

Effect of Public sector provision, governance and institutionalization intervention on Social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Evidence shows that Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI) had moderate effects on resilience against violence through leadership and conflict resolution skills.

Geographic focus: Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Moderate effect ($g=0.108$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (1 study with 12 effect sizes)

Short Summary

The Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI), led by Mercy Corps, aimed to reduce youth support for armed groups and political violence by expanding access to education and fostering civic engagement. The program constructed and rehabilitated 60 secondary schools across Somaliland, Puntland, and South-Central Somalia, reaching approximately 45,000 youth. SYLI also promoted leadership and conflict resolution skills, organized community action campaigns, and offered recreational activities to build self-confidence and strengthen peer connections. Findings indicate that in-school youth were nearly half as likely (48.2%) as out-of-school youth to support violent groups, demonstrating the program's positive effect on resilience against violence. Overall, confidence in this cell is low due to reliance on a single study.

Long summary

The intervention

Mercy Corps' Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI) focused on two main components: (1) expanding access to secondary education by building schools, training teachers, and developing Community Education Committees, and (2) fostering civic engagement by equipping youth with leadership and nonviolent conflict resolution skills, promoting participation in community action campaigns, and providing recreational activities to enhance social cohesion and self-confidence.

How the intervention is expected to work

Access to education reduces youth support for political violence by improving critical thinking, providing vocational and academic pathways to employment, and increasing resilience against recruitment by armed groups. Civic engagement and leadership training strengthen social norms that oppose violence, while recreational activities foster peer networks, self-confidence, and positive community involvement.

The evidence base

The cell contains 1 study designed as quasi-experimental study. The study was conducted in Somalia (1).

Evidence findings

SYLI increased civic engagement through leadership, conflict resolution skills, and community action efforts. It also enhanced self-confidence via recreational activities, resulting in a significant reduction in youth support for political violence. There is 1 impact evaluation in the cell and evidence summaries of the study are thus provided here:

Tesfaye (2018)- This research examines the impact of two common violence-reduction strategies—education and civic engagement—on youth support for armed violence. Armed opposition groups often recruit and indoctrinate frustrated youth, making them a key source of resilience. To counter this, youth development programs in Somalia, including Mercy Corps' Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI), focus on increasing access to secondary education

and civic engagement opportunities for vulnerable youth. An impact evaluation surveying 1,220 youth in two violence-affected regions of Somalia revealed that both SYLI-supported secondary education alone and combined with civic engagement reduced youth support for violent groups. The interventions appeared effective because they increased participants' optimism about future job prospects and confidence in using nonviolent methods to bring about change in their communities. While the study provides valuable insights, it is rated as medium confidence due to its non-experimental design and the irrelevance of attrition to the study design.

Confidence assessment

Overall low confidence as there is limited number of studies.

Other outcomes in this study:

Violence and atrocity prevention/Social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Violence and atrocity prevention/Diplomatic relations & Peaceful dispute resolution

Social cohesion / Sense of belonging

Human security/Intermediate social cohesion outcomes

Human security/Political security