



NEWS
RELEASE

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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MERCY CORPS: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN SOMALIA COULD HALVE SUPPORT FOR VIOLENT GROUPS

New research finds access to secondary education and community engagement are an effective combination in conflict-affected areas

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MOGADISHU, SOMALIA- New research from the global organization [Mercy Corps](http://mercy Corps.org) reveals that young people in conflict-affected areas of Somalia who have access to secondary education are almost half as likely— 48 percent – to support violent groups than those not in school. When structured community-engagement opportunities complement access to education, they are nearly 65 percent less likely to support violence.

The report, “If Youth are Given the Chance,” measured the impact of Mercy Corps’ Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI), a multi-year program funded by the United States Agency for International Development. The program improved access and quality of education for more than 100,000 young people through construction and rehabilitation of schools and improved teacher training. The program also created community-engagement opportunities through student clubs and youth-led community-improvement initiatives.

“Although we anticipated a reduction in support for violent groups based on our previous research, we did not anticipate the scale of that reduction,” says Beza Tesfaye, Senior Researcher for Mercy Corps and co-author of the report. “This important insight could be useful for the government of Somalia in implementing a national strategy to tackle support for violent groups.”

Despite mounting evidence that development programs can promote stability, investment remains low. In 2016, only nine percent of \$180.6 billion in worldwide development assistance tackled underlying causes of violence.

“Ten years ago, 80 percent of aid went to natural disaster victims. Today 80 percent goes to victims of conflict. Countries must make conflict prevention a central pillar of foreign policy,” says Tesfaye. “Mercy Corps urges donors and the international community to learn from successful programs like SYLI.”

The research evaluated the program in Somalia’s South Central and Puntland regions, reflecting surveys of more than 1,200 youth ages 15 to 24 years old interviewed between April and May 2017. It reinforces the findings of a 2016



analysis undertaken in the self-declared independent region of Somaliland, where in-school youth with access to civic-engagement opportunities through SYLI were 20 percent less likely to support political violence.

Mercy Corps has worked in Somalia since 2005 and has helped more than 1 million Somalis by improving access to food and clean water, supporting local markets and providing education and civic opportunities for young people.

The full report is available [here](#).