

Effect of training & job creation on food security and nutrition & health security

Training and job creation programs have a small effect on improving food security and health outcomes, mainly enhancing healthcare access but showing limited impact on food availability and psychosocial well-being.

Geographical region: Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Small effect ($g=0.036$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (3 studies with 6 effect sizes)

Short Summary

Training and job creation programs, including vocational training, cash-for-work, and agricultural skills initiatives, aim to improve food security and health outcomes by increasing household income and skills. Evidence indicates small positive effects on healthcare utilization, while effects on food availability and psychosocial well-being remain limited when interventions are implemented alone.

Long summary

The intervention

The interventions include asset transfer programs combined with agricultural training, vocational training linked to entrepreneurship, and public works employment schemes. Some also integrate nutrition education and social protection measures, such as cash transfers or food rations. These programs are designed to equip participants with skills for sustainable livelihoods, increase income, and improve access to health and nutrition resources..

How the intervention is expected to work

These programs improve food and health security through multiple pathways: increased household income allows better access to nutritious food and healthcare; vocational and agricultural training equips participants with skills to produce food or manage small businesses; public works programs provide immediate income support and infrastructure that supports long-term agricultural productivity. Nutrition education components encourage healthier dietary practices and improved childcare behaviors, complementing economic gains

The evidence base

The cell contains 4 studies: 1 systematic review and 3 impact evaluations.

The review examines the integration of psychosocial support with livelihood interventions in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCS). It assesses whether this combination improves both mental well-being and economic resilience.

The quantitative studies are set in Sierra Leone (1), South Sudan (1), and Uganda (1).

Evidence findings

Evidence shows **small effects** on food security and health security outcomes. In Sierra Leone, cash-for-work programs increased healthcare utilization, particularly among young boys. However, interventions had null effects on food availability and psychosocial well-being, suggesting that livelihood programs alone are insufficient to substantially improve these outcomes.

The review evidence

The evidence from the systematic reviews shows that livelihood programs alone do not necessarily lead to improved psychosocial well-being. When combined with economic support, they tend to have stronger and more sustained impacts on mental well-being.

The impact evaluation evidence

There are 3 impact evaluations. Three 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. Sub-components of household well-being index, which include an indicator on 'having food', did not display any significant change. The study is rated as medium confidence due to its attrition rate.

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 participate in the survey. Endline data were collected in 2017. There were very limited effects on behavioural outcomes, with a small reduction in crime and violence but an increase in cattle raiding, but none on overall psychological wellbeing, attitudes to risk, or migration. 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. Participation in the program led to greater utilization of health services, particularly for young male children. The study was rated as having low confidence because the author provided little or no description of the evaluation question.

Confidence Assessment

Overall low: The cell is rated low confidence due to the limited number of studies.

Link to review summaries

Kumar (2016)

All studies may be accessed via the EGM.

Other outcomes in the study:

Human security / Economic security

Social cohesion / Feelings of trust & Acceptance of diversity

Violence and atrocity prevention / Social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Social cohesion / Willingness to participate or help

Human security / Educational security