

Effect of Security sector reform on Diplomatic relations & Peaceful dispute resolution

Security sector reform interventions have a small effect on improving consensus around dispute resolution and understanding of local authority.

Geographic region: Latin America and Caribbean

Effect: Small effect ($g=0.019$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (1 study with 5 effect sizes)

Short summary

This cell examines the ComunPaz program, a low-cost, scalable intervention aimed at improving coordination between police, Police Inspectors, and JACs in communities formerly under FARC control. The program avoided imposing state laws and instead focused on facilitating state penetration and preventing the resurgence of rebel governance. Delivered over four one-day modules within three months, it combined lectures, discussions, and group work to encourage adoption of new institutional practices. The evaluation found no significant improvement in consensus around dispute resolution or understanding of JACs' authority. While some leaders reported better coordination between state and communal authorities, agreement on major disputes remained unchanged between treatment and control groups. Overall, the intervention shows a very small positive effect.

Long summary

The intervention

The ComunPaz program is a scalable, low-cost initiative designed to enhance collaboration between police officers, Police Inspectors, and JACs, while avoiding the pitfalls of forcibly imposing state structures on communities with histories of autonomy or rebel governance. It consists of four modules delivered over one day each, combining lectures, discussions, group work, and Q&A, implemented over three months to allow participants to practice and adopt new institutional arrangements. The program's design seeks to facilitate state presence and prevent re-emergence of rebel governance, although the approach could be generalizable to other contexts without such histories.

How the intervention is expected to work

The program intended to improve understanding of key disputes in communities and build consensus on dispute resolution processes. By strengthening coordination between state and communal authorities, it was expected to promote peaceful dispute resolution. However, the evaluation found no evidence that the program increased understanding of JAC authority or agreement on the most important disputes. Leaders, police commanders, and Police Inspectors showed similar levels of consensus in both treatment and control groups, indicating limited effectiveness in enhancing diplomatic relations or local dispute resolution processes.

The evidence base

The cell contains 1 impact evaluation designed as randomized controlled trial. The study was conducted in Colombia (1).

Evidence findings

The intervention had a very small effect in improving consensus around dispute resolution and understanding of JAC authority. There is low confidence in the findings due to the single study and limited effect sizes. There is 1 impact evaluation in the cell and evidence summaries of the study are thus provided here:

Included studies

Blair (2022) evaluated the ComunPaz program in rural Colombia using an experimental study design. The program specifically targets the three obstacles to state–communal cooperation. The program seeks to provide information about the roles and responsibilities of state and communal authorities, build trust between citizens and both state and communal authorities by creating opportunities for them to interact in a structured and secure environment, and improve coordination between state and communal authorities through the design and dissemination of “response routes.” The sample consists of 149 communities distributed across 24 municipalities in four purposefully selected regions of Colombia. The study found that ComunPaz enhanced the quality of local dispute resolution, increased citizens’ trust in (some) state institutions, and strengthened coordination between state and communal authorities. It also appears to have reduced citizens’ confidence in, and reliance on, armed groups. The program did not, however, increase dependence on either state or communal authorities to resolve disputes, nor did it increase citizens’ trust in communal institutions. The study is rated as low confidence due to the partial description of outcomes and attrition not being reported in the study.

Confidence assessment

Overall low confidence due to limited number of studies in the cell.

Other outcomes in this study:

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

Community and state governance/ Civic Participation