

### **Effect of Dispute Resolution on the Feeling of Trust & Acceptance of Diversity.**

Dispute resolution programs, including CONCUR, IPNN, ECPN, UNMIL, PEACE, and the Conflict Management Program, had a moderate positive effect on intergroup trust and acceptance of diversity.

**Geographical Region:** Sub Saharan Africa & Middle East & North Africa

**Effect:** Moderate effect ( $g = 0.133$ )

**Confidence in study findings:** Low confidence (6 studies with 28 Effect size)

### **Short Summary**

Dispute resolution interventions were implemented in Nigeria, Liberia, Niger, and Jordan to enhance trust and social cohesion among diverse groups. Programs such as CONCUR and IPNN strengthened trust between farmers, pastoralists, and religious communities in Nigeria, with CONCUR achieving a 49% increase in trust. ECPN showed modest improvements in cooperation, while UNMIL enhanced trust in formal dispute resolution mechanisms and promoted ethnic tolerance in Liberia. The PEACE program increased intra- and inter-community trust in Niger, though in homogeneous communities, it sometimes reinforced within-group ties. In Jordan, the Conflict Management Program supported trust-building between Syrian refugees and host communities through negotiation training and community-led projects, though gender norms and security concerns limited broader social cohesion. Overall, findings were inconsistent across contexts, resulting in low confidence.

### **Long summary**

#### *The Intervention*

Dispute resolution interventions employed various strategies to build trust and social cohesion. CONCUR used interest-based negotiation training and joint economic projects, IPNN promoted interfaith initiatives, and ECPN established community committees and conflict prevention forums. UNMIL implemented patrols and reinforced state authority, PEACE facilitated resource-sharing via the CATALYSE approach, and the Conflict Management Program provided safe dialogue spaces and community development activities. Each intervention addressed specific local conflict dynamics.

#### *How the intervention expected to work*

These interventions enhance trust, acceptance of diversity, and social cohesion through conflict-resolution strategies and community-building activities. By engaging local leaders and community members in dialogue, training, and joint projects, these programs promote cooperation across ethnic, religious, and social divides. Utilizing interest-based negotiation and resource-sharing initiatives aims to reduce tensions, improve intergroup relationships, and foster a shared responsibility for peace.

#### *The evidence base*

The cell includes a total of seven studies; six primary studies and one qualitative study by Dhialhaq Ahmad (2016). These primary studies were conducted in Nigeria (three studies, including two by the same author on the same intervention, with an additional intervention in one), Liberia (two studies with different interventions by different authors), Niger (one study), and Jordan (one study).

### *Evidence findings*

Dispute resolution interventions generally improved trust and intergroup tolerance by fostering cooperation, though effects varied by context. Challenges such as low baseline trust and community homogeneity limited broader outcomes. Overall confidence is low due to inconsistent findings and the predominance of low-confidence studies.

### *Included studies:*

There are six impact evaluations. The detailed summaries are thus provided here:

**Baran (2017)** evaluated the Community-Based Conflict Management and Cooperative Use of Resources (CONCUR) program, implemented by Mercy Corps from December 2012 to December 2016 in Nigeria's Middle Belt. The program aimed to mitigate conflicts between pastoralist and farming communities through Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN) training for local leaders, joint economic projects (e.g., shared grazing areas, community marketplaces), and policy advocacy addressing long-term economic drivers of conflict. Additionally, an interfaith peacebuilding initiative engaged religious leaders in non-violent conflict resolution through IBN training, interfaith initiatives, and media campaigns. A mixed-methods impact evaluation utilized a difference-in-difference (DiD) framework, comparing conflict-affected CONCUR-targeted communities with neighboring comparison areas. Surveys at baseline (1,806 households) and endline (1,276 households) covered 10 intervention and six comparison sites across Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau states. Households were selected through community mapping, and the study integrated quantitative analysis (DiD and cross-sectional regression) with qualitative insights from focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Findings showed significant improvements in social cohesion and trust. In CONCUR sites, trust between conflicting groups increased by 49 percentage points, while comparison communities saw a decline. Acceptance of diversity improved, with intergroup tolerance rising from 69% to 90% in CONCUR sites and from 64% to 90% in interfaith initiative sites. Economic collaboration also strengthened intergroup relationships, with 86% of CONCUR households reporting reduced tensions at the endline, compared to 56% in comparison areas. While the study demonstrated positive conflict mitigation outcomes, low baseline trust in some areas posed challenges for deeper intergroup trust-building. The study was rated as a high-medium-confidence quantitative study.

**Blair (2019)** : The study assessed the impact of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) on the rule of law in post-conflict Liberia, focusing on building confidence in state institutions such as the police and courts, enforcing the separation between formal (state) and informal (non-state) dispute resolution methods, and eliminating illegal practices like trial by ordeal. UNMIL's activities included patrols, public works, and dispute resolution interventions, often in collaboration with local leaders and state actors. The survey covered 242 rural communities in Lofa, Nimba, and Grand Gedeh counties, focusing on jurisdictional disputes and UNMIL activities. Data were collected in three waves (2009, 2010-2011, 2013) from residents, local leaders, and UN/government officials through quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and a list experiment. Using a mixed-method approach, the study applied difference-in-differences and instrumental variable analysis to assess causal effects.

Findings related to feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity revealed that Communities exposed to UNMIL showed a 16-percentage point increase in citizens choosing state authorities over non-state alternatives to resolve serious incidents like murder or mob violence. Exposure to UNMIL patrols significantly increased citizens' trust in formal authorities, with a 25% greater likelihood of calling the police and 25% less reliance on informal methods like trial by ordeal in communities with weekly patrols. Even after UNMIL's withdrawal, reliance on formal institutions (police, courts) persisted, suggesting a long-term impact on institutional trust and conflict resolution methods. While there was no direct measure of hate or discrimination, the shift from informal, potentially biased practices to formal justice

mechanisms likely contributed to greater fairness and equity. The study is rated as a low-confidence quantitative study.

**Blattman (2012):** The study evaluated the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) campaign, known as the "Community Empowerment Program" in rural Liberia, designed to strengthen informal dispute resolution by training community members. The program included eight-day workshops over two months, focusing on direct dispute engagement, problem-solving, positive-sum resolutions, and reducing reliance on formal courts. Training, led by two facilitators for groups of 35, included lectures, group discussions, participatory dramas, and experience-sharing. Facilitators lived in the communities for 2-4 months, building trust and reinforcing workshop principles—the training aimed to address violence by encouraging constructive dispute resolution and discouraging forum shopping. The evaluation used a randomized controlled trial (RCT) combined with qualitative research, surveying over 10,000 individuals across 243 communities, with 85 receiving the intervention. Local officials nominated conflict-prone communities, and leaders mobilized residents to participate.

The study found modest improvements in trust and acceptance of diversity, with a 24% decline in residents' reliance on formal courts for money disputes, indicating greater trust in informal dispute resolution. There were small but positive shifts in support for minority rights, ethnic tolerance, and intermarriage acceptance, though only the latter was statistically significant. In villages with more PEACE activities, 14% more respondents reported improved access to social services, and there was a slight increase in trust in community leaders' commitments. While infrastructure projects had the strongest impact on vertical cohesion, statistical significance varied. Overall, the program showed positive but limited effects, and the study is rated low-confidence quantitative.

**Dawop (2019):** The study evaluated the Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN) program, which aimed to mitigate farmer-pastoralist conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt. The program involved training community leaders in dispute mediation, forming joint committees (peace, early warning, and project committees), implementing community projects (e.g., boreholes and fences), and facilitating conflict prevention forums with community members and government officials. The study used a mixed-method approach, combining a community-level RCT with individual-level pre/post-intervention analysis. Thirty communities were selected, with surveys conducted at baseline (2015) and endline (2018), including behavioral games and observational monitoring. Quantitative analysis applied regression, difference-in-difference comparisons, and multiple hypothesis testing, while qualitative data captured market and social interactions.

Findings on trust and intergroup cohesion showed modest improvements in intervention communities, while trust declined in control groups. The community-level effect size was 0.49, representing a 13% difference between groups ( $p = 0.06$ ). At the individual level, trust improved most for direct participants, followed by indirect participants, with the smallest improvement in the control group (effect size 0.15, or a 5% difference,  $p = 0.072$ ). In an endorsement experiment, intervention community members were more likely to support policies advocated by the other group than controls, though this result was not statistically significant. Intergroup Cohesion followed the expected trend, with stronger improvements in intervention groups than controls, but results were not statistically significant. The study is reported as a low-confidence quantitative study

**Lichtenheld (2022):** The study evaluates the PEACE (Preventing Violent Extremism Actions through Increased Social Cohesion Efforts) program, which aims to reduce the vulnerability to violent extremism by enhancing social cohesion in the Tillabéri region of Niger. The intervention employed Mercy Corps' CATALYSE approach, a methodology focused on community mobilization and participatory planning. This approach engaged communities in identifying and addressing shared needs to promote trust and cooperation among different groups. The main activities included in the PEACE program are: 1) Mediation and dialogue

initiatives to foster conflict resolution skills and promote peaceful interaction. 2) Infrastructure projects that involved the collaborative development or rehabilitation of community assets. 3) Access to shared natural resources initiatives to manage and equitably distribute resources like water and land. 4) Livelihoods and economic inclusion efforts designed to enhance economic opportunities for youth and women. 5) Cultural and sporting events aimed at bringing communities together through shared cultural expressions and recreational activities. The study used a quasi-experimental design involving 40 villages, randomly assigned into treatment (20 villages) and control (20 villages) groups in the program's first phase. Data collection occurred at three points—baseline in 2020, midline in 2021, and endline in 2021—yielding insights from 1,843 respondents (55% male, 45% female).

The PEACE program improved intra-community cohesion, with greater participation and activity implementation leading to increased trust among community members. Infrastructure and cultural activities had a statistically significant impact on inter-group trust, fostering collaboration by addressing shared needs. However, mediation and dialogue activities had limited reach, as they engaged smaller groups rather than the broader community. The program was more effective in diverse communities, while in homogeneous villages, it reinforced within-group trust at the expense of broader social cohesion. Resource-sharing activities sometimes exacerbated disputes, highlighting the need to tailor interventions to community dynamics for sustained impact. The study is rated as a low-confidence quantitative study.

**Maroni (2015):**The Conflict Management for Syrian Refugees, Host Communities, and Municipal Actors in Jordan intervention, implemented by Mercy Corps in the Northern Jordan governorates of Mafraq and Irbid, aimed to reduce tensions and mitigate conflict risks between Jordanian host communities and Syrian refugees. The program included training community leaders (Jordanian, Syrian, and municipal) in interest-based negotiation, supporting community development projects collaboratively designed by these leaders to benefit both groups, and establishing safe spaces to promote interaction and cooperation. The study used a mixed-methods evaluation design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Household surveys were conducted in June 2013 (baseline) and May 2014 (12-month follow-up), sampling 854 individuals at baseline (667 in treatment areas, 187 in comparison areas) and 845 individuals at follow-up (662 in treatment areas, 183 in comparison areas). Additionally, 12 focus group discussions were held with 114 participants (69 Jordanians, 45 Syrians; 51 male, 63 female).

The study reported improved interpersonal relationships in treatment communities, with women's focus groups highlighting the importance of playgrounds and community-friendly spaces in fostering positive interactions. The program also set a precedent for building intergroup trust by demonstrating the role of NGOs in cultivating strong, respectful relationships with local authorities and communities. The study is rated as high-medium confidence.

#### *Confidence assessment*

Overall, the cell is rated as low confidence due to inconsistent independent effect sizes among all included studies and the majority of included studies are rated as low confidence.

#### **Other outcomes assessed in the study**

**Social cohesion/** Willingness to participate/help

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

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

**Human security/**Intermediate social cohesion outcomes, economic security, physical security