

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING WAR WIDOWS:
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY FOCUSING ON THE KARACHCHI
DIVISIONAL SECRETARIAT DIVISION IN THE
KILINOCCHI DISTRICT**

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This research study analyses the existing social and economic issues affecting the war widows living in the Karachchi Divisional Secretariat (DS) Division in the Kilinochchi District. The prolonged ethnic conflict that spanned over for more than two decades in Sri Lanka brought about many socio-economic problems of which the crisis of the war widows is crucial. The armed conflict has rendered the women in the war-ravaged areas, a heavily victimized group. There are 7443 war widows living in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka and among them 2155 war widows live in the Kilinochchi District. This study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The primary data were collected through questionnaire surveys, key informant interviews and case study methods. There were 100 war widows selected randomly from the Karachchi DS Division in the Kilinochchi District for the questionnaire survey. Also 10 case studies were conducted for this study. The findings of the study reveal that war widows face severe social and economic issues. As far as the war widows are concerned, women continue to grapple with the ill-effects of the prolonged war, multiple displacements and the social insecurity. Land and property ownership related issues affecting women are intimately intertwined with the women's basic rights, living conditions and questions regarding livelihood. Lack of opportunities for their economic empowerment has worsened the plight of these war widows and located them in a backward social position. The study has found that 81 per cent of the women became widows in the year of 2009 due to the last phase of the war between the Sri Lankan military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The study confirms that male domination in the Tamil community hinders the independent functioning of the war widows. The war widows, who are mothers in the villages, have developed an inferiority complex since they are unable to bring up their children in the same manner as other women do. They have an anxiety for their children to be brought up in an appropriate environment and to be given education and other fundamental facilities. However, the prevailing socio-economic conditions among the war widows prevent them from realizing their expectations. Also 76 per cent of the war widows stated that their social participation level is very poor. The study also found that nearly most of the war widows have chronic grief. From the overall findings of this research, it has been identified that the war widows in the war affected villages encounter enormous social and economic challenges. The research study emphasizes that a durable solution should be found to the problems encountered by the war widows and that their freedom, social justice, fundamental rights and social equity should be ensured.