

## **Peace processes and diplomacy: row summary**

**Peace processes and diplomacy have large beneficial effects on physical and economic security despite the small harmful association with violence and atrocities. There are moderate improvements in diplomacy and dispute resolution, and little or no average effects on civic participation and environmental security. Engagement of all relevant local stakeholders is important for successful interventions.**

Peace processes and diplomacy refer to formal and informal efforts to prevent, de-escalate, or end armed conflict and reduce risks of atrocities. These interventions encompass not only supporting political institutions, but working with key actors to establish the preconditions for peace and avoiding the emergence or escalation of atrocities, including ceasefires, establishing national and community dialogues, and ensuring that marginalised groups, such as women, youth, and ethnic minorities, participate in the process.

Interventions in this evidence base include third-party mediation and facilitation (by the UN, regional bodies, states, or local actors); ceasefires (including localized or area-specific ceasefires); peace agreements and provisions (e.g., human-rights or gender provisions); informal and community peace accords and indigenous dispute resolution mechanisms; and complementary diplomatic instruments such as international election observation, peacekeeping and monitoring linked to negotiations, disarmament–demobilization–reintegration (DDR), humanitarian assistance, and donor budget support in post-agreement transitions.

Peace processes and diplomacy aim to reduce violence by enabling dialogue, lowering uncertainty, and creating credible commitments between conflict parties. Mediation can break negotiation stalemates, address information asymmetries, and help parties bargain over core incompatibilities. Ceasefires can pause hostilities and create space for talks; and local agreements can embed culturally legitimate rules for resource sharing and dispute resolution, reducing retaliation cycles. Diplomatic and implementation supports—such as peacekeeping/monitoring, DDR, electoral assistance, and budget support—are expected to strengthen compliance, protect civilians during transitions, and restore basic services and livelihoods. Effects are expected to vary by conflict phase, the design and inclusiveness of agreements, mediator leverage and neutrality, and state or locally rooted capacity to enforce commitments.

There are large beneficial average effects on physical security ( $g=1.36$ ) and economic security ( $g=0.63$ ), most often linked to informal and community agreements and related mechanisms that improve safety and equitable access to resources. Effects are moderate and beneficial for peaceful dispute resolution ( $g=0.19$ ) and diplomatic relations ( $g=0.337$ ), consistent with evidence that mediation increases negotiations, agreement signing, and conflict termination—particularly when paired with peacekeeping and monitoring. By contrast, the average association with the nature and scale of violence or atrocities is harmful ( $g=-0.04$ ), reflecting mixed findings: some mediation or ceasefires reduce fatalities temporarily (especially when addressing core issues), while in other contexts peace processes coincide with fragmentation of rebel movements, violence displacement

(either geographically, or other forms of violence such as crime-related increase), or selective targeting in areas with weak protection. On the other hand, local ceasefires sometimes reduce violence in neighbouring areas, Government performance shows a small beneficial average effect ( $g=0.058$ ), while civic participation shows little or no effect ( $g=0.001$ ). Environmental security shows little or no average effect ( $g=-0.01$ ), but case evidence highlights potential environmental harms during post-agreement transitions when land governance and enforcement are weak.

Confidence in findings varies by outcome. The evidence base for diplomacy/dispute resolution and violence outcomes draws on multiple non-experimental impact evaluations (and some reviews), but causal interpretation is constrained by selection into mediation or agreements and context-specific implementation differences. Several outcomes (e.g., education security, food and health security, transitions of power, sense of belonging) rely mainly on single-case qualitative studies and should be treated as low-confidence signals of plausible pathways rather than generalizable effects. Overall, the pattern of findings suggests that peace processes and diplomacy can deliver substantial benefits—especially for security and livelihoods—when interventions are locally legitimate, address core conflict drivers, and are matched with credible implementation and protection capacity; where these conditions are absent, effects can be muted or can involve meaningful risks.

#### Meta-analytic effect sizes (Hedges' $g$ )

| Outcome                                            | Effect size (g) | Direction  | Magnitude       | No. of studies | No. of effect sizes |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Physical security                                  | 1.422           | Beneficial | Large effect    | 2              | 5                   |
| Economic security                                  | 0.63            | Beneficial | Large effect    | 1              | 4                   |
| Peaceful dispute resolution                        | 0.194           | Beneficial | Moderate effect | 5              | 19                  |
| Diplomatic relations & Peaceful dispute resolution | 0.337           | Beneficial | Moderate effect | 1              | 3                   |
| Diplomatic relations                               | 0.172           | Beneficial | Moderate effect | 1              | 12                  |
| Government performance                             | 0.058           | Beneficial | Small effect    | 2              | 6                   |

|                                            |        |            |                      |    |    |
|--------------------------------------------|--------|------------|----------------------|----|----|
| Political security                         | 0.001  | Beneficial | Small effect         | 2  | 12 |
| Civic participation                        | 0.001  | Beneficial | Little or no effect  | 1  | 12 |
| Environmental security                     | -0.008 | Harmful    | Little or no effect  | 2  | 4  |
| Nature and scale of violence or atrocities | -0.04  | Harmful    | Small adverse effect | 10 | 30 |

Note: Interpretation thresholds:  $|g| < 0.05$  little or no effect;  $0.05 \leq |g| < 0.10$  small;  $0.10 \leq |g| < 0.20$  moderate;  $|g| \geq 0.20$  large. Negative values indicate harmful effects in the coding used for these outcomes.