

Effect of social funds, community-driven development and reconstruction on intermediate social cohesion outcomes

Social funds and community-driven development interventions had a small effect on intermediate social cohesion, modestly improving economic perceptions, interethnic tolerance, and service quality, with mediation and dialogue most effective in reducing support for violence.

Geographical region: South Asia, Sub Saharan Africa

Effect size: Small effect ($g=0.095$)

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence (2 studies; 35 ES)

Short summary

Social funds and community-driven development programs had a small positive effect on intermediate social cohesion outcomes, modestly improving economic perceptions, interethnic tolerance, and local service quality. Impacts on trust in local institutions and overall well-being were mixed. Confidence in this cell is low due to the limited number of studies.

Long summary

The intervention

Interventions included vocational training, infrastructure rehabilitation, natural resource management, media campaigns, and participatory planning. Programs engaged communities in collaborative decision-making, economic empowerment, and governance training to foster local ownership, resilience, and inclusion in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

How the intervention is expected to work

These initiatives aim to enhance governance, economic well-being, and resilience by funding local projects, establishing participatory councils, and fostering civic engagement. Mediation, dialogue, and capacity-building activities strengthen service provision, counter extremism, and promote inclusion. By empowering communities and promoting cooperative norms, they are expected to reinforce social cohesion and reduce support for violence.

The evidence base

The cell includes two primary studies and one systematic review. One study used a randomized controlled trial and the other a quasi-experimental difference-in-differences approach. The studies were conducted across 500 villages in Afghanistan (Balkh, Baghlan, Daykundi, Ghor, Herat, Nangarhar) and in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Evidence findings

Social funds and community-driven development programs had a small positive effect on intermediate social cohesion outcomes.

The review evidence

Targeted interventions showed modest positive effects, though long-term behavioural changes were limited. Interventions also increased representation of women in local and subnational civil and political processes during peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery.

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 study found that NSP improved female economic perceptions significantly at midline and endline ($p < 0.01$). Happiness was not significantly impacted, though a slight decrease in female unhappiness was observed ($p < 0.05$). It also improved perceptions ($p < 0.05$) and female optimism. The study is rated as high and medium confidence quantitative study.

Laudati (2018) Tuungane 2 was a community-driven development program in the Democratic Republic of Congo, aimed at enhancing service provision through increased community participation. It focused on improving knowledge about service roles and increasing interactions between villagers, service providers, and local committees (CODESA, COPA, MCZ, and Sous-Proved). The study covered villages in Haut Katanga, South Kivu, and Tanganyika. A randomized controlled trial (RCT) was employed, comparing treatment and control areas to measure program impact. The study surveyed 1,540 villagers, 241 health facility heads, and 272 school heads. The study found that Knowledge of CODESA, COPA, MCZ, and Sous-Proved was low in control areas (20%-34%) but increased significantly under Tuungane 2. Villagers attended more meetings with CODESA (0.47 vs. 0.41, $p < 0.01$) and COPA (0.36 vs. 1.44, $p < 0.05$). Service quality perception increased by 11% for health and 17% for education. Trust in COPA (-113.94, $p < 0.01$) and CODESA (-37.30, $p < 0.05$) declined. The study is a low confidence quantitative study.

Confidence assessment

The overall confidence in the cell is low due to a limited number of the studies in the cell.

Link to review summaries

Lwamba (2022)

Other outcomes in the study

- Violence and atrocity prevention/Nature and scale of violence or atrocities
- Social cohesion/Feelings of trust & Acceptance of diversity/
- Community and state governance/ Access to justice, rights and public services/Civic participation/Government performance

- Human security/Economic security/Educational security/Political security/ Food security and nutrition and Health security