

Effect of Dispute resolution on Access, Justice, and Public Service

Legal empowerment and conflict management programs produced a **large positive effect** on fairness through trained mediators.

Geographical region: East Asia & Pacific, Middle East & North Africa

Effect: large effect ($g = 0.479$)

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence (2 studies with 9 effect size)

Short Summary:

Dispute resolution interventions, including legal empowerment and Conflict Management programs, aimed to improve access to justice and fairness in Afghanistan, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, and Jordan. Programs focused on legal education, paralegal training, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, and legal aid services. Findings indicate that trained mediators had a large effect on fairness and satisfaction, though gender disparities and power imbalances continued to limit women's ability to seek justice. The Conflict Management program for Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan strengthened social cohesion through community projects but faced challenges from economic hardship, which contributed to local tensions.

Long summary

The intervention

Dispute resolution intervention includes legal empowerment and community-driven development (CDD) to address barriers to justice and promote cooperation. Key activities included training local leaders and paralegals in dispute resolution and rights awareness, establishing ADR mechanisms, and implementing joint community development projects, such as playgrounds and health centers.

How the Interventions are Expected to Work

Interventions aimed to empower communities to resolve disputes peacefully and inclusively by enhancing local capacity and promoting shared decision-making. Legal education increased rights awareness, enabling women and marginalized groups to assert their rights more effectively. Community projects and ADR mechanisms addressed structural inequalities, fostered social cohesion, and promoted equitable access to justice and public services.

The evidence base:

The cell includes **two primary studies**: one synthesizing case studies from six countries (Afghanistan, Namibia, Papua New Guinea), and one conducted in Jordan.

The Evidence Findings

Legal empowerment and conflict management interventions improved fairness and promoted social cohesion but did not fully address gender disparities and structural power imbalances. Economic hardships sometimes limited the effectiveness of community projects. Overall confidence in these findings is **low**, due to the limited number of studies.

Included studies: This cell contains summaries of two impact evaluations, the detailed summaries thus provided below:

The International Development Law Organization (2013) evaluated a legal empowerment intervention to improve women's access to justice in formal and informal systems, addressing discriminatory norms and resource limitations. Key activities included legal education,

paralegal training, ADR mechanisms, and legal aid services. Based on case studies from Afghanistan, India, Namibia, Rwanda, Morocco, and Papua New Guinea, findings showed that trained mediators improved fairness and satisfaction, with respondents more likely to feel their views were considered (89% vs. 55%) and to receive legal explanations (75% vs. 52%). However, gender disparities persisted, with women facing greater difficulty expressing perspectives (39% vs. 28%) and lower chances of reaching a resolution. Power imbalances remained a challenge, underscoring the need for targeted interventions. The study is rated as a low-confidence quantitative study.

Maroni (2015) evaluates the Conflict Management for Syrian Refugees, Host Communities, and Municipal Actors in Jordan, implemented by Mercy Corps in Mafraq and Irbid, aimed to reduce tensions between Jordanians and Syrian refugees. The program trained community leaders in interest-based negotiation, supported joint community development projects and established safe spaces for cooperation. Using a mixed-methods evaluation, household surveys were conducted in 2013 (baseline) and 2014 (follow-up) with around 850 respondents, alongside focus groups. Findings showed that joint projects (e.g., playgrounds, and health centres) improved public space access and inclusion, strengthening social cohesion. However, economic hardship contributed to increased tensions, affecting attitudes toward justice, rights, and equitable access to services. The study is classified as a low-confidence quantitative study.

Confidence assessment

Overall. The cell is rated as low-confidence quantitative studies due to the limited number of studies

Other outcomes assessed under these studies:

Community & state governance/Civic Participation

Social cohesion/willingness to participate/feelings of trust & access of diversity/sense of belonging.

Violence and atrocity prevention/Social norms regarding violence and atrocities