

Effect of Public sector provision, governance and institutionalisation on government performance

The intervention had small effect on government performance outcomes although the confidence in study findings was low.

Geographic focus: Latin America & Caribbean, South Asia, Middle East & North Africa, East Asia & Pacific

Effect: Small effect ($g=0.097$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (5 studies with 20 effect sizes)

Short summary

Public sector provision interventions including governance training for village heads and civil society leaders, peace talks, and aid strategies—had a small positive effect on government performance outcomes. Information interventions, such as SMS updates on government projects and public service priorities, had minor improvements on satisfaction with services. Aid interventions increased public support for local councils and rebel governance in non-contested areas but had limited effects in contested zones. Governance training improved adherence to procedures by village heads by 7%. Overall, confidence in these findings is low due to variability and limited studies.

Long summary

The intervention

The interventions included public sector provision, peacebuilding, and information strategies. Public sector provision interventions comprised governance training for local leaders, peace talks, and aid programs aimed at supporting state-building. Aid strategies included delivering funds to local councils, with both fragmented and non-fragmented approaches. Information and feedback interventions involved sending nine SMS messages to citizens about government projects, territorial consolidation efforts, and public service updates, with an option to submit feedback on priorities for state-building programs. The interventions targeted improving trust, transparency, and satisfaction with governance at the community level

How the intervention is expected to work

Governance training aimed to increase compliance with procedures and reduce bias in local decision-making. Aid interventions were expected to increase public support for local councils and governance by demonstrating effective service delivery, particularly where rebel influence was limited. Non-fragmented aid was anticipated to improve development efforts more effectively than fragmented aid. Information and feedback interventions were designed to enhance citizen awareness of government initiatives, encourage civic engagement, and increase trust in state actors. Effects were context-dependent: in contested areas, aid and information interventions had weaker impacts..

The evidence base

The cell contains 6 studies: 5 impact evaluations designed as quasi-experimental studies and randomized controlled trials & 1 qualitative study. There is inconsistency in findings across studies.

The IE studies are from Philippines (1), Syria (2), Afghanistan (1), Colombia (1) and qualitative study is from Uganda (1).

Evidence findings

Governance training improved village heads' adherence to procedures by 7%, while aid interventions increased public support for local councils in areas without strong rebel presence, though the effects were insignificant in contested zones. Non-fragmented aid also enhanced public perceptions of development efforts. In contrast, information and feedback interventions had minimal impact on citizen satisfaction with services. Additionally, experience with rebel governance was associated with increased trust in peace agreements.

Included studies

There are 5 impact evaluations in the cell and evidence summaries of the 5 studies are thus provided here:

Breslawski (2023) assessed that when rebels engage in peace talks with the government, civilians that experienced rebel governance are more likely to trust the government will fully implement the peace agreement than civilians that did not experience rebel governance. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design. The study shows that there is a positive relationship between having experienced rebel governance by the MILF and trust in the government of the Philippines ($p < 0.01$). Experience with rebel security results in a 7% increase in civilian's predicted level of confidence that government will implement the full terms of peace agreement, while experience with rebel justice results in a 6% increase in civilian's predicted level of confidence. The study is rated as medium confidence due to quasi-experimental study design and partial description of intervention.

Carnegie (2021) assessed that the foreign aid can improve opinion of the government institutions when they are embedded in demographic, aspirational, and experiential solidarities of their communities in Syria. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design. The study analyzed perceptions of residents from 27 rebel held communities (13,657 respondents) inside Syria from 2014 to 2016. The study shows that the aid has a positive and significant ($p < 0.01$) effect on public support for local councils in area in which ISIS not the dominant actor. The more OTI provided assistance to a community, the higher the level of support expressed by survey respondents in that community. The study is rated as medium confidence due to quasi-experimental study design.

Carnegie (2021) - The study was conducted in Syria. A primary objective of foreign aid in conflict zones is to help political actors win citizens' 'hearts and minds'. Previous studies have focused on assistance provided to state actors; however, this article examines aid's impact on rebel governance. It argues that aid only bolsters opinions of rebel governors where military control is uncontested. In contested areas, rebels lose credibility if they cannot offer protection, and they have difficulty delivering – and receiving credit for – services in insecure environments crowded with competitors. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design. The data was gathered in five collection periods: May 2014, September 2014, January 2015, August 2015 and March 2016. A total of 13,657 surveys were administered in twenty-seven Syrian communities. The aid has a modest but positive effect on support for LCs in uncontested areas ($p < 0.01$). Substantively, going from no aid to US\$500,000 – the mean amount of aid in our sample – boosts support for rebel governance by 0.075 on a scale from 0–1. The average level of support in our sample is 0.49; thus, we find that aid can produce limited but real change in perceptions of governance. However, in contested areas, the effect of aid becomes insignificant. Also, the baseline level of support for LCs is large, positive and significant, indicating that, as we have argued, civilians tend to identify with and support these bodies. The study is rated as low confidence due to quasi-experimental study design.

Child (2020) NG- 86032267 Aid Fragmentation, Corruption, and Conflict – The study tested the existing theory on aid fragmentation by studying aid provision under numerous donors throughout Afghanistan from 2006-2009. Leveraging granular military data on aid, corruption, public opinion, and conflict, we conduct the first micro-level analysis of aid

fragmentation. When delivered by a single donor, aid curtails corruption, boosts public opinion, and reduces conflict. However, under donor fragmentation, the benefits of aid are significantly reduced. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design. The primary unit of observation is the district-quarter. Total sample covers 398 districts over 15 quarters (from Q1 2006 to Q3 2009), containing 5,970 observations. The study suggests fragmentation facilitates corruption and erodes aid's ability to win hearts and minds in the fight against insurgents. Independently of aid, however, fragmentation benefits the quality of institutions. The study is rated as medium confidence due to quasi-experimental study design and partial description of intervention and outcomes.

Nussio (2020) – The study was conducted in Colombia. This paper tested two communication interventions in statebuilding areas for improving the communication of government with the public. This include-provision of information on service delivery via text messages – led to a reduction in satisfaction with services and the second treatment – an invitation for citizens to vote on service provision priorities – we can detect no effect. The study was designed as a randomized controlled trial. The randomisation procedure generated a feedback group of 311, an information group of 309, and a control group of 305 subjects. Most of the results are negative and not significant. The negative results indicate that those individuals included in the information intervention did not follow the positive change experienced by the control group, and among Colombians in general during this time period. The positive change in the control group reflects the underlying general mood in Colombia. The study is rated as high confidence.

Confidence assessment

Overall low confidence, most of the included studies are rated low confidence and there is inconsistency in the findings.

Other outcomes

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