

Effect of Dispute resolution on Diplomatic relations & peaceful dispute resolution:

Dispute resolution interventions, including CONCUR, IPNN, ECPN, RLS-I, and legal empowerment programs, produced a large positive effect on dispute resolution and trust in mediation.

Geographical space: Global

Effect: Large effect ($g = 0.207$)

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence (4 studies 35 effect size)

Short Summary

Dispute resolution interventions were implemented across multiple countries to strengthen mediation, promote non-coercive conflict resolution, and improve access to justice. Programs such as CONCUR, IPNN, ECPN, RLS-I, and legal empowerment initiatives targeted both community- and state-level dispute resolution, emphasizing negotiation capacity, fairness, and reduced coercion. Studies employed RCTs and difference-in-differences analyses with sample sizes ranging from 200 to over 10,000 participants. Findings indicated improvements in dispute resolution practices, trust in mediation, women's participation, and sustainable peace agreements. Non-coercive strategies, including Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN) training, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, and interfaith initiatives, were most effective, whereas coercive interventions sometimes exacerbated conflicts. Successful programs combined international mediation, local leadership, and legal empowerment to support long-term conflict resolution.

Long summary*The intervention*

Dispute resolution interventions employed a mix of non-coercive and community-driven strategies to address conflict. Initiatives such as CONCUR and IPNN in Nigeria and ADR and RLS-I in Afghanistan emphasized IBN training, mediation, joint economic projects, policy advocacy, and capacity-building for local peacebuilders. Activities promoted cooperation, tension reduction, and addressed the root causes of conflict, particularly in marginalized communities, while improving access to justice and fostering social cohesion.

How the intervention is expected to work

The interventions aimed to resolve disputes through mediation, negotiation, and legal empowerment. IBN and ADR mechanisms enabled local leaders, religious figures, and community members to mediate conflicts impartially. Policy advocacy and legal training strengthened links between formal and informal justice systems, while collaborative community projects fostered cooperation across conflicting groups.

The evidence base

This cell comprises 12 studies, consisting of 5 impact evaluations (IEs), 6 qualitative studies, and 1 low confidence systematic review (SR).

Among the five included IEs, one (Killian - 2014) was excluded from the cumulative effect size calculation due to insufficient data for Cohen's d computation. These studies were conducted in Nigeria (Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau states), Afghanistan, India, Namibia,

Rwanda, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, and India, employing Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs), difference-in-differences (DiD) analysis, and mixed-method approaches.

The 6 qualitative studies were authored by Coffey (2012), Mengstie Missaye Mulatie (2022), Malla Trilochan Bahadur (2016), Laats Henkjan (2005), Demartoto Argyo (2014), and Dhialulhaq Ahmad (2014, 2015).

Evidence findings

Programs including CONCUR, IPNN, ECPN, RLS-I, and legal empowerment initiatives improved dispute resolution and trust in mediation, enhancing negotiation skills and promoting sustainable peace. Non-coercive strategies, such as IBN training, ADR mechanisms, and interfaith initiatives, were most effective, whereas coercive measures escalated conflicts. Overall confidence in these findings is low, reflecting inconsistencies in study outcomes and effect sizes, despite the broad geographic representation of the included studies.

The review evidence

This review examines the impact of land-use conflicts on peaceful dispute resolution and diplomatic relations in Indonesia. Rural communities rely on customary laws and informal mediation rather than legal frameworks due to weak land rights protections and corporate-government collusion. Unlike rightful resistance seen elsewhere, disputes are resolved with minimal legal enforcement, limiting formal dispute resolution mechanisms and diplomatic engagement between communities, corporations, and authorities.

Included studies: There are five impact evaluation studies. The detailed summaries of all included studies are thus provided here:

Baran (2017): evaluated two conflict resolution interventions in Nigeria: CONCUR and IPNN. CONCUR aimed to reduce pastoralist-farmer conflicts in the Middle Belt through interest-based negotiation (IBN) training, joint economic projects like community gardens, and policy advocacy for long-term solutions. IPNN focused on nonviolent conflict resolution by engaging religious leaders in IBN training, interfaith initiatives, and media peace campaigns. A mixed-methods impact evaluation using difference-in-difference (DiD) analysis surveyed 1,096 CONCUR and 710 IPNN households at baseline, and 923 CONCUR and 1,041 IPNN households at endline. Recruitment was conducted through random sampling in conflict-affected areas of Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau states.

Findings related to diplomatic relations and peaceful dispute resolution showed significant improvements in CONCUR sites. At baseline, dispute resolution success was rated 0.45 points lower than in comparison sites, but by endline, it improved by 0.91 points relative to comparison sites ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, peaceful management of shared resources in CONCUR sites improved by 1.23 points ($p < 0.01$), although the frequency of resource sharing remained unchanged. These improvements were attributed to the effectiveness of IBN training, which enabled local leaders to mediate disputes impartially. The study is rated as a high-medium confidence quantitative study.

Biswas (2007): The study investigates how domestic institutions and international interventions influence the management and de-escalation of ethnic conflicts, focusing on both coercive (e.g., military action) and non-coercive (e.g., mediation) interventions. It examines the impact of these interventions in stable democracies and states with weak institutions, with specific case studies, such as Sri Lanka, exploring the roles of dialogue facilitation, mediation, and domestic reforms driven by international actions. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis using the Minorities at Risk (MAR) dataset and qualitative case studies.

Non-coercive interventions, such as mediation, were more effective in promoting negotiations and sustaining peace agreements, particularly in stable democracies. In Sri Lanka,

Norwegian-led mediation (2001–2004) facilitated ceasefires but failed to secure long-term agreements due to internal instability. Conversely, coercive interventions, like India's military involvement, escalated tensions and hindered conflict resolution, especially in weak domestic institutions. Democracies had a 72% probability of engaging in negotiations when mediation was the primary approach, though internal divisions often delayed implementation. Coercive interventions prolonged hostilities, reducing the success of peace agreements. Successful cases, like Papua New Guinea and India, involved power-sharing and decentralization. Overall, non-coercive approaches proved more effective in achieving lasting peace, requiring a mix of international mediation, domestic reforms, and power-sharing arrangements. The study is rated as a high-medium confidence quantitative study

Dawop (2019): evaluates the Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN) program addressed farmer-pastoralist conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt through mediation training, joint peace committees, community projects, and conflict prevention forums. The study used a mixed-method approach, combining a community-level RCT and individual pre/post-intervention analysis. It covered 30 communities (15 sites), surveying 1,539 participants at baseline and 1,523 at endline. Individual resurveying included 287 participants (74 direct, 121 indirect, 92 controls). Data collection (2015–2018) included surveys, behavioral games, and observational monitoring, with quantitative analysis using regression, difference-in-difference, and multiple hypothesis testing.

The study found mixed results in dispute resolution, with variations in impact at the community and individual levels. At the community level, perceptions of dispute resolution effectiveness declined from baseline to endline in both ECPN and control communities, with a slightly greater but statistically insignificant decrease in ECPN areas. This suggests that community-wide awareness of resolution efforts remained limited. At the individual level, ECPN indirect participants reported lower improvements in dispute resolution perceptions compared to direct participants, with no significant difference from controls. This may be due to limited engagement in mediation and a lack of awareness of the 528 disputes resolved, mainly concerning shared resources such as farmland, pastures, and markets. While direct participants saw notable benefits, the program's broader community impact was inconsistent. The study is reported as a low-confidence quantitative study.

International Development Law Organization (2013): The study evaluated a legal empowerment intervention aimed at improving women's access to justice across diverse legal systems, addressing barriers in both formal and informal settings. Key activities included legal education and rights awareness programs, training paralegals and community leaders, establishing alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, and providing legal aid services integrated with other social support systems. The analysis drew on case studies from countries such as Afghanistan, India, Namibia, Rwanda, Morocco, and Papua New Guinea, synthesizing qualitative evidence and lessons from multiple projects.

The study findings revealed that Training in interest-based negotiation improved access to justice, making participants 1.37 times more likely to support peaceful conflict resolution. ADR centres in India resolved 78% of disputes involving women within a year, while in Morocco, ADR initiatives increased fair dispute outcomes for women by 20%. Satisfaction with dispute resolution was high: 98% felt encouraged to express their views, 91% were satisfied with the mediator, and 97% fully participated. The process restored community harmony (86%), improved relationships (86%), and helped 88% move forward. 85% were satisfied with the outcome. This study is rated as a low-confidence quantitative study.

Killian (2014): The study assessed the Rule of Law Stabilization - Informal Component (RLS-I) in Afghanistan, aimed at strengthening Traditional Dispute Resolution (TDR). The program included six legal education workshops (30 hours over 4-6 months) for elders and dispute resolvers, covering conflict resolution, inheritance, and family law. Additional activities included discussion sessions, coordination meetings, and networking to promote equitable dispute resolution. The study sampled 850 elders, 996 disputants, and 3,820 citizens across

six districts (three treatment, three control), with participants drawn from 35 villages per district. A difference-in-differences evaluation was used to measure changes in dispute resolution practices, attitudes, and women's roles, using surveys and a 5-point perceptual index.

Key findings on diplomatic relations and peaceful dispute resolution revealed that Afghans seeking mediation from RLS-I elders experienced a 11% higher satisfaction with procedural fairness and an 8% increase in overall justice perceptions. Additionally, there was a 4.6% decline in support for giving away girls in marriage as a dispute resolution method. In RLS-I districts, women's direct engagement in dispute resolution increased by 17%, with 19% more households supporting women as dispute resolvers and 24% favouring female dispute resolvers. However, while male disputants reported positive views on procedural fairness and justice outcomes, female disputants expressed negative assessments of the same processes. The study is rated as low confidence.

Confidence assessment

Overall, this cell is rated as low confidence because the included studies and reviews themselves exhibit low confidence and also represent the inconsistency in their independent Cohen's d. despite the number of studies being representative.

Link to review summaries

Afrizal (20220).

All studies may be accessed via the EGM.

Other outcomes assessed in the study

Community & state governance/Access to justice, rights & public services, Government performance

Violence & atrocity prevention/ Diplomatic relation & peaceful dispute resolution, Nature and scale of violence or atrocities

Human security/Economic Security, Intermediate social cohesion outcomes, physical security

Social cohesion/feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity, Willingness to participate/help