

LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO LOCAL PROBLEMS?
**EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS TO
REDUCE INTERETHNIC TENSIONS AND LOCAL VIOLENCE**

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Abstract

This study assesses the effectiveness of a new EU-funded project to strengthen social trust and rebuild communal norms of tolerance in the West African state of Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso has a strong history of peaceful coexistence among ethnic and religious groups, but in recent years has seen a rise of organized violence by Islamic extremists and a fracturing of old forms of social solidarity. Through a randomized curricular intervention administered in schools and youth clubs, this study assesses the effectiveness of individual-level (building self-esteem and self-confidence) and community-level (encouraging social cohesion through emphasizing shared identities) factors on intercommunal trust and the willingness of individuals to rely on non-violent solutions to local disputes. Our project employs a randomized intervention in Burkina Faso, a West African state in which the social order, previously bolstered by a strong national identity of l’homme integre (upright men), has begun to come apart in recent years. The country has seen a rise of intercommunal violence and organized violence by Islamic extremists. The proposed intervention seeks to educate adolescents to reinforce identities that are tolerant of others and resilient to radicalization. In co-operation with a local implementing partner, we randomly assign an education module to teachers and non-school educators in six communes and two cities (Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou) in Burkina Faso. These educators will deliver the module to 2,400 youth from the ages of 12-25.

Please contact William Nomikos at wnomikos@wustl.edu for more details on this ongoing project.