

Effects of social funds, community-driven development and reconstruction on educational security

Social funds, community-driven development (CDD), and reconstruction programs improved education infrastructure but had small effects on learning outcomes, school attendance, and institutional accountability, limiting long-term educational security.

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

Effect size: Small effect ($g=0.07$)

Confidence in study findings: Moderate confidence (6 studies; 23 ES)

Short summary

Social funds, community-driven development, and reconstruction programs had a small effect on educational security. While there were minor improvements in infrastructure and temporary learning gains, these programs had limited impact on school attendance, learning outcomes, girls' education, and institutional accountability. Confidence in this cell is moderate due to inconsistencies in the effect sizes across studies.

Long summary

The intervention

The interventions focused on improving education infrastructure, governance, and service delivery through social funds, CDD, and reconstruction programs. They provided block grants for school construction and rehabilitation, supported vocational training, and promoted community participation in local decision-making and education management.

How the intervention is expected to work

These interventions are expected to enhance educational security by building or rehabilitating schools, improving learning conditions, and increasing access to vocational training. Participatory governance structures, such as Village Development Committees, aim to strengthen local accountability and ensure resources meet community needs. Improved infrastructure is expected to boost attendance, while governance and training interventions aim to sustain learning outcomes and institutional resilience. The effectiveness of these interventions depends on governance quality, implementation fidelity, and long-term sustainability..

The evidence base

The cell includes six primary studies and one systematic review. Study designs include three randomized controlled trials (RCTs), two propensity score/pipeline matching studies, and one quasi-experimental difference-in-differences study. Research was conducted across Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Armenia. The review findings were generally consistent regarding infrastructure improvements but highlighted limited impacts on learning outcomes.

Evidence findings

Interventions improved infrastructure but had limited lasting effects on learning outcomes, school attendance, and girls' education. Temporary literacy and computation gains faded post-intervention, and weak institutional accountability limited overall educational security.

The review evidence

CDD programs improved facilities for education, health, and water but did not yield significant improvements in educational outcomes.

The impact evaluation evidence

Beath (2015) evaluates the impact of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Programme (NSP), a large-scale rural development initiative aimed at improving local governance and economic well-being through community-driven projects. The NSP facilitates the creation of gender-balanced Community Development Councils (CDCs), providing block grants for local projects. The study covers 500 villages across 10 districts in Balkh, Baghlan, Daykundi, Ghor, Herat, and Nangarhar provinces. The evaluation uses a randomized controlled trial (RCT) approach, with 250 villages receiving NSP (treatment group) and 250 villages not receiving it (control group). Data was collected through baseline, midline, and endline surveys from 2007 to 2011, comprising over 25,000 household interviews and more than 2,600 focus groups. The sample includes 500 villages with household surveys and focus groups of village leaders and women. The data is derived from both male and female respondents. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) improved basic literacy and computation skills among both men and women during project implementation, but these effects did not persist post-project. NSP had limited impact on cultural barriers restricting girls' education. There was no significant increase in support for girls attending school beyond fourth grade or changes in attitudes regarding female education ($p > 0.10$). These findings suggest temporary gains in education-related outcomes that were not sustained after the intervention. The study is rated as high and medium confidence quantitative study.

Chase (2002) The Armenian Social Investment Fund (ASIF) aimed to support communities in rehabilitating local infrastructure, particularly schools and water systems, during Armenia's transition from a centrally planned economy. ASIF provided financing for community-driven projects to improve education, water access, and social services. The study was conducted in Armenia, targeting earthquake-affected regions (Aragatsotn, Lori, Shirak), conflict-affected regions (Sunik, Tavush), and urban areas (Yerevan). The study used propensity score matching and pipeline matching techniques to control for selection bias. The evaluation compared households in communities with completed ASIF projects to those in communities with approved but incomplete projects. The study was based on a nationally representative household survey (3,600 households). An oversample of 2,260 households from ASIF-active areas was included. The total sample included 113 clusters where ASIF was active. The findings indicated that school attendance at national level 87% of 7–12-year-olds attended school in ASIF communities, significantly higher than 79% in pipeline (control) communities ($p < 0.05$). Attendance was 86% in ASIF areas vs. 76% in pipeline areas ($p < 0.05$) in earthquake zones. Attendance was 93% in ASIF areas vs. 83% in matched communities in conflict zones, though the difference was not statistically significant. The findings suggest that ASIF-supported school rehabilitation increased school attendance, particularly in earthquake-affected regions. The study is rated as low confidence quantitative study due to selection bias and a small sample size in subgroup analysis.

Finkel (2018) The Peace through Development II (PDEV II) program, funded by USAID, aimed to counter violent extremism in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger from 2011 to 2016. The program sought to improve social cohesion, increase resilience to extremist ideologies, and promote civic engagement. It included interventions such as vocational training, media campaigns, and community-led initiatives to address underlying causes of extremism. PDEV II was implemented in 45 "core zones" (which received all program interventions) and 56 "non-core zones" (which received only radio-based interventions). The impact evaluation used a quasi-experimental difference-in-differences approach to assess the program's effects by comparing core and non-core zones. Surveys were conducted with 7,888 respondents across 83 zones. The PDEV II program increased access to vocational schools by 6.5 percentage points in core zones compared to non-core zones ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant positive impact. Despite increased access, no significant reduction in support for violent extremism was observed ($p > 0.10$). These findings suggest that while vocational training

opportunities expanded, their effect on reducing violent extremism remained statistically insignificant. The study is rated as high and medium confidence quantitative study.

Humphreys (2014) The Tuungane program in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) aimed to enhance participatory governance by providing communities with funds for local projects and encouraging democratic decision-making. The study was conducted in villages across the eastern DRC. A randomized controlled trial (RCT) was used. Communities were randomly assigned to participate in the Tuungane program or serve as controls. A follow-up intervention, RAPID, tested transparency and accountability effects. The study involved 560 villages. Efficiency (Level of knowledge of health facts): The RAPID intervention significantly increased health knowledge levels by 9.72 percentage points ($p < 0.01$). Tuungane areas had a baseline knowledge advantage of 1.74 percentage points ($p < 0.1$), but no significant improvement in knowledge transmission speed ($p > 0.1$). Tuungane had no statistically significant effect on school attendance. The estimated change was -0.12 days overall ($p > 0.1$), with -0.21 days for girls and -0.04 days for boys. The study is rated as high and medium confidence quantitative study.

Laudati (2018) The Tuungane 1 program (2007-2011) aimed to improve education infrastructure and service provision in rural areas by funding school construction and supplies. However, it did not directly target teaching quality, affordability, or governance. The study was conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A randomized controlled trial (RCT) was used to measure the impact of the intervention on educational outcomes. Data was collected from household surveys and direct testing of children's educational performance. The study included randomly selected households from control and treatment areas. A subset of children aged 6–11 was tested in mathematics, French, and science. The total sample size for education-related measures was 3,054 children. The Tuungane 1 program had no significant impact on key educational outcomes. Uninterrupted school attendance remained unchanged, with no measurable improvement for either sons (-0.04, $p > 0.05$) or daughters (-0.04, $p > 0.05$). Similarly, the proportion of children who had never attended school showed no significant reduction, with both sons (-0.01, $p > 0.05$) and daughters (-0.01, $p > 0.05$) experiencing negligible changes. Additionally, test scores in key subjects did not improve, with students showing no gains in French (-0.11, $p > 0.05$) or local language proficiency (-0.17, $p > 0.05$). The study is rated as high and medium confidence quantitative study.

Laudati (2018) The Tuungane 2 program (2011–2014) was a Community-Driven Development (CDD) initiative implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The program aimed to improve local governance, service delivery, and infrastructure, particularly in education and health sectors. Communities elected Village Development Committees (VDCs) to oversee funded infrastructure projects (e.g., school and health facility construction) while promoting participatory decision-making. The study was conducted in South Kivu, Haut Katanga, and Tanganyika provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The evaluation used a non-randomized, quasi-experimental design, employing propensity score matching to compare Tuungane communities with similar non-Tuungane communities. 781 villages surveyed. This study evaluates Tuungane 2's impact on education infrastructure, school attendance, and governance outcomes. The findings on the capacity of education facilities indicate that in control areas, classrooms had an average of 5.29 benches, while Tuungane schools had 8.71 more benches ($p < 0.01$). Room size was slightly smaller in Tuungane schools ($p > 0.05$). The number of teachers decreased by 0.90 in Tuungane schools ($p > 0.05$), and the number of rooms increased slightly by 0.27 ($p > 0.05$). The highest degree offered was unchanged (0.01, $p > 0.05$). The number of registered students increased by 24.43 but was not significant ($p > 0.05$), and the teacher-student ratio remained unchanged (-0.01, $p > 0.05$). School attendance saw no significant improvements for sons or daughters, with no meaningful reduction in the proportion of children who never attended school. Exam grades in French and local languages remained unchanged, with French scores decreasing by -0.11 ($p > 0.05$) and local language scores decreasing by -0.17 ($p > 0.05$). The study is rated as low confidence quantitative study.

Confidence assessment

The overall confidence in the cell is moderate as there are inconsistencies in the effect sizes of the studies.

Link to review summaries

White (2018)

Other outcomes in the study:

- Violence and atrocity prevention/Nature and scale of violence or atrocities/ Diplomatic relations and peaceful dispute resolution/ Social norms regarding violence and atrocities
- Social cohesion/Feelings of trust and acceptance of diversity/ Willingness to participate or help
- Community and state governance/Access to justice, rights and public services/ Government performance/ Civic participation
- Human security/Intermediate social cohesion outcomes/ Economic security/ Food security and nutrition + Health security/ Physical Security/ Political security