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CAN EMPLOYMENT REDUCE LAWLESSNESS AND REBELLION? A FIELD
EXPERIMENT WITH HIGH-RISK MEN IN A FRAGILE STATE

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Can Employment Reduce Lawlessness and Rebellion? A Field Experiment with High-Risk Men in a Fragile State

States and aid agencies use employment programs to rehabilitate high-risk men in the belief that peaceful work opportunities will deter them from crime and violence. Rigorous evidence is rare. We experimentally evaluate a program of agricultural training, capital inputs, and counseling for Liberian ex-fighters who were illegally mining or occupying rubber plantations. 14 months after the program ended, men who accepted the program offer increased their farm employment and profits, and shifted work hours away from illicit activities. Men also reduced interest in mercenary work in a nearby war. Finally, some men did not receive their

capital inputs but expected a future cash transfer instead, and they reduced illicit and mercenary activities most of all. The evidence suggests that illicit and mercenary labor supply responds to small changes in returns to peaceful work, especially future and ongoing incentives. But the impacts of training alone, without capital, appear to be low.

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