

## Effect of intergroup contact and peace education on nature and scale of violence and atrocities

Intergroup contact and peace education have a moderate effect in reducing violence and ethnic tensions.

Geographical region: Europe & Central Asia, Sub Saharan Africa, South Asia

Effect size: Moderate effect ( $g=0.15$ )

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence (8 studies; 47 ES)

### Short Summary

Intergroup contact and peace education interventions have a **moderate effect** on improving conflict resolution, social cohesion, and non-violent dispute resolution. Programs targeting diverse groups demonstrated improvements in intergroup relations, reduced violence, and strengthened social ties. While interventions produced short-term reductions in aggression and ethnic tensions, long-term impact depends on sustained engagement, institutional support, and integration into broader societal structures. Confidence in this cell is low due to the predominance of low-confidence studies and inconsistent effect sizes.

### Long summary

#### *The Intervention*

Interventions included community-based peace programs, structured peace education, and conflict resolution training. Programs such as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), LivingSideBySide® (LSBS), "Understanding Each Other," and the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) engaged participants through workshops, dialogue, and skill-building activities. Outcomes varied, with some interventions achieving short-term reductions in violence, while others showed limited lasting impact.

#### *How the Intervention is expected to work*

Intergroup contact and peace education programs, such as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), LivingSideBySide® (LSBS), "Understanding Each Other", and the Community Empowerment Program (CEP), aim to reduce violence, foster trust, and improve conflict resolution. Many interventions show short-term success in reducing disputes, ethnic tensions, and peer violence, but their long-term sustainability remains uncertain. While some programs enhance cooperation and dispute resolution, challenges like extrajudicial punishment and limited diffusion of benefits persist. Achieving lasting impact requires sustained engagement, integration into broader societal structures, and comprehensive strategies tailored to specific conflict dynamics and contexts.

#### *The evidence base*

The cell contains two systematic reviews and seven impact evaluations. The overall evidence base is fragmented and weak in review findings.

The seven studies employ a mix of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) at the community and individual levels, cluster RCTs, cross-sectional designs, interrupted time series, and behavioral experiments. Some use mixed methods, including surveys, focus groups, and qualitative assessments, while others rely on self-reported data.

The studies are conducted in Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Liberia, Afghanistan, Nigeria.

### *Evidence Findings*

The interventions showed a **moderate effect** in reducing violence, including peer, community, and ethnic conflicts. Effects were more pronounced in the short term, while long-term sustainability remains uncertain due to variable implementation and structural challenges.

### *The review evidence*

The reviews assess interventions to reduce armed violence and gender-based violence in conflict settings, finding limited but evolving evidence on effectiveness.

### *The impact evaluation evidence*

**Aladysheva (2017)** The LivingSideBySide® (LSBS) peacebuilding programme in Kyrgyzstan aimed to foster interethnic tolerance and reduce prejudice among adolescents through structured after-school training. Implemented in ten schools with individual-level randomization, the study used surveys, behavioural experiments, and focus groups to assess its impact. The intervention, categorized under Intergroup Contact and Peace Education, sought to improve trust, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills. Results indicate mixed but generally positive effects: trust in strangers increased, especially among boys, while girls showed improved interreligious trust. However, there was no significant reduction in aggressive behaviours, and self-confidence in conflict resolution slightly declined, possibly due to increased self-awareness. The study highlights the limited but promising impact of peace education, suggesting that longer and more intensive interventions may be necessary for sustained change. Future efforts should consider integrating such programmes into national curricula for broader and lasting effects. The study is rated high.

**Alan (2021)** evaluates the "Understanding Each Other" educational intervention, designed to foster social cohesion among ethnically diverse elementary school students in Turkey. The intervention falls under the Intergroup Contact and Peace Education category and aims to reduce violence, social exclusion, and ethnic bias while promoting prosocial behaviors. Implemented as a cluster randomized controlled trial (RCT) across 80 schools with 6,500 children aged 8–12, the program trained teachers to deliver a structured curriculum emphasizing perspective-taking. The outcome sub-category is the Nature and Scale of Violence and Atrocities, as it measures reductions in peer violence and victimization, social exclusion, and improvements in trust, cooperation, and reciprocity. Results indicate a significant reduction in peer violence, with treated children perpetrating 1.21 fewer violent incidents on average over ten school days, a 64% decline, and victimization rates dropping by 50%. The other result reveals that the program also increased emotional and academic support among classmates, strengthened social ties, and reduced ethnic segregation by 15–21%. Confidence in the findings is strengthened by robust experimental design elements, such as stratified randomization and high statistical power, though some effects on behavioural norms and impulsivity did not survive multiple hypothesis corrections. The study is rated low confidence due to its little description of the intervention.

**Blattman (2011)** evaluates the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) in Liberia, a program aimed at promoting peace, human rights, and civic participation. The program provided training and facilitated community dialogues to build skills for non-retributive dispute resolution and promote constructive engagement. The study used a randomized evaluation design, comparing outcomes between communities that received the CEP program and control communities that did not. The analysis focused on "potential trainees" identified in advance as well as other community members who attended the program. The program had modest impacts on respect for human rights and equality, but significant impacts on conflict and conflict resolution, increases in non-violent interpersonal and inter-group disputes, suggestive evidence of a decrease in violent disputes, increased rates of dispute resolution and satisfaction with resolutions. Results showing significant increases in certain non-violent disputes while reducing violent strikes and inter-group violence by 59%, though this reduction was not statistically significant. There was a 93% increase in conflicts between youth and elders, with treatment communities being twice as likely to experience peaceful protests and three times as likely to report a witch killing, though the latter was not statistically significant. Additionally, while violent crime prevalence, including fights and murders, was slightly lower in treated communities, these effects were not statistically significant, aligning with the observed reduction in violent communal disputes. The study is rated as low confidence quantitative study due to lack of reporting attrition.

**Blattman (2014)** evaluates the short-term impacts of a community education campaign on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) practices in Liberia, a country with weak formal institutions and high levels of property disputes and violence. The campaign aimed to promote informal dispute resolution skills, practices and norms to help parties reach self-enforcing bargains faster and at less cost than through the formal court system. The study finds that the education campaign led to shorter and less violent land disputes, with treated communities seeing a 29% reduction in unresolved land disputes and a 32% reduction in property destruction. However, the campaign also led to unintended consequences, including increases in informal extrajudicial punishment and more (largely peaceful) disagreements and demonstrations. The results suggest that mass education can change high-stakes behaviors, and improving informal bargaining and enforcement can promote order in weak states, though the approach carries risks of heightened conflict. The study design involved randomizing the intervention at the community level, with 116 of 246 communities initially assigned to treatment. The study has strong internal validity, though the generalizability of the findings may be limited by the specific context of Liberia. The study is rated as high and medium confidence quantitative study.

**Corboz (2019)** presents the results of an evaluation of a school-based peace education and community-based intervention implemented in Afghanistan to reduce violence against and between children. The intervention aimed to change harmful social norms and practices related to gender and the use of violence in conflict resolution. The evaluation found significant reductions in various forms of violence at the school level, including peer violence victimization and perpetration, and corporal punishment by teachers. There were also significant reductions in children's experience of corporal punishment at home and observation of family violence, particularly among girls. Both boys and girls showed more equitable gender attitudes, less violence-supportive attitudes towards children's punishment, and fewer symptoms of depression. Girls' school attendance also increased significantly. The study used a cross-sectional, interrupted time series design with three data collection points over 12 months. The findings suggest that the peace education intervention combined with community-level components can be an effective approach to reducing various forms of violence against children in a conflict-affected setting like Afghanistan. The study is rated low confidence quantitative study.

**Fafchamps (2013)** assesses the "No to Political Violence! Vote Against Violent Politicians" campaign, an intergroup contact and peace education intervention aimed at reducing electoral

violence and fostering social cohesion in conflict-prone regions of Nigeria. The intervention was implemented through community-based awareness campaigns, including home visits, town meetings, and popular theater, to encourage peaceful conflict resolution. The study, designed as a randomized controlled trial (RCT) across multiple states, measured the nature and scale of violence and atrocities by analyzing behavioral changes in targeted and untargeted individuals. Results indicate that exposure to the campaign significantly increased participation in community peace-building activities, while social proximity to other targeted individuals reinforced these effects and it also reveals limited diffusion of these benefits to untargeted individuals, suggesting that direct engagement was crucial for impact. This study is rated as low confidence quantitative study as both the targeted & untargeted sample sized was not drawn differently, it follows the same method & source.

**Hartman (2018)** evaluates the impact of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) training program as an intervention within the sub-category of Intergroup Contact and Peace Education, assessing its effects on the Nature and Scale of Violence and Atrocities. The study employs a cluster-randomized controlled trial in conflict-affected regions, measuring the impact of ADR training on dispute resolution, land conflicts, and social norms. Result presents findings related to the effectiveness of the ADR intervention in reducing unresolved disputes, particularly land conflicts, by approximately 28% in the first year but with no significant effect observed at the three-year mark. This suggests that ADR was effective in resolving immediate disputes but lacked long-term sustainability. The study reports moderate confidence in its findings due to potential self-reporting biases, but the robustness checks, including heterogeneity analysis, confirm the intervention's significant short-term impact. The intervention led to improved dispute resolution processes and reduced reliance on violent means, though it did not eliminate conflicts over time. This study is rated as high and medium confidence quantitative study.

**Smidt (2020)** evaluated local intergroup dialogue activities organized by the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). These dialogues aimed to reduce communal violence by addressing information gaps, rebuilding trust among different ethnic communities, and promoting norms for peaceful coexistence. The study used a quasi-experimental design with bivariate probit and matching models to address the nonrandom selection of intervention sites. The dataset covered 107 departments and tracked both intergroup dialogue events and instances of communal violence from 2011 to 2016. A total of 586 department months with at least one dialogue activity were analyzed. The study documented a reduction in Communal Violence by Civilians, i.e., Departments hosting at least one dialogue event in the preceding three months experienced a decrease in the likelihood of communal violence by 25.4 percentage points on average, and Similar dialogues reduced the probability of communal violence involving armed groups by 26.9 percentage points as confirmed by post-matching analyses. These reductions were statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ), demonstrating that UNOCI's interventions had a meaningful impact on mitigating communal violence. The documented mechanisms to improve coordination among community leaders were like tripartite commissions (e.g., in Bayota, a commission was set up to resolve disputes and prevent violence) for like and in addition to those positive changes in attitudes, such as reduced biases and increased commitment to peacebuilding, demonstrated by participants' public apologies and promises to promote harmony. This is a low confidence quantitative study.

#### *Confidence assessment*

Overall confidence is low due to most studies being low confidence and inconsistencies in effect sizes.

*Link to review summaries*

Cramer (2016)

Jo (2021)

**Other outcomes in this study**

- Violence and atrocity prevention/ Diplomatic relations and peaceful dispute resolution/  
Social norms regarding violence and atrocities
- Social Cohesion/ Feelings of trust/ Acceptance of diversity/ Sense of belonging/  
Willingness to participate or help/ Intermediate social cohesion outcome
- Community and state governance/Government performance
- Human Security/ Educational Security/ Intermediate social cohesion outcomes/  
Physical security/ Health security/ Political Security/ Economic security