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Ms. Sumiti Ahuja, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi,

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Dr. Navtika Singh Nautiyal presently working as an Assistant Professor in School of law, Forensic Justice and Policy studies at National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. She has 9 years of Teaching and Research Experience. She has completed her Philosophy of Doctorate in 'Intercountry adoption laws from Uttranchal University, Dehradun' and LLM from Indian Law Institute, New Delhi.



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Associate Professor at School of Law, Apex University, Jaipur, M.A, LL.M, Ph.D,

Dr. Rinu have 5 yrs of teaching experience in renowned institutions like Jagannath University and Apex University. Participated in more than 20 national and international seminars and conferences and 5 workshops and training programmes.

Dr. Nitesh Saraswat

E.MBA, LL.M, Ph.D, PGDSAPM

Currently working as Assistant Professor at Law Centre II, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Dr. Nitesh have 14 years of Teaching, Administrative and research experience in Renowned Institutions like Amity University, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Jai Narain Vyas University Jodhpur, Jagannath University and Nirma University.

More than 25 Publications in renowned National and International Journals and has authored a Text book on Cr.P.C and Juvenile Delinquency law.



Subhrajit Chanda

BBA. LL.B. (Hons.) (Amity University, Rajasthan); LL. M. (UPES, Dehradun) (Nottingham Trent University, UK); Ph.D. Candidate (G.D. Goenka University)

Subhrajit did his LL.M. in Sports Law, from Nottingham Trent University of United Kingdoms, with international scholarship provided by university; he has also completed another LL.M. in Energy Law from University of Petroleum and Energy Studies, India. He did his B.B.A.LL.B. (Hons.) focussing on International Trade Law.

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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON GLOBAL POVERTY: EVALUATING ITS CHALLENGES AND MANAGEMENT

AUTHORED BY - GARGI DAURWAL

INTRODUCTION

Armed conflicts have had a devastating impact on global poverty, affecting millions of lives worldwide have been affected due to the armed conflict. It has severely influenced global poverty. It is a given that civil conflicts, wars and turf battles result in loss of life but it also heavily undermines the economic stability of regions affected thereby which in turn aggravates poverty. The connection between armed conflict and poverty is both positive and vicious. Whereas armed conflict, on one hand displaces populations, demolishes infrastructure, brings havoc to livelihoods; poverty on the other hand, could be the root cause to it intensifying it and eventually leading to the continuation of conflict.

In this paper the multifarious relationship between armed conflict and global poverty is explored by analysing both its challenges and management approaches. With the help of case studies and global data, this paper focuses on the severe economic consequences of conflict and evaluates the global management strategies that are there to minimise and deal with the poverty in conflict-ridden regions.

ARMED CONFLICT AND GLOBAL POVERTY: A TWO-WAY RELATIONSHIP

War and poverty are intertwined with each other that they have a symbiotic relationship; one breeds the other in its worst form as they feed off each other. This relationship between poverty and armed conflict has become a main focus in literature studies of conflict and development, exhibiting how armed conflict intensifies poverty and how poverty in turn can act as contributor towards conflict. To understanding this relationship, it is essential to inspect different factors that cause to continue the suffering in regions which are affected due to conflicts.

Poverty as a Root Cause of Conflict

Poverty has a relation with armed conflict because mainly it creates social inequality and people

have no say in the political system. These deficits reduce opportunities for nurturance, for example education, health care, and opportunities for work; over time the frustration and sense of unfairness lead to violence against governing authorities. Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler's studies' explain that the occurrence of civil war is high in low income countries since people who have nothing to lose will readily join the armed forces for a reward.¹

The example of civil war in Sierra Leone 1991 – 2002 showed that conflicts in the country were due to poverty and inequality. It was against this background of no development and high unemployment levels that the RUF found easy to obtain 'employees' among the frustrations and greed of the youthful population as it promised the same riches found in looting and control of resources to these youths.²

Conflict as a Driver of Poverty

On the other hand, armed conflict has a negative impact on poverty as it takes regions to deep end of poverty. Conflicts demolish structures; roads, hospitals, schools and industries, which delay development and plunge the economy.

Yemen is a good example where 80% of the population still needs some form of humanitarian assistance, and size of the economy is less than half its size prior to onset of the conflict. Also, conflict brings about refugees thus deepening poverty for both refugees and other host families. Internally displaced persons, or refugees, are unable to have homes, work and social connections; much less, compete for scarce resources, in host countries such as Jordan and Lebanon.

The Vicious Cycle: Conflict-Poverty Nexus

The subject under consideration demonstrates that poverty generates armed conflict on the other side, armed conflict in turn leads to poverty. Author Alan page also supports that when conflict results in poverty, deprivation breeds violence. In post conflict countries, both the slow speed of recovery and especially inadequate equity can lead to the start of conflict all over again. Fragile states like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have experienced repeated cycles of conflict, with poverty both driving and resulting from instability.

¹ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War' (2004) 56 *Oxford Economic Papers* 563.

² Ibrahim Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War* (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa 2004).

Natural resources usually amplify this cycle when the armed groups undertake the control of valuable assets of these countries to fund their operations, it leads to the exaggeration of the "resource curse." Resource-based conflicts can contribute to a prolonged conflict.

Long-Term Effects on Development

It is seen that poverty suffers long-term effects in any society or country exposed to armed conflict. Recovery in such areas is usually slow as these are post-conflict societies which are exerting themselves to build their infrastructure and governance once again from the scratch. Afghanistan is among the poorest countries in the world today with high unemployment and underemployment as a result of decades of war.³ The nonavailability of economic development can therefore mean that more cycles of violence are repeatedly going to be added therefore deepening the poverty for the generations to come.

Unfortunate victims of armed conflicts are mainly women and children making them even more vulnerable to poverty. Women cook for families and are responsible for the overall running of homes in cases where male family members are eliminated or forced out. Among other threats women face additional threats also such as sexual violence and exploitation during such.⁴

IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON ECONOMIC STABILITY

Any warfare destabilises the economy, both in the short run and in the long run, by inhibiting economic development. It destroys and destroys infrastructures and negates trading activities. It also redirects governmental spending to military considerations thereby shutting down or stunting an economy altogether.

Destruction of Infrastructure

Specifically, conflicts invariably affect or demolish substrata for economy—roads, bridges, power plants among them. This brings unrest in many ways by disrupting trade and means of transport and communication, confining people and stopping manufacturing. Sustaining and rebuilding after conflict is expensive; such as the civil war in Syria which cost infrastructure damages of 120 billion USD. Damaging infrastructure such as irrigation systems in agricultural

³ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2023* (UNDP 2023) <https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2023> accessed 26 March 2025

⁴ Women's Refugee Commission, *Evolving Responses to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Conflict Settings* (Women's Refugee Commission 2020).

economy countries result in food insecurity like in South Sudan, Somalia and others where damage was hugely caused by conflicts deepening poverty and famine.

Damage to Key Economic Sectors

Sources of national income such as agriculture extractive industry compelled by conflicts. The result is that in developing nations where agriculture is one of the biggest sources of employment, conflict wreaks havoc through displacing farmers and destructing farmlands. Thus in the central African Republic agricultural destruction facilitated worsening of food shortage and poverty.⁵ Likewise, production ceases when factories are bombed or burned; natural resources such as oil or minerals (Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance) then become objects of war.

Inflation, Currency Devaluation, and Hyperinflation

The relationship between conflicts and inflation is traced to the fact that government use money printing as a way of financing the military needs. As seen in Venezuela hyperinflation results to high prices forcing millions of people into the category of the poor.⁶ Volatility also hinders the ability of a country to import relevant goods from other countries making essential goods unaffordable. Zimbabwe's experience was a rudimentary illustration of this fact invariably caused by numerous political upheavals. Sometimes post war recovery is very slow, Liberian for instance faced issues of corruption and governance in post war and this slowed economic growth work.⁷

SOCIAL DISPLACEMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR POVERTY

Another one of the irreparable consequences of armed conflict is the massive social displacement it engulfs. Given definition of forced displacement is one where individuals are fleeing their homes owing to violence, destruction or persecution. Within a country's borders and across borders, conflict displacement affects the uprooted individuals and societies that

⁵ International Food Policy Research Institute, *Impact of Conflict on Agriculture in the Central African Republic* (IFPRI 2018) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/impact-conflict-agriculture-central-african-republic> accessed 26 March 2025

⁶ Jeffrey D Sachs, *Venezuela's Economic Collapse* (Project Syndicate 2019) <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/venezuela-economic-collapse-us-sanctions-by-jeffrey-d-sachs-2019-01> accessed 26 March 2025

⁷ UNDP, *Liberia Post-Conflict Economic Recovery* (UNDP 2018) <https://www.undp.org/liberia-post-conflict-economic-recovery>

take them in in the long run. The short term effects of displacement are generally the enhanced level of poverty, because displaced people lose their source of income, houses, and basic facilities. In the long-run displacement leads to poverty that is cycle through generations; this continues to present a major challenge to the antipoverty and development initiatives at both country and international levels.

Scale of Displacement Due to Armed Conflict:

The level and extent of displacement due to armed violence is undoubtedly phenomenal. As per global sources, since the UNHCR over 100 million people or more were refugees by the end of 2023, nature of their displacement being either on account of conflict, violence or persecution.⁸ These 100 million displaced people consist of both the internally displaced persons, who have fled their home areas but have not crossed the border of their own country and refugees who have crossed the border of their home countries in search of safety. This type of displacement is a huge pressure to global humanitarian organizations and pushes a lot of economic, social, and, political problems for the countries. For instance, in South Sudan, Somalia, and Democratic Republic of Congo, long-standing conflicts have created refugees after refugees producing a lasting crisis of poverty in Africa.⁹

Immediate Economic Impact of Displacement:

Refugees become homeless, deprived of land ownership and other means of earning a living, as well. To the farmers, petty traders and other persons in low-end jobs, displacement translates to a immediate stop of their source of income. This leads to high levels of poverty because individuals and families displaced from property rights-based livelihoods turn to handouts or are forced to engage in livelihood activities that are informal such as manual work, alms seeking, and social capital reliance. In countries such as Yemen and Sudan which have been ravaged by conflict, large number of people have fled their homes hence disrupting agricultural production which is the major activity among the rural folks that depend on it to feed themselves and earn a living.¹⁰

⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2023* (UNHCR 2023) <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2023> accessed 26 March 2025

⁹ UNHCR, *Mid-Year Trends 2023: Sub-Saharan Africa* (UNHCR 2023) <https://www.unhcr.org/midyear-trends2023> accessed 26 March 2025

¹⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Impact of Conflict on Agriculture and Food Security in Yemen* (FAO 2023) <https://www.fao.org/yemen/conflict-impact> accessed 26 March 2025

Impact on Housing, Health, and Education

Comprehensive utility which includes shelter, health, and education are squarely off limits to the displaced people. While living in refugee camps or temporary shelters, many refugee individuals stay in very crowded, dirty, and with almost no access to water and sanitation. Hospitals and clinics are destroyed in areas of conflict while, congruently, the demand for health services overwhelms available capacity in refugee camps or host communities; thus, there are huge hurdles to health care access. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened this problem as infected and displaced populations had much higher levels of exposure and even less access to healthcare as a result of the increased pressure on healthcare systems around the world.¹¹ Education is another sector that is affected so much by displacement. War expends schools or makes them dangerous; education for children who have been forced to flee is a challenge. In many areas, education services in refugee camps, Syria's neighbours like Jordan and Lebanon are dismal, with schools that are inequitably funded, undersupplied, and overcrowded. It is a permanent socioeconomic problem because if grown-ups and youths do not get education, after they grow up they will not find jobs and, therefore, won't come out of poverty.

Gendered Consequences of Displacement:

Gender roles indicate that women are mostly responsible for children, and since displacement deprives them access to work, health, and protection, displaced women endure higher degrees of challenges. In most displacement situations, previous gender structures may even deepen women's vulnerability when getting access to employment because they will be forced to rely on donations or small business like cleaning services or petty business. Furthermore, women and girls displaced by conflict are vulnerable targets to gender violence of either sexual exploitation, trafficking and forceful marriages.¹² In areas like the Rohingya camps for IDPs in Bangladesh for instance, the standards of living are lower for women and children, who form a significant number of the displaced population: they do not attend school or go to work or access health services – and even with provision of humanitarian aid, poverty levels remain elevated.

¹¹ World Health Organization, *COVID-19 and Refugees: Addressing Health Inequalities* (WHO 2020) <https://www.who.int/covid19/refugees-health> accessed 26 March 2025

¹² UNHCR, *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Refugee Camps* (UNHCR 2022) <https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence-2022> accessed 26 March 2025

Long-Term Poverty and Marginalization of Displaced Populations:

Displacement results in long-term exclusion because the affected persons cannot easily assimilate into new society or find ways to start anew amidst ruined societies. Refugees and IDPs' legal status, social and economical integration in most societies remains largely limited. Very often refugees and internally displaced persons do not have the opportunity to legally work or own property and use public services in receiving countries, which contributes to their poverty. This has resulted in near-scratching poverty level, among the refugee-headed families, who now depend on the survival markets or humanitarian organizations.¹³ Internally displaced also encounter challenges of minority in their home countries since they lack representation in development policies or programs, health and nourishment. In countries like, Colombia that has suffered conflict for more than half a century, IDPs have been displaced severally and they struggle to get land, shelters and means of livelihood.

Impact on Host Communities:

Displacement also has severe socio-economic and political implications on the affected communities mainly in the developing low and middle income countries due to lack of funds to support the affected persons. The increase in the number of IDPs generates more pressure on the much scarce resources and services including shelter, health, education and employment. For example, Jordan and Lebanon, which host a large population of Syrian refugees, local population has complained of the pressure the refugees have brought when it comes to economic production.¹⁴ Levels of employment reduced, cost of housing went up while the standards of the social sector, including education and health, was stretched due to the influx of people. In such circumstances, poverty of not only the IDPs but also the host communities has increased. Sometimes this results in ethnic tensions and conflict between hosts and refugees or IDPs most especially when there are few resources to go round. This puts people into a cycle of aggression evicting other and aggression causing further conflict over resources to mean further eviction.

Long-Term Consequences of Protracted Displacement

Complex displacement entails where either refugees or Internally Displaced Persons stay

¹³ Human Rights Watch, *Lebanon: Barriers for Syrian Refugees* (HRW 2023) <https://www.hrw.org/lebanon-syrian-refugees> accessed 26 March 2025

¹⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Syrian Refugees and Employment in Jordan* (ILO 2023) <https://www.ilo.org/jordan-refugees-employment> accessed 26 March 2025

displaced for years or decades and with few prospects of returning to their homes or assimilating into host societies. It is most devastating in a poverty reduction strategy since prolonged displacement is synonymous with chronic poverty, and dependence on humanitarian assistance. For example, Palestinian refugees, most of whom are still in refugee camps after 70 years, generations of these refugees have been living in poverty relying solely on the financial donations they receive from different international organizations. Since women cannot gain full employment, education or legal protection, the conditions have become such that one can actually be poor and helpless for generations without the odds of being on their own improving in the slightest.

HUMAN CAPITAL DEPLETION AND LONG-TERM POVERTY

Human capital may be explained in terms of the skills, or knowledge, and aptitudes of people. The schooling systems are made ineffective by armed conflict, a majority of skilled workers are compelled to vacate or their abilities are rendered useless, and health systems are weakened. The long-term drain of human capital results in wide impacts to poverty, complicating issues of poverty in the post-conflict stage and in the development of the economy. When human capital is depleted many nations lack the ability to revive their economies and pull their people out of poverty resulting in long and continuous cycles of poverty and underdevelopment that span generations.

Destruction of Education Systems

Armed conflict also poses a very dangerous social cost in that it disrupts or destroys education systems. Education institutions are usually attacked or demolished resulting to millions of children and young adults being denied education. The policy of denying education narrows the earnings capacity of persons in the future, raise unemployment gracefully, and produce a human resource that is not fit for the processes of rebuilding after conflict.

The attacks on schools and universities in countries affected by conflicts including Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria have also left a very large education gap. More than 2 million children are out of school in Syria, and many have been displaced due to the civil war for several years – as reported by the United Nations. Such a situation means that these children will not be able to have useful educations and find a job after the conflict, thus having negative impacts on the country's economy, unable in returning to the state before the war. In

Afghanistan, civil war over the years has denied millions of children education as well as deepened poverty in one of the world's poorest countries.

Brain Drain: Loss of Skilled Labor:

In the case of conflict, highly skilled personnel in the areas like health, engineering, education, and other productive sectors emigrate seeking safety and worthwhile opportunities. This loss of human capital is disastrous for conflict-affected countries as the leadership finds itself without professional workforce to initiate development and growth for the countries.

For instance, during the Iraq War, the country recorded its worst brain drain ever with many qualified Iraqis immigrating to other countries in their thousands. This loss of skilled labour will remain a permanent scar on the development of Iraq's infrastructure, health care delivery system and the economy in the future. Also, Multiple industries and the healthcare sector especially suffered from this policy due to shortage of skilled legal professionals and exodus of medical professionals from the country which till this date is hampering the quality of medical care to the Iraqis.

Skill deficit reduces the economy's capacity and undermines poverty alleviation measures since conflict-affected countries lack the human capital to attract investment and rebuild essential institutions. Furthermore, skilled professional's migration leads to further deterioration of the country's social development which in turn provokes more educated people to immigrate to other countries.

Health System Collapse and Impact on Labor Force

The availability of health care is impacted negatively by armed conflict through hospital destruction, personnel scarcity and many individuals with restricted access to health care.

The losses incurred as a result of failure of the systems that support health care delivery are additionally most destructive in conflict areas since populations are in danger for poverty and poor health. In a country like Yemen where the health sector has struggled due to civil war and the people are experiencing extreme malnutrition, cholera incidences as a result of insufficient medical facilities. The South Sudan's conflict has caused a rise of acute malnutrition, high maternal mortality and children mortality. Current health condition of human capital has negative impacts on the realization of country's economic growth since most people cannot

engage in productive activities due to health complications.

Furthermore, the medical providers who stay behind suffer from life threatening shortages of medicines and supplies, and from sketchy training, which detracts from the quality of the medical services that can be offered to the people of the countries in conflict. Such a decline of the healthcare infrastructure impacts a country's capacity to rebuild after conflict due to negative health outcomes affecting productivity of the workforce and keeps the country and its people in cycles of poverty.

Disruption of Skills Development and Vocational Training

Vocational training becomes completely unthinkable to a large number of youths, who bear the brunt of unemployment and poverty. Due to the absence of opportunities for skill acquisition you find young people joining armed groups or have to take up sundry and risky jobs in conflict torn societies. This not only widens generation poverty gaps but also leads to continuous conflict as the youth who bear no vote becomes easy targets to radicalized groups.

Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo are examples of countries that education systems particularly vocational training have been disrupted during conflict and large population groups resulting from these disruptions do not have the necessary skills to make productive contributions to an economy. This has brought long-term implications in the economic recovery in that a shortage of skilled human resource constrains the rebuilding of critical industries like construction, manufacturing and agricultural industries.

Impact on Child Labor and Generational Poverty

The consequences of reduced human capital during armed conflict have severe impact, such as generation of more children labour, which enhances generational poverty. Despite the provisions of child labour law they are forced to work under poor working conditions, lack education, and are forced to work in order to make ends meet thus perpetuating poverty within the country.

Forbes cites examples like Afghanistan flexing a collapsed education system after so many years of war and millions of families struggling in poverty, child labour is rife here. Coupled with poor education and lack of exposure to risky working conditions the right of children compel them to face adverse health, developmental, and economic implications in their future

as they are unable to ace poverty in future.

Child labour also worsens human capital stock depletion because children who have been compelled to work instead of going to school, are even unable to gain the knowledge and expertise necessary to be productive members of society. This in turn fosters a cycle of poverty contributing to the accumulation of poverty and a comparatively slow development of the country as a whole.

Long-Term Economic Consequences: Reduced Productivity and Slow Recovery

The loss of human capital during armed conflict has impact that transcends the immediate post conflict period – economic impacts. The Post-conflict countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, human capital was deplete for many years due to civil wars thus the recovery process is slow. During the conflicts between the two countries several fleeing the hostile environment, took their talents with them thereby causing a brain drain. Education and health care systems became destroyed and decision makers in these nations were left with even a lot of difficulties in reconstructing their economies, because segments of populations did not have necessary skills or health to work.

The depletion of human capital in the long run also hinders accumulation of physical capital since foreign investors are normally reluctant to invest in human capital starved and infrastructures poor countries. This lack of investment only worsens recovery and poverty, as countries in conflict try to reconstruct and find jobs for their citizens.

CHALLENGES

Challenges in Managing Poverty during Armed Conflicts

Humanitarian aid delivery to populations affected by armed conflict is one of the biggest tasks and hurdles when it comes to tackling poverty. Possible and probable locations of conflict are generally inaccessible owing to the on-going fighting or as a result of restrictions by the belligerent parties. There are threats to the security of humanitarian workers as well as international organizations commonly struggle to effectively coalesce on a particular theatre of operations. Furthermore, in conflict countries corrupt practices can shift the resources from the needy populations since most of the armed groups control resources.

Unfavourable conditions of people also occur due to the breakdown of governance in conflict areas, so it becomes difficult to bring down the poverty rate. In the absence of organs of government, chances of putting into practice social policies on poverty eradication strategies such justice for all and social protection programs for the vulnerable, economic development policies are nearly impossible. Sometimes the volatile political situation in the post-conflict country adds even more to its vulnerability, and the economy has a long way to recover with an example of Afghanistan and Iraq.

International response and Management Strategies

Several global approaches have been established to fight poverty in conflict areas but the success rates differ. Bridging famine, disease, refugees and other effects of poverty relief, humanitarian aid, developmental assistance, and peace building are the main instruments used to address poverty amid conflict. But for long-term the problems must be tackled through broader pathways that provide solutions through economic development, education and security measures.

In addressing poverty in conflict lead regions, United Nations through its peace keeping task and development activities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The World Food Programme (WFP) goals too encompass short-term response to emergencies such as famine and war and long term objectives of human development.

Other regional bodies like the African Union and the European Union have also played a role in eradicating poverty in conflict stricken countries. For instance, such organization as African Union when intervening in such conflicts as the one in Darfur or Somalia has ensured establishment of conducive environment for development interventions.

Globalization has seen some international financial organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund offering funds and technical support to conflict ridden nations. But the effectiveness of these interventions crucially hinges on the predictability of the post conflict political structures and institution.

However, the recurrence of turbulence in other areas for example the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa is a clear indication that present strategies for managing conflicts are; still inadequate. It is argued that poverty reduction should be placed within a wider framework of

post-conflict reconstruction beginning with conflict prevention and the problem of poverty as a major source.

CONCLUSION

The study of the effect of armed conflict on the level of poverty in the world shows that there is the combination between the conflict and poverty as the conflict strengthens and sustains poverty in different ways. The civil wars result not only in the direct loss of central structures and source of income, but also give rise to further and sustainable negative effects towards the poverty in those areas. Other issues that underpin our discussion of economic devastation, food insecurity, social displacement and human capital depletion are structural in nature and hinder recovery and poverty reduction.

Moving to the effects of armed conflicts on the economies of the affected countries, it is evident that little or no production, trade or investment takes place; couple with this, most of the affected countries end up having a large population living in absolute poverty, and dependent on donations. This is a big problem as it triggers destruction of structures and institutions more so for countries that are struggling to restore or develop their economies. Hunger, one of the more dire ramifications of conflict, is worst on the affected communities where food insecurity levels increases, malnutrition and stunted growth not only reduce the workforce's capacity but promotes continued more poverty.

Due to social displacement conflict leads to up surging poverty levels as displaced people are deprived of their sources of income, shelter, and social amenities such as education and healthcare facilities. Internal and cross-border movements exert intense pressure on host communities and create long term poverty. Education systems and skilled human capital are brought to their knees, health care disappear, all this buries a nation in poverty as the human capital that was wiped out is the same capital needed to push for economic revival.

As seen from the case of poverty in conflict affected countries, poverty and conflict have synergistic relationships where different phases of poverty reinforce each other and continue to hinder development even after cessation of the conflict. To break this, it is necessary to develop more extensive approaches that should respond to the current requirements of the persons threatened by violence and do not take into consideration only their basic necessities

and after that, to consider long-term consequences of the armed conflict. Such strategies have to address reestablishment of the basic physical environment, and reconstitution of the ability of individuals to make a living, access food, and enhance human capital through education and access to healthcare. That is the reason why until current and potential causes of poverty in the conflict areas are solved, the mainstream initiatives on poverty decrease and development all over the world will remain ineffective.

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