

Effect of training & job creation on feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity

Employment and training programs show a **large positive effect** ($g = 0.239$) on social cohesion, though evidence indicates mixed impacts on trust and acceptance of diversity across contexts.

Geographic scope: Middle East and North Africa, Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Large effect ($g=0.239$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (5 studies with 43 effect sizes)

Short Summary

Training and job creation programs, including vocational training, cash-for-work, and mentorship initiatives, aim to enhance economic stability and foster social cohesion. Evidence from studies in Uganda, Somalia, Lebanon, South Sudan, and Mozambique indicates a **large overall effect** on social cohesion outcomes, but effects on trust and acceptance of diversity remain **mixed**. Some interventions modestly increased cross-group interactions and reduced discrimination—especially among refugees—while others had no measurable impact or, in some cases, worsened perceptions among host communities.

Long summary

The intervention

The studies examine a range of employment and training initiatives designed to expand economic opportunities and promote social cohesion among diverse and often divided populations. Programs commonly combined vocational skills training, mentorship, cash-for-work, and small business support. In Uganda, microentrepreneurs received grants paired with mentorship to encourage collaboration between host and refugee populations. In Somalia, vocational and entrepreneurship programs targeted at-risk youth to improve livelihoods and promote inter-clan cooperation. In Lebanon and Jordan, vocational training courses in trades such as carpentry and food processing integrated refugees and host community members to foster inclusive participation. In South Sudan, a youth business grant program aimed to provide financial and skills-based support, although disruptions affected participation and expectations. In Mozambique, entrepreneurship and employment programs sought to reduce marginalization and promote non-violent forms of social engagement among young men..

How the intervention is expected to work

These interventions are designed to improve financial independence, labor market integration, and social cohesion by creating stable income opportunities and fostering trust across social groups. By promoting mentorship, inclusive hiring, and cross-community collaboration, programs are expected to enhance mutual understanding and reduce social tensions. Integrating economic support with dialogue-based or group activities may also build trust in within the community and in institutions and reduce incentives for participation in violent or exclusionary movements.

The evidence base

This cell includes 6 impact evaluation studies, 1 systematic review, and 1 qualitative paper.

The review is concerned with interventions, including training, for women's empowerment and gender equity in fragile settings.

The primary studies are conducted in the Middle East (Lebanon & Jordan) and Africa (Uganda, Somalia, South Sudan, and Mozambique). There is one ongoing primary study (quantitative) included which is set in Cote d'Ivoire, i.e., Marguerie (2018).

The review evidence

The review suggests that training programs that integrate social capital-building mechanisms contribute positively to trust and acceptance of diversity.

Evidence findings

Overall, the evidence indicates a **large positive effect** on measures of social cohesion, though effects on trust and acceptance of diversity vary considerably across settings. Programs that successfully integrated economic and social components such as mentorship or joint vocational activities tended to produce modest improvements in mutual understanding and cooperation. However, where implementation challenges, unmet expectations, or limited interaction between groups occurred, trust outcomes were neutral or negative. The findings suggest that while employment and training programs can meaningfully contribute to social cohesion, their impact on intergroup trust and diversity acceptance depends heavily on program design, duration, and local context.

The impact evaluation evidence

There are 6 impact evaluations, one of which is still ongoing. Five study summaries are thus provided here:

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 as medium confidence.

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.

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. There is some evidence that the training reduces 'outgroup' discrimination amongst refugees, but not the host population. The study is rated as medium confidence as it is non experimental and due to its attrition rate.

Muller et al. (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. There is no effect on trust overall, but it falls for women who expected the cash but did not receive it. The study is rated medium confidence because of moderate levels of attrition and incomplete description of the intervention

Vicente (2022) valuates the effectiveness of two interventions aimed at preventing Islamic radicalization and reducing anti-social behaviour in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. This include a religious sensitization program, led by Muslim leaders to counter extremist narratives, and an economic training program, providing entrepreneurship skills and employment guidance to raise the opportunity cost of engaging in violence. The study employs a randomized controlled trial

among young Muslim men, using a behavioural experiment (the Joy-of-Destruction game) and surveys to track changes on attitudes. Findings indicate that only the religious campaign was effective in reducing anti-social behaviour and increasing trust in government institutions, while the economic training had no significant behavioural impact and may increase perceptions of aggression from others. The study is rated low confidence as its attrition rate is not reported.

Confidence Assessment:

Overall low confidence, as individual studies range from low to medium in quality, and there is inconsistency in reported effect sizes.

Link to review summaries

Lwamba (2022)

All studies may be accessed via the EGM.

Other outcomes in the study:

Human Security / Economic Security

Human Security / Educational Security

Human Security / Food Security & Nutrition / Health Security

Violence & Atrocity Prevention / Social Norms on Violence

Community & State Governance / Government Performance

Human Security / Political Security