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Early-Life Conditions and Child Development:  
Evidence from a Violent Conflict

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# Early-Life Conditions and Child Development: Evidence from a Violent Conflict

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## Abstract

This paper investigates how the exposure to violent conflicts in utero and in early and late childhood affect human capital formation. I focus on a wide range of child development outcomes, including novel cognitive and non-cognitive indicators. Using monthly and municipality-level variation in the timing and severity of massacres in Colombia from 1999 to 2007, I show that children exposed to terrorist attacks in utero and in childhood achieve lower height-for-age (0.09 SD) and cognitive outcomes (PPVT falls by 0.18SD and math reasoning and general knowledge fall by 0.16SD), and that these results are robust to controlling for mother fixed-effects. The timing of these exposures matters and differs by type of skill. In terms of parental investments, I find some evidence that parents reinforce the negative effects of violence by increasing their frequency of physical aggression.

Keywords: Human capital formation, Early-life shocks, Violence, Children, Development  
JEL codes: J24, J13, D79, I20, O15

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