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## Fertility after the conflict and during the famine: The case of Timor Leste

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### Abstract

From the perspective of the citizens of newly independent Timor Leste, the period between 1975 and 1999 was one of constant struggle involving both outright conflict and passive resistance against the Indonesian occupation. A referendum for self-determination in August 1999 produced a decisive move to independence, and a brutal backlash from the Indonesian military and the Timorese militias they had trained and financed. Throughout the period of transition to Independence in 2002 the people continued to suffer from difficulties of reconstruction, adverse climatic shifts, and problems in managing the resettlement of people displaced in the decades of conflict. In 2003 a Demographic and Health Survey collected nationally representative data on fertility, mortality and basic health. This paper analyzes the impact of a decade of disruption on Timor Leste's demographic situation. According to the DHS the total fertility rate in 1999-2003 was 7.7 births per woman, and was rising, with a rate above 8 in early 2003. Infant mortality fell consistently through the decade, and was below 80 per thousand births in the period immediately before the survey. These figures imply the highest levels of fertility and natural increase in the region.

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