

Effect of dispute resolution on willingness to participate or help

The peace program showed a large effect on social cohesion through participatory projects, significantly enhancing cooperation intensity.

Geographical Space: Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Large effect ($g=0.28$)

Confidence in the study findings: Low (one study with 5 effect size)

Short summary

The PEACE program in Niger's Tillabéri region showed a **large positive effect** on cooperation intensity, particularly among direct participants. While collective action norms improved, the program had little impact on overall participation levels. The findings suggest that participatory dispute resolution can strengthen social cohesion, though evidence is limited.

Long summary

The Intervention

The PEACE program (2019–2021) implemented Mercy Corps' CATALYSE approach, which engaged communities in joint projects addressing shared needs, such as infrastructure rehabilitation, cultural events, mediation initiatives, and natural resource management.

How the intervention is expected to work

The intervention is designed to promote collaboration by requiring intergroup cooperation in planning and executing projects. Through shared responsibility and joint problem-solving, participants develop trust, improve social cohesion, and strengthen norms of collective action.

The evidence base

The cell includes one primary impact evaluation conducted in 40 villages in Niger's Tillabéri region. Additional qualitative evidence comes from case studies in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Evidence findings

The PEACE program demonstrated a large effect on collective action and cooperation intensity. Direct participants experienced stronger improvements in social cohesion and collective action norms than indirect participants, with these differences remaining significant at endline. The program did not significantly affect overall participation levels or timing of cooperation.

Included studies: The cell includes one IE which was focused on the peace process. The details of the included study summary thus provided below; .

Lichtenheld et al. (2022) evaluated the USAID-funded PEACE program, implemented by Mercy Corps from 2019 to 2021 in Niger's conflict-prone Tillabéri region. The program aimed to strengthen social cohesion through Mercy Corps' CATALYSE approach, which engaged 40 villages in participatory planning and joint projects such as infrastructure development, cultural events, and mediation efforts. Villages were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, and surveys were conducted among 1,843 respondents at baseline, midline, and endline to assess program impacts.

The PEACE program demonstrated a significant positive impact on cooperation intensity, although it did not affect the level of participation or timing of cooperation. Collective action norms improved substantially, with a 14% increase in treatment communities compared to control communities from baseline to midline. Direct participants experienced greater improvements than indirect participants, with these differences remaining statistically significant at the endline. The study is rated as a low confidence.

Confidence assessment

Overall, this cell is rated as low confidence due to the limited number of studies.

Other outcomes in this study

Social cohesion/Feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity

Community and state governance/Government performance

Community and state governance/civic participation

Violence and atrocity prevention/Nature & scale of violence

Violence and atrocity prevention/social norms regarding violence or atrocity