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Conflict and Contraception in Colombia

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We explore how modern contraceptive use varied in the presence of conflict violence in Colombia, using data from the Uppsala Peace and Conflict Georeferenced Event Data and the Colombian Demographic and Health Surveys from 2000, 2005 and 2010. How conflict influences women's access to and decisions regarding family planning is still poorly understood, despite the intrinsic value as well as economic and health benefits of reproductive empowerment. Based on Ansley Coale and colleagues' ready, willing and able contraception paradigm, conflict may affect modern contraceptive use positively and/or negatively through mechanisms of willingness, access and ability. The results showed that women in departments where conflict had occurred recently had significantly higher odds of using modern contraception on average than women in non-conflict areas. Women are likely more careful to avoid unwanted pregnancy because of increased impoverishment, insecurity, and emotional and physical stress of armed conflict. Conflict may also have reduced or more firmly decided their demand for children. Experiencing conflict does not appear to influence contraceptive use differently by educational level or wealth. Rather, we find that the average relationship was driven by the experience of women in rural areas where conflict had recently occurred. We interpret this location-specific finding to reflect less access to safe abortion and post-abortion care in rural areas in Colombia.