

A Medical Sociological Study on Prevalence of War-Related Disability in the Kilinochchi District

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Abstract

Armed conflicts and disabilities are inextricably linked in many conflict-affected countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Iraq. The prolonged armed struggle that continued for nearly three decades in Sri Lanka caused enormous vulnerable conditions including disability especially in the North-East provinces and in other parts of the country in general. The issues of people with disabilities (PWDs) were earlier looked at entirely from a medical point of view. It is only recently that disability has drawn the attention of social scientists and some of whom are now involved in analyzing these issues from medical sociological perspectives. This research was conducted in four Divisional Secretariat (DS) divisions in the Kilinochchi District. The prime objective of this study is to assess the prevalence of war-related disability in the Kilinochchi District. This study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative data were collected through the questionnaire survey and survey data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 21). The sample comprised 316(n=316) respondents selected for the questionnaire survey. In addition, qualitative data were collected through the key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and case study methods. The findings of this study reveal that the prevalence of war-related disabilities is high in the Kilinochchi (59.87 per cent) and Mullaitivu (65.4 per cent) districts in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. There were 2330 PWDs in the Kilinochchi district and among them 1395 (60%) of the people have become disabled due to war. The Kandawalai (63.33%) and Karachchi (62.36%) DS divisions contain the higher percent of people with war-related disabilities than other DS divisions in the Kilinochchi District. This study has found that prevalence of war-related disability is high among men (64.9%). When considering age group, war-related disabilities are high (53.79%) among the age group of 21-40 years. The percent of unemployment is higher after disability (50.3%) than percent of unemployment before disability (35.8%) due to physical incapability after disability. Amputation (76%) is the most prevalence type of disability found among PWDs while spinal cord injury (11%) is the second prevalence of disability. More than 70% of the respondents have become disabled during the last phase of war. Shelling (66.8%) and landmines (18.7%) are the major weapons causing disability. Survey results reveal that PWDs use number of devices such as prosthetics, wheel chair, crutch, and tricycle in accordance with their type of disabilities.

Key words: Armed Conflict, Disability, Amputation, Rehabilitation, Well-being

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