

Effect of Intergroup contact & Peace education on Access to justice, rights and public services

Headline finding: Intergroup contact and peace education improved women's access to justice and services by building trust, capacity, and agency

Geographical distribution: Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Positive (Evidence suggested positive effects of participatory approaches to women's access to legal services.

Confidence in study findings: High and medium confidence

Short Summary

Gender-based disparities in accessing resources, decision-making, and protection from gender-based violence remain widespread across the world, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS). Women and girls in such settings faced different layers of marginalization, which resulted from the interplay of gender inequality, conflict, and fragility. International frameworks, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, have emphasized the role of women in peacebuilding, but there is a lack of knowledge about how gender-specific and gender-transformative interventions would work to empower women in FCAS. This review aimed to synthesize the evidence regarding such interventions, as well as identify barriers and facilitators to success. Intergroup contact and peace education, as part of these interventions, were assessed on their potential to create a more gender-equal and empowered women's world of increased access to justice, rights, and public services.

Long summary

The intervention

Intergroup contact, as through structured dialogue between conflictive groups, and peace education, fostered a culture of non-violence and equality, and proved to be promising interventions to enhance women's access to justice, rights, and public services.

Interventions such as changing perception, reducing prejudice, and more inclusive environments improved their chances of having women's rights advocated for and protected better.

How is the intervention expected to work

The expected outcome was the empowerment of women to attain greater accessibility to justice and public service while changing societal mindsets regarding gender roles. Peace education and intergroup contact availed the opportunity to challenge prejudiced practices for women; assert their rights; obtain resources previously off-limits to them. Doing this provided an advantage not only to the women as it made settings more sensitive and friendly but also assisted in keeping the community relatively stable long-term.

The evidence base

The cell has a single systematic review. The systematic review had 104 impact evaluations (75% randomized controlled trials) that evaluated 14 intervention types in fragile and conflict-affected environments (FCAS). The interventions targeted women's empowerment and gender equality, and the studies analyzed their impact at individual and community levels. The cell has a single systematic review. The systematic review comprised 104 impact evaluations (75% randomized controlled trials) that evaluated 14 various types of

interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAS). The studies were on interventions for women's empowerment and gender equality, with their impacts at individual and community levels.

The review evidence

The review examined 104 impact evaluations, mostly randomized controlled trials, focusing on 14 intervention types in fragile and conflict-affected settings. It assessed outcomes related to economic empowerment, legal rights awareness, public service access, and social support. Several studies found that cash transfers, microenterprise support, and negotiation training improved women's access to justice and legal protection. These economic empowerment programs also helped women access healthcare and legal services. Though the review mentioned significant effect sizes, effect sizes pertaining to intergroup contact & Peace education on Access to justice, rights and public services was not explicitly mentioned in the review, and therefore the data was narratively synthesized. One key study by Tanner and O'Connor (2017a) in the Democratic Republic of Congo combined life skills training, mentoring, safe spaces, and community dialogues for adolescent girls and young women. The intervention led to improved attitudes toward women's rights and increased confidence among participants, which helped them engage more actively in household and community decision-making. While the program did not directly measure access to legal institutions, the enhanced awareness of rights was seen as an important step toward accessing justice and public services. Similarly, Sharma et al. (2020) evaluated a gender-transformative training program in Ethiopia involving women, men, and couples, paired with community ceremonies. This program led to broader support for women's rights and improved awareness of how to access legal and social services. The participatory nature of the intervention helped reshape gender norms and made it easier for women to seek help or assert their rights in traditionally patriarchal settings. Another important contribution came from Leight (2021), who studied a participatory learning and action program in Ethiopia that educated women about their rights and available services. These programs significantly increased women's knowledge and use of public and legal support systems.

Confidence Assessment:

High and medium confidence

Source: Lwamba (2022)