

The Legacy Effects of Conflict on Health

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While there is a growing cross-country literature on the economic costs of conflict, less attention has been paid to the health costs. This paper considers the change in countries' health measured by Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) over time and the impact that conflict plays. The approach taken is to see if the growth of country DALYs can be modelled as a random process, following the law of proportionate effects, and if this is influenced by conflict. The results reject a purely random growth process. Conflict exposure is associated with significantly higher DALY burdens, and these effects persist well beyond the initial shock. Estimates based on cumulative conflict histories suggest that the health legacy of conflict may remain visible for up to four decades, although its magnitude declines over time. They also vary across different age groups and genders in the population, with the largest effect occurring among children under 5 years of age and adults aged 15 to 49 years, and slightly higher for males than for females. These findings have implications for post-conflict recovery policies, public health planning, and the design of development assistance.

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