Seriously?

RCT’s Role in Peacebuilding

Sebastian Chaskel
Program Director
Peace and Recovery Program
October 9, 2018
schaskel@poverty-action.org
Governance, Conflict and Crime Initiative

- GCCI tests solutions that can help low and middle income countries:
  - Overcome crime, violence, and corruption
  - Examine the causes of instability and insecurity
  - Support recovery and resiliency in countries affected by crisis and disaster

- GCCI supports three linked research initiatives:
  - Governance Initiative
  - Crime and Violence Initiative
  - Peace and Recovery Program
GCCI is implemented by IPA and J-PAL

J-PAL and IPA work to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence.

- 26 offices worldwide
- Global network of over 200 leading affiliated researchers at 50+ universities

Together, researchers affiliated with J-PAL and IPA have conducted over 1000 randomized evaluations in over 80 countries.
Role of RCT’s in Peacebuilding

• RCTs can be implemented in peacebuilding.

• Doing so would give us more knowledge about what works, allowing us to ensure resources are spent on projects with higher impact.

• Two examples.
  • Reconciliation program in Sierra Leone.
  • Peacebuilding program in Liberia.
War leaves wounds

Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly/Reuters
Can the wounds of war be healed?

Photo: Sara Terry
Districts of Operation

Cilliers, Jacobus, Oeindrila Dube, and Bilal Siddiqi. "Reconciling after civil conflict increases social capital but decreases individual well-being." Science 352.6287 (2016): 787-794. [Link to website][Link to paper]
Randomized evaluations rigorously test the effectiveness of programs and policies

Among a sample of 100 sections of 10 villages, sections randomly assigned to two groups so that they were statistically identical before the reconciliation program was implemented. Outcomes for both groups are measured. Two groups continue to be identical, except for the reconciliation program. Any differences in outcomes between the groups can be attributed to the reconciliation program.

Cilliers, Jacobus, Oeindrila Dube, and Bilal Siddiqi. "Reconciling after civil conflict increases social capital but decreases individual well-being." Science 352.6287 (2016): 787-794. [link to website], [link to paper].
Cilliers, Jacobus, Oeindrila Dube, and Bilal Siddiqi. "Reconciling after civil conflict increases social capital but decreases individual well-being." Science 352.6287 (2016): 787-794. [link to website], [link to paper].
Surveyed 2,383 people
What did this reconciliation program lead to?

- Forgiveness increased.
- Social networks became stronger.
  - More friendships.
  - Relied more on other people.
- Participation in organizations increased.
  - Women’s groups.
  - Parent teacher organizations.

Cilliers, Jacobus, Oeindrila Dube, and Bilal Siddiqi. "Reconciling after civil conflict increases social capital but decreases individual well-being." Science 352.6287 (2016): 787-794. [Link to website](#). [Link to paper](#).
What did this reconciliation program lead to?

- Psychological well-being deteriorates.
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - PTSD

Can we teach peace?

Photo: Glenna Gordon
Districts of Operation
What does peacebuilding intervention lead to?

• Same number of disputes, but backlog gets resolved.
• Disputes over real property are less violent.
• Some evidence of change in norms and skills.

What does peacebuilding intervention lead to?

But…

- Short-run rise in extrajudicial punishment.
- The powerful seem to benefit more in terms of property rights security.
- Question of cost-efficiency.

What is the role of RCTs in peacebuilding?

Looking forward to the discussion and to hearing from you:

schaskel@poverty-action.org