

## Effect of training & job creation on educational security

Training and job creation programs, particularly labor-intensive public works, show a **harmful effect** on educational security by increasing school absenteeism.

Geographic scope: Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Harmful effect ( $g=-0.027$ )

Confidence in study findings: Low (1 study with 2 effect sizes)

### Short Summary

Training and job creation programs, including labor-intensive public works, aim to provide short-term employment and economic stability for vulnerable youth in post-conflict settings. Evidence indicates an **overall harmful effect** on educational security, as these programs are associated with increased school absenteeism. This suggests potential trade-offs between short-term employment and long-term educational outcomes.

### Long summary

#### *The intervention*

Training and job creation interventions, **Cash-for-Work (CfW)** program implemented in Sierra Leone under the Youth Employment Support Project with World Bank support. The program provided temporary employment to youth aged 15–35 through labor-intensive public works such as feeder road rehabilitation, agriculture, and environmental management. Participants received 50–75 days of paid labor at a daily wage of approximately USD 1.80, slightly below market rates to target economically vulnerable groups. Implemented across 276 communities using a randomized phase-in approach, 143 communities received the intervention during the study period. The program was designed to stabilize incomes and reduce economic distress following conflict by offering immediate employment opportunities.

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

The intervention was intended to enhance short-term economic stability by providing income opportunities to unemployed youth and injecting liquidity into local economies. Increased household income was expected to improve welfare and support broader community recovery. However, participation in temporary labor may also draw young people away from school, thereby reducing educational attendance and undermining longer-term human capital investment. The design of such interventions can therefore generate unintended consequences when short-term employment competes with time allocated to education.

#### *The evidence base*

This cell includes one impact evaluation study conducted in Sierra Leone.

#### *Evidence findings*

Evidence indicates a **harmful effect** of labor-intensive public works on educational security. Participation in short-term employment increased school absenteeism among youth in treatment households, suggesting that work obligations diverted time away from schooling. While the program achieved its primary objective of improving short-term financial stability, it did not enhance skills development or support sustained educational engagement. These findings suggest that the design and timing of public works interventions may need to be adjusted to avoid undermining educational participation, particularly among school-age and young adult populations.

#### *Included studies*

**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: 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. The study is rated low due to its little description of the evaluation questions.

#### *Confidence Assessment*

Overall low: The cell is rated low given that it only includes 1 impact evaluation study.

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

Human security / Economic security

Human security / Food security and nutrition & Health security