

Systematic reviews in international development

Evalueringskonferansen, Oslo, 1st September

Origins from evidence based medicine



Systematic reviews examine the existing evidence on an intervention

- Aim to answer key questions for evidence-based policy making:
 - What works and what doesn't? What is the evidence on effectiveness/impact of interventions?
 - Under which circumstances and for whom?
 - Why? What are the factors influencing intervention fidelity, beneficiary adoption and/or social change?
 - What is the quality of the evidence

SR process

1. Scoping: setting appropriate question, based on policy relevance (demand) and existing evidence (supply)
2. Set out methodology in protocol a-priori
3. Rigorous search to identify published and unpublished sources, in any language
4. Application of study inclusion criteria, determines what gets included
5. Systematic data collection and critical appraisal of study quality, to assess validity of the included evidence
6. Synthesis of evidence (outcomes and programme theory)
7. Review updated as new evidence emerges

SR applied to international development



Scoping/ Background

- Studies suggest that social cohesion is important for development outcomes and for post-conflict peacebuilding
- For these results to be meaningful for policy we need to know...
- Is social cohesion manipulable? Can you grow it?
- No existing systematic reviews

Study inclusion criteria

- **Population:** Geographically-based communities in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Intervention:** Community-level development, reconstruction, and peace building interventions in sub-Saharan Africa aiming to generate social cohesion.
- **Study designs:** Experimental and quasi-experimental (controlled before and after studies)
- **Outcomes:** Inter-personal and inter-group social cohesion, measured at the community or individual level.

Search and screening process

Title/ abstract review: Search of academic databases, communication with researchers, review of bibliographies returned 983 studies potentially relevant studies

Full-text review: 18 studies appeared to meet inclusion criteria and were reviewed

Included in review: 8 studies, reporting on 10 interventions

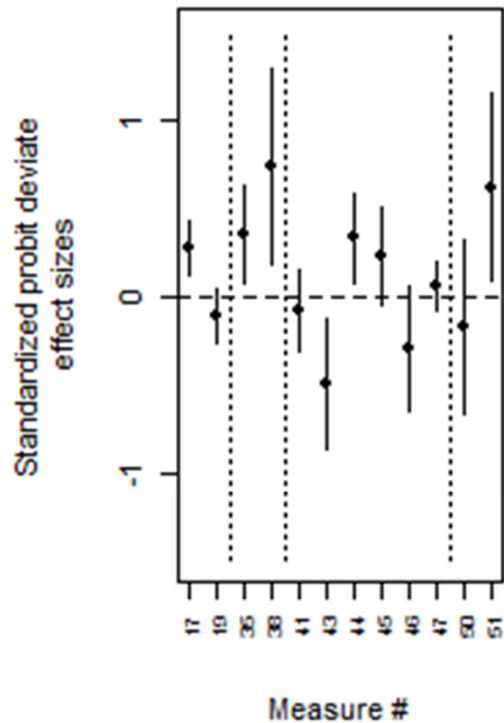
Included studies

- Covered two broad categories of interventions: Community Driven Development and Curriculum interventions
- Seven different countries, some post-conflict, others not, mix of rural and urban
- Study designs varied
- Outcome measurements varied

Preliminary meta-analysis

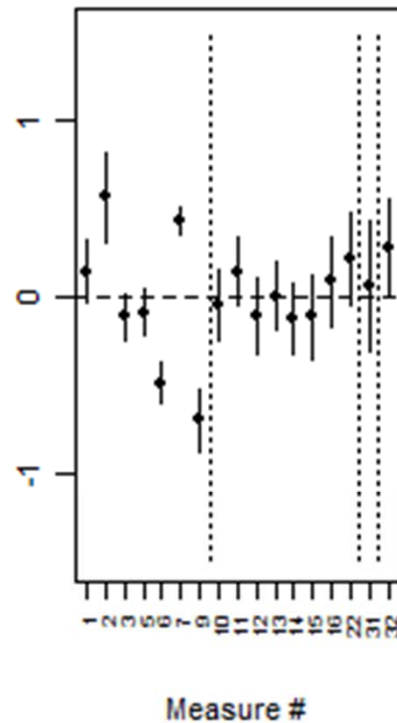
Trust and confidence

Effects on trust and confidence in community



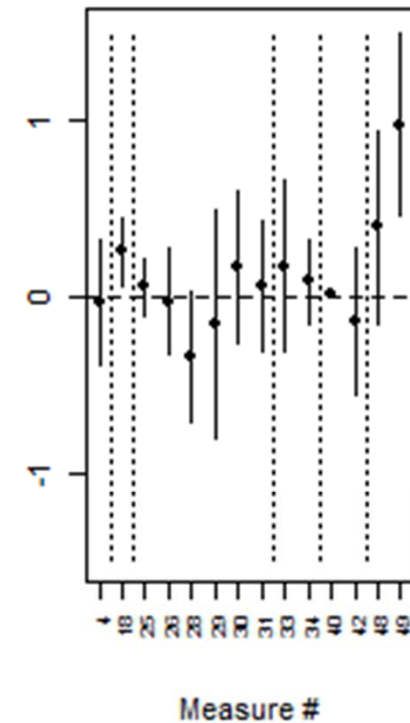
Collective action

Effects on reports of collective community action



Individual participation

Effects on reports of individual participation



CDD program theory (logic model)

Inputs: Information, facilitate election of sub-project committee, training and financial resources for sub-project



Outputs: Members of community select sub-project, contribute directly to sub-project implementation and administration



Intermediate outcomes: Members of community select sub-project and contribute directly to sub-project implementation and administration. Capacity to mobilise community and work together for a common goal



Final outcomes: Improved social cohesion

CDD program theory (logic model)

Inputs: Information, facilitate election of sub-project committee, training and financial resources for sub-project

Outputs: Members of community select sub-project to sub-project implementation and administration

Assumptions:
Community is a relevant concept;
people aware of available funding

Intermediate outcomes: Members of community select sub-project and contribute directly to sub-project implementation and administration. Capacity to mobilise community and work together for a common goal

Final outcomes: Improved social cohesion

Program theory (logic model)

**Assumptions:
Community aware
of meetings and
elections; Inclusive
and broad
participation**

**Activities: Facilitate election of sub-project committee, training
for sub-project**

**Outputs: Members of community select sub-project, contribute directly
to sub-project implementation and administration**

**Intermediate outcomes: Members of community select sub-project and
contribute directly to sub-project implementation and administration.
Capacity to mobilise community and work together for a common goal**

Final outcomes: Improved social cohesion

CDD program theory (logic model)

Inputs: Information, facilitating sub-project
financial resources for sub-project

Outputs: Members of community select s
to sub-project implementation and adminis

Intermediate outcomes: Members of community select sub-project and
contribute directly to sub-project implementation and administration.
Capacity to mobilise community and work together for a common goal

Final outcomes: Improved social cohesion

Assumptions: Choice of
project reflects
community priority;
participants believe
funding will be used
efficiently; projects bring
together people who
would not otherwise work
together

CDD program theory (logic model)

Inputs: Information, facilitating sub-project committee, training and financial resources for sub-project

Assumptions: Sub-project achieves positive outcomes; results are equitably distributed; if co-financing, community members are aware of and accept their obligations; free riders are penalised and sanctions effective

Community select sub-project, contributes directly to project implementation and administration

Members of community select sub-project and contribute to project implementation and administration. Community members work together for a common goal

Final outcomes: Improved social cohesion

CDD program theory (logic model)

Inputs: Information, facilitate election of sub-project committee, training and financial resources for sub-project

Outputs: Members of community select sub-project, contributes directly to sub-project implementation and administration

Intermediate outcomes: Members of community select sub-project and contribute directly to sub-project implementation and administration. Capacity to mobilise community and work together for a common goal

Final outcomes: Improved social cohesion

In conclusion, evidence does NOT suggest CDD programs have strong pro-social effects

- This appears to be because of limited impact on meaningful participation in programs
- BUT evidence is very messy and need better (more comparable) impact evidence
- Effects on other outcomes (quality of services) may be better
- Implementation may not be faithful to the “CDD” concept, but hard to assess as information on the causal chain in IEs limited
 - ⇒ *Future IE studies should collect this information*
 - ⇒ *Future SRs on social cohesion need to draw on wider evidence (not just IEs)*

Future of systematic reviews in international development

- Methodological innovation
- Increase in demand
- Database of systematic reviews in international development