

Civil War, Sexual Violence and HIV Infections: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Abstract

This paper estimates the effect of conflict and conflict-related vulnerability factors, namely sexual violence and economic vulnerability, on HIV prevalence rates. I find that HIV prevalence rates are higher in conflict-affected regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) than in non-conflict regions, and that sexual violence and economic vulnerability significantly affect HIV prevalence rates. Specifically we find that (i) HIV prevalence is 1.64 % higher in war-affected zones than elsewhere in the DRC; (ii) the impact of sexual violence in conflict-affected regions is 55 times greater than on average (1.10 % versus 0.02 %); (iii) Civil war and sexual violence jointly increase HIV infection rates by 1.45 %; (iv) Finally, economic conflict-related vulnerability does not explain HIV infection rates. In contrast, a one percent point decrease in poverty incidence, that is a reduction in economic vulnerability, increases HIV prevalence rates by 0.048 % regardless of the situation of conflict.