

Effect of training & job creation on willingness to participate or help

Job training and employment programs have a small effect on individuals' willingness to participate or help, although some positive associations are observed with social connectedness across groups.

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

Effect: Small effect ($g=0.064$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (2 studies with 3 effect sizes)

Short Summary

This cell examines vocational training and employment initiatives, designed to improve economic opportunities while fostering engagement in productive and social activities. Studies from Liberia and Afghanistan show mixed results: in Liberia, no clear effect on willingness to help or broader civic participation was found, while in Afghanistan, positive effects were observed in participants' social interactions, particularly across tribal lines. Overall, these interventions yield a small effect on willingness to participate or help.

Long summary

The intervention

Two main interventions were assessed. In Liberia, the Action on Armed Violence (AoAV) agricultural training program targeted high-risk youth involved in illicit mining and logging. Participants received residential agricultural training, counseling, life skills classes, and farm inputs worth \$125. Of the 1,100 recruited, approximately half were randomly assigned to the training. In Afghanistan, vocational and technical training courses were offered through nine Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers. These programs aimed to provide participants with practical skills to improve employment prospects and economic self-reliance.

How the intervention is expected to work

These interventions are designed to increase willingness to participate in work and community life by enhancing skills, creating economic stability, and fostering engagement in productive activities. Vocational training improves employment opportunities, reduces reliance on informal or illicit work, and builds participants' sense of agency. Business grants and startup support allow individuals to engage in productive enterprises, while counseling and structured social activities strengthen social networks, potentially encouraging civic engagement. However, economic participation alone does not always translate into increased political or social involvement, especially in fragile contexts where other structural or social barriers exist.

The evidence base

There are 3 impact evaluation studies included in this cell. The study settings are: Afghanistan (1 study), Liberia (1 study), and Cote d'Ivoire [ongoing – Marguerie (2018)].

Evidence findings

Findings across studies, effects on willingness to participate or help are mixed but generally small. In Liberia, participation reduced engagement with armed recruiters, though no broader increases in civic participation were observed. In Afghanistan, programs improved social connectedness, particularly across tribal lines, reflecting limited positive impact on social engagement. Overall, the interventions show a small positive effect on willingness to participate or help.

Included studies

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. Participants were less likely than the control to have met with armed recruiters. The study is rated low confidence because of lack of information on power calculations.

Kurtz (2015) 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. There was some effect on social connectedness. Participants reported that they had more friends to turn to for help or advice (10.7 percentage points), as well as affecting participants' identifying as an Afghan above a tribe or religion (8.1 percentage points). INVEST also had a positive effect on participants' social interactions with people from other tribes, as well as a positive effect on a measure of discrimination. The study is rated low confidence because of lack of information on power calculations.

Confidence assessment

Overall low: Confidence in the findings is low due to the limited number of studies in the cell, all of which were rated as low confidence.

Other outcomes:

Violence and atrocity prevention / social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Human security / economic security

Human security / food security and nutrition & health security