

**VULNERABILITY OF WAR-WIDOWS IN THE POST- WAR
DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO: A CASE STUDY OF WAR-TORN
KANDAWALAI DIVISIONAL SECRETARIAT DIVISION OF THE
KILINCHCHI DISTRICT IN SRI LANKA**

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The war widows are a vulnerable group in the post-resettlement scenario in the war affected areas in Sri Lanka, aftermath of the civil war that lasted for more than three decades. As a result of the civil war, there are 40,000 widows in the Northern Province whereas 49,000 widows are from the Eastern Province in Sri Lanka. In addition to that, 8000 widows are with three children each and 12,000 are young widows in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka.

In this background, this study aims at achieving a better understanding of the socio-economic challenges of war widows with reference to Kandawalai DS division in the Kilinochchi district. This study was administrated a set of qualitative data collection techniques: case studies, and key informant interviews. In addition, secondary data were used for the statistical analysis.

The study reveals that there are 1680 war widows out of 7893 total widows in the Kilinochchi district, which represents 21% of the total widows. The study found out that there is a disproportionate number of young war widows owing to the forced recruitment by the LTTE and the sudden demise of the husband due to the war. Accordingly, 21.84% of the war widows are less than 40 years old in which 35 war widows are even less than 20 years old in the district where as the 36.44% of the war widows are from the study area in the Kilinochchi district. However, considerable number of females has become widowed in their young age.

The study ended up with the facts in what ways war widows are excluded which result in harsh socio-economic condition of their wellbeing. Because of the sudden demise of husbands, the war widows assigned to the dual role as homemakers and breadwinner. However, war widows are incapable of carrying out the dual role with the dependents whereas there are a few families of war widows run by widows' parents or their in-laws who are economically better than the Widow Headed families. In many cases, young war widows especially childless war widows express their consent to remarry but societal stigmatization and family dignity hinder their likeness. Many of the war widows and their dependents are heavily reliant on the government and NGOs assistance due to the lack of a stable income that consequently results in lack of savings. In many cases, war widows encounter social and human insecurity, psychological depression, isolation and discrimination, threats, and the lack of social integration. Therefore, this study reveals that having to live a life as widow especially as war widow would result in economic vulnerability and deprivation to the Widow Headed families.

In conclusion, the study requires a proactive role in the inclusion of war widows in the development by the government and NGOs to overcome their socio-economic challenges.