

Evidence from Randomized Evaluations of Peacebuilding in Liberia: Policy Report 2011.2

Can we Teach Peace and Conflict Resolution?:
Results from a randomized evaluation of the
Community Empowerment Program (CEP) in
Liberia: A Program to Build Peace, Human Rights,
and Civic Participation

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Executive Summary

How can new democracies and societies emerging from conflict encourage tolerance and dialogue, strengthen conflict resolution systems, and increase understanding of human rights?

Governments and NGOs commonly try to “teach” civic values, conflict resolution, and democratic norms through widespread dialogue, education and information campaigns. But do these dialogue and education programs work as intended? Can education campaigns actually change norms and behaviors and, if so, how?

Dialogue and education campaigns are at the core of Liberia’s present peacebuilding strategy. Many see the absence of reconciliation and the lack of equitable mechanisms for resolving local conflicts as root causes of past and future instability.

To design a response, policymakers need answers to crucial questions:

- Will dialogue and education work as intended?
- Could they backfire, and instigate or entrench conflict?
- Are local bodies equipped to minimize and resolve conflict effectively and non-violently?
- And can traditional institutions manage this difficult balance between traditional practices and human rights, especially the rights of women, youth, and minorities?

To help answer these questions, IPA and Yale University researchers studied one of Liberia’s largest peacebuilding programs—the Community Empowerment Program—for answers. The CEP was an intensive community education campaign that focused on civic education, human rights, and community collective action. Above all, the program attempted to impart knowledge and skills to foster dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution. From early 2009 to late 2010, UNHCR and JPC implemented the program in 67 conflict-prone communities in three Liberian counties, reaching more than 9,000 individuals.

IPA performed a two-year impact evaluation of the program using a randomized controlled trial, comparing trends in attitudes, participation, and conflict in these 67 communities to more than 170 control communities. We combined the quantitative study with detailed qualitative research in more than 20 communities. This report summarizes impacts and lessons learned after two years of program implementation.

Our aim, however, is not simply to assess the successes and challenges of one program, but to suggest ways to improve justice and reconciliation moving forward in Liberia, and especially to caution against risky approaches to community-driven justice.

Findings

IPA compared program to control communities, and make three major observations.

First, looking at civic education and collective action, we observe:

- Very small increases in community participation and empowerment among individuals who attended the program, particularly for previously “troublesome individuals”; and
- Little evidence of impacts on political participation, program-specific “knowledge,” or perceptions of community leadership.

Second, we detect moderate shifts towards respect for equity and human rights, including:

- Small to moderate increases in “liberal attitudes” among leaders and program attendees; and
- Few spillover effects to other community members.

Third, we measure the most striking effects on conflict and its resolution, including:

- Increases in non-violent inter-personal and inter-group disputes;
- Suggestive evidence of a decrease in violent disputes;
- Increasing levels of land conflict since the program, though also suggestions of lower rates of violence; and
- Increased rates of dispute resolution, and of satisfaction with those resolutions, in trained communities.

In summary, we see different impacts in different domains: little impact on specific measures of civic participation and community cohesion; modest increases in respect for human rights and equality; and large impacts on conflict and conflict resolution though not always in expected ways).

Conclusions

Overall, the evidence suggests that the education campaign stimulated dialogue and provided some skills and knowledge for non-retributive dispute resolution. This suggests to us that NGOs and governments indeed have the potential to shift norms and paradigms of conflict, especially when the formal rule of law and customary governance are weak.

We think that several aspects of the program were crucial in achieving these results:

- The intensity of the program (engaging people for weeks rather than hours)
- The reach of the program (targeting a large proportion of community members)
- An emphasis on safe and non-violent discourse
- Concurrent programs that also emphasize alternative dispute resolution as a way of managing conflicts

Given the increased dialogue about conflict and the introduction of alternative methods of dispute resolution, increased prevalence of conflict may be a logical result of the program. But this elevated conflict highlights the risks facing future reconciliation programs:

- The program may not have adequately considered the ways that the training would influence interpersonal relationships and shape patterns of conflict
- Certain aspects of the program, such as the lessons that focus on youth rights and empowerment, appear to inflame existing tensions between youth and elders
- Dialogue also brings to the fore inter-group tensions and disputes

Efforts to stimulate dialogue need not lead to reconciliation or a decrease in violent conflicts in all cases, especially where disputes are sensitive or social cleavages are deep. The CEP promoted safe and structured dialogue, and this may account for the rise in non-violent disputes.



Some of the key lessons from this study

- **“Changing political cultures” and “balancing traditional systems with human rights” are easy to say and hard to do.**
- It is very difficult to change entrenched attitudes and participation through information and education alone. Without any fundamental change in incentives or institutions, these campaigns may have marginal effects.
- **It appears to be strikingly easy, however, to stimulate contentious dialogue and activate latent conflicts. “Peace education” and dialogue can be quite risky if not done carefully.**
- Admitting that attitudes are hard to change, and that traditional systems and human rights are sometimes directly in conflict, is a first and important step to careful program design and implementation.
- Given the risks and the difficulty of change, achieving results on a large scale is bound to be quite expensive. Policy-makers will want to carefully weigh whether these education and information campaigns are really the best use of scarce security and justice resources in Liberia.

Recommendations and lessons for future reconciliation and dialogue programming in Liberia

1. The emphasis on constructive skills for dispute resolution and the philosophy of non-violent, non-punitive, non-retributive solutions seems to have been internalized by communities.
2. It may not be enough to educate individuals, even leaders, in dialogue and dispute resolution. Sustained engagement with the community to create generalized knowledge is important as well.
3. Generalized, intensive engagement is expensive and time-consuming, and will need to be targeted to the communities and individuals with the most need and the most potential to benefit.
 - A few towns with widely recognized conflicts are over-programmed by diverse, inconsistent and often non-intensive programs. A more consistent, intensive approach may be more useful in these areas, if they are to continue to be (over)served.
 - Promising candidates include underserved communities (i.e. those away from truck roads) and underrepresented people in the over-served communities, who rarely benefit from typical NGO interventions that focus heavily on community leaders.
4. If dialogue and reconciliation programs cannot be done smartly and safely then we question whether such interventions should be attempted at all.
5. Finding cost-effective means to promulgate these skills will be crucial. Intensive facilitation by expert trainers may only be sustainable for high-risk communities. Options for expanding include: (a) training of volunteer trainers and facilitators; (b) radio programming and education; and (c) collaboration with churches, mosques, schools and other existing community institutions.
6. Close monitoring and evaluation of success, and of different approaches, is needed to learn and improve the approach. We recommend continued experimentation with intensity, reach, curriculum, out-of-classroom facilitation, economic components, and other program aspects.

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Photography by Glenna Gordon.



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Reintegrating and Employing High Risk Youth in Liberia: Lessons from a randomized evaluation of a Landmine Action agricultural training program for ex-combatants. Christopher Blattman, and Jeannie Annan (2011).

Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in Liberia (Part 1): Results from a Longitudinal Study. Robert Blair, Christopher Blattman, and Alexandra Hartman (2011).

Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in Liberia (Part 2): Prospects for Conflict Forecasting and Early Warning. Robert Blair, Christopher Blattman, and Alexandra Hartman (2012).

What is a randomized evaluation?

A Randomized Evaluation (also known as a randomized controlled trial) is a type of impact evaluation that uses random assignment to allocate resources, run programs, or apply policies as part of the study design. Like all *impact evaluations*, the main purpose of randomized evaluations is to determine whether a program has an impact, and more specifically, to quantify *how large* that impact is.

Impact evaluations measure program effectiveness typically by comparing outcomes of those (individuals, communities, schools, etc) who received the program against those who did not. There are many methods of doing this. But randomized evaluations are generally considered the most rigorous and, all else equal, produce the most accurate (i.e. unbiased) results.

Why randomize?

IPA uses randomized evaluations to measure impact because they provide the most credible and reliable way to learn what works and what does not. Randomized evaluations use the same methods frequently used in high quality medical research and rely on the random assignment of a program or policy to measure its impact on those that received the program compared to those who did not.

How do randomized evaluations work?

In the simplest kind of study, the group we are looking at is divided randomly in two. One group receives the benefits of a program or intervention, and the other does not. We are basically flipping a coin for each person to decide

Can we Teach Peace and Conflict Resolution?: Results from a randomized evaluation of the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) in Liberia: A Program to Build Peace, Human Rights, and Civic Participation

1 Introduction

To resolve the roots of conflict and build a foundation for peace in Liberia, the Government of Liberia, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have each generated recommendations to promote national reconciliation and strengthen the rule of law (1). All emphasize a few common objectives:

- Foster a new political culture of tolerance and respect
- Encourage dialogue between community members and between community members and community leaders
- Strengthen local and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms
- Increase awareness of and adherence to human and political rights

To reach these ambitious goals, each of these institutions also emphasizes a shared set of programs: civic education and information campaigns to foster knowledge of human rights and trainings to teach mediation and non-violent dispute resolution in conflict-prone communities.

Liberia is not unique in this regard. In societies emerging from war, government and civil society often attempt to change the political culture, civic values, and practices of conflict resolution at the local level. This raises a first key question for policymakers in Liberian and other war-torn countries: *Do these civic and peace education campaigns actually work? If so, how?*

Policymakers must also strike a balance between local, traditional norms and the principles of human rights that underlie international law. In post-conflict and low-capacity states like Liberia, community elders and informal justice systems manage most disputes. Policymakers typically realize they need to work with and strengthen these local actors. Yet these traditional mechanisms for law and order sometimes conflict directly with the stated goals of the formal justice system.

Policymakers are thus faced with a second key question: *How to balance the “traditional” and the “progressive” to protect rights, resolve conflicts, and prevent violence?*

For answers, this report looks at one recent program in Liberia—the “Community Empowerment Program”, implemented in 2009 and 2010 by UNHCR and Liberia’s Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) in dozens of rural communities. We conduct a rigorous randomized evaluation combined with in-depth qualitative research to evaluate the impacts of the program and assess implications for future peacebuilding efforts in the region.

1. For examples of these goals and the recommended actions, see for example: Liberia Peacebuilding Office (2011), “Review of progress in the implementation of the Statement of Mutual Commitments on Peacebuilding in Liberia: First progress report,” 31 August 2011; Peacebuilding Commission (2011) “Liberia Configuration Report of the PBC Delegation’s visit to Liberia, 12-17 June 2011”; and Republic of Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2009) “Volume II: Consolidated Final Report”. Likewise, the International Crisis Group recently called for a political transformation leading to the emergence of a new generation of leaders at local and national levels, removed from the culture of violence and corruption, including training and educational opportunities to acquire governance skills. (International Crisis Group (2011). Liberia: How Sustainable is the Recovery? Africa Report 177.)

2. The background to the development of the CEP can be found in the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies “Peace Education Program: Facilitators’ Manual for Community Workshops” Handbook.

3. Throughout this report, we use the words ‘conflict’ and ‘dispute’ interchangeably to refer to a range of conflicts and disputes, including violent and non-violent crime, petty and domestic disputes, land disputes and conflicts, ethnic conflicts and political conflicts.

4. This estimate did not take into account a major logistical expense – vehicle fuel and maintenance. Given Liberia’s lack of infrastructure, these increase the per person cost of the program substantially. However, outside these costs, the next major expense in the program budget goes toward providing food during the workshops. In the spirit of the training, the two daily meals provided by the workshops are responsibility of the community (who are given a cash grant to cook during the training).

2 The Community Empowerment Program (CEP)

The CEP was designed under the assumption that communities at risk of, or affected by, violent conflict could benefit from education on dispute resolution, human rights, and “skills for constructive living” (2). In order to affect changes in attitudes and behavior, interactive classroom training sessions covered topics including self-awareness, communication, stereotypes, emotional honesty, empathy, co-operation, assertiveness, problem solving, alternative dispute resolution and human rights. In addition, the last several days of the program focused on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the political structure of the Liberian government. The CEP attempted to provide the building blocks for local-level dialogue, reconciliation and development.

UNHCR and JPC implemented the CEP program in 67 villages and town quarters across Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties. The program mobilized and trained community members in order to achieve three main goals:

1. Educate people on their rights, and to respect the rights of others.
 - a. While power and privilege varies from community to community, youth, women and minorities are typically under-represented in local government and may be treated inequitably in decision-making, dispute resolution and other aspects of community life. The program is designed to encourage respect for—and participation by—these marginalized groups.
 - b. In addition, the program emphasized rights and responsibilities of citizenship and provided general information on the Liberian political system.
2. Encourage community collective action towards shared goals.
 - a. Most communities have unmet needs, including poor infrastructure, agricultural pests, and limited access to healthcare and education, among others. The program sought to develop skills for cooperation among community members in meeting these needs.
3. Foster non-violent dialogue and conflict resolution.
 - a. Trainers taught conflict mediation and prevention skills and encouraged alternative dispute resolution. Resolutions are supposed to be collaborative, mutually beneficial, and non-punitive.
 - b. The training also addressed inter-group conflicts or grievances (such as inter-group marriages, or resentment over disruptive religious ceremonies) and encouraged communities to seek mutually agreeable solutions (3).
 - c. Training graduates are encouraged to use their skills to actively prevent and mediate conflicts, on their own or through membership in community peace groups and committees.
 - d. The goal of the workshop is not to eradicate or even necessarily reduce conflict in the program communities, but rather to shift norms of conflict resolution so that existing and future disputes are resolved non-violently with a smaller chance of resurfacing in the future.

“Peace or palava hut training” is commonplace in Liberia—nearly a majority of community members had attended some form of peace training in the past. This program, however, is notable for its intensity and reach. Rather than focus on leaders alone, or on short messaging, meetings or seminars, the program targeted a larger proportion of the community over a longer period of time than the average approach.

In each community, roughly 10% of adults participated in eight-days of workshops led by a professional facilitator, typically held over the course of several weeks. When possible, facilitators conducted workshops in the most common language spoken in the community with translation provided for other language groups. Each workshop included 20 to 30 community members, both men and women, and multiple workshops were held in most communities in order to reach the 10% coverage target. often over several months. We estimate that more than 9,000 persons were trained.

The United Nations' Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in Liberia funded the program at a total cost of approximately \$1.2 million—approximately \$16,000 per community, or \$100 to \$150 per trained person (4).

3 The Evaluation

Can training programs change people’s knowledge, attitudes and behaviors on issues such as human rights, democratic participation, conflict and conflict resolution? If so, how much change can these programs affect, and how and why are they successful? If citizens are so malleable, should we expect the effects of training programs to persist?

To answer these questions, Yale University researchers and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) worked with UNHCR and JPC to rigorously evaluate the CEP using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study is designed to provide lessons not just for the CEP, but also for civic and peace education campaigns in Liberia and other post-conflict settings.

Qualitative Research

Three Liberian staff and one of the lead researchers did regular and systematic qualitative interviews in 8 communities over time (before, after and during the workshop) and conducted extensive interviews in 6 other communities. Lead researchers participated in more informal interviews in roughly 12 additional communities before and during the program.

The aim of the formal qualitative work was to understand the challenges facing communities, observe how the program worked, and try to assess reactions and changes to the program over time. IPA conducted 104 interviews between April 2009 and December 2010, totaling around 80 hours of recorded material that is now in the process of being transcribed, organized and analyzed. In addition, all staff collected field notes and observations.

As part of a larger research program, we are also working independently and with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Liberia’s Land Commission to study patterns of land conflict in rural communities across Liberia. This work informs our analysis as well.

Quantitative Research

The core of the study, however, was a randomized controlled trial, a survey-based quantitative impact evaluation of **the program. Demand for the training program outstripped available funding, and so “treated” communities were randomly selected from a larger pool of eligible towns and villages, creating random treatment and control groups for comparison (5).** We surveyed and compared outcomes in the treatment and comparison communities before and after the program

We collected pre-program and post-program data in all communities, with three main surveys:

- i. A survey of 20 randomly-selected “community members” (newly selected in each round)
- ii. A survey of four “community leaders”, typically a town chief, a female leader, a youth leader, and a minority leader
- iii. A survey of three people identified by local chiefs as potential CEP participants if the village were selected into the program, or “potential trainees,” typically an elder, an informal community leader, and a “troublesome” person in each community.

We can measure impacts at four levels:

1. The impact of attending the program on the three potential trainees
2. The impact of attending the program on random community members
3. The impact on the community of having the program take place in their community
4. The impact of attending the program on leaders

5. Local stakeholders (including government officials and customary leaders) identified 247 communities that would benefit from hosting the PEACE trainings. A lottery determined 116 “treatment” communities that would receive the program, ensuring that on average these treatment communities were not different from the “control” group not selected for the program. In the end, only 75 of the 116 were treated, and only 68 could be treated before the endline survey was conducted. But these 68 are a random subset of the 116, and thus our final number of treated communities is 68 and control communities are 179.

4 Starting Levels of Conflict and Cooperation

A second IPA report, on the *Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in Liberia*, describes the levels, trends, and correlates of conflict and cooperation in our study communities. It builds on a host of new, nationally representative studies of peace and conflict in Liberia (6). We summarize some key facts, however, to help set the scene for our assessment of CEP impacts and recommendations for future education campaigns.

The UNHCR and the JPC sought to target towns and villages where the Liberian civil war displaced a high proportion of **the population in addition to “conflict prone” communities, as identified by county officials and elders. Our pre-program data collection suggests that while these communities reported relatively high levels of conflict, community members also were already politically active and expressed open attitudes towards “others” even before the start of the program.** The core program ideas of human rights and collective action were not new.

Nevertheless, there are certainly moderate levels of tension and conflict in these communities. Data collection prior to the start of the program found that:

- At least 17% perceived other tribes in their town to be dirty or violent (i.e. ethnic bias)
- 22% felt they were verbally abused or insulted in their community
- 15% reported a theft or burglary in the past year (e.g., 2008)
- 28% reported personal involvement in a land conflict
- 10% of the communities reported an episode of inter-tribal violence in the past year
- 10% of the communities reported an incident of witchcraft

At the same time, there were signs of community cooperation and peaceful dispute resolution before the program began:

- 41% of people surveyed said they were already a member of a peace group or council and 28% reported exposure to some form of **“peace training” in the past**
- Large majorities expressed support for female or minority leadership in their community
- Just 19% said they felt that leaders were corrupt in their community
- 95% said they had access to justice in the event of a crime or conflict
- 94% said that town people could come together to work on projects or get things done when needed

Are the evaluated communities especially conflict-prone? Our qualitative observation, and comparisons to levels of conflict reported in the 2011 Berkeley Human Rights Center report, suggest that the target communities are indeed conflicted, but do not stand out as especially more conflict-prone than most rural communities in Liberia. In some ways this is an advantage, in that the results are probably somewhat representative of the potential impact of the program in the average Liberian town or village.

While rigorous, note that the evaluation method relies on people’s reports of their own beliefs and actions (7). Despite the **“objectivity” of our empirical methods, the results are necessarily prone to subjectivity. In addition, certain effects of the training may be difficult if not impossible to measure with survey questions, or may not emerge until years after**

6. For national attitudes and levels of conflict and dispute resolution see Patrick Vinck, Phuong Pham, and Tino Kreutzer, "Talking Peace: A Population-Based Survey on Attitudes About Security, Dispute Resolution, and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Liberia," (Berkeley: UC Berkeley Human Rights Center, 2011). For media analysis of armed violence see Landmine Action, "Media analysis on armed violence in Liberia, 2008-2011," (Monrovia, Liberia: Landmine Action / Action On Armed Violence, 2011). For an analysis of the local-level impacts of UNMIL's operations see Eric Mvukiyehe and Cyrus Samii, "Quantitative Impact Evaluation of the United Nations Mission in Liberia: Final Report," (2010). For political and institutional analysis of insecurity in Liberia see International Crisis Group, "Liberia: How Sustainable is the Recovery?," in *Africa Report 177* (2011).

7. If misreporting is similar in treatment and control communities, and relatively idiosyncratic, then it will effectively cancel out. If people systematically underreport behaviors, however, we will tend to underestimate effects. If treatment subjects misreport more than control subjects, however, then our estimated impacts will confuse measurement error caused by treatment with actual change.

5 Implementation Successes and Challenges

The program had several strengths.

- Intensity and reach. Many education and information campaigns can be brief or shallow—for instance, a single meeting or day-long workshop, targeting leaders alone or a small proportion of community members. While possibly impactful, it is difficult to imagine that such interventions could change generalized knowledge and beliefs, and hence norms or behavior. The CEP is unusually intensive and broad in comparison. It attempted to reach 10% of adults in each community, and engaged them for eight days of meetings, usually over several weeks, in relatively small groups.

To complete so many workshops with so many groups, facilitators worked in each community for many weeks, developing a deep familiarity and rapport with the community. Facilitators and program management worked hard to meet the program targets in isolated and sometimes difficult conditions. The long duration of the workshops and the high proportion of the population reached meant that the program was well-known and, in principle, had the potential to change community-wide behaviors and norms (unlike smaller and more targeted training programs, like those for leaders alone).

- Out-of-classroom engagement. Facilitators often spent weeks, and in some cases months, living in the program communities. Our qualitative research suggests that facilitators formed strong bonds with their hosts and attained **positions of trust and esteem in the community. Also important were the “after-hours” interactions between facilitators and community members, which included advising on individual conflicts and resolutions, and sometimes direct involvement in interpersonal or intergroup disputes.**
- Consistency. Finally, our observations suggest that the formal curriculum was adhered to well. Interviews with facilitators suggest that they believed in the program, had a good understanding of its content, and were eager to introduce the ideas to others. Their positive attitude was essential to running successful and engaging workshops. Senior trainers provided ongoing supervision and field support in the form of additional facilitator workshops and one-on-one guidance.

We also noted several challenges in design and implementation:

- Theory and feasibility of individual and community change. While CEP is more intensive than most civic and peace education campaigns, it is not clear that any degree of workshop instruction, no matter how participatory, can lead to lasting changes in ideas and behaviors. What is needed is a theory of change that is both explicit and well-evidenced, or at least well-reasoned. Governments and NGOs commonly pursue trainings and information campaigns under the assumption that knowledge and beliefs are the binding constraint to change, and that provision of information or facilitation by example can loosen that constraint. Piloting and evaluating large and expensive programs is critical to test the validity of these assumptions.
- Previous exposure to civic education and conflict resolution programming. According to our pre-program data, 41% of community members stated they were already a member of a peace group or council prior to the start of **the program, and 28% reported that they were exposed to a previous “peace” training of some form. While the CEP appears to have been substantially more intensive (in length and in population coverage), many leaders and community members had received short trainings before, which could lessen the impact of the CEP. More targeting of underserved communities might have increased impact and avoided this difficulty.**
- Sensitive and conflict-inducing topics. Discussion of community conflicts and rights aroused emotional reactions, aired old grievances and challenged the community status quo. This is an inherent part of the training, and is recognized by organizers. While conflicts are not treated as negative per se, some facilitators managed these conflicts better than others, and some challenges are worth noting:
 - a. Airing old grievances can open old wounds. If the training provides the skills and impetus to heal these wounds, then we can expect peacefulness to improve. One motive for the evaluation was to assess whether or not eight-day workshops—even when they reach so many community members over such a lengthy period of time—can facilitate that healing.

- b. Respecting the rights of women, minorities or youth often means fewer privileges for elders, males or majority groups. This can be threatening to these groups and has the potential to increase conflict in the short run, if not the long run.
- c. Setting up peace committees and encouraging alternative dispute resolution can create competing institutions for mediating conflicts. A second rationale for the evaluation was to assess whether competing institutions, especially ones that included more marginalized groups, would alleviate or exacerbate existing patterns of conflict and conflict escalation.
- Omitted development component. **The CEP initially called for the creation of “opportunity plans” to address community-wide problems, with the potential of financial support through Liberia’s nation-wide Poverty Reduction Strategy.** Due to financial and other constraints, support from the PRS was not available and so the opportunity plans were discontinued early in the program. From an evaluation perspective, this means that the intervention is much more uniform and simple, making it easier to capture the impacts of the educational component alone. Nonetheless, the program leaders viewed the educational and economic components as complementary, and so the civic and conflict impacts envisioned might be lower than expected.
- Omitted training-of-trainers component. The CEP also called for further training of the most talented trainees and leaders in target communities, so they could (on a volunteer basis) run workshops and actively spread the skills and messages imparted by the workshops. Due to funding constraints and inefficiencies, four introductory facilitator trainings were held, but subsequently discontinued.
- Program interruptions. During the two years of program implementation, the CEP suffered from problems of financial management, procurement, the distribution of food in conjunction with workshop activities, and access to remote and difficult-to-reach communities. As a result, there were periods of several months where workshops did not take place and field staff went unpaid.
 - a. The largest disruption in programming took place in the summer of 2010 as a result of a renegotiation of the agreement between UNHCR and JPC.
 - b. From an evaluation perspective, this led to a difficult trade-off: perform the post-program survey as scheduled, two years after the start of the program and before the effects of the earliest CEP trainings began to **dissipate, but at the cost of evaluating the most recently trained communities “too soon”.** IPA decided on a middle ground, and evaluated communities 1 to 22 months after “treatment”.
 - c. **The consequence, however, is potentially lower impacts in the most recently “treated” communities.** Fortunately, we randomized the order so that communities received the training in batches. Thus we can look at average treatment effects in the whole sample and in those treated in the first half of the batches, where we might expect impacts to be larger.
- Less than two-thirds of communities received the CEP. Perhaps most important, delays and financial difficulties meant that UNHCR and JPC treated less than 60% of the communities assigned to treatment.
 - a. Again, fortunately for the evaluation, we were able to randomly choose the communities that were assigned but not treated, and so the estimated impacts are not biased. But the lower proportion of treated communities means that our precision suffered, making it more difficult to detect statistically significant treatment effects.



6 Program Impacts

6.1 Impacts on community and political participation

We see positive but small and relatively imprecise impacts on political and community participation among trainees and community members. Only in two areas do we see a substantial and precise impact of the CEP. One is that **trainees, particularly the “troublesome” individuals, feel slightly more empowered to speak up to community leaders.** The second is increased peace group membership, most likely because peace committee formation was an explicit part of the program. Otherwise we see only weak evidence of an increase in group membership and leadership, and no change in contribution to the community.

Community participation

One objective of the CEP is to increase community cohesion and participation.

- Workshop units focused on communication, active problem solving, citizenship, and civic rights and responsibilities.
- Lessons designed to promote active engagement in community life sought to create an open forum for discussion among community members and leaders and to provide opportunities for experiential learning through dramas.

Figures 1a and 1b display the treatment impacts as a percentage relative to the averages in the control group, one for **the “potential trainees” we identified in advance, and one for other (random) community members who attended the program.** The figure can be read as follows:

- **Consider the “potential trainees” in the control group**—those who were identified to be included in the program, but did not receive the training because their village was not selected for the CEP. At endline, nearly 77 percent of these control trainees were already a member of a peace committee or group of some sort.
- Meanwhile, the potential trainees in villages selected for the CEP are 17 percentage points more likely to be a member of a peace group—a 22% increase relative to the control group average. This is the 22% increase displayed with the black diamond in Figure 1a (b).
- The dotted line provides the 95% confidence interval, a measure of statistical significance (see Appendix). The × indicates the treatment effect for the first half of treated communities (those that have typically received the program more than one year before the evaluation).

In addition to peace groups we ask whether respondents made contributions to community public goods (such as wells or town development projects), participated in community work, or offered financial help to families in need. Looking at treated communities, we do not see a significant increase in public goods contributions among potential trainees, community members who attended the program, or the community at large. The effect is both small and statistically not significant.

We also ask about participation in a variety of groups, from farming to savings to sports. We do see a modest increase, of about 10%, in group participation among the potential trainees, though this impact is only weakly significant. Moreover, the impact is not echoed among other community members who attended the program, or in the community at large.

Finally, we look at leadership in groups. Potential trainees are not more likely to be leaders in their groups. We do see a sizable increase among other attending community members—22%—but this is only weakly significant.

Political Engagement

To measure political participation, we asked respondents whether they planned to vote in the 2011 election and if they were affiliated with any political party. Figure 2 shows impacts for potential trainees only. Both treated and control overwhelmingly reported that they planned to vote—more than 97% of trainees and 95% of community members. More than two-thirds of respondents reported that they have a political party affiliation. We do not see a significant

8. Each estimate also has a confidence interval. An appendix to this document provides a statistical primer. Briefly, we regard an impact as **“strong” or “statistically significant” if this confidence interval does not include zero. In general, any impact that is small and close to zero** (e.g. less than 10%) and whose confidence interval includes zero or large negative values is not considered a robust impact of the program.

Figure 1a: Impacts on community participation --"Potential trainees"
 Program Impact as a % of control group average

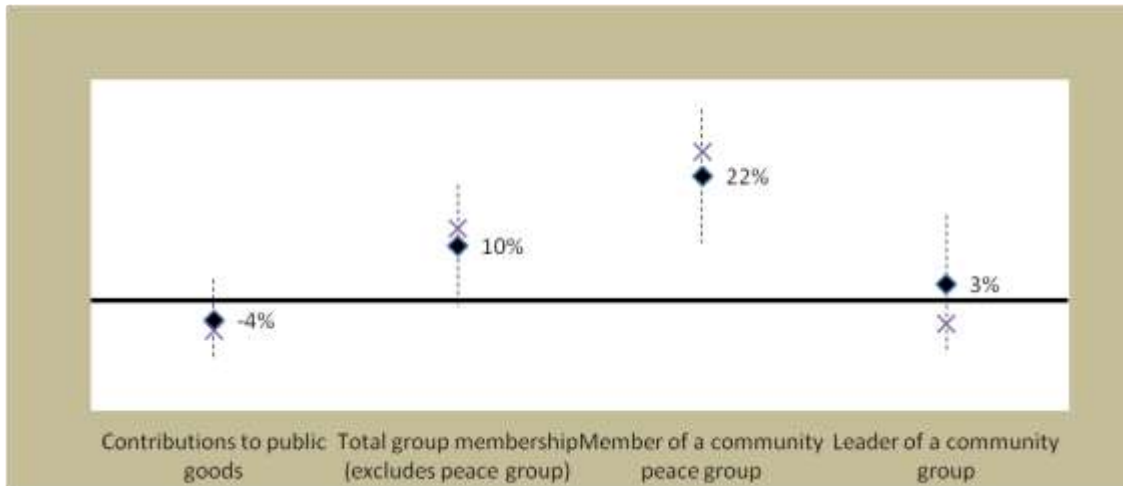


Figure 1b: Impacts on community participation --Other attending community members
 Program Impact as a % of the control group average

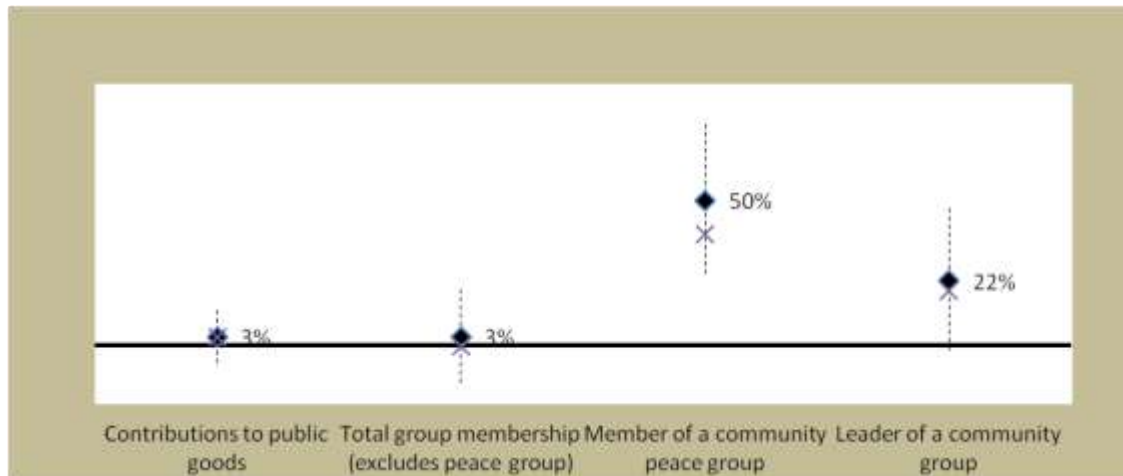
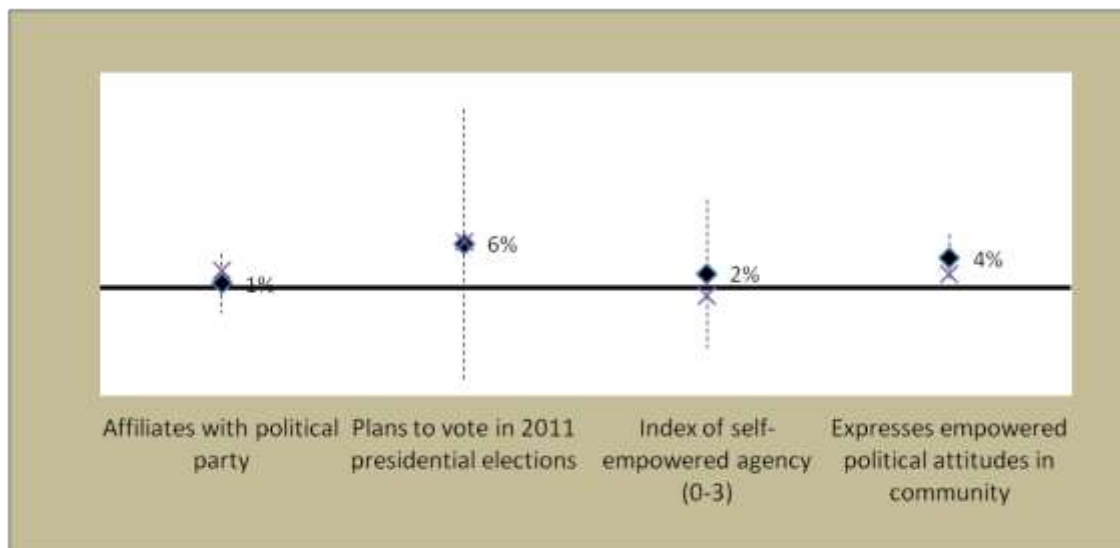


Figure 2: Impact on politics and empowerment—"Potential trainees"
 Program Impact as a % of the control group average



STATISTICS PRIMER

We set out to write a report that is free of excessive technical jargon. Whenever possible, we tried to present findings in meaningful terms, our prose aided by several tables and figures. While we believe that the lessons of the report can be understood without a background in statistics, there are a few concepts that are good to review.

Average, mean and median

The average, or mean, is simply the sum of all values for the group divided by the number of people in that group. It is not the only way to measure the central tendency of a group of numbers, or the difference between two groups, however. Because means can be distorted by extreme values—people who do really well or really poorly—we sometimes report the median, the precise middle value in the group (the 50th percentile). Both are common measures of central tendency.

Impact or effect size

Simply put, impact refers to the size of the difference between groups when evaluating outcomes. In this report, impact will often be stated as the average difference between people who received the program (the treatment group) and people who did not (controls). This difference can be framed as an absolute value (e.g., increase of \$x in income for the average beneficiary) or as a percentage increase relative to the control group (e.g., the treatment effect is equivalent to an increase of 50% over the control group mean).

Statistical significance and confidence intervals

When we calculate an average treatment effect, we compare the average in the treatment group to the average in the control group. Both groups contain a great deal of variation, and this implies that any average treatment effect is measured with error. This error decreases as we increase the number of people in the sample and the precision of measurement. But some uncertainty always remains.

In any study, the default hypothesis is always that there is no treatment effect. When we detect an average difference between the treatment and control group, at a minimum we want to know whether or not we can say with confidence that the result is not zero, or runs in the opposite direction.

In statistics, a result is called statistically significant if it is unlikely to have occurred by chance, and the amount of evidence required to accept that an event is unlikely to have arisen by chance is known as the significance level. Conventionally, we regard a result as statistically significant if there is a less than 5% risk that it is not zero. Sometimes a 10% risk is accepted, but the convention is typically 5%.

Of course, we are not merely satisfied to know that a result is not zero. We would like to know the possible range of error of our average treatment effect. How high or low could the true value be? One way to evaluate our results is to report confidence intervals. Confidence intervals tell us the range of values that our finding could take with 95% significance. For instance, we might report that the average effect size is \$50, but because there is some error in this estimate, we would also report that the “true” effect size falls somewhere between \$30 and \$70 with 95% confidence.

INTERPRETING LINE FIGURES

Each line figure in this memo several components that provide information about the impact of the program for a given set of outcomes. Below we go through how to interpret the different components of each line figure.

In general, we estimate the effects of the program by comparing our measures of program effects in communities and individuals who experienced the program and our measures of program effects in communities and individuals that did not receive the program. Any difference between these groups represents the impact of the program. If there is no difference, we do not see any impact. To represent this difference graphically, we use the horizontal line to represent the average value of an outcome for individuals and communities who did not experience the program for any given outcome.

Each vertical line in the figure represents the effect of the program on a particular outcome for individuals and communities that experienced the program.

- The location of the black diamond on the vertical line shows the size of the effect of the program in communities that hosted the program compared with communities that did not host the program. For example, figure 1a shows the impact of the program on community participation. 77% of trainees who lived in communities that did not host the program reported they attended a peace group. Our analysis suggests that for trainees, attending the workshop increased the average membership in a peace group by 17 percentage points, which is a 22% positive change in membership over the mean of trainees in the control group.
- The small x on the vertical line provides the same information as the black diamond, but for trainees who attended the program in the early stages of program implementation. In figure 1a in the third column, the position of the x demonstrates trainees attending the program during the early stages of implementation experienced an even greater impact on peace group membership from the workshop compared with both trainees that experienced the program during later stages of implementation and to the control group.

The size of the vertical line and the location relative to the horizontal line also provides information.

- The larger the size of the vertical lines, the wider the "confidence interval" or range of potential values of the effects of the program (see above for a definition of confidence interval). In figure 1a, the first column provides information on the impact of the program on contributions to public goods by comparing those attending the program with those in the control group. The relative size of this line tells us that the value of the estimated difference between trainees who attended the program and those that did not falls within a narrow range of values with 95% confidence. The vertical line depicting the difference between trainees in the treatment group and trainees in the control group is much larger for the impact of the program on leadership in a community group, indicating a larger range of possible values for the difference between the treatment and the control group.
- If the vertical line crosses the horizontal line, this suggests that the average impact for individuals and communities that experienced the treatment may be the same as the average impact for individuals and communities in the control group. This is because the range of values or "confidence interval" for the difference between the treatment and the control groups for the outcome contains 0. If the vertical line for any given outcome crosses the horizontal line, we cannot say with certainty that there is any impact of the program on this outcome.

Empowerment impacts

We also try to capture the degree of empowerment and control that people feel over their lives and community. Figure 2 reports impacts on “potential trainees”.

We asked several questions about respondents’ “self-empowerment” (also known as “locus of control”), measuring to what degree they believe that they have control over their own fate, or that the community has the power to influence its own future. In general, trainees in treatment and control communities express relatively a strong sense of control over their own fates, and we see little effect of the treatment.

We do see some small signs of empowerment, however. We create an index of empowerment based on whether potential trainees feel free to speak their minds to “big people” in the community, and whether they feel community members have the right to speak out to elders. Those trained are 4% more likely to feel empowered in their communities. **This effect is concentrated among the “troublesome” individuals, who see a larger increase of about 8%. While modest in size, this is one of the few statistically significant results among all participation outcomes.**

6.2 Impacts on attitudes towards rights

A major component of the CEP is encouraging an understanding of human rights, especially for women, minorities and “outsiders” in the community.

- Several workshop exercises encouraged participants to reflect on their own rights and on whether they had ever denied anyone a human right.
- Guided discussions aimed to emphasize the importance of extending rights to previously excluded groups.
- Qualitative research suggests that some of the most polemic discussions of the workshops focused on the question of rights. Participants were divided in their perceptions of how a new understanding of human rights would affect existing norms, such as respect for elders or gender-segregated religious and cultural practices.

We see a modest increase in self-reported “progressive” attitudes and support for rights among trainees and leaders. We do not see evidence, however, that these attitude changes spilled over into the community in general.

To measure attitudes, we asked respondents a large number of questions on themes such as women’s rights, minority rights, degree of bias towards other ethnicities, and opinions on human rights in general. We assemble answers to these individual questions into an aggregate index of overall “progressive” beliefs. It is important to keep in mind that these questions capture self-reported attitudes only: there is a risk that exposure to the training may lead people to speak differently about rights while underlying attitudes stay the same.

Figures 3a, 3b and 3c display the impacts, relative to the control group, for the potential trainees, other community members who attended the training, and leaders. (Note that the specific questions that were asked potential trainees versus community members versus leaders varied.)

Specific questions asked, and responses overall are reported in Table 1.

Nearly all the treatment effects are positive, indicating that respondents in trained communities generally report more progressive beliefs. For community members, however, these impacts are fairly close to zero. The impacts on trainees and leaders are modest in size – often in the range of 1 to 10% —and seldom statistically significant at conventional levels. **But the aggregate index of “progressive” attitudes is typically significant, and points to a real, albeit modest, change.**

In terms of both magnitude and statistical significance, we find that the impact of training across all attitudes is strongest among leaders. Yet even this impact is modest in size, and the aggregate index is just statistically significant. The change is strongest and most significant on one of the sub-components—attitudes towards inter-religious marriage—where potential trainees and (especially) leaders expressed increased support.

Figure 3a: Impacts on Progressive Attitudes — Potential Trainees
 Program Impact as a % of the control group average

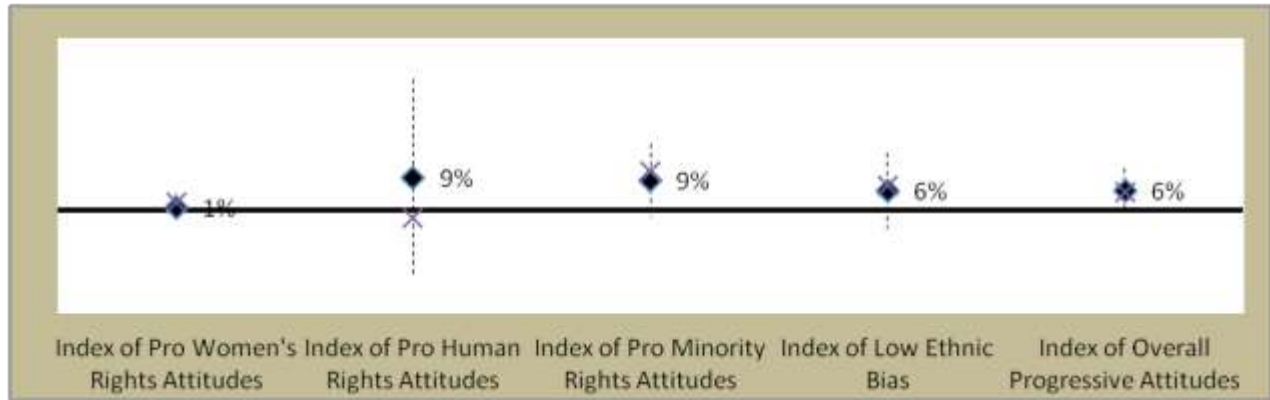


Figure 3b: Impacts on Progressive attitudes — Attending Community Members
 Program Impact as a % of the control group average

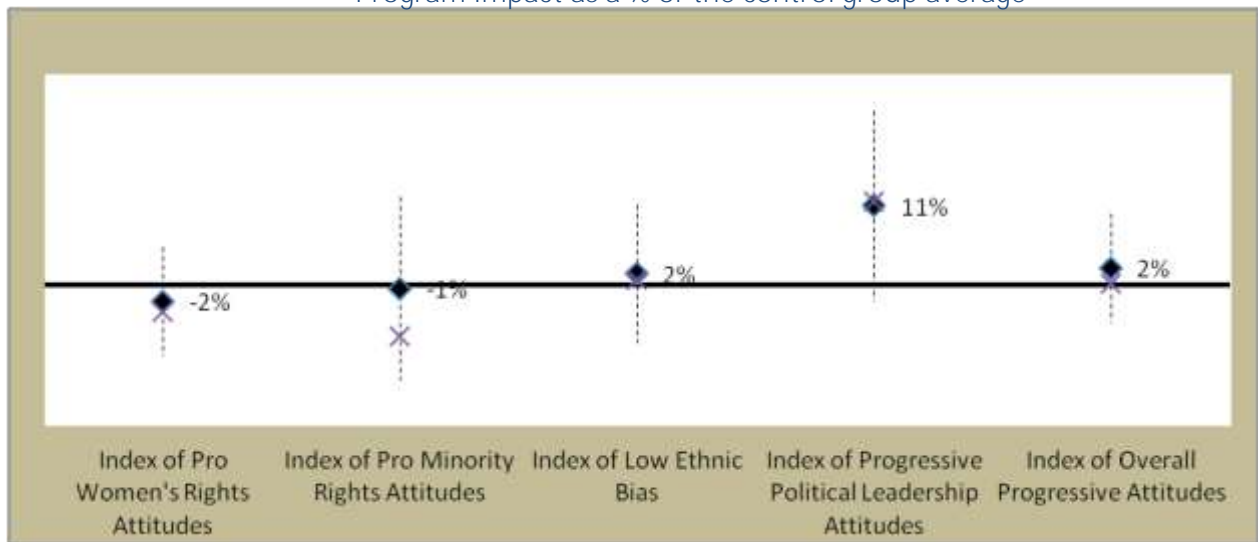


Figure 3c: Impacts on Progressive attitudes — Leaders
 Program Impact as a % of the control group average

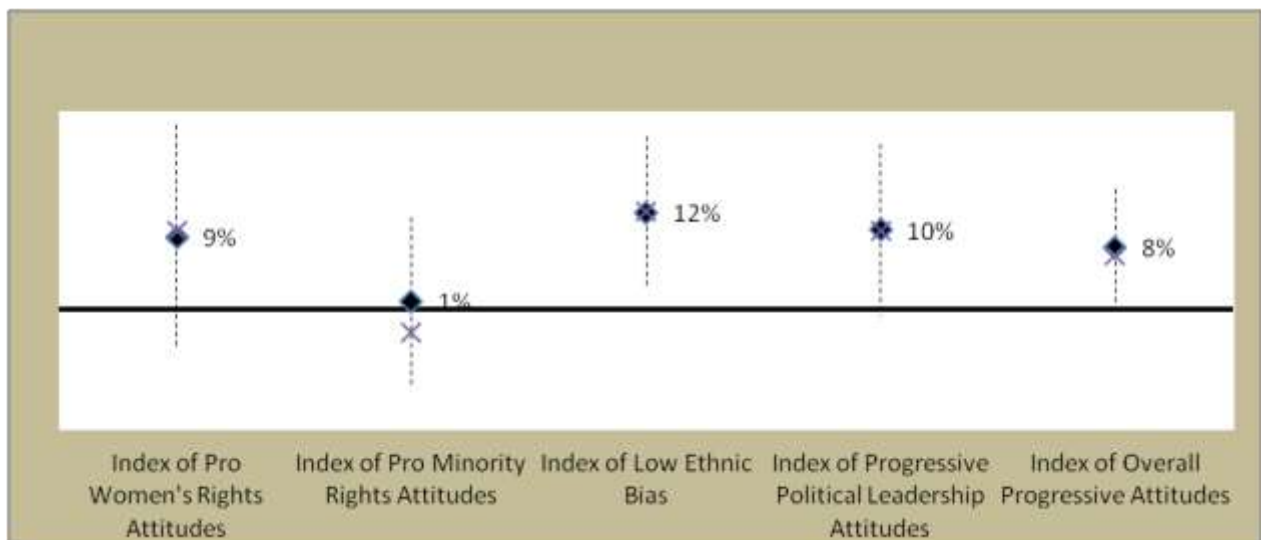


Table 1: Treatment and Control Mean on Selected Attitudinal Questions

	Treat- ment Mean	Con- trol Mean	Treat- ment Mean	Con- trol Mean	Treat Mean	Con- trol Mean
	Potential Trainee		Community Member		Leader	
Women's Rights (% agree)						
The important decisions in the family should be made by men	14%	15%	.	.	.	.
A wife should stay with her husband even if he beats her	8%	6%	.	.	.	.
If a wife refuses sex it is ok for her husband to not give her money	7%	8%	.	.	.	.
A wife has the right to voice her opinion even when she disagrees	92%	90%	.	.	.	.
A wife can spend money on what she wants without ask her husband	52%	48%	.	.	.	.
A wife can refuse to have sex with her husband if he sleeps with other women	50%	51%	.	.	.	.
A woman can own land with deed in her own name	.	.	69%	70%	73%	69%
A woman can refuse her husband anytime she wants	.	.	60%	64%	68%	64%
A widow has the right to inherit land	.	.	92%	93%	.	.
Progressive Political Beliefs (% agree)						
Muslims can be leaders	.	.	47%	47%	62%	52%
A woman can be clan chief	.	.	72%	72%	83%	83%
Ex-coms can be leaders	.	.	51%	47%	67%	60%
Town chief should have set terms	.	.	39%	36%	33%	34%
Town chiefs should be put there by paramount chiefs	.	.	19%	21%	17%	15%

	Treat- ment Mean	Con- trol Mean	Treat- ment Mean	Con- trol Mean	Treat Mean	Con- trol Mean
	Potential Trainee		Community Member		Leader	
Human Rights (% agree)						
Human rights not always good because they go against traditional culture	58%	62%	55%	55%	61%	57%
White people love human rights, but I don't think they are good here	57%	57%	91%	91%	90%	90%
Minority Rights (% agree or "feel OK or fine" with hypothetical)						
Hypothetical: Five new poor families have just moved to your town	87%	81%				
Hypothetical: Five new Muslim families have just moved to your town	79%	70%				
Hypothetical: Five new Fula families have just moved to your town	83%	78%				
Hypothetical: Five new Mandingo families have just moved to your town	77%	68%				
Hypothetical: Five new Ivorian families have just moved to your town	85%	83%				
The minority tribe can own land			55%	55%	61%	57%
The minority tribe can make farm			91%	91%	90%	90%
Ethnic Bias (9)						
Which tribe you think most like to make palaver? (% Naming tribe)	68%	70%	65%	64%	70%	69%
Which tribe you think most like to keep their place dirty? (% Naming tribe)	58%	58%	56%	56%	54%	57%
Muslim people they are all trouble makers (% Agree)	38%	41%				
Would you accept son/daughter to marry another religion? (% Yes)	80%	75%	75%	73%	85%	79%
Would you accept son/daughter to marry another tribe? (% Yes)	96%	93%	94%	94%	98%	96%

9. For the first two Ethnic Bias questions, we count answers where an individual named a tribe as evidence of bias (either positive or negative). When an individual either said all tribes or no tribes, we counted that as absence of bias.

6.3 Impacts on civic attitudes and knowledge

The civic education component of the CEP provided information on citizenship, civic rights and responsibilities and the structure of the Liberian political system. The training also taught specific skills for solving problems and methods of alternative dispute resolution.

We look at the impacts of the program both on specific forms of knowledge, as well as beliefs about the quality and equity of civic institutions.

Knowledge of program concepts

Examples of specific knowledge and lessons that the program sought to impart were:

- An understanding of Liberian citizenship, including rights and responsibilities
- **Knowledge of Liberia’s political structure and of local and national political institutions**
- The benefits of assertiveness and open mindedness, as opposed to aggression or passivity, when looking for solutions to problems.

Figure 4: Impacts on Civic and Political Knowledge
Program Impact as a % of the control group average

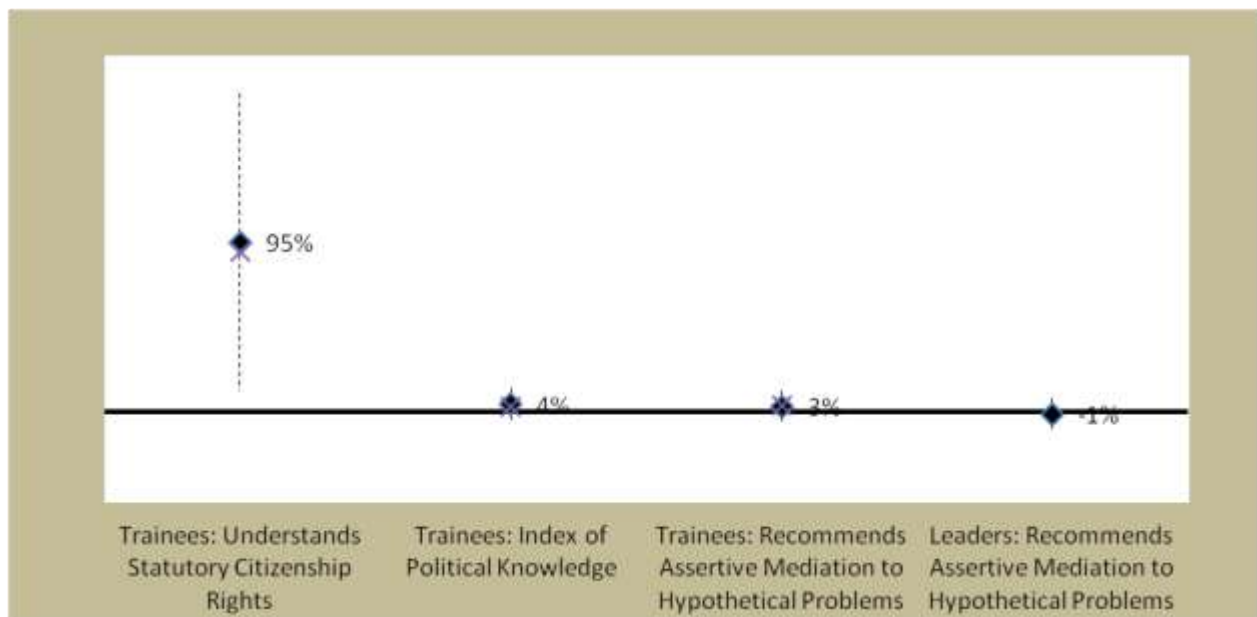


Figure 4 looks at impacts of the program on knowledge.

- Among the potential trainees, only about 12% of control group members correctly understood the statutory requirements for citizenship. This understanding nearly doubled among treated trainees.
- We see little change, however, in political knowledge among potential trainees, such as the names of their representatives (roughly 70% knew these correctly);
- **Finally, we see little evidence that leaders or trainees internalized the programmatic emphasis on “assertive mediation.” Although assessing problem-solving skills through survey questions is difficult, we see almost no change in the proportion favoring assertive mediation in response to questions about the best solution to a hypothetical conflict.**

Attitudes to local and national government

We also explored whether civic education increased knowledge of the structure of government institutions and influenced perceptions of the integrity of local and national governance. Figures 5a and 5b look at whether participation in the program changed perceptions towards community and national governance respectively.

We ask trainees and community members how they perceive safety and civility in their communities, as well as whether they perceive equity in community governance. Overall, the program appears to have little impact on these perceptions. In 5a, we see that trainees and community members perceive a weak increase in community safety and civility, **but that the confidence interval is so large that we can't distinguish the effect from zero (or even a negative effect)**. Similarly, average impacts on opinions of community governance are close to zero with wide confidence intervals, suggesting little systematic impact.

We also see no evidence of a systematic change in perceptions towards the national government among (Figure 5b).

Figure 5a: Perceptions towards Community and Community Government
Program Impact as a % of the control group average

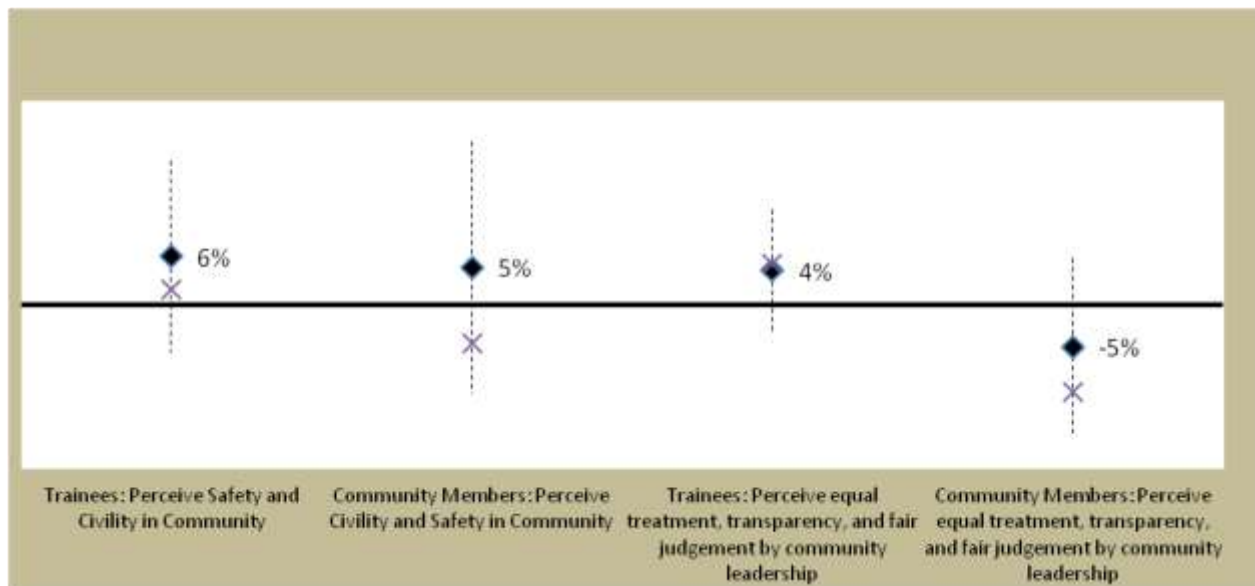
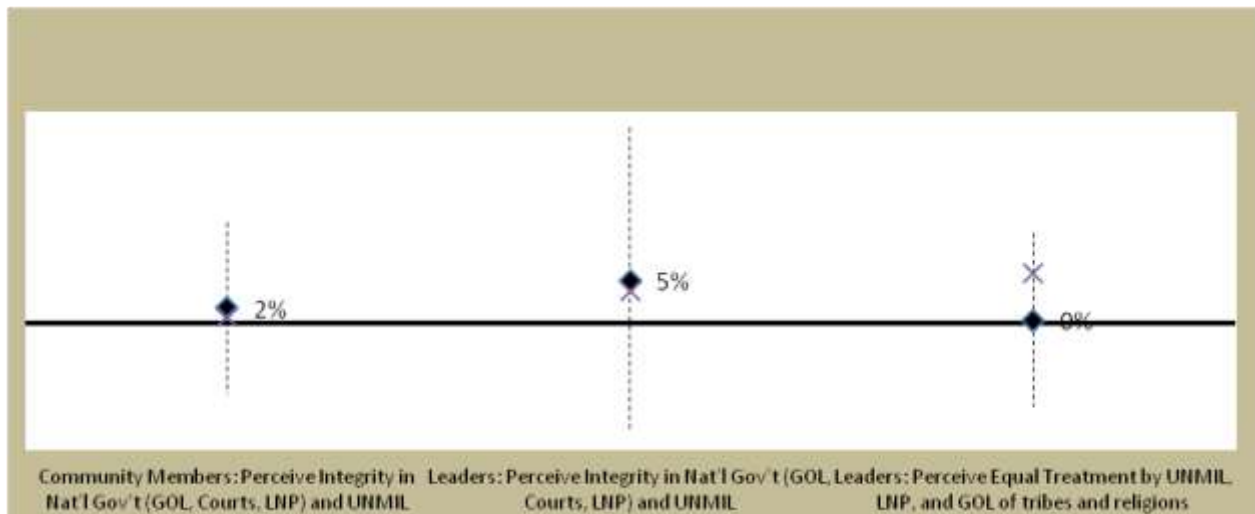


Figure 5b: Perceptions towards National Government
Program Impact as a % of the control group average



Self-sufficiency

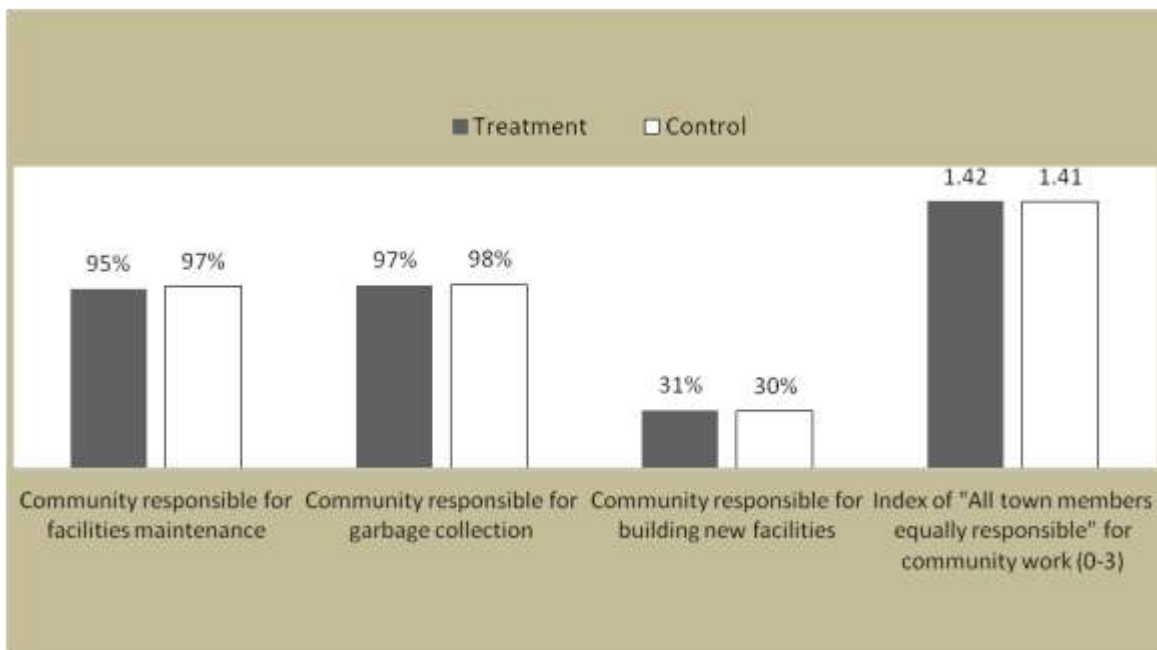
Another theme of the workshops was community empowerment, including notions of community collective action and self-sufficiency. As a measure of self-sufficiency, we ask community leaders and members who they feel should be mainly responsible for the construction of community public goods, such as building community structures or facilities. Choices include the community itself, or outside actors, including the county or national government, or NGOs. Overall, we find no significant impacts on self-sufficiency from the program.

Figure 6 compares the proportion of community members in treatment and control communities who felt that the community itself, rather than outside actors, should be responsible for public goods, be it garbage collection or construction and maintenance of facilities. We see a near consensus that communities themselves are responsible for maintenance and garbage collection (though the rates are lower in treatment communities, at small but in some cases statistically significant levels). On balance more than two thirds of community members feel outside agencies are responsible for new building, and we see little treatment-control difference.

Community members could also indicate whether they felt all members were equally responsible for these duties, or whether they thought subgroups (like youth) were mainly responsible. We construct an index of “All town members equally responsible” across the three public goods, which increases by one each time the respondent said that all are equally responsible. Answers are virtually identical among those that did and did not receive the program.



Figure 6: Who Should be responsible for Community Public Goods?
Community Member Responses



6.4 Impacts on the prevalence and resolution of conflict

One of the main goals of the program was to change patterns of conflict in the target communities, reducing violence and promoting alternative dispute resolution techniques that seek “win-win” solutions to conflict. The workshop included several sessions on problem solving, as well as lessons, discussions and participatory dramas that taught negotiation, mediation and reconciliation. The evaluation explored the effects of the workshop on the prevalence and resolution of different types of crime and conflict, including fights, conflicts over money, land disputes, and violence at the community level, such as riots.

Interpersonal conflict

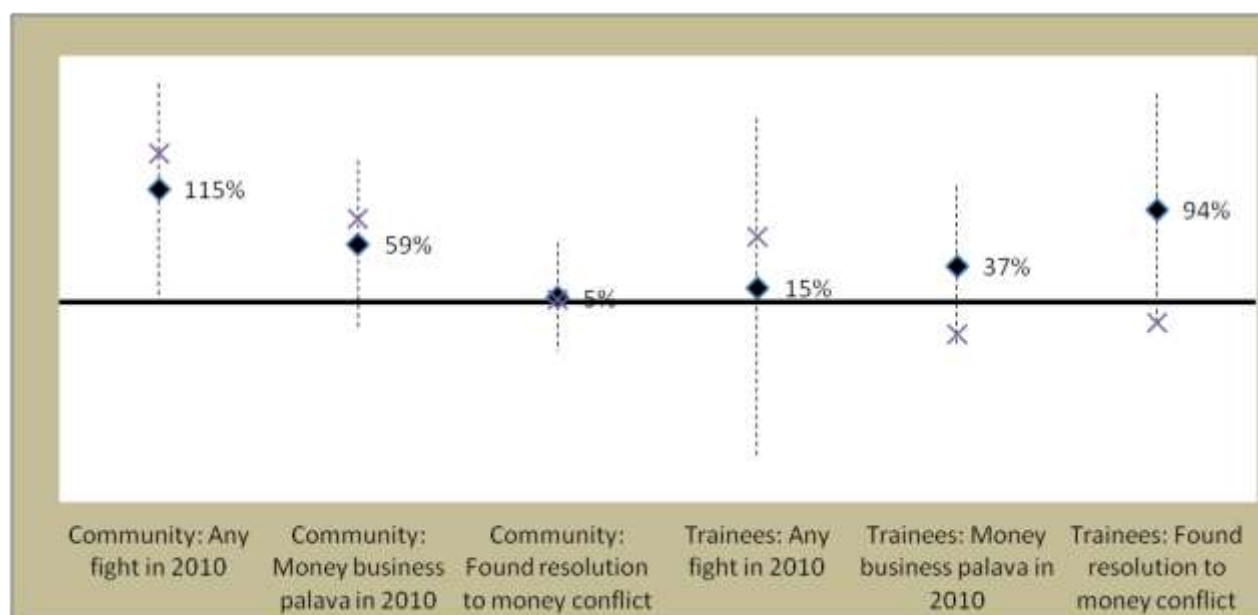
We measure the prevalence of physical fights reported by community members and potential trainees, as well as fights, or “palavas,” over money. Figure 7 illustrates impacts as a percentage of the control group average on a number of behaviors: being in a fight, having a “money business” palava (i.e. a dispute over money, like debts repayment), and finding a resolution to this money dispute—both the random community members and the non-random target trainees.

We see a sizeable *increase* in these forms of interpersonal violence in treated communities. This increase is not always statistically significant, but in proportional terms the increases are quite large. Fights and money palavas are uncommon—in the six months prior to the survey only 7% of community members report a fight and only 15% report a money palava—but in absolute terms the increase in interpersonal conflict is important.

It is difficult to say what may cause the increase. It is possible that exposure to the program opens old conflicts that may take a long time to resolve, but (as we can see from the figure) if anything the increase in conflict is larger in the communities treated earlier (where the average treatment effect is indicated by the x).

Another possible explanation for the increase is that trained individuals report conflicts that they might not have reported in the absence of the workshop. It is possible that individuals who attend the training feel more comfortable speaking out about their disputes, perhaps because the workshop teaches safe ways to voice grievances. We cannot rule out the possibility that this impact is merely a reporting phenomenon rather than a real change.

Figure 7: Impacts on Interpersonal Conflict
Impact as a % of control group average



Domestic Violence

We also measure the prevalence of domestic violence and restrictions placed on women's behavior. Conflicts between men and women, respect for women, and norms against domestic violence were a recurring theme in the training. We ask female potential trainees how restrictive and violent their partners are towards them, and we ask male potential trainees how restrictive and abusive they are towards their partners. Figure 8 illustrates these impacts.

Unlike interpersonal aggression, here we see an improvement reported among both males and females. Women report that their partners are substantially less restrictive—an improvement of 76% compared to the control group—and less prone to domestic abuse (an 18% reduction), although only the reduction in restrictions is statistically significant. Males, however, report little statistically significant change.

Figure 8: Impacts on Domestic Violence — Potential Trainees Program Impact as a % of the control group average



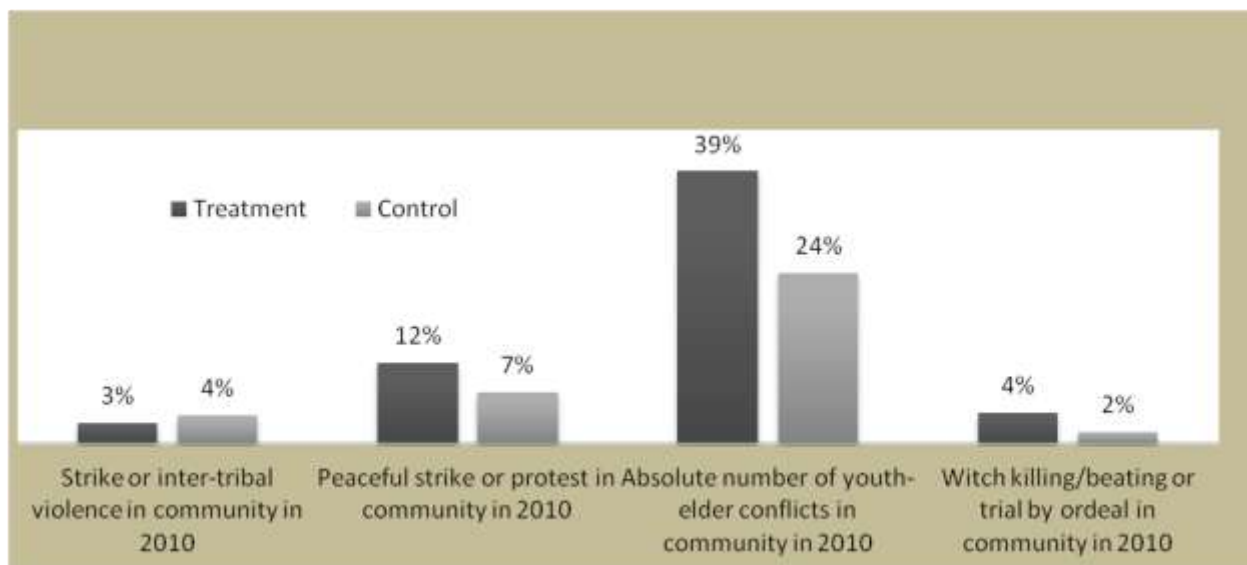
Communal and between-group disputes and violence

We get similarly puzzling and sizable results looking at different forms of communal and group violence. Figure 9 shows the prevalence of different forms of conflict in the treatment and control communities. Figure 10 displays the relative difference, with confidence intervals for the treatment effect estimates.

Communal and between-group disputes and violence

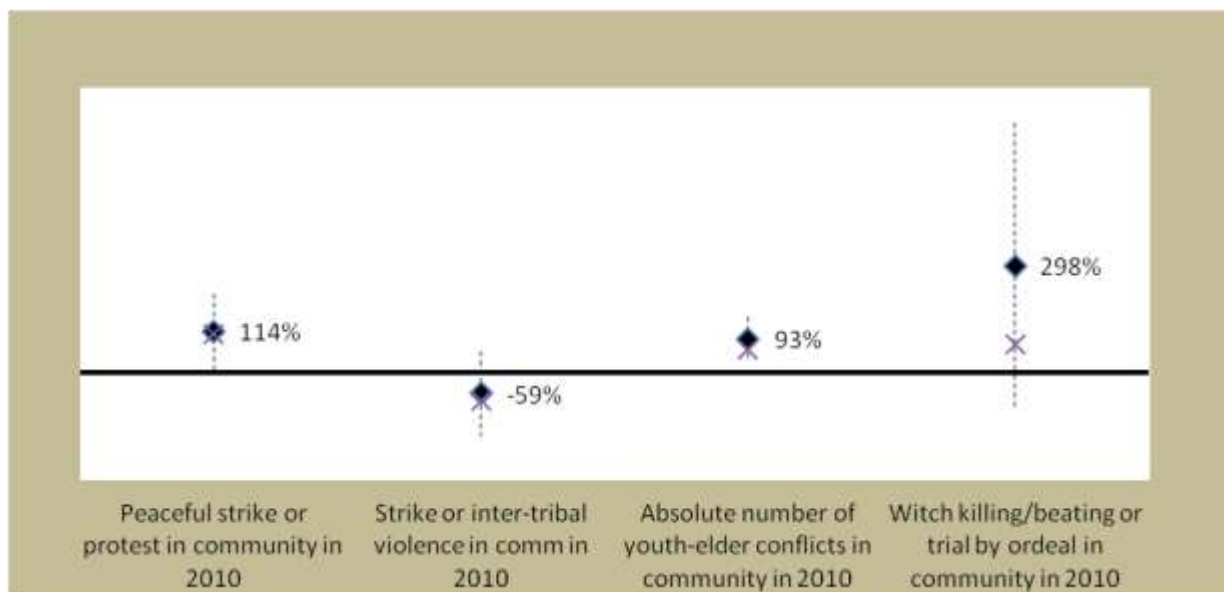
We get similarly puzzling and sizable results looking at different forms of communal and group violence. Figure 9 shows the prevalence of different forms of conflict in the treatment and control communities. Figure 10 displays the relative difference, with confidence intervals for the treatment effect estimates.

Figure 9: Treatment and Control Difference in Means in Communal and Intergroup Conflict among Program Villages



At the community level, leaders reported a 93% increase in conflicts between youth and elders in the communities treated by the program (where “conflicts” typically mean disputes and disagreements, rather than anything physical or violent in nature). Treatment communities were twice as likely to have a peaceful strike or protest, and three times as likely to have a witch killing (though the latter result is not statistically significant).

Figure 10: Impacts on Group and Communal Conflict
Community-Level Program Impacts as a % of the control group average



Violent strikes, protests, and inter-group violence are 59% less likely, however, though again this result is not statistically significant (partly because the events are rare, making it difficult to estimate their prevalence precisely with such a small sample of communities). The evidence seems to indicate that non-violent conflicts and disagreements are spurred by the CEP, but that violent conflicts are reduced.

Crime

We see evidence of a slight decrease in the prevalence of violent crime as well, though the results are not statistically significant.

Figure 11: Treatment and Control Difference in Means in Crime among Program Villages

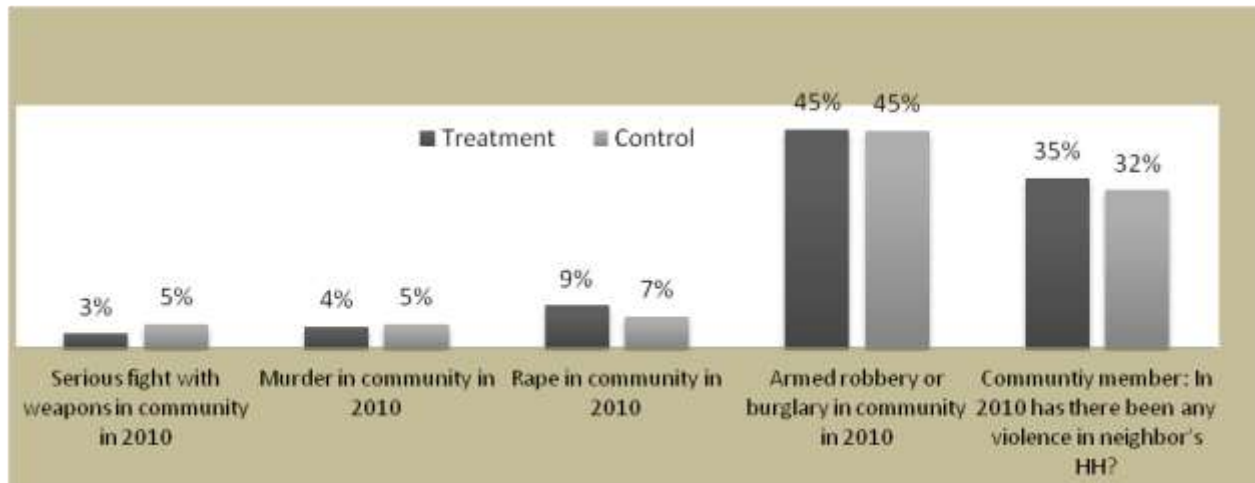
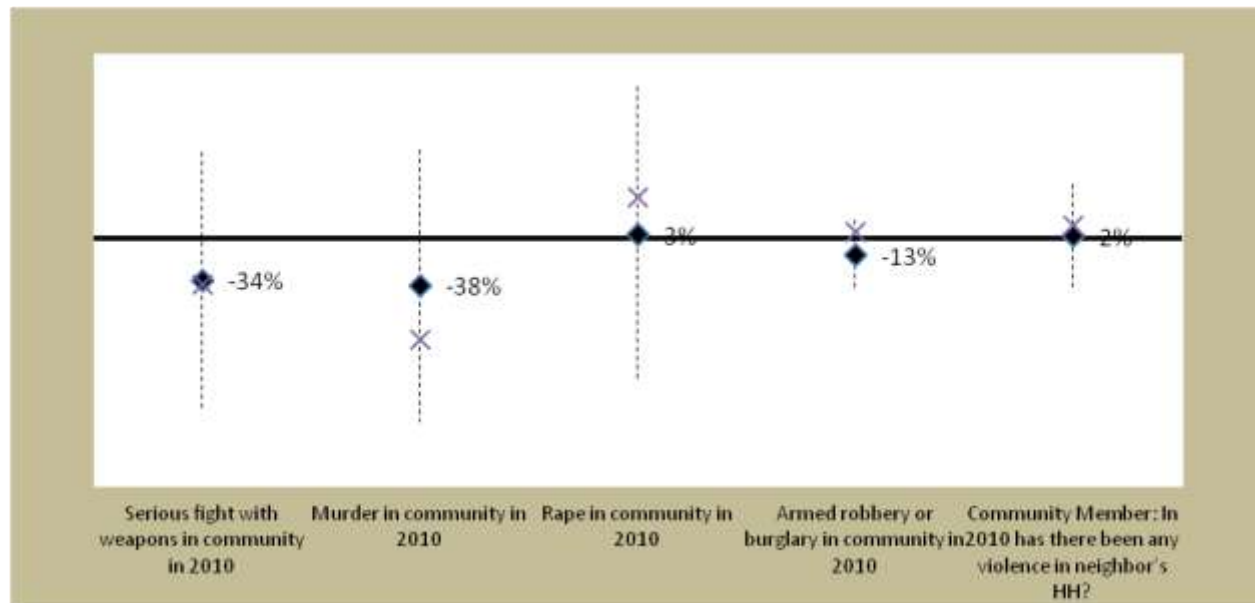


Figure 12: Impacts on Reported Crime in Program Communities
Community-Level Program Impacts as a % of control group average



We see that serious fights with weapons, rapes and murders are rare but not as rare as one would hope: about 4% of communities report a violent fight, 5% of all communities report a murder and about 8% report a rape. 45% report armed robbery.

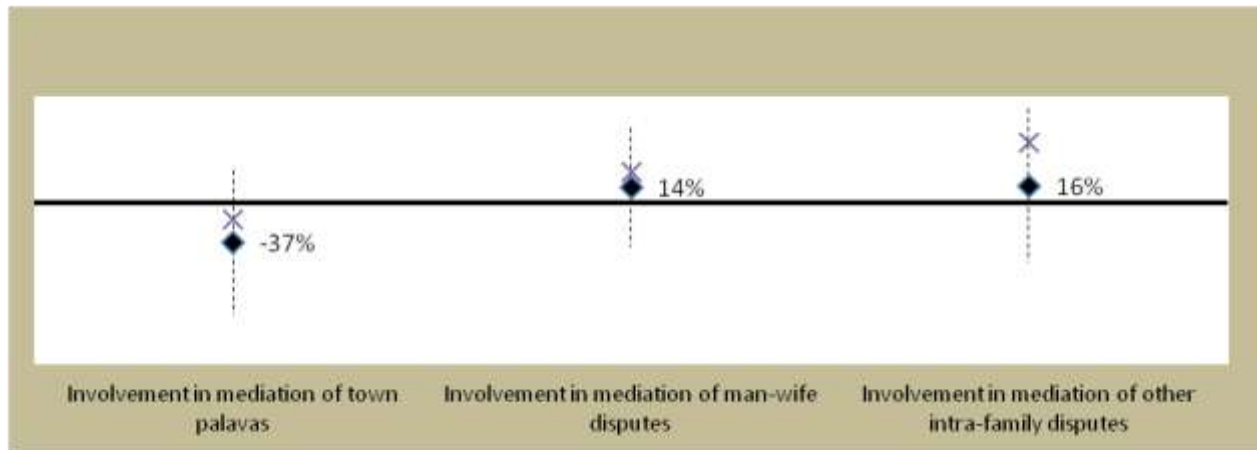
Fights and murders are slightly lower in treated communities, though this result is not statistically significant. Nevertheless, the pattern is consistent with the fall in violent communal disputes seen in previous sections.

Leader mediation

The evaluation suggests that the CEP does not have straightforward effects on leaders' mediation in the community. Leaders in treated communities report less involvement in mediating town palavas, but more intervention in domestic disputes (man-wife business) and other intra-family conflicts.

Figure 13 reports leaders' involvement in disputes:

Figure 13: Impacts on Leaders Involvement in Conflict Mediation
Program Impacts as a % of control group average



Land Conflict

The evaluation suggests that the program has complex effects on the reported prevalence of conflict. First, time elapsed since implementation took place seems to affect whether the program leads to changes in land conflict dynamics. . Second, we see some evidence of an increase in land conflicts, but a decrease in violence associated with those conflicts and an increase in the rate of resolution. We also see that conflicts are more likely to have been resolved in treated communities. Satisfaction levels with the resolution are also higher, though not significantly so, in these communities. Overall, we find that trainees and leaders experience the program differently than community members. Figures 14 and 15 display the levels of land conflict and impacts of the program on community members who attend the training. Figure 16 looks at impacts on potential trainees.

Figure 14: Impacts on Land Conflict — Attending Community Members
Program Impact as a % of control group average

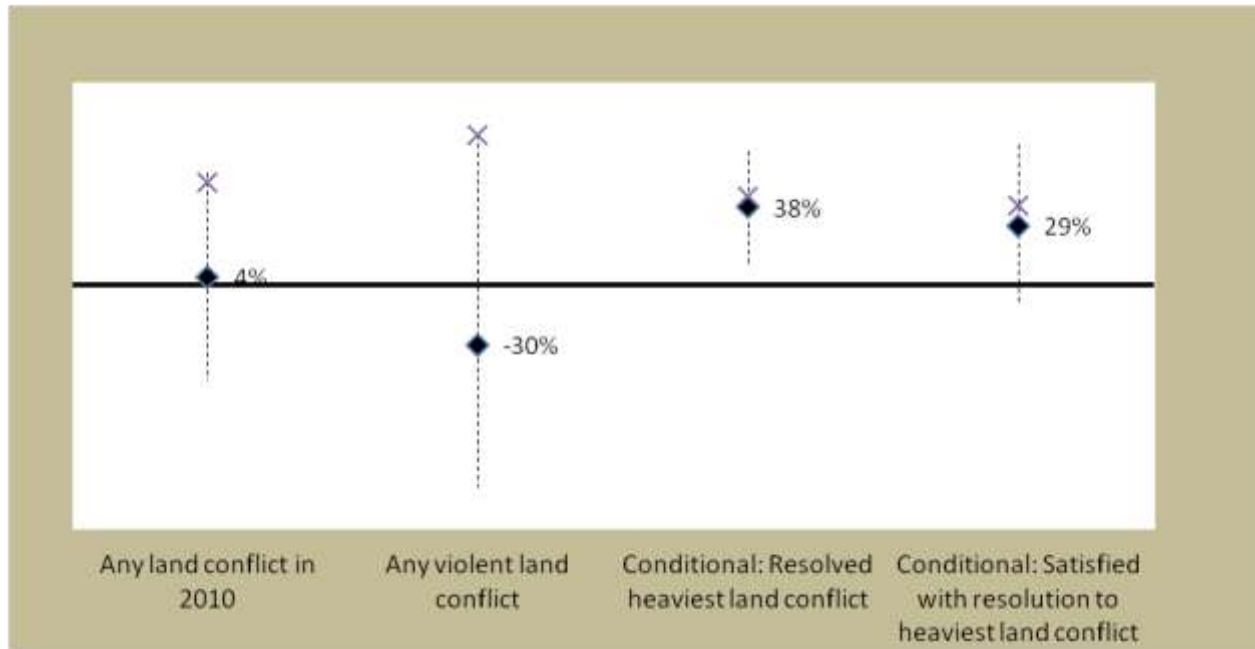
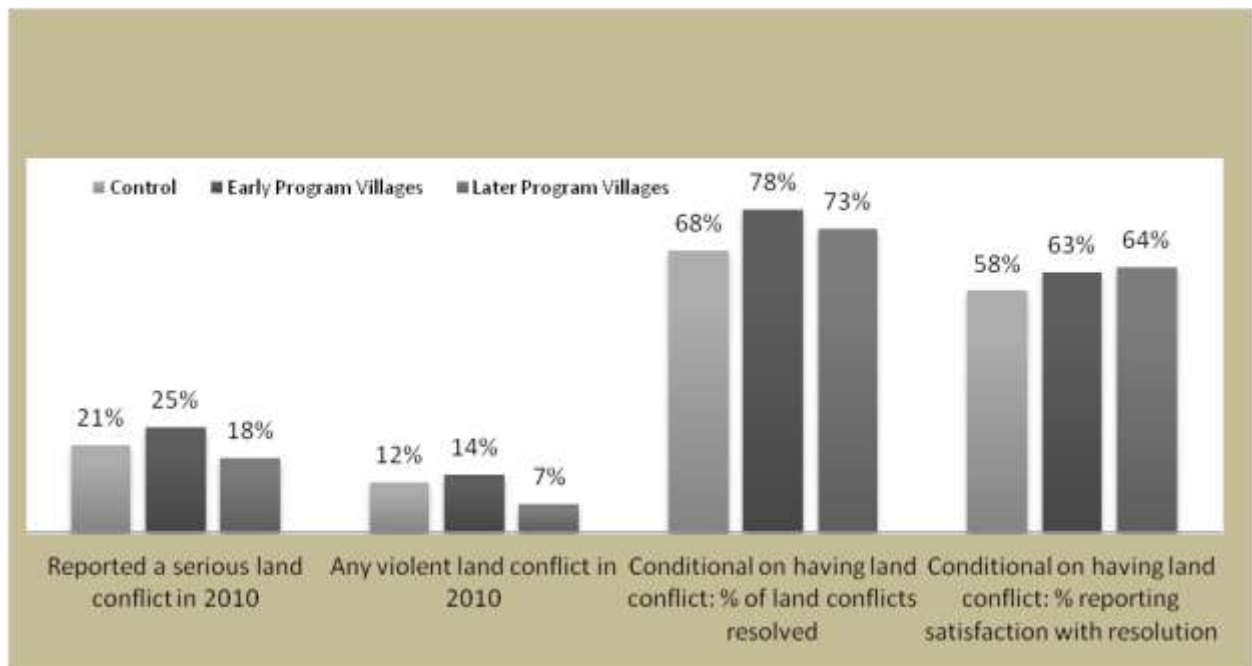


Figure 15: Treatment and Control Difference in Means in Land Conflict
Attending Community Members



Community Members

On average, we see little significant difference between treatment and control communities in the prevalence of land conflict based on reports of land conflict by community members regardless of whether they participated in program or not. However, levels of land conflict are significantly higher in the early-treated communities, and hence significantly lower in recently treated communities (treated within the six months before the survey). This evidence suggests that the effect of the program on land conflict reported by community members may not happen immediately. **One possible explanation for this pattern is that the influence of the program on community members' land conflicts takes time to emerge.**

We also find that the prevalence of violent land conflicts—where “violence” includes threats of physical violence, violent incidents such as assaults, or property damage—is lower in treated communities. But again we see that early treated villages report much more violent conflict, and late treated ones less.

Overall, from the community evidence, it seems that the program increased the reporting of land conflicts, but also increased the rate of reporting land conflict resolution. We need to do additional analysis to see whether, on net, land conflicts were resolved faster than they grew in number.

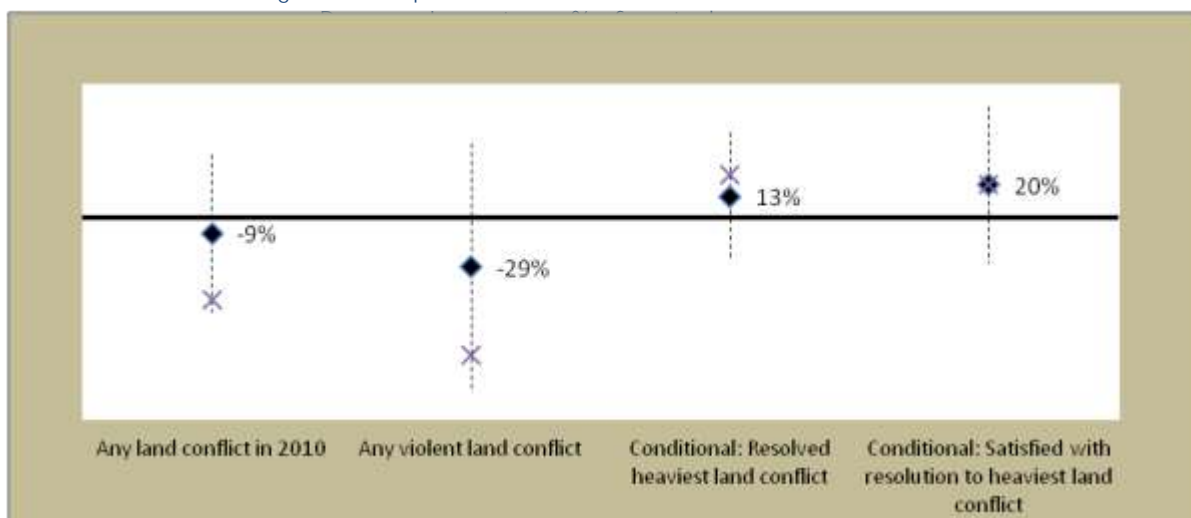
Trainees

We see a different pattern of conflict among “potential trainees” than among community members. While they too report (weakly) higher rates of resolution and lower levels of violence associated with land disputes, trainees report lower levels of land conflict and lower levels of violent conflict in early treated communities in contrast to trainees who report higher levels in early treated communities. See Figure 16. This is the exact opposite of community members who report higher levels of conflict in communities treated earlier during the program implementation.

This divergence between the potential trainees and average community members who attend is puzzling. It may have to do with the profile of potential trainees, who tend to be leaders and elders. Influential persons may be more likely to be able to use their skills and their power to resolve conflicts in their favor, and access other conflict resolution services such as the formal court system or other civil society programs that help resolve conflicts, more so than the average community member. It may be that over time, as trainees and leaders successfully resolve their disputes, community members who are less likely to have attended the training see their successes and begin to bring their conflicts forward. This is one possible explanation for the variation in the results between trainees and community members. With further qualitative and quantitative analysis we hope to see whether people who fit the same profile among average community members show the same pattern.

At the same time, we should note that the sample size of “potential trainees” is much smaller than the sample size of community members in general, especially when we start splitting villages into early and late treatment. Hence we should probably treat the divergent trainee experiences and results with more caution.

Figure 16: Impacts on Land Conflict — “Potential Trainees”



7 Additional Observations from the Qualitative Research

In addition to the quantitative findings, our qualitative research raised a handful of issues of interest for future research and consideration.

- Youth relations in the community. During qualitative interviews, respondents often mentioned that relationships **between youth and elders had changed as a result of the civil war**. Interviewees stated that the war had “changed the boys,” that “the boys have no respect now,” that “they do not listen to their parents,” or that “they can just abuse all the time.” In the words of one respondent: “The war taught them what it’s like to have money and that taking it by force is acceptable.”

Despite these negative views, change in the relationship between youth and elders is not necessarily a negative thing. Given our finding that palavas between youth and elders are more common in treated communities, however, programs that promote youth empowerment should be designed with these tensions in mind.

- Internalization of conflict resolution. It is difficult to capture the effects of training on patterns of conflict resolution through quantitative surveys alone. In qualitative interviews, respondents described lessons or insights from the training that they found especially meaningful. These reports help us understand not just *whether* the training worked, but *why* and *how* it worked as well.

For instance, when asked what they liked most about the workshop, many respondents mentioned the curriculum’s emphasis on **“not simply calling someone guilty” in the event of an interpersonal dispute. An important lesson of the “win-win” alternative dispute resolution framework is that guilty parties can still be good people.** In qualitative interviews, many community members stressed the importance of this principle for resolving disputes without provoking residual hostility and tension.

- Continued central role of the elders and chiefs. While the CEP encourages citizens to develop their own local-level mechanisms for conflict resolution, the Liberian Government is expanding the presence of the police and formal justice system nationwide. What will happen as these local- and national-level institutions begin to interact with one another?

Our qualitative work suggests that local norms tend to situate traditional leaders at the center of dispute resolution, and that many rural Liberians deeply respect these norms and the hierarchy of authorities that they prescribe. **When asked about the government’s role in their communities, many respondents answered that town chiefs and elders should be the first to intervene in the case of a crime or dispute.** While the government may intercede at some point, it is widely understood that community members should take their grievances first to a quarter chief or youth leader, then to an elder, then to the town chief. Only then, and only if the town chief deems it necessary, will the government get involved.

8 Summary and Recommendations

In its final report, Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) listed ten root causes of the nation's 14-year civil war. One was the "lack of any permanent or appropriate mechanism for the settlement of disputes, the judiciary being historically weak and unreliable." This problem persists today, and the CEP represents one large-scale effort by the government and the international community to address these root causes.

The CEP takes a community-driven approach, empowering communities to avoid and constructively engage conflict. In many ways, it tries to augment traditional systems of conflict resolution, systems that the government and international community see as crucial to peacebuilding in Liberia. We see this emphasis, for instance, following the Peacebuilding Commission Delegation's visit to Liberia in June 2011, where they reported:

"Strong support exists for relying on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. In particular the Palava Huts were repeatedly cited as a traditionally recognized venue for discussion on injustices. The Huts were also proposed as forum from which a common historical narrative could be reached with the caveat that a mechanism needs to be designed to guide the compilation of a historical narrative out of the discussions held in the Palava Huts and other similar fora."

We can probably expect community-level mechanisms, led by traditional leaders and practices, to be an important force in conflict resolution for the foreseeable future. But how well are they equipped to provide equal justice? The same report notes that

"A balance should be found that will ensure that human rights considerations are factored into the reconciliation strategy."

One challenge with traditional systems of justice is that they do not necessarily provide equal treatment or access to **women, youth, minorities, "strangers" to the community, and other marginalized groups.** Conflict resolution is difficult in any case, but promoting traditional justice mechanisms alongside relatively non-traditional human rights principles is an added complication.

The CEP represents one attempt to achieve this delicate balance. Looking at the CEP is relevant not merely to evaluate the successes and shortcomings of a particular program, but to glean insights into the ongoing process of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Liberia is preparing to enlarge and formalize its efforts to provide security, justice, dialogue and reconciliation. We believe the CEP holds important lessons for national reconciliation policy, for dialogue plans and platforms, and for other peacebuilding efforts in Liberia.



Summary of impacts and findings

The evaluation of the CEP demonstrates that training programs do make an impact, but perhaps not always in expected ways.

The results presented above can be summarized as follows:

1. Small improvements in community participation and empowerment among individuals who attend the program, particularly for troublesome individuals.
2. **Small to moderate increases in “liberal attitudes” for program attendees.**
3. Little evidence of an impact on political participation, program-specific **“knowledge” or perceptions of the community** for those who attended the program.
4. Few discernable spillover effects on non-participants in communities where the program took place.
5. Increases in non-violent inter-personal and inter-group disputes, and suggestive evidence of a decrease in violent disputes.
6. Increasing levels of land conflict, though suggestions of lower rates of violence associated with those conflicts. (The evidence here is contradictory depending on whether we are speaking to community members or potential trainees).
7. Where both violent and non-violent conflicts occur, there is evidence that people are slightly more likely to find resolutions in trained communities, and that parties are happier with the outcomes.

Overall, the CEP training does not transform attitudes in all program outcome areas. The effects on conflict behavior aside, the evaluation suggests that the program does have a moderate impact on individuals who attend, especially along the lines of a civic education program. The absence of an effect on non-trained individuals reflects the challenges of bringing about community-level change by targeting only a portion of the community and by using education- and information-based campaigns alone. Even though the CEP trained a larger proportion of community members than other programs, the small to moderate effects on individuals makes community-level impacts unlikely. Understanding the impact on levels of conflict and conflict resolution reported in the community requires further analysis of the qualitative data collected during the program as well as additional assessment of the quantitative data to tease out patterns.

The large and complex impacts on conflict suggest that the program does not have a straightforward effect on disputes and dispute resolution. Qualitative data suggests that certain aspects of the program, such as the lessons that focus on youth rights and empowerment, might inflame existing tensions between youth and elders, a tension that has persisted since the end of the Liberian civil war. Whether the program influences actual levels of conflict, or merely makes respondents more comfortable reporting disputes, is an important ambiguity that requires further consideration. In addition, further analysis on how the CEP interacts with other existing conflict resolution programs may help explain why the program influences certain kinds of conflict and not others.

Overall, we see suggestive evidence of increasing non-violent disputes and in several (but not all) cases we see decreases in violent disputes. Given the increased dialogue about conflict and alternative dispute resolution, increased prevalence of conflict may be a logical result of the program. Given the size of the impact, however, and the potential challenges that increased conflict may pose, these results should be considered with care.

The evaluation suggests that the CEP may not have adequately considered the ways that the training would influence interpersonal relationships and patterns of conflict and violence, perhaps unsurprising given that the CEP had never **before been implemented on such a large scale. Some of the CEP’s more complex and contradictory effects may have** been the result of implementation challenges, although the role that implementation plays in shaping specific program impacts is difficult to assess. A more nuanced theory of attitude and behavior change is needed to explain why the program affects different individuals in different ways, and why its effects are strong in some areas but not others.

We should be careful to stress two points:

- A. Impact is only as good as the quality of implementation. There were interruptions and difficulties in the roll-out of the program. Nevertheless, we believe the trainers delivered the program fairly faithfully and consistently. From a policy perspective, they did at least as well as the average implementing organization and perhaps better, and so it **is not unreasonable to use this program’s performance as an indicator for performance in the average civic education and conflict resolution program.**
- B. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. In many cases large treatment effects are within our confidence interval, and cannot be ruled out. This is particularly true for impacts that are difficult to capture in survey measures. In addition, because the treatment group was smaller than expected, impacts are less precisely estimated. Nevertheless, across a wide range of outcomes the message is the same: small but positive improvements.

Recommendations for reconciliation and dialogue programs in Liberia

Briefly, the key lessons from our study are as follows:

- **As policy goals, “changing political cultures” and “balancing traditional systems with human rights” are easy to say and hard to do.**
- It is very difficult to change entrenched attitudes and behaviors through information and education alone. Without any fundamental change in incentives or institutions, the effects of these campaigns may be marginal.
- It appears to be strikingly easy, however, to stimulate contentious dialogue and activate interpersonal conflict. **“Peace education” and dialogue can be quite risky if not done carefully.**
- Admitting that attitudes are hard to change, and that traditional systems and human rights are sometimes directly in conflict, is a first and important step to careful program design and implementation.



Future reconciliation and dialogue programming in Liberia can draw several lessons from this experience:

1. Education campaigns may not be an effective means to enhance civic knowledge, change attitudes, or promote community cooperation and cohesion outside of conflict resolution.
 - a. Since conflict resolution was the focus of the CEP, this evaluation is not an entirely fair assessment of civic education programs in general. But civic education was nevertheless a major component, and we observe limited evidence of impact.
2. The ideology driving the program seems to have been important in having impacts on conflict.
 - a. The emphasis on non-violent conflict, and alternative dispute resolution, imparted a powerful lesson. The idea that non-violent, non-punitive, non-blaming discussions of conflicts—while easier in the abstract than in reality—was for some an influential idea.
 - b. The training also gave community members a common language and set of ideas to discuss conflict—essentially a set of tools that, with time, might stabilize into new norms.
 - c. The presence of the trainers, their elite and educated status, and the respected position of the implementing **NGO, brought credibility to the ideas. In particular, the program’s ideas validated the concerns and rights of youth, women, and other marginalized groups, in some cases giving them confidence to dispute their marginalized status.**
 - d. Some messages, however, seemed less effective than others. In our experience, these were typically the messages that had been least adapted to the Liberian context. Closer adaptation to local and national issues will probably increase effectiveness.
3. Dialogue without skills in conflict resolution may be risky
 - a. The emphasis on constructive skills for dispute resolution and the philosophy of non-violent, non-punitive, non-retributive solutions seems to have been internalized by communities and was probably quite important in their reaction to the program.
 - b. We worry that any large-scale reconciliation or dialogue program carries dangers of elevated conflict, including violent conflict, should the wrong approach be adopted at a broad scale before it has a chance to be piloted, tested, refined, and evaluated.
 - c. A less risky model for future reconciliation would complement the successful strategies of the CEP with further experimentation and the gradual scale-up of safe and proven approaches.
4. Any community-driven reconciliation program should evolve and change as the formal justice system builds.
 - a. The emphasis on dispute resolution outside of the court system makes sense in the current Liberian context, yet this may change over time.
 - b. As the formal justice system builds its capacity, programs that focus on alternative dispute resolution may shift to a different role. The present curriculum focuses on avoiding court cases—which are framed as creating winners and losers, with little lasting resolution—in favor of **“win-win” solutions through alternative mechanisms.** But as the formal justice system improves, it may be an appropriate vehicle for criminal acts or serious civil disputes that are presently (by necessity) handled within the community.
 - c. At the same time, there may be opportunities for the formal justice system to incorporate certain **components of the CEP’s alternative dispute resolution strategies.**
5. It may not be enough to educate individuals, even leaders, in non-violent dialogue and dispute resolution.
 - a. Sustained engagement with the community to create generalized knowledge and skills are important as well.
 - b. Training may be most effective for individuals who have the intent and capacity to become trainers and facilitators themselves—**something akin to the (omitted) “training of trainers” component in the CEP.**

6. Generalized, intensive engagement is expensive and time-consuming, and will need to be targeted to the communities with the most need and the most potential to benefit.
 - a. A few towns with widely recognized conflicts are over-programmed by diverse, inconsistent and often non-intensive programs. A more consistent, intensive approach may be more useful in these areas, if they are to continue to be (over)served.
 - b. Promising candidates include underserved communities (i.e. those away from trunk roads) and under-represented people in the over-served communities.
7. Within communities, programs should recognize that the individuals most needful of peace education are not necessarily the most easily mobilized
 - a. The customary approach is for town leaders to round up the same group of influential or affable or available people for trainings. These may not be the most important candidates for peacebuilding programs.
 - b. **This experiment sought the targeting of “troublesome” individuals**—a task that seemed new, but not difficult, to the facilitators and leaders. This suggests that targeting the underserved is not necessarily a difficult or time-consuming task.
 - c. Programs need to strike a better balance between including leaders and influential people on the one hand, and marginalized, troublesome or conflicted individuals on the other.
8. It is important, however, that such programs create dialogue, and not simply rote learning
 - a. Our qualitative observation suggests that the least successful facilitators were those that relied on lectures and rote learning rather than practice and participation
 - b. The out-of-classroom time by facilitators, who stayed in the community after hours by necessity (due to distance), may have been especially important here. After-hours interactions with community members involved all dialogue and practice with no opportunity for lecture-like discourse.
 - c. More structure in out-of-classroom work, and formalizing and incorporating these components into training manuals, is a promising avenue for better peace education programming.
9. Finding cost-effective means to promulgate these skills will be crucial. Intensive facilitation by expert trainers may only be sustainable for high-risk communities. Options for expanding include:
 - a. Training of volunteer trainers and facilitators
 - b. Radio programming and education
 - c. Collaboration with churches, mosques, schools and other existing community institutions
10. Close monitoring and evaluation of success, and of different approaches, is needed to learn and improve existing programs. We recommend continued experimentation with intensity, reach, curriculum, out-of-classroom facilitation, economic components, and other program aspects.
11. If dialogue and reconciliation programs cannot be done smartly and safely then we question whether they should be attempted at all. The elevated levels of conflict that may arise as a result of intervention should encourage caution and humility in peacebuilding programming, a healthy skepticism of existing approaches, and an insistence on monitoring and evaluation to avoid doing harm.

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