

### Effect of training & job creation on economic security

Training and job creation programs show a **moderate positive effect** on economic security, contributing to increased employment, stabilized incomes, and reduced reliance on illicit or precarious work.

Geographic region: Global, Sub Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia

Effect: Moderate effect ( $g=0.188$ )

Confidence in study findings: Medium (15 studies with 190 effect sizes)

### Short Summary

Training and job creation programs, including vocational training, business mentorship, and financial assistance interventions, aim to improve economic security for marginalized and high-risk populations. Evidence from 15 impact evaluations and 2 systematic reviews indicates that these programs generally increase employment and household income. For example, Liberia's agricultural training program achieved a 77% engagement rate in farming, and Tanzania's RukaJuu! initiative increased earnings by 146%. Public works programs, such as India's NREGA, helped stabilize incomes during economic shocks. Some interventions, however, had mixed outcomes, particularly in fragile settings or where gender inequalities limited access to decent work. Overall, the evidence suggests a **moderate positive effect** on economic security.

### Long summary

#### *The intervention*

The interventions assessed primarily involve vocational training, business skills development, and direct financial grants intended to improve economic security. Programs target marginalized or high-risk populations, including youth engaged in illicit activities, refugees, and individuals affected by conflict or poverty. Many interventions integrate skills training with financial support, such as microgrants or farm inputs, and in some cases include life skills, mentorship, or counseling to encourage sustainable labor market participation. By combining skill-building and economic support, these programs aim to enhance employability, promote entrepreneurship, and reduce dependence on precarious or illegal work.

#### *How the intervention is expected to work*

Programs are designed to increase employment opportunities, stabilize household incomes, and shift participants away from informal or illicit work toward sustainable livelihoods. Vocational training and business mentorship provide skills and resources for labor market entry or enterprise development, while financial support enables short-term consumption smoothing and productive investment. In conflict-affected areas, these programs may also contribute indirectly to social cohesion by reducing economic grievances and incentives to engage in violence or criminal activity.

### *The evidence base*

This cell includes 17 impact evaluation studies and 2 systematic reviews. Note that two of the 17 impact evaluations are study protocols. These include Alik-Lagrange (2019) and Marguerie (2018) which are set in the Central African Republic and Cote d'Ivoire.

One of the reviews discusses employment programmes in general, which are mainly vocational training. The other is concerned with interventions, including training, for women's empowerment and gender equity in fragile settings.

The study settings for the impact evaluation evidence include: South Africa (1 study), Uganda (1 study), Liberia (3 studies), Somalia (1 study), five African countries (1 study), Lebanon and Jordan (1 study), India (1 study), Tanzania (2 studies), Afghanistan (2 studies), South Sudan (1 study), and Sierra Leone (1 study).

### *Evidence findings*

Overall, evidence indicates a **moderate positive effect (g = 0.188)** of training and job creation programs on economic security. Programs generally increase employment rates and household income, improve financial resilience, and in some cases reduce reliance on illicit or precarious work. For example, Liberia's agricultural training achieved 77% engagement in farming, Tanzania's RukaJuu! program increased earnings by 146%, and India's NREGA helped stabilize incomes during economic shocks. Youth microenterprise programs in Uganda and South Sudan also supported savings and business growth, although employment effects varied across settings. While outcomes are generally positive, the magnitude of effects can differ depending on program design, local economic conditions, and access to decent work, particularly in fragile or gender-unequal contexts.

### *The review evidence*

Both reviews show that training interventions have positive effects on economic security, especially employment. One of the reviews conducts meta-analysis and finds that technical and vocational training improved the capacities of women entrepreneurs and their access to assets, credit and income. However, null effects were found in terms of women's access to decent work, particularly in fragile and gender unequal states.

### **The impact evaluation evidence**

There are 17 impact evaluations included in this cell. Two of these studies are earlier versions, one study evaluated the same program, and two are protocols. Thus, 12 summaries are provided below:

**Adato (2005)** examines the effectiveness of public works programs as a tool for poverty alleviation in the Western Cape province of South Africa. The study focuses on seven different public works programs that were designed to provide short-term employment opportunities. The study employs mixed-methods approach, using quantitative data from 101 public works projects and qualitative insights from eight in-depth case studies in the Western Cape province. Quantitative analysis examined outcomes such as job creation, cost efficiency, and labor intensity, while case studies explored the roles and challenges of community involvement. The study finds that community participation significantly improved project outcomes, including increased labor intensity, reduced

cost of job creation, and higher inclusion of women. Participation also enhanced the number of training and workdays provided. The study is rated medium as it is non-experimental.

**Baseler (2021)** The study investigated two programs for Ugandan (host) microentrepreneurs: cash grants delivered with information that connects the grant with Uganda's inclusive refugee policies and existing aid-sharing policy, and mentorship by an experienced refugee. This tests whether mentorship is an effective means to promote skill transfer across nationalities and increase small business profits. The study is designed as a randomized controlled trial. The main sample consisted of 1,406 Ugandan businesses. These were randomly assigned to treatments (cash and information, cash, information, a refugee mentor, a Ugandan mentor) or control. The study found a positive effect of all treatment groups on the main outcome, a pre-specified index of policy preferences – inclusive policies including refugees' right to work and hosting additional refugees, that is statically significant at the 10% level. The cash and information combined treatment (T1), however, has a larger effect than the other four treatments. The study is rated medium confidence.

**Blattmann and Annan (2011)** and **Blattman and Annan (2016)** assess a training programme for high-risk youth in Liberia. Specifically, the NGO Action on Armed Violence's (AoAV) implemented a programme of residential agricultural training combined with counselling and "life skills" classes. The target group were youth engaged in illicit activities of mining and logging who were seen as at risk of engaging in conflict. At the end of the training participants received farm inputs worth \$125. The NGO recruited 1100 high-risk men in 138 communities of which roughly half were assigned to the program on a random basis. Engagement in agriculture was of interest, with three-quarters of those assigned to the programme attending the training. About 77% of participants engaged in farming, compared to 61% of controls. Participants reduced their illicit activities by about 20%, though none abandoned them completely. Incomes rose by on average US\$12 a month. One-third of the participants did not receive the inputs because of supply issues, and so were promised future cash provided they stayed in the village. This group saw the largest reduction in illicit activities. A short war occurred during the study period. Participants were less likely than the control to have met with recruiters. The study is rated low confidence because of lack of information on power calculations.

**Borino (2019)** This study investigates the role of employment programs in reducing the willingness of individuals to engage in violence in Somalia. Specifically, it evaluates the impact of the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s "Joint Program Youth Employment Somalia" (YES) and "Youth for Change" (Y4C) initiatives on promoting stability and reducing support for violence among at-risk Somali youth. The YES and Y4C programs are employment-focused initiatives implemented in Somalia, targeting youth at risk of engaging in violent activities. These programs provide vocational training, cash-for-work opportunities, and support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Although not designed explicitly for peacebuilding, their conflict-sensitive approach emphasizes inclusivity, transparency, and fostering social cohesion among beneficiaries in Bosasso (Puntland), Berbera (Somaliland), and Baidoa (South Somalia). The study analyzed data from approximately 200 participants to assess the impact of the YES and Y4C vocational training programs. Support for violence among beneficiaries significantly decreased, with those justifying violence for better services dropping from 16% to 6% and those endorsing violence for political causes falling from 37% to 27%. These changes were driven by three mechanisms: improved economic opportunities through skill development, enhanced social cohesion via dialogue across clans and genders, and grievance redressal through the programs' inclusive and equitable design. The study is rated as low confidence as it is before and after study design.

**de Chaisemartin (2020)** revisits the Blattman & Annan (2016) experiment in Liberia, which evaluated the impact of an agricultural training program on ex-combatants who were at risk of engaging in illegal activities, including mercenary work. Participants were randomly assigned to training through a randomized waitlist mechanism, and the study sought to estimate the program's effects on employment, income, and social outcomes. The authors proposed a new estimator, the Doubly Reweighted Ever-Offer (DREO) estimator, which corrects for this bias by adjusting for endogenous selection in treatment offers. The study finds that the agricultural training program had a positive impact on economic stability, particularly through employment shifts. For one, the income index improved, though the effect size was small (0.169 standard deviations). While the income index showed a modest increase, the most significant changes were observed in occupational shifts, particularly moving away from illegal work toward farming. The study is rated as low confidence due to little description of the evaluation questions and outcomes.

**Ferguson (2019)** explores whether employment programs contribute to peacebuilding by analyzing stability-related outcomes in five African countries (Burundi, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, and Uganda). Using a pseudo-meta-analysis and a difference-in-differences (DID) approach with matched samples, the study finds mixed effects. Employment programs significantly reduced fear of crime in all five countries, suggesting a positive impact on perceived security. The study is rated low due to little description of the intervention, outcomes, and evaluation questions. The study is rated low confidence due to little description of intervention, outcomes, and evaluation questions.

**Ferguson (2022)** examine the effects of vocational training provided to both host and refugee participants in Lebanon and Jordan, both of which have large numbers of Syrian refugees. The programmes - Fostering Resilience by Strengthening Abilities and *3Amaly* in Lebanon and the Access to Justice and Jobs in Jordan - were managed by a US NGO, Mercy Corps and implemented by local training providers. The courses provided marketable skills, such as aluminium fabrication and installation, woodworking and carpentry, food and dairy processing, electrical repair. Most of these activities are allowable for refugees, and so delivered in mixed sessions, although a small number were delivered to locals only because of employment restrictions. Courses lasted from two to eight weeks. The programme was oversubscribed, so treatment and control were sampled from successful and unsuccessful applicants respectively. The intervention has little impact on perceptions of economic scarcity, and no effect from participation on optimism about the respondent's economic situation. But there are effects from assignment to the programme, which are negative for hosts but positive for refugees. There are also no significant effects on perceived economic scarcity across a range of measures. The study is rated medium since it is non-experimental and due to its attrition rate.

**Fetzer (2020)** The study assesses the impact of India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) on reducing conflict intensity by moderating the effects of adverse weather shocks, specifically monsoon rainfall deficits, on household incomes. Launched in 2006 in India, NREGA is the world's largest public employment program, guaranteeing up to 100 days of employment annually at minimum wages for rural households through public works aimed at creating sustainable infrastructure. By providing a safety net, the program stabilizes household incomes, particularly for individuals with limited income options during adverse economic conditions, aiming to reduce economic vulnerabilities and their potential link to conflict. The study combines household-level panel data with district-level conflict records in India, revealing that prior to NREGA, adverse monsoon rainfall reduced agricultural output by 0.32% for every 1% rainfall deficit and significantly lowered agricultural wages. However, post-NREGA, this relationship disappears, showing that the program has a stabilizing effect on incomes. In summary, NREGA reduces the vulnerability of rural households to weather-induced income shocks, stabilizes agricultural labor markets, and indirectly lowers conflict intensity, demonstrating its effectiveness

as a social insurance mechanism in resource. The study is rated as medium confidence as it is non-experimental study design.

**Jansen (2022) and Outwater et al. (2019)** report findings from a pilot study of *RukaJuu!*, an intervention conducted in 2015 which offered vocational training in beekeeping, entrepreneurship or both in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where community violence is high. Participants were young men aged 16 and above. For the entrepreneurship training participants were shown videos of an edutainment series which had been on television a few years earlier. The beekeeping training was led by beekeeping officers of the Tanzanian Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, covering practical aspects of beekeeping such as and to build a beehive. No financial support was provided. The study was conducted in four neighborhood camps (called ) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, with each camp randomly assigned to one treatment arm. A total of 55 men participated from the four camps. All arms, including the control, also received a health intervention. The number of training sessions was: Health/Control (2 sessions), Entrepreneurship + Health (6 sessions), Beekeeping + Health(6 sessions), and Entrepreneurship + Beekeeping + Health (10 sessions). data were collected at baseline and 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year after the sessions were completed. Deteriorating economic conditions meant that earnings fell by 37% in the control group. By contrast, incomes increased in all three intervention camps: beekeeping by 43%, entrepreneurship by 146% and combined by 50%, The most persistently reported constraint to business operations was insufficient start-up capital. Financial capital increased in all three treatment arms, though the effect is not significant for either of the arms including beekeeping: beekeeping (TSh29,310), entrepreneurship (82,334), and both (23,145). The study is rated medium confidence based on study design (pre-post test with one comparison camp).

**Kurtz (2015 and 2018)** examines the effect of the UK-supported INVEST program, which offered vocational and technical training courses in nine technical vocational education and training (TVET) centres in Helmand Province in Southern Afghanistan from 2011. The programme was implemented by a US NGO, Mercy Corps. At the time of the evaluation 25,000 students had graduated from the programme of which nearly on-third were women. The study used propensity score matching to match recruits from February to April 2014 with successful applicants who had not yet started the programme. The training had substantial economic benefits for participants, with a greater likelihood of employment (currently employed 35.7 percentage points and, paid work 12.7 percentage points increase), as well as greater job satisfaction and economic optimism and being more likely to engage in economic activity with another tribe. The study is rated low confidence because of lack of information on power calculations.

**Muller (2019)** examine the effects of the unintended closure in 2016 of the Youth Business Start-Up Grant Programme in South Sudan. The intervention consisted of an unconditional cash grant worth US\$1,000 combined with a one week business and life skills training. The grants were accessible through a commercial bank account. The group of approximately 1,200 participants were randomly selected from 6,000 applicants for the programme. A similar size group was randomly selected to be the control group. Because of the cancellation of the programme on account of escalating violence some participants received the training but no grant. Estimate of the ITT effect is by a regression with a treatment dummy and exogenous covariants. ToT effects are also estimated with a regression, though these cannot be interpreted as causal effects. To estimate causal effects are estimated with an instrumental variable, with proximity to a bank as the instrument, as having a commercial bank account was a condition of participation, and selection into training with grant or training but no grant. Baseline data were collected in April and May 2015. Many participants migrated to escape the violence, so attrition was a problem: 55 per cent were reached by phone prior to the endline, most of whom agreed to participant in the survey. Endline data were collected in 2017. Participants who received training and cash displayed significant increases in savings partly as a result of reduced consumption, but no effect on

employment or business skills. The effects on savings are large for males than females. The study is rated medium confidence because of moderate levels of attrition and incomplete description of the intervention

**Rosas (2016)** The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the short-term impacts of Sierra Leone's Cash for Work (CfW) public works program, launched in 2010 under the Youth Employment Support Project with World Bank support. By employing a phased-in randomized control trial, the study examines how the program influenced household welfare, economic prospects, and labor market participation. The key findings from the study on the labor-intensive public works program in Sierra Leone are as follows: the program significantly boosted cash income among participants, with an increase of nearly three times the amount compared to control households. Overall, treated households saw a 29% rise in monthly income. Participation in the program led to increased labor force participation not only among program participants but also among other household members, especially in rural areas. The program notably increased female labor force participation. Households used the additional income for food, health services, and investments in home improvements and businesses. However, some consumption of "temptation goods," like cigarettes, increased slightly, and student absenteeism rose, likely due to children helping with household tasks. Treated households were more likely to start new businesses (nearly four times more likely than control households) and increased their participation in informal savings groups. Participation in the program led to greater utilization of health services, particularly for young male children. The program demonstrated the potential of public works as productive safety nets, providing immediate income support and opening avenues for investment in household resilience and productivity. However, some challenges, such as informal rotation and leakage, may have affected its effectiveness. The program's cost-effectiveness was evaluated, with the average cost per subproject being about \$16,000, which led to significant impacts on job creation and income enhancement, providing a valuable model for future programs in post-conflict settings. The study was rated as having low confidence because the author provided little or no description of the evaluation question.

#### *Confidence assessment*

Overall confidence in the evidence is **medium**. While the large number of studies and general consistency in findings support the overall conclusion, the quality of individual studies is mostly low, which limits the strength of the evidence.

#### *Link to review summaries*

Bruck (2018)

Lwamba (2022)

All studies may be accessed via the EGM.

#### **Other outcomes in the study:**

Human security / Educational security

Human security / Food security and nutrition & Health security

Violence and atrocity prevention

Social cohesion / Feelings of trust & Acceptance of diversity

Violence and atrocity prevention / Social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Social cohesion / Sense of belonging

Social cohesion / Willingness to participate or help

Community and state governance / Government performance

Human security / Intermediate social cohesion outcomes

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