

Effect of dispute resolution on civic participation

The PEACE program in Niger's Tillabéri region (2019–2021) had a small effect on civic participation, with limited overall impact.

Geographical Regions: Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Small effect ($g = -0.041$)

Confidence in the study findings: Low confidence (1 study s with 9 effect size)

Short summary

The PEACE program aimed to strengthen social cohesion and reduce vulnerability to violent extremism through participatory community projects in 40 villages across Tillabéri, Niger. A survey of 1,843 individuals found that the program had a small overall effect on civic participation, with minimal changes in government engagement or community decision-making. Specific components, such as infrastructure projects and cultural or sports activities, increased local involvement, but structural barriers like patriarchal norms and household responsibilities—limited meaningful participation by women and youth.

Long summary

The Intervention

The PEACE program (2019–2021) used Mercy Corps' CATALYSE approach, implementing participatory initiatives to improve social cohesion and reduce conflict vulnerability. Activities included infrastructure rehabilitation, cultural and sports events, mediation, and resource management, promoting joint planning and shared responsibility among community members.

How the intervention is expected to work

The interventions to enhance civic participation by encouraging collaborative planning and project implementation, fostering inter-group cooperation, and promoting shared responsibility in local governance processes.

The evidence base

The cell includes one impact evaluation (primary) study conducted in Niger's Tillabéri region from 2019 to 2021. The program adopted Mercy Corps' CATALYSE approach, engaging 40 villages in participatory planning and joint initiative and enrolled 1,843 respondents to evaluate the program's impact.

Evidence findings

The PEACE program showed a small effect on civic participation, with limited improvement in community engagement. While specific activities increased involvement, social and structural barriers constrained meaningful participation, particularly for women and youth. Confidence in these findings is low, based on a single low-confidence study.

Included studies: The cell includes one low-confidence impact evaluation. The details of the summary thus are provided below.

Lichtenheld et al. (2022) assessed the USAID-funded PEACE program implemented by Mercy Corps in Niger's conflict-prone Tillabéri region from 2019 to 2021. Designed to strengthen social cohesion and reduce vulnerability to violent extremism, the program utilized

Mercy Corps' CATALYSE approach, engaging 40 villages in participatory planning and joint initiatives such as infrastructure development, cultural activities, and conflict mediation. Villages were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, with surveys conducted at baseline, midline, and endline among 1,843 respondents to evaluate the program's impact. The PEACE program had a limited overall impact on improving the government's inclusion of communities in decision-making. However, infrastructure projects and cultural activities significantly improved community engagement. Efforts to increase the participation of marginalized groups, especially women and youth, faced significant challenges. Despite targeted initiatives, perceptions of their roles in decision-making remained unchanged due to structural barriers like patriarchal norms, household duties, and interference from community leaders, limiting their meaningful involvement in governance.

The study also explored broader outcomes related to vertical cohesion (Perceived improvement in services, Leaders keeping commitments to the community), measuring trust, intergroup interactions, tolerance, perceptions of government responsiveness, and violence incidence. This study is rated as a low confidence study.

Confidence assessment

Overall, the cell reflects low quality due to the limited number of studies, and the included study itself has low confidence.

Other outcomes in this study

Community and state governance/Government performance

Violence and atrocity prevention/Nature and scale of violence or atrocities

Violence and atrocity prevention/Social norms regarding violence and atrocities