

Effect of training & job creation on government performance

Training and job creation interventions have a small effect on government performance, with some programs enhancing perceptions of governance.

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

Effect size: Small effect ($g=0.051$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (5 studies with 29 effect sizes)

Short Summary

Training and job creation programs, including vocational training and employment-for-peace initiatives, aim to improve economic stability and, in some cases, enhance governance perceptions. Evidence shows **small positive effects**: some programs modestly improved trust in government and perceptions of local institutions, while others had no measurable impact or even slight declines in confidence.

Long summary

The intervention

Interventions include vocational training, cash-for-work, small business support, and employment programs in fragile settings. Examples include ILO's Youth Employment Somalia (YES) and Youth for Change (Y4C), the INVEST vocational training program in Afghanistan, and large employment-for-peace programs in several African countries. These initiatives combine economic support with social inclusion strategies to promote stability and community engagement.

How the intervention is expected to work

By improving economic stability, these programs reduce grievances related to poverty and unemployment, which can undermine trust in governance. Social inclusion components, such as dialogue across communities, aim to enhance perceptions of government responsiveness. When perceived as government-supported, programs signal institutional effectiveness, while alternative economic opportunities reduce incentives for participation in violence, indirectly supporting governance stability.

The evidence base

This cell includes 6 quantitative studies set in Somalia (1 study), Afghanistan (2 studies), and Uganda (1 study). Another study is conducted a pseudo-meta-analysis using data from five African nations. Finally, there is one ongoing study included in this cell which is set in Central African Republic, i.e., Alik-Lagrange Arthur (2019).

Evidence findings

Evidence indicates a **small effect** on governance perceptions. INVEST in Afghanistan led to minor improvements in views of local government employment provision but did not affect political engagement among youth. YES and Y4C in Somalia reduced support for violence and improved perceptions of government transparency. Employment programs in African countries reduced fear of crime, though effects on trust in government were inconsistent.

Included studies

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 (2019) examines whether employment programs contribute to peace and stability in Africa by analyzing data from five countries: Burundi, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, and Uganda. Using a pseudo-meta-analysis and a difference-in-differences (DID) approach with matched samples, the study evaluates the relationship between employment programs and stability-related outcomes. Findings indicate that employment programs significantly reduce fears of being victimized by crime across all case-study countries. However, effects on other indicators are mixed—trust in government declines in some contexts, while satisfaction with government performance remains

largely unchanged. These results suggest that while employment interventions can enhance perceptions of safety, their broader impacts on governance and institutional trust are less consistent. The study calls for further research into the mechanisms driving these effects and highlights the need for targeted program designs that maximize positive stability outcomes while minimizing unintended consequences. The study is rated low due to little description of the intervention, outcomes, and evaluation questions.

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. There was no effect on young people's willingness to use violence for political or other cause. There was a small improvement in perception of local government, especially their ability to provide employment. However, increased confidence in local, informal institutions, including traditional leaders (shuras), civil society organizations and religious leaders did not have any effect on willingness to engage in political violence. The study is rated low confidence because of lack of information on power calculations.

Confidence assessment:

Overall low: The cell is rated low confidence due to the limited number of studies and inconsistent effects across settings.

Other outcomes in this study:

Violence and atrocity prevention / Social norms regarding violence and atrocities
Social cohesion / Feelings of trust & Acceptance of diversity
Social cohesion / Sense of belonging
Human security / Economic security
Human security / Physical security