



NEWS
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NEW MERCY CORPS RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS STRATEGIES TO REDUCE YOUTH SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

Combining vocational training with cash can reduce willingness to support armed opposition groups

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ABOUT MERCY CORPS

- Leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible
- Empowering people to survive through crisis, build better lives and transform their communities for good
- Meeting the urgent needs of today through emergency response and disaster preparedness
- Building a stronger tomorrow by connecting people to the resources they need to strengthen their community from within
- About 5,000 team members reaching nearly 22 million people
- \$436.6 million total operating revenue in FY2017; 87% channeled directly into programs in more than 40 countries

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PORTLAND, ORE. – [New research](#) by the global organization [Mercy Corps](#), in partnership with [Princeton and Yale Universities](#), finds that youth who received vocational training and a cash transfer during an employability program in Kandahar, Afghanistan, were less likely to support armed opposition groups.

The study found that neither cash nor vocational training alone affected the likelihood of youth supporting political violence in the long term. However, when combined, participants were less likely to support armed opposition groups six to nine months later. Although the program aimed to improve youth employability through vocational training, without an explicit objective to reduce violence, the study enabled researchers to test the hypothesis that employability programs can have tangible impacts on violence reduction.

“For years, we’ve worked to reach more definitive conclusions about whether employment programs can have a positive impact on peace and stability in conflict-affected environments,” says Rebecca Wolfe, Mercy Corps’ director of evidence and one of the report’s authors. “This study provides strong evidence to support the argument that development interventions can indeed shift young people’s attitudes toward violent groups and address the underlying causes of these attitudes.”

Combining cash transfers and vocational training may help reduce violence by addressing multiple factors underlying the willingness to support it, including a confluence of governance-related and economic drivers. Those receiving cash transfers and vocational training reported improved perceptions of government performance, which they saw as being more responsive to their needs.

“It is critical that the international community continue to rigorously evaluate programs so we can learn what works to reduce support for political violence,” says Wolfe. “We hope our study will encourage continued research in Afghanistan and other conflict zones to better understand what drives young people to violence and inform programs as a result.”

The study analyzed Mercy Corps’ technical and vocational education and training program in Kandahar, Afghanistan, designed to boost youth employability by providing courses such as embroidery, phone repair and welding. A one-time cash transfer was provided to a random subset of participants for research purposes. The impacts of the vocational training, cash transfer and a combination were examined immediately after participants completed the training and/or received the cash transfer, and then again six to nine months later.

Read the [study](#) and [findings](#) from Yale and Princeton, and join us to learn more at mercy Corps.org.