J-PAL CRIME AND VIOLENCE INITIATIVE RFP OVERVIEW
ROUND 6 (FALL 2020)

The Crime and Violence Initiative (CVI) will foster experimental research on crime and social and political violence. Crime and violence can hinder economic development and urban growth, and exacerbate governance challenges by fostering corruption and draining public sector resources. The initiative will fund evaluations that focus on preventing, mitigating, and responding to the effects of crime and violence.

The CVI is now calling for proposals from J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, and CVI invited researchers for travel/proposal development grants, policy outreach support grants, pilot grants, and full RCT grants. Proposals are due **November 20, 2020**.

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I. BEYOND SIMPLE PROGRAM EVALUATION: GENERALIZABILITY AND INNOVATION

First and foremost, this initiative aims to support the most innovative and generalizable experimental studies on crime and violence. Innovation can mean producing evidence where little exists, especially where little experimental work has been done. While there is more and more micro-level work on violence, there remains little on crime outside the OECD. And there is little experimental research on either subject.

Some recent examples of work on new topics include Jasper Cooper's study of whether transferring policing power to community members might improve legal protection in Papua New Guinea. Another comes from Salma Mousa, who is evaluating the impact of mixed Christian- Muslim soccer teams on social cohesion and interactions between Christians and Muslims in an ISIS-affected area of Iraq.

Yet large gaps remain in this area. To name a few examples, there is currently little international experimental research on: the psychological and behavioral roots of aggression; dispute resolution; gangs; criminal networks; "disorganized" crime; and the role of social alienation in driving crime and violence.

Innovation also includes studies that tackle common interventions and test the fundamental assumptions and prior beliefs that underlie them. For example, reconciliation programs and ceremonies have become routine after violence. Yet a randomized evaluation in Sierra Leone shows that truth and reconciliation programs implemented 10 years after the end of violence had positive and negative effects, improving relations between people from rival sides but also increasing symptoms of traumatic distress.

Almost every major program or policy is founded on reasonable but untested assumptions. Employment programs for criminals assume that criminal labor supply is responsive to non-criminal wages. Rehabilitation programs assume that specific skills or norms can be learned or adopted through short training courses or other interventions. Testing these assumptions in one context, and across contexts, aids generalizability.

For instance, recent studies of cognitive behavioral therapy programs in Chicago and Liberia suggest that self-control skills and social identity not only affect decisions to commit acts of crime and violence, but that these skills and identities are malleable in adults and can be shaped by short courses of intervention.

Naturally, it is difficult to generalize the results of any single evaluation. That said, some studies have more general lessons than others. We believe it is the studies that pursue "basic science," while at the same time answering important policy questions, that will have the greatest intellectual and policy impacts in the long run.

For example, Abhijit Banerjee and coauthors recently studied the crime displacement effects of enforcement, but used the experiment to structurally estimate the strategic response of drunk drivers to police presence in Rajasthan. We encourage studies that attempt to assess more fundamental assumptions or policy parameters, or that develop or test theories.

Flagship programs of great national and international importance are also strong candidates for funding, although even here we encourage applicants to carefully consider generalizability. For example, as part of the Rajasthan drunk driving experiment, Abhijit Banerjee and coauthors developed a cross-cutting analysis of various interventions to improve overall police performance and public perception. This deep partnership with the Bureau of Police Research and Development and other government entities ultimately resulted in dedicated funds for police skills trainings in the state.

Other frontiers of experimentation apply new methods. One example is the estimation of spillovers. For instance, Chris Blattman, Donald Green, Daniel Ortega, and Santiago Tobón used a large-scale policing intervention in Bogotá to estimate design-based spillovers. Their analysis shows that in the presence of interference between units, conventional estimation techniques produced biased estimates and inaccurate standard errors. This work builds on extensive US evidence from much smaller samples, where it is not possible to estimate spillovers precisely.

Bringing new types of data or measurement to bear is also an important contribution, especially when those data will become available to others, they can be replicated in other contexts, or the measurement strategy can be mimicked by others. For example, Claudio Ferraz and Joana Monteiro (with support from J-PAL's Government Partnership Initiative) partnered with the

Citizen Security Institute of the State Government of Rio de Janeiro to build a police violence dataset to subsidize future randomized evaluations. Other frontiers include new forms of data (including "big data"), new behavioral games, and new survey modules.

Finally, CVI is also accepting proposals for research on violence and homicide reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), supported by a grant from the Open Society Foundations (OSF), which is run through and managed by IPA's Peace & Recovery Program (P&R). With just eight percent of the world's population, LAC accounts for over a third of all homicides. Seventeen of the 20 countries with the highest homicide rates in the world are in LAC, as are 43 of the top 50 cities. To date, little evidence exists on what kinds of programs and policies can contribute to a reduction in this rate. To that end, CVI has expanded its core research themes to include homicide in LAC. The special fund seeks to support some of the first rigorous studies, and policy and program pilots, on the impact of homicide and violence reduction interventions.

II. SCOPE OF THE INITIATIVE

Crime and social and political violence are wide-ranging phenomena. By crime, broadly speaking, we invite proposals related to the following phenomena:

- Violent crime and property crime
- Organized crime
- Interpersonal violence (such as between-household disputes, identity-targeted violence, and domestic violence)
- White collar crime (although please note that corruption research is generally the focus of the J-PAL Governance Initiative)

By social and political violence, we invite proposals related to the following phenomena:

- State-supported violence and repression, including the regular and extreme use of force by arms of the criminal justice system
- Electoral violence
- Riots, protests, and other collective action (violent and nonviolent)
- Intergroup violence, including ethnic and sectarian violence
- Terrorism and violent extremism
- International and internal conflict (including insurgency and counterinsurgency)

III. GENERAL RESEARCH PRIORITIES

There is relatively little international experimental evidence on "bread and butter" interventions and approaches to reducing crime and violence. We anticipate that the next decade will see the replication and evaluation of common US and European anti-crime strategies in developing countries. This initiative is open to funding high-quality interventions in this vein. In line with our emphasis on generalizability, however, we strongly encourage a focus on fundamental questions rather than narrow program evaluation. We also encourage work on challenges and policy strategies that are unique to the developing world which supersede national and regional boundaries.

In particular, we encourage research that:

- Helps develop or test theories of crime and violence, including causes and consequences
- Seeks to disentangle interventions to isolate and understand the underlying assumptions and theoretical mechanisms
- Tries to challenge common prior beliefs, which could lead to a new understanding of crime and violence or new programs and priorities for mitigation
- Uses and develops novel measurement strategies

In addition, over the first three years of this initiative, we have seen growing interest and enthusiasm around specific themes and intervention types (e.g. social contact, cognitive behavioral therapy, etc.). For those interested in pursuing research on these

topics that will help further unpack mechanisms and address unanswered questions, we encourage you to closely review the evidence wrap-ups included in the appendix of this document, which briefly summarize existing evidence, ongoing research, and areas for further research.

Finally, given the unique challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic on both research and policymaking, this round we look forward to receiving proposals that acknowledge and address these issues. This includes projects that (i) propose to understand the impacts of the pandemic on topics related to crime, violence, and conflict, and/or (ii) clearly lay out to what extent their findings may be generalizable beyond a COVID-19 context. Moreover, we expect research teams to consider the safety measures required to conduct field activities in the current scenario. More information on J-PAL's COVID-19 research guidelines can be found here.

IV. PRIORITY QUESTIONS

We encourage submissions that aim to push the frontiers of research and policy and that ask new or otherwise important questions. Questions where there is an established literature will be held to a higher standard of innovation and generalizability.

Research themes and questions that are especially relevant or in need of evidence include:

Motivations behind participating in crime and violence. A fundamental research area is "who participates in criminal activities?" and "why do they engage in violence?" We encourage research that sheds light on a range of material and nonmaterial incentives, such as:

- Psychological factors and behavioral motivations
- Economic opportunities (e.g. in labor markets)
- Social norms, as well as social networks and relationships
- Injustice, rights, and political representation
- Governance and the provision of public goods
- Opportunities and connections to criminal networks (and interventions that are designed to alter or break those connections)
- The role of groups (including but not limited to the provision of material and nonmaterial club goods, the role of social networks, and the role of group dynamics and social norms)

Organizational strategies of criminal and armed groups. We also encourage research that sheds light on the internal organization of entities such as criminal gangs and extremist social movements, including questions of leadership, funding, organization, as well as internal principal-agent problems. For example, field experimental work may help shed light on radicalization, including strategies used to recruit radicalized youth.

Security provision and the efficacy of the justice sector. We hope the initiative will generate evidence on the role of justice sector institutions and policies. Relevant topics include:

- Peacekeeping
- Formal policing (practices, capacity, technical expertise, etc.)
- Criminal justice and judicial reform
- Sentencing and incarceration
- Alternatives to incarceration
- Informal (e.g. community) policing and security

Building and maintaining stability after violence. We encourage research that uncovers how peace and stability can be maintained after episodes of violent crime and conflict.

 At the community level this encompasses:

- Conflict resolution, to bring organized violence to an end
- Peacebuilding initiatives, such as methods for alternative dispute resolution
- Reconciliation among groups engaged in violence
- State capability and public service delivery
- Participation and the peaceful exercise of political voice

At the individual level this encompasses:

- Rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and perpetrators, socially and economically
- Social and psychological recovery from trauma
- (To a lesser extent, because of the larger existing literature) Recovery in terms of economic well-being (home production, labor market participation) and human capital (education, physical health)

Understudied topics and groups. Finally, there are a number of extremely important but understudied topics and groups where we wish to encourage research.

- Migrants, displaced persons, and refugees
  - Social conflicts engendered by migration (voluntary or forced)
  - Strategies for dealing with and mitigating the effects of forced migration
- Exploitation of women and human trafficking
- Violent speech and extremism

As long as proposals fall within this focus, the CVI does not prioritize certain research questions over others. If you are uncertain about whether a proposal may be eligible, e-mail cvi@povertyactionlab.org.

V. FOCUS COUNTRIES

Funding for this initiative comes from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO, former DFID). As such, no funds can be spent in high-income countries (generally defined as the US, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and wealthy Middle Eastern countries). A majority of funds must be spent in FCDO priority countries.

The CVI will consider proposals in non-FCDO priority countries, but these proposals will have a lower probability of funding. In general, the CVI and FCDO are interested in expanding beyond countries where most RCTs are concentrated and are especially interested in evaluations in fragile states. If you are uncertain about whether a country may be eligible, e-mail cvi@povertyactionlab.org.

Lastly, only projects in LAC are eligible for competitive funding from OSF. While we would be particularly excited to receive proposals for projects in Brazil and the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua), proposals for projects across the region will be considered.

VI. PROPOSAL TYPES

The CVI will consider the following proposal types:

Travel/Proposal development grants: These grants are to develop preliminary research ideas. Activities may include background research, travel, relationship development, descriptive analysis, observational analysis, and data development or collection. Travel/Proposal development grants are intended for those who may not otherwise have access to this type of funding. PhD students, junior researchers, and those from institutions with limited funding are especially encouraged to apply. The review board will consider how this proposal helps researchers develop subsequent proposals for pilots or full randomized controlled trials (RCTs). Maximum award: $10,000.

Pilot grants: These grants are for studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation requires substantial upfront investments, including: further trial-and-error piloting; developing new measurement strategies or instruments; analysis of existing data; or new descriptive or experimental data development or collection.[1] The review board will consider how this proposal helps researchers develop subsequent proposals for full RCTs. Maximum award: $75,000.

Full RCT grants: These grants are for research projects with a clear research question, committed implementing partner(s), randomization design, well-defined instruments, and sample size estimates.[2] Grants can also fund the continuation or completion of research projects that have already started without CVI funding (including those for which data collection is complete). This includes long-run follow-ups from previously published trials, as well as "downstream studies" that use a randomized evaluation designed for a non-CVI priority to answer a CVI-relevant question. The expectation is that this work will result in a paper publishable in a top economic, political science, or science journal. Maximum award: $400,000, including any previous CVI funding of any type for the same project. Other J-PAL and IPA funding may also affect award sizes.[3]

VII. OFF-CYCLE PROPOSALS

CVI also offers two types of funding outside of the regular RFP cycles:

Off-cycle Projects: These grants are intended for research projects that face a substantial time constraints and need to receive funding before the end of a regular funding round to make use of an unanticipated opportunity (e.g., a newly announced policy change that will go into effect soon, creating an opportunity for a randomized evaluation). Proposals must clearly justify the need to receive a decision on an expedited schedule. The maximum amount awarded to off-cycle proposals is $50,000. PhD students are not eligible for off-cycle funding.

Evidence use and policy outreach support: These funds are intended to support the take-up and dissemination of evidence from CVI-funded evaluations, or other randomized evaluations conducted by J-PAL affiliates and CVI invited researchers that address the initiative's research priorities. Funds can be used to support activities such as conferences, workshops, or events to disseminate results and policy lessons from evidence, as well as to support the take-up of evidence, such as by providing technical assistance to or embedding staff in an organization, either with a partner from the original study or with other entities interested in using evidence. The suggested budget range for these requests is $10,000-20,000 and applications can be submitted on a rolling basis.

VIII. ELIGIBILITY

J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, and a list of invited researchers are eligible to apply for any type of CVI funding. PhD students who have a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher on their thesis committee may be eligible to apply for travel/proposal development grants, pilot grants, or up to $50,000 for full RCT grants.[4] All proposals may include collaborators outside of this network.

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[1] Full RCTs requesting less than $75,000 are considered full RCTs and evaluated accordingly.

[2] As a general rule, CVI does not fund pure lab experiments. In very rare cases, a proposal may be considered if a lab-in-field experiment supplements an underlying randomized evaluation, or if the lab-in-field experiment has direct policy implications. For example, Edward Miguel and coauthors' lab-in-field evaluation of ethnic bias in Kenya was implemented during Kenya's national elections to understand how proximity to election dates might affect participants' ethnic biases.

[3] Proposals with a reason for requesting more than $400,000 may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

[4] A PhD student's adviser must provide a letter of support and indicate willingness to remain involved in a supervisory role throughout the project. For J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher advisers who do not reside at the student's host university, the application must also include a formal letter of confirmation from the student's department head confirming the adviser is a member of the student's official thesis committee. To apply for up to $50,000 for pilot studies or full RCTs, PhD students must also provide evidence of successful pilot activities, funded either through a CVI travel/proposal development grant or other sources. PhD students are eligible to apply for a maximum of two travel/proposal development grants and two pilot study/full RCT grants during their time as graduate students. All else equal, priority will be given to graduate students who have not applied before. Applicants who received travel/proposal development grants as graduate students but have

Please note that beginning in January 2019, any J-PAL affiliate, J-PAL postdoc, CVI invited researcher, or eligible PhD student can submit **a maximum of three pilot or full-scale proposals within a 12-month period to CVI**, either as a main PI or co-PI in the proposal. For example, if a researcher submitted two pilot or full-scale proposals in our Spring 2019 round, they were only eligible to submit a maximum of 1 pilot or full-scale proposal in our Fall 2019 round. *Applications from our postponed Spring 2020 round will not count towards this number.*

IX. GRANT CONDITIONS

Travel/Proposal development grants:

1. **Research Conduct:** Grantees accept responsibility for following appropriate IRB protocol and providing CVI copies of any IRB approvals or exemptions, if any are necessary. In addition, they are expected to adhere to MIT's community-wide policies that are available here, as well as policies put in place by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

2. **Submit report:** Grantees are required to submit a brief report within 30 days of completing travel. If the travel/proposal development work results in non-initiative-funded follow-on projects, grantees should inform CVI as part of their final report or upon receipt of additional funding.

3. **Participate in CVI activity:** Grantees agree to participate in one CVI activity or event. The CVI will cover associated costs.

4. **Credit CVI:** Any presentations and publications, including academic papers, policy briefs, press releases, blogs, and organizational newsletters that emerge from this project must include the following text: "*Funding for this project was provided by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, awarded through the Crime and Violence Initiative.*"

Pilot studies and Full RCTs:

1. **Research conduct:** Grantees will be required by MIT to establish an Institutional Authorization Agreement so that MIT can cede IRB authority to the IRB of Record. Specific instructions will be given in the Notice of Award. In addition, they are expected to adhere to MIT's community-wide policies that are available here, as well as policies put in place by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

2. **Peer-review proposals:** Grantees may be requested to peer-review proposals in the future CVI rounds.

3. **Register project (full RCTs only):** Within three months of the start date indicated on the proposal, grantees must register their trial with the AEA RCT Registry. Registration includes 18 required fields (such as your name and a small subset of your IRB requirements), and the entire process should take less than 20 minutes. There is also an opportunity to include more information, including power calculations and an optional pre-analysis plan.

4. **Submit progress/final reports:** Grantees are required to submit a brief start-up report, semi-annual financial update, an annual progress report, a final financial report within 60 days of completion of the award period, and a final project report with preliminary results within 12 months of completion of the award period, which will be made public on the J-PAL website.

5. **Publish project datasets and instruments (full RCTs only):** Grantees may be requested to share data collection instruments and methodologies with other grantees. Furthermore, researchers funded through this grant will be required to publish de-identified data in accordance with J-PAL's Data and Code Availability Policy. J-PAL's

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since moved to another institution may only apply for funding to continue that same project.

research team can work with you to clean, label, de-identify, document and replicate datasets collected as part of a randomized trial before publishing them in the J-PAL Dataverse or another data repository of your choice.

6. **Collect program cost data (full RCT only):** Policymakers are interested in program costs, as it is one of the key factors in their decision to support a program. Cost data also allows for cost effectiveness analyses (CEA), which J-PAL may conduct (with permission from the researchers) even if such an analysis is not part of an academic paper. To offset the cost of collecting program cost data, the budget template includes a $1,000 line item. CVI will provide a costing worksheet for grantees to update annually.

   If researchers are unable to collect detailed cost data, researchers are still required to provide estimates of total program cost, average cost per beneficiary, and marginal cost to add another beneficiary.

7. **Collecting and reporting Gender-disaggregated data:** J-PAL, through its Gender sector, is making an effort to study heterogeneity in program impacts by beneficiary/participant gender more systematically. Please note that the following request only applies to J-PAL internal reports and does not extend to the academic paper or online J-PAL summary.

   Many studies funded by J-PAL initiatives already collect study participants' gender. In such cases, and when outcome data are individual-specific, we request that grantees conduct heterogeneity analyses by beneficiary gender for the study's main results for internal reporting to J-PAL (to be shared in the final grant report). A single study might be underpowered to detect heterogeneous treatment effects, or null results might not seem interesting in one study, but these findings may be meaningful when included in an analysis across studies. J-PAL will use the reported results for (a) determining potential pooled statistical analyses to conduct across studies and (b) generating gender-related policy lessons in the crime and violence field. Our reporting template will include a question on this, which researchers are encouraged to fill it in when applicable. We recognize that there will be cases where this reporting is not applicable, for various reasons. In these cases, the PIs can just provide a brief explanation to be shared with the Gender sector.

8. **Participate in CVI activities:** Grantees agree to participate in one CVI activity or event such as an evidence-sharing workshop, matchmaking conference, or donor presentation. The CVI will cover associated costs.

9. **Credit CVI**: Any presentations and publications, including academic papers, policy briefs, press releases, blogs, and organizational newsletters that emerge from this project must include the following text: "*Funding for this project was provided by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, awarded through the Crime and Violence Initiative*."

X. REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals are reviewed along five criteria: academic contribution, policy relevance, technical design, project viability, and value of research.

Travel/Proposal development grants: The CVI co-chairs review proposals and make final funding decisions.

Pilot and full RCT grants: The CVI review board, consisting of the CVI co-chairs and three other J-PAL affiliates selected by the co-chairs, reviews proposals. Co-chairs submitting a proposal in the current round of funding are required to recuse themselves from reviewing the same proposal type (travel/proposal development, pilot, or full RCT), and any board member submitting a proposal in the current round of funding is required to recuse him/herself from the overall review. [5] The CVI review board makes a decision to (1) approve, (2) conditionally approve (with minor revisions or clarifications), (3) request a "revise and resubmit" during this or a subsequent round, or (4) not approve.

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[5] In addition, no spouse, partner, or immediate family member (parent, child, or sibling) of any individual named on a proposal application may serve as a peer or board referee in the round in which the applicant's proposal is being reviewed.

If applicants would like to appeal a CVI review board decision, they must e-mail cvi@povertyactionlab.org within one week of the announcement detailing the reasons for the appeal (maximum two pages). The CVI review board considers all appeals.

XI. TIMELINE

The CVI has two regular funding cycles per year. See below for the current round's timeline:

ROUND 6 (FALL 2020) TIMELINE	
October 1	RFP is issued
November 20	Proposal submission deadline
Week of January 18	RFP decisions announced

XII. TO APPLY

Proposals are due **11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, November 20, 2020**. Follow the instructions in the travel/proposal development grant application instructions or the pilot studies and full RCTs application instructions, available on the CVI RFP webpage.

XIII. RELATED INITIATIVES

When applying to the CVI, consider whether your proposal may also be suited for the J-PAL Governance Initiative or Innovations for Poverty Action's Peace & Recovery (P&R) program. These initiatives share the same geographic focus and emphasis on supporting innovation and basic research that maximizes generalizability (and with it broad policy relevance). The priority questions of CVI and P&R are especially overlapping, although the CVI has a much greater emphasis on crime and criminal justice issues, and P&R has a broader focus on state and institution building, humanitarian crises, and post-crisis recovery.

Please do not submit the same proposal to more than one initiative at the same time. J-PAL initiatives cannot simultaneously consider the same proposal. If you are uncertain about whether your proposal falls within the CVI's scope, e-mail cvi@povertyactionlab.org.

J-PAL Governance Initiative (GI): GI funds randomized impact evaluations of programs designed to improve participation in the political and policy process, reduce leakages in public programs, and improve state capacity. GI's research priorities are identified in the Governance Review Paper, which is currently being revised to include a new section on improving state capacity based on Finan, F., Olken, B., and Pande, R. 2015. "The Personnel Economics of the State." Elsevier, Forthcoming.

IPA Peace & Recovery (P&R) program: IPA's Peace & Recovery program is designed to support field experiments and related research in several broad areas: reducing violence and promoting peace; reducing "fragility" (i.e. fostering state capability and institutions of decision making); and preventing, coping with, and recovering from crises (focusing on conflict, but also including non-conflict humanitarian crises).

XIV. FUNDING

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO, former DFID) has co-funded J-PAL's Governance Initiative since 2011. FCDO has approved a further £12m of UK Aid to increase its support for the Governance Initiative; and also to fund new research, particularly experiments, in crime and violence (J-PAL's Crime and Violence Initiative), and conflict (IPA's Peace and Recovery Program), together called the Governance, Crime, and Conflict Initiative (GCCI). GCCI also receives funding from the Open Society Foundations (OSF) for projects on violence and homicide reduction in Latin America—applicants are able to apply for these grants through CVI and P&R.

APPENDICES

The following pages contain evidence wrap-ups that are meant to provide guidance for researchers applying to J-PAL's Crime and Violence Initiative (CVI) or IPA's Peace and Recovery Program (P&R). These wrap-ups have been drafted on thematic areas on which we have previously received and/or funded a high volume of proposals. In advance of submitting a research proposal, we encourage all researchers working on these themes to review these materials closely for guidance on existing evidence to consider, ongoing research, open questions, and other considerations for applying.

Current topics include:

1. Social contact in fragile settings
2. Cognitive behavioral therapy for crime and violence reduction

EVIDENCE WRAP-UP: SOCIAL CONTACT IN FRAGILE SETTINGS[6]

EXISTING EVIDENCE

Some peacebuilding programs aim to promote peace by improving interactions among individuals on opposite sides of the conflict divide by, for example, reducing the degree of prejudice and discrimination groups harbor towards one another. One such type of programming—social contact—has built on decades of social psychology research on prejudice reduction. The "contact hypothesis," as laid out by Allport (1954), asserts that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and bias when the following conditions are met: (1) there is equal status between groups; (2) groups are working towards a common goal; (3) there is intergroup cooperation; and (4) there is support from authorities. But can contact lead to measurable changes in attitude and behavior and, ultimately, serve to reduce conflict among opposing groups?

A 2006 meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp reviewed more than 500 contact studies, coming to the conclusion that "intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice." However, a more recent paper by Paluck, Green, and Green (2019)—which reviews evidence from 27 randomized evaluations—finds that contact interventions that addressed racial or ethnic bias often produced much weaker effects, compared to interventions addressing other forms of prejudice. This suggests that there are still a number of important questions to be answered in assessing whether contact is an effective policy tool.

Notably, these reviews highlight the dearth of existing experimental evidence on whether contact interventions are an effective means of altering how individuals interact with one another in contexts experiencing or recovering from conflict. Moreover, less is known about whether contact can help reduce conflict among divided groups and the channels through which contact can ultimately promote peace. Recent work has started to shed light on how contact can alter the ways in which groups view one another and the extent to which they are more tolerant of each other in conflict-prone contexts, but additional research is needed to discern whether these efforts ultimately translate into lower levels of conflict or higher degrees of cooperation and collaboration among groups:

- In Nigeria, Scacco and Warren (2018) studied a vocational training program that brought together Christian and Muslim young men for sixteen weeks of computer training in either mixed-religion or single-religion classrooms in a conflict-prone city, Kaduna. They find that students in mixed-religion classrooms demonstrated significantly less out-group discriminatory behavior (though there was no change in reported prejudice) compared to students in single-religion classrooms. However, the mixed-religion group did not discriminate any less than a pure comparison group that did not participate in the computer training intervention. This would appear to suggest that the increase in discriminatory behavior amongst those in homogenous classrooms may have resulted from greater opportunities for in-group bonding, which could reinforce existing biases against the out-group.
- In Iraq, Mousa (2020) evaluated the impact of mixed Christian-Muslim soccer teams on social cohesion and interactions between these groups in an ISIS-affected area of Iraq. Results indicate that Christians who played on mixed teams demonstrated a higher likelihood of engaging with Muslim teammates after the league ended. However, the intervention did not improve their overall tolerance toward the Muslim community.
- In India, Lowe (Forthcoming) randomly assigned young men from different castes to participate in month-long cricket leagues. The results showed that when members of different castes were assigned to "collaborative contact"—that is, playing on the same team as members of other castes—they were more likely to report cross-caste friendships after the league had ended and showed less own-caste favoritism when voting to allocate cricket rewards. In contrast, "adversarial contact"—pitting members of different castes against one another on different teams—generally reduced cross-caste interaction and efficiency.

OPEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We encourage innovative research proposals that further unpack the mechanisms underlying effective contact programming in contexts experiencing or recovering from conflict. Areas for further inquiry include:

UNDERSTANDING MECHANISMS (i.e. when does contact work and why?)	– Are the conditions identified by Allport (e.g. supportive role of authorities, equal status of groups, intergroup cooperation, groups working towards a common goal) required for contact to be effective?
TESTING CONTACT IN REAL-WORLD SETTINGS	– Recognizing that, in the real world, people self-select into contact, how can we design and test interventions that do not artificially "force" people into contact? – Are there forms of contact beyond face-to-face interaction that can create deeper horizontal linkages between groups, such as economic contact? – Can "vicarious contact" (i.e. when people observe in-group contact with out-group members on TV or online) shift attitudes and behaviors? – Can virtual contact be effective and, if so, what is the most effective form for virtual contact to take?
ANALYZING IMPACTS BY STUDY POPULATION	– Who should social contact interventions target (e.g. average community members or local influencers; individuals with higher baseline levels of prejudice or those who are less prejudiced and potentially easier to influence)? – How are people affected differently based on their prior prejudice levels? – When in someone's lifetime does contact matter? Could contact be more effective for young people (youth attitudes may be more malleable, but familial influences may also be strong)? – Does the contact hypothesis hold with newly mixed populations, such as refugees and host communities? – What role does intersectionality play in influencing the effectiveness of contact interventions? (i.e. does contact have different effects on individuals who may identify with multiple minority "out-groups"?)
VARYING THE INTENSITY AND DURATION OF CONTACT	– Does group size matter? Do the effects of contact vary based on the ratio of the minority group represented in the activity being evaluated? – What is the role of peer influence in amplifying or negating the effects of contact? – What is the ideal frequency for contact? What is the minimum effective dosage? – Is sustained contact important or required? Can long run analyses be conducted to shed light on these questions?
EXPANDING MEASUREMENT	– Can contact affect outcomes beyond prejudice (e.g. can contact affect violent conflict of influence other factors that can play a role in conflict between groups, such as productivity, access to public goods, or collective action)? – How long do the effects of contact last? Are effects immediate or are they activated over time (for instance, how do effects respond to shocks)? – What are the spillover effects of contact onto community members who are not directly exposed to the intervention?
COMPARING VIS-À-VIS OTHER INTERVENTIONS	– How does contact perform relative to other prejudice reduction interventions (like perspective taking or higher-level structural changes)? – Is explicit peace messaging a complement or a substitute of contact programming?

The following examples showcase ongoing research funded by CVI and P&R exploring social contact interventions in conflict-affected contexts:

Can Social Contact Reduce Economic Conflict between Farmers and Herders? Evidence from Nigeria (Oeindrila Dube, Soeren Henn, and James Robinson)

In this study, researchers will investigate whether "contact" can help resolve the endemic farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria. This study will provide micro evidence on whether, and how, contact influences conflict. The researchers will conduct a randomized evaluation that convenes inter-dialogues with farmers and herders in 189 communities. Their analysis will test whether contact can reduce conflict even when the underlying conflict is economic in nature. In addition, the study will provide evidence on potential mechanisms. Specifically, they will examine whether contact reduces conflict through more traditional economic channels of information revelation and commitment, or whether behavioral channels such as implicit bias and the creation of new social links serve as the key mechanisms.

Social and Economic Integration of Syrian Refugees in Host Communities in Jordan (Eliana La Ferrara, Pedro Rosa Dias, and Marcus Holmlund)

Does interpersonal contact between groups lead to a reduction in prejudice or does it exacerbate divisions? Debate is divided on this question and causal evidence on the topic is scant. This research uses a large-scale randomized evaluation to investigate this question in the context of communities in Jordan that are hosting Syrian refugees. The evaluation builds on a cash-for-work program, where refugees and Jordanian residents cooperate in upgrading infrastructure in Jordanian municipalities exposed to a large influx of refugees. Researchers are varying the proportion of Syrian refugees who work in the teams employed by the program, thereby changing exposure to members of other groups. They will measure how contact impacts stereotyping, social norms, trust between the groups, and productivity. They are also evaluating the effect of disseminating information about refugees amongst residents on these outcomes.

The Beautiful Game? Soccer, Intergroup Contact, and Refugee-Native Integration in Lebanon (Salma Mousa and Alexandra Scacco)

Can intergroup contact improve native-refugee relations? Is contact better suited to improving relationships between old or new arrivals? The researchers will answer these questions using a soccer-based field experiment that brings together Syrian refugees who arrived post-2011, Palestinians descended of refugees who arrived in the 1940s – 60s, and native Lebanese youth for two-month soccer leagues across Lebanon, where refugees make up 25% of the population. They will randomly assign participants to a homogenous or heterogeneous (Lebanese-Palestinian or Lebanese-Syrian) soccer team in order to assess whether contact of this form can improve: (a) prejudiced attitudes, (b) discriminatory behavior, (c) norms about intergroup interactions, (d) social integration, and (e) psychological integration among refugees. They will track both players and their parents to capture possible spillovers and will also exploit variation in an accompanying educational curriculum to explore added returns to combining contact with empathy education. This study thus tests the differential potential of contact and educational programs to build social cohesion between old and new neighbors, in a context of pervasive prejudice and distrust.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPLYING

As with all other applications to the Crime and Violence Initiative and Peace & Recovery Program, we encourage proposals that focus on fundamental questions that will contribute generalizable lessons, rather than narrow program evaluation.

For proposals seeking to evaluate social contact interventions specifically, we also encourage research that:

- **Seeks to validate measures:** Many of the outcomes that contact interventions seek to alter are inherently difficult to observe (e.g. changes in attitudes, beliefs, etc.). We encourage research that seeks to develop new and innovative strategies for validating these measures outside of a lab setting through real world experimentation. For example, we encourage studies that combine different measurement strategies—such as surveys, lab games, and direct observation—to study a range of outcome measures and assess how they correlate.
- **Takes a cross-disciplinary approach:** Recognizing the strong grounding that social contact has in the field of social psychology, we encourage research proposals that take a cross-disciplinary approach. Proposals are encouraged to acknowledge the progress made across different disciplines and incorporate expertise from those not only in the fields of economics or political science.
- **Evaluates sustainable interventions:** Much of the existing contact literature to date has examined interventions that have been artificially introduced into a new environment, where contact may not have naturally occurred. In order to assess the impact and sustainability of contact programming in real-world settings, we encourage proposals that demonstrate a long-term commitment by the implementing partner to using research findings to inform their future program and policy decisions.

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EVIDENCE WRAP-UP: CBT FOR CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION[7]

EXISTING EVIDENCE

A growing number of programs have sought to draw on principles of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)—a psychotherapeutic practice often used to address mood and anxiety disorders by shifting participants' thoughts and behavior—to reduce anti-social and violent behaviors. CBT-inspired interventions—which may include a mix of in-person or virtual counselling, group therapy, workshops, and other activities—are typically designed to help participants evaluate and modify the way they think and make decisions, improve their self-image, and relate and adapt to their environments. A goal of some of these programs is to help participants plan ahead or slow down automatic reactions in the face of high-stakes situations; this may be one way in which they can help reduce violent or criminal activity.

A 2007 meta-analysis (Lipsey et al.) of 58 studies—19 of which were randomized evaluations—reinforces the potential of CBT to reduce recidivism in juvenile and adult offenders. However, few of the evaluations referenced tested programs at scale in real-world settings, and few observed the effects of interventions outside of the US. More recently, three large-scale randomized evaluations of CBT-based programs in Liberia and the US have found that therapy reduced criminal behavior and recidivism, and increased graduation rates when delivered in school.

- In Liberia, Blattman et al. (2017) studied the impact of a CBT-inspired program that combined group therapy with one-on-one counseling aimed at improving participants' self-image and self-control. The study recruited 999 participants from a population of criminally engaged young men, many of whom had fought in Liberia's previous civil wars. In addition to the CBT component, half of the participants also received a one-time unconditional cash grant of US$200. Receiving therapy with or without the cash reduced the likelihood of aggressive and criminal behavior among participants and improved some measures of self-control and self-image, including reductions in impulsivity and improvements in self-esteem. These results endured longer for participants who received *both* therapy and cash. The researchers are now engaging in a long-term follow-up study to see how exposure to the program has impacted participants nearly ten years later.
- In the United States, Heller et al. (2017) evaluated a CBT-inspired program delivered by the NGO Youth Guidance to at-risk youth in low-income Chicago public schools. Mentors, who were often recruited from the community or similar neighborhoods as the students, delivered weekly hour-long group sessions for one to two school years to a random subset of more than 4,000 students. Therapy decreased arrests by the end of the program, and recipients were more likely to graduate high school on time.
- Also, in the Unites States, Heller et al. (2017) evaluated a CBT-inspired program implemented through the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC). Detention center staff randomly selected a sample from 2,693 male juvenile detainees to receive twice daily group sessions over a period of three to four weeks. Therapy reduced re-admission rates within two months of release, a reduction that persisted eighteen months later.

Notably, the above studies evaluated iterations of long-standing interventions, rather than CBT programs that have been adapted and introduced into new environments. More recent studies, including an evaluation of a CBT-based program in Mexico City (Avitabile et al. 2019), have revealed challenges in incentivizing youth to take up this type of programming when introduced into a new environment, given possible stigma surrounding participation. Thus, additional debate remains over how CBT generalizes across contexts, to different types of criminal activity (e.g. disorganized vs. organized crime), and target populations (e.g. older youth or adults). Further research is also needed to better understand the precise mechanisms through which CBT interventions bring about behavior change.

OPEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We encourage innovative research proposals that further unpack the mechanisms underlying effective CBT-based interventions. Areas for further inquiry include:

UNDERSTANDING MECHANISMS (i.e. when does CBT work and why?)	– Given CBT-based curricula may take many forms, is CBT as a comprehensive approach driving its effects or are individual components (e.g. mentorship, group dialogue, individual therapy, etc.) responsible for the observed behavioral changes? (I.e. what program components are vital to CBT's success?)
IMPROVING PROGRAM DELIVERY (i.e. what are the optimal and necessary implementation conditions?)	– What level of supervision is needed to achieve program impact (i.e. delivery by clinical psychologists vs. locally trained facilitators)? What are the tradeoffs between clinical and non-clinical implementation (particularly when considering effectiveness at scale)? – As attendance can often be a barrier to program efficacy, what strategies are effective for engaging and retaining participants in CBT programs over time? How can the benefits of participation be made most salient? – Where is delivery most effective (for instance, when targeted at youth, is delivery more effective inside or outside of schools)? – Can virtual (including app- and text-based) CBT be effective and, if so, what is the most effective form for virtual CBT to take?
VARYING THE INTENSITY AND DURATION OF CBT	– What is the optimal frequency and intensity of CBT programs for achieving desired results? – Can "booster" sessions (i.e. CBT sessions delivered at intervals following the conclusion of the main intervention) help prolong or amplify program impacts? – Can app- or text-based CBT services augment the success of in-person sessions?
EXPANDING MEASUREMENT	– What are the spillover effects of CBT exposure onto the broader community? – Is CBT more or less effective in reducing certain types of criminal activity or violent behavior (e.g. violent crime vs. property crime; organized crime; etc.)? – What are the long-term effects of exposure to CBT interventions? – What upstream outcomes (e.g. mental health, welfare, etc.) can be measured to help researchers assess often hard to observe or sensitive downstream outcomes on crime and violence reduction? Moreover, research should aim to develop creative measures for sensitive outcomes that people are likely to underreport (e.g. gang participation).
COMPARING VIS-À-VIS OTHER INTERVENTIONS	– How does CBT compare to other, lighter touch psychosocial interventions (e.g. mindfulness)? – How do CBT-based programs compare to other soft or hard skills training interventions delivered in the same contexts? – What complementary interventions may amplify the impacts of CBT and how (e.g. cash transfers)?

Integrating Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-based Interventions and Employment Programs for Youth in Sierra Leone (Theresa Betancourt, Agha Ali Akram, Nathan B. Hansen)

Researchers in Sierra Leone are exploring alternate delivery platforms to bring evidence-based mental health interventions to youth facing conflict and adversity in West Africa. This study will integrate a CBT-based intervention into an existing youth employment program and evaluate barriers to implementation and intervention effectiveness, as measured by impact on social functioning (soft skills), emotion regulation and economic stability.

Preventing Violence Against Children in Refugee-Camp Schools in Tanzania (Karen Devries, Camilla Fabbri, Vivien Barongo, Elizabeth Shayo, Elizabeth Allen, Giulia Greco, Rachel Steinacher, Katherine Rodrigues)

School is one of the most common settings where children and adolescents may experience violence; and in some countries, school staff may be one of the most common perpetrators of violence against children. Levels of violence may be higher in humanitarian settings, where people are displaced and teachers and children may have recent histories of trauma. While this violence is associated with negative outcomes for students, little evidence exists on how to shift this harmful behavior, particularly within humanitarian settings. In partnership with the International Rescue Committee and Behavioral Insights Team, researchers are evaluating the impact of a school-based program, which utilizes principles of cognitive behavioral therapy, on physical and emotional violence perpetrated by teachers on students, students' mental health outcomes, and test scores.

Moving Youth away from the Market for Crime: Interventions in the Honduras Safer Municipalities Project (Laura Chioda, Benjamin Feigenberg, Marcus Holmlund)

In high-violence municipalities in Honduras, researchers are studying whether the combination of soft skills training, technical and vocational training, and a temporary job can promote positive behaviors, improve mental well-being, and improve post-intervention labor market outcomes. The intervention targets at-risk youth who are not enrolled in schooling and are disconnected from the legal labor market. Importantly the soft skills dimension of the program incorporates an innovative approach to providing cognitive behavioral therapy that is tailored to the comorbidities present in the target population and relies on an apprenticeship-based training model that is appropriate in settings such as Honduras, where the availability of trained mental health professionals is extremely limited.

Thinking Twice: Does Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Influence Police Officer Behavior? Experimental Evidence from Mexico City Police (Rodrigo Canales, Juan Santini)

Policing is an occupation with distinctive characteristics that can prompt mental health disorders. Research shows that police officers are exposed to a variety of traumatic and stressful events over the course of their careers that have large negative impacts on mental and physical health, job performance, interactions with citizens, and violence. It is essential for police organizations, therefore, to identify interventions that can support the mental health of their workers, and reduce their use of excessive force. Collaborating with the Mexico City Ministry of Citizen Security, researchers will implement an RCT to measure whether cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) affects police officers' emotional stability and violent behavior. The research aims to shed light on the linkages between CBT and officers' mental health, job performance, and use of excessive force in the streets.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPLYING

We encourage proposals that push the frontier of what we know, including proposals that directly address any of the open research questions listed above. As with all other applications to the Crime and Violence Initiative and Peace & Recovery Program, we also encourage proposals that focus on fundamental questions that will contribute generalizable lessons, rather than narrow program evaluation. For proposals seeking to evaluate CBT-based interventions, we also encourage research that:

- **Evaluates sustainable and scalable interventions:** Given the intensity of many CBT-based interventions, not all programs that are evaluated may be feasible or cost-effective at scale. With this in mind, we encourage proposals that seek to evaluate interventions that are designed to mimic how they would operate at scale over time, as well as interventions that explore delivery channels that may allow for cost savings.
- **Takes a cross-disciplinary approach:** Recognizing that CBT-based interventions for crime and violence reduction have originated in the field of psychology, we encourage research proposals that take a cross-disciplinary approach and incorporate both research and implementation expertise from those outside of the field of economics.
- **Provides proof of concept:** As discussed above, evidence of successful CBT-based programs largely draws on contexts in which the tested interventions had been running for substantial periods of time with community buy-in and support. We encourage proposals that seek to measure the effects of CBT in new contexts in order to understand how programs that have been successful elsewhere can be adapted to new environments.
- **Explicitly defines the intervention:** Proposals should provide a description of the precise structure of the CBT program that will be evaluated (e.g. session topics, forms of engagement and presentation, etc.) so that reviewers can easily contextualize the study relative to prior or ongoing evaluations.

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