

Effect of transitional or restorative justice & Justice system support and reform on Diplomatic relations & Peaceful dispute resolution.

Transitional and restorative justice reforms aimed at building trust, reconciliation, and accountability show **harmful effects** on boosting diplomatic relations and peaceful dispute resolution.

Geographic Location: Sub Saharan Africa, Global, Latin America & Caribbean

Effect: Harmful effect (g= -0.039)

Confidence in study findings: Low (3 studies with 30 effect sizes)

Short Summary:

This cell indicates that transitional and restorative justice interventions have a **small harmful effect** on diplomatic relations and peaceful dispute resolution. While programs such as Colombia's ComunPaz, Sierra Leone's Fambul Tok, and ICC interventions in peace negotiations foster dialogue, reconciliation, and institutional trust, they can also exacerbate tensions or fail to translate into durable cooperation. Psychological distress, contextual complexities, and implementation challenges limit the effectiveness of these interventions in strengthening both local and international reconciliation.

Long summary

The Intervention:

Interventions in this cell include efforts to convene victims and perpetrators of past or ongoing conflict to prevent further violence. This encompasses Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, community-led reconciliation initiatives, and justice system reforms. These interventions can involve formal acknowledgment of harms, apologies, reparations, and legal reforms to strengthen access to justice, human rights protections, and institutional accountability.

How the Intervention is expected to work:

The interventions aim to promote peace and reconciliation by fostering dialogue, addressing past injustices, and strengthening governance structures. Blair (2022) highlights Colombia's ComunPaz program, which integrates local community organizations with state resources to address historical grievances, build trust, and enhance dispute resolution. Cilliers (2018) shows that Sierra Leone's Fambul Tok program fosters forgiveness and reconciliation through community forums but requires psychological support to sustain long-term peace. Reilly (2019) examines ICC involvement in peace negotiations, showing that prosecutorial or oversight decisions can either facilitate or hinder dialogue between leaders, influencing the resolution of disputes and broader accountability. Overall, success depends on context, implementation quality, and supportive mechanisms such as mental health care.

The Evidence Base:

The cell contains 4 studies, 3 of which are impact evaluations utilising experimental design to test their outcomes and finally 1 qualitative study (Muke 2016) which is rated low confidence. There are two RCTs, and 1 observational study using a quasi-experimental design.

The primary studies are from Colombia (1 study), Sierra Leone (1 study), Uganda (1 study) and Rwanda (1 study).

Evidence findings

The studies indicate that transitional and restorative justice mechanisms, while intended to enhance trust, dialogue, and accountability, have a harmful effect on diplomatic relations and peaceful dispute resolution. Although community reconciliation programs and international justice interventions can improve institutional trust and promote dialogue, they may also trigger psychological distress, reinforce social tensions, or fail to achieve durable cooperation between communities and state actors.

Included Studies

Blair (2022): The ComunPaz program in Colombia exemplifies the integration of transitional or restorative justice with diplomatic relations in post-conflict settings. The initiative sought to strengthen local governance and collaboration between state institutions and community-based organizations, such as Juntas de Acción Comunal (JACs), to address historical grievances and prevent future violence. Through dialogue between state actors and communal leaders, the program facilitated acknowledgment of past injustices, laying a foundation for communal healing. By enhancing dispute resolution mechanisms and integrating community practices with state resources, ComunPaz aimed to improve the rule of law and strengthen legal protections for individuals in former conflict areas. Additionally, the program emphasized the importance of diplomatic relations by fostering dialogue and reducing mistrust between state authorities and local communities. Efforts to educate local leaders and police on their roles in dispute resolution empowered communities to address conflicts peacefully, reducing violence and fostering sustainable governance. Capacity-building measures further reinforced these efforts, ensuring disputes could be managed internally without reliance on external armed groups. By creating inclusive mechanisms for conflict resolution and improving trust in local governance, the program contributed to a more stable and equitable post-conflict landscape. This study is rated low confidence due to no mention of power calculation.

Cilliers (2018): The evaluation of the Fambul Tok reconciliation program in Sierra Leone highlights its impact on transitional justice, restorative justice, and diplomatic relations. By creating forums where victims could share their experiences and perpetrators could confess and seek forgiveness, the program facilitated dialogue essential for community healing and reconciliation. This process fostered increased forgiveness and trust among participants, though it also reopened psychological wounds, underscoring the need for thoughtful implementation to mitigate retraumatization. The program's emphasis on community participation and acknowledgment of grievances paved the way for potential reforms in the justice system, enhancing access to dispute resolution and raising awareness of human rights. At the diplomatic level, Fambul Tok demonstrated how local reconciliation efforts can contribute to broader peacebuilding by reducing tensions and fostering collaboration among state and non-state actors. Community forums improved participation in governance structures and highlighted

the importance of capacity building to address sensitive issues effectively. While the program strengthened social capital and reconciliation, it also revealed the necessity of integrating psychological support to ensure sustainable peace. This study is rated high confidence.

Reilly (2019): This study explores the impact of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on civil war peace negotiations, particularly on how the ICC's involvement affects diplomatic relations and peaceful dispute resolution. Restorative justice mechanisms, such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs), are designed to foster dialogue between victims and perpetrators, promoting the acknowledgment of past wrongs and reconciliation. These processes often lead to formal apologies and reparations, which are essential for healing in post-conflict societies. Additionally, restorative justice initiatives typically involve reforms to improve access to justice and integrate human rights into legal frameworks, contributing to a more stable legal culture. Such justice systems also play a significant role in diplomacy, as countries engaged in transitional justice often strengthen their international relations and improve their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. Reilly's study highlights this dynamic through three case studies. In Uganda, the ICC's involvement was perceived as politically manipulated by the government, which undermined peace negotiations and prolonged the conflict. In contrast, the ICC's oversight in Colombia helped facilitate peace talks and ensure accountability, contributing to the successful 2016 peace agreement. In Sri Lanka, the ICC's non-prosecutorial role allowed for a ceasefire agreement but did not result in a comprehensive peace deal. Reilly also emphasizes that the ICC's role influences leaders' "exit options," suggesting that when leaders view the ICC as an overseer rather than a strict prosecutor, they are more likely to engage in negotiations, highlighting the ICC's potential to either facilitate or hinder diplomatic relations. The study is rated as medium confidence due to partial description of intervention and non-experimental design.

Confidence Assessment:

Overall Low: The overall confidence is low due to the limited number of studies and the low confidence rating of included studies.

Other outcomes within the study:

Violence and atrocity prevention / Nature and scale of violence or atrocities

Violence and atrocity prevention / Social norms regarding violence and atrocities