

Effect of social funds, community-driven development and reconstruction on sense of belongingness

Social funds and community-driven development programs improved belongingness and social harmony in post-conflict Nicaraguan communities, showing significant increases in closeness and cohesion.

Geographical region: Latin America & Caribbean

Effect size: Large effect ($g=0.0464$)

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence (1 study; 01ES)

Short summary

Social funds and community-driven development interventions had a large effect on the sense of belongingness and social harmony in post-conflict Nicaraguan communities. Residents in Pantasma and Waslala reported increased feelings of closeness and cooperation, reflecting strengthened communal ties and shared identity. These findings suggest that structured social capital and leadership-building interventions can effectively rebuild trust and cohesion in post-conflict contexts. Confidence in the cell is low due to the limited number of studies.

Long summary

The intervention

The intervention combined social funds and community-driven development initiatives to rebuild social capital after conflict. It included management and leadership (M&L) training to promote civic engagement, trust, and local governance participation, aiming to strengthen cohesion and community belonging.

How the intervention is expected to work

The intervention is expected to rebuild trust and strengthen community ties by fostering local leadership, empowering organizations, and promoting participatory governance. Through M&L training and community-driven projects, it enhances cooperation, accountability, and collective ownership of local initiatives, reinforcing social cohesion and a shared sense of belonging.

The evidence base

The cell includes one primary study that used a two-year quasi-experimental design in Pantasma, Waslala (treatment), and Cinco Pinos (control), Nicaragua.

Evidence findings

Social funds and community-driven development programs had a large effect on social cohesion and feelings of closeness in post-conflict Nicaraguan communities. Residents reported greater cooperation, trust, and participation in local initiatives, indicating strengthened communal ties and a shared sense of belonging.

Included studies

Brune (2009) evaluates a management and leadership (M&L) training program designed to increase social capital in post-conflict Nicaraguan communities. The intervention aimed to foster civic engagement, trust, and participation in governance while also assessing its impact on health behaviours, particularly child healthcare practices. The study was conducted in three Nicaraguan communities: Pantasma, Waslala (treatment), and Cinco Pinos (control). A two-year quasi-experimental design was employed, with baseline and follow-up household surveys assessing changes in social capital and health behaviors. The study used logistic regression models to measure associations between social capital and individual/community health practices. The study included a baseline sample of 198 households and a follow-up sample of 210 households. Findings indicate that systematic interventions significantly increased feelings of closeness among community members ($p = 0.061$), suggesting a notable positive shift in social harmony. In Pantasma, closeness increased by 18.1%, while Waslala saw a smaller 6.4% rise. The intervention's impact was statistically significant at the 10% level ($p < 0.10$). The study is rated as high and medium confidence quantitative study.

Confidence assessment

We have low confidence in the cell due to a limited number of studies.

Other outcomes in the study

- Social cohesion/Willingness to participate or help
- Community and state governance/Civic participation
- Human security/Food security and nutrition and health security