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War and conflict in Timor Leste, the impact on women's lives

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Abstract

In 1999, around the time of its vote for independence, the territory of East Timor experienced a period of conflict and violence of a massive scale. Huge numbers of people crossed or were removed across the border into refugee camps in west Timor, numerous people were brutally murdered in front of their relatives and friends, most of the housing in the territory was burnt down and public infrastructure was destroyed. These experiences had considerable impact on people's psychological and physical well-being. Widespread mental health disturbance was an inevitable consequence of the conflict. The entire population has been affected. All must restart their lives, rebuild their main source of income and deal with the ensuing psychological and financial problems.

The main objective of this paper is to analyze women's socio-demographic and health condition before and after the conflict. This paper is based on the Timor Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2003 (TLDHS 2003). The TLDHS 2003, collected data from 5,000 households from different geographic areas in East Timor. The respondents are both ever married women as well as ever married men of reproductive age. Other secondary and qualitative data as well as field observation of women and child's health, women's negotiating power in the family, socio cultural beliefs and practices that may have an impact on women's lives will also be used to support the survey findings.

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