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Ex-combatant reintegration: cash or training?

Over at *The Smoke-Filled Room*, Yale PhD student [Suparna Chaudhry](#) writes:

The Indian government must realize that simply granting a lump-sum of money to ex-combatants for a period of time cannot guarantee their reintegration—education and training are crucial skills that need to be imparted, but until these skills are used to develop these regions further, there is not [sic] guarantee that other civilians might be deterred from taking up arms.

Her post is inspired by the Government of India's [offer](#) to rehabilitate the Maoist insurgents in many parts of central and eastern India. In arguing for the importance of making up the human capital deficit in ex-combatants, Chaudhry cites a [quasi-natural experiment](#) conducted in Northern Uganda by Annan, Blattman, Mazurana, and Carlson. However, her conclusions may be premature, given the evidence from another study in Northern Uganda also conducted by Annan and Blattman. [Preliminary results showed that unconditional cash transfers actually yielded a 35% return on investment for groups of youth prone to violence.](#)

IPA has also been actively involved in researching the unique challenges presented by post-conflict societies in the context of the broader development program. In particular, how do we develop the human capital of ex-combatants and help reintegrate them in productive activities? [An evaluation of the Action on Armed Violence \(formerly Landmine Action\) agricultural training program in Liberia found a number of promising results.](#) Program participants were at least a quarter more likely to be involved in agricultural activities, while there were also small but positive improvements across most measures of social engagement, citizenship, and stability. Although there was little impact on participation in illicit activities, participants did report being a third less likely to have interest in and links to recruiters and activities from the conflict in neighboring Cote D'Ivoire. A policy memo with detailed results of the evaluation conducted by Chris Blattman and Jeannie Annan, can be found [here](#) (pdf).

So IPA results show that while Chaundhry is not far off in her claim that education and training are crucial, cash transfers might also improve outcomes in helping to rehabilitate ex-combatants.

For further reading, we also recommend checking out our [Post-Conflict Recovery and Fragile States Initiative](#), and [related projects](#) conducted through IPA.

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