de Chiribiquete National Natural Park and Cahuinarí National Natural Park, both known for their biodiversity and rock art. The landscapes include tropical rainforest, rivers, and rocky formations. Notable fauna include jaguars, pink river dolphins, and anteaters. The flora is diverse, with trees, medicinal plants, and fruit-bearing species. Caquetá offers opportunities for exploration in the Colombian Amazon (Martínez, 2019).

As of 2021, in the department of Caquetá, 54 religious entities were characterized, belonging to the municipalities of Belén de los Andaquíes, Cartagena del Chairá, Curillo, El Doncello, Florencia, La Montañita, Milán, Puerto Rico, San Vicente del Caguán, Solita, and Valparaíso. This makes it one of the departments with faith-based organizations that have existed for more than 20 years. Additionally, the religious sector provided 63,314 humanitarian aid services, 14,515 mental health assistance services, and 77,829 forms of support during the pandemic .(Mayor's Office of Itagüí, 2023).

CAQUETÁ

HEART OF THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON



This is due to its vast areas of tropical rainforest, which form part of the Amazon, one of the most biodiverse regions in the world, with a great capacity to produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide, contributing significantly to the country's environmental health (Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, General Directorate of Fiscal Support, 2019).

A fishing boat at sunset on the Caguán River, Caquetá.

2016 — CAQUETÁ

Through agreements, Religious Freedom Committees were established in the municipalities of Morelia, Curillo, Cartagena del Chairá, El Doncello, and Puerto Rico.

2017 — CAQUETÁ

Approaches and meetings were held with religious entities in order to establish the Religious Freedom Committees and the Public Policy on Religious Freedom.

2019 — CAQUETÁ

By decree, Religious Freedom Committees were created in the municipalities of Florencia, San José del Fragua, La Montañita, and Valparaíso.

2021 — CAQUETÁ

By decree, Religious Freedom Committees were established in the municipalities of Albania, Solita, San Vicente del Caguán, and Belén de los Andaquíes.

Likewise, through decrees, the Public Policies on Religious Freedom were adopted in the municipalities of Florencia, San José del Fragua, Albania, Curillo, Solita, La Montañita, Puerto Rico, and San Vicente del Caguán.

In coordination with the Government of Caquetá and the Mayor's Office of Florencia, during the pandemic, 1,400 food packages were distributed and support was provided for the prevention and care of mental health conditions. Participation also took place in the Territorial Peace Council, allowing the religious sector to position itself as a key ally for promoting peace, coexistence, and reconciliation, contributing strategies to the public peace policy through actions that strengthen the social fabric.

CAQUETÁ

HEART OF THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON



Squirrel monkey among the trees.

2021

SOLANO

Through a decree, the Religious Freedom Committee of the municipality of Solano was established.

CAQUETÁ

Through decrees, the Public Policies on Religious Freedom were adopted in the municipalities of Belén de los Andaquíes, Solano, Valparaíso, and El Paujil.

A report was prepared on acts of victimization affecting the religious sector, which was submitted to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP).

2022

CAQUETÁ

The Public Policies on Religious Freedom were adopted in the municipalities of Cartagena del Chairá and El Doncello.

Through an agreement between the Ministry of the Interior and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a characterization of the religious sector was conducted at the request of the Mayor of Florencia to the Ministry.

The religious sector participated in the Women's Advisory Council, where the responsibility was assigned to make visible the role of women in social and spiritual work, strengthening their mental health. Additionally, within the annual action plan, activities were carried out to ensure compliance with the strategies established in the Public Policy on Religious Freedom of the municipality.

2023

CAQUETÁ

The election of the representative of the Women's Advisory Council of the religious sector was carried out.





CASANARE

Casanare, located in the Orinoquía region of Colombia, has a warm tropical climate with average temperatures ranging from 25°C to 30°C. Its main attractions include El Tuparro Natural Reserve, known for birdwatching and wildlife observation, and El Cocuy National Natural Park, ideal for hiking and mountaineering. The landscapes include plains, rivers, and rocky formations. The fauna includes deer, caimans, ocelots, and aquatic birds, while the flora is characterized by gallery forests, palm trees, and savanna vegetation. Casanare offers wild nature and llanero culture, making it an ideal destination for ecotourism and outdoor activities (Martínez, 2019)

According to the assessment conducted in 2022, in the department of Casanare 219 entities belonging to the religious sector were geo-referenced in the municipalities of Aguazul, Chámeza, Hato Corozal, Maní, Monterrey, Nunchía, Orocué, Paz de Ariporo, Pore, Recetor, Sabanalarga, Sácama, San Luis de Palenque, Támara, Tauramena, Trinidad, Villanueva, and Yopal. Of these, 98.2% correspond to Religious Entities, 0.5% to foundations, and 1.4% to associations. Additionally, 45,048 people benefited from actions, programs, and projects developed in prioritized territories (Mayor's Office of Itagüí, 2023).

CASANARE
THE OIL PANTRY



Casanare, Colombia, is known as "the oil pantry of Colombia" due to the significant oil production in the region, which has been a key economic driver for the department and the country as a whole (Sánchez et al., 2005).

Aerial view of the Cravo Sur River, Yopal, Casanare.

YOPAL

Through Municipal Council Agreement 029 of 2020, the Committee on Religious Freedom of Worship and Conscience of Yopal was created.

YOPAL

Agreement 029 of 2020 was modified by Agreement 023 of 2021 in several articles, with the purpose of providing participatory guarantees and religious pluralism, since the entire religious sector had not been fully taken into account.

2020

2021

2022

YOPAL

In 2022, the Municipal Administration of Yopal, through Administrative Resolution 286 of 2022, recognized the different delegates of religious entities, following prior convocation and review of the documentation submitted to the office.

On June 24, 2022, the Committee on Religious Freedom of Worship and Conscience was formally installed.

On October 20, 2022, the first session of the Committee on Religious Freedom and Conscience was held.

In December, the second session of the Committee on Religious Freedom of Worship and Conscience was conducted. The committee was composed of nine religious leaders, and the process of building the public policy continued.

CASANARE
THE OIL PANTRY



Herons in El Garcero, Sirivana – Yopal

YOPAL

A working group was held with religious leaders in order to present the work plan for the preparation of the technical document of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom. Likewise, the first regular session of the Religious Freedom Committee was held.

On December 28, 2023, according to Decree 406, the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship of the Municipality of Yopal, Casanare, was adopted.

2023






CAUCA

The department of Cauca, located in southwestern Colombia, is characterized by significant geographic and cultural diversity. Its climate ranges from temperate to warm, with temperatures between 18°C and 25°C. Popayán, the capital city, is well known for its colonial architecture. Other notable sites include Puracé National Natural Park. The landscapes include mountains, valleys, and high-altitude páramo ecosystems. Wildlife includes condors, spectacled bears, and endemic bird species. The flora is distinguished by frailejones and cloud forests. Cauca offers a combination of natural richness, history, and cultural heritage (Martínez, 2019).

In the department of Cauca, according to the public registry, there are 189 characterized entities belonging to the religious sector. Of these, 21 have fixed legal status, 55 have indefinite legal status, and 112 have lifetime legal status. The terms fixed, indefinite, and lifetime refer to the duration of the religious entity's legal existence within the territory, which must be specified at the time of requesting special or extended legal recognition. Through its programs, the religious sector provided benefits to 3,725 individuals (Municipality of Itagüí, 2023; Public Registry of Religious Entities, 2023).

CAUCA

HOME OF THE ISLANDS OF GORGONA AND GORGONILLA



Gorgona Island administratively belongs to the municipality of Guapi, in the department of Cauca. Together with Malpelo, these are the only Colombian islands located in the Pacific Ocean. The archipelago functioned as a maximum-security prison for 25 years, until 1984 (Wikipedia contributors, 2024c).

"Whale Watching, Gorgona Island, Cauca"

PATÍA

A programmatic agreement was signed, representing a formal commitment made during the campaign period between several parties, with the purpose of establishing joint actions around specific objectives. This agreement led to the creation of the First Municipal Committee on Freedom of Worship and Freedom of Conscience.

2015

2016

CORINTO

The Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom was created through Agreement 023 of 2016.

PUERTO TEJADA

In September 2016, the proposal for the creation of the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was presented and was approved in December 2016 through Agreement 025.

POPAYÁN

Agreement 016 of 2016 was enacted, "by which the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom and Religious Equality of the municipality of Popayán is created."

SANTANDER DE QUILICHAO

The initiative to create the Committee on Religious Freedom was approved through Agreement 01, becoming pioneers in the territory.

CAUCA

HOME OF THE ISLANDS OF GORGONA AND GORGONILLA



Tierradentro National Archaeological Park, Cauca.

GUACHENÉ

The Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom was created through Agreement 005 of 2017.

PIENDAMÓ

Through a programmatic agreement and Municipal Agreement No. 025, on October 21, 2017, the Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

SANTANDER DE QUILICHAO

Recognition was granted to existing churches, both with and without property, located in residential areas, through the Master Plan for Worship Facilities, by means of Municipal Agreement 013 of September 5, 2017.

2017

2018

CAJIBÍO

Through Decree 053 of June 16, 2018, the Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

POPAYÁN

A characterization of temples belonging to the religious sector of Popayán was conducted.

LA SIERRA

The Municipal Committee on Freedom of Worship was created.

ROSAS

Meetings were held with leaders of different congregations to present the importance of establishing the Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship.

SANTANDER DE QUILICHAO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was implemented in the municipality through Municipal Agreement 016 of December 20, 2018.

CAUCA

HOME OF THE ISLANDS OF GORGONA AND GORGONILLA



Empty streets at dawn in Popayán.

2019

ROSAS

On August 30, 2019, the Committee on Religious Freedom was created in the municipality of Rosas.

Since 2018, meetings had been held with leaders of different congregations to explain the importance of forming the Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, culminating in its creation on August 30, 2019.

TIMBÍO

A diagnostic assessment of the religious sector was carried out as a preliminary stage for the formulation of the Municipal Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, effective in 2020.

2020

2021

CORINTO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted in the municipality of Corinto through Agreement 018 of 2021.

POPAYÁN

In September 2021, the Security Support Network for temples of the religious sector in the municipality of Popayán was created.

PUERTO TEJADA

In 2021, the project for the creation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was presented.

SANTANDER DE QUILICHAO

The Intersectoral Technical Council for the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was created through Agreement 012 of September 7, 2021, enabling coordination between the administration and the interreligious sector.

CAUCA

HOME OF THE ISLANDS OF GORGONA AND GORGONILLA



Ullucos Valley, Cauca, Colombia.

PUERTO TEJADA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was approved through Agreement 06 of March 1, 2022.

TIMBÍO

The formulation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship began, adopted through Agreement 005 of February 28, 2022.

ROSAS

In 2022, regional meetings were held in the municipality of Rosas for the formulation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship with the participation of religious communities.

2022

2023

LA SIERRA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted through Municipal Agreement 02 of June 2023.

MORALES

As a result of the programmatic agreement, the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was developed in December 2023; however, the Committee on Religious Freedom had not yet been established.

POPAYÁN

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was created through Agreement 008 of October 2023.

ROSAS

In August 2023, the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was approved through Municipal Agreement.

Regional meetings had been held in 2022 with religious communities for the formulation of the policy, which was approved by the Municipal Council on August 31, 2023.

CAUCA

HOME OF THE ISLANDS OF GORGONA AND GORGONILLA



Panoramic view of the Cauca River.

CORINTO

Through Agreement 005 of 2024, guidelines for social cooperation with the religious sector were established in the municipality of Corinto, Cauca.

LA SIERRA

The Secretariat of Agriculture supported the religious sector by granting subsidies for coffee cultivation for a period of one and a half years.

MERCADERES

A diagnostic assessment was conducted among members of different entities of the religious sector in the municipality, with the purpose of consolidating information for the development of the Public Policy.

The Board of Directors of the Committee on Religious Freedom was restructured on March 9, 2024.

PATÍA

The inclusion of the religious sector within the Territorial Planning Council of the municipality of Patía was requested and achieved.

Participation was secured in the formulation of the Municipal Development Plan through working groups in which the inclusion of the religious sector was obtained.

The religious sector also participated in the formulation of the Departmental Development Plan, where its proposals were presented.

2024





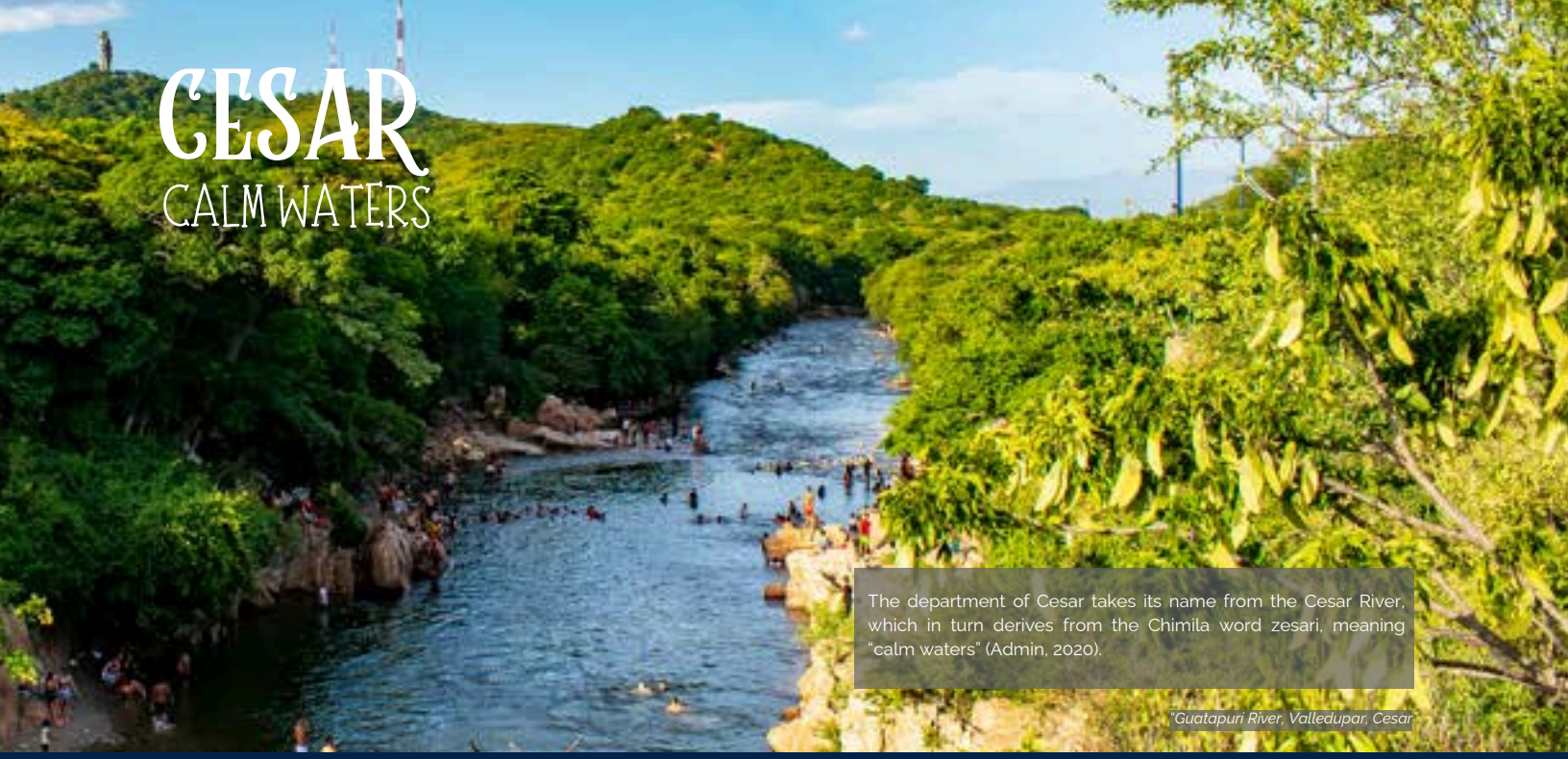


CESAR

Cesar, located in the Caribbean region of Colombia, has a warm and dry climate with temperatures ranging from 25°C to 30°C. Valledupar, the capital city, is known for vallenato music and its music festivals. The Los Besotes Regional Natural Park offers canyons, rivers, and waterfalls. The landscapes include the Cesar and Magdalena rivers as well as tropical dry forests. Wildlife includes toucans, anteaters, and reptiles. The flora is characterized by gallery forests, tropical dry forests, and mangroves. Cesar combines natural richness, culture, and Caribbean traditions, making it a region known for ecotourism and folk music (Martínez, 2019).

In Cesar, 151 religious entities were identified within the territory, of which 40.4% are Christian. Catholic entities in the department are present in 20 municipalities, and according to verified information from the 24 municipalities of the department of Cesar (Parishes – Diocese of Valledupar, n.d.), there are 161 official establishments, of which 18 are educational centers administered by the diocese and one educational institution administered by the diocese (Public Registry of Religious Entities, 2023).

CESAR
CALM WATERS



The department of Cesar takes its name from the Cesar River, which in turn derives from the Chimila word zesari, meaning "calm waters" (Admin, 2020).

"Guatapuri River, Valledupar, Cesar"

2018

BOSCONIA

Churches were characterized in terms of location, religious leader, address, and telephone contact information.

The Religious Freedom Liaison was established.

2020

VALLEDUPAR

A virtual forum on Religious Freedom as a Human Right, a step toward social integration, was organized with the support of the following universities: Universidad del Magdalena, Universidad Popular del Cesar, and Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), with more than 500 connection points nationwide.

2021

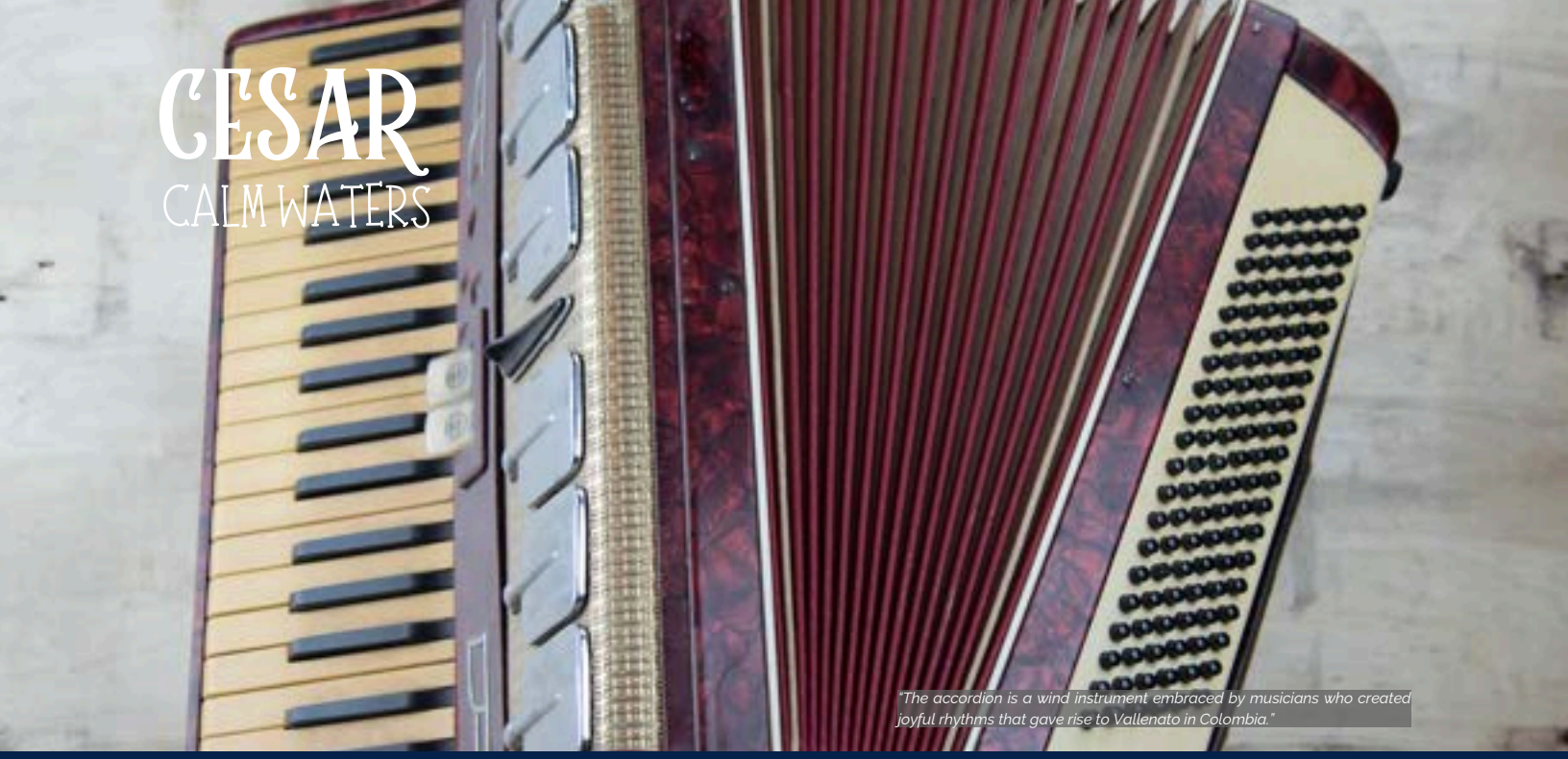
AGUSTÍN CODAZZI

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom and the Committee on Religious Freedom were approved.

VALLEDUPAR

Through Agreement 015 of November 25, 2021, by which the Municipal Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted, the creation of the Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship of the municipality of Valledupar was included.

CESAR
CALM WATERS



"The accordion is a wind instrument embraced by musicians who created joyful rhythms that gave rise to Vallenato in Colombia."

LA JAGUA DE IBIRICO

The first meeting of religious leaders was held to commemorate the Day of Religious Freedom. During the event, the contributions on Religious Freedom presented by then Vice Minister Dr. Carlos Baena López were shared. Each attendee received a recognition.

VALLEDUPAR

The Religious Freedom Roundtable of Valledupar was informally formed, with the participation of the newly appointed National Director of Religious Affairs, Dr. Amelia Cotes. The roundtable included one representative from each church present at the meeting. However, it remained a protocol act; to date, it has not been formalized, and no administrative act has been issued.

2022

2023

VALLEDUPAR

Participation took place before the Municipal Council of Valledupar during the debates on the exceptional modifications to the Territorial Land Use Plan, specifically the amendment of Article 276, in which collective worship facilities had been classified as restricted. The modification placed them in the same category as education and health facilities, that is, as compatible uses.

CESAR
CALM WATERS



Aerial view of Valledupar, Cesar.

AGUACHICA

Participation took place, as the religious sector, in the working groups for the development of the Municipal Development Plan of Aguachica.

AGUSTÍN CODAZZI

The Religious Freedom Liaison was created.

A council member from the MIRA party presented to the Municipal Council the project on interreligious cooperation policy and the project bank of the religious sector.

BOSCONIA

Participation took place, as the religious sector, in the working groups for the development of the Municipal Development Plan of Bosconia.

LA JAGUA DE IBIRICO

Participation took place, as the religious sector, in the working groups for the development of the Municipal Development Plan of La Jagua de Ibirico.

2024

2024

VALLEDUPAR

Participation took place, as the religious sector, in the working group for the development of the Departmental Development Plan.

Participation also took place in the working groups for the development of the Municipal Development Plan of Valledupar.

The religious sector also participated in the formulation of tl Comprehensive Plan for Security and Citizen Coexistence.

CURUMANÍ

Participation took place, as the religious sector, in the working groups for the development of the Municipal Development Plan of Curumaní.



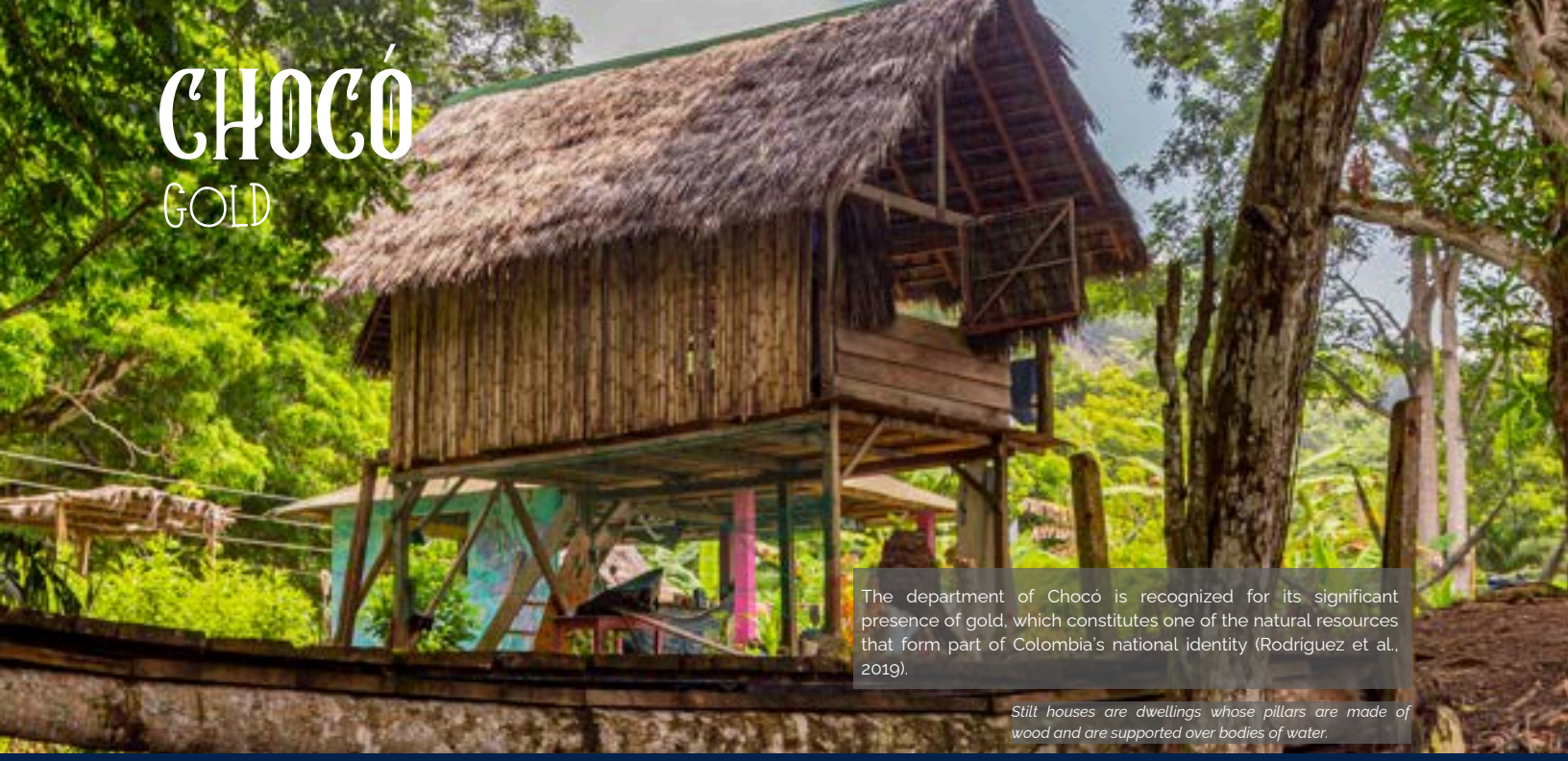


CHOCÓ

Chocó, located on the Pacific coast of Colombia, is known for its lush tropical rainforest, coastal landscapes, and remarkable biodiversity. The climate is warm and humid throughout the year, keeping the region green and fertile. Activities include whale watching in Utría National Natural Park, adventure tourism in Los Katíos, and exploration of Afro-Colombian culture in Quibdó and Nuquí. The landscapes stand out for their pristine beaches, mangroves, and tropical forests. The fauna includes jaguars, monkeys, manatees, and birds, while the flora is highly diverse, with trees, medicinal plants, and tropical fruits (Martínez, 2019).

According to the characterization conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of the Interior, as of 2022 the department of Chocó had 34 entities and organizations belonging to the religious sector, located in the municipalities of Alto Baudó, Condoto, Istmina, Medio Baudó, Quibdó, Tadó, Unguía, and Unión Panamericana. In Chocó, 91.18% correspond to churches or temples, while 8.8% belong to foundations related to the religious sector. A total of 679 people benefited from their different programs, and overall, 90,728 humanitarian aid services were delivered in the department by the religious sector (Mayor's Office of Itagüí, 2023).

CHOCÓ
GOLD



The department of Chocó is recognized for its significant presence of gold, which constitutes one of the natural resources that form part of Colombia's national identity (Rodríguez et al., 2019).

Stilt houses are dwellings whose pillars are made of wood and are supported over bodies of water.

2019 — QUIBDÓ

Decree 0146 was issued, adopting the Public Policy on Religious Freedom. The board of directors of the committee was elected and formally installed.

2020 — CONDOTO

Through Municipal Agreement 014 of 2020, the Municipal Council created the Committee for Protection and Religious Freedom (

2021 — CHOCÓ

The Departmental Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted.

2021 — BOJAYÁ

Through Decree 150 of 2021, the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted and the Religious Freedom Committee was created.

2022 — CHOCÓ

The department participated in the installation of the National Committee for Social Dialogue on Religious Freedom.

2023 — BAJO BAUDÓ – PIZARRO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted, and the board of directors of the Religious Freedom Committee was created and elected.

2024 — ISTMINA

The Municipal Council approved the Cooperation Policy for Religious Freedom.





CÓRDOBA

Córdoba, located in the Caribbean region of Colombia, has a warm tropical climate. Montería, the capital city, is known for its gastronomy and folkloric festivals. Paramillo National Natural Park is ideal for ecotourism, while San Antero offers beaches along the Gulf of Morrosquillo and extensive mangrove areas. The landscapes include forests, rivers, and beaches. The fauna includes birds such as herons and toucans, mammals such as monkeys and sloths, and various reptiles. The flora is characterized by mangroves and coconut palms. Córdoba combines natural beauty, Caribbean culture, and local traditions, making it an important destination for ecotourism on the Colombian coast (Martínez, 2019).

In 2022, as part of the characterization process, the Ministry of the Interior conducted 177 surveys in the department of Córdoba across 21 municipalities: Ayapel, Buenavista, Canalete, Chinú, Cotorra, La Apartada, Lorica, Los Córdobas, Montelíbano, Montería, Planeta Rica, Pueblo Nuevo, Puerto Escondido, Puerto Libertador, Purísima, Sahagún, San Andrés de Sotavento, San Antero, San Bernardo del Viento, Tierralta, and Tuchín. Of the total, 79.7% corresponded to urban areas and 20.3% to rural areas (Mayor's Office of Itagüí, 2023).

CÓRDOBA
— WITH "V" FOR VICTORY



The department bears its name as a tribute to José María Córdova; however, the letter "V" in his surname was replaced with "B," giving rise to the official name "Córdoba," while the original "V" is commonly associated with the concept of "Victory." (Wikipedia collaborators, 2024).

Cordoba, territory of Brahman cattle.

VALENCIA

An agreement was reached to carry out joint work with the Mayor's Office of Valencia, pastors, and leaders of the religious organizations present in the municipality.

During this meeting, the guidelines issued by the Ministry of the Interior were presented in order to establish the Religious Freedom Committee. The meeting was attended by Rosendo Gómez, who emphasized the importance of these committees for the benefit of religious communities.

At that same meeting, the Assembly agreed to elect an Executive Board for the Committee.

MONTERÍA

After several previous meetings, on July 5, 2018, a meeting was held to establish the Religious Freedom Committee in the municipality of Montería, with the participation of all religious denominations in the city.

2017

2018

2019

2020

MONTERÍA

Through the Mayor's Office, Decree 090 of April 3, 2019, was issued, creating the Municipal Board on Religious Freedom, Worship, and Conscience of the city of Montería, and defining its members representing the religious sector of the city.

MONTERÍA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom was created through Agreement No. 036 of 2020.

CÓRDOBA
— WITH "V" FOR VICTORY



Sinú River. Montería – Córdoba.

SAHAGÚN

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted through Decree No. 0244 of May 10, 2021.

2021

2023

CERETÉ

An invitation was made to the First Municipal Board of Religious Affairs and Worship, following the guidelines established in Municipal Decree No. 073 of October 2023. Through this decree, the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted, and the interfaith board, executive board, and committees were created in the municipality of Cereté.



CUNDINAMARCA

Cundinamarca, located in the Andean region of Colombia, has significant geographic diversity and climates ranging from temperate to warm. Bogotá, the capital city, is known for its architecture and cultural life. Chingaza National Natural Park is an ideal destination for hiking. The landscapes include mountains, valleys, and páramo ecosystems. Wildlife includes condors, toucans, and hummingbirds. The flora is characterized by frailejones, cloud forests, and oak trees. Cundinamarca offers natural richness, culture, and history, making it an important destination for ecotourism in the Colombian Andean region (Martínez, 2019).

In Cundinamarca, 703 religious entities and social organizations were identified in the 15 provincial capitals of the department, according to the final characterization report of 2019, which made visible the Religious Pluralism present in the territory of Cundinamarca. Of the entities and organizations surveyed, 95% stated that they belong to a Christian community in its various denominations; 0.71% declared adherence to Islam; 0.14% identified as Buddhist; another 0.14% reported practicing Hinduism; and the remaining 4% indicated having beliefs different from those listed in the survey (Ministry of the Interior; UNDP, 2019).
In 2023, the Directorate for Coexistence, Justice, and Human Rights of the Government of Cundinamarca held 15 provincial meetings with the participation of more than 1,000 religious leaders from across the department (Government of Cundinamarca, 2023).

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



For those who are not aware, the name means "nest of the condor" in the Quechua language, originally pronounced Kuntur marqa, which eventually evolved into Cundinamarca. After the Spanish conquest, the name was replaced by New Kingdom of Granada, a designation chosen by Don Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada in homage to his homeland (El Tiempo, 2009).

Andean condor in flight

CUNDINAMARCA

The first intersectoral strategy for the recognition of Religious Freedom and equality in Freedom of Worship in the department was established.

FUSAGASUGA

The first meeting of leaders from the religious sector was held in Fusagasugá. Approximately 60 representatives from different religious organizations with presence in Fusagasugá and the Sumapaz region attended the meeting.

2016

SILVANIA

The goal of formulating the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was included in the Municipal Development Plan.

UBATÉ

Municipal Agreement No. 17 of 2016 was approved, "by which the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom and Religious Equality is created."

SOACHA

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

2017

FACATATIVÁ

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

CUNDINAMARCA

The First Departmental Interreligious Dialogue Roundtable was held on July 11.

In the Sabana Centro province, a workshop was conducted for the National Public Policy on Religious Freedom.

FUSAGASUGÁ

The first Municipal Public Policy on Religious Freedom was approved in the municipality of Fusagasugá.

At the initiative of Councilor Jonatán Martínez, with the support of the Municipal Secretariat of Integration and Family, the First Forum on Religious Freedom was held, with the participation of religious leaders and communities.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Andean Bear, emblematic species of Cundinamarca"

FUSAGASUGÁ

The First Municipal Public Policy on Religious Freedom was developed in the municipality of Fusagasugá.

CUNDINAMARCA

The Subcommittee on Religious Diversity of the department was created, coordinating the participation of seven departmental secretariats and members of the religious sector.

SILVANIA

Participatory working sessions were held with the municipal administration and the interreligious sector in order to organize diagnostic assessments of the issues affecting the religious sector in the municipality.

2018

2019

FUSAGASUGÁ

The Committee on Religious Freedom of the municipality of Fusagasugá was created through Decree 189 of 2019.

SIBATÉ

The first celebration of the National Day of Religious Freedom was held, including a dinner for the religious sector.

VILLETA

The First Office of Religious Affairs was created.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Paragliding, Sopó – Cundinamarca"

SOACHA

The First Office of Religious Affairs in Soacha was created.

The first characterization of religious entities established in the municipality of Soacha was conducted, identifying 227 churches.

The first celebration of the National Day of Religious Freedom was held, including a dinner for the religious sector.

LA CALERA

The Advisory Council on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was created.

LA MESA

The Council for Religious Freedom and Worship was created

LA MESA

2019

The Council on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was created.

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

UBATÉ

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

2019

CHÍA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted by decree, Decree 820 of 2019.

The Municipal Roundtable on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

FACATATIVÁ

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, Freedom of Conscience, and Faith-Based Organizations was adopted.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Tequendama Falls, Cundinamarca"

CUNDINAMARCA

Ten projects from the Interreligious Initiatives Fund were successfully implemented.

FACATATIVÁ

A booklet for the dissemination of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was produced.

CACHIPAY

The Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

SILVANIA

The Municipal Development Plan included the goals of formulating the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience, the characterization of religious entities in the municipality, and the creation of the Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience.

CHÍA

The Directorate of Ethnic, Racial, Religious, and Post-Conflict Affairs was created.

Within the Municipal Development Plan 2020–2024, a budget of 430 million pesos was allocated for the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom.

The characterization and georeferencing of religious entities and organizations of the religious sector in the municipality of Chía was carried out.

The Municipal Roundtable on Religious Freedom was established with the participation of different religious leaders of the municipality.

2020

2020

VILLETA

The inclusion of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom as a goal of the Municipal Development Plan was achieved.

FUSAGASUGÁ

Four goals to strengthen Religious Freedom were included in the Municipal Development Plan 2020–2023.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Valley of the Falcons, Suesca – Cundinamarca"

TIBIRITA

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

ZIPAQUIRÁ

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

CAJICÁ

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

PACHO

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

CABRERA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

2020

2020

MOSQUERA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

The Municipal Roundtable on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

TOCAIMA

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

SILVANIA

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created in the municipality of Silvania, Cundinamarca, through Municipal Agreement 02 of 2021.

AGUA DE DIOS

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Beliefs was created.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Farmer's hands harvesting potatoes, a crop abundant in Cundinamarca"

2021

CUNDINAMARCA

In coordination with the Secretariat of Government and the Secretariat of Health of the department of Cundinamarca, approximately 90 leaders of the religious sector and municipal Religious Freedom liaisons were trained in biosecurity protocols for the reopening of temples, churches, Sunday schools, and other related activities, as well as additional recommendations.

SOACHA

The First Forum for the Recognition of Leadership,

Transformation, and Social Contribution of the religious sector in Soacha was held.

After the pandemic, 295 churches were identified.

2021

CHÍA

An interadministrative agreement with the Military University was implemented to offer a virtual course on religious culture and its legal framework for public servants and the general population, with 104 participants trained.

The Director of Ethnic, Racial, Religious, and Post-Conflict Affairs participated in a discussion on Religious Freedom broadcast on the radio program Cundinamarca Relevante in the municipality of Chía.

NEMOCÓN

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

TOCAIMA

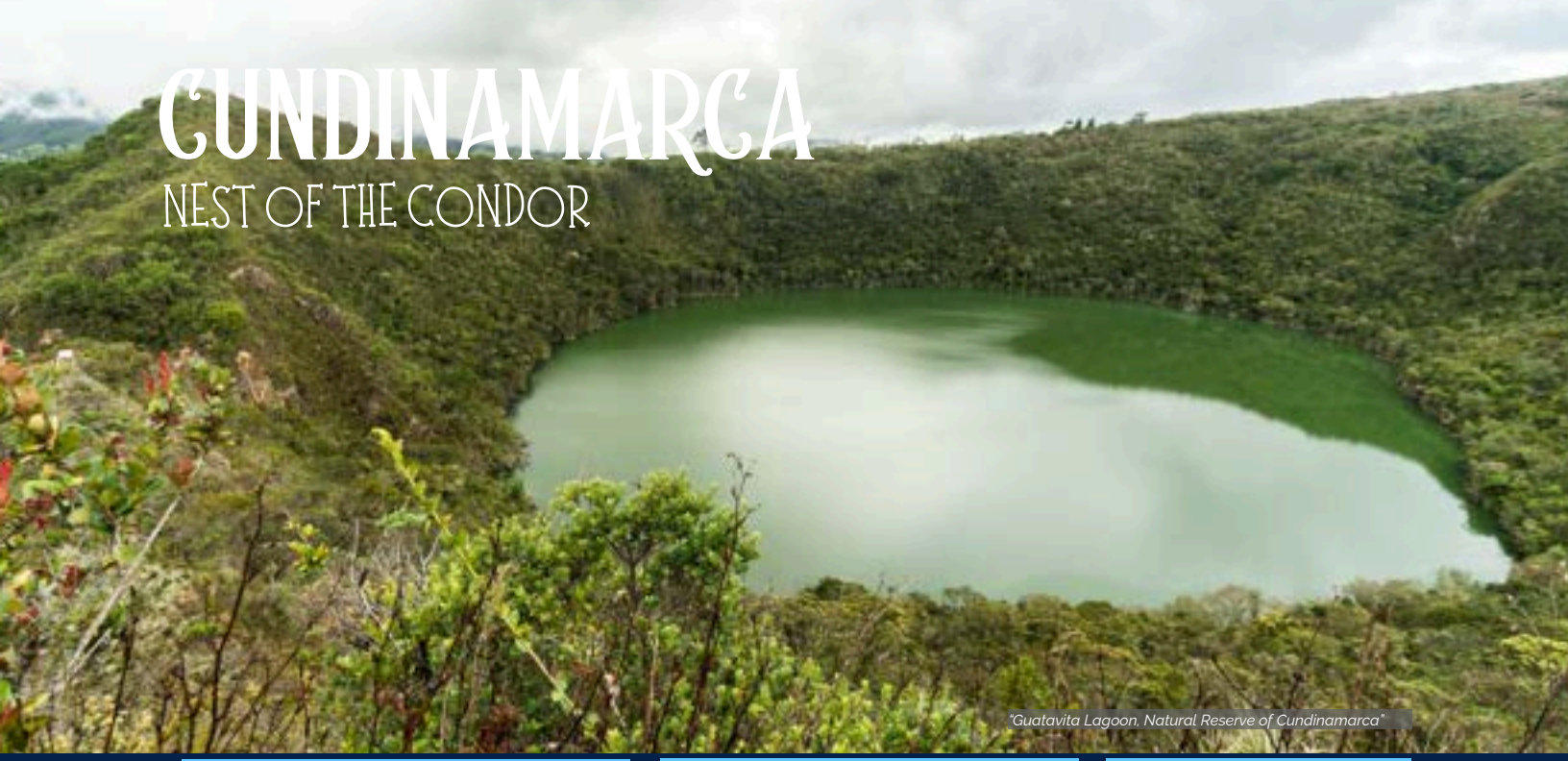
The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

SAN ANTONIO DEL TEQUENDAMA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Guatavita Lagoon, Natural Reserve of Cundinamarca"

2021

CHÍA

Participation took place in three public discussions on Religious Freedom through different media outlets, including Luna Estéreo, Fraterchía, and Cundinamarca Relevante, with the participation of the MIRA council member of the municipality of Chía and the Director of Ethnic, Racial, Religious, and Post-Conflict Affairs.

FUSAGASUGÁ

The religious sector participated in the radio program Vive el Amanecer con Esperanza, broadcasting reflections by Sister María Luisa Piraquive.

The first academic forum on Religious Freedom was held, and contributions were made to the Territorial Land Use Plan in favor of the religious sector.

SOPÓ

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

2021

CHÍA

The Social Directory of the Religious Sector was created so that Religious Entities (RE) and Religious Social Organizations (RSO) could work jointly with the Municipal Administration to provide community training and humanitarian assistance.

Through this initiative, one religious entity provided 550 humanitarian aid packages for vulnerable persons affected by COVID-19 and 100 school kits for vulnerable children between 8 and 12 years of age.

EL COLEGIO

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Con ience was created.

NARIÑO

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

GUASCA

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Cat looking out a window, Cundinamarca"

PUERTO SALGAR

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

SILVANIA

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created in the municipality of Silvania, Cundinamarca, through Municipal Agreement 02 of 2021.

2021

CHÍA

A characterization of the social, cultural, educational, coexistence, peace, reconciliation, and differential-approach activities carried out by religious entities and their organizations was conducted in order to produce a technical document highlighting their contribution to social cohesion, peace, and coexistence.

This characterization was carried out through in-person interviews with leaders and representatives of the religious entities.

A diploma course on religious culture and its legal framework was also conducted, with 104 participants including public servants and members of the religious community.

2021

VIOTÁ

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

TABIO

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

CHÍA

Public outreach campaigns were conducted through different media to promote respect, tolerance, and non-discrimination within the framework of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience, directed to the general community.

The dissemination used the Municipal Administration's Facebook page and local media outlets such as Periódico Adrenalina, El Sabanario, Latitud Medio Z, and Litechía.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Water mirror, salt mine, Nemocón – Cundinamarca"

FUSAGASUGÁ

The characterization and georeferencing of different religious entities and faith-based organizations present in the municipality of Fusagasugá was carried out.

This process was led by the Religious Freedom program in coordination with the Committee on Religious Freedom.

CAJICÁ

The characterization of religious organizations in the municipality of Cajicá was carried out, identifying 43 congregations representing approximately 20,000 inhabitants of the municipality.

SOACHA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

2022

2022

FUNZA

A census and characterization of 43 religious entities was conducted.

MOSQUERA

The First Youth Entrepreneurship Fair of the religious sector was held.

ARBELÁEZ

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted.

SOACHA

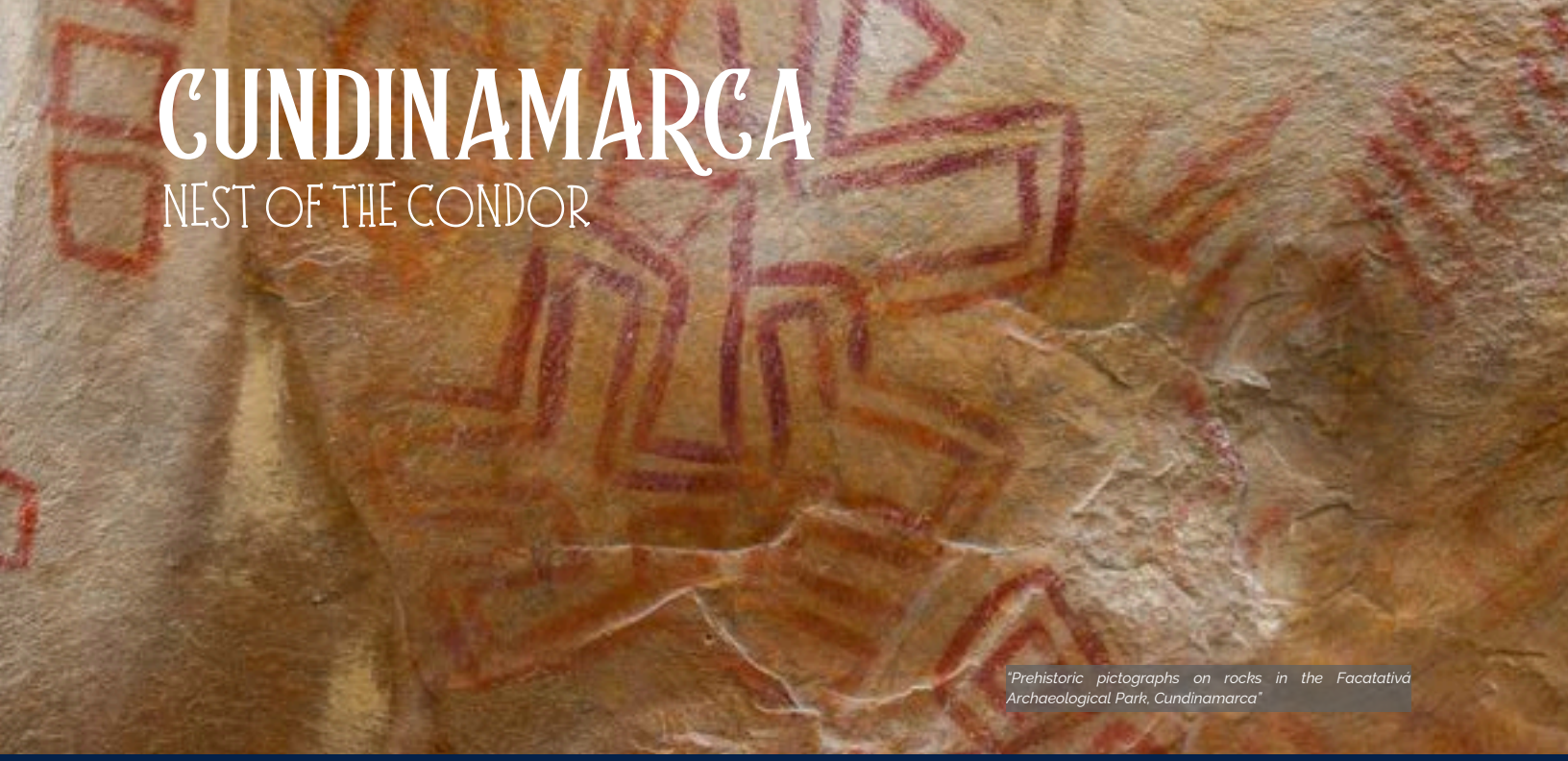
In the protection of Religious Freedom from an urban planning perspective, three working sessions were held to present and incorporate contributions from the religious sector into the Territorial Land Use Plan.

QUIPILE

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Prehistoric pictographs on rocks in the Facatativá Archaeological Park, Cundinamarca"

CUNDINAMARCA

With the support of Dr. Carlos Alberto Baena, in his role as Vice Minister for Social Dialogue, Equality, and Human Rights, the justification for the formulation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom in Cundinamarca was submitted to the Departmental Secretariat of Planning.

TABIO

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

UBAQUE

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

SIBATÉ

The First Meeting of Social Transformation Leaders was held under the theme "Significant Experiences of Peace led by the religious sector in Soacha and Sibaté."

2022

2022

CHÍA

Three representatives of the religious sector were appointed to the following bodies:

- The Committee for the "Statute on the response, use, and verification of the legitimate use of force by the State and the protection of the right to peaceful protest."
- The Community Participation Committee in Health.

CAJICÁ

The process for the formulation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience began, with the participation of more than 2,000 stakeholders through working groups and surveys directed to the community.

VENECIA

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

MOSQUERA

The first measurement of the social contribution of the religious sector to public expenditure and the characterization of the religious sector was conducted.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Beehive in Cogua, Cundinamarca"

FUNZA

The Committee on Religious Freedom was formally established.

ZIPAQUIRÁ

Training was provided to the Committee on Religious Freedom and public officials on the guarantee of the right to Religious Freedom in the territory.

SOACHA

A qualitative and quantitative study of the social contribution of the religious sector to public expenditure in Soacha was conducted.
The results were presented during the Second Forum on the Recognition of the Social Contribution of the religious sector, where each religious entity received formal recognition.

MADRID

The National Day of Religious Freedom was commemorated, and the assistance protocol for the religious sector was presented.

2022

2022

FUSAGASUGÁ

The first provincial meeting on Religious Freedom (Sumapaz Province) was held, resulting in the signing of the Pact for Religious Freedom.

PUERTO SALGAR

Training was provided to members of the Committee on Religious Freedom and public officials on guaranteeing the right to Religious Freedom in the territory.

FUNZA

Training in risk management was provided to the religious sector.

A diploma program in Disaster Risk Management, with emphasis on the religious and community sector, was conducted, with 1,300 graduates nationwide.

Training on Religious Freedom was provided to municipal administration officials.

Seventy-five students of San Andrés School received training on Religious Freedom.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Neusa Reservoir, Colombia"

2022

CHÍA

A virtual diploma course on citizen participation and conflict resolution was developed for religious leaders, in agreement with the Military University, addressing citizen competencies, participation mechanisms, culture of peace, and conflict-resolution strategies.

Twenty-one religious leaders from the municipality were trained.

Training on neutral places and environments for worship was conducted at Capillas de la Fe Funeral Home.

CAJICÁ

Recognition was granted to all religious leaders of the municipality.

MOSQUERA

A diploma program in school religious education was conducted.

2022

FUNZA

Participation took place in the commemoration of the National Day of Religious Freedom organized by Cundinamarca and Bogotá.
The Day of Religious Freedom was commemorated.
The Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Conscience, and Freedom of Worship of Funza was adopted through Decree No. 074 of 2022.

CHÍA

A virtual diploma course on Religious Culture for public officials was conducted in agreement with the Military University, covering the religious phenomenon, diverse religious traditions, religion and politics, religion in the public sphere, and Religious Freedom.
Thirty participants were trained.

MOSQUERA

A provisional manifesto for the guarantee and respect of Religious Freedom was published.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Nurseries in Fusagasugá"

FOSCA

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

MOSQUERA

A diploma program in school religious education was conducted.

CHÍA

Two in-person training sessions on neutral environments for worship were conducted, including one at San Antonio Hospital, with 21 participants.

Humanitarian aid deliveries were carried out through the Social Directory of the religious sector, along with training on mental health and healthy habits.

2022

2022

CAJICÁ

Proposals were submitted to the Basic Territorial Land-Use Plan to ensure that the municipality would not impose restrictions on the construction of places of worship.

CHIA

A decoration ceremony was held honoring pastors of different religious entities in recognition of their social contribution.

FUNZA

Participation took place in a conference on Religious Freedom at ZIU University with 1,900 participants.

A meeting on worship facilities within territorial planning was held.

A workshop on public-service ethics was conducted.

Training was provided to CEO officials on the prevention of religious discrimination.

An optometry health campaign benefited more than 90 members of the religious sector.

Participation took place in the Salvatorian Interreligious Forum.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Ubaté, Cundinamarca — the dairy capital of Colombia"

2022

CHÍA

Eighteen training sessions were conducted on freedom of conscience and respect for different beliefs in schools, universities, companies, community organizations, and the general public.

Topics included religious beliefs present in the municipality, the Public Policy on Religious Freedom of Chía, and the legal framework protecting Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship. A total of 961 people were trained.

FUNZA

Religious Freedom literacy training was provided to 175 students of San Marcos School.

Emergency-response training was delivered by the School of Engineers.

The Day of Prayer was created and formally established.

SOACHA

A forum on national progress in Religious Freedom and training on Public Policy was held, led by the National Director of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior, with support from the Departmental Government.

2022

CAJICÁ

The process of characterization of the religious sector began.

MADRID

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom [illegible] was adopted.

SAN BERNARDO

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

FACATATIVÁ

Training on the Territorial Land-Use Plan was provided to leaders of the religious sector.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Sendero Mina de Nemocón"

FUNZA

A cultural and historical visit to the Casa de Nariño was held with the participation of 15 religious leaders, highlighting the importance of the right to Religious Freedom.

Participation took place in emergency-response training for the Municipal Risk Management Plan conducted by the Military Engineers School.

Leadership training was provided to youth of the religious sector.

Certificates were awarded to more than 70 women who completed a diploma course in political empowerment.

Participation took place in the First Inter-Provincial Meeting on Religious Freedom.

A visit was made to a senior-care home, where activities were shared with 100 elderly persons in vulnerable conditions.

SAN JUAN DE RIOSECO

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

2022

2023

MADRID

The Day of Religious Freedom was commemorated, and the assistance protocol for the religious sector was presented.

SOACHA

A mechanism was created to allow the religious sector to use public spaces without cost.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Hummingbird watching at the Enchanted Garden, San Francisco – Cundinamarca"

MOSQUERA

The "Churches Plan" was created, a security strategy developed with the Secretariat of Security, National Police, intelligence services, security managers, and the religious sector to strengthen protection measures, including improved surveillance cameras, plain-clothes officers, and patrol operations.

CAJICÁ

Road maintenance and lighting improvements were carried out in areas surrounding several religious entities.

FUNZA

The book Religious Freedom Is Everything Except Religious was presented in the Congress of the Republic, and recognition was given highlighting the role of women as religious leaders.

CHÍA

An interreligious academic meeting was held to provide training for religious leaders, with the workshop titled Entrepreneurship and Business Models.

2023

2023

UBATÉ

A Provincial Meeting on Religious Freedom was held in the Province of Ubaté

SILVANIA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was formulated through Municipal Agreement 06 of 2023.

CAJICÁ

A booklet on the social contribution of religious entities and organizations was produced.

FUNZA

Participation took place in the Book Fair with the book Religious Freedom Is Everything Except Religious.

Participation also took place in a discussion on Religious Freedom organized by the Latin American Institute for Religious Freedom.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Cundinamarca, Route of Champions"

MADRID

Training on Religious Freedom was provided to media organizations.

PARATEBUENO

2023

The Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

FACATATIVÁ

A provincial meeting on Religious Freedom was held in Sabana de Occidente Province.

Institutions were coordinated to guarantee parking access during worship services and to include the religious sector in outreach programs for homeless populations.

MOSQUERA

2023

Religious Freedom was incorporated into the coexistence manuals of public and private educational institutions.

A second measurement of the social contribution of the religious sector to public expenditure was conducted.

The municipality received recognition from the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) for its outstanding implementation of policies protecting the right to Religious Freedom.

CAJICÁ

The First Provincial Meeting on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was held with more than 400 participants.

Participation took place in the radio program Cajicá Radio Internacional during the celebration of the Day of Religious Freedom.

VILLETA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

CHÍA

The First Regional Congress on Religious Freedom was held, becoming an important interreligious and academic space focused on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience.

It was organized by the Municipal Administration of Chía and the Nueva Granada Military University.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



Cundinamarca is one of the departments that produces the greatest quantity of lettuce of all varieties in the country.

CHÍA

2023

In order to promote respect for different beliefs, workshops were held in schools, universities, companies, community organizations, and the general public on the following topics:

- School coexistence models based on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Conscience.
- Community integration for the management of social entrepreneurship projects based on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Conscience.
- University pastoral ministry as a setting for the recognition of human dignity based on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Conscience.
- Team empowerment as an approach to effective organizational performance based on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Conscience.

A total of 494 people were trained.

SAN BERNARDO

2023

The formal signing of the Agreement for Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was held in the municipality of San Bernardo, Cundinamarca, entitled "Religious Freedom is Unity, Not Discrimination," with the participation of community leaders, school principals, teachers, representatives of the Government of Cundinamarca, and the Municipal Mayor.

CHÍA

An interreligious academic meeting was held to train religious leaders, during which the book Religious Freedom Is Everything Except Religious was promoted.

CAJICÁ

Police accompaniment was requested for security at the exit of places of worship during late hours of the night.

FUNZA

Participation took place in the first provincial meeting of Tequendama, with 160 participants.

Training on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was provided to officials and contractors of the Municipal Administration of Funza.

Participation also took place in the International Forum on Social Dialogue for Equality and Human Rights.

CUNDINAMARCA

NIDO DEL CÓNDOR



"Tominé Reservoir, Guatavita – Cundinamarca"

2023

EL COLEGIO

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted.

VIOTÁ

The Provincial Meeting on Religious Freedom of the Tequendama Province was held.

MOSQUERA

Together with the Secretariat of Social Development and the Municipal Religious Freedom Liaison, recognition was received for the valuable contribution of the religious sector to mental health.

A diploma program in project management for the religious sector was promoted in cooperation with ESAP.

2023

CHÍA

Experiential workshops were held for the general population to strengthen the following topics:

- Transformational leadership.
- Defense of cultural identity and family commitment.
- Vocation, freedom, and community management.
- Promotion of personal talents.

A total of 502 people v d.

CUNDINAMARCA

Se realizó el encuentro provincial de Libertad Religiosa en la Provincia de Sumapaz.

FUSAGASUGÁ

The reformulation of the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom 2023–2033 was approved, and the Second Provincial Meeting on Religious Freedom was held.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"Jaime Duque Park, Tocancipá – Cundinamarca"

MOSQUERA

2023

The Pact for Religious Freedom was celebrated between community organizations and residential associations, and the security network for religious leaders was launched.

CHÍA

The Directorate of Ethnic, Racial, Religious, and Post-Conflict Affairs led the First Regional Congress on Religious Freedom in the municipality of Chía, consolidating an important interreligious and academic space focused on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience.

The event was organized by the Municipal Administration of Chía and the Nueva Granada Military University.

During the congress, recognition was given to women leaders of religious entities, and certificates of recognition were presented to the members of the Municipal Roundtable on Religious Freedom.

A total of 228 people participated.

FUNZA

2023

Participation took place in the academic forum "A Commitment from Research" at the University of Caldas.

Participation also took place in the Provincial Meeting on Religious Freedom of Sabana de Occidente.

During the pandemic, 13,000 food packages were delivered to the religious sector.

With the support of 70 volunteers, the book Religious Freedom Is Everything Except Religious was prepared and later recognized by the Ministry of the Interior.

A service line for cases of religious discrimination was created.

SIBATÉ

The Provincial Meeting on Religious Freedom of the Soacha Province was held jointly with the municipality of Sibaté.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"View of flower greenhouses in Suesca, Cundinamarca"

VILLETA

From the Territorial Planning Council, the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was proposed for the current administrative term.

SILVANIA

Guidelines for cooperation on Religious Freedom were established through Municipal Agreement 01 of 2024.

MOSQUERA

The action plan for the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was implemented with a multi-thematic approach.

2024

2024

CUNDINAMARCA

Eight draft agreements establishing guidelines for interreligious cooperation were submitted to the municipal councils of Cajicá, Facatativá, Tabio, Silvania, Mosquera, Villeta, Guasca, and Funza.

FUNZA

Participation took place in the program Religious Freedom Colombia on Canal del Congreso, with the municipality of Funza, Cundinamarca.

CUNDINAMARCA

NEST OF THE CONDOR



"El Frailejonal" Forest Reserve, Machetá – Cundinamarca

CHÍA

The Municipal Development Plan 2024–2027 of Chía was approved, promoting the inclusion of the implementation of the National System for Religious Freedom (SINALIBREC), the implementation of Article XV of Decree 922 of 2023, and the creation of the Project Bank for Cooperation on Religious Freedom.
As a result, the budget allocated to Religious Freedom in the municipality of Chía increased by 150% compared to the previous four-year period, rising from 400,000,000 Colombian pesos in 2020–2023 to 1,000,000,000 Colombian pesos for the current term.

2024







CAPITAL DISTRICT (BOGOTÁ, D.C.)

Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, located in the Andean region, has a temperate mountain climate with temperatures ranging from 9°C to 19°C. Notable sites include the historic center of La Candelaria and Monserrate. Urban fauna includes hummingbirds, sparrows, and thrushes, along with butterflies and small mammals. The flora is characterized by eucalyptus, cypress, and pine trees, as well as a wide variety of ornamental plants. Bogotá offers a unique experience of culture, art, and nature in Colombia (Martínez, 2019).

As of 2024, the capital of Colombia has 1,338 entities from the religious sector that have been characterized. Religious pluralism is classified as follows: 87.84% belong to non-Catholic Christian denominations, while 9.46% identify as Catholic,, 0.45% Muslim, 0.90% Jewish, 0.45% belong to Eastern beliefs, and 0.90% correspond to other confessions or spiritual traditions. Regarding the socioeconomic level of respondents, 48% live in stratum 3, 27% in stratum 4, 19% in stratum 2, 5% in stratum 5, and 1% in stratum 1 (Power BI Report, n.d.).

CAPITAL DISTRICT

THE ATHENS OF SOUTH AMERICA



Bogotá, a center of thought, education, and culture, has earned the name "The Athens of South America." This nickname highlights the importance of the city as a hub of knowledge and culture in the region (Salazar, 2021).

View of Bogotá, Colombia.

2014

BOGOTÁ

The first forum on Religious Freedom was held, promoted by the District Secretariat c Government.

2015

BOGOTÁ

The First Diploma Program in Social and Community Action was conducted, aimed at religious leaders, with the participation of the District Secretariat of Government and the National University.

2016

BOGOTÁ

This chapter on rights was incorporated into the public agenda within the structure and functions of the District Secretariat of Government through District Agreement 637 of 2016.

The Subdirectorate of Religious Affairs and Freedom of Religion and Conscience was created as a governmental office to manage issues related to this right, through District Decree 411 of 2016.

Local Religious Freedom Committees were established in Kennedy.

2018

BOGOTÁ

The District Public Policy on Freedom of Religion, Worship, and Conscience for the Capital District was adopted through District Decree 093 of February 12, 2018, with validity from 2018 to 2028.

Local Religious Freedom Committees were established in Usme, Bosa, and Engativá.

2019

BOGOTÁ

Local Religious Freedom Committees were established in Santa Fe, San Cristóbal, Fontibón, Barrios Unidos, Teusaquillo, Los Mártires, Rafael Uribe, La Candelaria, and Puente Aranda.

CAPITAL DISTRICT

THE ATHENS OF SOUTH AMERICA



Virgilio Barco Library, Bogotá.

2017

BOGOTÁ

The District Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

Local Religious Freedom Committees were established in Bosa and Kennedy.

2018

BOGOTÁ

The District Public Policy on Fundamental Freedoms of Religion, Worship, and Conscience for the Capital District was adopted through District Decree 093 of February 12, 2018, and was in effect from 2018 to 2028.

Local religious freedom committees were established in Usme, Bosa, and Engativá.

The Interreligious Movement in Support of Children was activated.

2019

BOGOTÁ

Local Religious Freedom Committees were established in Usaquén, Santa Fe, San Cristóbal, Fontibón, Barrios Unidos, Teusaquillo, Los Mártires, Rafael Uribe, La Candelaria, and Puente Aranda.
The Action Plan of the Public Policy was issued through the district CONPES document.

The District Forum on Religious Freedom was reactivated, with the requirement that it be held annually from that year onward.

The first district commemoration of the International Day in memory of victims of violent acts motivated by religion or belief was held.

The Religious Sector Business Fair "Bogotá + Valor" was organized.

CAPITAL DISTRICT

THE ATHENS OF SOUTH AMERICA



Downtown Bogotá.

2020

BOGOTÁ

Local Religious Freedom Committees were established in Tunjuelito and Sumapaz.
The campaigns #FreeToBelieve and #StrongerThanWhatDividesUs were launched to promote Religious Freedom.

The Strategy for the Reopening of Places of Worship in Bogotá was developed during the pandemic and post-pandemic context.

Awareness activities on Religious Freedom began with the media, police authorities, and public servants.

2021

BOGOTÁ

By the end of the year, Local Religious Freedom Committees had been created in all localities of Bogotá, with committees installed and operating in 19 of them.

The Route for Promotion and Protection of the Fundamental Rights to Religion, Worship, and Conscience was activated.

Local Forums on Religious Freedom were initiated.

Research was conducted through forums, focus groups, and surveys on the perception of Religious Freedom in Bogotá.

Annual diploma programs on Religious Freedom were launched, covering various related topics. The Interfaith Network for the Environment was established.

Local Employment and Entrepreneurship Fairs for the Religious Sector were activated.

DISTRITO CAPITAL

THE ATHENS OF SOUTH AMERICA



José Celestino Mutis Botanical Garden, Bogotá.

BOGOTÁ

2022

The governmental report on the quantification of the social, psychological, and spiritual contribution of the religious sector in Bogotá was delivered.

The radio program "Believe in Freedom" was launched.

The Humanitarian Assistance Network of the Religious Sector was established, including the Serve Network and the Employment and Entrepreneurship Network of the Religious Sector of Bogotá.

Awareness activities were carried out on the creation of neutral places of worship in the city, or multifaith worship spaces.

Seven district-level dialogues with the religious sector were held for the construction of the National Development Plan.

2023

BOGOTÁ

The book Empirical Inquiry on the Religious Phenomenon in Bogotá was published.

The Interfaith Network for Older Adults was established.

Special Quality Standards were issued for Worship Services in Bogotá, in accordance with the Territorial Planning Plan.

BOGOTÁ

Following the Action Plan of the Public Policy, work continued on consolidating various instruments that constitute the baseline of the religious phenomenon in Bogotá. Among these are the academic publication on the state of Religious Freedom in Bogotá, the databases of the Power BI report on the Religious Phenomenon in the city according to its leaders, as well as the map showing the location of places of worship in Bogotá.

DISTRITO CAPITAL

THE ATHENS OF SOUTH AMERICA



National Capitol Building in downtown Bogotá.

BOGOTÁ

The social, psychological, and spiritual contribution of the religious sector in Bogotá was quantified:

- 1.8 trillion pesos in annual savings for Bogotá.
- 1.7 million monthly service actions.
- 156 billion pesos in monthly savings for Bogotá.

BOGOTÁ

Within the framework of the implementation of the Public Policy, five district forums on Religious Freedom were held consecutively, along with four diploma courses on various topics related to this fundamental right

BOGOTÁ

233.307 people benefited through the actions implemented under the Public Policy, including forums, diploma courses, awareness campaigns, events, fairs, meetings, research activities, among others.

2023







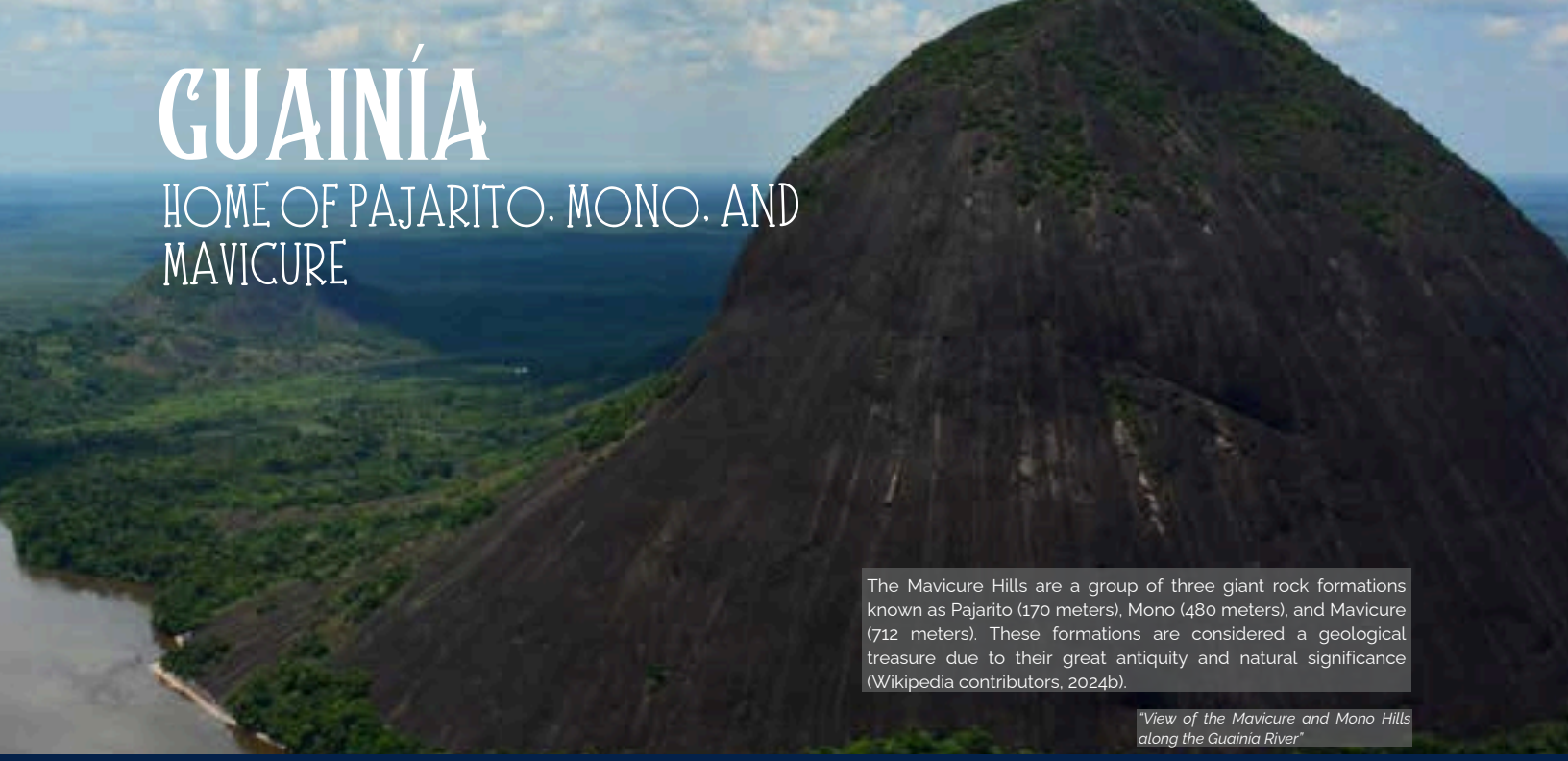
GUAINÍA

Guainía, located in the Amazon region of Colombia, has a tropical climate with high humidity throughout the year. River and jungle excursions allow visitors to observe diverse wildlife, including exotic birds and mammals. In the department of Guainía, the Puinawai National Natural Reserve stands out for its unique ecosystems and rich biodiversity. The landscapes include the Guainía and Atabapo rivers, which are suitable for fishing and for observing pink river dolphins. Wildlife includes dolphins, jaguars, and manatees, while the flora features species such as rubber trees, cedar, and ceiba. Guainía offers pristine natural environments and opportunities for adventure in the Amazon rainforest, making it a destination for ecotourism and remote exploration (Martínez, 2019).

In the department of Guainía, there are a total of 18 religious and educational actors, of which 8 are legally recognized religious entities and 10 are faith-based organizations. Despite the absence of specific media outlets for the dissemination of content related to Religious Freedom, the department has one religious educational institution that contributes to the formation and development of the community (Y. Jiménez Garzón, personal communication, 2024).

GUAINÍA

HOME OF PAJARITO, MONO, AND MAVICURE



The Mavicure Hills are a group of three giant rock formations known as Pajarito (170 meters), Mono (480 meters), and Mavicure (712 meters). These formations are considered a geological treasure due to their great antiquity and natural significance (Wikipedia contributors, 2024b).

"View of the Mavicure and Mono Hills along the Guainía River"

GUAINÍA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted through Decree No. 703 of 2019 (December 9, 2019).

The Departmental Roundtable of the Religious Sector was created through Decree No. 669 of 2019 (October 8, 2019).

2019

2024

GUAINÍA

Participation took place in the working sessions for the formulation of the Departmental Development Plan, with the aim of incorporating proposals into the department's Development Plan, on April 16 and 17, 2024.









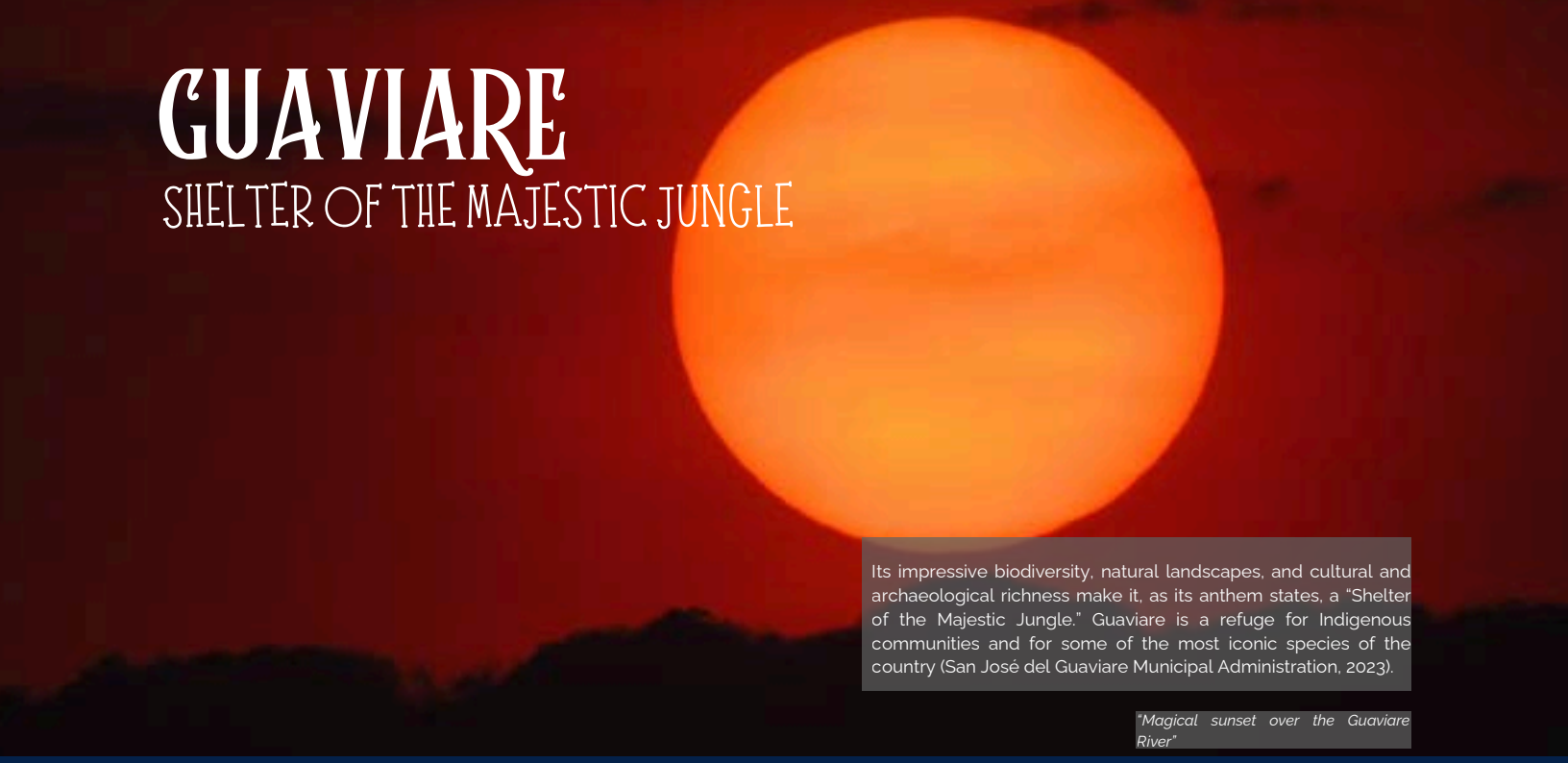
GUAVIARE

Guaviare, located in the Amazon region of Colombia, has a tropical climate and high biodiversity. River and jungle excursions allow for the observation of wildlife, including exotic birds and mammals. The Serranía de La Lindosa stands out for its rock formations and ancient rock paintings. The Guaviare and Inírida rivers offer opportunities for fishing and observing pink river dolphins. Guaviare is ideal for ecotourism and remote exploration in the Amazon rainforest (Martínez, 2019).

In the department of Guaviare, 20 religious entities have been identified, of which 18 have legal status. In addition, there are three faith-based organizations and one educational institution. These entities play a crucial role in the spiritual and educational life of the region, promoting values and providing support to the community (E. Useche Niño, personal communication, 2024).

GUAVIARE

SHELTER OF THE MAJESTIC JUNGLE



Its impressive biodiversity, natural landscapes, and cultural and archaeological richness make it, as its anthem states, a "Shelter of the Majestic Jungle." Guaviare is a refuge for Indigenous communities and for some of the most iconic species of the country (San José del Guaviare Municipal Administration, 2023).

"Magical sunset over the Guaviare River"

2016

GUAVIARE

The first forum on Religious Freedom was held, highlighting the importance of the religious sector within the community.

2017

GUAVIARE

The National Day of Religious Freedom was celebrated for the first time.

2018

SAN JOSÉ DE GUAVIARE

Meetings were held with the departmental and municipal Secretariats of Government with the purpose of creating Committees on Religious Freedom.

The Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom of the municipality of San José del Guaviare was created through a municipal agreement.

2019

RETORNO

The Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom in the municipality of El Retorno, Guaviare, was created through a municipal agreement.

2020

GUAVIARE

The departmental government and the religious sector worked jointly to assist different populations with food aid and spiritual support during the pandemic crisis.

2021

GUAVIARE

The Departmental Roundtable on Religious Freedom was created through Decree No. 143 of the department of Guaviare.

GUAVIARE

SHELTER OF THE MAJESTIC JUNGLE



"View inside one of the natural tunnels of Guaviare"

GUAVIARE

A forum on Religious Freedom was held with the participation of religious entities and the Governor.

The religious sector intervened regarding a violation of Religious Freedom within the Territorial Land-Use Plan, requesting the removal of restrictions affecting areas designated for religious worship.

GUAVIARE

The restriction on areas designated for worship that affected Religious Freedom in the Territorial Land-Use Plan was removed, and religious worship was included within the category of basic social services.

2022

2023

2024

GUAVIARE

Proposals related to Religious Freedom were included in municipal and departmental development plans.









HUILA

Huila, located in the Andean region of Colombia, features mountainous landscapes and clear rivers, with a climate that ranges from temperate to warm. The Tatacoa Desert stands out as an important site for astronomical observation. Other destinations include Cueva de los Guácharos National Natural Park and San Agustín, famous for its archaeological park. The landscapes include canyons, valleys, and waterfalls. The fauna includes condors, hummingbirds, spectacled bears, and howler monkeys, while the flora is characterized by cloud forests and coffee plantations. Huila is an ideal destination for ecotourism and exploration in the Colombian Andean region (Martínez, 2019).

In 2020, the characterization process began in the municipality of Neiva through virtual means due to the pandemic. During this process, 123 entities were registered, of which 86 are Christian, 36 Catholic, and 1 Anglican Catholic. During worship services held from Monday to Saturday, a total attendance of 18,720 people was recorded, while on Sundays the number of participants is even higher, reaching an estimated total of 47,560 believers attending religious congregations. Finally, it was reported that 4% of the entities do not have legal status (Mayor's Office of Neiva, n.d.).

HUILA
LUMINOUS MOUNTAIN



It is said that the name comes from the "snow-capped mountain of Huila," referring to Nevado del Huila, whose name in the indigenous language means "Luminous Mountain." The snow that covers its peak produces a remarkable brightness when it comes into contact with the sun (Ortiz, 2015).

Central mountain range view from Huila.

GIGANTE

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 135 of 2016.

PITALITO

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 496 of 2017.

NEIVA

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 0510 of 2016.

RIVERA

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 030 of 2017.

2016

2017

2018

2019

NEIVA

The Day of Religious Freedom was established on July 4 through Agreement 019 of 2018.

GARZÓN

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 058 of 2019.

HUILA
LUMINOUS MOUNTAIN



Red hills in the Tatacoa Desert, Huila, Colombia.

ALGECIRAS

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 080 of 2020.

BARAYA

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Agreement 016 of 2020.

NEIVA

Religious Freedom was included in the 2020–2023 Development Plan. The internal regulations of the Committee for Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship were adopted through Resolution 119 of 2020.

The Office of Religious Affairs was created within the modernization of the organizational structure of the Mayor's Office of Neiva through Decree 0877 of 2020.

The Religious Freedom Committee began its operations through Resolution 052 of 2020.

GARZÓN

The Internal Regulations of the Religious Freedom Committee were adopted through Decree 117 of 2020.

2020

2021

TELLO

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 009 of 2021.

CAMPOALEGRE

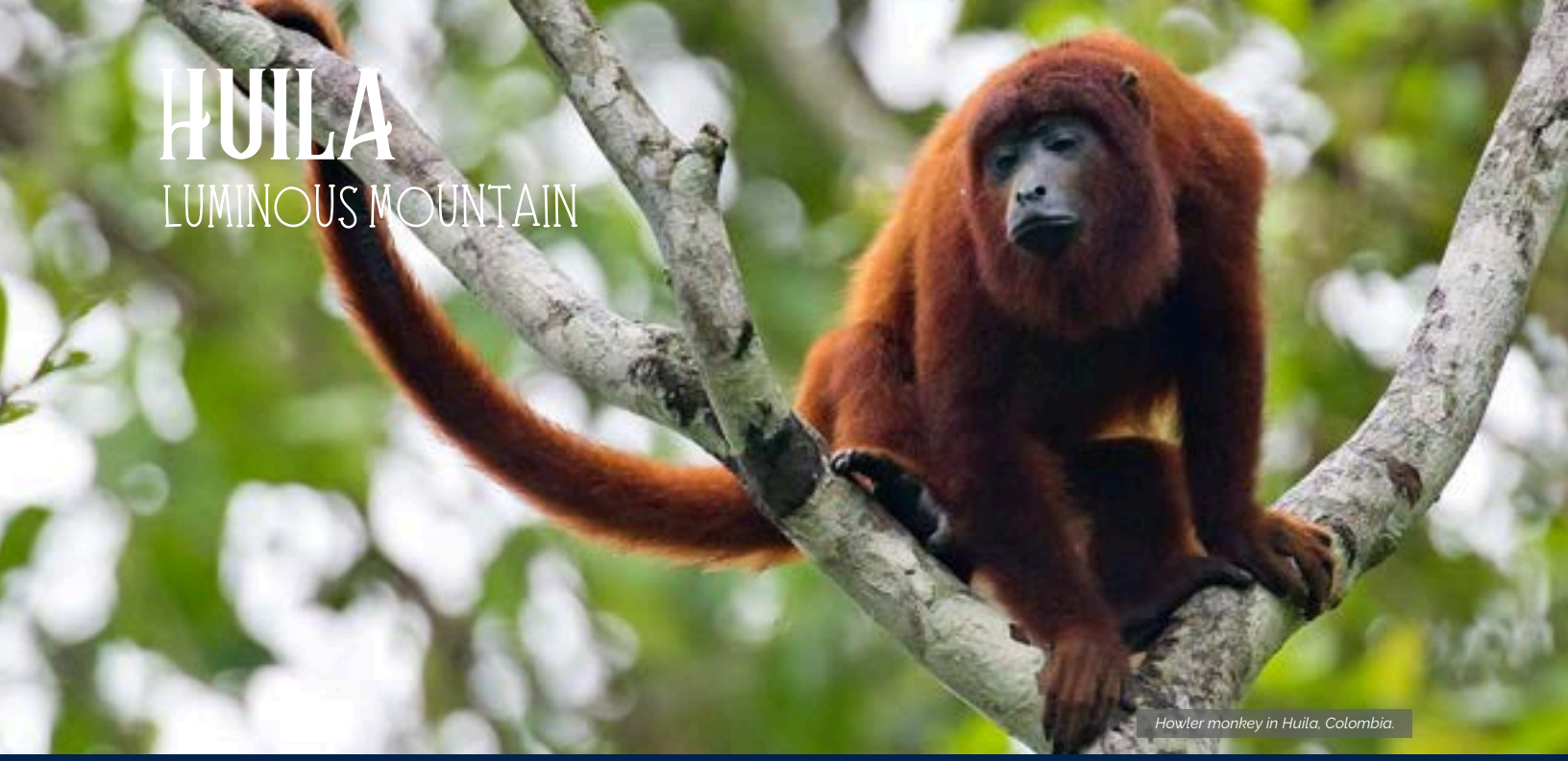
The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 002 of 2021.

SAN AGUSTÍN

The Religious Freedom Committee was created through Decree 031 of 2021.

HUILA

LUMINOUS MOUNTAIN



Howler monkey in Huila, Colombia.

ALGECIRAS

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted through Agreement 0035 of 2022.

GIGANTE

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted through Agreement 004 of 2022.

NEIVA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted in Neiva through Decree 0460 of 2022.

Twelve proposals from the religious sector were incorporated into the Territorial Land-Use Plan project.

The Virtual Departmental Forum on Religious Freedom was held, through which the religious sector submitted proposals to the National Development Plan 2022–2026, on October 14, 2022.

2022

2023

GARZÓN

The Public Policy on Fundamental Freedoms of Religion, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted through Agreement 018 of 2023.

HUILA

The Public Policy on Fundamental Freedoms of Religion, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience for the department of Huila was adopted through Ordinance 016 of 2023.

BARAYA

The formation of the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship and Conscience was updated through Agreement 05 of 2023.

TIMANÁ

The Public Policy on Fundamental Freedoms of Religion, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted through Agreement 024 of 2023.

TERUEL

The Committee on Religious Freedom was created through Decree 033 of 2023.

HUILA
LUMINOUS MOUNTAIN



"Birdwatching in Huila"

HUILA

Proposals from the religious sector were incorporated into the 2024–2027 Development Plan project in the municipalities of Neiva, Rivera, Gigante, Tello, Campoalegre, Teruel, Garzón, Pitalito, Agrado, La Argentina, and La Plata.

2024







LA GUAJIRA

La Guajira, located in the Caribbean region of Colombia, is known for its desert landscapes and the culture of the Wayuu people. Its climate is arid and warm, with high temperatures and scarce rainfall. Notable destinations include Cabo de la Vela, known for kitesurfing, Macuira National Natural Park, and Punta Gallinas. The landscapes include desert areas, pristine beaches, and Wayuu markets. Wildlife includes flamingos, pelicans, and deer, while the flora is characterized by cacti and algarrobo trees. La Guajira is ideal for ecotourism and adventure along the Colombian Caribbean coast (Martínez, 2019).

In the capital city, Riohacha, no characterization process of the religious sector has been carried out; therefore, there are no official figures regarding religious entities with legal status. However, five Catholic-oriented religious schools are identified: Divina Pastora School, Sagrado Corazón de Jesús School, Sagrada Familia School, Nuestra Señora de los Remedios School, and Nuestra Señora de Fátima School (Own research source, 2024).

On the other hand, the Public Registry indicates that there are six religious entities in the department (Public Registry of Religious Entities, 2023).

LA GUAJIRA
OUR LAND



In the Wayuunaiki language, wajira means "our land," although today "La Guajira" is also known as the birthplace of vallenato music.

"Hammocks on a beach at sunset in La Guajira, Colombia"

RIOHACHA

The first Interreligious Roundtable was established in the District of Riohacha.

RIOHACHA

For the first time, Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship were included in the Riohacha's Development Plan.

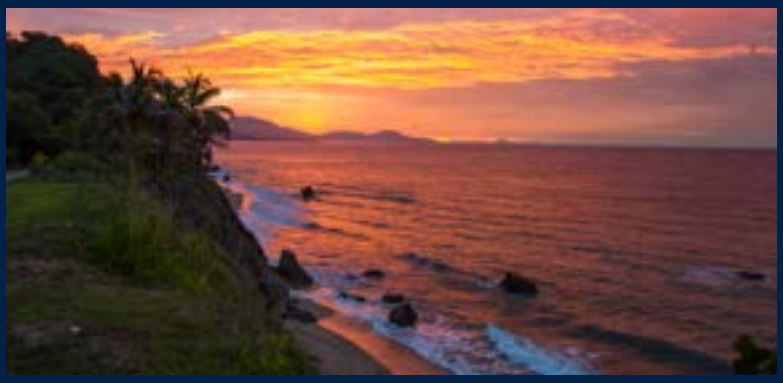
MAICAO

The religious sector was included in the Development Plan.

2022

2023



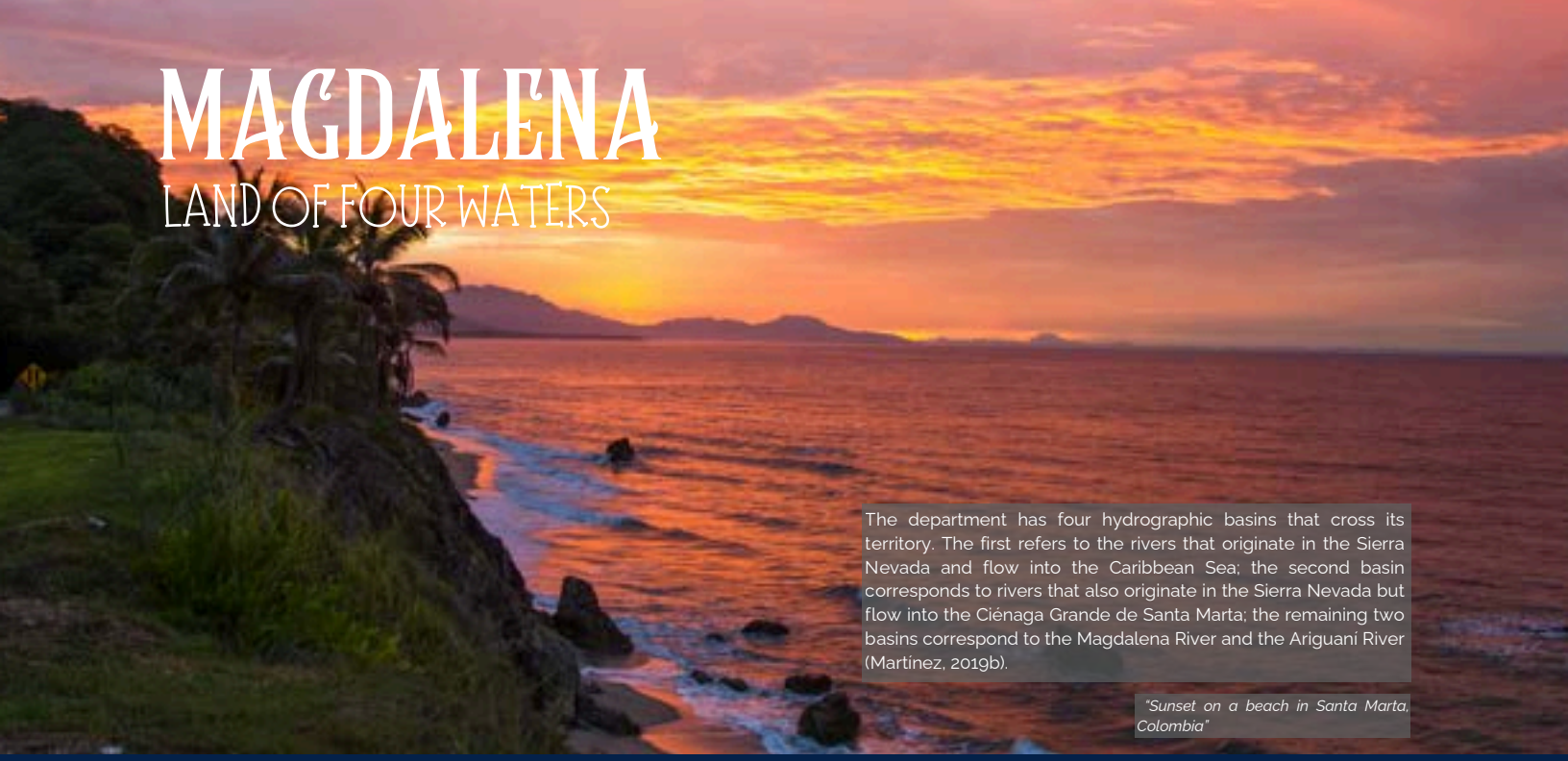




MAGDALENA

Magdalena, located in the Caribbean region of Colombia, is known for its beaches, colonial history, and biodiversity. It has a tropical climate with a rainy season between May and November. Santa Marta, with its historic center and Tayrona National Natural Park, is one of the main destinations. Other notable places include the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the Magdalena River. The landscapes include beaches, mangroves, mountains, and jungles. Wildlife includes toucans, jaguars, and monkeys, while the flora is characterized by palms and orchids. Magdalena is ideal for coastal and nature tourism (Martínez, 2019).

In the city of Santa Marta, 423 churches of different denominations are legally established (H. Pacheco Barrios, personal communication, 2024). Additionally, in 2022 the department of Magdalena participated in the characterization and territorial mapping carried out by the Ministry of the Interior and UNDP, with the participation of 62 religious entities and organizations from the municipalities of Aracataca, Ariguaní, Ciénaga, Guamal, Pivijay, Plato, Puebloviejo, Santa Ana, Santa Marta, Sitionuevo, and Zona Bananera.
These initiatives provided cross-cutting benefits to approximately 21,378 inhabitants (Municipality of Itagüí, 2023).

MAGDALENA
LAND OF FOUR WATERS



The department has four hydrographic basins that cross its territory. The first refers to the rivers that originate in the Sierra Nevada and flow into the Caribbean Sea; the second basin corresponds to rivers that also originate in the Sierra Nevada but flow into the Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta; the remaining two basins correspond to the Magdalena River and the Ariguaní River (Martínez, 2019b).

"Sunset on a beach in Santa Marta, Colombia"

2015 — FUNDACIÓN

A programmatic agreement was signed with the mayoral candidate, in which, for the first time, the proposal of the MIRA Party regarding Religious Freedom was presented.

2016 — SANTA MARTA

The Public Policy guaranteeing the right to Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted through Agreement 016 of November 29, 2016.

2017 — CIÉNAGA

Official procedures began before the municipal administration through the submission of a formal request for the creation of the Committee on Religious Freedom.
In the same year, a response was obtained, and work began on the identification and assessment of religious entities in the municipality.

2018 — SANTA MARTA

The Religious Freedom Liaison was established in the District of Santa Marta.

The importance of this liaison was recognized, and permanent dialogue within the district was proposed.

Several requests were submitted to Migration Colombia to guarantee respectful treatment, security, and support for Venezuelan migrants and others within the religious sector.

MAGDALENA
LAND OF FOUR WATERS



"City Hall, Santa Marta, Colombia"

2019

CIÉNAGA

On June 27, the first participation roundtable on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was held, with the purpose of highlighting the importance of strengthening Religious Freedom in the territory.

On July 4, the National Day of Religious Freedom was commemorated with the forum "Regulations on Religious Freedom, Challenges and Benefits."

Three strategic actions and one product goal related to Religious Freedom were included in the Development Plan, despite the absence of a programmatic agreement.

2020

MAGDALENA

Departmental Ordinance 098 of August 22 was approved, adopting the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience.

FUNDACIÓN

A programmatic agreement was signed with the mayoral candidate, establishing the commitment to implement actions related to Religious Freedom during the 2020–2023 administration.

2021

PIVIJAY

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted through Decree 001 signed by Mayor Roberto Mario Pérez Varela.

CIÉNAGA

Work sessions were initiated for the formulation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience for the municipality of Ciénaga.
In the same year, a response was obtained, and work began on the identification and assessment of religious entities in the municipality.

SANTA MARTA

On December 1, a public event was held to present Agreement 007 of November 2, 2021, by which the Public Policy was updated, expanded, and modified in the tourist, cultural, and historic district of Santa Marta.

MAGDALENA
LAND OF FOUR WATERS



"Canoe loaded with pineapples on the Magdalena River"

EL BANCO

On February 22, the adoption of the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was presented, established by Decree 131 of November 2021.
The decree provides for the development of a municipal action plan for the implementation of the policy in the municipality of El Banco, Magdalena.

CIÉNAGA

Working groups continued for the formulation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience.

PIVIJAY

On July 1, 2022, the Office of Religious Affairs, or Religious Freedom Liaison, was officially opened at the municipal administration building, with the presence of the Mayor.

2022

2022

CIÉNAGA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was adopted through Municipal Agreement No. 013 of September 10, 2022.

FUNDACIÓN

The Office of Religious Freedom was created in July 2022.

The Religious Freedom Liaison was created in August 2022.

Working sessions were held with the religious sector within the framework of the formulation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom of the municipality of Fundación on December 20, 2022.

MAGDALENA
LAND OF FOUR WATERS



"Dwelling of the Kogui Indigenous people in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia"

2023

CIÉNAGA

A programmatic agreement including Religious Freedom was signed with the mayoral candidate, who later won the local elections.

For the first time, the municipality received the visit of the National Director of Religious Affairs, Dr. Amelia Cotes.
During the visit, the creation of the first Rural Interreligious Network of Colombia was announced.

A diploma program on Human Rights, Leadership for Peace, and Religious Freedom was conducted by INFOTEP Higher Education Institution, promoted by the municipal ideological delegate.

FUNDACIÓN

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was debated and approved by the Municipal Council through Municipal Agreement No. 060323 of February 2, 2023.

The National Day of Religious Freedom was celebrated on July 4, 2023.

Leaders of the religious sector met with the municipal administration to create the Committee on Religious Freedom.

The Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was created through Decree 539 of August 28, 2023.
The decree was publicly presented

The Committee was formally installed, and its internal regulations were approved through Resolution No. 15844 of December 13, 2023.

2024

EL BANCO

On February 15, participation took place in a working session of the Territorial Planning Council, where a proposal was submitted to the Planning Secretariat to include in the draft Development Plan a budget allocation for the religious sector to strengthen the Public Policy.

SANTA MARTA

On February 17, 2024, the Religious Freedom Liaison was appointed in accordance with the provisions of the existing programmatic agreement.

The inclusion of the religious sector in the District Territorial Planning Council was achieved

MAGDALENA
LAND OF FOUR WATERS



"Fishing boat, Santa Marta, Colombia"

FUNDACIÓN

Participation took place in thematic working sessions for the formulation of the Municipal and Departmental Development Plans, where proposals from the religious sector were included.

A meeting was held with the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom and the Municipal Religious Freedom Liaison for the presentation of the 2024 action plan.

2024

CIÉNAGA

For the first time in the history of Ciénaga, the Mayor appointed a Religious Freedom Liaison.

For the first time, a Territorial Planning Council member representing the interreligious sector of the municipality was designated.

The Acting Director of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior visited the municipality to guide the inclusion of actions in favor of the religious sector within the Territorial Development Plan.

Actions in favor of Religious Freedom were included in the Municipal Development Plan







META

Meta, located in the Orinoquía region of Colombia, is known for its plains, rivers, and biodiversity. Its climate is tropical, with a rainy season from April to October and a dry season during the remainder of the year. La Macarena National Natural Park stands out, famous for Caño Cristales and its unique landscapes. Another important site Villavicencio, the capital of the department, recognized for its llanero music and adventure activities. The fauna includes jaguars, capybaras, and migratory birds, while the flora is characterized by gallery forests and palm groves (Martínez, 2019).

By 2022, a total of 94 faith-based entities and organizations were identified in the municipalities of Acacías, Cabuyaro, Castilla Nueva, Cubarral, Cumaral, El Calvario, El Castillo, El Dorado, Fuentedeoro, Granada, Guamal, Mapiripán, Mesetas, Puerto Concordia, Puerto Gaitán, Puerto Lleras, Puerto López, Puerto Rico, Restrepo, San Juan de Arama, San Juanito, Uribe, Villavicencio, and Vistahermosa, through a process carried out by the Ministry of the Interior and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
This process documented the actions carried out by the religious sector in its extensive social work, involving approximately 5,952 volunteers and benefiting 25,557 people (Mayor's Office of Itagüí, 2023).

META

WHERE THE BLUE OF THE SKY MEETS THE LAND



"...Where the blue of the sky blends with your land in the vast distance. At dawn, the sun kisses you, and from the marsh to the moriche palm groves the herons cut through the air, while the breeze whispering through the palm trees carries a song of freedom..."
Lyrics from the song Ay mi llanura by Arnulfo Briceño, considered the second anthem of the department of Meta (AY MI LLANURA – Arnulfo Briceño – LETRAS.COM, n.d.).

"Sunrise on the Guacavía River, Cumaral – Meta"

2016

META

call was issued by the Ministry of the Interior, gathering the religious sector to formulate the Public Policy on Religious Freedom

2017

META

A workshop was held for the development of the Action Plan of the Departmental Board of Religious Affairs, DDHH, DIH, and Peace.
[Interpreter Note: DDHH = Human Rights; DIH = International Humanitarian Law.]

META

Ordinance No. 976 of 2018 was issued, through which the Territorial Council for Peace, Reconciliation, and Coexistence of the department of Meta was created.

Decree 373 of 2018 was issued, through which the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted

Ordinance 1026 of 2018 was issued, adopting the Public Policy on Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, and Peace of the department of Meta, which includes Chapter 5: Religious Affairs, Coexistence, and Freedom of Worship.

2018

2019

META

The second session of the Departmental Council of Religious Affairs was held.

2020

META

On August 22, the International Day in Commemoration of the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief was observed.

Nine training sessions were conducted in municipalities of the department on the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, as well as on the formation and functions of the Committee on Religious Affairs.

META

WHERE THE BLUE OF THE SKY MEETS THE LAND



"Sighting of capybaras along the banks of the Meta River"

2021

META

The creation of Religious Affairs Councils was achieved in 17 municipalities.

On July 4, 2021, the National Day of Religious Freedom was observed with a forum involving women from the religious sector as social leaders, with the participation of national and international guests and a virtual connection of more than 1,520 people, reaching 2,834 views. The event was broadcast in seven countries, recognizing the work carried out by women in the religious sector in the reconstruction of the social fabric.

2022

META

Actions were carried out that made possible the issuance of Ordinance 1145, through which the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted at the departmental level, and the Departmental Council of Religious Affairs was created.

Decree 390 of 2022 was issued, regulating the creation of the Departmental Council of Religious Affairs.

2023

META

On March 15, 2023, through Resolution 055 of 2023, the Departmental Council of Religious Affairs was formally established, with 17 municipal advisors on religious affairs representing the six subregions of Meta, 18 representatives of religious entities (Jews, Orthodox, Anglicans, Christians, Catholics, among others), social organizations related to religion, academia, and public entities, in compliance with the provisions of Ordinance 1145 of 2021 and Regulatory Decree 390 of 2022, with a total of 35 members.

META

WHERE THE BLUE OF THE SKY MEETS THE LAND



"Woman playing the harp, an emblematic instrument of the department of Meta"

META

On May 3, 2024, the first session of the Departmental Council of Religious Affairs was held, during which the guidelines were established for the creation of the 2024–2027 Four-Year Action Plan.

On May 2, the Governor of Meta submitted the preliminary version of the Government Action Plan of the Religious Affairs Unit within Subprogram 2.4.1, Public Policy and actions for the promotion and guarantee of Religious Freedom in Meta.

2024







NARIÑO

Nariño, located in southwestern Colombia, is distinguished by its geographic diversity, varied climate, and natural attractions such as La Cocha Lake and Galeras National Natural Park. Pasto, the capital city, is known for its colonial architecture and the Blacks and Whites Carnival, while Tumaco offers beaches and a rich seafood cuisine. The landscapes include mountains, valleys, cloud forests, and mangroves, with abundant fauna and flora (Martínez, 2019).

According to the Public Registry of Religious Entities of the Ministry of the Interior, the department of Nariño has 104 entities belonging to the religious sector, with presence in Pasto, Tumaco, Ipiales, Tangua, Policarpa, El Rosario, Linares, and La Unión. Of these entities, 58 identify as Catholic, one as Jewish, and one as Islamic (Public Registry of Religious Entities 2023.xlsm, n.d.), and Catholicism is composed of 85 parish communities located in 27 municipalities (Official Diocese of Pasto, n.d.).

NARIÑO
WHERE GALERAS BREATHES



"Named Galeras Volcano due to its resemblance to the galleys (galeras) used by Spanish conquerors along the Pacific coast by the Spanish conquerors, it is one of the most active volcanoes on the continent and is located only 9 kilometers from San Juan de Pasto, capital of Nariño.
Galeras Volcano | Tourist Information System of Nariño, n.d."

"Photograph of Galeras Volcano, Pasto, Colombia"

2016 — PASTO
Working groups were held on Religious Freedom with the Ministry of the Interior.

2018 — PASTO
The Religious Affairs Board was established.

2019 — TUMACO
The religious sector was characterized and mapped.

2020 — GUAITARILLA
The Religious Affairs Board was created.

SANDONÁ
Issues related to Religious Freedom were incorporated into the Development Plan, as well as the initiative for the establishment of the Religious Affairs Board.

LA CRUZ
The Board of Religious Affairs, Religious Freedom, Equality, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was established.

2021 — PASTO
The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted.

The Municipal Intersectoral Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

The characterization and mapping of the religious sector were presented

NARIÑO

WHERE GALERAS BREATHES



"La Cocha Lagoon, Nariño"

GUAITARILLA

Through the Religious Affairs Board, support was provided to the community in vulnerable situations.

SANDONÁ

Recognition was granted by the Mayor's Office for the contribution to strengthening the social fabric.

SAN PABLO

The Municipal Board of Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Beliefs was created.

SAPUYES

A diagnostic assessment of churches was carried out, along with actions for the strengthening of the religious sector.

PASTO

Intersectoral Boards were established for the adoption of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom.

2022

2023

GUAITARILLA

With the support of educational and training institutions, students were trained in topics related to Religious Freedom.

IPIALES

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted.

PASTO

Recognition was received for the dedicated work carried out by the religious sector.

BUESACO

Initial institutional engagements were conducted with the Mayor's Office to advance the programmatic agreement, including the creation of the Religious Affairs Board and the formation of the Intersectoral Committee.

SANDONÁ

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted.

TÚQUERRES

A programmatic agreement was established, including provisions related to Religious Freedom.

SAPUYES

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted, and the Forum on Religious Freedom was held in the Municipal Council.

NARIÑO

WHERE GALERAS BREATHES



"La Corota Island, Nariño"

BUESACO

Proposals from the religious sector were formally submitted to be included in the Municipal Development Plan.

GUAITARILLA

Proposals were presented to be incorporated into the Development Plan, and progress was made in the implementation of the Public Policy with the allocation of resources.

IPIALES

Proposals from the religious sector were submitted to be included in the Development Plan.

SANDONA

Proposals from the religious sector were submitted to be included in the Development Plan.

SAN PABLO

Proposals from the religious sector were submitted to be included in the Development Plan.

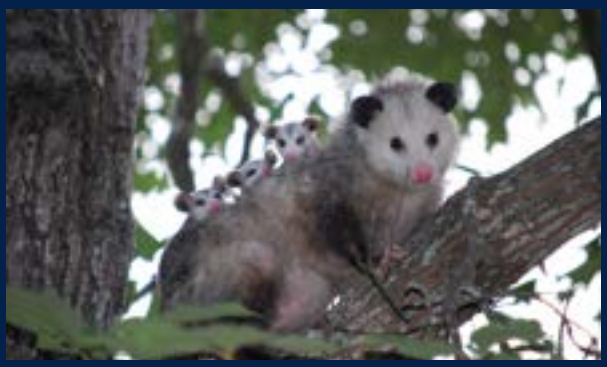
SAPUYES

Proposals from the religious sector were submitted to be included in the Development Plan.

TÚQUERRES

Proposals from the religious sector were submitted to be included in the Development Plan.

2024









NORTE DE SANTANDER

The department of Norte de Santander has a diverse geography, ranging from mountains to plains, with climates varying from temperate to warm. Notable places include Santurbán National Natural Park, known for hiking, and Catatumbo-Barí National Natural Park, recognized for its cloud forests. Cúcuta, the capital city, features colonial architecture and an active nightlife. Its fauna includes the Andean condor and the spectacled bear, while the flora is characterized by cloud forests and tropical dry forests (Martínez, 2019).

In the department of Norte de Santander, a total of 202 religious entities have been identified, including 139 churches, 2 associations of ministers of worship, 2 religious confessions, 32 denominations, 1 federation, and 27 unspecified entities. Within the Religious Pluralism of the department, the following groups were identified: Adventists, Baptists, Anglican Catholics, Orthodox Catholics, Roman Catholics, Old Catholics, Oneness Pentecostals, and Trinitarian Pentecostals (M. Álvarez, 2024).

NORTE DE SANTANDER

CRADLE OF GREAT COLOMBIA



"It is one of the symbols of greatest historical significance for the South American continent, as it is recognized as the birthplace of Gran Colombia. This historic event has made the region a territory of importance and reputation that has been transmitted and preserved from century to century (History | Your Destination Norte de Santander, n.d.)."

"Wildlife representative of Norte de Santander"

NORTE DE SANTANDER

Participation was made representing the non-Catholic religious sector to address the attendees and offer a prayer invoking God's blessing at the beginning of a new stage for the city.

A meeting convened by the Ministry of the Interior was attended in order to gather input for the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and to present the initiative.

Participation also took place in a meeting with the Minister of the Interior and more than 100 leaders of the religious sector of Norte de Santander to discuss the role of churches in the post-conflict period, within the framework of the Peace Agreement with the FARC.

Participation was made in a meeting convened by the Office of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior, in which the commitment of the Governor was secured, and five working groups with religious leaders were formed, where Religious Freedom was discussed. From this process, progress was made and leadership was strengthened.

CÚCUTA

The study process began to address the issue of Religious Freedom, with the purpose of promoting, supporting, and encouraging the mayoral candidate to advance the creation of the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom.

2015

2016

2017

CÚCUTA

The first departmental forum titled "Freedom of Worship in Colombia, Utopia or Reality" was held, in which Mayor César Rojas Ayala made public Decree 0396 of June 30, 2017, through which the Committee on Religious Freedom of the municipality of San José de Cúcuta was created and its organization and operation were established.

NORTE DE SANTANDER

CRADLE OF GREAT COLOMBIA



"Frailejón in the Santurban Páramo, Norte de Santander."

CÚCUTA

An initial open meeting was held, to which all religious leaders were invited.

Participation took place in a working session at the Governor's Office to carry out the presentation of Decree 437 of 2018, Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship.

A forum was held for the presentation of the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, addressed to students of the University of Pamplona, Villa del Rosario campus.

2018

2020

CÚCUTA

For the first time, the appointment of a liaison for the religious sector was achieved, working within the Mayor's Office, allowing participation and recognition as a sector in different public events.





PUTUMAYO

The department of Putumayo, located in southern Colombia and bordering Ecuador, is distinguished by its Amazon rainforest, abundant rivers, and ethnic diversity. It has a tropical climate with heavy rainfall throughout the year. Destinations such as La Paya National Natural Park and the Churumbelos Mountain Range offer opportunities for ecotourism and birdwatching. Mocoa, the capital city, is well known for its waterfalls and surrounding jungle. The fauna includes jaguars and pink river dolphins, while the flora is characterized by Amazonian trees such as rubber and ceiba. Putumayo is an ideal region for ecotourism and rainforest exploration (Martínez, 2019)

In Putumayo, 21 religious entities have been identified in the territory, of which 19 are non-Catholic Christian entities and 2 are Catholic entities belonging to the Diocese of Mocoa. These include Saint Paul the Apostle Cathedral and Saint Michael the Archangel Cathedral, with a historical presence in the region dating back to the colonial period.
The department has 141 educational institutions, of which only 39 have teachers specialized in religious education, out of a total of 3,488 trained teachers in the department. (Saint Michael the Archangel Cathedral • Diocese of Mocoa–Sibundoy, n.d.).

PUTUMAYO

SOURCE OF WATER



"Putumayo means 'source of water' in an indigenous language, in homage to its mighty river that flows into the Amazon River (ColHistoria, 2024)."

a group of macaws in the jungle of Putumayo.

PUTUMAYO

The Departmental Technical Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

2016






QUINDÍO

Quindío, located in the Andean region of Colombia, is known for being the epicenter of the country's Coffee Region. Its mild and pleasant climate, ranging between 18°C and 24°C, makes it ideal for coffee cultivation. Coffee farms offer guided tours where visitors learn about the cultivation process and can taste different varieties. Destinations such as the National Coffee Park and the towns of Salento and Filandia stand out for their colonial architecture. Its fauna includes hummingbirds, toucans, and sloths, while its flora is characterized by coffee plantations, cloud forests, and guadua bamboo (Martínez, 2019).

The mapping and identification of religious entities in the department of Quindío was carried out at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. During this process, information was collected on the number of religious entities, their activities, affiliated population, organizational structure, and other relevant aspects.

A total of 218 religious entities were identified in the department, all with Christian traditions, including Catholic and Protestant denominations, of which approximately 95% of the religious entities have legal status (UNDP, 2021).

QUINDÍO

LAND OF PIONEERS, MULETEERS, AND SUN

"Its natural wealth, with majestic sunrises, its coffee crops, its colorful streets, and its enterprising and kind families turned the department of Quindío into the land of pioneers, muleteers, and sun." (Hymn of the Department of Quindío, v. 1, n.d.)

"Coffee harvest, Quindío – Colombia"

2016

QUINDÍO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was formulated in the department of Quindío.

2017

QUINDÍO

The Forum on Religious Freedom was held, opening the way for the creation of Committees on Religious Freedom in the municipalities.

2018

QUINDÍO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was presented in several municipalities.

2019

QUINDÍO

Approval was obtained in the Assembly for the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom (Ordinance)

2020

QUINDÍO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was implemented in the municipalities of Quindío (delivery of humanitarian aid by the religious sector).

2021

QUINDÍO

Committees on Religious Freedom were created in the municipalities of Quindío through municipal agreements.

QUINDÍO

LAND OF PIONEERS, MULETEERS, AND SUN



"Colombian flag and wax palm in the Cocora Valley, Salento – Quindío"

QUINDÍO

The National Day of Religious Freedom was commemorated in the department of Quindío, during an event in which recognition was given to religious entities with more than 30 years of presence in the department.

2022

2023

QUINDÍO

Committees on Religious Freedom were created in the municipalities of Quindío through municipal agreements.









RISARALDA

Risaralda, in the Andean region of Colombia, is distinguished by its mountainous landscapes and thermal waters. Its temperate climate, between 18°C and 24°C, is favorable for tourism. The Santa Rosa de Cabal Hot Springs offer natural pools and waterfalls in the middle of the jungle, while Los Nevados National Natural Park is ideal for hiking and observing páramo fauna and flora. Other places of interest include the Botanical Garden of Marsella and Consotá Park, with aquatic activities. Its fauna includes hummingbirds, toucans, and sloths, while the flora is characterized by coffee plantations and cloud forests (Martínez, 2019).

The religious sector of the department of Risaralda, Colombia, is composed of 170 actors present in the municipalities of Pereira, Dosquebradas, Santa Rosa de Cabal, and La Virginia, of which 83% are religious entities and 17% are oganizations, including foundations, corporations, and faith-based schools. This diversity reflects a strong presence of religious and educational communities in the region, contributing significantly to social cohesion and community development through various initiatives (UNDP, 2021).

RISARALDA
CITY WITHOUT DOORS



"This is the name given to the capital of the Department of Risaralda, Pereira, as it is considered a territory that welcomes people from different regions and that, historically, has been a city of refuge." (Caballero, 2023)

a coffee plant loaded with coffee beans

LA VIRGINIA

The Committee on Religious Freedom of the municipality of La Virginia was created through Agreement 011 of May 2016.

DOSQUEBRADAS

The Committee on Religious Freedom of the municipality of Dosquebradas was created through Agreement 013 of July 31, 2016.

QUINCHÍA

The Committee on Religious Freedom was created in the municipality of Quinchía through Decree 126 of September 2016.

2016

2017

RISARALDA

In March 2017, the Forum on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was held, with the presence of the Honorable Senator Dr. Carlos Alberto Baena López, achieving for the first time the gathering of more than 250 religious leaders of the department.

For the first time in Risaralda, a departmental link on Religious Freedom was established, and progress began toward the articulation for the formulation of the National Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship.

APIA

The Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was created in the municipality of Apía through Agreement 007 of August 24, 2017.

LA CELIA

The Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was created in the municipality of La Celia through Agreement 010 of November 26, 2017.

RISARALDA
CITY WITHOUT DOORS



"Santa Rosa de Cabal Hot Springs, Risaralda"

2018

PEREIRA

The Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship of the municipality of Pereira was created through Decree 553 of July 18, 2018.

RISARALDA

Decree 437 was signed, through which the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship in Risaralda was established; and through Decree 1415 of October 2018, the Departmental Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship for Risaralda was created

2019

GUÁTICA

The Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship of the municipality of Guática was created through Decree 021 of March 11, 2019.

2020

LA VIRGINIA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was adopted in the municipality of La Virginia through Decree 163 of November 25, 2020.

RISARALDA
CITY WITHOUT DOORS



"Viaduct connecting the cities of Pereira and Dosquebradas, Risaralda"

2021

RISARALDA

It was achieved that the religious sector became part of the Departmental Council for Citizen Participation, with voice and vote.

Several forums and visits were held with different educational institutions of the department, raising awareness about the importance of the religious sector as actors of peace, reconciliation, construction of social fabric, and in the prevention and mitigation of psychoactive substance use.

The Metropolitan Interreligious Women's Gathering was held in September 2021.

SANTA ROSA DE CABAL

The Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was created through Decree 012 of January 12, 2021

MISTRATÓ

The Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was created through Decree 046 of July 21, 2021.

BALBOA

The Committee on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was created through Decree 098 of September 21, 2021.

2022

RISARALDA

The Departmental Assembly was held, including a forum in which the contribution of the religious sector during the pandemic was presented, reflected in assistance exceeding 48 million pesos provided to the people of Risaralda.

Teachers of the subject of Religion were trained in Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, emphasizing the responsibility of teaching without discrimination based on religious belief.

Working groups were established for the formulation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom in the municipality of Pereira

RISARALDA

CITY WITHOUT DOORS



"Chachalaca, emblematic bird of the department"

2022

RISARALDA

Participation took place in the Summit of the Religious Sector and Government held in the city of Cúcuta.

Through different radio stations in the department, several campaigns were carried out promoting respect for Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, as well as highlighting the contribution of the religious sector to society.

The commemoration of July 4 was held.

Participation took place in the Forum on Religious Freedom and Mental Health of the department, where the contribution of the religious sector to people's mental health was discussed.

2023

RISARALDA

By ordinance, the Departmental Council of Mental Health was created, in which the participation of the religious sector is achieved, and work was carried out in the importance of intervention in prevention, mitigation, and support for people with suicidal behavior, together with the School of Psychologists and Psychiatrists of Risaralda, where the sector has been a key ally in reducing suicide rates.

A forum was held in which Public Agreement 0922 of 2023 was presented.

Together with the religious sector and the health sector, the Forum on Humanization of Health was held, highlighting the spiritual assistance provided by religious leaders.

SANTA ROSA DE CABAL

A symposium was held in Santa Rosa de Cabal in commemoration of Women's Day, highlighting the leadership of women in the religious sector.







SAN ANDRÉS Y PROVIDENCIA

San Andrés and Providencia, an island department of Colombia in the Caribbean Sea, stand out for their white-sand beaches, ideal for diving and snorkeling. San Andrés features Morgan's Cave, and Providencia, quieter, has Cayo Cangrejo. Its fauna and marine flora are unique, with African, British, and Caribbean influences reflected in its culture (Martínez, 2019).

At the end of 2020, a special interreligious assistance line was created by the Ministry of the Interior to support the islands, due to the impact of Hurricane Iota on much of the archipelago. The objective was for 14 religious entities and organizations to cooperate in the reconstruction of the territory's infrastructure, as well as in sports activities, shelters, psychosocial support centers, recreational spaces, and children's dining programs (UNDP, 2021).

SAN ANDRÉS Y PROVIDENCIA

THE SEA OF SEVEN COLORS

"In the Caribbean, the waters of the sea of San Andrés range from sandy tones near the shore, passing through turquoise, and deepening into dark blue, offering a remarkable visual spectacle."
(San Andrés: Discover Everything About the Sea of the 7 Colors, n.d.)

an impressive view of the Caribbean Sea on the island of Providencia

SAN ANDRÉS Y PROVIDENCIA

The Departmental Board on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was created.

2022







SANTANDER

Santander, in the Andean region of Colombia, is known for its mountainous landscapes and its history. Among its main attractions are Chicamocha National Park, famous for its canyon; El Cocuy National Natural Park, ideal for trekking enthusiasts; and Barichara, a charming colonial town. Its fauna includes birds such as the Andean condor and mammals such as the spectacled bear, while its flora is diverse, with cloud forests and tropical dry forests (Martínez, 2019).

Currently, in Santander, 42 religious entities have been identified in Barrancabermeja, Bucaramanga, Girón, Floridablanca, and Piedecuesta. Of these entities, 97% are Christian and 90% have legal status. In Barrancabermeja, 68 actors were identified, of which 98% have a religious affiliation; 8% do not belong to any religious entity. Sixty-eight percent of the religious entities have legal status and 32% are not registered.

92.5% of the NARP and Indigenous population report belonging to a religious confession (UNDP, 2022).

SANTANDER

THE LIBERATING LAND



"The people of Santander are recognized for their strong spirit of resistance and courage in the struggle against the Spanish, turning their territory into a key place in the fight for the independence of Colombia."
(Santander Macroregion, n.d.)

Chicamocha Canyon, Santander, Colombia.

SANTANDER

Through Ordinance 036, the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted in Santander, and the Departmental Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

SAN VICENTE DE CHUCURI

Through Agreement 012, the Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

MÁLAGA

Through Agreement 008, the Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

2014

2018

2019

FLORIDABLANCA

Through Agreement 011, the Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

BUCARAMANGA

Through Agreement 021, the Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

VÉLEZ

Through Decree 039 of 2019, the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted.

SANTANDER
THE LIBERATING LAND



"Barichara, Santander, better known as 'the most beautiful town in Colombia'"

FLORIDABLANCA

The Virtual Forum on Religious Freedom was held.

RIONEGRO

The Virtual Forum on Religious Freedom was held.

2020

2021

SAN VICENTE DE CHUCURÍ

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted in the municipality of San Vicente de Chucurí through Agreement 014.

RIONEGRO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted, and the Committee on Religious Freedom of the municipality of Rionegro was created through Agreement 018.

FLORIAN

The Committee on Religious Freedom of Florián was created through Agreement 008 of 2021.

JESÚS MARÍA

The Committee on Religious Freedom of Jesús María was created through Agreement 002-23 of 2021

BARBOSA

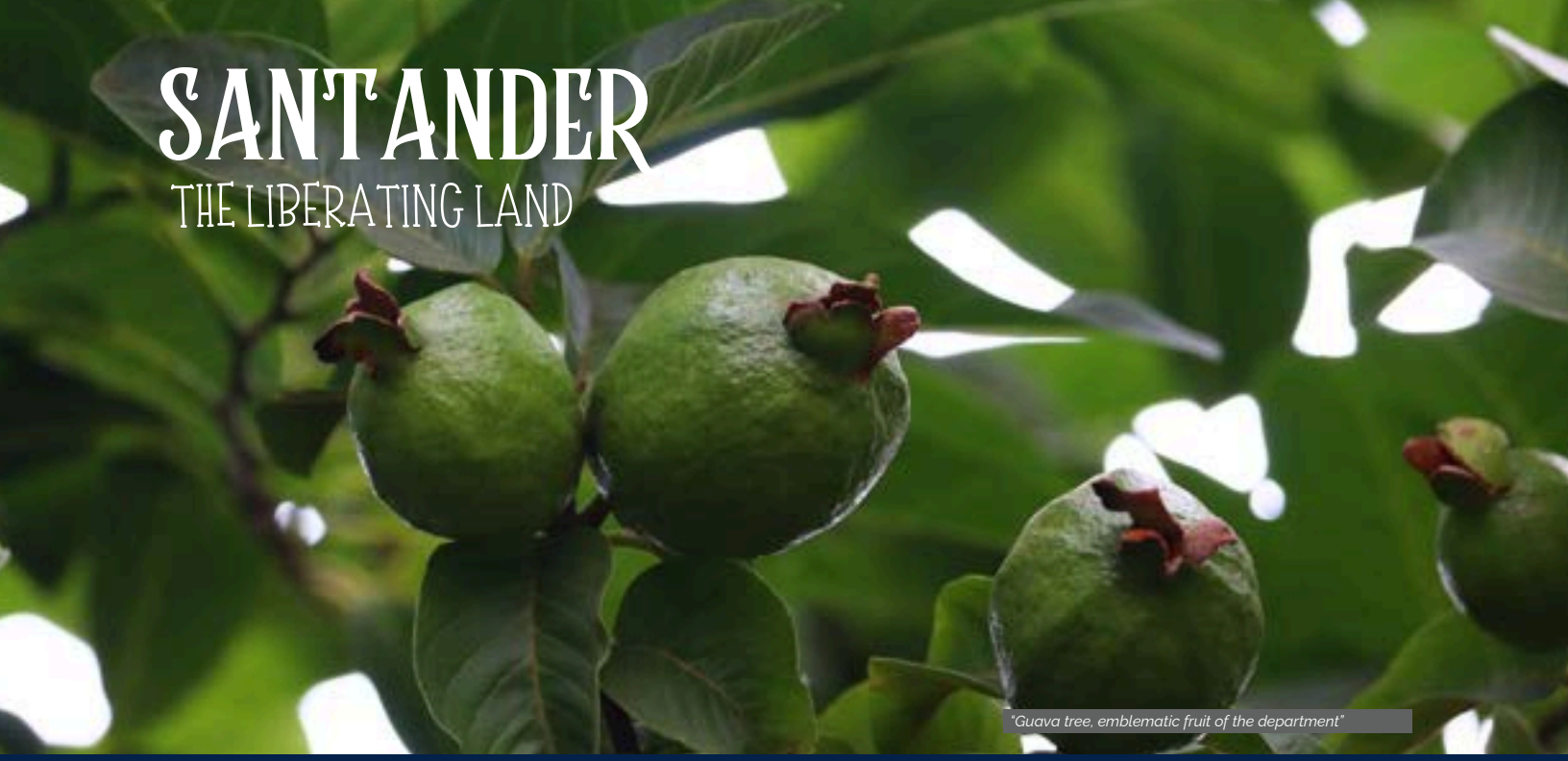
The Committee on Religious Freedom of Barbosa was created through Agreement 008 of 2021

SAN GIL

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom of San Gil was adopted through Decree 100-199 of 2021.

SANTANDER

THE LIBERATING LAND



"Guava tree, emblematic fruit of the department"

BUCARAMANGA

The Committee on Religious Freedom of Bucaramanga was updated through Municipal Agreement No. 011.

FLORIAN

Agreement 008 of 2021 of the Committee on Religious Freedom was amended through Agreement No. 005 of 2022

VÉLEZ

The Committee on Religious Freedom of Vélez was created through Agreement 002 of 2022.

SOCORRO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom of Socorro was adopted through Agreement 002 of 2019.

2022

2023

BARRANCABERMEJA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted, the Committee on Religious Freedom was created, and the Office of Religious Affairs was established through a municipal administrative act.

FLORIDABLANCA

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted through Decree No. 0521.

PIEDECUESTA

The Municipal Council on Religious Freedom of the municipality of Piedecuesta was created through Decree 059.







SUCRE

Sucre, in the Caribbean region of Colombia, is known for its beaches, colonial history, and biodiversity. With a tropical climate and a rainy season from May to November, its main attractions include Coveñas and Tolú, famous for their crystal-clear waters and aquatic activities. Sincelejo, its capital, offers colonial architecture and cultural festivals, while the Gulf of Morrosquillo is a marine sanctuary. Its fauna includes pelicans and manatees, with mangroves and coconut trees forming part of its flora. Sucre is ideal for ecotourism and outdoor activities on the Caribbean coast (Martínez, 2019).

In Sucre, 141 religious entities were identified in the territory, of which 97.8% are Christian, and the department has 269 educational institutions in which there are only 42 professional teachers in religion out of 3,137 trained at the national level to teach this subject (Departmental Government of Sucre, 2021). Additionally, in the public registry, 214 entities of the religious sector were identified, of which 142 identify as Christian, while the remaining entities do not report a specific religious affiliation (Public Registry of Religious Entities, n.d.).

SUCRE

THE PEARL OF LA MOJANA



"Its location in the La Mojana region, and its rich diversity, where wetlands and river systems are found, allow the observation of significant agricultural and fishing production."
(Wikipedia contributors, 2024)

the traditional Colombian Sombrero Vueltiao.

2018

SUCRE

Progress was made in the creation of the Departmental Board on Religious Freedom of Sucre.

2021

SAN ONOFRE

With the Mayor's Office of San Onofre, the adoption of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom in the municipality was achieved through decree, and the creation of the Committee was ordered.

The first stage of mapping of the religious sector in San Onofre was carried out, along with exercises for the development of the security strategy in coordination with the religious sector and the National Police.

2022

SINCELEJO

Participation took place in the creation of the Committee on Religious Freedom in Sincelejo, and the Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted.

SUCRE

Broad participation of the entire interreligious sector of Sucre and the Departmental Board took place in the Forum on Religious Freedom.

2024

SAN ONOFRE

Advisory support was provided to the Interreligious Board of San Onofre in the formulation of the Development Plan, achieving the inclusion of the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom.







TOLIMA

Tolima, in the Andean region of Colombia, is known for its mountains, volcanoes, and cultural traditions. Its climate ranges from temperate to warm, with activities such as hiking in Los Nevados National Natural Park, known for its snow-capped peaks. The Archaeological Park of San Agustín, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, exhibits pre-Columbian statues. The Tatacoa Desert, an arid region, is ideal for astronomical observation. Its fauna includes birds such as the Andean condor and mammals such as the spectacled bear, while its flora is characterized by cloud forests and páramo ecosystems (Martínez, 2019).

The religious sector of the department of Tolima provided more than 52,200 humanitarian aid services and assisted approximately 20,400 people. In the municipality of Ibagué, a characterization of 118 religious entities was carried out, of which 97% are legally registered with the Ministry of the Interior, while the remaining 3% are in the process of legalization.

From the characterization conducted, 93% of the religious entities expressed their willingness to participate in post-conflict processes, in the construction of the social fabric, in reconciliation, and in the inner healing of individuals (UNDP, 2021).

TOLIMA
THE HEART OF COLOMBIA



"The department of Tolima is located in the center of Colombia, becoming a true treasure in the heart of the country, with its magnificent landscapes and beautiful nature."
(Bravo, n.d.)

a beautiful view of the Nevado del Tolima from Ibagué.

IBAGUÉ

The Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom was created in the municipality of Ibagué through Agreement 012 of 2016.

TOLIMA

The First Municipal Public Policy Forum on Religious Freedom was held.

Municipal Agreement 011 of August 2017 was approved, through which the Day of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship was institutionalized, along with other provisions.

In the municipalities of Alpujarra and Purificación, administrative acts were issued creating the Committee on Religious Freedom.

The Departmental Committee on Religious Freedom in Tolima was created through Decree 0693 of 2017.

2016 2017

2018

TOLIMA

The first election of the Committee on Religious Freedom was held in the municipality of Ibagué.

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was created in the municipality of Ibagué through Agreement 025 of 2018, "By which the Public Policy on Freedom of Worship and Religion of the Municipality of Ibagué 2019–2029 is adopted and other provisions are issued."

In the municipalities of Coello and Alvarado, administrative acts were issued creating the Committee on Religious Freedom.

TOLIMA
THE HEART OF COLOMBIA



"Car passing through a colorful street in a town in Tolima"

TOLIMA

The Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship in the department of Tolima was created through Ordinance 001 of 2019.

IBAGUÉ

The Group on Religious Rights and Freedoms was created in the municipality of Ibagué through Resolution No. 1000-0003 of 2019, by which internal working groups of the Central Municipal Administration of Ibagué were established and assigned functions.

MELGAR

In the municipality of Melgar, the Administrative Act was issued creating the Committee on Religious Freedom.

PRADO

The municipality of Prado, Tolima, adopted the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, and the Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

2019

2020

TOLIMA

Decree 0634 was issued, through which the Technical Committee for the Management of the Public Policy on Freedom of Worship and Religion was created in the municipality of Ibagué for the period 2019–2029.

Thirteen municipalities of the department of Tolima adopted the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, including Alvarado, Armero Guayabal, Cajamarca, Casabianca, Dolores, Flandes, Herveo, Honda, Mariquita, Murillo, Purificación, San Luis, and Villarrica.

TOLIMA

THE HEART OF COLOMBIA



"View of the Magdalena River in Honda, Tolima"

TOLIMA

In fourteen (14) municipalities of the department of Tolima — Carmen de Apicalá, Cunday, Dolores, Espinal, Flandes, Fresno, Guamo, Herveo, Mariquita, Murillo, Saldaña, San Luis, Suárez, and Villarrica administrative acts were issued creating the Committees on Religious Freedom.

The operation of the Technical Committee responsible for implementing and executing the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship in the department of Tolima was put into effect, in accordance with Resolution 0235 of 2019.

2020

2021

IBAGUÉ

The creation of the Religious Affairs Office was promoted on the website of the Mayor's Office of Ibagué

The Action Plan for the Public Policy on Religious Freedom of Ibagué was launched.

ESPINAL

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted.

ATACO

The Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted.

IBAGUÉ

The Transversal Action Plan on Religious Freedom was launched, with the participation of the Vice Minister for the Promotion of Human Rights, Dr. Carlos Alberto Baena.

TOLIMA

THE HEART OF COLOMBIA



"View from the mountains overlooking the city of Ibagué, Tolima"

TOLIMA

The allocation of physical space for the operation of the Office of Religious Freedom in the Municipal Palace was arranged on December 22, 2022.

The Youth Public Policy of the department of Tolima included the protection of Religious Freedom (Ordinance 017 of 2022).

In the department of Tolima, the First Forum on Religious Freedom was held, led by the Office of the Ombudsman, titled "A Look at Religious Freedom as a Fundamental Right of Colombians."

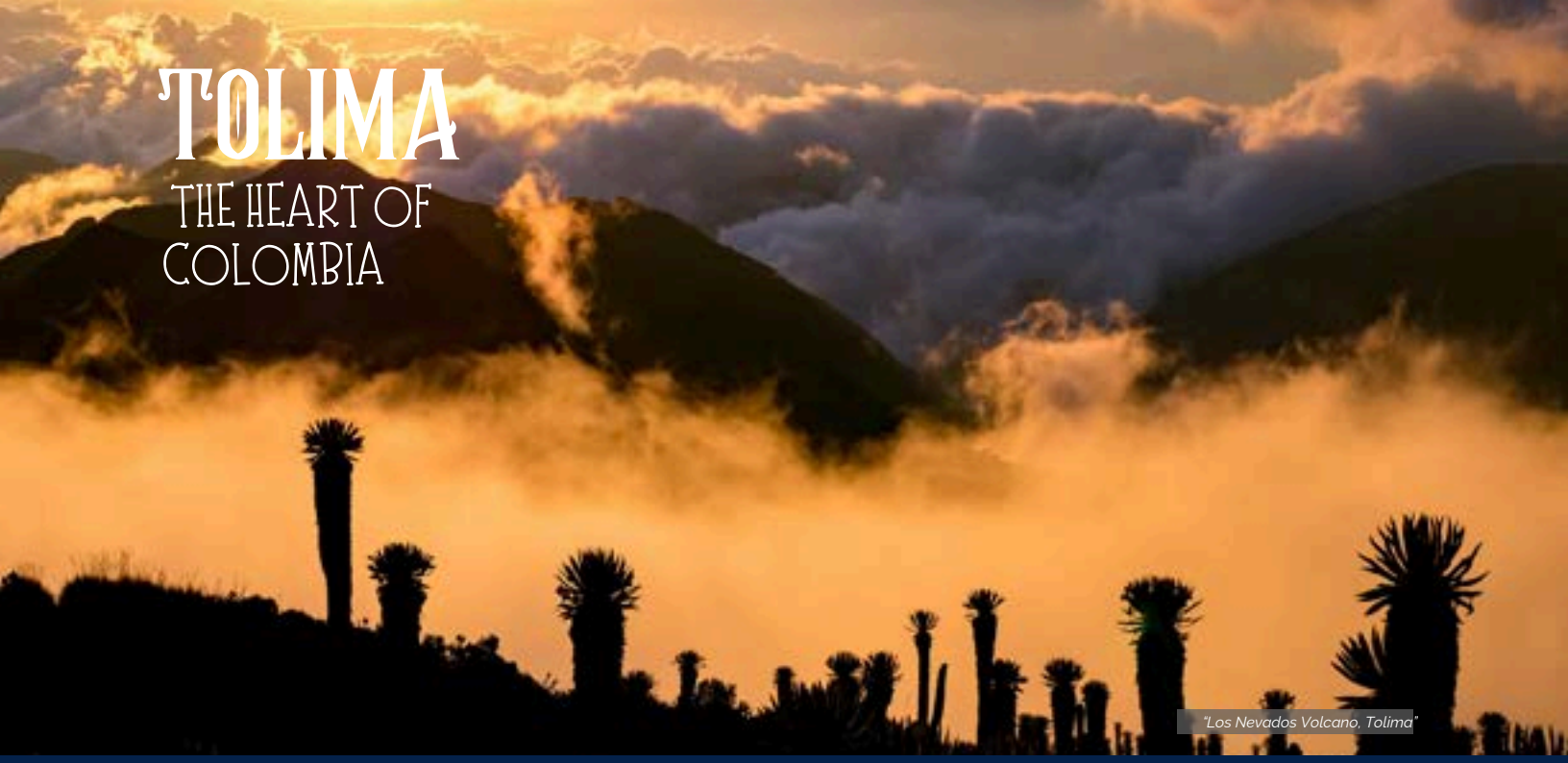
2022

2023

TOLIMA

The Directorate of Human Rights, Peace, Justice, and Religious Freedom was created in the department of Tolima, assigning functions related to Religious Freedom through Resolution 033 of 2023, by which the structure of the Government of Tolima was established and the functions of its departments were defined.

The First Interreligious Youth Forum of the city of Ibagué, "Open Hands for Freedom," was held, led by the Municipal Youth Councilors, with participation from the Senate of the Republic.



TOLIMA
THE HEART OF COLOMBIA

"Los Nevados Volcano, Tolima"

TOLIMA

Municipal agreements were approved establishing the guidelines for the formulation of the Public Policy on Cooperation for Religious Freedom in the municipalities of Ibagué and Villarrica.

The first Departmental Committee on Religious Freedom of the year was held.

2024





VALLE DEL CAUCA

Valle del Cauca, in the Pacific and Andean regions of Colombia, is known for its geographic diversity, culture, and agriculture. Its climate ranges from warm to temperate. Cali, the capital, is known for its festivals and salsa. Farallones de Cali National Natural Park offers opportunities for birdwatching, while Calima Lake is another notable destination. Its fauna includes birds such as the yellow-eared parrot and mammals such as the howler monkey, and its flora includes cloud forests and crops of sugarcane and coffee (Martínez, 2019).

In the municipality of Guadalajara de Buga, Valle del Cauca, 32 religious entities have been identified in the territory, Of these, 68% have legal status. Within this group, 83.9% have special legal status and 16.1% have extended legal status. Among the identified religious entities, 25.8% belong to organizations of the religious sector (RSO), such as foundations and associations. Of the 14 public educational institutions in the municipality, 1 is confessional, and of the 54 private schools, 3 are confessional (Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience of Guadalajara de Buga, 2022).

VALLE DEL CAUCA

SULTANA OF THE VALLEY



The name "Sultana of the Valley" reflects the historical influence of Spanish-Andalusian culture, linked to the origins of Sebastián de Belalcázar, founder of Santiago de Cali (Wikipedia contributors, 2024b).

"Sugarcane plantation."

2016

VALLE DEL CAUCA

The Departmental Committee on Religious Freedom was created through Departmental Ordinance 422 of 2016, in fulfillment of one of the goals established in the Departmental Development Plan.

2017

VALLE DEL CAUCA

Approval was obtained for the Public Policy on Religious Freedom for the department of Valle del Cauca, adopted through Ordinance 469 of November 27, 2017, as a result of the advocacy of the MIRA caucus in the Assembly.

In 2017, the Government of Valle del Cauca created a working group responsible for addressing all matters related to religious affairs in the department

2018

CALI

In 2018, a characterization of the interreligious sector was conducted in order to identify its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. This work was carried out with the participation of the Ministry of the Interior and the UNDP.

In Cali, participation took place in the celebration of the International Day of the Family through a forum entitled "United for the Family, the Smile, First", with the participation of World Vision, the Ministry of the Interior, and Universidad San Buenaventura.

VALLE DEL CAUCA

SULTANA OF THE VALLEY



"Chontaduro, an emblematic fruit of Valle del Cauca."

VALLE DEL CAUCA

The topic of Religious Freedom was included in the Departmental Development Plan "Valle Invencible" 2020–2023, in Article 39.

In 2020, a significant step forward was taken as a contribution to the Religious Sector with the creation of the Office of Religious Affairs.

In 2020, the First Summit of Mayors was held in order to raise awareness and advance the implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, with the participation of the 42 municipalities. This resulted in a commitment by municipal administrations to address these matters virtually, with the participation of the Vice Ministry for Participation and Equal Rights.

The First National Summit of the Religious Sector was also held, with the participation of the Vice Ministry for Participation and Equal Rights, Dr. Carlos Alberto Baena López, and the governors of the different department of Colombia.

2020

2021

VALLE DEL CAUCA

The Departmental Youth Interreligious Network was created in the department of Valle del Cauca through Decree 057 of 2021.

The Protocol and the Assistance Route for cases of Religious Discrimination were established.





VICHADA

Vichada, located in the Orinoquía region, is distinguished by its vast plains, rivers, and biodiversity. Its tropical climate has an average temperature of approximately 26°C. El Tuparro National Natural Park is famous for species such as the pink dolphin and the jaguar. Puerto Carreño, the capital, is recognized for its colonial architecture. The Orinoco River offers sport fishing and connects with rivers such as the Bita and the Arauca, as well as with mammals such as the tapir and the capybara, and a flora characterized by the trees of the savanna plains (Martínez, 2019c).

In Vichada, 11 religious entities were identified in the territory, of which 10 are Christian (Registry of Religious Entities, 2023, SIMS, n.d.) and one Catholic entity under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Puerto Carreño (Admin., n.d.).

VICHADA

THE MORICHAL



The principal symbol of the department of Vichada is the moriche palm, which represents the strong bonds that unite the region with water. This is due to the fact that the moriche palm grows near bodies of water, and from it fibers are obtained that serve as raw material for the production of various handmade products such as basketry (Vichada Macrorregiones, n.d.).

"Housing of the Piapoco indigenous community."

2015

VICHADA

A request was submitted to include religious affairs within the Government Plan of the administration in office.

2018

PUERTO CARREÑO

Decree 065 was issued, through which the Municipal Committee on Religious Freedom was created.

VICHADA

Decree 520 was issued, through which the Departmental Public Policy on Religious Freedom was adopted

2019

VICHADA

The celebration of July 4, International Day of Religious Freedom, was held.
Training was provided on the Public Policy on Religious Freedom by the Ministry of the Interior.

2021

VICHADA

The celebration of July 4, International Day of Religious Freedom, was held.

2022

VICHADA

The celebration of July 4, International Day of Religious Freedom, was held.

2023

VICHADA

The celebration of July 4, International Day of Religious Freedom, was held


“Let us take care of water!”
Nature teaches us to preserve so that we may later give to all.


Let us protect
and preserve!

HOW TO IMPLEMENT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN A TERRITORY?

GOVERNORS AND MAYORS

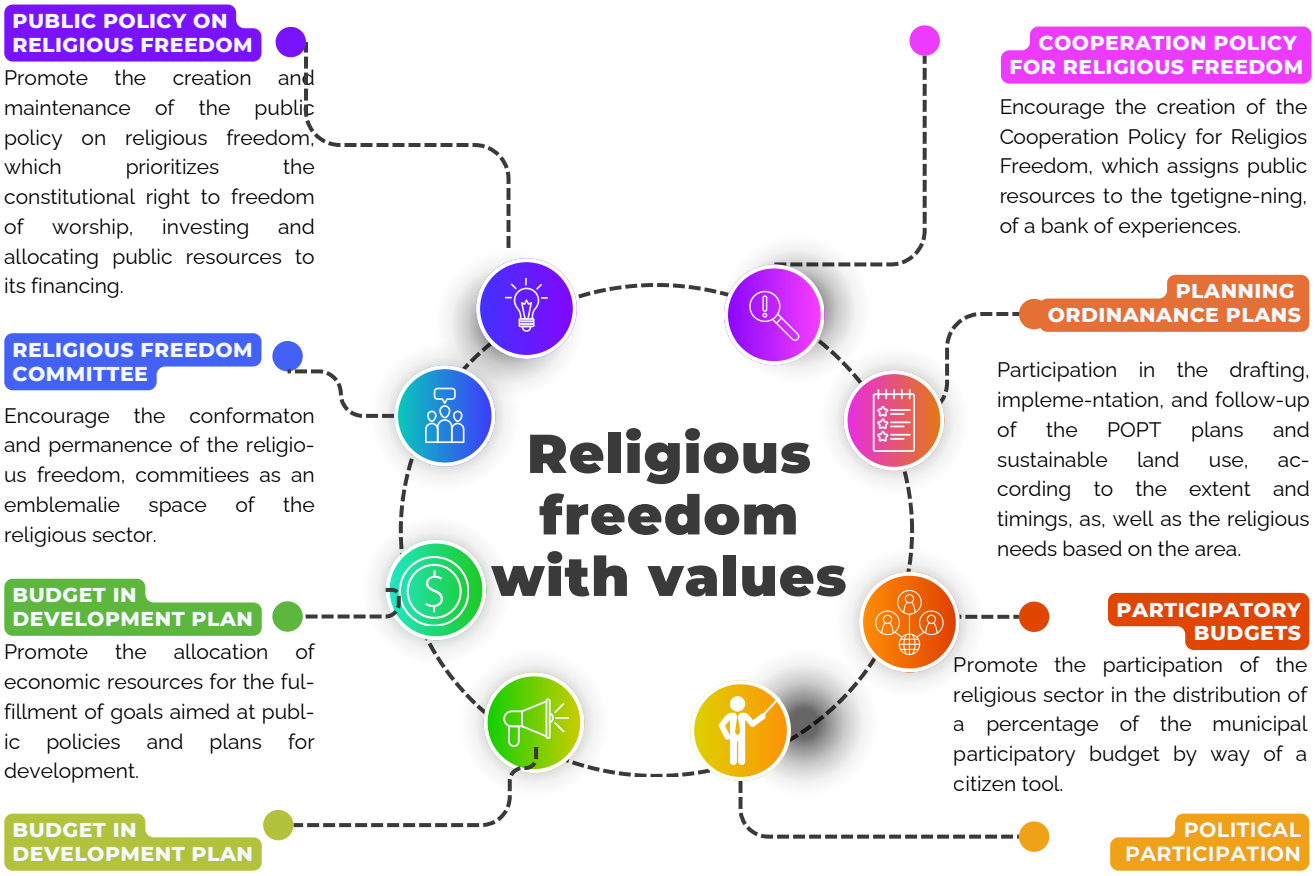
SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION WITH VALUES FROM THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR

> Spirituality must be understood in the daily process of each person as a fundamental element that must be taken into account in the development of public policies of governance, in order to build a society that has the measure of what human beings are capable of achieving. Spirituality and moral values, promoted by the various religious institutions, help shape citizens' character, strengthen the family, and encourage dialogue for conflict resolution.
> This scenario, accompanied by order and the principle of authority, is a sound guideline for the exercise of leadership in government.

TRAINING IN VALUES FOR MULTIPLE CITIZEN ACTIONS

Undoubtedly, the formation in values and the moral foundations of the first learning is the key to achieving the social change expected by the population in general. In this regard, religious institutions, through programs, social outreach, and educational activities, contribute to forming individuals with values, with understanding of their role as persons, their importance as citizens, and their responsibility within society.
Through these contributions, it is possible to build a better society, where individuals are prepared to make responsible use of reason, and where the importance of the contribution made by religious organizations to human formation is recognized.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Of Religious Freedom in a Territory



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

The MIRA Political Party carries out actions throughout the national territory aimed at enabling communities to mature their understanding of Religious Freedom and to become effective in the administration of this Human Right. At no point should it be overlooked that when referring to the religious sector, the reference is not to specific individua ls, but to ordinary citizens who possess full moral, personal, and professional capacity to contribute to society.

From an anthropological perspective, all human beings and living beings are in constant search of their own systems of values that allow them to understand what is good for them. This process begins with self-awareness and with the care of those within the family environment, leading to the search for truth, which situates the individual in the world as a practitioner of truth.

This search makes it possible to form citizens committed to their surroundings and who value the concept of citizenship. Implementing each of these actions makes it possible to clarify the social modernity of the territory, allowing the interaction of communities of different beliefs to converge in their social actions, working together for the benefit of the most vulnerable.

As a methodology for achieving communication between the State and all churches and their organizations, it is important to emphasize that the religious sector is not limited to places of worship. Schools, foundations, associations, and multiple entities derived from spiritual assistance form a broad social network that undoubtedly becomes a strategic ally of public administrations.

The religious sector, understood as a "social vehicle" for the targeting of assistance, makes it possible for the most vulnerable population groups to trust the support that will be provided. In the same way, this process helps ensure that the beneficiary populations are genuine and not impersonated, as often occurs in many such cases.

The savings provided to the State by religious organizations through volunteer work, supplies, and sponsorship are invaluable. However, in 2022, the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) reported highly significant figures that demonstrate the true social contribution generated by this sector of the economy. Among these is the creation of more than 200,000 formal jobs, contributing over 4.5% of the value added to the Colombian economy.
For its part, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its characterization report, recognized that during the pandemic the religious sector provided more than 540,000 instances of assistance to individuals facing issues such as depression, suicide, divorce, and addiction, representing an estimated value of COP 8,800,000,000. These forms of assistance included medicines, rent support, clothing, and food, delivered through community dining halls, volunteer networks, community kitchens, temporary shelters, community food banks, food storage centers, community radio stations, and local communication media, among others.

For this reason, understanding the real and profound value of having religious entities within the territory is essential for developing citizens who appreciate governmental efforts. Supporting investment in infrastructure, promoting social development, and strengthening the value systems of population groups constitutes a formula for the success of any public administration.

ABC OF PUBLIC POLICY DESIGN

Introduction

Public policy design focuses on planning, evaluation, and motivation aimed at achieving the public good. In this context, efficiency becomes the objective of every process of formulation and implementation of Public Policy. However, it is common to encounter bureaucratic obstacles, imprecise designs, dishonest management, structural limitations, complex contexts, and the predominance of particular interests. Under these circumstances, rigorous and efficient projects are often set aside, revealing that outcomes do not depend solely on technical knowledge (Kingdon, 1984; Fischer, 2003).
Despite the uncertainties surrounding public administration, efforts must remain grounded in precision and transparency. Only in this way will there be greater possibilities to resolve or mitigate community problems, strengthen democratic participation processes, and expand the country's social development

Within this framework, the effort to carry out a systemic and participatory design of Public Policy becomes especially important. This text offers a basic guide for that purpose and is intended to serve as an introduction to management processes in various regions of the country.

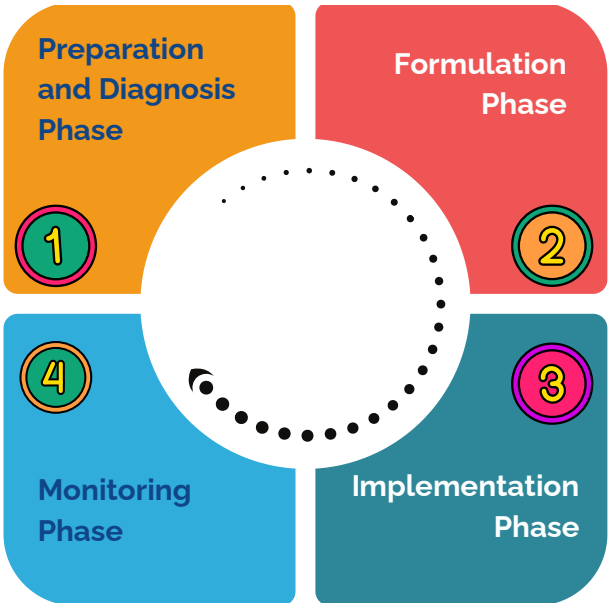
The Public Policy Cycle

a set composed of one or more collective objectives considered necessary or desirable, together with the means and actions that are addressed, at least partially, by a governmental institution or organization, with the purpose of guiding the behavior of individual or collective actors in order to modify a situation perceived as unsatisfactory or problematic" (Roth, 1999).

It consists of a set of provisions and participatory planning tools that the Government uses to solve problems and propose alternatives to various issues affecting the community. Within this framework, it is important to emphasize that citizen participation is a right established in Law 489 of 1998 and Statutory Law 1757 of 2015.

Within the Public Policy cycle, authors generally identify, with slight variations, the following phases: 1. Preparation and diagnosis, 2. Formulation, 3. Implementation, and 4. Monitoring. It is important that each phase be carried out with the greatest possible rigor before moving on to the next. Each phase contains a series of steps that must be followed in order to achieve the optimal development of the project.

Public Policy Cycle



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

PHASE 1: PREPARATION AND DIAGNOSIS

This first phase is fundamental in the development of Public Policy, as it makes it possible to understand the problem to be addressed, identify needs, and consolidate an effective project. The value of this phase lies in the in-depth understanding of the problem and its contexts, as well as in recognizing the challenges faced by the Public Policy.

At this stage, the issue to be resolved is clearly defined, and the problem is examined using qualitative tools from a specific approach (Human Rights approach, environmental approach, gender approach, among others).

The steps to be followed during this phase are the following:

THE STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED DURING THIS PHASE ARE THE FOLLOWING:

Step 1. Problem Identification. A social actor, an institution, or a group of people recognizes and defines the problem that the policy seeks to resolve. Examples include limitations on the expression of one's beliefs, restrictions in the sphere of Religious Freedom, or some form of hostility against Freedom of Conscience. It is important to gather quantitative data (structured interviews, questionnaires, document analysis, records, databases, etc.) and qualitative data that provide evidence of the magnitude of the problem and its impact on the community (focus groups, extended conversations, open interviews, active involvement in the daily life of the community, etc.). In the field of Religious Freedom, problems may be identified in relation to the lack of legal protection, governmental interference in religious matters, inequality in the application of the law, biased representations or the perpetuation of negative stereotypes in the media, institutional discrimination, discrimination in access to services, social harassment, among others.

Step 2. Context Analysis. This step seeks to understand the environment in which the problem develops and in which the policy will be implemented. It involves reviewing the economic, religious, political, and cultural factors that may influence the success of the policy. In addition, a review is conducted of the laws, decrees, resolutions, and other relevant provisions that may support the proposal and help anticipate challenges. At this stage, reviewing successful experiences in the same field is especially valuable; this exercise provides lessons learned and helps reduce risk.

Step 3. Identification of Key Actors. At this stage, key actors are identified. These may be organizations and/or individuals who will have a broad impact on the policy or who will be affected by it. Among these actors may be religious organizations, government agencies, media outlets, and public or private sector organizations that will support the implementation of the Public Policy.

Step 4. Resource Estimation. Those responsible for the project determine the financial resources, necessary materials, number of qualified personnel, and other requirements needed to implement the Public Policy. Carrying out a precise assessment of what is intended helps ensure that the policy is sustainable over the long term.

Step 5. Formulation of the Diagnosis. Through a written document, the diagnosis is formulated, giving coherence to the problem, the context, the actors, and the resources. This step makes it possible to consolidate the foundations for the later stages and, therefore, must be clear, rigorous, and evidence-based. At this stage, it is worthwhile to review practical national or international reports concerning the specific problem being addressed

In the case of Religious Freedom, for example, reference may be made to the work carried out by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the reports of the Berkley Center at Georgetown University, the Oxford Journal of Law and Religion (OJLR), the Center for Theological and Religious Studies of Universidad del Rosario (CETRE), and the work of the MIRA Political Party.

Preparation and Diagnosis Phase



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

PHASE 2: FORMULATION

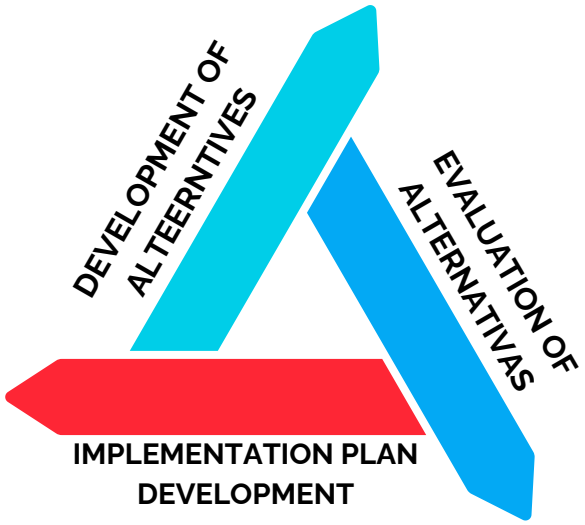
The formulation phase makes it possible to transform the diagnosis of the problem into feasible and effective solutions. Within this second phase, the following steps are identified: proposal of alternatives; evaluation and selection of alternatives; and preparation of the implementation plan. Each of these steps must be carried out carefully and through detailed analysis to ensure that the proposed policy is sustainable
.

Step 1. Proposal of Alternatives. In this first step, options are generated to address the identified problem. After the evidence has been collected, the team considers a variety of possible solutions and strategies. It is important for stakeholders and experts to engage in dialogue in order to achieve realistic and well-founded solutions; this is an exercise in co-creation that fosters relevant responses. At this stage, it is essential to question assumptions and consider the viability of innovative proposals by exploring new sustainable approaches. Technology can be a key driver for innovation in social projects, for example through the use of software, digital platforms, or big data analysis, among other tools**.**

Step 2. Evaluation of Alternatives. Once the different parties have proposed a number of alternatives, an analysis is conducted of the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal. At this step, it is important to ask questions such as: Is the proposal effective? Are the resources sufficient? Is it politically viable? Is it efficient and sustainable? This evaluation makes it possible to select the most promising proposals and discard those that do not meet the intended objectives and relevance. The final decision must be supported by broad consensus in order to ensure support during implementation.

Step 3. Preparation of the Implementation Plan. In this step, a detailed implementation plan is prepared, including, among other elements, the description of the project, objectives, timeline, resources, organizational structure, communication plan, work methodology, risk management, sustainability, and annexes. It is important for the document to contain mechanisms that make it possible to monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of the policy. Having a solid document helps ensure that the proposed objectives will be achieved.

Step-by-Step Formulation



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

This phase is essential because it is the stage in which the decisions previously formulated are put into practice. It includes a series of steps that ensure the effective execution of the planned Public Policy: planning and preparation, capacity building, execution and coordination, and monitoring and evaluation. During the development of this phase, it is necessary to empower the community and maintain a high level of coordination and management among the teams involved. For this purpose, it is important to use appropriate communication channels that keep each member informed about the progress of the process.

Step 1. Planning and Preparation.

In this step, the details, strategies, and resources required to execute the Public Policy are verified. It is essential to ensure that the team is complete and clearly understands the steps to be carried out and the responsibilities assigned. Necessary adjustments are made to aspects that require modification due to unexpected changes. It is important for the team to anticipate possible obstacles and define the actions to be taken in response to them.

Step 2. Capacity Building.

The second step of this stage involves training the team involved in the implementation of the policies and related matters. For example, those responsible for developing Public Policy on Religious Freedom would benefit from training in Human Rights, public policy analysis, legislation on Religious Freedom, among other areas. In this regard, it is important to rely on support networks that collaborate in the training of the agents involved in the project. Adequate training ensures that all actors possess the skills and competencies necessary to perform their roles efficiently.

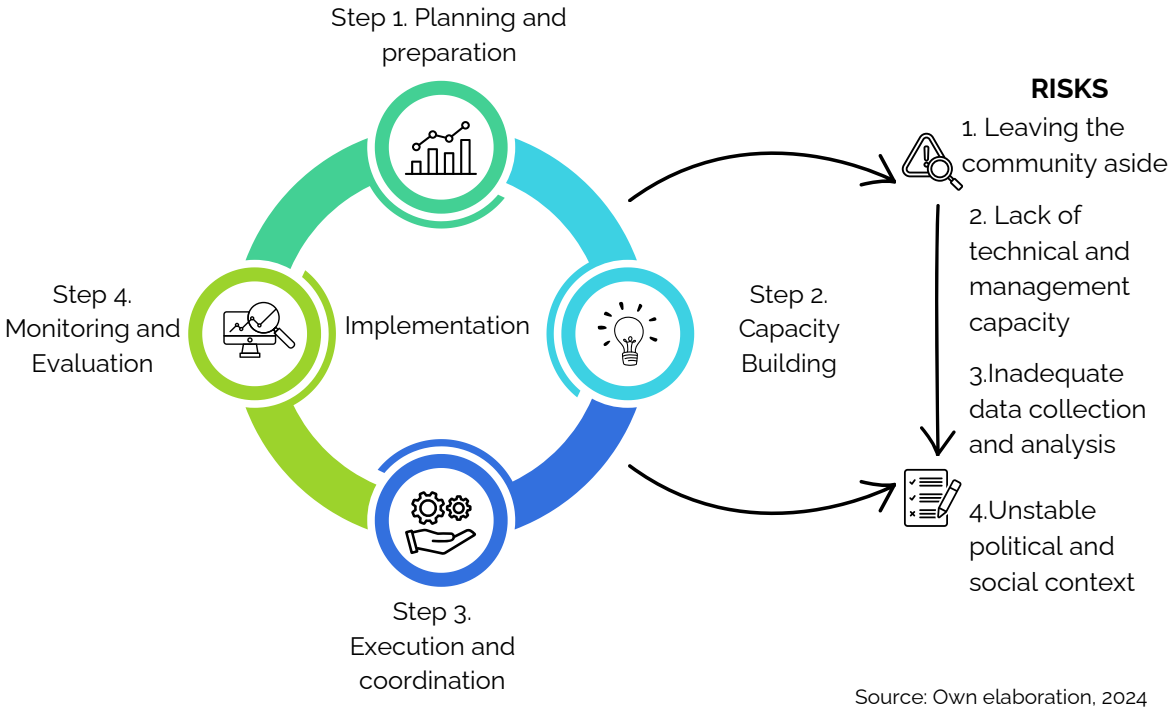
Step 3. Execution and Coordination.

During this step, the planned actions and tasks are carried out. Processes are activated, and efforts are coordinated among the different actors, ensuring that all remain aligned. Progress is supervised and controlled, and the necessary adjustments are made. It is important to avoid duplication of activities and tasks, as this causes fatigue, wastes resources, and consumes time that could be devoted to other activities. To prevent this, communication must be properly managed and progress reports regularly reviewed. Likewise, it is crucial to pay attention to the proper management of resources, risk mitigation, and pressure from stakeholders to include tasks that were not originally planned.

Step 4. Monitoring and Evaluation.

This stage involves the constant supervision of execution and its impact. It is important to establish performance indicators to measure progress and make the necessary adjustments to achieve greater effectiveness. The monitoring and evaluation plan should include the methodology, tools, and frequency, among other aspects. It is recommended to strengthen the process through the use of technological project management tools and the participation of stakeholders and beneficiaries. This exercise ensures that policies are properly implemented and provides valuable information for future initiatives. Among the risks to be avoided is the improper collection and analysis of data.

Implementation Phase



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

PHASE 4: EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION

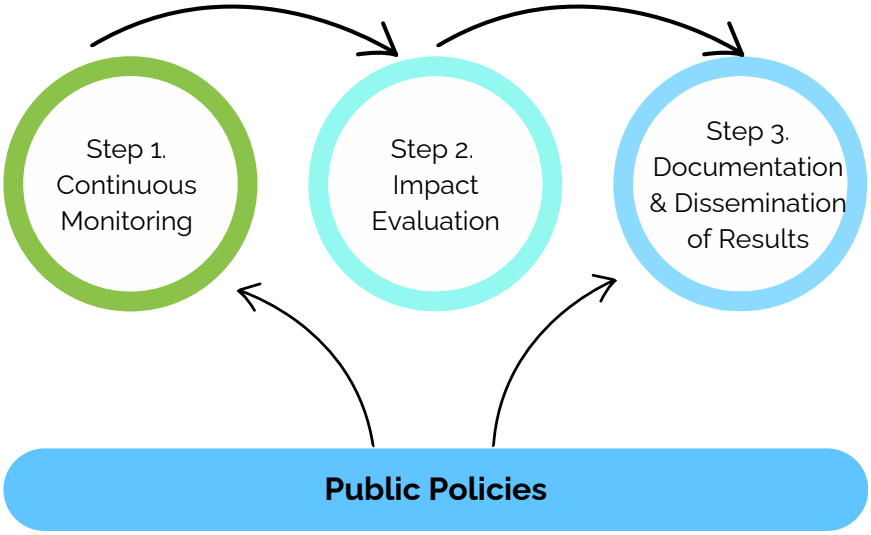
Throughout this phase, it is ensured that the implemented policies achieve the established objectives. This phase includes the following steps: continuous monitoring, impact evaluation, and documentation and dissemination of results. Completing this phase makes it possible to validate the impact of the policies and to collect data for future policy formulation.

Step 1. Continuous Monitoring. This first step involves the systematic collection of data during the implementation of the policy in order to evaluate its progress and detect deviations from the planned objectives. For this purpose, it is essential to use performance indicators and management information systems.

PStep 2. Impact Evaluation. In this step, the impacts of the policy on the community and the benefits achieved for the population are measured. It is important to consider direct, indirect, and unintended effects. This provides a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of the policy

Step 3. Documentation and Dissemination of Results. This final step involves compiling and organizing all the information obtained during the process into a clear and structured document. The document must be accessible both to the participating members and to citizens, thereby guaranteeing accountability and transparency.

Evaluation and Dissemination Phase



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

CONCLUSION

A Public Policy grounded in the real problems of the community makes it possible to achieve the greatest benefits for society as a whole and to strengthen a more participatory democracy. Following each of the phases and steps included in the planning and formulation of Public Policy largely ensures proper implementation and the achievement of the expected results.

This methodical approach enables those responsible for Public Policy to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the situations involved, anticipate challenges in order to act effectively, make informed decisions, and adjust strategies to maximize the positive impact of their interventions. This text represents only an outline of strategic planning and execution. To deepen the study and practice of Public Policy, the reader may consult the works cited in the references.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN THE INTERRELIGIOUS SECTOR:

PUBLIC EXCELLENCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

This chapter analyzes the theoretical and regulatory framework, as a value-based proposal, for the creation of public excellence grounded in the participation of the interreligious sector and the strengthening of democracy in Colombia. This is achieved through dialogue based on human values, coordinated and articulated between governmental authorities and organizations of the interreligious sector, with agency in social cooperation, partnerships in participatory budgeting, and accountability mechanisms for public investment in sustainable territorial development in Colombia.

Introduction

The theoretical framework proposes the value of public excellence, considering the promotion of democracy through Public Policy that guarantees the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, through actions of interreligious and multi-thematic social dialogue, fostering social cooperation between the interreligious sector and the government in participatory planning processes and participatory budgeting for sustainable territorial development.

Public excellence, according to the United Nations (2023), considers sustainable development as its cornerstone, along with digital citizen participation, dialogue among multiple stakeholders in the formulation of Public Policy, the inclusion of the universal

principle of leaving no one behind, and the promotion of more agile public institutions and officials, supported by data and new competencies for collaborative work in public administration with a citizenry committed to the public good (UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, 2016). These elements contribute to transforming public institutions and services into systems that are effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, inclusive, and innovative for sustainable development (United Nations, 2023).

In this regard, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) states that fostering new ways of involving citizens in the policy-making cycle strengthens deliberative processes, enabling difficult decisions to be made at lower cost. Likewise, the OECD emphasizes the importance of governments engaging in dialogue with citizens through opportunities for participation in order to strengthen public trust between government and society in public decision-making (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2024).

In the context of Public Excellence in Colombia, reference is made to the 2023 National Culture Survey conducted by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), which highlights the organizations with the highest levels of participation: Community Action Boards at 5.1%, religious organizations at 4.4%, followed by cultural or sports organizations at 1.6%, and labor cooperatives and ethnic organizations at 1.4% (National Administrative Department of Statistics — DANE, 2023).

Likewise, the National Culture Survey conducted by DANE states that the institutions with the lowest levels of public trust in 2023 are political parties (6.6%) and municipal councils (10.4%). In addition, politics is considered one of the least relevant aspects of life, as only 16.8% of the national population aged 18 or older describes it as “very important” (National Administrative Department of Statistics — DANE, 2023).

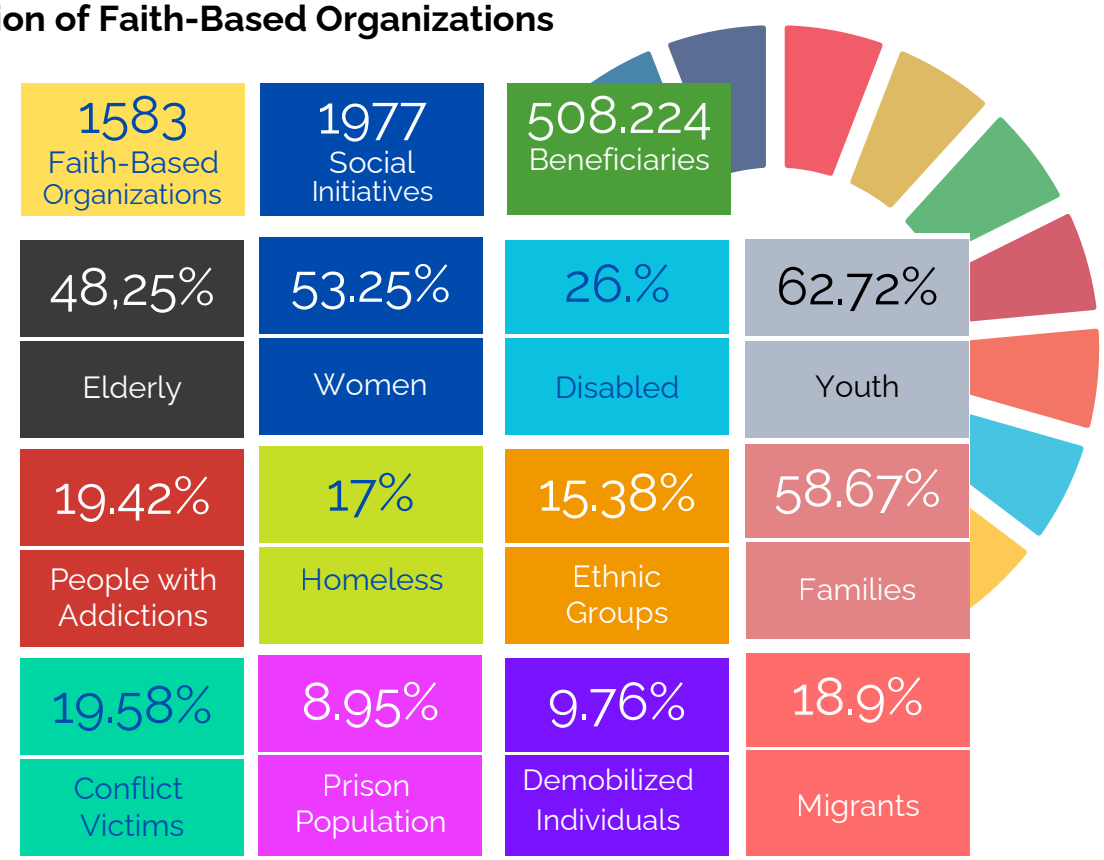
The results of the public survey in Colombia represent major challenges, as well as opportunities, for government authorities in achieving public excellence through the creation of value in public services within a digital environment, ensuring that no one is left behind and restoring citizens’ trust in government in order to achieve sustainable development

To achieve public excellence, the interreligious sector constitutes a strategic ally for government authorities. It is an essential and highly capable actor for strengthening democracy through participatory planning processes and participatory budgeting in territorial development. Its participation is notable

and valued within the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability in Colombia. According to the report of the National Administrative Department of Statistics — DANE (2022), churches and other religious entities in Colombia contribute to the labor market as nonprofit institutions, generating 4.5% of the value added to the national economy, which exceeds the contribution of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, estimated at 3.8% during the period of economic recovery following the 2020 pandemic (National Administrative Department of Statistics — DANE, 2022).

Likewise, the final report of the Ministry of the Interior (2022), Characterization, Territorialization, and Acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals of Faith-Based Organizations, determined that the contribution of 1,583 Faith-Based Organizations in Colombia, through 1,977 social initiatives benefiting 508,224 individuals, reflects the principle of leaving no one behind. These initiatives are primarily linked to the following population groups: 48.25% older adults, 53.52% women, 26% persons with disabilities, 62.72% youth, 19.42% victims of the conflict, 17% homeless individuals, 15.38% ethnic groups, 58.67% families, 19.58% persons with addictions, 8.95% incarcerated population, 9.76% demobilized individuals, and 18.9% migrants (Ministry of the Interior, 2022).

Contribution of Faith-Based Organizations



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

Likewise, the same final report of the Ministry of the Interior (2022), Characterization, Territorialization, and Acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals of Faith-Based Organizations, determined that in 2022 a total of 9,518 permanent actions, programs, and projects were identified. These included humanitarian activities such as the distribution of food supplies, financial assistance, and housing support; community kitchens aimed at reducing hunger and malnutrition; initiatives to facilitate access to physical health services; strengthening of education for children through recreational and pedagogical activities; access to mental health services through activities and treatments addressing conditions such as depression, anxiety, and addiction to alcohol and drugs; employment generation through job training and the creation of entrepreneurial initiatives; reduction of inequality through actions directed toward vulnerable populations such as migrants, single mothers, and older adults; and, finally, peacebuilding activities, including ongoing family dialogue, support for programs involving demobilized individuals and victims of the armed conflict, and the prevention of different forms of violence, among others.

In addition, 630,780 actions were identified during the pandemic period (March 2020–June 2022), including humanitarian assistance and mental health resilience support for the most vulnerable populations. In this way, contributions were made to the following Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 1, No Poverty; Goal 2, Zero Hunger; Goal 3, Good Health and Well-Being; Goal 4, Quality Education; Goal 5, Gender Equality; Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth; Goal 10, Reduced Inequalities; and Goal 16, Peaceful and Just Societies.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

On the other hand, Salas (2022), in the book entitled University, Citizenship, and Sustainable Development: Religious Freedom, Health, and Disasters, identifies an additional contribution of the interreligious sector to Sustainable Development Goal 11, Sustainable and Resilient Cities; Goal 13, Climate Action; and Goal 17, Partnerships for Sustainable Development, through cooperative relationships aimed at overcoming emergencies, disasters, and humanitarian crises.

In other studies related to levels of trust, according to the report Barómetro de la Reconciliación 2021, Colombians show higher levels of trust in churches (Universidad de los Andes, 2021) in processes of reconciliation for peace.

Based on the evidence of social and economic contributions, together with the principle of leaving no one behind and the trust that Colombians place in churches, the strength of the interreligious sector is confirmed in its inclusion within Public Policy and participatory budgeting for territorial planning and social cooperation with the government, in processes aimed at building public excellence and sustainable development in Colombia.

Within this framework, the promotion of democracy constitutes a cornerstone of public excellence through participatory planning processes, participatory budgeting, open government, deliberative dialogue between citizens and government in Public Policy for the creation of public goods and services, and the adoption of transparent accountability mechanisms for sustainable territorial development.

Territorial development is a process of social construction driven by the interaction between geophysical characteristics, the initiatives of different actors, and the operation of economic, technological, sociopolitical, cultural, and environmental forces (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean — ECLAC, 2023). For the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), sustainable territorial development requires addressing climate change, demographic growth, digitalization, urbanization, and the globalization of cities and regions in order to preserve social inclusion, promote economic growth, and advance the transition to a low-carbon economy. This is achieved by using the Sustainable En Colombia, la Ley 152 de 1994, o Ley Orgánica del Plan de Desarrollo (Congreso de Colombia, 1994), que en materia de desarrollo territorial,

Development Goals as a framework for aligning national, regional, and local governments to manage and promote synergies that improve people's lives, while ensuring transparent accountability through the participation of all territorial actors, including civil society, citizens, youth, academia, and the private sector, within the policy-making process (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development — OECD, 2024).

In Colombia, Law 152 of 1994, or the Organic Law of the Development Plan (Congress of Colombia, 1994), establishes in Article 32 that territorial entities "have autonomy in matters of planning economic and social development and environmental management, within the framework of the competencies, resources, and responsibilities assigned to them by the Constitution and the Law." This law defines the planning instrument through which local administrations determine the programs and projects to be executed during their term of government (four years) (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean — ECLAC, 2023).

Colombian regulations define participatory planning as the process through which civil society determines the direction of policies, plans, programs, projects, or procedures in accordance with its needs (Función Pública, 2024), including decision-making regarding public investment through participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting functions as a mechanism for the equitable, rational, efficient, effective, and transparent allocation of public resources, strengthening the relationship between the State and civil society, in accordance with Articles 90, 91, 92, and 93 of Law 1757 of 2015, which establishes provisions for the promotion and protection of the right to democratic participation (Congress of Colombia, 2015).

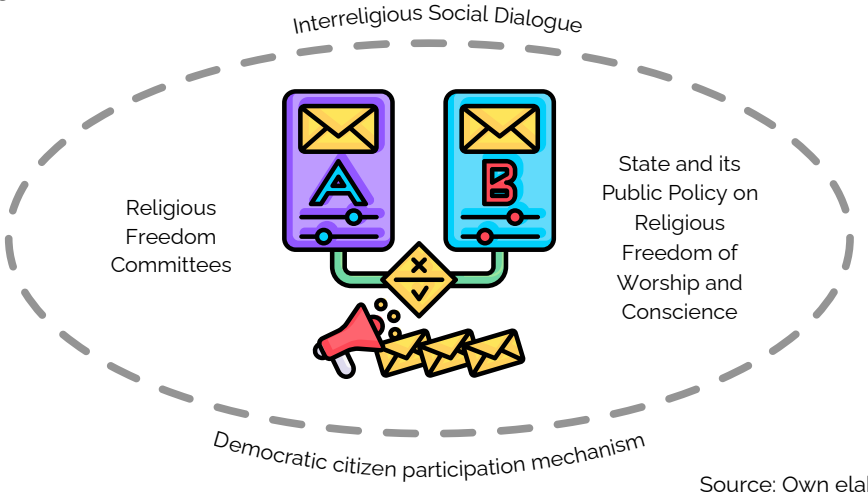
Equally important for democracy is accountability, understood as a process "composed of a set of rules, procedures, methodologies, structures, practices, and results through which public administration entities at the national and territorial levels, as well as public officials, inform, explain, and make known the results of their management to citizens, civil society, other public entities, and oversight bodies." Through the promotion of dialogue, this process seeks transparency in public administration and is guided by the principles of Good Governance, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability (Article 48, Law 1757 of 2015).

In the same way, public excellence integrates open government with territories, smart cities, and open citizen participation through Information and Communication Technologies, as a collaborative tool that strengthens interaction between governments and citizens in the formulation of policies, contributing to transparent, accountable, and effective public institutions capable of providing innovative solutions to the complex challenges of development (United Nations, 2023).

Public excellence, with the participation and cooperation of the interreligious sector through alliance-based actions with the government for sustainable territorial development, is framed within Article 111 of Law 1757 of 2015, which establishes: "Social dialogue as a democratic mechanism for citizen participation and the strengthening of civil society organizations, with the objective of promoting interaction, communication, consultation, and monitoring of Public Policy at the national and territorial levels" (Congress of Colombia, 2015).

In Colombia, the then Vice Minister for Participation and Equal Rights of the Ministry of the Interior in 2022, Dr. Carlos Alberto Baena López, defined interreligious social dialogue and multi-thematic social dialogue as follows: Interreligious Social Dialogue is an open exchange based on education and mutual respect among individuals and groups of different religious beliefs, with active participation among interreligious associations recognized by States and international organizations in order to generate and lead development proposals. Religious communities promote development because they have a significant presence and broad reach in humanitarian actions and social service (Fundación Iglesia de Dios Ministerial de Jesucristo, 2023).(Church of God Ministry of Jesus Christ Foundation), 2023

Multi-thematic Social Dialogue considers multiple issues that must be addressed given the complexity of the structure of the State and society, within a broader dialogue consisting of the relationship established between citizens and the State, recognizing the diversity of factors involved in a social problem and the consequent need for each State entity to contribute from its respective field to the solution of that problem. Multi-thematic Social Dialogue is perhaps the most comprehensive and integrative instrument that can be conceived in the relationship between citizens and the State (Fundación Iglesia de Dios Ministerial de Jesucristo, 2023).(Church of God Ministry of Jesus Christ Foundation), 2023



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

Based on the definitions of interreligious social dialogue and multi-thematic social dialogue, it is possible to affirm, within the regulatory framework that establishes the mechanisms of democracy in Colombia, the development of a Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship through national, departmental, district, and municipal committees that enable interreligious social dialogue among groups and individuals of all religious beliefs legally recognized by the State, for the formulation of plans, programs, and projects, with inclusion in multi-thematic social dialogues for cooperation between the interreligious sector and the government in achieving the objectives of sustainable territorial development.

Consequently, the United Nations, through Resolution A/RES/57/277, established the United Nations Public Service Awards, which are defined as "an international recognition of excellence in public service, rewarding the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions that lead to more effective and responsive public administration in countries around the world," with an emphasis on citizen participation in Public Policy (United Nations, 2002), and encouraging the contribution of public administration to sustainable development (United Nations, 2003).

Likewise, in Colombia, within the framework of public excellence, open government is contemplated in Decree 2573 of 2014, which establishes the general guidelines for the Online Government Strategy (Presidency of the Republic, 2014), and in Resolution 2405 of 2016, by which the Digital Government Seal of Excellence model is adopted (Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, 2016), within the dimensions of building a model of territory and smart cities through the participation of a digital citizenry.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

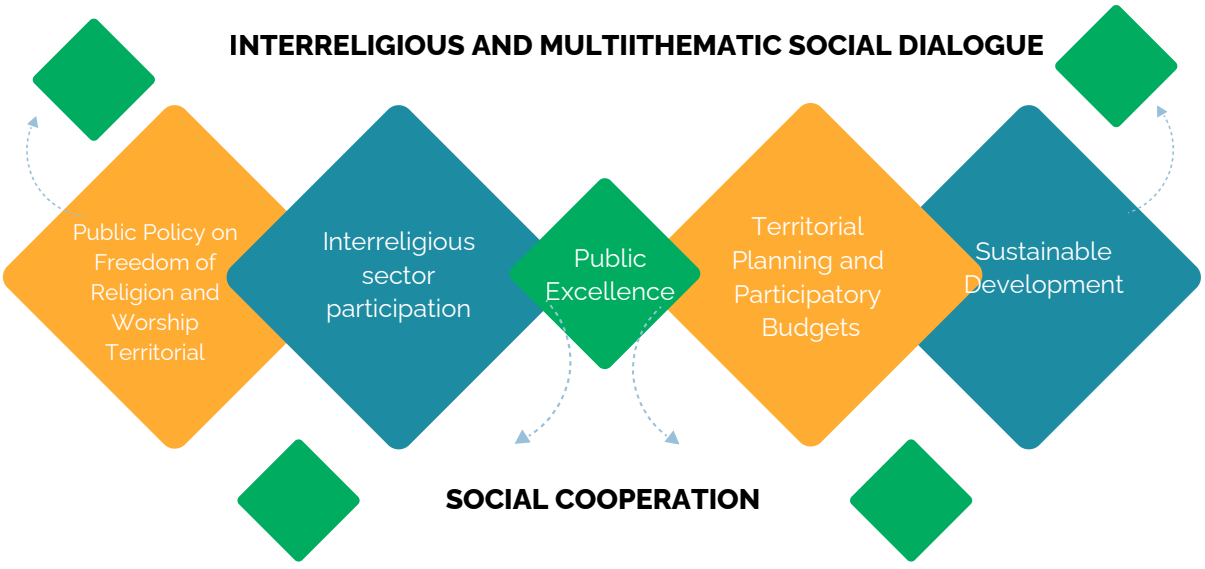
For this purpose, it is proposed that territorial authorities in Colombia promote the right to Religious Freedom within participatory planning processes and participatory budgeting scenarios, in order to foster social cooperation between the interreligious sector and the Government within an open digital environment, with the goal of meeting territorial needs and advancing sustainable development.

Citizen Participation of the Interreligious Sector as a Pillar of Public Excellence

In Figure 1, the pillars of public excellence are described, based on the normative declaration issued by public administrations at the departmental, municipal, and city levels to guarantee the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, as well as the participation of the interreligious sector in territorial planning and participatory budgeting, in synergy with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Public excellence requires the establishment of a regulatory framework that guarantees mechanisms for citizen participation by the interreligious sector within departmental, district, municipal, and local Religious Freedom committees, ensuring interreligious social dialogue for preparation and participation in the processes of formulation, execution, monitoring, evaluation, oversight, and accountability of the Territorial Development Plan, as well as the guidelines that enable the effective participation of the interreligious sector in Territorial Planning Councils and participatory budgeting.
In this way, it will be possible to identify needs and define coordinated and articulated actions through a bank of programs and projects led by the interreligious sector, with the capacity to cooperate as a strategic ally of the government for sustainable territorial development.

FFIGURE 1
Pillars for Public Excellence with the Participation of the Interreligious Sector in Territorial Planning for Sustainable Development.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

The participation and social cooperation of the interreligious sector in territorial planning and participatory budgeting in Colombia are defined according to principles aimed at the protection and safeguarding of democracy for the achievement of public excellence.

In Figure 2, the principles for the participation of the interreligious sector in territorial development in Colombia are presented, in accordance with the international and national regulatory framework that guarantees the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, and particularly within the approaches, strategies, and lines of action established in National Decree 437 of 2018, by which the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship in Colombia is adopted at the departmental, district, and municipal levels (Presidency of the Republic of Colombia, 2018).

FIGURE 2

Principles for the Participation of the Interreligious Sector in Territorial Planning and Participatory Budgeting.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

The principles of participation of the interreligious sector include social dialogue grounded in human values, aimed at social cooperation between the interreligious sector and public administration institutions, through actions that promote the inclusion of a religious citizenry founded on ethical and virtuous conduct, within an open digital environment that adopts accountability as a mechanism to guarantee transparency of public information, fostering lasting relationships of trust for public service centered on the common good and sustainable territorial development.

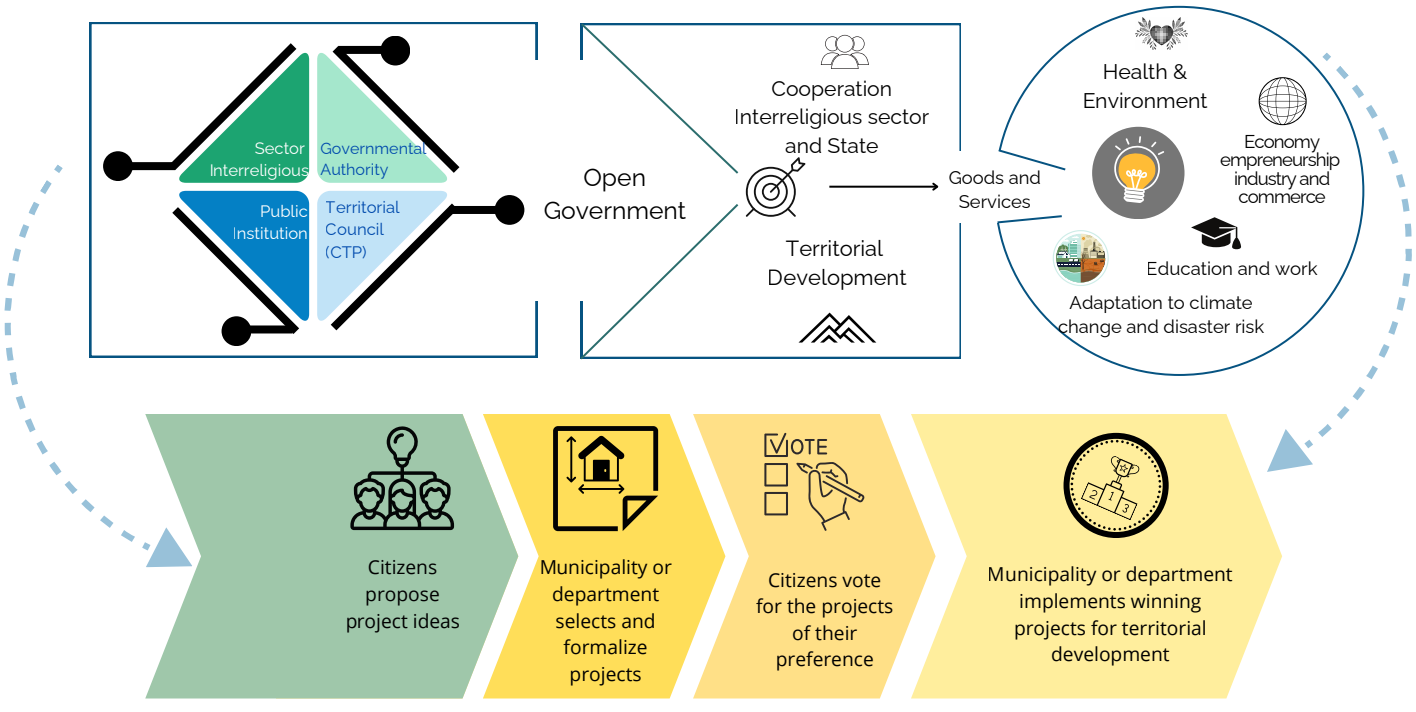
In Figure 3, the proposed participation map of the interreligious sector in territorial planning and participatory budgeting is presented as a means of promoting democracy

for public excellence at the territorial level, in accordance with Article 33 of Law 152 of 1994, which establishes the Organic Law of the Development Plan (Congress of Colombia, 1994). This includes the participation of the interreligious sector, through the territorial governmental authority, in the Territorial Planning Councils, for the analysis of sectoral participatory diagnoses together with public institutions, in order to identify territorial needs within a digital government environment of public administration, as well as the effective participation of the interreligious sector in participatory budgeting within the framework of the Annual Operational Investment Plan and the public investment of the Territorial Development Plan.

This participation takes place within a framework of social cooperation with the government for the co-creation of inclusive, effective, efficient, and high-quality public services, considering the significant social contribution of the interreligious sector in areas such as the promotion of health, environmental protection, strengthening of the economy and social entrepreneurship, industry, job creation, commerce and food production, formal and informal education, disaster risk management, and climate change, all directed toward sustainable territorial development.

FIGURE 3

Participation Map of the Interreligious Sector in Territorial Planning and Participatory Budgeting.

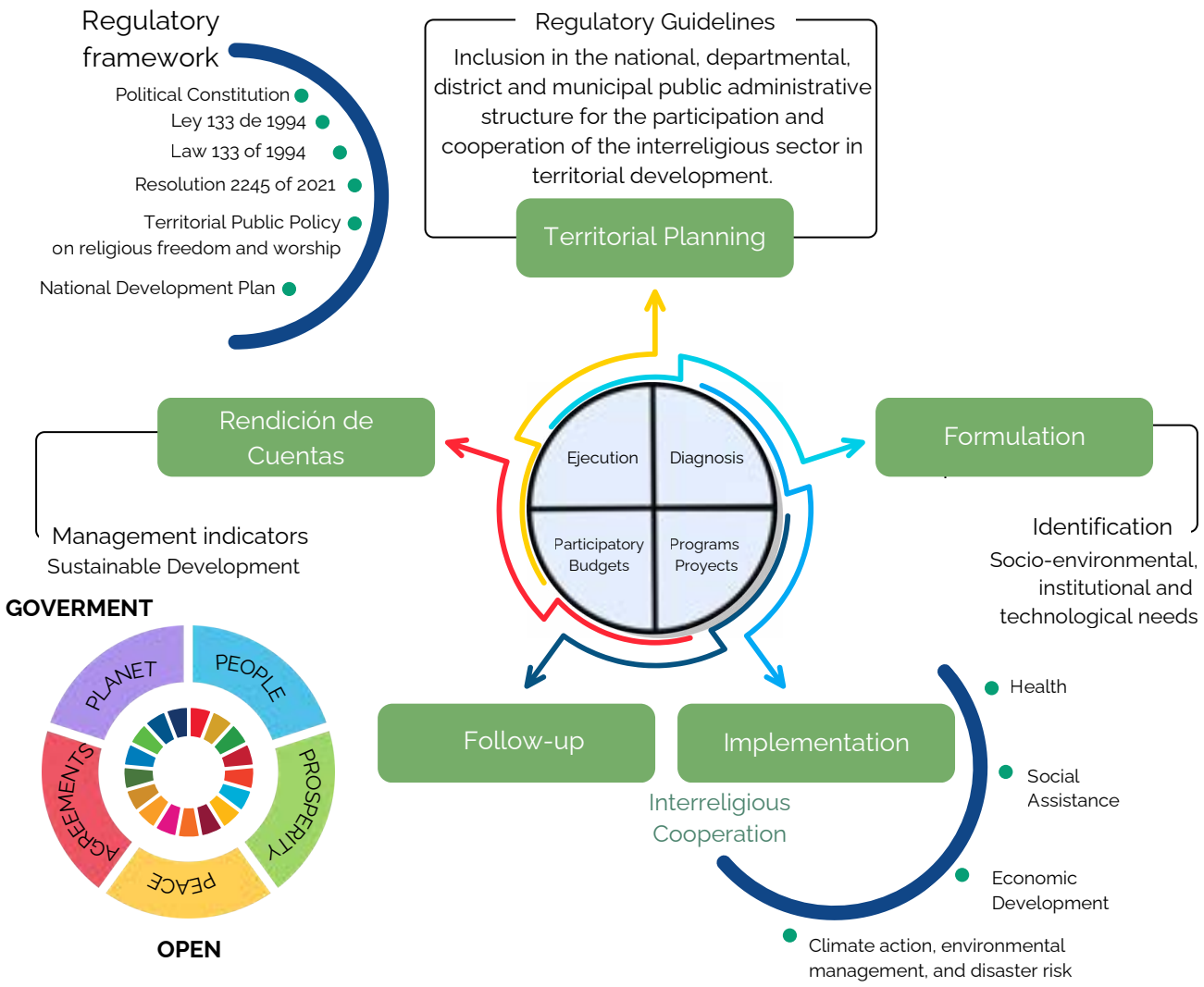


Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

In Figure 4, the public policy cycle of the Territorial Development Plan is specified for the participation and cooperation of the interreligious sector in sustainable development.

FIGURE 4

Cycle of Public Excellence in Participatory Planning and Social Cooperation between the Interreligious Sector and the Government for Sustainable Territorial Development.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

In accordance with the powers established in Law 152 of 1994, which enacts the Organic Law of the Development Plan (Congress of Colombia, 1994), the cycle of territorial planning for public excellence is defined by political authorities, represented by Mayors and Governors, who exercise administrative powers as decision-makers and the highest governmental authorities. This is carried out in compliance with Article 19 of the Political Constitution of Colombia, Law 133 of 1994, which regulates the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship (Congress of Colombia, 1994), Decree 437 of 2018, by which the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship is established, and Resolution 2245 of 2021, through which the National Committee for Participation and Intersectoral Social Dialogue on Religious Freedom is created, together with the current National Development Plan. Within this framework, regulatory

instruments are issued that declare the inclusion and participation of the interreligious sector in the processes of the Territorial Development Plan and participatory budgeting for the formulation of programs and projects with multi-year public investment, as well as the implementation of strategic lines aimed at addressing basic territorial needs through the creation of public value based on volunteer work, support networks, and the administrative and financial capacity of nonprofit religious organizations to develop alliances for social cooperation. These alliances contribute to the implementation of social productive projects, economic growth, employment promotion, and education, as well as humanitarian assistance, medical care, social support, suicide prevention, youth development, protection of children, older adults, and women, environmental conservation and protection, climate action, and disaster risk reduction, contributing to the construction of sustainable and resilient societies.

The cycle of public excellence in participatory planning and interreligious social cooperation for sustainable territorial development incorporates accountability as a guarantee of transparent governance and citizenship, centered on the principle of leaving no one behind, respect for human dignity, and sustainable development

The pathway to public excellence, centered on participation and cooperation between the interreligious sector and the government for sustainable territorial development planning, includes the following:

1. Establish the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship at the departmental, district, and municipal levels.
2. Define the regulatory framework for the inclusion of the interreligious sector within public administration through actions of citizen participation in territorial development planning and participatory budgeting.
3. Establish the regulatory guidelines for social cooperation between the interreligious sector and the government in programs and projects for sustainable territorial development.
4. Ensure the participation of the interreligious sector together with the government in participatory diagnostic processes in order to identify social, economic, environmental, technological, and institutional needs, among others, to be incorporated into the formulation of the Territorial Development Plan.
5. Implement programs and projects with public investment for social cooperation between the interreligious sector and the government in the protection of the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, and in addressing basic territorial needs in health, social assistance, economic development, climate action, environmental protection, and disaster risk management, among others.

6. Development by the public administration of characterization reports that include the participation of the interreligious sector in plans, programs, and projects implemented within the territorial development plan, contributing to sustainable development.

7. Monitoring and accountability regarding the effective participation and inclusion of the interreligious sector in the programs and projects of the territorial development plan, contributing to sustainable development.

8. Evaluation of the effective participation and inclusion of the interreligious sector in the programs and projects of the territorial development plan, contributing to sustainable development.

9. Measurement of the participation of the interreligious sector in participatory budgeting, with leadership in programs and projects of the territorial development plan, contributing to sustainable development.

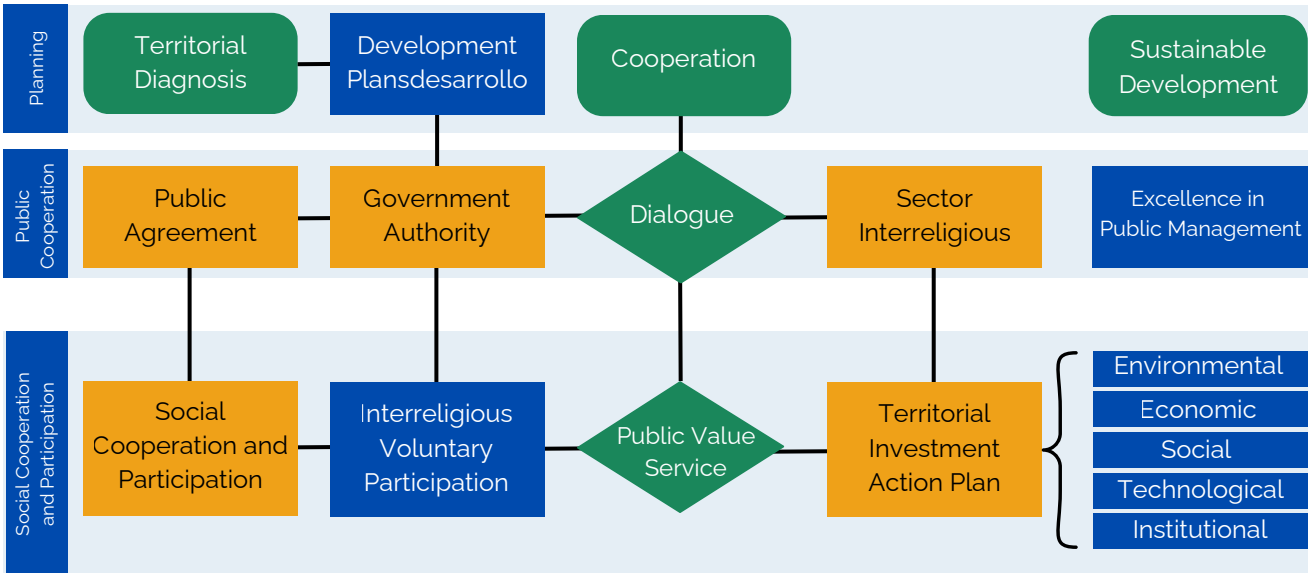
10. Preparation by the public administration, in cooperation with the interreligious sector, of reports on best practices for excellence in public administration, with an emphasis on open government, territorial and sustainable development, in order to improve the quality of life of Colombians.

Figure 5 presents the actions for excellence in public administration based on the participation of the interreligious sector in the participatory budgeting process within territorial development, promoting social cooperation with the government in its capacity as a social and civic actor, and fostering partnerships for sustainable development at the departmental, municipal, and district levels in Colombia.

The participation of the interreligious sector in the formulation process of the territorial development plan contributes to strengthening democracy through coordination and articulation with public institutions in actions aimed at analyzing sectoral diagnostics in order to identify the expressed needs of the population. Through the inclusion of the interreligious sector in participatory budgeting, it becomes possible to collaboratively design programs and projects that transform needs and problems into public investment proposals and social cooperation initiatives between the interreligious sector and the government. These actions generate value in public services in the environmental, economic, social, technological, and institutional spheres, in pursuit of public excellence and sustainable development.

This collaborative participation, together with the willingness of the State to allow citizens to take part directly in decisions that reflect the sentiments and needs of the people, undoubtedly represents one of the most meaningful experiences of belonging to the State.

Figure 5.
Public excellence based on the participation of the interreligious sector in participatory budgeting within the territorial planning process.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

CONCLUSION

The participation of the interreligious sector, in accordance with the frameworks that enable democracy in Colombia, is founded on the pillars of social dialogue with human values for interreligious exchange in the protection of the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, and on the development of the National Public Policy on Religious Freedom through actions of social cooperation for the creation of public goods and services. These actions contribute to strengthening trust between governments and citizens, with a broader scope in the inclusion of territorial planning and participatory budgeting, allowing the interreligious sector to be established as an essential ally in social cooperation for public excellence and sustainable development.

The participation and cooperation of the interreligious sector in participatory territorial development planning and participatory budgeting are supported by scientific evidence based on studies conducted in economically developed countries such as the United States. According to the 2021 Gallup survey, religion was considered “very important” by 49% of Americans. Likewise, the World Economic Forum has affirmed that religion contributes approximately 1.2 trillion dollars annually in socioeconomic value to the economy of the United States, citing the 2016 study by the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation.

This study is primarily based on three general categories of contribution from religion: religious congregations; religious institutions such as universities, charitable organizations, health systems, and businesses related to or inspired by faith.

Likewise, the World Economic Forum demonstrates how religious groups, interreligious alliances, and faith-motivated investors establish innovative partnerships with the private sector to advance efforts in areas such as climate action, responsible technology, among others (World Economic Forum, 2017).

Furthermore, the World Economic Forum confirms in the report Faith in Action the global contribution of religious leaders, stating that "we cannot afford to ignore the impact of religion and spirituality on today's interconnected challenges" (World Economic Forum, 2024), considering that eighty-five percent of people worldwide adhere to a religious or spiritual tradition. This reality contributes to the construction of value-based societies whose members participate in workplaces and promote the common good (Pew Research Center, 2022).

Religion is therefore promoted as a partner for change, in accordance with its positive impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, 2024), consolidating multi-thematic social dialogue in spaces of exchange between the interreligious sector and the government. These exchanges take place within analytical and conflict-resolution frameworks in environmental, social, economic, technological, and institutional dimensions, through participatory planning processes within Public Policy for territorial development.

In this regard, religious actors — including traditional religious institutions and interreligious organizations — address common challenges through partnerships with businesses, governments, and other stakeholders in pursuit of sustainable development (World Economic Forum, 2024).

According to the United Nations (2019), successful cooperation with religious organizations requires that political institutions and other partners become part of a shared framework of sustainable contribution through Public Policy oriented toward the common good, as well as interreligious dialogue aimed at resolving human needs between States and a collaborative citizenry with a religious foundation (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — UNESCO, 2019).

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM COMMITTEES

THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE PARTICIPATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR IN COLOMBIA

Abstract

This article focuses on the importance of the Religious Freedom Committees created under the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, as mechanisms to implement effective measures for the protection of the human right to Religious Freedom. Their functions are highlighted as being separate from any form of religious practice and closely aligned with the pursuit of legal equity for all members of churches and their organizations. The article explains the actual roles of the actors involved in the sector and concludes with a reflection on how the greatest obstacle to the exercise of citizen participation often lies within the members themselve

Introduction

Religious Freedom is a Human Right grounded in the principles of equality and non-discrimination, established in various international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. These rights have been adopted both universally and regionally through the Organization of American States, which developed the Inter-American system for the protection of Human Rights (Cervantes, 2009).

From its general formulation, it was established tha**t "Every person has the right to freely profess a religious belief and to manifest and practice it in public and in private,"** as stated in Article III of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (Organization of American States — OAS, 1948).

These international instruments served as a guide for Colombia to adopt this universal framework within its Constitution, establishing the first steps toward the development of the right to Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and freedom of conscience.

This implied respect for individual and collective beliefs, as well as for their individual and collective expression.

The State and its authorities are obligated to promote, respect, and take action to protect this right. These measures must be reflected not only in legal provisions but also in the administrative practice of public institutions. For this reason, citizen participation by religious leaders and their communities becomes the fundamental pillar for the highest expression of the promotion and respect of this right, as it enables these communities to take an active role in decision-making processes within their territories.

Origin and regulatory framework of the Religious Freedom Committees

On March 6, 2018, Colombia adopted the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, with the general objective of "providing guarantees for the exercise of the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship in Colombia" (Decree 437 of 2018 – Normative Manager, n.d.).

This policy also established the orientation of different actions aimed at safeguarding the exercise of the right and recognizing the religious sector and its organizations, including, as stated in subsection seven of Decree 437 of 2018, "intersectoral, interinstitutional, and territorial coordination within the framework of guaranteeing the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship." In this way, an essential mechanism was created for the adoption of effective measures to prevent violations of the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, as follows:
"The Ministry of the Interior shall design a strategy for the adoption of measures to prevent and impede attacks against the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship and its exercise. In this strategy, the competent entities shall be convened to define the appropriate actions to be taken, within the framework of the constitutional order and the rule of law in force. For this purpose, **the creation of working groups, committees, and/or other relevant bodies shall be promoted."**

In this regard, it is evident that within the adoption of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, the legislator explicitly established the figure of these committees, which must exist in order to adopt measures that prevent violations of the right and its exercise. Therefore, they must be protected and supported by the State, with the purpose of strengthening them, and never with the intention of eliminating or replacing them.

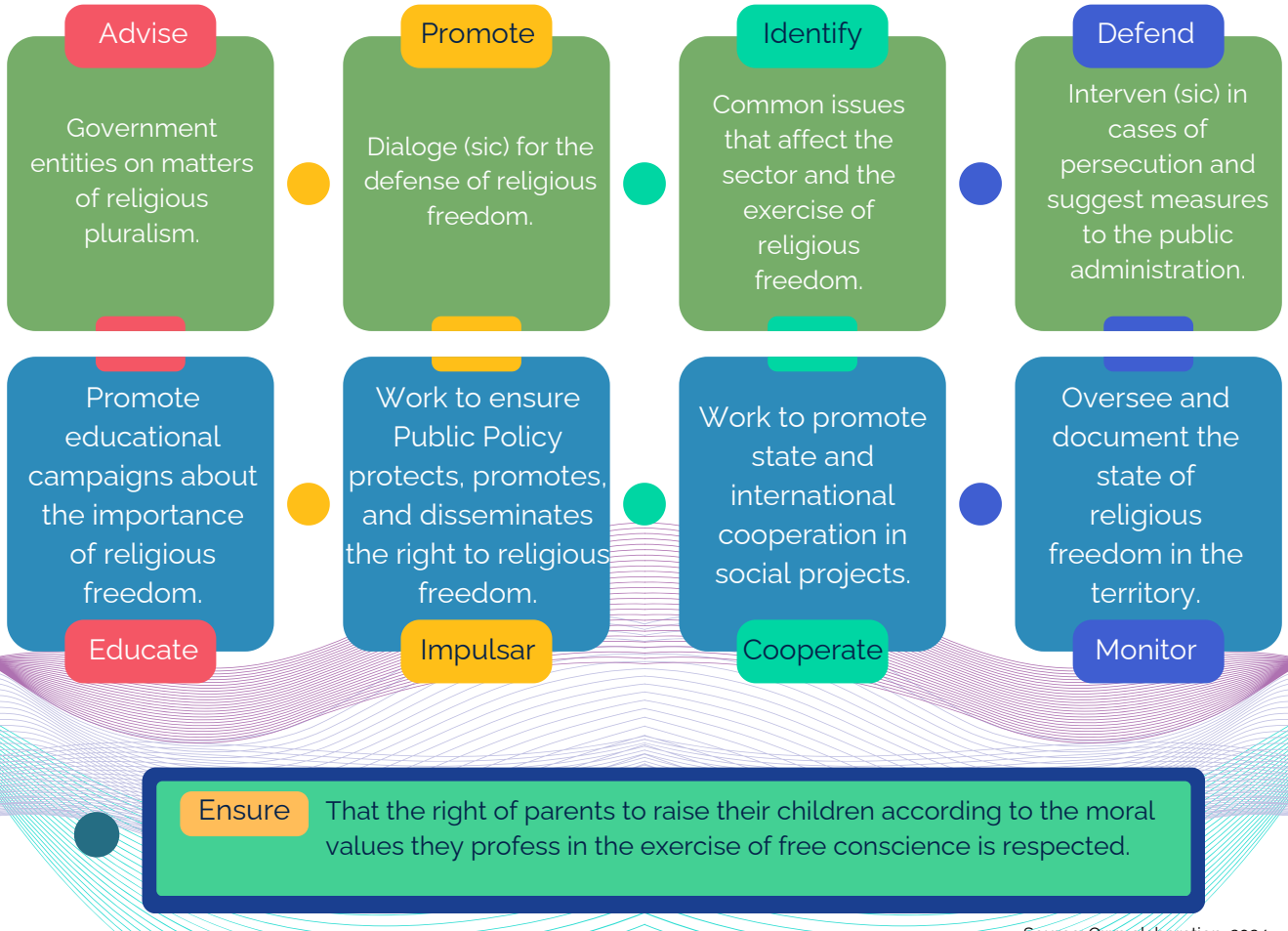
An effective means of strengthening by the State is that these committees, at the national, departmental, and municipal levels, be formally established through decrees, agreements, or ordinances that provide them with regulatory authority, as well as administrative and logistical support for their operation. It should not be overlooked that the religious leaders who are part of these committees represent a significant portion of the population actively committed to their fait

FUNCTIONS

Their primary objective is to act as an advisory body to government authorities in all matters related to churches and religious organizations. These committees are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Public Policy concerning the religious sector and for carrying out actions that enable the protection of this Human Right.

The success of these committees depends on the participation of at least one leader from each religious expression present within the territory. It is clear that, from a doctrinal perspective, they constitute a sector with irreconcilable differences; therefore, their discussions must focus on specific actions aimed at protecting their leaders and their communities from religious hatred, discriminatory fanaticism, and discriminatory actions by the State, private entities, or organizations that act against the sector.
Likewise, these committees safeguard the right of parents to raise their children according to their moral values and firmly denounce any attack against any entity belonging to the religious sector or its organizations.

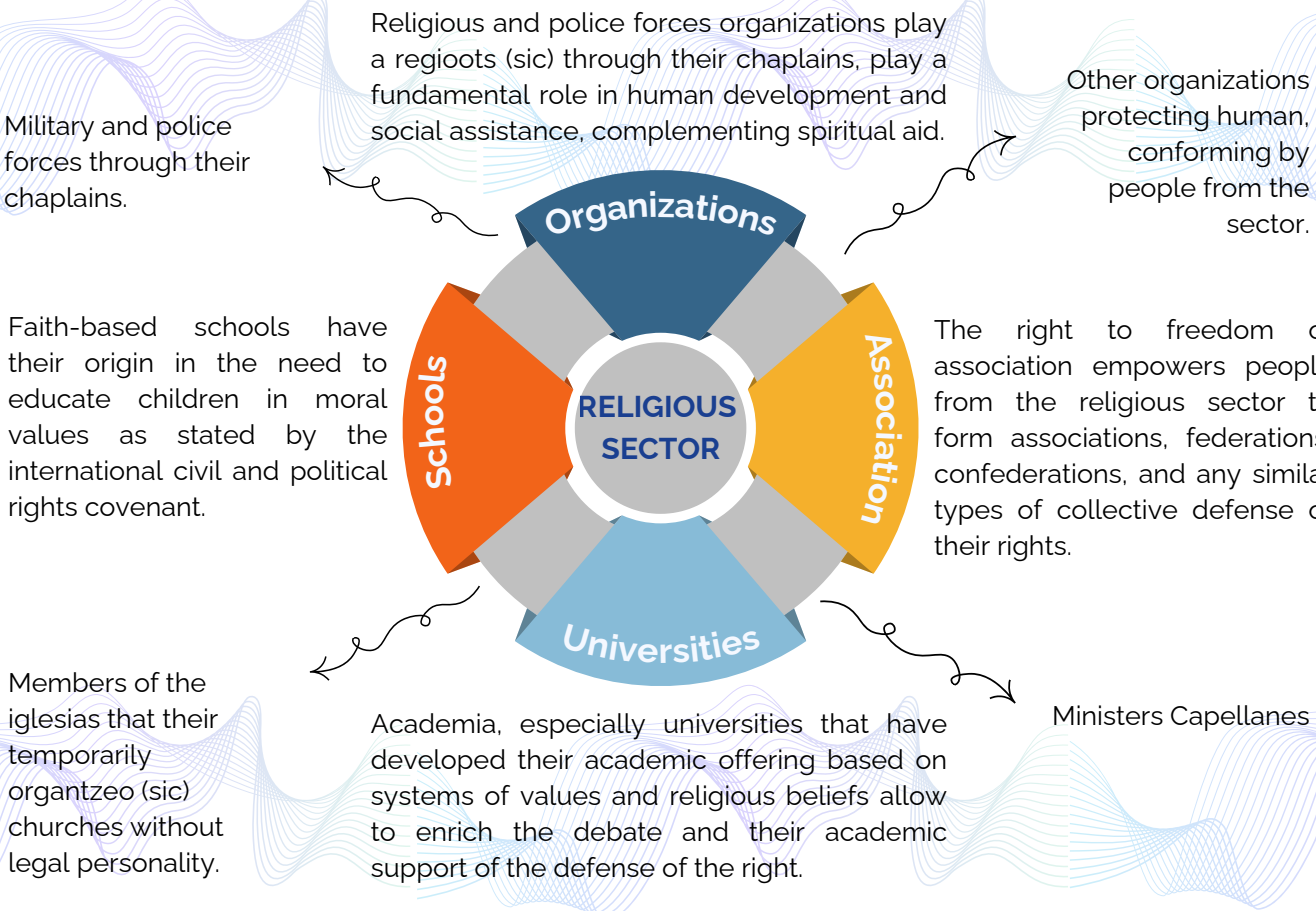
Main Actions



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

ACTORS OF THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM COMMITTEES

The establishment of Religious Freedom Committees within a given territory must include the participation of all actors belonging to the religious sector. Below are the principal actors who should have voice and vote in order to ensure balance and the comprehensive participation of all individuals who make up the sector in practice.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

Organizational structure

President. This position must always be held by the chief executive authority: the Governor in the case of departments, and the Mayor in the case of municipalities. This ensures that the committee has real participation in the decisions of the Administration and directly raises awareness among local authorities regarding the social contribution and the economic savings generated by the entities of the religious sector in the social sphere.

Technical Secretariat. This role is generally assigned to one of the cabinet secretaries, who will be responsible for implementing and operationalizing all decisions adopted by the committee.

Vice Presidency. These positions are usually created for protocol and recognition purposes for members of the sector; however, they generally lack decision-making authority because they are not part of the Administration.

Members. Participation is granted to those individuals who, in accordance with decrees, municipal agreements, or ordinances, are authorized to take part. Nevertheless, the ideal situation is that all churches and their organizations with a presence in the territory have a seat, voice, and vote through at least one representative. In some cases, local administrations request proof of residence to verify that participants genuinely belong to the territory. It is considered good practice to require a letter in which the religious entity certifies the representation of each religious leader.

Members may also include cabinet secretaries, the Office of the Inspector General, the Municipal Ombudsman, the National Police, the National Army, the Police Inspector, and any other authority that directly belongs to the Committee.

Guests. Any entity or individual authorized by the administrative act that created the Committee may participate as a guest. Guests shall not have voting rights and may speak only upon request of the Committee**.**

Regulations. The Committee may establish its own internal regulations within the limits of the administrative act by which it was created. As a committee, it does not possess legal personality.

Topics to be addressed by the Committees

Without a doubt, the principal mission of the Religious Freedom Committees is to achieve actions such as ensuring that each territory adopts a Public Policy on Religious Freedom that strengthens the sector; that a Religious Freedom liaison be appointed to exclusively manage the relationship with the religious sector; that economic resources be allocated within development plans for the implementation of the Public Policy; that Territorial Land-Use Plans be compatible with the needs of the religious sector; that the religious sector be included in participatory budgets in order to develop social programs; that territorial entities establish cooperation policies with the religious sector allowing the implementation of social projects; that initiatives created in general or interreligious project banks be executed through operators that guarantee transparency in the management of resources; that schools located within the territories respect the right of children and their parents to receive alternative instruction when they do not identify with the religious education provided; that public events allow the participation of any religious leader; that no barriers to employment exist on religious grounds; that religious literacy programs be created for public officials in order to prevent and combat religious discrimination within institutions; that programs be developed to harmonize rights and allow parking in areas adjacent to places of worship; that the religious sector be incorporated into security plans and its communities recognized as vulnerable

populations; that safe perimeters be established around churches prohibiting the sale and consumption of psychoactive substances; that adequate access be provided for persons with disabilities; that public transportation stops be located near places of worship and that routes pass close to churches and their organizations; that the construction of bicycle lanes and bicycle systems near places of worship be promoted; that training programs be provided by local administrations in different modalities to reduce noise levels; and that neighborhood residents be trained, through community action boards, on the social importance of churches within their communities.
These and many other topics are unrelated to doctrinal matters, but rather concern the defense and promotion of this Human Right.

REFLECTION

We may be enjoying one of the most robust systems for the protection of the Human Right to Religious Freedom in the region, according to studies conducted by the Observatory on Religious Freedom in Latin America. We are protected by international norms, by the laws of the Republic, by departmental ordinances, and by municipal agreements. Governments strive to open spaces for our participation; however, the greatest barrier to achieving Religious Freedom continues to be ourselves as a religious sector.

We find it difficult to accept one another as human beings amid our differences. We create barriers and obstacles among ourselves; we resist the idea of working together with those who hold different perspectives on life. We attack one another, and in the midst of a violent world that looks to churches as a light of hope, society expects from all of us an example of integrity, acts of forgiveness, and reconciliation—never in doctrinal matters, but in what concerns our shared humanity, so that every person, and our children, may live according to their convictions.

Ultimately, that is the purpose of defending a Human Right: to leave a moral legacy. What weakens us as a religious sector are divisions and those who promote them. Let us work together and take action so that our communities may live without fear and profess their faith with the certainty that no one will coerce them, persecute them, or even take their lives. Let us work for the protection of the right; after all, what identifies us all is the desire to improve ourselves and to become better people each day. We know how to grow, and we know that, in the end, we wish to live in peace with ourselves and with others.

.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LIAISONS GUARDIANS OF THE HUMAN RIGHT

Summary

Religious Freedom liaisons in Colombia represent a highly significant development in the evolution of the State in protecting the Human Right to Religious Freedom, as they reduce the gap between the State and the religious sector. They emerged from the adoption of the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship and have evolved over the years, learning to adapt to religious leaders and their communities, assuming positions of increasing importance and becoming guardians and defenders of this Human Right.

Introduction

Among the achievements reached in the defense of Religious Freedom over more than thirty years, and following the enactment of the 1991 Constitution, is the establishment of a public official exclusively responsible for managing the relationship between the State and churches and their organizations. This situation was not always the case. Before Colombia adopted its Public Policy on Religious Freedom, members of the religious sector had to communicate with different public officials who were not sensitized to the social and spiritual contribution of the religious sector, which at times led to acts of discrimination, especially against those belonging to minority or Protestant beliefs.

The lack of recognition of the Human Right to Religious Freedom, together with insufficient understanding of the religious phenomenon, often led public officials to irrational misunderstandings and, consequently, to the systematic violation of Human Rights.

It is necessary for governments, public officials, and the judicial branch to fully understand the social role of entities belonging to the religious sector, in order to prevent situations that may expose their communities to violations of their rights (Dennis P. Petri, 2021).

BIRTH OF THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LIAISON FIGURE

The adoption of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom on March 6, 2018, opened the way for the creation in Colombia of an environment of greater understanding regarding Religious Freedom, by "strengthening the institutional capacities of national and territorial public entities and their coordination in the recognition and guarantee of the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship." This measure implied that departmental and municipal governments would begin a process of reconciliation with this Human Right, which is notable considering that, at the time the document was signed, twenty-seven years had already passed since the adoption of the 1991 Constitution.

The delay in the State's response to this matter is difficult to understand. Some journalists indicate that this period was particularly complex for Colombia due to multiple national challenges, which caused certain fundamental rights to receive priority while others did not have the opportunity to develop. Restoring this situation through the adoption of the Public Policy constitutes one of the most significant and extraordinary achievements of the religious sector.Thus, Article 2.4.2.4.2.7.4 of Decree 437 of 2018 enabled the appointment of officials who would serve as interlocutors for the promotion of this right, as follows: "Promotion of nation–territory dialogue strategies. The Ministry of the Interior, respecting territorial autonomy, **shall promote, within territorial entities, the designation of liaisons who will serve as interlocutors** between the territory and the Ministry of the Interior in matters related to the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship."

EVOLUTION OF THE LIAISON ROLE

Over time, and with the goodwill of presidents, governors, and mayors, Religious Freedom liaisons began a process of learning and training regarding the universal right to Religious Freedom. Many of them belonged to the religious sector and therefore possessed sensitivity toward their relationship with religious communities, understanding that the sector itself was also learning how to interact with the State.

At the beginning, for understandable reasons, there was a certain degree of resentment and distrust. It must be remembered that this relationship was in its early stages, and neither side fully knew how to act. In some cases, religious leaders attempted to use the spaces provided by the State for the development of their doctrines, which was not always well received by public administrations. This situation led to a process of adaptation and mutual understanding focused on the defense of the Human Right to Religious Freedom. Ultimately, both liaisons and religious leaders shared the same purpose: the protection of that right.

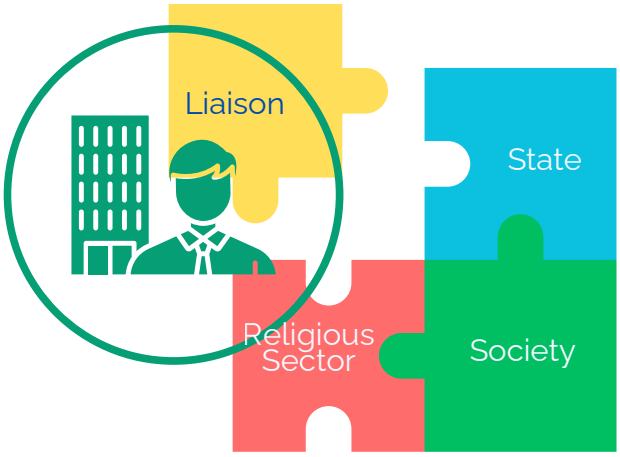
In this process, literacy in Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience was essential, as well as the understanding of the different dimensions of the right and its practical application. This contributed to the construction of a more balanced relationship,

preventing these institutional spaces from being used for doctrinal purposes. In 2021, the Municipal Administration of Funza, Cundinamarca, published the first book on Religious Freedom in the country, with a strong and symbolic title that would mark an important milestone in this State–church relationship was reflected in the work titled "Religious Freedom: Everything but Religious," which contributed to opening the understanding of the Human Right to Religious Freedom and focused efforts on ensuring that every person in Colombia may freely practice their beliefs and participate in their religious communities on the basis of respect.

This path has not been easy for those who have served as Religious Freedom liaisons, since educating the religious sector about this right has become a challenge, due to the lack of knowledge on both sides. For this reason, academics and scholars have played a key role in improving these processes, strengthening the relationship between the parties and establishing roadmaps for effective work in favor of communities.

Religious Freedom liaisons throughout the national territory have undergone many changes and taken different forms. Many have been appointed as directors, coordinators, senior advisors, or even cabinet-level secretaries, demonstrating that Religious Freedom has evolved beyond a merely functional responsibility to become a matter of social implementation, generating benefits for religious communities. These include the development of diploma programs, training in risk management, the designation of citywide signage recognizing places of worship of different denominations, participation in international initiatives, and the strengthening of coordination with family commissioners' offices and police inspection authorities.

Serving as a Religious Freedom liaison, regardless of the specific title assigned, has required a high level of commitment, seriousness, and sensitivity, even above personal convictions—not in order to change or renounce them, but to understand that all persons who belong to the religious sector deserve respect and consideration, since they carry out an unquestionable social contribution.



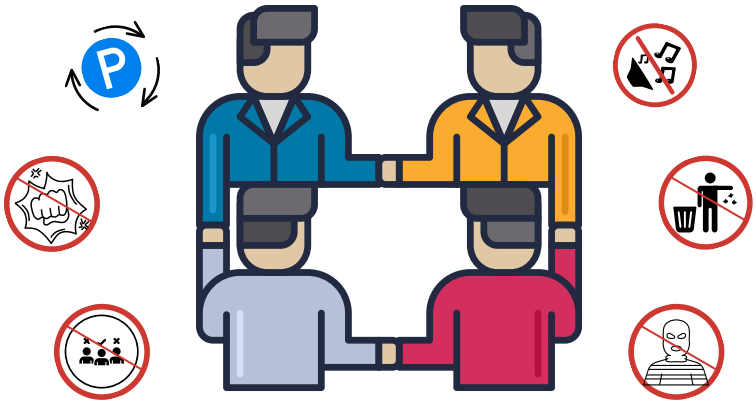
Source: Own elaboration. 2024

LIAISONS AS GUARDIANS OF THE HUMAN RIGHT TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, FREEDOM OF WORSHIP, AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

A person serving as a Religious Freedom liaison must, in addition to professional qualifications, possess skills that define them as a defender of Human Rights. Despite the efforts being made to restore respect for Religious Pluralism, cases of violence and open discrimination continue to occur; therefore, the liaison becomes a guardian of this right.

According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, these may be defined as "any persons or groups of persons who strive to promote Human Rights, ranging from intergovernmental organizations based in major cities around the world to individuals working within their local communities. Defenders may be of any gender, of different ages, come from any part of the world, and have any professional or other background" (About Human Rights Defenders, n.d.).

This role, in addition to being protected by labor regulations, is also covered by international treaties. A Human Rights defender is characterized by the activity carried out rather than by the organization for which they work; their vocation lies in the work performed for the communities they serve. This status allows the development of their duties to be carried out with strong commitment and dedication.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

Religious organizations are fundamental social actors within communities; however, their work may be affected by neighborhood-related situations in which the Religious Freedom liaison must act with great skill to harmonize the rights of all parties involved. Situations such as noise levels or adjacent parking are common and must be addressed with fairness so that both members of religious congregations may enjoy their Freedom of Worship and the surrounding community may enjoy the peaceful use of their neighborhoods. In all cases, it must be understood that the solution to these situations cannot be the suppression of the activity itself.

The resolution of conflicts cannot consist in restricting the exercise of a right; rather, the appropriate response must be based on coexistence and the peaceful resolution of differences. It is advisable that, when addressing these situations, awareness-raising campaigns be conducted for all those involved, so that coexistence may ultimately be achieved in harmony, without abuse or violence.

LAND USE PLANNING IN COLOMBIA:

A CHALLENGE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

Abstract

Land use planning in Colombia, regulated by Law 388 of 1997, presents challenges for Religious Freedom. Planning instruments such as POT/PBOT/EOT frequently contain ambiguities when classifying places of worship, creating uncertainty regarding their location and operation. The lack of regulatory clarity makes it difficult to construct and develop religious spaces, particularly in urban areas where demand for such spaces is high.

A model of POT/PBOT/EOT in matters related to Religious Freedom is proposed, aimed at facilitating the location of places of worship in all activity zones, eliminating prohibited areas while establishing mitigation conditions. In addition, the inclusion of "interreligious spaces or neutral worship spaces" within planning instruments is suggested, without affecting existing places of worship. This analysis seeks to contribute to the debate on land use planning in Colombia and to generate proposals that strengthen the protection of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship within the framework of territorial development.

Keywords

Land Use Planning, Colombia, Religious Sector, Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, Territorial Planning, Land Use, Facilities, Interreligious Spaces, Neutral Worship Spaces

Introduction

Land use planning in Colombia, governed by Law 388 of 1997, establishes a legal framework for territorial planning and management, with the objective of promoting the social and ecological function of property, the prevalence of the general interest over private interest, and the equitable distribution of burdens and benefits (García, 2018). However, its implementation has faced several challenges, including limited institutional capacity, lack of resources, informal urban expansion, and difficulties in integrating risk management (Ministry of Housing, City and Territory, 2017).

This research, conducted during the years 2021 and 2022, developed a participatory action research (PAR) methodology, selected for its inclusive and collaborative approach, which facilitates the active participation of those involved in the research process, promoting empowerment and critical reflection among participants in order to understand the influence of the religious sector in the formulation of land use planning instruments. In addition, this methodology stands out for overcoming the traditional domination–dependence relationship between researcher and object of study.
Fals Borda (2008) maintains that participatory action research establishes a horizontal dialogue and authentic participation among the subjects involved in the research process. This approach is complemented by the ideas of Paulo Freire (1997), who highlights the importance of dialogue as a tool for social transformation, where critical reflection on reality allows participants to become active agents of their own history.

The combination of these approaches makes possible a type of research that not only seeks to understand the difficulties faced by religious entities and faith-based organizations regarding the location of places of worship in municipalities throughout Colombia, but also aims to empower the affected communities so that they may actively participate in the search for solutions to these challenges.
The study is based on semi-structured interviews with religious leaders, planning officials, policy formulators, and Religious Freedom liaisons, as well as focus groups with members of different religious communities and municipal government officials. In addition, 200 Land Use Plans from different Colombian municipalities were analyzed in order to identify the various classifications assigned to places of worship and the regulations governing their location and operation.

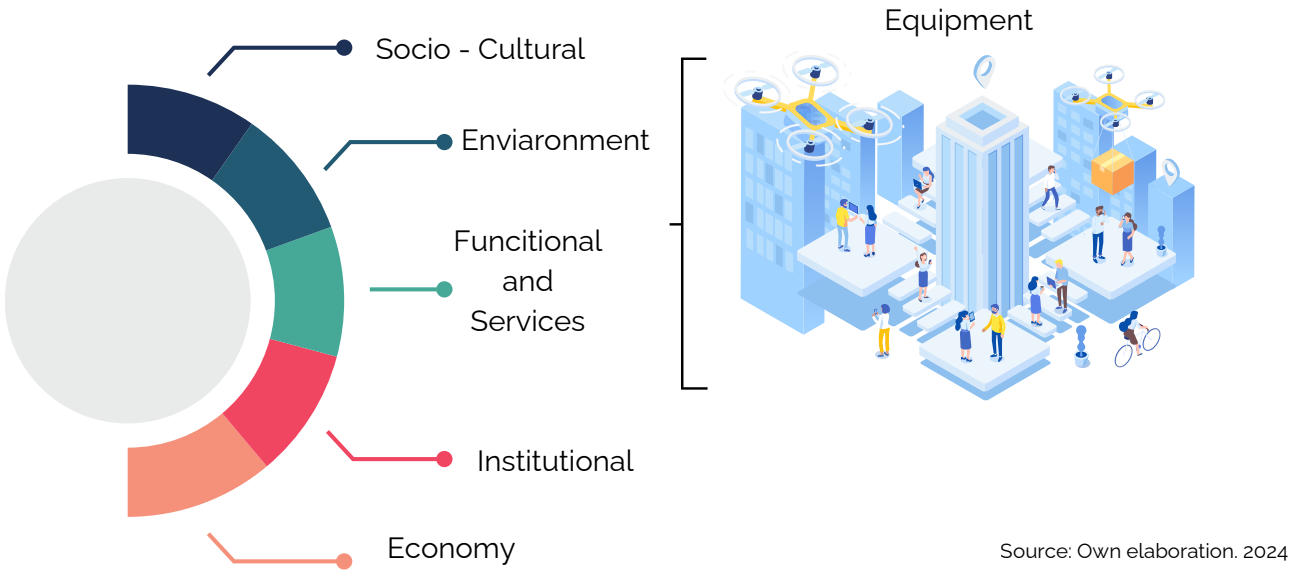
The findings of the research reveal that land use planning regulations are insufficiently specific when referring to places of worship, generating uncertainty and possible restrictions on Religious Freedom. Based on these findings, an ideal POT model is proposed that facilitates the location of places of worship and the performance of religious activities.

The implementation of this model will be structured in stages, including pilot projects in several municipalities, training workshops, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure impact and adjust policies according to results and continuous feedback.

Land Use Planning: Worship Facilities

Land Use Plans (POT) in Colombia are classified into two generations, differentiated by their historical context and priorities. First-generation plans, prepared between 1998 and 2005 following the enactment of Law 388 of 1997, focused on formalizing territorial planning and controlling urban growth. In contrast, second-generation plans, formulated after 2005 upon the expiration of the first plans, adopt a more comprehensive approach. These later plans address issues such as risk management, environmental protection, and regional integration, using more efficient management tools.

A key difference between the two generations is that first-generation plans, being more general in nature, imposed fewer restrictions on worship facilities, whereas second-generation plans tend to be more restrictive in this regard.
Furthermore, the regulatory classification of temples or places of worship within Colombian land use planning presents several ambiguities. Although Law 388 of 1997 and the Unified Regulatory Decree of the Housing, City and Territory Sector refer to the need for "collective facilities" for worship, the specific category within the classification of social or collective facilities is not clearly defined. These facilities are included within the occupation model in the functional and service dimension, grouped within the system of collective facilities.
This implies that their configuration within the territory must consider how they are constituted, how they are located, and how they relate to one another, both in urban and rural areas.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

One of the key issues within these planning instruments concerns facilities. The category of "facility" in the context of land use planning in Colombia has evolved significantly throughout history. Initially, it referred to the provision of public-use goods, such as schools, clinics, and green areas, with the objective of integrating and coordinating dispersed urban interventions (Arteaga, Urrea, & Pedraza, 2012). This initial vision, influenced by the Industrial Revolution and urban growth, has evolved toward a broader understanding of facilities as collective spaces that promote social interaction, encounter, and the construction of everyday life (Arteaga et al., 2012).

One of the key issues within these planning instruments concerns facilities. The category of "facility" in the context of land use planning in Colombia has evolved significantly throughout history. Initially, it referred to the provision of public-use goods, such as schools, clinics, and green areas, with the objective of integrating and coordinating dispersed urban interventions (Arteaga, Urrea, & Pedraza, 2012). This initial vision, influenced by the Industrial Revolution and urban growth, has evolved toward a broader understanding of facilities as collective spaces that promote social interaction, encounter, and the construction of everyday life (Arteaga et al., 2012). In this regard, the research of Romero Torres and Ovalle Garay (2021) is noteworthy, as it proposes the concept of the "worship facility as a device," which reinterprets these spaces as multifunctional elements that respond to community needs. In these marginalized areas, interventions by local governments are uncommon; instead, non-governmental organizations tend to have a stronger presence, focusing their efforts on community work aimed at the development of projects.

In Spain, urban planning considers the need for places of worship for different religious denominations within the public sphere, arguing that Religious Freedom requires physical spaces for the exercise of worship and related activities. The term "religious facility" refers to physical locations intended for worship and religious activities, emphasizing the need for a general system of religious use that guarantees the availability of such facilities. In addition, the reservation of public service land for religious facilities is mentioned, suggesting that publicly owned land should be allocated for the construction of facilities of general interest, including religious ones (Guardia Hernández, 2010).

Religious Pluralism in Colombia and Urban Regulations

Religious Pluralism in Colombia is a phenomenon in constant evolution. Studies such as the National Survey on Religious Pluralism 2019 (Beltrán & Larotta, 2020) reveal a complex panorama that includes the growth of Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism, a decline in Catholicism, and an increase in

the number of people who identify as believers without affiliation to any religion, as well as atheists or agnostics.

Statutory Law 133 of 1994 in Colombia allows churches to establish places of worship; however, they must comply with the urban regulations established in the Land Use Plan (POT) of each municipality. These regulations may be consulted at municipal planning offices and are determined by the competent municipal authority. The Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior (Ministry of the Interior, 2019) recommends that properties intended for religious worship be classified under the use category "Churches," with the designation "private institutional facility" and property type "religious," in order to ensure compliance with current regulations. The pluralism of religious denominations and the historical integration of Catholic and Protestant churches within traditional urban models contrast with the construction of new places of worship belonging to other denominations, which must comply with the current urban planning framework.

Land use planning in Colombia must respect first- and second-generation rights guaranteed by the 1991 Constitution. First-generation rights—such as the right to life, personal liberty, security, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and Religious Freedom—ensure individual liberty. Second-generation rights—such as the right to work, education, health, and housing—seek to guarantee equality and social welfare. Territorial planning directly influences the exercise of these rights by ensuring spaces for religious practice, such as temples and worship centers, and by allowing the creation and activity of religious communities in different territorial contexts.

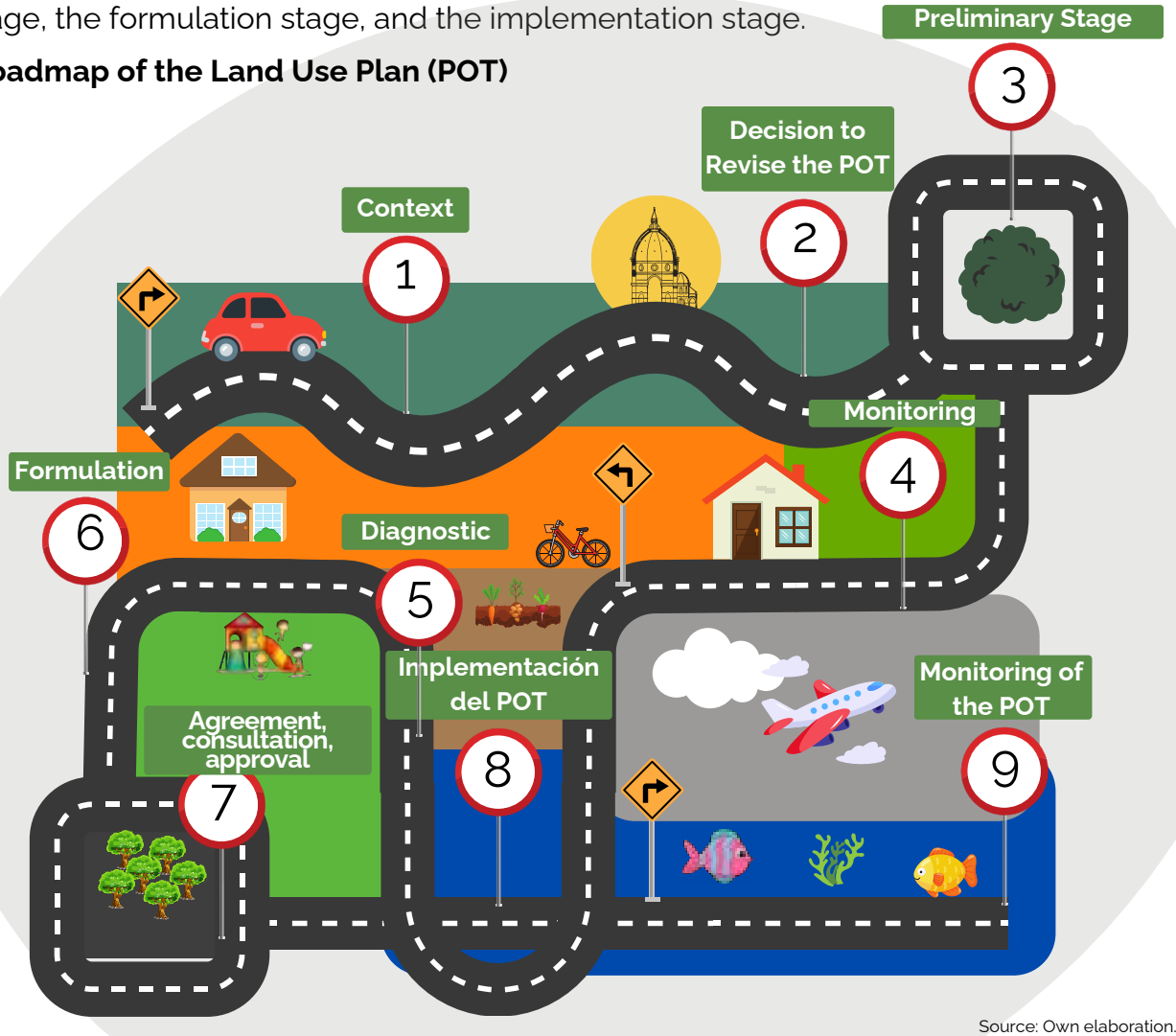
Keys to Understanding the Municipal Land Use Planning Process as a Tool for the Development of Religious Freedom

The website_www.colombiaot.gov.co is the official portal of Colombia's Land Use Planning Information System (SIOT), an integrated platform created by the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute (IGAC) to facilitate access to information related to territorial planning in the country. Through this portal, it is possible to conduct a comprehensive review of the revision and adjustment processes of municipal planning instruments.

The portal proposes a procedure for the revision and adjustment of planning instruments, indicating that this process should include the evaluation of financial resources, the definition of priorities, territorial diagnosis, decision-making for land use organization, consultation and approval with different authorities, implementation of actions to achieve the proposed objectives, determination of land financing mechanisms, land management in coordination with the Development Plan, and continuous monitoring in order to evaluate impact and make the necessary adjustments.

Within the nine steps proposed as the roadmap of the Land Use Plan (POT), it is essential that the religious sector participate in at least three of them: the diagnostic stage, the formulation stage, and the implementation stage.

Roadmap of the Land Use Plan (POT)



Source: Own elaboration. 2024
References: https://www.colombiaot.gov.co/ruta/

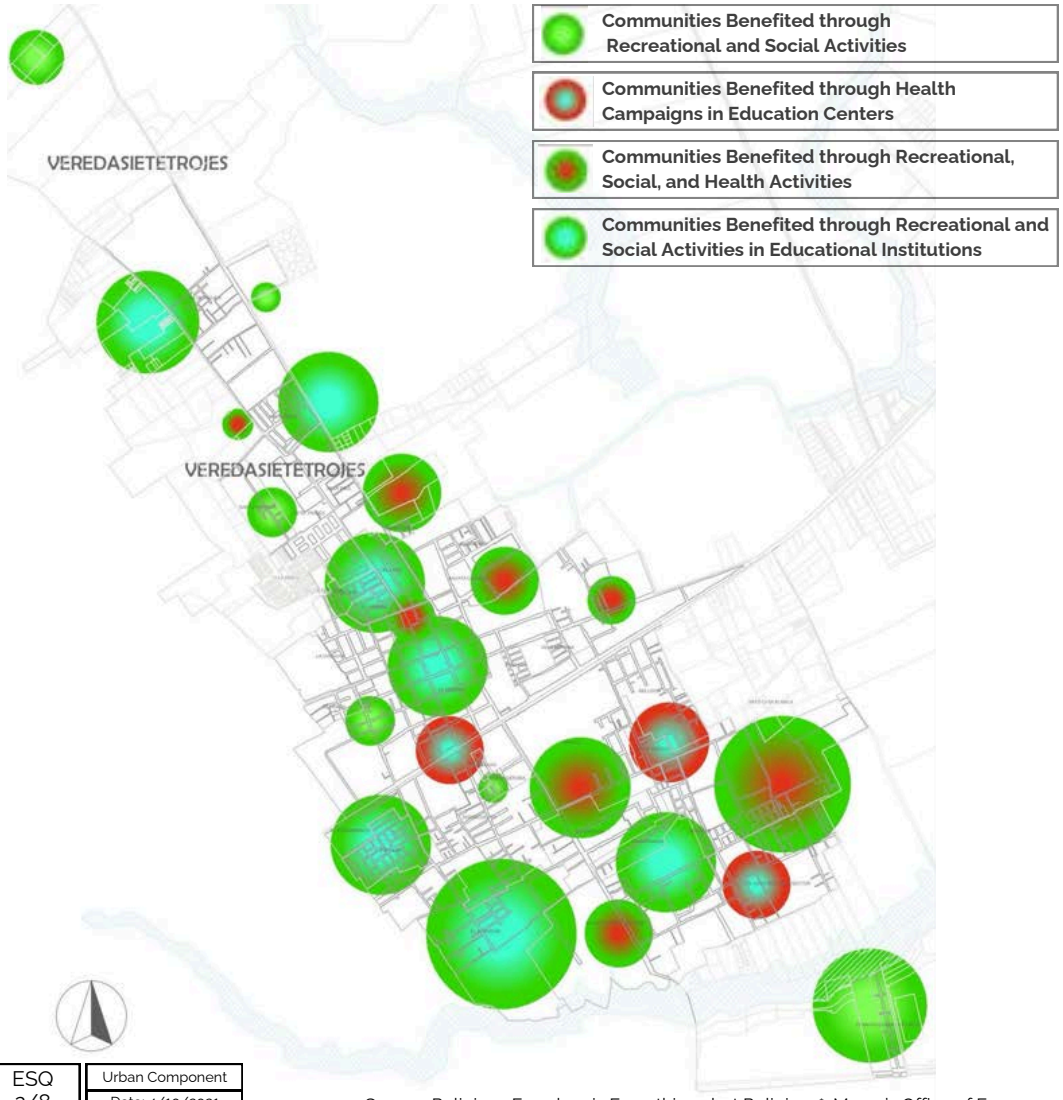
Since the diagnostic stage seeks to determine the current condition of the territory, it is necessary to clearly understand the present situation of the religious sector within the municipality. For the religious sector, the Land Use Plan (POT) becomes a determining instrument in the configuration of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, as it establishes the conditions for the construction, operation, and development of spaces intended for religious practice.

For this stage, the Analysis Matrix for POT/PBOT/EOT will be presented later, as it allows the evaluation of the current condition of the occupation model in relation to worship facilities. At this point, it is important to note that the lack of awareness regarding the social contribution of the religious sector to the communities in which temples are located prevents a proper understanding of the importance of their universal accessibility and location.

It is essential that urban planning not focus exclusively on aspects such as health, security, or public space, but also take into account the educational and social role performed by religious entities in the comprehensive development of the community. As an example, the census of the religious sector conducted in Funza, Cundinamarca, by the Municipal Administration revealed the presence of 44 religious entities and organizations, including churches, schools, nursing homes, and foundations, all of which contribute significantly to the social fabric of the municipality.

This census demonstrated the need for urban planning that considers the specific needs of the religious sector, including the strategic location of places of worship to facilitate community access, the provision of adequate public services, and the promotion of an environment of tolerance and respect toward Religious Pluralism (Municipal Administration of Funza, 2021).

Impact zones of the activities carried out by the religious sector in the municipality of Funza, Cundinamarca



ESQ 2/8	Urban Component
	Date: 4/10/2021

Source: Religious Freedom is Everythings but Religious", Mayor's Office of Funza, 2021.

During the formulation stage, which includes the decision-making process for land use planning and is reflected in the components and contents of the plan, as well as in the procedures of consultation, coordination, approval, and adoption by the authorities established by law, it is essential that the religious sector participate actively in the participation committees with clear and well-structured proposals. For this reason, this study presents a Land Use Planning model specifically designed for the religious sector.

Finally, during the implementation stage, the necessary actions must be carried out to make the objectives of the Land Use Plan effective, particularly in financial matters, institutional capacity, technical development, and the ability to convene and reach agreements among stakeholders. This stage will make it possible to materialize what has been proposed in the Land Use Planning model, ensuring respect for Religious Freedom and serving as a foundation for the formulation process.

Required exercise for the development of the Planning Instrument Analysis Matrix

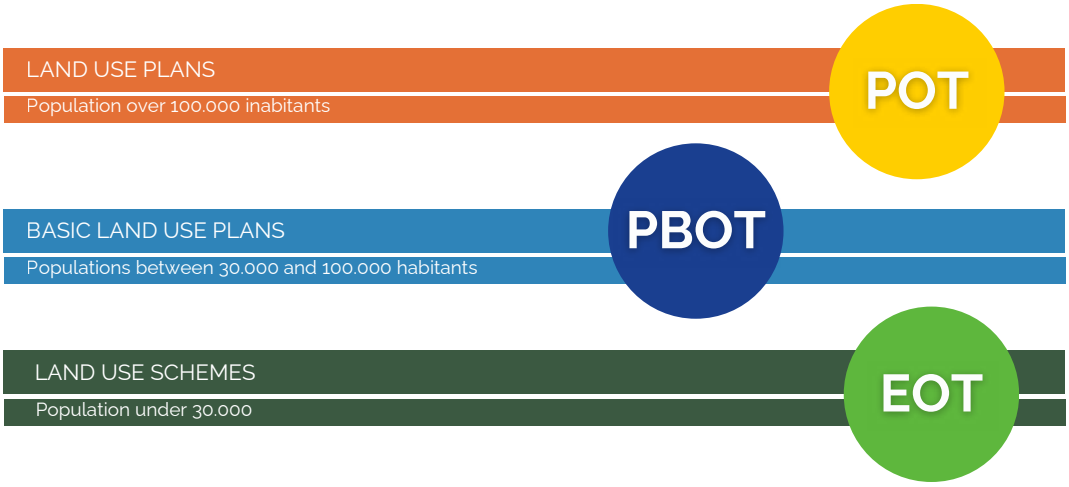
The analysis of the current status of Land Use Plans (POT, PBOT, EOT, POD) conducted in this research, together with the proposals for revision made by territorial entities in Colombia regarding regulations applicable to worship facilities, reveals a complex and concerning reality. Despite the efforts of the religious sector and certain public administrations, systemic obstacles persist that hinder fair and inclusive urban planning for the religious sector.

The detailed study of the current status of 200 Land Use Plans (POT, PBOT, EOT, POD), carried out through semi-structured interviews based on the established methodology, reveals a complex and troubling situation regarding the location of places of worship. The findings show the need to confront excessive urban and environmental restrictions in cases where land use is not expressly prohibited. However, in situations where such use is prohibited, Religious Freedom is limited, which represents a significant challenge.

In order to understand the situation faced by religious entities in relation to land use planning, a Land Use Planning Analysis Matrix has been developed, applicable to Municipal Land Use Plans (POT/PBOT/EOT).

Below, the municipal-level instruments are described. In general, all of them are Land Use Plans, but they vary according to the number of inhabitants. Their complexity depends on each municipality and its historical development, including how the plans were originally formulated and how they have been modified over the years.

Types of Land Use Plans



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.
Reference : https://minvivienda.gov.co/viceministerio-de-vivienda/espacio-urbano-y-territorial/plan-ordenamiento-territorial/pot

A reality that must be addressed is that most territorial planning instruments are outdated, and those that have been updated—particularly in municipalities lacking sufficient resources for specialized studies—do not adequately meet urban planning needs. This places the country in a difficult situation, as development, equity, and well-being largely depend on proper territorial planning; however, Colombia has not fully achieved this objective (Saldías, 2018).

Therefore, territorial planning must progress and evolve. How can this be achieved? It is necessary to enact legislation so that structural guidelines for the formulation of Territorial Planning Plans are established at the national level. This would prevent administrative inefficiencies and allow the majority of existing needs to be addressed from a comprehensive national perspective. Such an approach would promote development at all levels and remove regulatory barriers that currently hinder investment and the construction of infrastructure throughout the territory.

For the religious sector, the challenge is even greater, since in addition to facing outdated planning instruments, there is also a lack of knowledge among public officials regarding the operation of places of worship. As a result, many of these places currently operate under restricted or prohibited land-use classifications within commercial or even residential zones that no longer correspond to their present function. The problem becomes more severe for new places of worship, which encounter barriers that are often insurmountable, thereby directly affecting the exercise of Freedom of Worship.

The analysis matrix identifies problematic areas, formulates critical questions, and proposes approaches for urban planning that is more inclusive and respectful of Religious Freedom. This matrix serves as a fundamental guide for evaluating and improving current planning instruments, as well as the proposals for their revision, ensuring equal treatment for all religious expressions and promoting the active participation of the religious sector in urban planning.

Analysis Matrix for POT/PBOT/EOT

To carry out the analysis, it is necessary to identify the relevant aspect, understand the problem, formulate key questions, consider examples of impact, and pose the evaluative question. The result of this process is the development of approaches that are compatible with the religious sector and its communities.

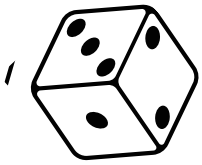


	PROBLEM	IMPACT EXAMPLES
Definition of Religious Activity	Absence of a definition associated with religious activity. Most land use planning instruments such as POT, PBOT, EOT are as categorized as temples, and chapeles, with very few exceptions, regardless of their religious significance. **Key Question** How can the territorial plan include an updated and precise definition of religious activity?	Chapels allow in residential areas while mosques and temples must adapt to segregated areas. **Evaluator Question** How can the Territorial Land Use Plan (POT) consider all types of religious denominations so that Land Use participation is managed equally?



	PROBLEM	IMPACT EXAMPLES
Complementary Activities	Complementary Activities. Instruments are not clear about the complementary purpose of these activities, which is mainly to strengthen and develop the churches within the churches. **Key Question** What complementary actions should be inclued within the places of worship? Worship Equipments?	Confusion about holding seminars, fairs, charities and religious ceremonies in warehouses and factories. **Evaluator Question** Which complementary activites should be considered within the Territorial Land Use Plan (POT) and be included in clear definitions?

Source: Own elaboration. 2024



Clear Religious Activity Management

PROBLEM

Clear Religious Activity Management. There are no clear guidelines on management,clarification, and resolution of religious spaces and associated events.

Key Question

How can religious activity be effectively managed in a rational and equitable way?

IMPACT EXAMPLES

Conflicts with neighbors and the risk of stigmatization in residential areas arise.

Evaluator Question

How can the Territorial Land Use Plan (POT) ensure that religious activities and spaces are equitable and conflict-free?



Land Proportion for Worship

PROBLEM

Land Proportion for Worship. There are no specific proportion guidelines that reflect the essential role that spaces for worship should have.

Key Question

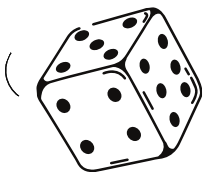
What percentage of the area should be set aside for places of worship and religious facilities?

IMPACT EXAMPLES

Discriminatory allocation of substandard, irergular (sic), peripheral, or poorly connected plots.

Evaluator Question

How should the Territorial Land Use Plan (POT) balance the land use for spaces of worship, ensuring fair and strategic locations?



Limited Worship Schedules

PROBLEM

Limited Worship Schedules. Time restrictions in terms of hours of worship are not considered.

Key Question

What hours of worship are adequate? Space opening hours and limitations?

IMPACT EXAMPLES

Obstacles for halding (sic) night vigils or developing activities early in the morning.

Evaluator Question

When should the Territorial Land Use Plan (POT) determine capacity and operating hours in places of worship?

Source: Own elaboration. 2024

The systematization of the analysis matrix for POT/PBOT/EOT produced the following findings:

- There is a lack of a clear and universal definition of "religious worship activity" within Colombian legislation and planning instruments, which constitutes an obstacle to Religious Freedom. This ambiguity generates discrimination and inequality by treating different religious expressions in an unequal manner. A restrictive interpretation of the concept, focused primarily on traditional churches, excludes emerging communities and new expressions of faith, limiting their recognition and development.
- There is also a lack of precision regarding which activities are considered complementary to worship activities, resulting in restrictions on location and difficulties in carrying out religious, educational, social, and cultural events within worship facilities. In many cases, authorities interpret these activities restrictively, limiting the ability of religious communities to organize social and cultural events within their own spaces, thereby hindering their potential to act as agents of social development.
- Regulations concerning occupancy limits, building index ratios, parking requirements, and complementary activities lack harmonization with national regulations and are applied discretionally by territorial authorities. This situation generates uncertainty for faith communities regarding the number of attendees they are permitted to host.
- In some municipalities, excessive minimum parking requirements are imposed on places of worship, particularly in densely populated urban areas, making it difficult to establish new worship facilities and preventing the application of adjacent parking provisions as established in the two existing public law agreements.
- Restrictions on building index ratios are also imposed, preventing the construction of larger worship facilities with greater capacity. In rural areas, regulations have been implemented that complicate the construction of places of worship in regions where the population is dispersed, thereby reducing access to religious services for communities located far from urban centers.
- There is a need to strengthen regulations concerning safety, accessibility, and waste management in order to ensure that worship facilities are safe, inclusive, and environmentally responsible spaces. It is essential to establish clear guidelines on noise management to prevent conflicts with neighboring communities and to guarantee public tranquility without undermining Freedom of Worship.
- The religious sector is not actively involved in the territorial planning process. The lack of participation in working groups, the formulation of proposals, the communication of needs, and the construction of dialogue with local authorities prevents territorial planning from responding to the real needs of faith communities.

A territorial zoning model that respects religious freedom



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

Proposing an ideal model of POT, PBOT, or EOT for Religious Freedom—one that facilitates the location of places of worship and the carrying out of religious activities through the elimination of prohibited areas, the incorporation of quality standards consistent with the service provided, and the inclusion of "neutral spaces" in territorial planning instruments—is a significant challenge. For this reason, it is necessary for the religious sector to begin the study of territorial planning instruments with a strategic approach. The following proposals are the result of the review of 200 municipal planning instruments, especially first-generation instruments, and of work carried out with the religious sector in 50% of those municipalities, where the concerns of different religious entities were heard, together with the contributions made to Bogotá's POT through the City Council.

1.Universal Location. Worship services may be located throughout the city, without restrictions on size or occupancy. This "universal location" is justified under the principle that such services must be situated close to the population and under the conditions required by that population, thereby allowing their establishment in any activity area of the city.

2.Single Regulatory Framework. The land-use and building conditions applicable to worship services must be consolidated within a single regulatory framework, thereby ensuring the direct application for construction permits without the need for additional procedures. This means that, once the POT, PBOT, or EOT has been approved, construction permits and authorizations for the development of worship activities may be requested immediately, without requiring intermediate permits or studies.

3.Multifunctionality. Among collective facilities, all uses shall be compatible with one another unless technical or environmental restrictions defined by national regulations apply. It is established that facilities may complement each other, facilitating multifunctionality and the hybridization of institutional uses. This approach recognizes the complexity of the services that these structures may provide beyond their strictly religious function.

4.Definition of Worship. A definition of worship must be established in alignment with the Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, encompassing the practices of different faith traditions and their spaces of congregation. This definition should include areas dedicated to religious activities, such as spaces for rites, formation, administration, and residence of religious communities. It should also include the sale of religious articles, the storage of elements necessary for worship (such as musical instruments and furnishings), and the possibility of holding funeral services

5. Mixed Use in Buildings. Mixed use within buildings should be allowed up to a percentage of the constructed area with other activity uses, such as commercial or industrial, without altering the institutional character of the facility.

6. Recognition of Existing Buildings. The recognition of buildings that, for any reason, were constructed without a building permit or authorization should be permitted. These buildings may be regularized under their current conditions of use and construction, facilitating their formal incorporation within the existing legal framework.

7. Flexibility in Parking Requirements. Parking regulations should not be rigid but rather flexible, adjusting to the constructed area. In addition, specific zones and schedules should be established, in coordination with the municipal Traffic and Mobility authority, to allow adjacent parking during worship services, in accordance with the two public law agreements between the State and religious entities, thereby facilitating community access.

8. Substitution of Private Facilities Located in Public Space. Public-use assets included within public space may be replaced by others of equivalent or greater characteristics or dimensions, provided that quality, accessibility, and location criteria are met, either through the acquisition of land within ecological structure areas or through compensatory payments.

9. Spatial Quality Standards. The entities responsible for providing or regulating activities carried out in collective facilities shall adopt, in coordination with the municipal planning authority, spatial quality standards. These standards must be defined in accordance with the type of service provided..

10. Interreligious or Neutral Worship Spaces. The regulations should incorporate the category of interreligious spaces, allowing the designation of land for the construction of places of worship designed to accommodate believers from different religions, providing an environment where they may pray, meditate, and carry out their ceremonies in an inclusive and respectful manner.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals that territorial planning in Colombia, particularly Law 388 of 1997 and the Territorial Planning Plans (POT), presents obstacles to Religious Freedom. The absence of a clear definition of "worship facility" creates uncertainty and restrictions for the religious sector, especially because not all religious expressions and complementary activities are taken into account.

It is essential to ensure the active participation of the religious sector in territorial planning in order to achieve an ideal POT model that allows the universal location of places of worship, the consolidation of regulations within a single regulatory framework, the multifunctionality of spaces, the flexibilization of parking requirements, and the inclusion of interreligious or neutral worship spaces.
The implementation of this model would guarantee Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship and would encourage the religious sector to participate actively in the process of formulating and revising Territorial Planning Plans, in order to ensure that territorial planning regulations respect and promote this fundamental right.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND DEVELOPMENT

A STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR IN TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Abstract

The effective integration of the religious sector into territorial development plans is a crucial step toward promoting inclusive and sustainable development. This article highlights the importance of considering Religious Freedom as an essential factor in the construction of society, recognizing the significant role that religious organizations play within communities, and emphasizing the need to harness their potential to address social, economic, and cultural challenges.

To achieve this integration, several strategies are proposed, including the promotion of interreligious social dialogue, the identification of the needs and potential of the religious sector, the facilitation of interinstitutional collaboration, and the equitable allocation of resources. The importance of ensuring the active participation of the religious sector at every stage of the territorial development planning process is emphasized, from the identification of needs to the evaluation of impact.

The need to comply with the Colombian legal and constitutional framework is also highlighted, as it guarantees Religious Freedom and recognizes the importance of community participation in development planning. In addition, the relevance of aligning local strategies with national development objectives is underscored, ensuring the coherence and effectiveness of Public Policy.

Keywords

Religious Freedom, Development Plan, Territorial Development, Citizen Participation, Public Resource Management, Strategic Planning.

Introduction

In the pursuit of an equal, balanced, and prosperous society, it is imperative to adopt a holistic approach that incorporates the active participation of all relevant social sectors. Religious Freedom emerges as a fundamental element that not only safeguards the plurality of beliefs but also serves as an essential driver of socioeconomic development, strengthening community cohesion and promoting resilience in the face of emerging challenges. In this context, this article aims to analyze the urgent need to integrate the religious sector into territorial development planning processes, recognizing its potential as a catalyst for significant transformations and its capacity to contribute substantially to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The importance of strategic planning, the efficient management of public resources, and citizen participation is emphasized as fundamental pillars in the attainment of collective well-being. The inclusion of the religious sector in development plans should be understood not only as an ethical and democratic imperative, but also as a valuable opportunity to capitalize on its resources, experience, and capacity for mobilization, in order to generate positive and lasting impacts within communities.
This article proposes a series of strategies aimed at effectively integrating the religious sector into development planning processes. These strategies range from the promotion of interreligious social dialogue to the identification of specific needs and capacities, including the facilitation of interinstitutional collaboration and the equitable allocation of resources. In addition, both the challenges inherent in this inclusion and the opportunities it offers are addressed, seeking to achieve an appropriate balance between the plurality of beliefs and the need to safeguard the integrity of the religious sector against possible forms of instrumentalization.

Finally, an in-depth analysis is conducted of the cycle involved in the formulation of territorial development plans, with particular emphasis on the definition of outputs and the incorporation of indicators that allow for the accurate evaluation of the impact of the actions implemented in terms of Religious Freedom and development. The importance of governmental leaders recognizing the intrinsic value of the religious sector and fostering an environment conducive to its proper development is underscored, as this will contribute significantly to the construction of a more just society.

This study is based on a qualitative documentary review, using relevant academic and legal texts to examine the relationship between Religious Freedom and territorial development. Documents from international organizations such as ECLAC and ILPES have been consulted, as well as studies by recognized authors such as Rawls (1993), López Niño (2016), and Sanabria Pulido & Guzmán Botero (2021), among others, who explore key concepts including public value, strategic planning, and citizen participation.

In addition, documents from Colombian institutions such as the National Planning Department (DNP), the Political Constitution of Colombia, and Law 136 of 1994 have been examined in order to fully understand the legal framework and the territorial planning guidelines within the national context. The analysis of these documents has been oriented toward identifying the principal ideas, concepts, and perspectives that converge around the inclusion of the religious sector in territorial development processes.

Through a critical and reflective reading, an effort has been made to identify the arguments, evidence, and proposals that support the relationship between Religious Freedom and development, as well as the challenges and opportunities inherent in this process. Content analysis techniques and constant comparison methods have been employed in order to synthesize the relevant information and to construct a comprehensive understanding of the subject under study.

PUBLIC VALUE AND DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR

Public value, according to ILPES (2021), is defined as the perception citizens have regarding the goods and services received from the State, provided that these effectively satisfy a recognized need with quality and timeliness. In other words, it is not merely the provision of services, but the real fulfillment of the population's needs in a timely manner and with the expected level of quality. To generate this public value, ECLAC (2018) argues that a State committed to regional development is required, one that assumes responsibility for meeting the needs of its citizens.

This commitment implies continuous effort in several areas: strategic planning, which guides actions toward the achievement of common objectives; efficient budget management, ensuring that resources are allocated according to defined priorities; resource mobilization, enabling the financing of projects; active citizen participation, which enriches decision-making processes and guarantees the legitimacy of policies; the implementation of electronic government tools, facilitating interaction between the State and citizens; and transparency, which strengthens trust in institutions and supports accountability.

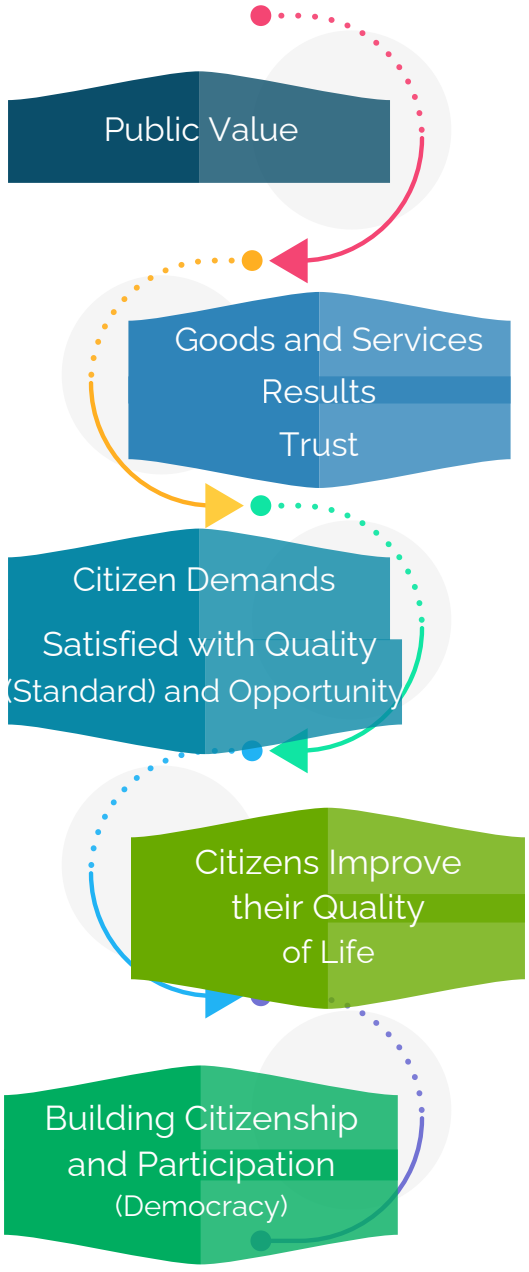
The importance of evaluation, both of public management and of public investment projects,is highlighted in the

analyses of ECLAC (2018). Ex post evaluation of projects makes it possible to determine whether the expected results are being achieved and whether Public Policy has succeeded in creating public value. Such evaluation is essential for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Public Policy, optimizing resource management, and adjusting strategies to better satisfy the needs of citizens.

For López Niño (2016, p. 75), public value is understood as a strategy aimed at achieving objectives, consolidating democracy, and modernizing the State. Its origin lies in collective construction, which connects it to the social sciences, where interaction between individuals and groups is fundamental. Mark Moore (1995, 2013), cited by Sanabria Pulido & Guzmán Botero (2021), defines public value as the "achievement of socially valued outcomes."

This definition emphasizes the importance of Public Policy responding to the needs and expectations of society in order to generate tangible results that improve the quality of life of the population. Ultimately, public value is a concept that seeks to guide public management toward the satisfaction of citizens' needs. This approach requires a State committed to strategic planning, efficient management of public resources, active citizen participation, and the constant evaluation of Public Policy. Only through the integration of these elements can a State be built that truly generates public value and contributes to a more equal and equitable future for all.

BASIC CONCEPTS OF PUBLIC VALUE

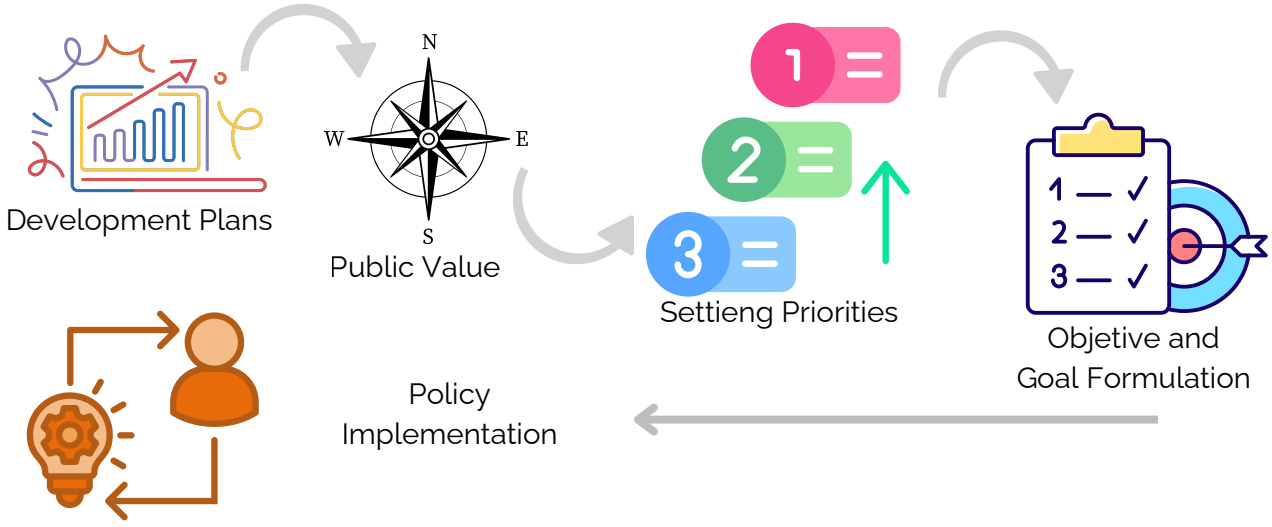


Source: Adapted from Ortegón, Edgar (2017). An Approach to the Complexity of Development: Public Policy and Public Value Approaches (Diagram 2, ECLAC, 2018, p. 13).

Public value, more than an abstract concept, is a practical guide for State action, aimed at generating a net benefit for society. This benefit occurs when the value perceived by citizens is greater than the cost of providing the good or service. It is not only a matter of economic efficiency, but of added social value that considers redistribution, equity, social effectiveness, and transparency—elements that are not always prioritized in the private sector (ECLAC, 2018).

The vision of public value places the citizen at the center, not as a mere client, but as a person with rights, needs, and expectations (ILPES, 2021). The State, in providing goods and services, seeks to satisfy these needs in an equitable and effective manner, using economic resources efficiently.

The creation of public value is integrated into development plans, guiding each stage of their formulation and implementation (Sanabria Pulido & Guzmán Botero, 2021). From the definition of priorities and the formulation of objectives and goals, to the implementation of policies, programs, and projects, public value functions as a compass that directs State action toward the fulfillment of the population's needs.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

Public value drives the continuous evaluation of public management and public investment projects. it seeks to determine whether state interventions are achieving the expected results, whether resources are being used efficiently, and whether a positive impact on citizens' quality of life is being generated. this evaluation makes it possible to identify areas for improvement and adapt strategies to increase the public value generated..

TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING: AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH WITH THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR

Strategic planning, an essential process for achieving objectives and managing resources over time (Rojas López & Medina Marín, 2011), is fundamental for the development of any territory. This planning is based on the definition of objectives, the allocation of resources, and the implementation of actions in order to achieve a desired future (Rojas López & Medina Marín, 2011, p. 20). However, for planning to be truly effective, it is crucial to consider the plurality of actors and realities that make up society. In this regard, the inclusion of the religious sector in territorial development plans becomes fundamentally important. Religious organizations, due to their influence and significant presence in many communities, can play a vital role in promoting sustainable development and social cohesion.

Development planning is a political instrument for the construction of a social project, in which different actors (State, civil society, and interest groups) negotiate and agree upon strategies, policies, and development projects in order to achieve a desired future (Poveda Gómez, 2008, p. 52). It is a technical–political process that integrates both technical and political elements, seeking to establish coherent objectives for sustainable development (Poveda Gómez, 2008, p. 71). Planning cannot be separated from management; rather, it is an integral part of the development process, involving all public, social, and private sectors of society (Poveda Gómez, 2008, p. 52). Planning must be based on a deep understanding of reality (present and future) and on the capacity to transform it through knowledge, qualitative and quantitative analysis, and the ability to anticipate future conditions (Poveda Gómez, 2008, p. 75).

Religious Freedom, a fundamental right that protects the freedom of conscience and religion of all individuals (Rawls, 1993, p. 225), is an essential pillar in the construction of society. The Political Constitution of Colombia reinforces this principle by establishing that the State guarantees Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship and protects all religious denominations and their places of worship (Political Constitution of Colombia, Art. 19). In this context, it is indispensable that territorial development plans consider Religious Freedom as a crucial factor in the construction of a more equitable and inclusive society. The inclusion of the religious sector in these plans is not limited to respect for its beliefs and practices, but also implies recognizing its potential as an agent of development.

The religious sector plays a fundamental role in society, contributing to the economic, social, and cultural development of communities. The integration of the religious sector into territorial development plans makes it possible to maximize its potential, generating positive impacts in multiple areas aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Religious institutions implement social assistance programs, support families in vulnerable situations, promote education, health, and violence prevention, in accordance with SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 4 (Quality Education).

Likewise, these entities promote microcredit initiatives, entrepreneurship, and support for rural development, contributing to job creation and poverty reduction, in alignment with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). In addition, religious institutions promote culture, the arts, and music, preserving traditions and strengthening cultural identity, in line with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Religious communities also play a crucial role in conflict mediation, peacebuilding, and the promotion of interreligious dialogue, supporting SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Through these activities, the religious sector not only enriches the spiritual and cultural life of communities, but also contributes significantly to the achievement of the SDGs, demonstrating that it is a key actor in sustainable development and social well-being (United Nations, 2015).

The following diagram provides a clear visual representation of the relationship between the religious sector and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the individual circles, the first describes the areas of influence and action of the religious sector, ranging from social assistance and education to the promotion of peace and community development. The second circle represents the SDGs relevant to this relationship, such as the eradication of poverty, health and well-being, and the promotion of quality education. The intersection between these two circles highlights how the activities of the religious sector directly contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

Relationship between the religious sector and the Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

The integration of the religious sector into territorial development plans finds strong support within the Colombian legal and constitutional framework. The Political Constitution of Colombia, in Article 19, establishes Religious Freedom as a fundamental right, recognizing the plurality of beliefs and guaranteeing the protection of religious practice in the country.

Furthermore, Law 136 of 1994, in Article 74, clearly establishes that territorial development plans must include the active participation of the community in their design, implementation, and monitoring. In this regard, the importance of including religious organizations as an integral part of the process of planning and implementing Public Policy at the local and regional levels is explicitly recognized.

This legal provision underscores the need to ensure the representation and equitable participation of all sectors of society in the formulation of development strategies that promote the well-being and prosperity of communities throughout the national territory.

Consequently, the inclusion of the religious sector in territorial development plans is not only a practice supported by the existing legal framework, but also an ethical and democratic imperative that reflects the commitment of the Colombian State to the construction of an inclusive, participatory, and pluralistic society. In this way, cooperation between the State and religious institutions is strengthened in order to comprehensively address the social, economic, and cultural challenges faced by communities throughout the country, promoting sustainable and equitable development for all citizens.

The formulation of a territorial development plan—whether at the departmental, district, or municipal level—implies a dynamic process that progresses through several stages. One of the most relevant stages, closely linked to the creation of public value, is the definition of outputs. The Guide for Results-Based Territorial Public Management issued by the National Planning Department emphasizes the need to incorporate citizen participation from the earliest stages of the process, in order to construct a development plan that responds to the needs and expectations of the population. For example, the creation of sectoral working groups is recommended, including the participation of the interreligious sector present in the territory.

Through these working groups, it is possible to develop a diagnostic assessment that identifies the central problem, its causes, and its consequences, in order to define alternative solutions that generate public value and produce a positive impact on the community.

In this process, it is essential to consider management reports and previous activities related to Religious Freedom. The implementation of the Public Policy on Religious Freedom, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Conscience, as well as the creation and strengthening of

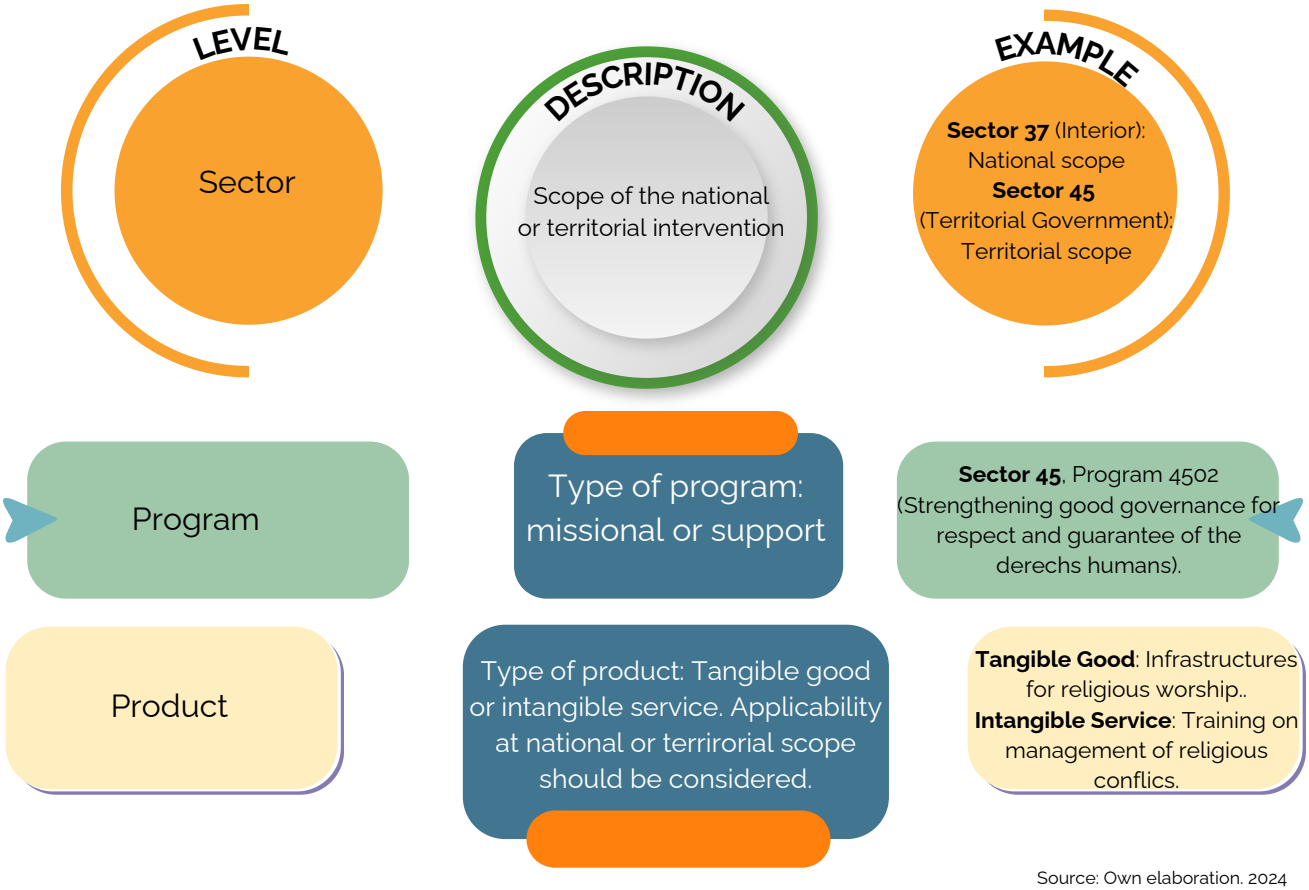
the corresponding committees, are key aspects. Likewise, cooperation actions with the religious sector should be considered essential elements for defining the baseline indicators of outputs or results that will form part of the strategic component of the development plan.

Once the diagnostic phase has been completed, and after defining the strategic lines and identifying alternative solutions, the next step is the definition of outputs, understood as the goods or services to be delivered by a project with the purpose of generating optimal results and producing significant changes in the conditions of well-being of the population.

Outputs must be defined within the product catalog of the Environmental Management Framework (MGA) and must have a programmatic approach, be associated with investment sectors, and be oriented toward results. For the proper selection of outputs that will allow the achievement of the goals established in the development plan, it is recommended to consult the Guidelines for the Definition of Outputs, which provide a detailed structure for this process.

The process for defining outputs includes three essential steps, as illustrated below:

Identification of the intervention based on sector, program, and output.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

PUBLIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR IN DEVELOPMENT

The implementation of a Development Plan within the framework of results-based territorial public management largely depends on the efficient management of public resources. These resources, originating from different sources such as the General Participation System (SGP), royalties, current revenues, and public credit, constitute the financial foundation for achieving the ambitious social, economic, and environmental goals established in the plan. Proper management of these resources not only enables the execution of projects, but also contributes to the strengthening of the social fabric and the prosperity of the territory (DNP, 2012).

It is essential that the Administration, from the planning stage, take into account the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MFMP) as a fundamental instrument. Through its Financial Plan, this tool projects the resources available over a ten-year period, allowing the Administration to make strategic decisions that ensure the financial sustainability of the territory. The MFMP also establishes targets for primary surplus and public debt, facilitating responsible decision-making regarding public borrowing.

With the support of the Secretariats of Finance and Planning, the Administration must prepare an Indicative Plan (PI) that annualizes the goals of the Development Plan, specifying their temporal and financial execution. The Indicative Plan breaks down output targets by fiscal year, assigning resources to each program and project. This short-term perspective, with its detailed annual programming, allows for more precise and results-oriented management.

The connection between the Indicative Plan and the Annual Operational Investment Plan (POAI) is crucial. The POAI, an instrument for the annual programming of investment expenditures, must include only projects registered in the Bank of Investment Programs and Projects (BPIM), ensuring that resources are allocated to viable, eligible, and priority projects. Its relationship with the Indicative Plan is essential to ensure that the selected projects correspond to the priorities of the Development Plan and that annual investment remains consistent with the allocation of resources defined in the Indicative Plan (DNP, 2012).

Public resource management is not limited to the mere allocation of funds. The preparation of an Action Plan by each administrative unit is fundamental. This instrument allows each secretariat to define the specific strategies and activities required to execute the POAI, linking projects with the assigned resources and establishing responsibility for each activity.

The Monthly Cash Flow Program (PAC), the final link in the management chain, is the

instrument that determines the monthly availability of resources for the commitments established in the Action Plan. In accordance with the principle of cash unity, the PAC enables the Treasury to administer resources with strict control over payments, preventing potential financial deficits.

The success of public resource management for the implementation of the Development Plan is not achieved solely through the preparation of planning instruments. Continuous monitoring of project execution, planned activities, and the fulfillment of targets is essential. This monitoring must be accompanied by periodic evaluation in order to identify difficulties and obstacles, allowing the necessary adjustments to optimize management and ensure the achievement of the plan's objectives.

Public resource management for the implementation of a Development Plan is a dynamic process that requires close coordination among different actors. The Administration, citizens, civil society organizations, and the private sector must work jointly and in a coordinated manner to optimize the use of public resources and ensure that they contribute to building a more prosperous future for the territory.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR IN DEVELOPMENT PLANS

It is essential to emphasize that the strategic lines defined in local development plans must arise organically from the priority proposals contained in the Government Program, with the technical support and approval of the elected authority (DNP, 2023). This process ensures that the proposed policies and actions reflect the needs and aspirations of the community, as well as the vision and commitments of the elected leader for the governmental term.

Likewise, it is imperative that these strategic lines be fully aligned with the National Development Plan, in accordance with the provisions of Article 32 of Law 152 of 1994 (DNP, 2023).

This alignment guarantees the coherence and harmonization of local actions with national policies and objectives, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of development efforts at the territorial level. In addition, it is essential that the strategic lines fall within the specific competencies of the corresponding territorial entity (DNP, 2023). This condition ensures the feasibility and execution capacity of the proposed policies and projects, preventing potential jurisdictional conflicts and maximizing the impact and effectiveness of local development initiatives.

The structure and content of the Municipal Development Plan are based on a careful evaluation of the relevant constitutional and legal provisions.

First, the Political Constitution provides essential guidelines, as established in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 313, which define the responsibilities of the Municipal Council, as well as in Article 339, which addresses public investment. Likewise, the legal framework established in Article 74 of Law 136 of 1994 and Article 21 of Law 1551 of 2012 has been taken into account, as these regulate the approval process of the Territorial Development Plan.

In addition, a detailed analysis has been carried out of the procedures established in Articles 37, 38, 39, and 40 of Law 152 of 1994, which define the steps to be followed in the formulation and implementation of territorial development plans. To further strengthen this process, a series of complementary legal provisions have also been considered, including Law 1098 of 2006, Law 1909 of 2018, Law 2056 of 2020, Law 2166 of 2021, as well as Resolution 000100 of 2024 and Circular 0024 of 2024 issued by the National Planning Department, which provide specific guidelines regarding the peace-related criteria to be incorporated into the Plan.

This rigorous legal analysis ensures that the Municipal Development Plan is prepared and approved in accordance with the applicable regulations, thereby guaranteeing its viability, coherence, and effectiveness in achieving the objectives of development and well-being for the local community.

In order to effectively integrate the religious sector into territorial development plans, it is necessary to implement specific strategies. It is essential to promote open and respectful dialogue among the State, civil society, and the religious sector, encouraging active participation in decision-making processes. The needs and potential of the religious sector must be identified, taking into account its projects, resources, and experience, in order to incorporate them into development plans.

Collaboration between governmental entities, civil society organizations, and religious institutions must be encouraged through the establishment of mechanisms for coordination and cooperation. Resources and funding should be allocated to support projects of the religious sector that contribute to territorial development.

It is also indispensable to monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions implemented, making the necessary adjustments and improvements in order to optimize results.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

the resistance from certain sectors of society to the inclusion of the religious sector in development plans are challenges that must be considered. However, the opportunities are equally significant. The possibility of harnessing the potential of the religious sector for community development, strengthening the social fabric, promoting interreligious social dialogue and social cohesion, and creating an environment favorable to Religious Freedom and inclusion are factors that encourage the incorporation of the religious sector into development plans.

The participation of the religious sector in territorial development plans is a fundamental requirement for the construction of a more just and inclusive society. Taking advantage of the potential of the religious sector, while fostering collaboration and dialogue among all involved actors, makes it possible to generate a positive impact on the economic, social, and cultural development of communities. Religious Freedom, in addition to being a fundamental right, can serve as a driving force for development, promoting the construction of a more prosperous and sustainable future for all.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The analysis carried out demonstrates the fundamental importance of Religious Freedom as a driver of development, transcending its character as an isolated right to become a key pillar for building a more just, equitable, and inclusive society. The religious sector emerges as a crucial actor in territorial development, with significant potential to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. To harness this potential, a strategic approach is required that effectively integrates the needs and plurality of the religious sector, promoting dialogue, interinstitutional collaboration, and the equitable allocation of resources. The Colombian legal framework, which guarantees Religious Freedom and promotes citizen participation, provides strong support for the inclusion of the religious sector in development plans. It is also essential to ensure coherence between local strategies and national development policies in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of territorial development actions. Consequently, recognizing the value of the religious sector and properly integrating it into development plans is essential for advancing toward a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

The integration of the religious sector into territorial development plans requires a strategic approach that promotes interreligious dialogue, identifies the needs and potential of the sector, and facilitates collaboration among governmental entities,

civil society organizations, and religious institutions. It is essential to allocate resources equitably to support projects that contribute to territorial development, prioritizing those that address the most urgent needs of communities. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of implemented actions, as well as training public officials and community leaders on issues related to Religious Freedom and development, are crucial for optimizing results.

It is necessary to incorporate a gender perspective into all development actions involving the religious sector, ensuring the equitable participation of women and men in decision-making processes. Finally, it is fundamental to recognize and value the contribution of the religious sector to community development, creating a favorable environment for its growth while ensuring respect for its autonomy and independence.

COOPERATION POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES

Abstract

This article highlights the protection of Religious Freedom (R.F.P. — Religious Freedom Protection) as a fundamental issue within cooperation policy aimed at safeguarding this fundamental right, exploring existing approaches and the challenges they face. To this end, the study presents the context of a bibliographic review conducted within the framework of cooperation policies, concluding that cooperation for the protection of Religious Freedom requires a multifaceted approach that combines both international and national efforts. It is essential to strengthen legal frameworks, improve protection mechanisms, and address cultural, political, and implementation-related challenges in order to guarantee Religious Freedom in an effective and equitable manner.

In this regard, it can be affirmed that cooperation policies for the protection of Religious Freedom constitute a fundamental issue in global policy, encompassing international legal frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as diverse national legislations. International cooperation, through multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations, plays a decisive role in promoting and monitoring this right. However, numerous challenges remain, including cultural and political conflicts, systematic discrimination, legal restrictions related to freedom of religion or belief, and persistent inequalities.
The gap between legislation and its effective implementation, together with the lack of adequate resources and training, continues to represent a significant obstacle to the effective protection of Religious Freedom.

Keywords

Religious Freedom, protection, cooperation, Human Rights, discrimination.

Introduction

The Political Constitution of 1991 enshrines the fundamental right of all individuals to freely profess their religion and practice their worship, establishing that this right must be protected under the principles of respect and inclusion, while recognizing the equality of all expressions of faith. The importance of this right lies in the fact that religion or personal convictions represent an essential element in the lives of those who practice them, shaping their worldview and identity. Consequently, it is imperative to ensure the full guarantee and respect of this freedom, promoting understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect among individuals and communities of different beliefs.

In order to strengthen institutional and community capacities to promote sustainable peace with a territorial approach, it is essential to understand cooperation policies within conflict dynamics and the skills inherent in peacebuilding in urban settings. This implies promoting a culture rooted in the principles of Human Rights and reconciliation, through the active participation of historically marginalized and discriminated groups. This approach seeks not only to address tensions and challenges present in the city, but also to promote social transformation that consolidates peaceful coexistence and justice within the community.

In the same vein, the Cooperation Policy for the Protection of Religious Freedom emerges as a vital field in the current context, where religious pluralism is an evident reality. This approach seeks not only to safeguard the fundamental right of individuals to profess and practice their faith freely, but also to foster an environment of respect and tolerance among different beliefs and religious practices. Faced with the challenge of guaranteeing this right in an increasingly interconnected and pluralistic world, multidimensional collaboration among governments, international organizations, and civil society is required, with the purpose of developing inclusive and effective policies that promote interreligious understanding and strengthen the protection of Religious Freedom for all.

Currently, Decree 437 of March 6, 2018 is in force, "by which Chapter 4 is added to Title 2 of Part 4 of Book 2 of Decree 1066 of 2015, Sole Regulatory Decree of the Administrative Sector of the Interior, entitled Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship." This policy establishes three implementation pillars:

1. Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship and their spheres of application,
2. Religious entities and their organizations as agents of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation, and
3. International and interreligious cooperation for development.

Article 2.4.2.4.1.6 of Decree 437 of 2018 briefly explains each of these pillars.

The inclusion of the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, established in Decree 437 of 2018, reflects a governmental commitment to the protection and promotion of Religious Freedom in Colombia. The three pillars outlined in this policy—Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, the role of religious entities in peacebuilding, and international and interreligious cooperation for development—demonstrate a comprehensive and multifaceted vision for addressing this issue. Furthermore, by recognizing religious entities as key actors in the promotion of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation, the policy acknowledges the potential of religion as a catalyst for positive social change. The inclusion of international and interreligious cooperation for development underscores the importance of global collaboration and the promotion of interreligious dialogue as a means to build more just and inclusive societies. Taken together, these elements highlight Colombia's holistic and proactive approach to protecting and promoting Religious Freedom, not only at the national level but also within the international sphere.

Consequently, the recognition of religious entities and their organizations as active agents in the construction of peace within their communities highlights their fundamental role in social cohesion and the reconstruction of the social fabric. These institutions not only provide spiritual support, but also become drivers of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace throughout the national territory. Their experience and deep-rooted presence within communities grant them profound knowledge of local contexts and enable them to address tensions and conflicts effectively. In this sense, their legitimate participation in official peacebuilding mechanisms represents a significant step toward the inclusion of diverse perspectives and the promotion of inclusive and lasting solutions to the country's social and political challenges.

Moreover, the absence of cooperation policies for the protection of Religious Freedom may give rise to a series of significant problems and challenges, such as discrimination or even persecution on the basis of religious beliefs, fostering misunderstanding and intolerance among different religious groups, and generating social tensions and interreligious conflicts. Likewise, the lack of cooperation policies may result in restrictions on religious practice, such as the prohibition of places of worship, the censorship of religious expression, or the imposition of burdensome governmental requirements on religious organizations.

Likewise, the absence of cooperation policies to protect Human Rights, including freedom of religion, may result in the violation of these fundamental rights and in the denial of human dignity. Without a solid framework of cooperation between the State and religious entities, there is a risk that individuals may be subjected to discrimination, persecution, or unjust restrictions in the exercise of their Religious Freedom. This lack of collaborative policies may intensify social tensions, increase interreligious conflicts, and perpetuate the exclusion of minority groups. Ultimately, the lack of protection of Human Rights due to the absence of cooperation policies can undermine peace, stability, and the development of a society that is inclusive and respectful of religious pluralism.

On the other hand, the background of cooperation for the protection of Religious Freedom can be traced to various historical and political contexts. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the recognition and protection of Religious Freedom had been limited in many countries. The Universal Declaration established freedom of religion as a fundamental Human Right and laid the foundations for the promotion and protection of this right at the international level. Throughout history, there have been movements and struggles for Religious Freedom in different parts of the world. These movements have included the defense of religious minorities, resistance against religious persecution, and the promotion of religious pluralism and tolerance.

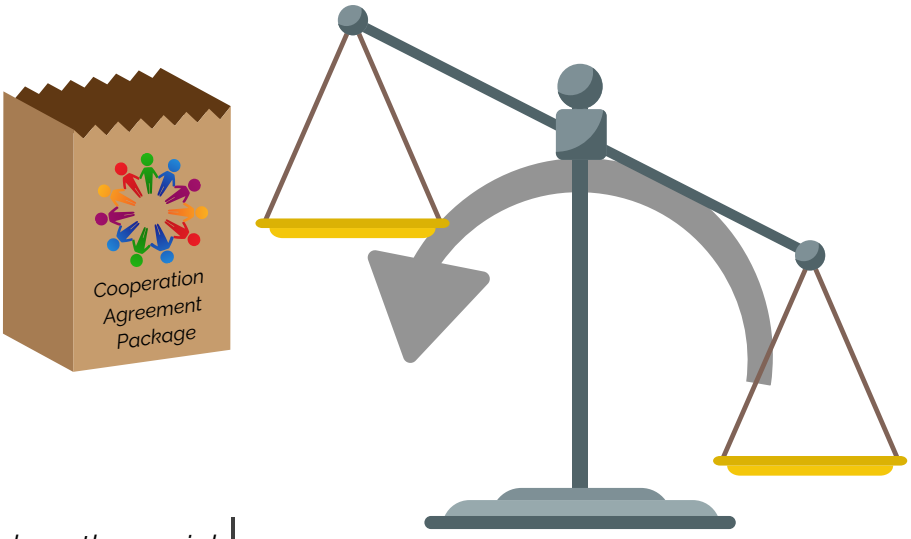
The persecution of Christians has been widespread and has increased in many regions of the world. According to a report by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2010, Christians constitute the most persecuted religious group globally, a conclusion that was also supported by the Vatican in the same year. In their book Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians, Paul A. Marshall, Lela Gilbert, and Nina Shea present a comprehensive and well-documented analysis of this reality, addressing the patterns of repression, abuse, and violence faced by Christians in various regions. The work, written in a journalistic and engaging style, is enriched with personal accounts that illustrate the courage required to practice Christianity in the contemporary world. In addition to describing the current situation, the authors examine the reasons behind hostility toward Christians and provide examples of how the Church, including the Church in the United States, has managed to reduce or stop repression in certain countries. Finally, the book suggests concrete steps that can be taken to address this problem in the future.

In a broader international context, it is also necessary to consider the issue of relations between the State and religious denominations in Spain,

which addresses the evolution and the current state of interaction between the State and different religious confessions, taking into account both historical background and contemporary regulation, as well as its adaptation to European Human Rights standards.

The current Constitution (1978) proclaims in Article 16 the right to Religious Freedom for individuals and communities, with no limitation on its external manifestations other than those necessary for the maintenance of public order protected by law. At the same time, paragraph three establishes both the non-confessional character of the State, expressed in the concise statement that "no religion shall have the character of a state religion," and the principle of cooperation between the State and religious denominations, affirming that "public authorities shall take into account the religious beliefs of Spanish society and shall maintain cooperative relations with the Catholic Church and the other religious denominations."

Promoción de la convivencia armoniosa y respetuosa de la pluralidad religiosa en España



> *Positive Secularism:*
> *The State acknowledges the social contribution of the religious sector.*

Cooperation to balance the neutrality of the State.

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

Positive secularism in Spain is reflected primarily in the cooperation agreements between the State and religious denominations. These agreements allow the general legal framework, established in the Organic Law on Religious Freedom, to be adapted to the specific characteristics of each denomination. In this sense, positive secularism in Spain, exemplified through cooperation agreements, seeks to balance the neutrality of the State with the recognition of the social value of religions. These agreements make it possible to adapt general regulations to the particular characteristics of each religious denomination that has achieved significant social presence, thereby promoting harmonious coexistence and respect for religious pluralism in the country.

In Colombia, the relationship between the State and religious denominations is characterized by an approach based on cooperation and mutual recognition, within a system of Religious Freedom guaranteed by the Political Constitution (1991). Article 19 establishes freedom of religion and Freedom of Worship, ensuring that all persons have the right to profess their religion freely and to disseminate it individually or collectively. Likewise, it establishes the equality of all religious denominations before the law and promotes their cooperation with the State.

At the regulatory level, it is important to note that Law 133 of 1994 (Law on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship) develops the right to Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, regulating the relations between the State and religious entities and establishing the conditions for their legal recognition and registration. In addition, Decree 437 of 2018 adds Chapter 4 to Title 2 of Part 4 of Book 2 of Decree 1066 of 2015, creating the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, which establishes three fundamental pillars for its implementation: Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship and their spheres of application: Guarantees the free exercise of religion and worship, ensuring respect for and inclusion of all expressions of faith.Religious entities and their organizations as agents of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation: Recognizes and promotes the work of religious entities in peacebuilding and social cohesion.International and interreligious cooperation for development: Encourages collaboration between religious entities and international organizations in order to promote development and peace.

It is important to recognize and understand cooperation policies for Religious Freedom, as well as their approaches and challenges, in order to promote an environment of respect and peaceful coexistence in increasingly diverse societies. Religious Freedom is an essential Human Right, internationally recognized and guaranteed by many national constitutions, including that of Colombia. However, in practice, its implementation faces significant challenges. Cooperation between the State and religious entities, as well as among different denominations and international organizations, can help overcome these challenges by fostering peace, sustainable development, and social inclusion. It also ensures that all individuals can exercise their right to Religious Freedom without discrimination or undue restrictions. Cases of arbitrary detention, forced disappearance, forced labor, and violations of Freedom of Worship have been documented in various contexts.
Consequently, it is necessary to evaluate and strengthen both the theoretical and practical framework for the effective implementation of cooperation policies, identifying areas for improvement in order to ensure the protection of Religious Freedom. In this regard, it is also important to identify and disseminate successful examples of interreligious and international cooperation that may be replicated in other contexts, thereby promoting best practices.

WHAT IS COOPERATION AND WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

Cooperation is an essential skill and a social strategy that involves the act or process of working jointly with other individuals, groups, organizations, or countries in order to achieve a common purpose or obtain mutual benefit. Cooperation is based on collaboration, mutual support, and synergy, and it is fundamental for personal, social, economic, and political development, as it seeks to create advantages for all participants, ensuring that each party benefits from the collaborative effort.

Within the religious sector, cooperation refers to joint work among different communities, organizations, and religious leaders in order to achieve common objectives, foster mutual understanding, and promote social well-being. This cooperation may involve various activities and projects aimed at benefiting faith-based organizations and society as a whole, promoting peace, social justice, and community development.

Likewise, a positive cooperation policy is a strategic approach that seeks to promote collaborative relationships among different entities, such as countries, organizations, sectors, and communities, with the purpose of achieving mutual and sustainable benefits. This policy is characterized by the promotion of principles such as transparency, accountability, mutual respect, and equity. It also involves the alignment of common objectives, the proper management of resources, and the implementation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to that cooperative actions generate the expected outcomes.

In the context of the religious sector, a positive cooperation policy may facilitate interreligious dialogue, promote Religious Freedom, and support the implementation of joint initiatives that contribute to social well-being and community development.



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

Figure 1 presents the essential components of the positive cooperation policy, the principles that govern it, and the key elements required for its effective implementation, aligned with common objectives, proper resource management, and the existence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. This figure provides guidance on how these interrelated components work together to ensure effective and positive cooperation among the parties involved.

What are cooperation policies?

Cooperation policies are guidelines and strategies established by governments, international organizations, companies, and other entities to facilitate and promote collaboration among different actors in order to achieve common objectives. These policies seek to foster synergy and coordination in various fields such as social, economic, political, and cultural development, ensuring that joint efforts are effective and beneficial for all parties involved.

This concept has been studied from different academic disciplines. In fact, there exists a Theory of Cooperation (Robert Axelrod and Martin Nowak, 1984), which states that the theory of cooperation is an interdisciplinary field that examines the conditions under which individuals or entities choose to cooperate rather than act selfishly, offering a deeper understanding of how and why cooperation emerges and is sustained in different situations. Axelrod emphasized the importance of reciprocity and long-term interactions, while Nowak identified multiple evolutionary mechanisms that facilitate cooperation. Together, their work provides a solid foundation for understanding the dynamics of cooperation in both human and biological contexts.
Likewise, it should be noted that the success of these policies depends on effective and coordinated synergy among all the sectors involved.

MULTISECTORAL COOPERATION ECOSYSTEM



Source: Own elaboration, 2024 -- Reference: Salgado, EN, 2024

The figure illustrates how cooperation policies are at the center of a dynamic system that involves multiple sectors and levels of interaction. Each actor — the State, academia, the private sector, territorial entities, national entities, and international cooperation — plays a relevant role in the implementation and success of cooperation policies. Each actor is defined as follows:

State. Represents the government and its institutions, which establish the legal and regulatory framework that facilitates cooperation.

Academia. Contributes through research, innovation, and capacity-building, providing knowledge and skills that support cooperative processes.

Private Sector. Participates through investment, public–private partnerships, and responsible business practices that promote sustainable development.

Territorial Entities. Include local and regional governments that implement and adapt cooperation policies to specific territorial contexts.

National Entities. Include national agencies and organizations responsible for coordinating and overseeing cooperation policies at the domestic level.

International Cooperation. Encompasses international organizations and agreements that promote collaboration among countries, as well as technical and financial assistance.

This configuration highlights the interdependence and collaboration required among different actors in order to achieve the common objectives established by cooperation policies.

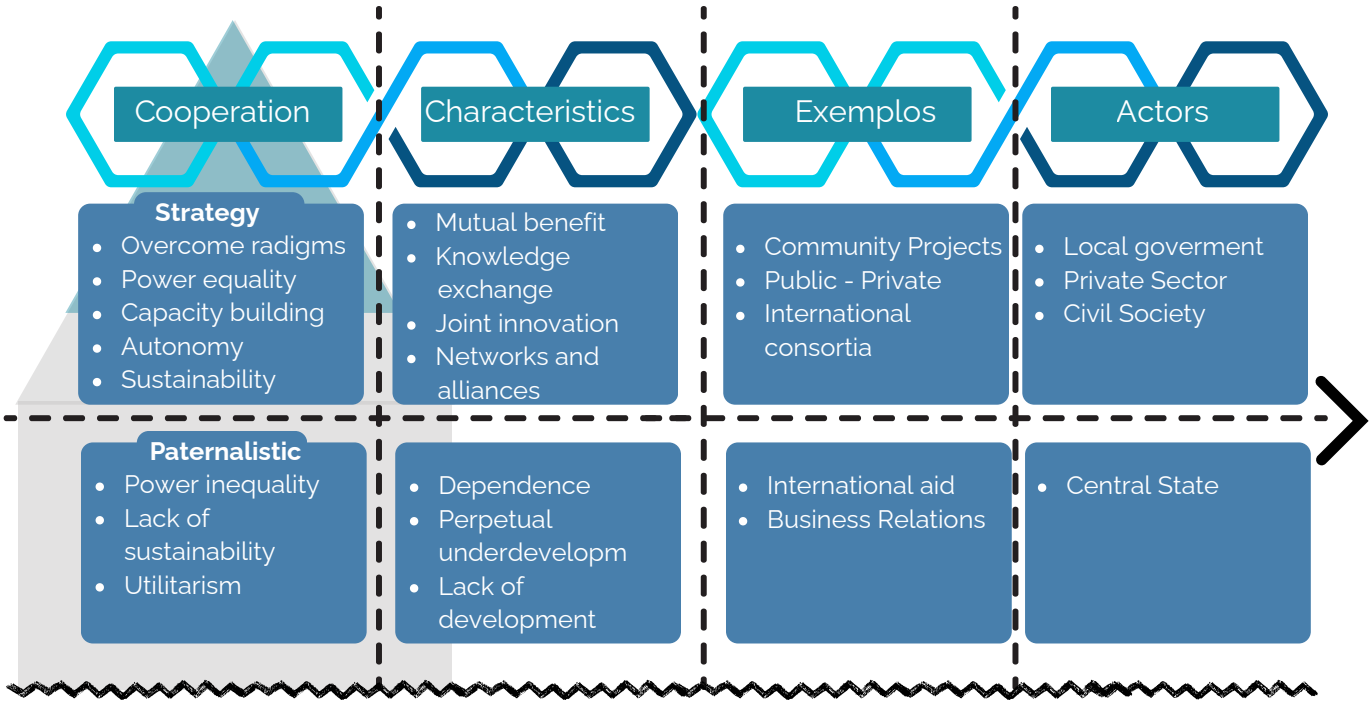
Evolution of forms of cooperation: from paternalism to strategic cooperation

The evolution of the forms of cooperation has gone through several important stages, reflecting changes in social, economic, and political dynamics. This transformation can be clearly observed in the transition from paternalism to strategic cooperation. In its early stages, cooperation was characterized by an unequal relationship between the parties, in which one entity — generally more powerful or wealthier — made decisions and provided resources without the genuine participation of the recipient. Beneficiaries often became dependent on the assistance provided, without developing their own capacities, and aid was perceived as charity or temporary support, without a long-term focus on building sustainable structures. Decisions were made unilaterally by the dominant entity, without meaningful consultation or participation of the beneficiaries.

Similarly, paternalistic cooperation can be observed in forms of international aid, such as donations from wealthy countries to developing countries, where the latter had little or no participation in decision-making processes. In the business sphere, it could also be seen in situations where multinational corporations operated in developing countries without integrating local communities into production processes or decision-making structures.

The figure presents a diagram illustrating the transition from the initial forms of paternalistic cooperation to current models of strategic cooperation, clearly reflecting the evolutionary process of cooperation over time. Initially, international cooperation was characterized by a paternalistic approach, in which donor countries made unilateral decisions, while recipient countries were regarded as passive beneficiaries. Over time, this approach has evolved toward strategic cooperation, where decisions are made in a more collaborative and equitable manner.

EVOLUTION OF COOPERATION MODELS



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

This model implied a vertical and asymmetric relationship, with strong dependence of recipient countries on donor countries. Projects and programs were designed and implemented with little local participation, which often resulted in unsustainable solutions poorly adapted to the real needs of communities. Over time, and as the importance of equity and sustainability in cooperation relationships became recognized, there has been a transition toward more participatory and strategic models.

Strategic cooperation is based on horizontal partnership, in which both actors — donors and recipients — collaborate equitably in the planning and execution of initiatives. This approach promotes the alignment of interests, shared responsibility, and the strengthening of local capacities, ensuring that projects are more relevant and sustainable in the long term.

What are the types of cooperation?

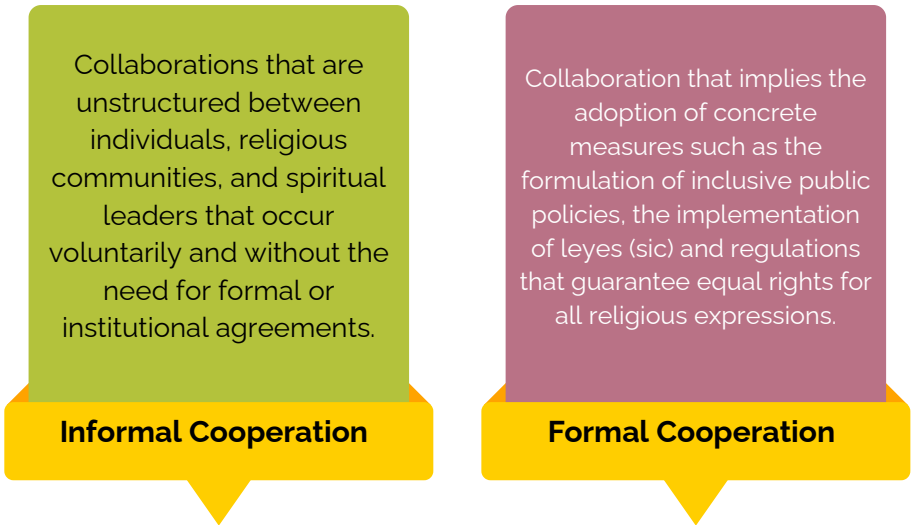
En el entendido de que la cooperación es el proceso mediante el cual dos o más personas, organizaciones o entidades trabajan juntas con el fin de alcanzar un objetivo común o lograr un beneficio mutuo; ésta se basa en la coordinación de esfuerzos, recursos y habilidades para superar desafíos y alcanzar metas que serían difíciles de lograr individualmente.
Es importante anotar que existen diversos tipos de cooperación, cada uno con características y objetivos específicos que responden a las necesidades y contextos particulares de los actores involucrados. Estos tipos de cooperación son fundamentales para entender las dinámicas de colaboración que se establecen a nivel internacional, nacional y local, y cómo estas contribuyen al desarrollo sostenible y la resolución de problemas comunes. A continuación, se detallan cada uno de estos tipos de cooperación, proporcionando una visión clara de sus modalidades y aplicaciones en diferentes escenarios.

Informal cooperation

Informal cooperation refers to spontaneous and non-institutionalized collaboration among individuals, groups, or communities, based on personal relationships, mutual trust, and shared objectives. Informal cooperation operates in a flexible and adaptive manner, without the need for strict legal or contractual frameworks. This type of cooperation is common in community and family settings, as well as within networks of friends or colleagues, where reciprocity and mutual support develop naturally, facilitating problem-solving and the achievement of common goals without formal bureaucracy.
In the religious sector, informal cooperation refers to unstructured interactions and collaborations among individuals, religious communities, and spiritual leaders, carried out voluntarily and without the need for formal or institutional agreements.
This type of cooperation may take different forms, such as collaboration among local congregations to carry out community service projects, the participation of religious leaders in informal interreligious dialogues to promote mutual understanding and peace, or mutual assistance among members of different religious traditions in times of personal or collective need.

Informal cooperation in the religious sector often arises from the initiative and personal commitment of individuals and religious groups, and may be particularly effective in addressing local problems, strengthening community ties, and promoting solidarity and mutual support. Because it is less structured than formal cooperation, this form of collaboration can be more flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of religious communities and society in general.

However, informal cooperation in the religious sector may also face challenges, such as limited resources, reduced coordination, and the possibility of conflicts or misunderstandings due to doctrinal or cultural differences. Despite these obstacles, informal cooperation remains a fundamental element in promoting interreligious understanding, social cohesion, and human well-being at both local and global levels.



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

FORMAL COOPERATION

Formal cooperation in the religious sector refers to agreements established among religious entities, governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders with the purpose of protecting and promoting the exercise of Religious Freedom at the local, national, and international levels.

This form of collaboration involves the adoption of concrete measures, such as the formulation of inclusive Public Policy, the implementation of laws and regulations that guarantee equal rights for all religious expressions, the promotion of interreligious dialogue, and the raising of awareness about the importance of respecting religious diversity.Formal cooperation in this context may include the creation of committees or working groups specifically dedicated to Religious Freedom, the establishment of monitoring and accountability mechanisms, as well as the allocation of financial and human resources to support initiatives that promote respect and religious tolerance.

This structured and systematic approach seeks to strengthen the legal, institutional, and social foundations necessary to ensure that all individuals may exercise their freedom of religion or belief without discrimination or coercion.

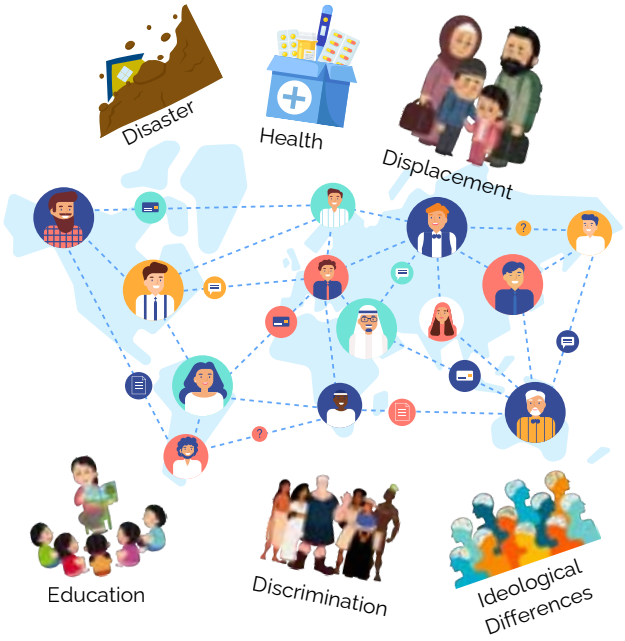
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

International cooperation represents a process through which different actors, such as States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and multinational companies, collaborate with one another in order to address challenges and promote objectives of global interest. This form of collaboration is characterized by transcending national borders and focusing on the resolution of problems that affect multiple countries or regions. The fields of action of international cooperation are diverse and include areas such as economic development, security, health, environmental protection, and the promotion of Human Rights.

International cooperation may take different forms, ranging from financial and technical assistance to the exchange of knowledge and the implementation of joint programs. Its effectiveness depends on political will, the availability of resources, and the capacity for coordination among participants, as well as on mutual respect and the understanding of the needs and priorities of each country or entity involved.

International religious cooperation involves collaboration among religious entities from different traditions and secular organizations in order to address social problems, promote human development, and foster peace and reconciliation at the global level. This form of cooperation is grounded in the ethical values and principles of different religious traditions, which often include solidarity, compassion, social justice, and respect for human dignity. The actors involved may include churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, or other religious institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations with a religious orientation, such as faith-based development organizations.

International cooperation for the resolution



Source: own elaboration. 2024.

It should be noted that international religious cooperation addresses a wide range of issues, from humanitarian assistance in cases of natural disasters or armed conflicts to community development, education, healthcare, and the promotion of Human Rights. In addition, these collaborations may contribute significantly to building bridges between communities divided by ethnic, cultural, or religious differences, thereby fostering interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

International religious cooperation initiatives are generally based on mutual respect, inclusion, and a commitment to justice and equity. By working together, religious entities and secular organizations are able to leverage their resources and networks in order to maximize the impact of their interventions and respond more effectively to the needs of vulnerable communities around the world.

However, it is important to recognize the challenges and limitations that may arise in this type of collaboration, such as doctrinal, cultural, and strategic differences, as well as the need to preserve independence and neutrality in politically sensitive contexts.

Ultimately, international religious cooperation represents a valuable resource for promoting human well-being and for contributing to the construction of a more just and compassionate world.



Source: own elaboration. 2024.

In international cooperation, it is essential that recipient actors formulate their own strategies, allowing them to take ownership of their development processes and adapt interventions to their specific needs. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the capacities of recipients to effectively coordinate the cooperation they receive, thereby promoting a more efficient and effective implementation of programs and projects.

Transparency regarding the interests of all parties and the construction of mutual trust are fundamental pillars for the success of any collaboration, as they enable the establishment of strong and lasting relationships. Cooperating actors must commit to adapting to local procedures and eliminating tied aid, ensuring that resources are used optimally and aligned with the priorities and specific contexts of the recipients.

It is crucial to strengthen joint monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in order to guarantee accountability and continuous learning, as well as to maintain coherence between development cooperation and other public policies, thereby maximizing impact and avoiding potential contradictions.

Finally, cooperating actors must assume an active role in reducing the debt burden of recipient parties, enabling them to allocate greater resources to sustainable development initiatives and to the improvement of the well-being of their populations.

Additionally, as part of the comprehensive analysis and in response to the proposal for a new architecture of international cooperation, it is necessary to adopt an integral approach that addresses different key aspects. First, strengthening the supply of cooperation implies improving the quality and effectiveness of interventions, ensuring that they are designed in a participatory manner and adapted to local needs and priorities. This also requires greater flexibility in financing mechanisms and increased investment in local capacities in order to guarantee the long-term sustainability of projects and programs.

Alignment with the global agenda implies adopting a coherent and coordinated approach, ensuring that interventions contribute significantly to the achievement of these objectives. Furthermore, promoting strategic partnerships with a variety of actors — including governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector, civil society, and local communities — is essential to maximize the impact of international cooperation and to effectively address the most urgent global challenges.

It can therefore be concluded that a new architecture of international cooperation must be inclusive, adaptive, and focused on achieving concrete results that improve human well-being and promote sustainable and equitable development at the global level.

How is internal cooperation promoted?

To describe effective internal cooperation within an organization, it is essential to establish a shared vision, promote open and transparent communication, define clear roles and responsibilities, create opportunities for collaboration, encourage empathy and respect, recognize collective achievements, and address conflicts in a constructive manner. These practices contribute to strengthening the sense of belonging, improving efficiency, and fostering a positive and collaborative working environment.

In the context of the religious sector, the promotion of internal cooperation involves consolidating an environment in which the different divisions, departments, or leaders within a religious entity work in harmony toward common goals, such as strengthening faith, providing pastoral care, and serving the community. This objective is achieved through the facilitation of open and respectful communication among members, the clarification of roles and responsibilities within the religious organization, the promotion of empathy and understanding among different currents of thought or theological interpretations, and the creation of spaces and opportunities for collaboration and exchange of ideas.

Constructive conflict resolution and the recognition of collective achievements are also essential elements for strengthening internal cooperation within the religious sector,

contributing to the more effective functioning of the faith community and to a greater capacity to address the spiritual, social, and ethical challenges faced by society.

HOW IS EXTERNAL COOPERATION PROMOTED?

Promoting external cooperation involves a series of strategic actions aimed at strengthening collaborative relationships with entities outside the organization. This includes establishing strategic alliances with related organizations, actively participating in networks and collaborative platforms, seeking funding opportunities through grants and donations, promoting dialogue and diplomacy with other external actors, supporting South–South and triangular cooperation, involving civil society and the community in collaborative processes, and maintaining an open and proactive mindset in order to adapt to new forms of work and continuously improve the effectiveness of external cooperation. These actions are essential for fostering meaningful and sustainable collaboration in order to address global challenges and achieve common objectives of development and well-being.

Within the religious sphere, promoting external cooperation involves establishing collaborative relationships with other religious entities, interreligious organizations, academic institutions, governments, and international organizations, among other external actors. This may be achieved through participation in interreligious dialogues to promote mutual understanding and peace, collaboration in community service projects together with other religious or secular organizations, and contribution to global initiatives that address social, economic, or environmental challenges from an ethical and spiritual perspective.

In addition, external cooperation in the religious context may include participation in conferences, seminars, and international events in order to exchange knowledge and experiences, as well as support for sustainable development initiatives and humanitarian assistance in collaboration with multilateral organizations and development agencies. By strengthening these external relationships and collaborations, religious entities can make a significant contribution to the construction of a more inclusive, just, and peaceful world, based on shared values of solidarity, compassion, and respect for religious and cultural pluralism.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024

ELEMENTS OF COOPERATION

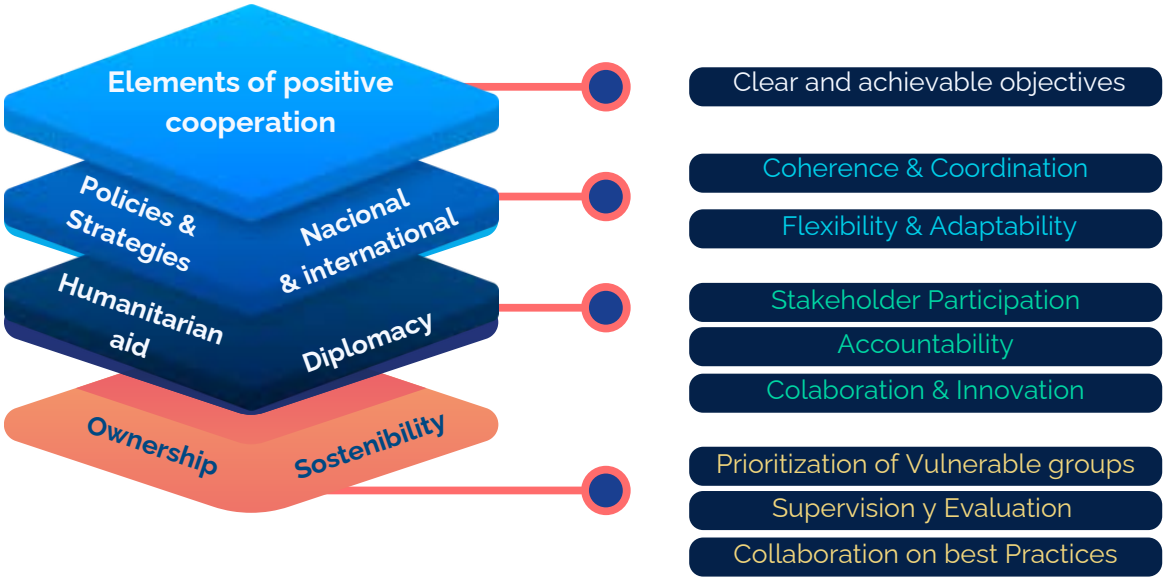
An effective cooperation policy is based on several fundamental elements that are essential for its successful implementation and alignment with strategic objectives of development and collaboration. First, it is imperative to establish clear and achievable objectives that reflect the specific priorities and needs of the country or entity implementing the policy. Likewise, the policy must adopt a results-based approach, define performance indicators, and establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure its impact and effectiveness.

Coherence and coordination with other national and international policies and strategies related to development, humanitarian assistance, and diplomacy are essential to ensure concerted action among all actors involved, including the religious sector. In addition, the participation of local actors in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of the cooperation policy must be promoted, ensuring ownership and long-term sustainability. It is essential that the policy prioritize attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, promoting gender equality and respect for Human Rights, in collaboration with religious institutions that have deep roots and extensive knowledge of local communities. Transparency in resource management and accountability are key elements for ensuring the trust and support of civil society and other stakeholders, including religious leaders and faith-based organizations. Furthermore, flexibility and adaptability are necessary to respond effectively to changes in the environment and to emergency situations.

Finally, promoting collaboration and innovation through strategic partnerships and the exchange of best practices will contribute to improving the effectiveness and impact of cooperation in achieving tangible results in terms of sustainable development and poverty reduction.

The following figure illustrates the fundamental elements that make up a positive cooperation policy. These elements are essential for establishing collaborative and effective relationships among different entities, such as governments, non-governmental organizations, private companies, and communities. The key elements of positive cooperation emphasize several fundamental components that are necessary to establish collaborative and effective relationships. First, clear and achievable objectives ensure that all parties involved understand and commit to specific and realistic goals.

Key Elements of Positive Cooperation



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

Coherence and coordination between national and international policies and strategies facilitate the alignment of efforts that maximizes positive impacts. Flexibility and adaptability allow policies and strategies to adjust to changing contexts, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness over time. Consequently, humanitarian assistance is strengthened through the participation and ownership of local actors, which guarantees that initiatives are relevant and sustainable.

In addition, transparency and accountability are crucial to maintaining trust and integrity in cooperation relationships. The promotion of collaboration and innovation fosters an environment in which new ideas and synergies can flourish, driving creative and effective solutions to common challenges. Finally, ownership and sustainability are achieved by prioritizing the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, with a strong emphasis on responsibility for results, continuous monitoring and evaluation, and the establishment of strategic partnerships and the exchange of best practices, ensuring that cooperation initiatives have a lasting and meaningful impact.

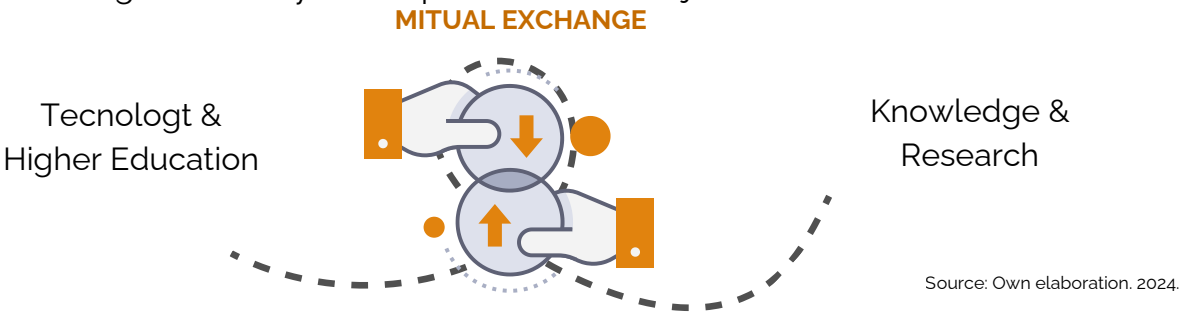
What cooperation schemes exist?

There are several schemes of international cooperation, each with its own characteristics and objectives. Among the most prominent are: Bilateral Cooperation, Multilateral Cooperation, South–South Cooperation, Triangular Cooperation, Financial Cooperation, Educational Cooperation, Environmental Cooperation, and Humanitarian Cooperation.

Bilateral Cooperation

Bilateral cooperation is defined as a form of international collaboration involving two countries working together to achieve common objectives in areas such as economic development, education, health, security, and other fields of mutual interest. This type of cooperation is characterized by specific agreements and projects designed to respond to the needs and priorities of both participating countries.
Bilateral cooperation may include financial assistance, technology transfer, exchange of knowledge and technical expertise, as well as the joint implementation of programs and policies. This form of cooperation is based on the principle of reciprocity and seeks to strengthen diplomatic and economic relations between the countries involved, promoting sustainable development and common well-being.
In the religious context, bilateral cooperation is expressed through different forms of collaboration between religious institutions from two different countries. This type of cooperation may cover a wide range of activities, from cultural and educational exchange to joint development projects and humanitarian assistance. It represents a valuable form of collaboration capable of addressing a broad range of social and spiritual challenges. Through mutual respect, understanding, and commitment to shared objectives, religious institutions from different countries can work together to promote the common good.

An example of this type of bilateral cooperation in the religious sector can be found in the collaboration between the Catholic Church in Germany and the Catholic Church in Brazil. Through Adveniat, an episcopal organization of the German Catholic Church, numerous projects in Brazil are financed, including the construction of churches, schools, and community centers, as well as training programs and social support initiatives. This cooperation has helped strengthen religious and social infrastructure in Brazil, promoting community development and social justice.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

Likewise, there are educational and theological exchange programs for students and professors between universities in two different countries. These exchanges allow for mutual enrichment through the study of different theological traditions and religious practices. An example of this can be found in the agreements established between faculties of theology in Germany and Latin America for academic and research exchange programs.

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

Multilateral cooperation is a process of collaboration among three or more actors, including States, international organizations, governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, or private sector entities, with the purpose of addressing common problems or challenges at the international level. This type of cooperation is characterized by the participation of multiple countries or stakeholders and is generally facilitated through multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, or the World Bank. Multilateral cooperation is based on the principles of sovereign equality, inclusive participation, and respect for cultural and political diversity, and seeks to promote peace, security, sustainable development, and the protection of Human Rights at the global level.

Similarly, multilateral cooperation in the religious sector involves collaboration among multiple countries and is facilitated by international organizations and global religious entities. This form of cooperation aims to address shared problems, promote peace and understanding among different cultures and religions, and provide assistance in various social areas. The following examples illustrate how multilateral cooperation is carried out within the religious sector.

A clear example is the World Council of Churches (WCC), an international ecumenical organization that brings together 349 churches and denominations from more than 110 countries. The WCC facilitates global interreligious dialogue,

promotes peace and social justice, and coordinates humanitarian responses to natural disasters and crises. Its participation has been evident in the peace process in South Sudan, where it has worked with local churches and international organizations to mediate the conflict and promote reconciliation.

Another example is the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum, where religious leaders from different traditions meet to promote interreligious dialogue, tolerance, and mutual understanding. This platform facilitates cooperation among diverse religious communities and international organizations to address issues such as the prevention of violent extremism, the promotion of peaceful coexistence, and the fight against religious discrimination.

Likewise, there is the Working Group on the Protection of Places of Worship in the Context of Interreligious Dialogue, established by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). This group brings together representatives from different religious traditions and governments to develop policies and practices aimed at protecting places of worship and promoting respect, security, and peaceful coexistence among different religious communities the peaceful coexistence among religious communities throughout the world.

f

In Bogotá, Colombia, an example of multilateral cooperation in the religious sector is the Interreligious Council of Bogotá. This council brings together representatives of different religious traditions present in the city, including leaders from the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist communities, among others. The main objective of the council is to promote interreligious dialogue, tolerance, and collaboration on issues of common interest, such as the promotion of peace, social justice, peaceful coexistence, and the support of vulnerable groups.

The Interreligious Council of Bogotá works in close collaboration with local governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other actors of civil society to develop programs and projects that address social challenges and promote shared values among different religious communities. In addition, this council actively participates in interreligious events and activities in the city, such as prayer gatherings, educational seminars, and awareness campaigns on issues of social and ethical relevance.

Through its work, the Interreligious Council of Bogotá exemplifies how multilateral cooperation in the religious sector can contribute to strengthening the social fabric, building peace, and promoting religious diversity in a multicultural city such as Bogotá.

SOUTH–SOUTH COOPERATION: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

South–South cooperation refers to collaboration among developing countries to share knowledge, skills, experiences, and resources with the objective of promoting sustainable development and improving common well-being. This type of cooperation is based on solidarity and mutual understanding, and seeks to address shared challenges without relying exclusively on assistance from developed countries. South–South cooperation is manifested in various sectors, including the economic, social, scientific, and cultural fields.

An example of this type of cooperation can be found in programs between India and several African countries, in which India has collaborated in areas such as agriculture, information technology, and education. Initiatives such as the India Development Capacity Initiative for Africa (IDCA) and the Pan-African e-Network Project illustrate this form of cooperation by providing training and technology transfer aimed at strengthening local capacities.

It should also be noted that, within the religious sector, South–South cooperation is reflected in joint efforts to promote Religious Freedom, interreligious dialogue, and social justice. This form of cooperation is particularly relevant for strengthening relationships among religious communities in developing countries and for addressing common challenges such as religious discrimination, intolerance, and violence based on religion.

An example of this can be found in the collaboration between the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, which have worked together to promote interreligious dialogue and peace in Mindanao. These religious organizations from different countries have cooperated in the creation of interreligious dialogue platforms.

These platforms facilitate mutual understanding and the peaceful resolution of conflicts among different religious communities

Teaching of religious pluralism



and the importance of religious frredom

Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

Likewise, collaboration between educational institutions in Brazil and South Africa has led to the development of academic curricula that include the teaching of religious pluralism and the importance of Religious Freedom. These institutions cooperate in the creation and implementation of educational programs that promote tolerance and respect for all religions from an early age.

Additionally, there are Community Development Projects in which religious organizations collaborate on initiatives that not only address material needs but also promote social cohesion and Religious Freedom. An example of this can be found in joint projects between Caritas organizations in Latin America and Africa, aimed at building community centers that serve both social activities and interreligious dialogue.

It is also worth mentioning the collaboration between the World Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches in initiatives for the defense of Human Rights and Religious Freedom in international forums such as the United Nations. Through these efforts, they advocate for Religious Freedom at the global level and participate in regional and international platforms that promote its protection.

In conclusion, South–South cooperation in the religious sector represents a valuable instrument for promoting Religious Freedom, interreligious dialogue, and social justice. Through collaboration and the exchange of knowledge and experiences, developing countries can effectively address common challenges and move toward a future characterized by peace and mutual understanding.

Triangular Cooperation

Triangular cooperation is a scheme of collaboration involving three parties: two developing countries and one developed country or international organization that acts as facilitator or provider of resources. This model combines the benefits of South–South cooperation with the additional support of actors from the Global North, creating synergies that enhance the impact of development initiatives. Its objective is to take advantage of the experiences and knowledge of developing countries, complemented by financial, technical, or logistical resources provided by a developed country or an international organization.

Likewise, the combination of resources and knowledge, the use of successful experiences, and the expansion of the scope and effectiveness of projects are key characteristics of triangular cooperation. In addition, triangular cooperation also has significant applications in the religious sector, particularly in the promotion of Religious Freedom, interreligious dialogue, and social justice. This form of cooperation can strengthen the efforts of different religious communities to address common problems and promote peace and mutual understanding.

Specifically, triangular cooperation has important applications in the religious sector, especially in the promotion of Religious Freedom, interreligious dialogue, and social justice. This form of cooperation enhances the capacity of different religious communities to work together in addressing shared challenges and fostering peaceful coexistence.

An example of this can be observed in the collaboration between South Africa (a developing country with experience in reconciliation and interreligious dialogue), India (a developing country as recipient), and Norway (a developed country providing financial and technical support). The objective of this cooperation was to facilitate educational and interreligious dialogue programs in India, using South Africa's experience in post-apartheid peacebuilding, together with Norway's financial and logistical assistance.

Similarly, another example involves the Philippines (a developing country with a strong tradition of religious activism for peace), Nigeria (a developing country facing challenges of interreligious violence), and the United States (a developed country providing resources and training). The purpose of this cooperation was to strengthen the capacities of religious institutions in Nigeria to promote peace and social justice, using the experience of the Philippines and the financial and technical support of the United States.

In other words, triangular cooperation in the religious sector is a powerful strategy for promoting Religious Freedom, interreligious dialogue, and social justice. Through collaboration between developing countries and the participation of a facilitator from the Global North, innovative and sustainable solutions to

common challenges can be achieved. This type of cooperation not only strengthens local capacities but also combines the practical experience of developing countries with the resources and technology of developed nations, generating a synergy that expands the reach and effectiveness of projects while fostering mutual understanding and social cohesion through multilateral initiatives.

It is also important to highlight that in Colombia, following the 2016 Peace Agreement, several reconciliation and reconstruction projects have been developed in regions previously affected by armed conflict. In these initiatives, local religious organizations, such as churches and faith-based community groups, have participated alongside Colombian government agencies and international humanitarian and development organizations.

These collaborations have included the implementation of psychosocial support programs, the promotion of peaceful coexistence, the strengthening of local capacities, and economic development projects in communities affected by violence. For example, training programs have been conducted for local religious leaders in mediation and conflict resolution, with technical and financial support from international organizations.

This type of triangular cooperation demonstrates how the joint efforts of local and international actors can have a significant impact on peacebuilding and development in Colombia, particularly in contexts where religious communities play an important role in daily life and in the resolution of social conflicts.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION

Humanitarian cooperation focuses on providing immediate and essential assistance to communities affected by natural disasters, conflicts, and other crises. In the religious sector, this form of cooperation is fundamental for protecting vulnerable communities and ensuring access to basic resources, regardless of their faith. For example, organizations such as Caritas Internationalis and Islamic Relief collaborate with local churches and mosques to distribute food, water, and medical care in conflict zones.

FINANCIAL COOPERATION

Financial cooperation involves the provision of economic resources to support development and sustainability projects within religious communities. This type of cooperation is essential for financing initiatives that promote Religious Freedom, such as the construction of places of worship, training programs for religious leaders, and community development projects. Institutions such as the World Bank and international funds frequently collaborate with religious entities to ensure that resources reach the communities that need them most.

EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION

Educational cooperation seeks to improve access to education and enhance its quality, while promoting understanding and tolerance among different religious communities. This form of cooperation is essential for instilling values of respect and Religious Freedom from an early age. Joint programs between universities and religious organizations, such as educational exchanges promoted by the KAICIID Institute, are examples of how educational cooperation can foster social cohesion and respect for religious diversity.

ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION

Environmental cooperation focuses on addressing environmental challenges through joint efforts that include religious communities. This form of cooperation promotes environmental justice and the care of the planet as principles shared by many religious traditions, thereby contributing to the protection of Religious Freedom by creating a safer and healthier environment for all communities. Initiatives such as the Interfaith Rainforest Alliance, supported by Religions for Peace, demonstrate how environmental collaboration can unite different religious traditions in the pursuit of sustainability and ecological justice.

In conclusion, each scheme of cooperation provides a unique set of resources and approaches, creating a strong network of support that benefits religious communities around the world. By integrating these forms of cooperation, the capacity of religious communities to promote peace, social justice, the protection of fundamental Human Rights, and the strengthening of interreligious dialogue worldwide is significantly enhanced.

COOPERATIÓN



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

STATE OF COOPERATION — INITIATIVE BANK

The State of cooperation refers to a condition in which different actors, such as countries, international organizations, non-governmental entities, and local communities, work together in a harmonious and efficient manner toward common objectives. This state is characterized by active collaboration, the exchange of resources and knowledge, the joint implementation of projects and policies, and the alignment of efforts toward shared goals. Mutual trust and transparency are fundamental in this context, facilitating cooperation and minimizing conflicts.

Examples of a state of cooperation include multilateral agreements such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and participation in international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. In the religious sector, cooperation is reflected through initiatives such as the World Council of Churches and interreligious programs for environmental protection. In summary, the State of cooperation is essential for addressing global challenges, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of collective actions, fostering innovation, and developing sustainable solutions that promote peace and stability.

In Colombia, the State of cooperation in Religious Freedom is evidenced through a solid legal framework, inclusive public policies, and various governmental and non-governmental initiatives. The Constitution and the Law on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship guarantee freedom of religion and equality among all religious denominations. The Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior and the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation, and Coexistence promote interreligious dialogue and peace. Religious entities such as the Colombian Episcopal Conference and the Confederation of Evangelical Churches collaborate on social justice projects, while the Interreligious Committee of Colombia encourages dialogue and cooperation among different religions. In addition, Colombia receives international support from organizations such as USAID and the European Union for programs that promote Religious Freedom, and it develops educational and community programs that teach respect for diversity of beliefs, contributing to a more inclusive and peaceful society.

WHAT IS AN INITIATIVE BANK?

A bank of initiatives is an organized collection of projects, ideas, proposals, or programs available to be consulted, implemented, or developed by different interested actors. This concept may be applied in public, private, academic, or social contexts, and its main purpose is to facilitate access to a wide range of initiatives that may serve as inspiration, models, or starting points for new actions.

In other words, a bank of initiatives represents a key platform that compiles and organizes projects, proposals, and ideas so that different actors may easily access successful experiences, best practices, and innovative strategies that can guide new programs and policies. This tool facilitates collaboration and knowledge exchange among participants, promoting continuous improvement and innovation in project implementation.

Within the religious sector, a bank of initiatives has particular importance because it provides a platform where religious organizations, communities, and spiritual leaders can share and access projects that promote Religious Freedom, interreligious dialogue, social justice, and other shared objectives. From interreligious dialogue projects to social justice and humanitarian programs, this type of platform creates a vital space for cooperation among different religious denominations, fostering a culture of mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding.

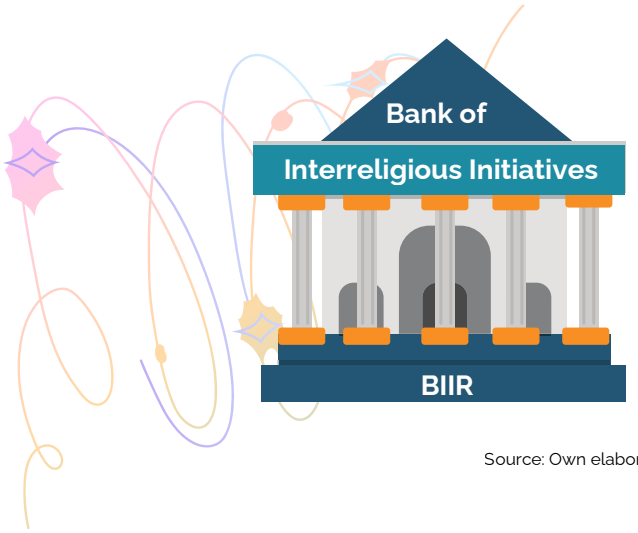
The importance of a bank of initiatives in the religious sector lies in its capacity to amplify the voices and actions of religious communities in the promotion of shared values and the resolution of social problems. By collecting and sharing successful projects and innovative strategies, this tool empowers religious organizations and spiritual leaders to develop effective actions that address common challenges, strengthen social cohesion, and promote a more inclusive and peaceful society based on respect and solidarity.

In this context, the Interreligious Initiatives Bank (BIIR) was created with the purpose of identifying and supporting initiatives from the religious sector that address different aspects of social and community development. Through the BIIR call for proposals, comprehensive assistance is provided for the formulation, execution, follow-up, and monitoring of projects submitted to the program, provided that they are aligned with five previously defined investment lines: entrepreneurship, socio-educational education, training of trainers, culture, and mental health. Through this initiative, the Ministry of the Interior — Directorate of Religious Affairs — recognizes the religious sector as a fundamental actor in the construction of social fabric and sustainable development, valuing the social and cultural impact generated through its actions throughout the country.

The BIIR is conceived as a tool designed to strengthen and support the activities and projects of the religious sector that contribute to the well-being and development of society. The National Government, through the Ministry of the Interior, recognizes the importance of identifying thematic areas and sectors in which the religious sector plays a crucial role in promoting social, cultural, and educational development.

This initiative represents a significant step toward building strong alliances between the government and religious institutions, acknowledging their capacity to address and solve social problems from a comprehensive and collaborative perspective.

As a result, the BIIR represents a commitment to the promotion of sustainable development and the construction of a more inclusive and equitable society, through the strengthening and support of initiatives from the religious sector that generate a positive impact on communities. This collaboration between the government and the religious sector demonstrates the importance of working jointly to achieve common objectives for the benefit of society as a whole.



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

WHAT IS A PROJECT?

The definition of a project involves the planning and execution of a series of actions designed to achieve a specific objective. In essence, a project represents the conception and structuring of a particular task, in which the methods and procedures required for its implementation are established. It is essential that the project include detailed planning of all activities to be carried out, as well as the resources necessary for its execution.

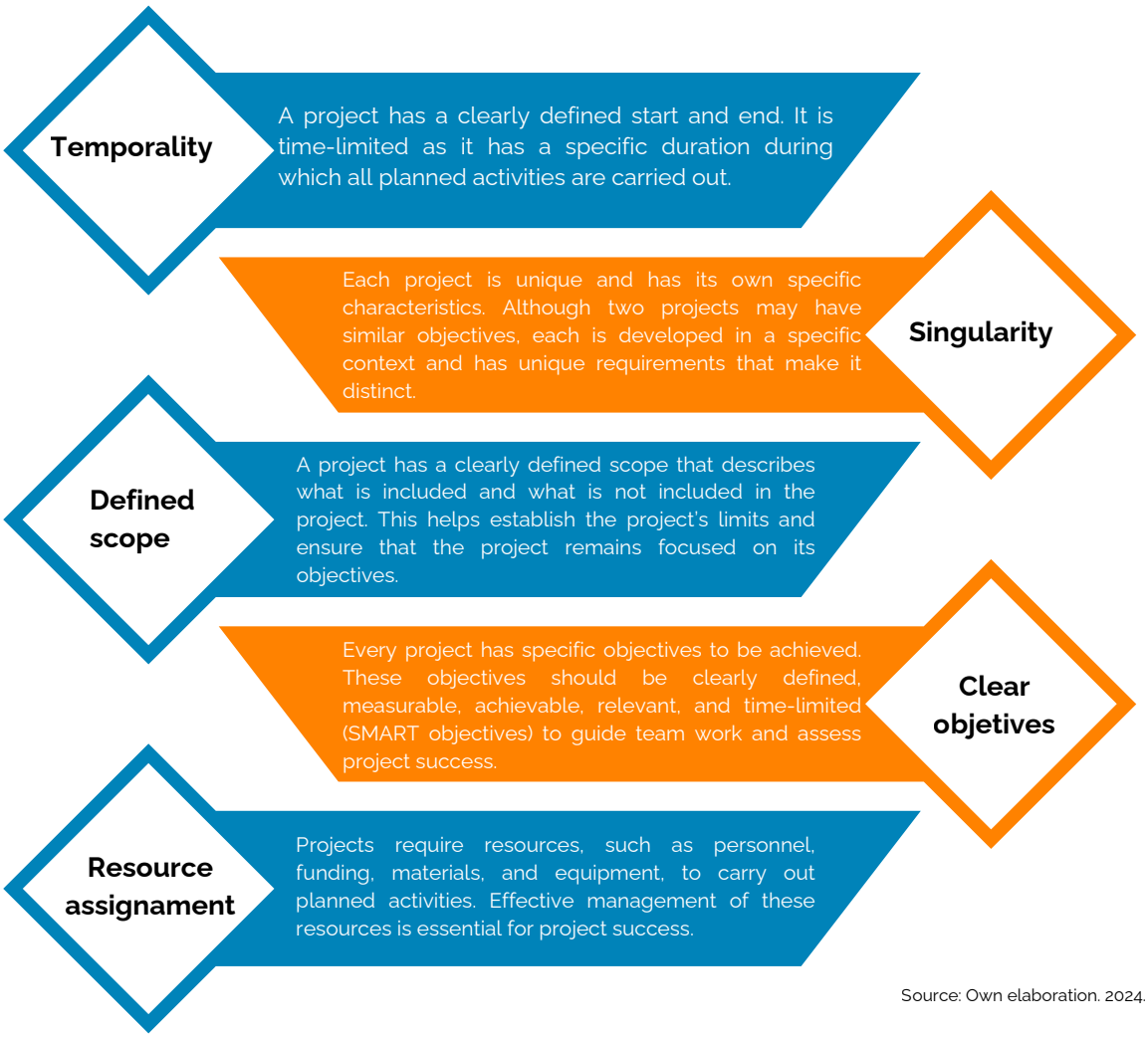
In every project, key elements must be considered in order to ensure its success. These include the time required to complete the tasks, the scope or extent of the activities, the associated costs, proper organization and planning, stakeholder management, effective communication, clear assignment of responsibilities, and the definition of the expected results.

It is important to note that projects may vary in their nature and characteristics, and may be classified according to their purpose, content, financing, or level of complexity, among other factors. However, regardless of their type, all projects share the need for careful planning and efficient resource management in order to achieve their objectives effectively.

WHAT ARE THE FIVE (5) CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROJECT?

Projects, as planned and executed endeavors intended to achieve a specific objective, present a series of characteristics that distinguish them and define their nature. These characteristics provide a fundamental basis for understanding the nature and scope of any project initiative. Among the five main characteristics are temporality, uniqueness, scope, limited resources, and a defined objective. These characteristics establish the framework within which projects are planned, executed, and evaluated, allowing teams and stakeholders to understand and effectively manage their development and results.

These characteristics are defined as follows:



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

These previously mentioned attributes provide a fundamental understanding of the nature and scope of any project initiative, enabling effective planning and execution. By recognizing and taking these characteristics into account, project teams can work more efficiently, anticipate potential challenges, and direct their efforts toward achieving successful and sustainable results. Ultimately, understanding and applying these characteristics establishes the foundation for project success and maximizes its positive impact in fulfilling its objectives and meeting the needs of stakeholders.

How is a project developed?

The process of developing a project is essential for transforming ideas into concrete and measurable actions that make it possible to achieve specific objectives. From the identification of a need or problem to the evaluation of the results obtained, each phase of the project requires careful planning and coordinated execution.

In this sense, developing a project involves following a set of structured and methodological steps that guide the path toward success. From clearly defining the objectives to assigning resources, establishing timelines, and evaluating impact, each stage of the process plays a leading role in achieving the desired results.Below, we will examine the fundamental steps involved in project development, highlighting the importance of rigorous planning and effective execution to ensure the fulfillment of the proposed objectives.

Step 1. Project identification

The first crucial step in starting any project is to clearly define its objective. This stage involves answering fundamental questions such as: Why are we carrying out this project? What result or goal do we expect to achieve upon its completion? It is essential to understand that every project is unique, and although two projects may have similar objectives, it is unlikely that they will be developed in exactly the same way due to the different circumstances surrounding them.

For example, if the project consists of building a house, the approach and actions required will be different from those of a research project on a vaccine for a disease. However, in both cases, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the project's objective in order to guide all future activities and decisions.

Defining the project's objective is the first step toward success, as it provides a clear point of reference and helps maintain focus and direction throughout the project's execution process.

Step 2. Project planning

The second step in project development is to establish the management model that will be used for its execution. The management model is the framework or approach that will guide the administration and supervision of the project from its beginning to its completion. This model defines how the project activities will be organized, directed, and controlled, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the team members.

When selecting an appropriate management model, it is important to consider factors such as the nature of the project, its scope, the available resources, and the preferences of the team.

Once the management model has been selected, it is important to establish the processes, tools, and techniques that will be used to implement it. In addition, clear roles and responsibilities must be assigned within the team, and the mechanisms for communication and decision-making must be defined. A well-defined management model provides the necessary structure to ensure that the project progresses effectively toward the achievement of its objectives.

Step 3. Identify available resources

The third step is to identify the resources available for the project. This involves answering the fundamental question: What resources do we have to carry out the project? The most important resource, and often the most critical, is the people who will be part of the project team. Without a competent and committed team, it is difficult to achieve project success.

It is essential to identify, assign, recruit, or hire the appropriate individuals for each role within the project. This includes not only the core team members, such as the project manager, team leaders, and technical experts, but also any additional personnel required, such as external consultants, suppliers, or contractors.

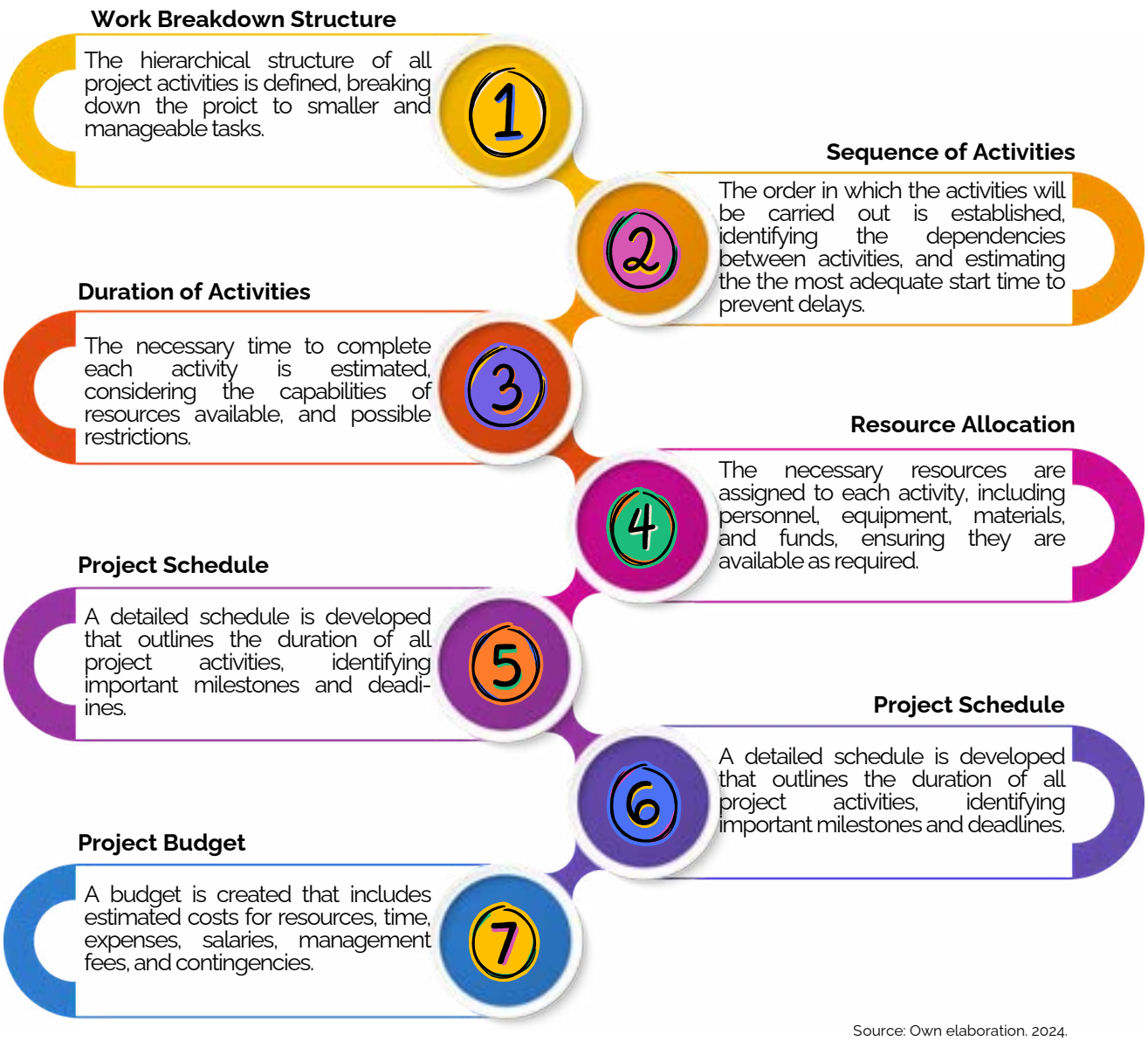
In addition to personnel, it is also important to identify and secure other necessary resources for the project, such as equipment, technology, tools, financing, and physical space. These resources may vary depending on the nature and scope of the project; therefore, it is necessary to conduct a thorough assessment to identify all required resources and ensure that they are available at the appropriate time during project execution. Effective resource management ensures that the project can progress efficiently and achieve its objectives within the established timelines and budget.

Step 4. Develop the work plan

The fourth step is to develop the project work plan. This plan details all the activities required to achieve the project's objectives, as well as the assigned resources, timelines, and dependencies between activities. The work plan provides a clear guide for project execution and helps keep the team focused and on track toward achieving the objectives.

When developing the work plan, several important aspects must be considered:Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), Activity sequencing, Activity duration, Resource allocation, Project schedule, Project budget, Risk management.

Key Aspects in the Development of a Project Work Plan



Source: Own elaboration. 2024.

At the end of this stage, the project team will have a detailed plan that will serve as a roadmap for the execution of the project. It is important to review and regularly update the work plan as the project progresses and as changes in circumstances or requirements occur. This will ensure that the project remains on track and that objectives are achieved effectively.

Step 5. Execution and Closure

The fifth step in project management is the execution of the previously designed plan. In this phase, the team begins to carry out the planned activities, following the established

schedule and allocating resources efficiently. Monitoring progress becomes a primary task, ensuring that each activity is completed within the expected timeframes and that project milestones are reached as scheduled. This stage is crucial, as it represents the transformation of planning into concrete actions.

It is essential to maintain open and constant communication both within the project team and with relevant stakeholders. This ongoing communication ensures that all parties remain informed about the progress of the project and about any significant changes that may arise during execution. In addition, any problems or challenges that emerge must be addressed in a timely and effective manner, using available skills and resources to resolve them and minimize their impact on the project's progress.

During the execution phase, attention must also be given to ensuring the quality of all activities carried out and the deliverables produced. It is essential to verify that established quality standards are met and that the final results are aligned with the expectations of the client or stakeholders. In summary, project execution is a critical phase that involves a combination of action, monitoring, communication, and problem-solving in order to achieve the project's objectives effectively.

Finally, this step also includes evaluating the success of the project, documenting lessons learned, and formally closing all activities related to the project. Specific closure activities are also included, such as the settlement of contracts, the delivery of final results to stakeholders, and the recognition of the achievements accomplished. Project closure is an important moment to reflect on the work performed and to acknowledge the effort of the team in achieving the project objectives.

Below, a diagram entitled "Practical Guide: Five Steps to Develop a Project" will be presented. This guide offers a systematic and effective approach for those seeking to carry out projects successfully. Each step provides a clear and coherent structure that guides the process from the definition of objectives to the final evaluation of results, allowing efficient and effective management at every stage of the project. By following this guide, individuals and teams can significantly increase their chances of success by planning, executing, and completing projects satisfactorily, thereby ensuring a positive and lasting impact on their environment and on the communities they serve. With this practical tool available, the path is opened toward achieving successful results and developing projects that generate meaningful and lasting change.

The success of the project will depend on successfully completing each of the following steps:

HOW To Develop A PROJECT IN 5 STEPS



☑ Identify the Project

Ask Yourself:
What is the goal of the project?
Why did I start the project?
What do I expect to achieve in the end?

☑ Plan the Project

Establish:

- A management model
- Processes, tooms, and techniques
- Roles and responsiblities

☑ Identify Available Resources

Establish::

- Project team
- Interested parties

☑ Develop the Work Plan

Detail all the activities neeeed to to achieve project goals, the necessary resources for each activity, the schedule, and dependencies between activities.

☑ Execute and Close

Implement the planned design. Execute the planned activities, follow the schedule, identify contigencies, adjust the resources, supervise all activities, and resolve any existing problem to ensure each activity is successfully completed.

CONCLUSION

After examining in detail the topics related to cooperation policies for the protection of Religious Freedom, as well as the fundamental concepts of cooperation, its components, and its evolution, several significant conclusions may be drawn. First, it is clear that international cooperation plays a crucial role in the promotion and protection of Religious Freedom worldwide by facilitating the exchange of best practices, resources, and support among different actors, including governments, religious organizations, academic institutions, and civil society. The evolution of cooperation models has shifted from paternalistic approaches to more collaborative and participatory strategies, reflecting a deeper understanding of cultural and religious complexities and pluralism.

Likewise, the importance of a well-structured cooperation policy has become evident, one that includes components such as transparency, accountability, interinstitutional coordination, and the participation of local communities in order to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives. The relationship between the State and cooperation is fundamental, since governments play a key role in policy formulation, resource allocation, and the coordination of efforts in collaboration with other relevant actors.

Banks of initiatives and projects constitute important tools for the implementation of cooperation policies, as they facilitate the identification, financing, and monitoring of specific initiatives that contribute to the promotion of Religious Freedom and respect for religious diversity. Ultimately, concrete projects represent the visible expression of international cooperation and the materialization of the principles and objectives established in cooperation policies, serving as an effective means to achieve tangible and positive results in the protection and promotion of Religious Freedom at the local, national, and international levels.

In Colombia, cooperation policies in the religious sector must address diverse approaches and challenges in order to guarantee the effective protection and promotion of Religious Freedom within a context marked by cultural diversity and complexity. It is imperative to promote collaboration between the State, religious organizations, and civil society, recognizing and respecting the religious pluralism present in the country. The promotion of interreligious dialogue and interfaith cooperation constitutes a fundamental tool for fostering peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among different religious communities.

Likewise, priority must be given to actions aimed at protecting the rights of minority religious communities and preventing religious discrimination, especially in areas affected by conflict or violence. This requires the implementation of concrete measures to guarantee the safety of religious leaders and the participation of these communities in policy-making processes.

For this reason, addressing the challenges related to cooperation policies in the religious sector in Colombia requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving multiple actors and promoting respect for Human Rights and peaceful coexistence within Colombian society.

ABBREVIATIONS

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
FARC-EP: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (People's Army)
NDP: National Development Plan
DANE: National Administrative Department of Statistics
SINALIBREC: National System for Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship
DNP: National Planning Department
POT: Territorial Land-Use Plan
CTP: Territorial Planning Council
SDG: Sustainable Development Goal
OLIRE: Observatory on Religious Freedom in Latin America
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNAD: National Open and Distance University
RE: Religious Entities
RSO: Religious Social Organizations
ZIU: Zion International University
CEO: Operational Liaison Center
IIRF: Institute for Religious Freedom
CONPES: National Council for Economic and Social Policy
MDP: Municipal Development Plan

GLOSSARY

A

Agreement: An agreement is a formal understanding or arrangement reached between different political parties, leaders, governments, or groups with divergent political interests in order to achieve a common objective. These agreements are essential for governance, policy implementation, conflict resolution, and cooperation among different political forces.

C

Committee: A committee is a group of people who work together to resolve specific problems.

Convergence: The term convergence refers to the act and the result of converging. This verb refers to something that coincides in the same position or tends to unite or meet with something else.

D

Decree: A decree is an order or provision issued by a competent authority, generally a Head of State, a President, or a Prime Minister, with the force of law. Decrees are used to regulate specific matters within the existing legal framework and may address a wide variety of issues, from the implementation of policies to the declaration of states of emergency.

G

Guideline: A guideline is a tendency, direction, or characteristic feature of something.

H

Harassment: Constant abuse intended to subdue or condition a person or community, present in multiple forms, such as verbal threats or physical harm, and occurring in environments such as educational, workplace, or religious settings, among others, to the extent that it may be considered a legally punishable offense.

GLOSARIO

M

Multifaceted: Refers to the quality of having many facets, characteristics, or diverse aspects.

P

Public Policy: A Public Policy is an action carried out by a government with the objective of meeting a need of society. Through Public Policy, the authorities responsible for the administration of the State use available resources to solve a problem or respond to a demand from the population.

R

Religious Worship Facilities: Refers to the installations and elements necessary for the practice of religious or spiritual activities.

T

Territorial Land-Use Plan: A technical and regulatory instrument for territorial planning and management, consisting of a set of administrative, planning, and physical policies and actions that guide the development of the municipal territory in the short, medium, and long term, regulating the use, occupation, and transformation of urban and rural physical space.

REFERENCES

- *Sánchez, Daniel. (2011, July 23). History of Human Rights – documentary video. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDmQ8N0ezrg*
- *Gould, J. P. (2012). The Metamorphosis Ritual: Identity Reconstructed in the Amazon (Vols. 48–2). https://scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0124-34122012000200004*
- *Calle, H. (2021, May 1). Various Religions Unite for the Amazon. EL ESPECTADOR. https://www.elespectador.com/ambiente/varias-religiones-se-unen-por-la-amazonia/*
- *Ortega Hoyos, B. A. (2023). Report: Characterization of the Religious Sector. file:///C:/Users/Usuario/Downloads/Informe%20TIC%20C%C3%B3mo%20Caracterizar%20la%20Comunidad%20Religiosa%20VFF.pdf*
- *Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America. Religious Freedom Index in Colombia (2023). https://olire.org.co*
- *Ministry of the Interior (Colombia), Palacio Martínez, D., Baena López, C. A., Rhenals López, V., Osorio Cárdenas, J. F., Salgado Leyva, E. N., Velásquez Carrascal, A., Pulido Blas, L. D., González, V. M., Montoya Pardo, I. M. (2022). Final Report on the Characterization of Faith-Based Organizations, Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*
- *Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL). (2023). Territorial Development and Public Policy. https://www.cepal.org*
- *United Nations. (2002). Resolution A/RES/57/277 – United Nations Public Service Awards. https://www.un.org*
- *Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OECD). (2024). Territorial Development and Public Governance. https://www.oecd.org*
- *Congreso de Colombia. (1994). Law 152 of 1994 – Organic Law of the Development Plan. https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co*
- *Congreso de Colombia. (2015). Law 1757 of 2015 – Promotion and Protection of Democratic Participation. https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co*
- *Presidencia de la República de Colombia. (2018). Decree 437 of 2018 – Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship.*
- *Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones. (2016). Resolution 2405 of 2016 – Digital Government Excellence Seal.*
- *Fundación Iglesia de Dios Ministerial de Jesucristo Internacional. (2023). Social Dialogue and Interreligious Dialogue Documents.*
- *Universidad de los Andes. (2021). Reconciliation Barometer Report.*
- *Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE). (2022–2023). National Culture Survey and Economic Contribution of Non-Profit Religious Organizations.*
- *Naciones Unidas. (2023). Open Government, Digital Participation, and Sustainable Development.*
- *CEPAL. (2023). Territorial Development as a Social Construction.*
- *OCDE. (2024). Sustainable Territorial Development and Governance.*
- *Various sources consulted in the preparation of the document, including academic publications, official reports, legal documents, and institutional databases related to Religious Freedom, Public Policy, Sustainable Development, and Interreligious Cooperation in Colombia.*

REFERENCES

- Ministry of the Interior. (n.d.). Guide for legal procedures and ministers of worship
- *(2019). Final report on the characterization of the Religious Sector of Cundinamarca within the framework of the public policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*
- *Authors: Ministry of the Interior and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2019). Report. (n.d.).*
  https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiODA4NTIzOTA1MWGVNS00MzJnLWFkYWEtNjJzMjNkNmQwMWdiCiOjEzQuxNTVmLWUxOTI1NTNDRkY5OSOTRkLTE5MTNkbODY1MDM3MIslmMi0JRg&pageName=ReportSection9df429325c135a6909ae
- *Municipality of Neiva. (n.d.). Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship in the Municipality of Neiva, Huila 2020–2023.*
https://www.alcaldianeiva.gov.co/Ciudadanos/Documents/PROYECTO%20POLITICA%20PUBLICA.pdf
- *Final report on characterization, territorialization, and acceleration of the SDGs of Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) in the departments of Antioquia, Atlántico, Caldas, Caquetá, Casanare, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, Magdalena, Meta, Quindío, Santander, Tolima, and Bogotá Capital District.*
  https://itagui.gov.co/uploads/micrositios/files/871f6e-informe-final-de-caracterizacion-territorializacion-y-aceleracion-de-los-ods-2.pdf
- *UNDP, M. D. (2021). Final report – Call for proposals for the Bank of Interreligious Initiatives in the Departments of Bolívar, Cundinamarca, Norte de Santander, Risaralda, Valle del Cauca, and San Andrés, Bogotá.*
- *UNDP, M. D. (2021). Final report – Call for proposals for the Bank of Interreligious Initiatives in the Departments of Bolívar, Cundinamarca, Norte de Santander, Risaralda, Valle del Cauca, and San Andrés, Bogotá.*
- *Saint Michael the Archangel Cathedral – Diocese of Mocoa-Sibundoy. (n.d.).*
  https://diocesisdesibundoy.org/catedral-san-miguel-arcangel/
- *Parishes – Diocese of Valledupar. (n.d.).*
  https://diocesisvalledupar.org/parroquias/
- *Diocese of Pasto Official. (n.d.).*
  https://www.facebook.com/DiocesisDePastoOficial/
- Government of the Department of Sucre. (2021). Teacher Training Plan and Directives for SCRIE. Local Education Authorities.
  https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1780/articles-319469_recurso_23.pdf
- Admin. (n.d.). Churches and Catholic Parishes in Puerto Carreño, Vichada, Colombia – Procedures – Documents.
  https://www.tramitya.com/iglesias-y-parroquias-catolicas-en-puerto-carreno-vichada-colombia/

REFERENCES

REFERENCES – PUBLIC POLICY DESIGN

- Baena, P. (n.d.). Strategic Planning. Theories, methodologies, and best practices in Latin America. UNAD, DNP, 2015.
- National Planning Department. Planning Guide: Guide for the construction and analysis of indicators. DNP, 2018.
- National Planning Department. Methodological Guide for the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies with measurable and verifiable indicators. 2024.
- Kingdon, J. Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies. D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1984.
- Fischer, F. Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices. 2024.
- Roth Deubel, A. N. Public Policies: Formulation, Implementation, and Evaluation. Bogotá: Ed. Aurora, 1999.
- Fischer, F. Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices. 2024.
- Roth Deubel, A. N. Public Policies: Formulation, Implementation, and Evaluation. Bogotá: Ed. Aurora, 1999.

REFERENCES – PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING – INTERRELIGIOUS SECTOR – PUBLIC EXCELLENCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2024). Upgrading Participation, Representation, and Openness in Public Life.
  Available at:
  https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/aeef583d-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/aeef583d-en
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). (2023). Territorial Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.
  Available at:
  https://www.cepal.org/es/subtemas/desarrollo-territorial
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). (2023). Territorial Development Plans of Colombia.
  Available at:
  https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/es/planes/planes-de-desarrollo-territoriales-de-colombia
- Congress of Colombia. (1994). Law 133 of 1994. Establishes the Statutory Law on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship, recognizing in Article 19 of the Political Constitution.
  Available at:
  https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=331
- Congress of Colombia. (1994). Law 152 of 1994. Organic Law of the Development Plan.
  Available at:
  https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=327

REFERENCES

- Congress of Colombia. (1994). Law 152 of 1994, by which the Organic Law of the Development Plan is established.
  Available at:
  https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=327
- Congress of Colombia. (2015). Law 1757 of 2015, by which provisions are issued regarding the promotion and protection of the right to democratic participation.
  Available at:
  https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=6535
- Congress of Colombia. (2015). Statutory Law 1757 of 2015, establishing provisions on the promotion and protection of the right to democratic participation.
  Available at:
  https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=6535
- National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). (2022). Satellite Account Design of Nonprofit Institutions Serving Households (NPISH), with emphasis on religious entities.
  Available at:
  https://www.dane.gov.co
- National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). (2023). Political Culture Survey.
  Available at:
  https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/cultura/cultura-politica-encuesta
- National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). (2023). Political Culture Survey 2023.
  Available at:
  https://www.dane.gov.co/files/operaciones/ECP/bol-ECP-2023.pdf
- Función Pública. (2024). Participatory planning and budgeting.
  Available at:
  https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/planeacion-y-presupuesto-participativo
- Iglesia de Dios Ministerial de Jesucristo Internacional Foundation. (2023). World Conference on Religious Freedom.
  Available at:
  https://fundacionidmji.org/page-id-1115
- López, C. A. (2023). Interreligious Social Dialogue and Multithematic Dialogue as a promoter of development in Latin America and the Caribbean.
  Available at:
  https://irf.global/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-07-IIRF-Reports.pdf
- Ministry of the Interior. (2022). Final report on characterization, territorialization, and acceleration of the SDGs of Faith-Based Organizations in Colombia.
- Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies. (2016). Resolution 2405 of 2016, by which the model of the Online Government Excellence Seal is adopted.
  Retrieved from:
  https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?id=30038107#:~:text=Define%20los%20lineamientos%20del%20mo,nacionales%20e%20internacionales%20que%20apliquen.https://www.mintic.gov.co.

REFERENCES

- Montalvo, J., & Mariana Rodríguez. (2023). AmericasBarometer 2023 for Colombia. Retrieved from the AmericasBarometer of the Americas – LAPOP takes the pulse of democracy in Colombia 2023. Nashville, TN: LAPOP.

https://obsdemocracia.org/2024/04/25/lanzamiento-del-barometro-de-las-americas-2023-para-colombia/

- United Nations. (2002). United Nations Public Service Day.

Retrieved from: https://publicadministration.un.org/about-us/united-nations-public-service-day-and-awards

- United Nations. (2003). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 57/277. Public administration and development.

Retrieved from:https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n02/557/68/pdf/n0255768.pdf

- United Nations. (2023). Support for intergovernmental dialogue and dialogue among multiple stakeholders.

Retrieved from: https://publicadministration.des.un.org/es

- United Nations. (2023). Report 22. Committee of Experts on Public Administration.

Retrieved from: https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/114/57/pdf/n2311457.pdf

- United Nations. (2023). Citizen engagement.

Retrieved from: https://publicadministration.un.org/es/topics/participation-and-accountability/e-participation-and-citizen-engagement

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2019). Social and citizen inclusion in Latin America: an experience of social transformation.

Retrieved from: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366825

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2023). Citizen participation, innovation, and new democratic institutions: Charting the path for deliberation.

Retrieved from: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2024). A territorial approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis report.

Retrieved from: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/86f8715-en/index.html

- Pew Research Center. (2022). The Global Religious Landscape.

Retrieved from: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/12/21/key-findings-from-the-global-religious-futures-project/

- Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. (2014). Decree 2573 of 2014, by which the general guidelines of the Online Government Strategy are established.

Retrieved from: https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=60596

REFERENCES

- Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. (2018). Decree 437 of 2018, by which the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship is established.
  Retrieved from: https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=85543
- Religious Freedom & Business Foundation. (2024). Religious Freedom & Sustainable Development.
  Retrieved from: https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/religious-freedom-sustainable-development
- Religious Freedom & Business Foundation. (2024). World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on the Role of Faith.
  Retrieved from: https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/world-economic-forum
- Salas, S. M. (2022). University, citizenship and sustainable development: religious freedom, health, and disasters.
  Retrieved from: https://digitkare.unad.edu.co/handle/areandina/5343
- UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence. (2016). Citizen Engagement in Public Service Delivery: The Critical Role of Public Officials.
  Retrieved from: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/GCPSE-CitizenEngagement_2016.pdf
- Universidad de los Andes. (2021). Churches as a relevant and trustworthy social actor for reconciliation, according to the Reconciliation Barometer.
  Retrieved from: https://cienciasociales.uniandes.edu.co/reconciliacion/barometro-historias-de-reconciliacion-las-iglesias-como-actor-social-relevante-y-confiable-para-la-reconciliacion/
- World Economic Forum. (2017). Religion may be bigger business than we thought. Here's why.
  Retrieved from: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/religion-bigger-business-than-we-thought/
- World Economic Forum. (2024). Faith in Action.
  Retrieved from: https://www.weforum.org/projects/faith-in-action/
- World Economic Forum. (2024). Faith in Action: Religion and Spirituality in the Polycrisis.
  Retrieved from: https://www.weforum.org/publications/faith-in-action-religion-and-spirituality-in-the-polycrisis/

REFERENCIAS

REFERENCES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM – THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE PARTICIPATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR IN COLOMBIA

- Cervantes, I. F. (2009). General principles on religious freedom in the jurisprudence of the European, Inter-American, and Costa Rican systems of human rights protection.
- Revista de Ciencias Jurídicas y Pastorales, 125–126.
  Retrieved from: file:///Users/luzclarolinatorres/Downloads/26333%20(1).pdf
- Organization of American States (OAS). (1948). American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.
  Retrieved from: https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/mandato/basicos/declaracion.asp
- Legislative Assembly of Colombia. (1991). Political Constitution of Colombia.
- Official Gazette No. 52,738 – April 25, 2024.
  Retrieved from:
https://www.secretariasenado.gov.co/senado/basedoc/constitucion_politica_1991.html
- Constitutional Court. (August 10, 2022). Judgment T-373/22.
  Retrieved from: https://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/relatoria/2022/t-373-22.htm
- Presidency of the Republic. (March 3, 2018). Public Policy on Religious Freedom.
  Retrieved from: https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=85543
- Bonilla, R. L. (2007). Administrative Act Chart.
- Baena, C. A. (March 21, 2015). Forum on Religious Freedom in Risaralda with Pastor David López Mejía.
  Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6kflVXZGE8
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. (June 1, 2023).
- Organization of American States.
  Retrieved from: https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/2024/Estudio_LRC.pdf

LINKS — RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: GUARDIANS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- The use of the expression “human rights defender” has expanded following the adoption of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups, and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, a term that replaced expressions such as “agent” or “supervisor” of human rights, which had been more commonly used. The expression human rights defender is considered more appropriate and useful.
- For more information on international human rights mechanisms, see the information booklets Nos. 10 (Rev.1), 15, 16 (Rev.1), 17, and 27.
- Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 217 A (III), December 10, 1948.
- See Information Booklet No. 2, International Bill of Human Rights (Rev.1).

REFERENCIAS

- https://www.ohchr.org/es/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders/about-human-rights-defenders#:~:text=Los%20defensores%20de%20los%20derechos%20humanos%20deben%20reconocer%20el%20car%C3%A1cter,porque%20los%20reconoce%20a%20otras.
- Se ha extendido el empleo de la expresión "defensor de los derechos humanos" a raíz de la aprobación de la Declaración sobre los defensores de los derechos humanos en 1998. Hasta entonces, términos como el de "activista", "profesional", "agente" o "supervisor" de los derechos humanos habían sido los más comunes. Se considera que la expresión "defensor de los derechos humanos" es más pertinente y útil.
- Para más información sobre los mecanismos internacionales de derechos humanos, véanse los Folletos informativos Nos. 10 (Rev.1), 15, 16 (Rev.1), 17 y 27.
- Aprobada por la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas en su resolución 217 A (III), de 10 de diciembre de 1948. Véase el Folleto informativo Nº 2, Carta Internacional de Derechos Humanos (Rev.1)
- https://www.ohchr.org/es/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders/about-human-rights-defenders#:~:text=Los%20defensores%20de%20los%20derechos%20humanos%20deben%20reconocer%20el%20car%C3%A1cter,porque%20los%20reconoce%20a%20otras.

ENLACES DE LIBERTAD RELIGIOSA GUARDIANES DEL DERECHO HUMANO

- Municipality of Soacha. (2018). Territorial Land-Use Plan of the Municipality of Soacha. Soacha Mayor's Office.
- Arteaga, J., Urrea, M., & Pedraza, G. (2012). Religious facilities in urban planning. Bogotá: Editorial ABCR.
- Beltrán, W. M., & Larotta, S. (2020). Religious diversity, values, and political participation in Colombia: Summary of the results of the National Survey on Religious Diversity 2019. Iglesia Sueca, World Vision, Intersectoral Commission for Justice and Peace, National University of Colombia.
- Congress of Colombia. (1997). Law 388 of 1997. Official Gazette.
- Congress of Colombia. (1997). Law 388 of 1997, by which Law 9 of 1989 is amended and Law 2 of 1991 is issued.
- Political Constitution of Colombia. (1991).
- Political Constitution of Colombia. (1991). Bogotá: Republic of Colombia.

REFERENCIAS

LINKS — RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: GUARDIANS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). (2017). Population census and projections data.
- National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). (2017). National Population and Housing Census. Bogotá.
- National Planning Department (DNP). (2012). Mission of Cities System.
- National Planning Department (DNP). (2012). National Development Report. Bogotá.
- Fals Borda, O. (2008). Research–Action in convergences disciplines. Available at: http://historiasurbanas.blogspot.com/2008/11/la-investigacin-accin-en-convergencias.html

TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN COLOMBIA: A CHALLENGE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

- Freire, P. (1997). Pedagogy of Autonomy – Knowledge Necessary for Educational Practice. (14th ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Guardia Hernández, J. J. (2010). Freedom, religion, and urban planning. Study of religious facilities in Spain. Martín de Azpilcueta Institute, University of Navarra.
- Ministry of Housing, City and Territory. (2017). Territorial Planning Plan. Bogotá.
- Ministry of the Interior. (2019). Legal guidelines for religious entities. Directorate of Religious Affairs.
- Ministry of the Interior. (2020). Decree by which the Comprehensive Public Policy on Religious Freedom and Freedom of Worship is adopted.
- Ovalle Páez, J. (2017). Urban development in Ciudadela Sucre. Bogotá: National University of Colombia.
- Pérez Prieto, V. (2011). Sacred spaces in Christianity and other religions. The necessary sacred space for architecture, art, and restoration. (pp. 25–59).
- Romero Torres, E. A., & Ovalle Garay, J. H. (2021). Community building through the re-signification of religious worship facilities: A proposal for urban edges in Latin America.
- Arquitecturas del Sur, 39(60), 78–93.
- https://dx.doi.org/10.22320/07196466.2021.39.060.05

REFERENCIAS

TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN COLOMBIA: A CHALLENGE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

- Romero Torres, Edwin Alexander, & Ovalle Garay, Jairo Hernán. (2021). Community building through the re-signification of religious worship facilities: A proposal for urban edges in Latin America.
  Arquitecturas del Sur, 39(60), 78–93.
  https://dx.doi.org/10.22320/07196466.2021.39.060.05
- García, D. G. (2008). Territorial planning and decentralization: competencies, resources, and perspectives.
  Pap. polít., 13(2), 1–21.
  https://razonpublica.com/ordenamiento-territorial-un-tema-ausente-pero-urgente-en-colombia/
- ECLAC. (2018). Overview of Public Management in Latin America and the Caribbean: an open government centered on the citizen.
  LC/TS.2017/98/Rev.1. United Nations. Department of Planning (DNP). (2023). Territorial Planning and Development.
  https://portalterritorial.dnp.gov.co/pkt/PLE5. (2012). Approach to public results and value.
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). López Niño, D. (2016). Public value and economic integration agreements in Colombia.
  Administración y Desarrollo, 46(1), 72–88.
  Retrieved from:
  http://esapvirtual.esap.edu.co/ojs/index.php/administracion/article/view/74
- Poveda Gómez, A. A. (2008). Development planning. Higher School of Public Administration.
- Rawls, J. (1993). Political Liberalism. Columbia University Press.
- Rosas López, M. D., & Medina Marín, L. J. (2011). Strategic planning. Concepts from the U. Sanabria Pulido, P., & Guzmán Botero, A. (2021). Public policies, public value and collaborative governance: The case of the Family Compensation Fund subsidy.
  Universidad de los Andes. Ediciones Uniandes.
- Constitution of Colombia. (1991). Article 19.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND DEVELOPMENT: A STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR IN DEVELOPMENT PLANS

- Alean, A. (2006, June). The concept of development.
  Retrieved from::
  http://www.unitecnologica.edu.co/descargas/taller/Elconceptodedesarrollo_AAlean.pdf
- World Bank. (2004). Private capital flows return to a few developing countries as aid flows to poorest rise slightly.
  Comunicación de prensa, No. 2004/284/S.
- Fox, J. (2015). Religious discrimination: A world survey. Routledge.
- García Gómez, R. (2010). International cooperation policy for development. Editorial.

REFERENCIAS

- González-Aller Hierro, J. M. (2009). Development cooperation policy. Ediciones Díaz de Santos.
- Grim, B. J., & Finke, R. (2011). International Religion Index: Government regulation, government favoritism, and social regulation of religion. Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion, 7(4), 1–30. https://www.religjournal.com/pdf/ijrr0008.pdf
- Grim, B. J., & Finke, R. (Eds.). (2011). The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century. Cambridge University Press.
- Jiménez, S., & Rosa, M. L. (2006). Displacement forced by international cooperation, operational and recovery in Cartagena 2000–2005. Cartagena de Indias: Latin American School of Cooperation and Development.
- Marshall, P. (2008). Religious Freedom in the World. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Martínez, A. (1995). Global Vision of Cooperation for Development. The international experience and the case of Mayor's Office of Cali.
- Ministry of the Interior of Colombia. (n.d.). Bank of Interreligious Initiatives (BIIR). https://www.mininterior.gov.co/banco-de-proyectos-para-las-comunidades/

COOPERATION POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM — APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES

- Alean, A. (2006, June). The concept of development. Retrieved from: http://www.unitecnologica.edu.co/descargas/taller/Elconceptodedesarrollo_AAlean.pdf
- World Bank. (2004). Private capital flows return to a few developing countries as aid flows to poorest rise slightly. Press release No. 2004/284/S.
- Fox, J. (2015). Religious Discrimination: A World Survey. Routledge.
- García Gómez, R. (2010). International cooperation policy for development. Editorial Tecnos.
- González-Aller Hierro, J. M. (2009). Development cooperation policy. Ediciones Díaz de Santos.

REFERENCIAS

- Martínez, A. (1995). Global vision of development cooperation: The international experience and the Spanish case. Mayor's Office of Cali.
- Ministry of the Interior of Colombia. (n.d.). Bank of Interreligious Initiatives (BIIR). Retrieved from: https://www.mininterior.gov.co/banco-de-proyectos-para-las-comunidades/
- Muñoz, E., & García, R. (Eds.). (2011). Development cooperation in the era of globalization: policies, strategies, and actors. Editorial Complutense.
- OECD. (2013). International Development Statistics (IDS). Retrieved from: https://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/idsonline.htm
- United Nations. (2012). Millennium Development Goals. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/es/millenniumgoals/
- Ortega Carpío, I. (2007). Public policy and management of international development cooperation. Editorial Síntesis.
- Sanahuja Perales, J. A. (2001). Development cooperation and globalization: Between public benefit and global welfare. Retrieved from: http://www.atos.org/docs/A_docs/5-2_Beneficencia%200%20welfare.pdf
- Shakman Hurd, E. (2012). *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion.* Princeton University Press.
- Sotillo Montes, C. (2011). *Development cooperation in the 21st century: policies, actors, and results.* Dykinson.
- Shah, T. S. (2015). *Religious Freedom: Why Now? Defending an Embattled Human Right.* In: *God and Globalization* (pp. 25–48). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Ucar Martínez, R. (2004). *Theory and practice of international cooperation for development.* Universidad Kant, I. (1784). *Was ist Aufklärung.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

PHOTO REFERENCES

.Photographs - Canva License Pro IAFXkpseik, Octubre 17. 2023 - Canva Pty. Ltd. ABN 80 158 929 938, VATEU3/2024 198 - 110 Kippax St, Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia - Copyright © 2024 Canva Pty. Ltd. All rights reserved. (Pages 1, 10, 74, 76, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210) and others.

FIGURE REFERENCES

All elements used to recreate each of the figures were used under Canva License Pro iAFXkpseik, October 17, 2023 — Canva Pty. Ltd. ABN 80 158 929 938, VATEU3/2024198 — 110 Kippax St, Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia — Copyright © 2024 Canva Pty. Ltd. All rights reserved.

(Pages 23, 28, 31, 32, 33, 43, 45, 75, 213, 216, 218, 219, 221, 222, 225, 226, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 237, 241, 242, 247, 248, 252, 255, 256, 258, 259, 260, 262, 269, 270, 272, 274, 277, 284, 286, 287, 289, 291, 292, 293, 295, 297, 298, 301, 303, 304, 307, 308, 311, 313) and others.